

Lifelong connections stretch to college and beyond

Earlier this year Director Samuels made an announcement about a new “lifetime approach” to caring for youth that entails providing resources and relationships to move young people to success as adults. Van Kaliyan, is a good example of how a foster parent, caseworker and even birth family members can build connections needed to set a firm foundation for life after foster care.

Kaliyan came into DCFS care at the age of 12. Two years later, he came to live with Annie Ratliff as a 14-year-old foster child. She saw him enter high school, helped him through and recently watched him graduate. But it is not over, even as he enters college as a 19-year-old man. He has started taking courses at Southwest Illinois Community College, and she will still keep him “under her wing.” Kaliyan will continue to live with his foster mother, but he is already scouting apartments that will give him independence and keep him close by.

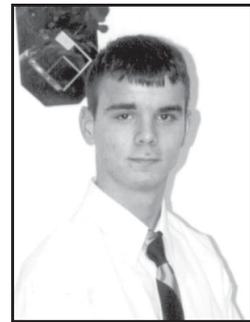
Paula Cobb, his caseworker for the last three years, is also going to stick with him. Together they applied for scholarships and

mapped out a plan for his education. Van made a daunting task easier by graduating from Triad H. S. with and a 3.75 grade point average and Cum Laude distinction. Van will take advantage of the DCFS Youth in College program to handle tuition and other expenses while at the community college. He also earned a scholarship from his church. With financial aid and earnings from his job at Wal-Mart he is sticking to a plan to earn a college degree.

“I haven’t made up my mind yet. But I am interested in teaching at the elementary school level or pursuing a career in architectural design,” said Kaliyan.

Ratliff has no doubt that her foster son will be successful. “He is a focused, responsible and determined young man. He knows how to adapt to circumstances,” she said.

His caseworker has been there to help him through some of the toughest circumstances. She was instrumental in reconnecting Kaliyan to his extended family. It had been many years since he had seen his father or his many siblings. But through Cobb’s



Van Kaliyan

diligent work and Ratliff’s continued support and cooperation he now enjoys healthy and supportive relationships with his birth family. Van recognizes that when he finally establishes himself in an independent living situation the support of his family as well as the agency resources will be invaluable.

Van could easily have fallen through one of the “cracks” in the system. However, his persistence and dedication were echoed by that of his caregiver and caseworker. Through their joint efforts, a classic example of working together as a team, they have succeeded in poising Van on the brink of life-long success.

Mental health and the impact on families

Caring for children with mental health needs can sometimes feel like swimming in a vat of alphabet soup. Whether the child has one diagnosis or a litany of acronyms, caregivers must help youth to cope in many settings. An upcoming conference can help foster parents.

The 3rd Annual Piecing It All Together Conference has the theme *How Children's Mental Health & Mental Illness Affect Family, School and Community*. The conference is scheduled for Friday and Saturday, October 28-29 at The Fountains Conference Center at the Four Points Sheraton, Fairview Heights. The fee is \$50 for Parents/Foster Parents and \$100 for child welfare professionals. Participants can earn continuing education credits towards their foster care licenses/professional licenses.

A full brochure can be mailed to anyone wanting more information about the different speakers/topics. For more information or to receive a brochure, contact Irene Angelou at 618-463-2152 or by email: iangelou@alton.madison.k12.il.us.

Southern Region students earn DCFS college scholarships

Most students head to college with the basic trappings of books, clothes and a calculator. But these students whose cases are handled in Southern Region had a send off that included paid tuition and academic fees at any of the participating Illinois universities and junior colleges, a monthly stipend of \$445 and a medical card for up to four years. The recipients of the 2005 DCFS Scholarship were selected from 218 worthy applicants. Based on their record of academic achievement, their community involvement and personal successes, the young scholars feature below can now focus on their new path toward a college degree.



JESSICA COPELAND

Jessica, of Watseka, is a 2005 graduate of Mt. Vernon Township High

School where she earned a 3.4 grade point average on a 4.0 system and ranked 71 in her class of 309. She participated in volleyball, cheerleading, soccer, tumbling, and HOSA (Health Occupation Students of America). Jessica has worked as a gymnastics instructor at Old Union Recreation Academy and a cashier at Fazoli's. Her extensive volunteer activities include involvement with the United Methodist Children's Home, Relay for Life, soup kitchen and food baskets charities, and volleyball coaching. She now attends Eastern Illinois University, majoring in pre-optometry with plans to eventually become an optometrist.



