

Foster care starts a brand new story after retiring

Four years ago, at the age of 63, Barbara Anderson discovered her calling. She says providing foster care and adoption feels like something she could have been doing all her life. This new chapter in her life story opened when retirement and the loss of both her husband and son brought her back to Springfield after 40 years away. She thought she was moving to be closer to family. She didn't know that she would be building a new family for herself.

With time on her hands and space in her home, Anderson found herself looking for new challenges. While child welfare was a new path for her, serving was not. Anderson had been a volunteer at a homeless shelter. She also spent years as the manager

of advocacy, focusing on legislative work to help people with disabilities live independently. After a lifetime of advocacy spent managing her own disability, she decided to use her professional skills and personal determination to advocate for children as a foster parent.

In the past four years, eight children have come to her home, some staying as long as three years. Currently there are four children in her family. She has guardianship of one, and adopted another. Her son through adoption came to her as a 15-year-old, having multiple disabilities. Two years later they finalized the adoption and recently celebrated his 18th birthday.

"The kids are the rewards. With hard work and patience, you can see the positive results. You just need to give them time to heal," said Anderson.

Add to time some active advocacy, and things can really turn around. Anderson says one of her boys could have been described as "wild" when he arrived. It turned out that his medication was missing the mark. She says once they got that straightened out, he has been great. Still it isn't easy, and she has been through a lot with her kids. She recognizes that they can be bundles of complex emotions. She knows how important it is to be there to



Barbara Anderson

pay attention to their feelings and deal with those feelings.

Once the kids get the basics down, Anderson turns their focus to the bigger picture goals. She wants her children to know that there are aspects of life that go beyond the present time. She has them involved in clothing drives that serve homeless individuals. She helps them develop a spiritual awareness as well. Anderson is Jewish, but the children she is caring for are Christian. Still, "for an old Jewish woman, I do a great job on Christmas and Easter."

While she discovered this new mission later than some, her dreams are like those of most parents. She wants to see her kids healthy, happy, enjoying life and striving to be the best at whatever they do.

Central Connections

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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.

Central Region students earn DCFS college scholarships

The 2009 DCFS Scholarship program sent 12 students, whose cases were served by programs in the Central Region, to college with several added layers of support. The scholarship includes the waiver of tuition and mandatory fees at one of the nine Illinois state universities or at one of the Illinois junior colleges, a monthly maintenance grant of \$471 and a medical card.

Scholarship recipients were chosen statewide on the basis of scholastic aptitude, a written personal statement and demonstrated community involvement. Next year's scholarship application process begins in January and ends in March. Contact the youth's caseworker or the DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959 for more information.



Jenitra Cannon

Jenitra is a 2009 graduate of Urbana High School where she earned a 4.875 grade point average on a 5.0 scale. Jenitra was an active member of the Minority Enrichment Program throughout her high school career. She also participated in the School Musical, the African American Club, Honor's Choir, the Executive Internship Program and the Principal Scholars Program/Step Up. She is a member of the National Honor Society, the Delta-Sigma-Theta Sorority, and Sociedad Honoria Hispanica. Jenitra is a student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, considering a degree in the psychology or social work.



Lakeshia Carhee

Lakeshia, formerly of Springfield, is a 2008 graduate of Mansfield High School in Louisiana, where she earned a 3.86 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. In high school, Lakeshia was a member of the volleyball team, cross country team, Prom Committee, Student Council, SADD, MHS Pawprint, 4-H, Future Business Leaders of America, and the National Beta Club. She has volunteered her time to the Class Act Community Center, Fast Tax and the Desoto Parish Library. Lakeshia also maintained employment at the local Chamber of Commerce and Bartholomew's Benefit Agency. Lakeshia now attends the University of Louisiana and majors in radiology technology.



Erica Duprey

Erica is a 2009 graduate of Danville Christian Academy where she earned a 3.6 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. In high school, Erica participated in volleyball, soccer, vocal music, and

piano. She also was part of a local singing group titled "Impact". She achieved recognition on both the Honor Roll and High Honors and earned awards in solo and ensemble contests. Erica is studying at Eastern Illinois University with a major in elementary education.

