

Fostering youth with intense medical needs is a passion

For 20 years, Pam Kleinwachter worked in daycare and then decided to make a career change. Yet she still wanted to be involved with children. Her husband Herb retired from the Naperville Fire Department after 25 years and now serves as the Assistant Fire Chief in Warrenville for their Volunteer Fire Department. This service-orientated couple have made caring for foster children a new passion.

Pam and Herb have been fostering for over ten years, providing excellent care to children with special needs, including severe burns, brain damage or other medical conditions. Currently, their household consists of four birth children, three adopted children and two children in foster care. Their “family affair” includes extended family members who are also very involved in the foster children’s lives. It takes a team to make sure everyone’s needs are met.

“They (the Kleinwachters) give excellent care to children with special needs. Pam is very organized. She supplies the Department with all of the children’s documentation before it is



Pam and Herb Kleinwachter

due. The information is always very detailed and up to date and she has always warmly welcomed workers into her home,” said Mary Beth Corrigan, a case-worker in the Aurora Field Office.

Pam and Herb also remain involved in the lives of the birth parents and maintain contact with them. Pam ensures that the birth parents are kept informed of their children’s lives with pictures and accounts of their activities. When appropriate, they have extended their home for visitation between birth parents and their foster children. In the midst of it all, they also strongly believe in mentoring new foster parents. Pam says she wants to do more of this so she can help others make foster care work for their own family.

Learn over lunch

The DCFS Aurora Field Office is offering a series of Brown Bag Lunch Presentations that will be held on the fourth Wednesday of each month from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The idea is to provide information to foster parents, DCFS child welfare staff, and court officials including CASA, Juvenile Court staff and Assistant State Attorneys. Past topics include *Court Testimony* and *The Changing Foster Care System*.

These informal presentations allow people to come together over their lunch hour, eat and participate in a discussion following the presentation. Family Focus will provide beverages and cookies. Training credits are available for foster parents.

Future topics will include

- Reactive Attachment Disorder
- Substance Affective Infants
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
- Erickson’s Hierarchy of Needs.

If you are interested in attending and/or being put on the mailing list please contact Cheryl Filson at 630-844-8400.

Dear Foster Parents:

As I hope you have heard, the Northern Region is attempting to re-establish the regional Foster Parent Advisory Council, and our goal is to have elected Regional Council Officers by September 2005. We welcome your input and need your support to reach this goal. Please make sure your voice is heard as we move forward.

The Northern Regional Foster Parent Advisory Council meets on the second Thursday of every month at 6 p.m. at the Regional Office, 8 E. Galena, Aurora. We gather at 6 p.m. for dinner, at 6:30 there is an hour of training (training credits are available) and at 7:30 the business part of the meeting is conducted.

At the next meeting on September 8 we will elect officers for the of Northern Region Advisory Council.

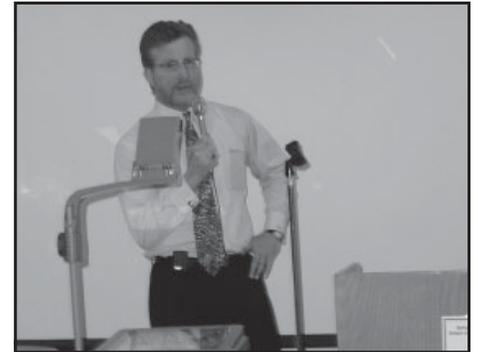
I look forward to meeting you and encourage you to get involved. Your involvement will ensure that the voice of the foster parents is heard in the Northern Region.

Sincerely,
Debbie Palmer-Thomas
Regional Administrator

Caregivers to teens get skills, inspiration

For the better part of a Saturday, 54 Northern region caregivers came together to celebrate and commiserate as they learned more about parenting older youth. The DCFS Division of Clinical Practice and Professional Development prepared this specialized Caregivers Institute, "The Ins and Outs of Parenting Adolescents and Teens," to fill a pressing need. The parents who attended the training seemed eager for information on how to effectively give love and guidance to young people as they make their way toward a successful adulthood.

Regional Administrator Debbie Palmer-Thomas, welcomed the eager participants. The workshops then started with youth involved with the Young Researchers Project of the University of Illinois sharing their personal experiences in foster care. That set the stage for the adults to better understand the youth's perspective as they learned how to work together in a family setting. From there, the audience discovered the myriad resources within the DCFS Division of Service Intervention to help families prepare young people for self-sufficiency. Education Advisor Rhonda Best then explained various educational opportunities for youth. She also covered how school policies on suspensions and expulsions can affect students with special educational needs and how caregivers can be good advocates.