SHENNELL ROWE

Shennell, of Carbondale, is a 2005 graduate of Carbondale Community

High School where she earned a 3.29 grade point average on a 4.0 system and ranked 99 in her class of 296. Her academic honors included Who's Who Among American High School Students, the Martin Luther King Academic Excellence Award, and the City of Carbondale Excellence Award. While at Carbondale, Shennell was involved with Life-savers, track, basketball, and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and was a freshman mentor. Shennell served as a principal's office assistant, and volunteered at the Boys & Girls Club, the American Heart Walk Association, and her church's blood drive. Now she is a student at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, majoring in business with plans to become an accountant.

Foster and adoptive families celebrate 20 years at DuQuoin Fair

This year marked the 20th anniversary of the annual Foster and Adoptive Families Day at the DuQuoin State Fair. More than 2,000 Southern Illinois families have answered the call to be foster or adoptive parents. Governor Rod R. Blagojevich, Fair Manager John Rednour Jr., the Marion Elks Lodge and DCFS, sponsored the Family Day event to honor these families.

The picnic included food, prizes and entertainment donated by a wide variety of local businesses, community organizations and individuals. Lunch was served by the Marion Elks Club, which also provided game prizes, attendance prizes and nearly half of the free ride armbands given to foster and adoptive youth. Marion Pepsi provided drinks, DuQuoin Ice supplied ice at a discounted rate, and the Marion and West Frankfort McDonald's provided cookies for lunch.

The festive atmosphere included balloons donated by the Party Shop of Herrin, which were passed by clowns from the Whittington Baptist Church. The Mt. Vernon Lions' Club miniature train provided a relaxing ride for the children. Egyptian Mental Health, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, Lutheran Child and Family Services, Catholic Social Services, Family Counseling, and Baptist Children's Home, joined numerous



First Lady Patti Blagojevich, Regional Administrator Bill Peyton, and the Illinois County Fair Queen were on hand to congratulate foster parents Vernon and Arlene Coffey on their award for outstanding service.

individuals and organizations in providing prizes and services. More than 65 DCFS and private agency staff volunteered to serve families at the picnic.

This year, families benefited from a "bicycle challenge". DCFS offices, private agencies and individuals responded to the call to purchase new bikes for kids. These bikes were distributed to children who attended the fair. Along with the bicycles, children also received other gifts and certificates.

"The State Fair picnic experience is a great way for DCFS to show its thanks to the families who have opened their homes to children who need their love and protection, as well as to recruit new foster and adoptive families," said Director Samuels.

Upcoming local regional council meetings

The Southern Region Foster Care Advisory Council has recently developed a system of satellite meetings in local field offices that encourage interaction between foster parents and DCFS staff as a means of improving the Region's implementation of the Law. Input and information gathered at these meetings will be used when the Implementation plan for 2006 has prepared later this year.

The remaining local meetings are scheduled for:

- Oct 20 @ 10:00 a.m. Anna FO
- Oct 26 @ 1:00 p.m. Alton FO

OUR KIDS

Sponsor

Bill Peyton, DCFS Southern Regional Administrator

Regional Reporter

Michael Bollman
DCFS Reporter/Editor
10251 Lincoln Trail
Fairview Hts., IL 62208
Phone: 618-394-2100
Fax: 618-394-2123

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.

Southern Region Training

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)

Marion
618-536-7751

East St. Louis
618-650-3213

Module

Module

MT. VERNON - DCFS
Sept. 20, 27 9 a.m.-12 p.m. 4
October 4 (Tue)

FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS - Ramada Inn
Sept. 19 & 26 6:30-9:30 p.m. 9
(Mon)

Non-PRIDE In-Service Training

Marion
618-536-7751

East St. Louis
618-650-3213

What you Really Need to Know About IEP's
(One 2.5 hour session=2.5 training credit hours)

Marion - State Office Building
Nov. 8 (Tue) 6- 8:30 p.m.

Children's Mental Health Issues
There will be one workshop in each of the 11 LANs in the southern region. Topics will address Children's Mental Health Issues. Dates and Locations TBA. For registration information contact Kay Teel, LAN Liaison at 618-244-8439.

Substance Abuse and the Effects on Children (Chestnut Health Services)
(One two-hour session=2 training credit hours)

Alton - DCFS Office
October 3 (Mon) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Belleville - Location TBA
October 10 (Mon) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Children's Mental Health Issues
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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.

Marion
618-536-7751

MARION **State Office Building**
Nov. 12 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

MT. VERNON **DCFS Office**
Sept. 24 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

East St. Louis
618-650-3213

BELLEVILLE Catholic Social Service
Sept. 7 & 14 (Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.
December 3 & 10 (Sat) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS DCFS Office
Oct. 8 & 15 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Nov. 3 & 10 (Thur) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

WOOD RIVER DCFS Office
Nov. 8 & 15 (Tue) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

**Pre-registration
is required for all
classes!**

**Call the number
listed for your area.**