

Chatman family dining room becomes a “board-room” for teens in foster care to find answers

There are six chairs around the dining room table at the Chatman home. Five of the chairs look pretty much the same. On any given day, one teenage adolescent or another will almost always occupy these five chairs. The sixth chair is for Mazue Chatman. Her chair is more official looking than the other chairs. It's the kind of chair you see the important CEO sitting in while contemplating those “big business” deals.

Mazue Chatman is a foster parent whose specialty is listening to adolescent girls. She has been sitting around her dining room table for 16 years now, listening to foster children tell their stories, helping them to sort out what is happening to them and offering advice on how they might go on from there.

“I just listen for as long as they need me to listen. I have learned that these kids need to be heard first. If you let them have their say, then they are more willing to hear what wisdom you may have to offer them,” said Chatman.

Many of the kids who come through her door have been through several other placements in foster care. “Mazue just seems to have the magic touch. She has a lot of patience,” offered one caseworker.

Chatman was born in Arkansas and eight months later her mother passed away. She was raised in the cotton fields with various relatives looking after her. She never went to school until the age of 12, when an uncle from Champaign traveled down to Arkansas and brought her back to live with him.

“I had a warm place to sleep and plenty of food. He bought me a red bicycle. I would bring it inside at

night and just look at it until I fell asleep. I just thank God my uncle came and got me,” she recalled.

This was Chatman's first experience with foster care. Years later, she would return the favor. In her adult life, Chatman was no stranger to being around children, having raised six of her own and helped to raise many

of her grandchildren. Then she realized there was another way she could help.

“One day a friend of mine said, ‘Come on Mazue, I'm going sign you up to be a foster parent’. And I said, OK,” she remembered, laughing with her eyes twinkling like a child on Christmas. That is all it took for her to start working her magic with teen girls.

So what is this “magic touch” that Chatman has that brings these girls to the table to talk and listen?

“Respect. You have to give respect in order to receive it,” she declared without hesitation.

Chatman offers these girls a safe place to work through their issues. Her house is warm and cozy, like a “Granny's” house, and Chatman is never too busy to listen. She attends school functions, doctor



Mazue Chatman just has to look around to have fond memories of the many young people who have called her house home.

Dining Room, con't.

appointments, court hearings, whatever needs to be done.

“I want them to know I care,” she said in her soft, kind-hearted voice. At the end of the day, they come back to the table to just sit and talk, play cards, and maybe eat some chicken,” chuckled Chatman. “We all love to eat.”

This past year Chatman was honored at the Foster Parent Appreciation Banquet, receiving the first annual Verne Woodson Award. Mrs. Woodson had been a long time foster/adoptive parent with DCFS. Ironically, Mrs. Woodson had been the friend who encouraged Chatman to become a foster parent.

Since then, more than 100 foster children have passed through the Chatman door in 16 years. The dining room walls are lined with hundreds of pictures of children whose hearts she has touched. Many of them come back to visit. Often one will stop her on the street or in a store and give her hug and thank her.

“She’s the best person you could have,” offered Aretha who has come back to live with Chatman long after aging out of the system.

Love and respect radiate from Chatman’s tiny frame and her smile brightens even the cloudiest of times. From her seat at the dining room table, Chatman is making a difference, one adolescent girl at a time.

Central Region Advisory Council meetings come closer to home

The Regional Advisory Council also meets in sub-regions. The Council is an excellent way for caregivers to hear about and help shape DCFS policy. The meetings are held at the DCFS field office in the local communities. The schedule for sub-region meetings follows.

Foster Parents should check with their Foster Parent Support Specialist or local field office to confirm the time and location prior to traveling to the meetings listed. While changes to this schedule will be avoided, there could be an emergency situation that results in a change.

Peoria Sub-Region

Princeton/Ottawa	March 30
Cambridge	June 29
Peoria/Pekin	September
Canton/Macomb	October 26

Time to be announced. Call the field office or your support specialist for more information.

Springfield Sub-Region

Beardstown	March 16 at 6 p.m.
Quincy	June 28 at 6 p.m.
Lincoln/Springfield (at Springfield)	September 15 at 6 p.m.
Carlinville/Jerseyville	October 13 at 6 p.m.

Champaign Sub-Region

Bloomington	June 17 at 10:30 a.m. <i>Psychotropic Meds</i>
Decatur	September 14 at 10 a.m. <i>Educational Rights</i>
Danville	October 21 at 7 p.m. <i>Team Building</i>

Meet the Central Region Representatives to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council!



Linda Stone



Andrea Miller



Mary White

“Trippin’ List” answers questions from Central Region teens

Hey! Central Region Teenagers! We, the members of the Central Region Youth Advisory Board thought it would be cool to get some time with you in each newsletter. Everybody on the Youth Advisory Board has been or still is in care with the Department of Children and Family Services. *We all know exactly what that’s like.*

During our discussions at our monthly meetings, we realized that life with DCFS most of the time means more questions than answers. So, we are going to pick some questions that we want to have answered. We’re going to research the official policy and maybe add a few of our insights too. We call this our ‘**Trippin’ List**’. It is a chance to talk about the things that have us trippin’ out or trippin’ over ourselves trying to make this whole DCFS thing work. But we won’t just trip—we will get some answers.

