

Foster care therapist takes work home as a caregiver, too

The idea of foster care came to Michelle Baker largely because of her hands-on experience as a foster care therapist for Catholic Charities. She saw the need for foster parents and also felt the need to have her own family. Since she and her husband Tom had not been able to have children, doing foster care seemed to be the logical solution. As fate would have it, right after the first child arrived at their home, Michelle found out that she was pregnant. However, this did not prevent the Bakers from continuing to foster. Then, right after the second child came for foster care, Michelle found out that she was pregnant again. In the six years that they have done foster care, the Bakers have adopted a son and will be adopting siblings soon. With two children by birth, their household will be close to full.

The Bakers continued as foster parents with Catholic Charities, but Michelle is now working with the Antioch Group. She is a child therapist who specializes in attachment disorder, adopted children's issues and substance abuse. While her professional background definitely helps, the Bakers acknowledge that each child that comes into care is different. The rewards come from seeing the children's growth and how they work through changes. The Bakers



reflect on their oldest child who was almost four when he came to them. He had many issues due to trauma. He worked hard to make positive changes and received much support from different people. Now at nine, it is difficult to see the problems they were first facing.

"Fostering means unconditional love, consistency, patience and structure as kids will test you, said Michelle. "If a child comes into your home, you treat them as if they were your own. We have treated every child equally with our own children."

The Bakers stress the need to get the children involved in sports and

other activities. Tom works with children as a Cub Scout den leader. They also had this recommendation for foster and adoptive parents: Take time for yourself so you don't burn out. Michelle believes a caregiver should take a look at the situation every six months to see whether you have made any progress.

"You need to remember the issues that the child came with and then you will likely be able to say 'I have seen progress,'" she said.

She noted that change will not happen overnight and that children with traumatic backgrounds often don't trust adults. It will take time to develop trust and a relationship.

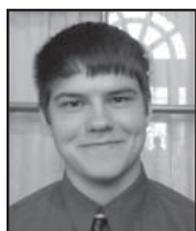
Central Region sends 8 students to college with DCFS scholarships

This year, eight students whose cases were served by programs in Central Region headed to college with the benefits included in the DCFS Scholarship program. The scholarship includes the waiver of tuition and mandatory fees at one of the nine Illinois state universities or Illinois junior colleges, a monthly maintenance grant of \$471 and a medical card. Scholarship recipients were chosen from among 250 applicants 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.

Kara Atkins (photo unavailable)

Kara is a 2010 graduate of Centennial High School in Champaign, where she earned a 3.67 GPA on a 4.0 scale. While in high school, she earned two academic letters for her high grade point average and two Senior of the Month awards. She was also a member of the Mu Alpha Theta Math Honors Society. Kara participated in fundraising events for Centennial High School alumni who were battling cancer and routinely tutored classmates who were struggling in math. Kara now attends Eastern Illinois University, where she majors in early childhood/elementary education.



Cody Baker

Cody graduated from Shelbyville High School. He participated on the golf, cross country, basketball, and baseball teams. Cody was also active on the Student Council, homecoming committee, prom committee, and in the Scholastic Bowl. He earned a 3.29 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Outside of school, Cody volunteered at his church for Vacation Bible School and Sunday School, the Red Cross Blood Drive, Relay for Life, and Boy Scouts. Cody graduated mid-term from high school and completed one term at Lake Land Community College. Next, he plans to transfer to Southern Illinois University to pursue a degree in business.



Kaitlyn Ellis

Kaitlyn is a 2010 graduate of Macomb High School where she earned a 3.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Kaitlyn participated in the Art Club, Anime Club and Student Council during high school. She achieved Honor Roll and High Honor Roll recognition and received the Principal's Award twice. She is also very active with a

local dance academy and was selected to perform in the annual Nutcracker ballet. She volunteered at the local Salvation Army Store, where her commitment and work ethic led to a paid employment position. Now she is studying at Western Illinois University, majoring in history education.



Jakob Francis

Jakob graduated from Pekin Community High School. In high school, Jakob participated in football, basketball, track, and baseball. He achieved recognition for best defensive player in basketball. He was a four-year member of the Honor Roll and graduated with a 3.3 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Outside of school, Jakob consistently volunteered with summer basketball and football camps for young children, for youth group activities at his church, and for annual food distributions in his community. He is now a student at Illinois Central College with plans to major in biology with a focus on orthopedics.



Elizabeth Freeman

Elizabeth is a 2010 graduate of Quincy Senior High School where she earned a 3.42 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Elizabeth participated on the golf and basketball teams and in Key Club and Natural Helpers while in high school. Elizabeth earned numerous golf awards, including being named Western Big 6 All Conference, the Scholastic Athlete Award, and Most Improved Player. She also was named to the Honor Roll consistently throughout high school. Elizabeth's volunteer activities include assisting in the office at the local YWCA and serving as a dog walker and caretaker for the local Humane Society. She now attends Western Illinois University, majoring in forensic chemistry.



Jessica Richey

Jessica graduated from Marshall High School, where she earned a 3.6 out of 4.0 GPA. In high school, she was a four-year member of the track team and chorus. She also participated in Drama Club, German Club, and

Interact, which is a community service organization that works with a local elementary school. Additionally, for three years Jessica held two jobs, working at a local nursing home and McDonald's. She is now studying at Eastern Illinois University where she plans to major in science.



Tessa Stephens

Tessa is a 2010 graduate of Pontiac Township High School. She earned a 3.0 GPA on a four-point scale. She stayed active in several community activities. She volunteered at the local Boys and Girls Club and received the

Youth of the Year Award. She was involved with Relay for Life for five years and volunteered with a homeless shelter. She also worked at her family's restaurant for five years. Tessa attends Illinois State University. She looks forward to drawing from her own life experiences to help and encourage youth in foster care.



Steven Dean Tyler

Steven, from Peoria, is a 2010 graduate of El Vista Baptist Academy where he earned a 4.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. He is very involved with his church, where he was employed and also volunteered to help parishioners.

He tutored three younger students at El Vista and provided transportation for a special needs child to an after-school program. Academically, Steven was on the Honor Roll every year since first grade. He enjoys playing soccer and basketball and has received awards for his achievements in baseball. Steven is now studying at Illinois Central College in Peoria where he will major in nursing.

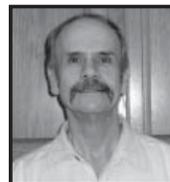


Foster caregivers joined the Rock Island Recruitment, Development and Support (RDS) group for its yearly training. RDS is a collaboration of Bethany for Children, Catholic Charities, DCFS, and Lutheran Social Services.

This year the committee decided to do the six-hour relative training as an in-person class to make it easier for relatives to get licensed. That day relatives could also get fingerprinting and adult physicals taken care of. Childcare was provided by staff, and more than 50 caregivers attended.

Central Connections

Sponsor
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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 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 covers 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 team members' roles, 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 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 assists 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 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.