Ray Gates, acting chief of the Office of Foster Parent Support Services, welcomes participants to the Caregivers Institute.

After refueling with a hearty lunch, the caregivers were ready to learn about the physical and emotional development of older youth. Dr. Michael Wonderlich of the DCFS Clinical Division explained that there are real biological reasons behind sometimes perplexing teen behaviors. In the final session of the day, Listening So Teens Will Talk, Terry Liggitt of Prevent Child Abuse Illinois offered many recommendations to help adults and teens communicate better.

By the end of the session, caregivers appeared refreshed and ready to relate better with the young people in their families. "This day was so successful, we're already looking forward to doing it again in Spring 2006. Plans are underway and notice will be in future editions of this newsletter," said Ray Gates, acting chief, Office of Foster Parent Support Services. The training also included many printed materials. For more information or a copy of the materials, call 217-524-2422.

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren unite for monthly Coffee Talk

Grandparents can take a break from child rearing to enjoy visiting with peers and sharing successes and challenges. Fun activities are planned for each “coffee talk.” This group is sponsored by Family Focus Aurora Foster Family Support Project. It is especially for grandparents raising grandchildren regardless of whether you are a guardian, foster parent or adoptive parent. All grandparents who are raising their grandchildren are welcome to attend.

The group meets the last Tuesday of the month from 6 to 8:30 p.m. at 49 E. Downer Place, Basement. Participants should enter through the glass door by the Water St. parking lot behind the building. Dinner is served and childcare is provided. The agency can also arrange transportation within Aurora with one week’s advance notice. For more information call Suyapa Anderson or Liz Rice-Conboy at 630-844-2550.

“McBuddies” Community School Supply Drive starts in August

The McBuddies’ Community School Supply Drive began August 1 and runs through Labor Day. The drive benefits children in Rockford and Harlem districts in grades K-6. The drive does not collect or distribute supplies to middle schools or high schools.

Foster parents of foster or biological children attending a Rockford or Loves Park area school must **inform the school** on Registration Day of the name and grade of children in need of school supplies. Kits will be prepared and distributed through the schools in time for its starting day. The kits for each grade level are different, based on the requirements set by each school. Keep in mind that McDonald’s only collects supplies. The restaurants

do not make decisions on who gets supplies or hand out supplies. The individual schools maintain the lists.

Anyone wishing to donate supplies may drop them off at any McDonald’s in the Rockford or Loves Park area during August. The items to be collected may include:

- Wide Rule Paper
- Blue and Black Pens
- Spiral Notebooks
- Two Pocket Folders
- White School Glue (8 oz.)
- Crayons (8, 16, 24 count)
- #2 Pencils
- Scissors (Blunt and Sharp)
- Rulers
- Washable Markers (Basic Colors)

Oak Park group donates school supplies

The Oak Park Women’s Guild is sending youth back to school with new backpacks filled with all the necessary tools for learning and a few extras. Thanks to donations and some serious shopping, children at Hephzibah Children’s Association will start off the year on equal footing as their classmates. Children who have been abused or stigmatized by being in DCFS care truly appreciate having new supplies of their own. In addition to paper and pencils, a child might also find a new outfit, a stuffed animal or a gift certificate tucked inside the backpack. The bags will be delivered and distributed in August, with enough extras to serve children who may enter the program through out the school year.

Northern News

Regional Reporter

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Anyone can call the regional reporter with foster parent association news and schedules; local training notices; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.

Northern 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* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 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)

College of DuPage Area
630-942-2392

Rock Valley Area
815-921-2301, ext. 2305

Module

AURORA - *Comfort Suites*

Aug. 11 (Thu) & 6:30-9:30 p.m. 2
Aug. 13 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Please call the number listed above for upcoming training dates.

Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hrs.

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.

College of DuPage Area
630-942-2392

Please call the number listed above for upcoming training dates.

Rock Valley Area
815-921-2301, ext. 2305

ROCKFORD Stenstrom Center/RVC
Sept. 10 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Nov. 5 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Tips for dealing with heavy backpacks

- Make sure the backpack weighs no more than 10 percent of the child's body weight.
- The backpack should never hang more than four inches below the waistline. Backpacks that hang too low increase pull on the shoulders.
- Use both shoulder straps. Using only one shifts the child's weight to one side, which can cause neck and lower-back pain.
- Choose a backpack with compartments to pack the contents more effectively, placing the heaviest items nearest the child's body.
- Make sure the backpack has adjustable straps. Wide, padded ones are preferred.
- If the backpack is still too heavy, talk to your child's teachers to see whether other arrangements can be made.

Sited by the American Chiropractic Association in the Rockford Register Star.