Jordan Gill

Jordan, who previously lived in Danville, is a 2009 graduate of Haywood High School in Brownsville, Tennessee. There she earned a 3.50 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and scored a 28 on her ACT exam. She was a member of the Distinguished Scholars Program at her high school and the National Society of High School Scholars. She also participated in the People to People Student Ambassador Program at Duke University and the JROTC Color Guard, Unarmed Drill Team, and Armed Drill Team. Jordan volunteered her time by assisting and transporting the elderly, working as a library aid, and participating in various community projects. Jordan attends the University of Alabama, majoring in computer engineering.



Danae Hennig

Danae graduated from Macomb Senior High School in 2009 where she earned a 3.151 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. She was an honor roll student and member of the French National Honor Society. She plays trumpet and performed in the marching band, pep band, jazz band and ensemble throughout high school. Danae was also the secretary of the Ecology Club and a member of the Interact Club. She is very committed to volunteer work and some projects have included the Park District Tot Program, McDonough Hospital, and work as a Sunday school teacher. Danae is now enrolled at Western Illinois University.



Elijah Joyner

Elijah, of Decatur, is a 2008 graduate of Eisenhower High School, where he earned a 3.14 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. He has worked at the Homework Hangout, Clares Family Restaurant and McDonald's. He volunteered as a tutor at the Decatur Boys and Girls Club and at the Living Word Evangelical Ministries as a drummer and usher. He received the Richland Community College Minority Award for maintaining a 3.0 or above GPA in college level classes in 2007 and 2008. Elijah initially studied at the Morrison Institute of Technology then recently transferred to Richland Community College where he is studying drafting.



Ina Patterson

Ina graduated from Champaign Central High School where she earned a 4.791 on a 5.0 scale. She was on the Honor Roll each year, a member of the National Honor Society, a Delta Sigma Theta Academic Award winner and a three-year academic letter winner. While in high school, she participated in: Interact Club, Peer Jury, Students for a Better World, African American Club, Nia Nation and AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program. Ina attends the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and is studying community health.



Gabriela Rosado-Rubio

Gabriela, from Manlius, is a 2009 graduate of Bureau Valley High School where she earned a 3.5 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. In high school, Gabriela was a member of the National Honor Society, Spanish Club officer, served as Sophomore, Junior, and Senior Class president, played softball all four years, and was on the newspaper and yearbook staff. She was an active volunteer in her community and church while maintaining part-time employment. Gabriela is attending Loyola University to study nursing.



Acey Settle

Acey is a 2009 graduate of Greenview High School where she earned a 3.72 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and achieved a 25 on her ACT. She was active in her high school as a member of the National Honor Society, yearbook staff, Future

Farmers of America, 4-H, and was recognized by Rep. Rich Brauer as an Illinois State Scholar in her junior and senior year. Acey also participated in athletics, including volleyball, cheerleading, and track, where she was awarded Student Athlete of the Month. Outside of school, she volunteered at local nursing homes in Lincoln. Acey is now studying at the University of Illinois in Springfield and wishes to pursue a career in chemistry and as a Certified Nursing Assistant.



Michael Spencer

Michael is a 2009 graduate of Douglas MacArthur High School in Decatur. He earned a 3.8 GPA on a 4.0 scale, and a 24 on his ACT. He received the AP Scholar Award, was Student Council and Intra-City Council President, Teen Court juror, co-captain of the Scholastic Bowl, and founder of the MacArthur Gay-Straight Alliance. Michael now attends the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and is studying pre-law, agricultural law and public policy.



Nicholas Stucker

Nicholas, from Onarga, is a 2009 graduate of Iroquois West High School where he earned a 3.3 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. He was on the honor roll, a member of the Track and Field team and the Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). He also maintained two part-time jobs. Nicholas is attending Kankakee Community College, with plans to transfer to Southern Illinois University. He wants to pursue a career in graphic design and game art.