If you have a “Trippin’ List” question or would like to become a member of our regional board, the door is always open. Ask your caseworker for information or call the Youth Hotline at 1-800-232-3798.

How often should we get a clothing voucher?

Replacement clothing is the responsibility of the foster home, private agency or residential facility. Clothing allowances are included in the monthly board payment. The monthly clothing allowance for youth 12 and over is \$69.70.

Clothing vouchers are issued in cases of destruction due to fire, flood, or the youth’s willful destruction; unsuitability of clothing due to health or medical reasons, i.e. extraordinary weight gains or losses, excessive growth, or damage done to clothing to accommodate casts or braces; when special items are required as a result of residential placement or entering an independent living program, i.e., Youth in College Program.

Replacement clothing may be purchased for youth who have returned home for an extended period of time and returned to placement. Youth who are in a DOC facility may be issued a clothing voucher at the time of discharge from the facility. See P359 Appendix A (IV) for amounts. Unmarried mothers may be issued a clothing voucher for maternity clothes. In all cases, the reason for replacement clothing must be noted on the purchase authorization.

Comments:

The clothing allowance is a monthly average and sometimes more is spent in a month and sometimes less is spent in a month. Almost \$70.00 a month seems like a lot, but think about it...that special “Tommy Hilfiger” pair of jeans might cost \$80.00 and you still need underwear. Ugh! Kids need to work with their caregivers and negotiate how the clothing money will be spent. Going to school without gloves and a hat, not to mention underwear is just not cool!

Teens Speak

“No One”

*I’m caught in the middle
Nowhere to hide
Nowhere to go
No one on my side*

*I’m so alone
I’m so afraid
and I just look back
at this mess I’ve made*

*I sit and try to recuperate
but all I do is cry.*

*Everything will be okay
be calm, strong at heart
and every morning is a
new day.*

Erin, 15

Send your “Teen Speak” submissions to Mary Dixon at mdixon@idcfs.state.il.us.

Central Region Training Calendar

FosterPRIDE In-Service Training

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend any or all of the PRIDE In-Service Trainings to enhance their skills and meet yearly training requirements.

Module 1 - *The Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children* (Four 3-hour sessions = 12 training hours)

Module 2 - *Using Discipline to Protect and Nurture* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 3 - *Child Development* - New module being written

Module 4 - *Child Sexual Development and Sexual Abuse* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 5 - *Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 6 - *Working as a Professional Team Member* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 7 - *Promoting Children's Personal & Cultural Identity* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 8 - *Promoting Permanency Outcomes* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 9 - *Managing the Fostering Experience* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 10 - *Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children & Families* (Five 3-hour sessions = 15 training hours)

Springfield Area 888-817-1825

Module

SPRINGFIELD - Lincoln Land Community College
April 13, 20 6:30-9:30 p.m. 2
& 27 (Tue)

JACKSONVILLE - Lincoln Land Community College
April 13, 19 6:30-9:30 p.m. 9
& 26 (Mon)

Peoria Area 888-507-7433

Module

EAST MOLINE - BHC Outreach Center
April 6, 13 & 20 (Tue) 6-9 p.m. 5

MACOMB - Holiday Inn Express
April 29 & May 6 (Thu) 6-9 p.m. 9

PEORIA - Lutheran Social Services
April 15 & 22 (Thu) 6-9 p.m. 7

Champaign Area 888-467-6065

Module

BLOOMINGTON - Comfort Inn
March 6, 13 & 20 9 a.m.-12 p.m. 4
(Sat)

DECATUR - Webster-Cantrell Hall
April 5, 12 & 19 6:30-9:30 p.m. 4
(Mon)

MATTOON - Broadway Christian Church
April 6, 13 & 20 6:30-9:30 p.m. 4
(Sat)

Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

Peoria Area • 888-507-7433

EAST MOLINE BHC Outreach Ctr.
March 22 & 29 (Mon) 6-9 p.m.
April 29 & May 6 (Thu) 6-9 p.m.

GALESBURG Holiday Inn Express
March 23 & 30 (Tue) 6-9 p.m.

LA SALLE Catholic Charities
April 24 & May 1 (Sat) 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

MACOMB TBA
March 16 & 23 (Tue) 6-9 p.m.

**PEORIA Children's Home
Lutheran Social Services**
March 17 & 24 (Wed) 6-9 p.m.
April 19 & 26 (Mon) 6-9 p.m.

Springfield Area 888-817-1825

QUINCY The Crossing
March 27 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Champaign Area 888-467-6065

DANVILLE Comm. Church of God
March 13 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

DECATUR Decatur Civic Center
March 16 & 23 (Tue) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Central Connections

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Call with foster parent association news and schedules of local training, features on foster families and community members working for children, photos and news articles and supports all foster families can use.

Pre-Registration is required for all classes.

Call the number listed for your area for registration information.