Phillip Woods

Phillip, of Decatur, graduated from Eisenhower High School where he earned a 3.87 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and ranked 17th in a class of 208. He was a member of the National Honor Society, placed High Honor Roll all four years, and was an active athlete on the school and YMCA basketball teams. Phillip volunteered for the American Red Cross and as a math tutor for the Homework Hangout. He participated in the 2008 Congressional Student Leadership Conference and the Jobs for Illinois Graduates (JILG) program. Phillip is majoring in pre-medicine at Southern Illinois University.



Central Region Caregiver Training

Foster PRIDE In-Service Modules

All caregivers are welcome to attend PRIDE In-Service Training. The descriptions below will allow you to decide which classes fit your family's needs or circumstances. Advance registration is required for all classes. In addition to the slate of classroom courses, caregivers can also take advantage of Digital Pride modules on CD and the full offering of Lending Library materials.

For the most up-to-date and complete schedule information for classes offered in your area, visit the on-line Virtual Training Center anytime at www.DCFStraining.org or call the DCFS Office of Training at 877-800-3393 during regular business hours.

Module 1 - Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children at Risk (12 training hours)

This module focuses on building self-esteem in children. It will cover how kids act when they need recognition, power, freedom, enjoyment, and a feeling of belonging. Caregivers will learn how to listen to what kids say and not what we think they say.

Module 2 - Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs (9 training hours)

This workshop provides practical information to foster parents about how to use effective discipline techniques such as I-messages, natural and logical consequences, time out and how to catch kids being "good" and what to do to encourage positive behavior.

Module 3 & 4 - The Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse (9 training hours)

Participants learn to differentiate normal from problematic sexual behaviors in children and youth, signs and symptoms of sexual abuse and ways to help sexually abused children recover.

Module 5 - Supporting Relationships between Children and Their Families (9 training hours)

This training focuses on helping foster parents learn how to help kids attach to caregivers and at the same time stay loyal to birth families. Caregivers learn about how to prepare and support children for and after visits with the birth family and how to share the parenting role with birth parents.

Module 6 - Working as a Professional Team Member (9 training hours)

Foster parents learn what everyone's role is on the team, when and how to be an advocate for children, what conflict is and

their own personal style for managing it, and how conflict can be a "win - win" situation for everyone involved.

Module 7 - Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity (6 training hours)

Culture includes traditions, values, customs and history. What "culture" means to a child's self-esteem, how to manage cultural diversity in a foster home, how to discuss sensitive issues with children and how to help a child record his or her history are topics covered in this module.

Module 8 - Promoting Permanency Outcomes (9 training hours)

The focus of this training is on families who have children in care and supporting reunification of the children and parents.

Module 9 - Managing the Impact of Placement on Your Family (6 training hours)

In this training, caregivers learn how fostering children can affect family relationships and how to minimize stresses that can result. They also learn about the supports that are available.

Module 10 - Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children and Families (15 training hours)

Foster parents will study the risk factors for chemical use, abuse, and dependency and understand relapse and recovery and be able to acquire skills necessary to be an active member of the team to support recovery in birth parents.

Module 12 - Understanding and Promoting Preteen and Teen Development (6 training hours)

This new course will assist caregivers to identify developmentally appropriate ways

to best promote healthy development for preteens and teens who have experienced abuse, neglect and trauma. This six-hour module will help foster/adopt caregivers to understand teen brain development and the impact of trauma and loss on preteens and teens. Participants will learn specific strategies that caregivers can use when fostering teenagers in the day to day life of the foster family.

The Teen in Foster Care: Supporting Attachment (6 training hours)

Attachment and the Teen in Family Foster Care will help foster/adopt caregivers to understand how early attachment experiences have impacted the teen's development. The training covers the teen's perspective on how the accumulation of loss, separation and trauma impacts his or her beliefs, feelings, behaviors and relationships. Participants will learn specific tips for helping manage behaviors that develop over time from the teen's adaptive responses to trauma, grief and loss.

Educational Advocacy

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.