

Fourth time is a charm for Denham boys' adoptions

Kim and Robin Denham grew up in the Alton area. Both enjoy fishing, camping and other outdoor activities. They had hopes of sharing their love for the outdoors with children – lots of children since they both came from large, extended families. After several disappointing years of trying to conceive, they grew to accept not being parents.

Then, through a family friend they learned of a sibling group of four brothers that possibly might be freed for adoption. The boys were split up in foster care and were in four separate homes. Kim and Robin had never considered foster care or adoption as a way to build a family, but as they considered this option their excitement grew. They knew that this could be a way for them to build a family, and possibly help keep these four brothers together.

Kim and Robin decided to go through training and in August of 2000 they received their license. They began pre-placement visits with the youngest child, Michael, who was placed with them in January of 2003, when he was two. The Denhams began hosting sibling visits and getting to know

the other boys. Soon it became their goal to have all four of the boys with them.

The process was not as easy as it sounded. The boys had many relationship issues and their problems were more than just sibling rivalry. However, the Denhams were committed to making this work. All of the boys eventually came to live with them. Mac was 11 years old when he arrived, Thomas was seven, and Joe was 11 when he joined his brothers. Kim and Robin thought they were well prepared to handle the challenges of parenthood. It did not take long to realize that there is no such thing as ready. In addition to the problems the boys had relating to each other, there were academic issues and behavior problems. They had many hurdles to cross and lots of adjustments, along with disappointments.

Joe failed the seventh grade and had to repeat it. At one point, Mac's behavior became so out of control he had to be temporarily placed in another home. Still, through it all, the Denhams kept focused on making a family with the boys. After working closely with their caseworker, Mac



Julie and Robin Denham adopted four brothers who had been separated in foster care.

returned to their home. Joe made the honor roll the following school year.

The last brother's adoption was finalized on December 23, 2005. All four have continued to blossom as part of the Denham family. And for Robin and Kim, adopting this sibling group completed their family.

"They're not perfect," Kim said, "They still have some issues, but now we deal with it as a family. Our children know that they've got a home and there will be no more moving to another family."

Central Region students earn DCFS college scholarships

Most students head to college with the basic supplies, including books, clothes and a calculator. But some students whose cases are handled in Central 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 \$458 and a medical card for up to four years. The recipients of the 2007 DCFS Scholarship were selected from more than 200 worthy applicants. Based on their record of academic achievement, their community involvement and personal successes, the young scholars featured below can now focus on their new path toward a college degree.



Mallory Bingham

Mallory, from Bartonville, graduated from Limestone Community High School. She obtained a 3.8 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and is ranked 40th in her class of 237. Her high school activities included color guard, softball, and competitive cheerleading. She was also a member of the National Honor Society. Mallory attends Illinois Central College, where she is majoring in nursing.



Sabrina Owens

Sabrina, from Bloomington, is a graduate of Tri-Valley High School where she obtained a 3.35 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and scored 24 on her ACT exam. In high school she was involved in Key Club, Tipps, SADD, Spanish Club, Gold Rush, softball, basketball and the Homecoming planning committee. She also served as a Teacher's Assistant. Sabrina's numerous volunteer activities included mission trips to St. Louis, Atlanta and Mexico, as well as service in the Bloomington/Normal area. She volunteered with Walk for Life, Relay for Life, Easter Seals, and Habitat for Humanity. Sabrina is currently studying youth ministry at Anderson University.

Christina Richards

Christina, from Macomb, graduated from Macomb High School. She achieved a 3.84 grade point average on a 4.0 scale as well as a 31 on her ACT exam. Her academic honors included a 2nd place finish in state competition with the math team. She was a member of the French National Honor Society and was on

the Honor Roll. Christina was recognized as an Illinois State Scholar as well as a Junior Rotarian. Her volunteer experiences included reading for the blind with Tri-States Informational Services, serving as an office assistant with Alternatives for Older Adults and working in the gift shop at McDonough District Hospital. Christina also received numerous sports awards including Miss Hustle, Most Improved and Most Dedicated for the track team. She was a three-time State Qualifier in track. She was voted Most Improved for the tennis team. She is now a student at Calvin College, planning to focus on mathematics or science.



Kathryn Tamburini

Kathryn, from Clinton, is a graduate of Clinton High School where she obtained a 3.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and scored a 25 on her ACT exam. Her high school activities included theater, cheerleading, powder puff football and working in the school office. She also volunteered with the DeWitt County Human Resource Center, Beta Sigma Phi and Teen Reach. Kathryn is studying chemistry at Illinois State University.

Katalina Vercler

Katalina, from Washington, graduated from Washington Community High School where she obtained a 3.43 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was ranked 65th in her class of 252. While in high school, she was involved in soccer, Key Club and Book Buddies. She was a competitive barrel racer and was on the Honor Roll. She now attends Parkland College to study veterinary technology.

Partnering with Parents Information Fair

Central Region hosted parents who have children in DCFS care at the Partnering with Parents Information Fair, held on June 28 in Champaign. Regional staff developed the event with support from the Division of Clinical Services and Professional Development, Office of Foster Parent Support Services.

The information fair was non-stop activity from 3:00 in the afternoon until 7:00 in the evening. The success of the event turned on frank open discussion. Presentations included:

- *Love and Logic*, explaining effective techniques to encourage positive behavior from children.
- *Creating Your Village*, offering three parents now successfully raising their children again an opportunity to share ideas to help other parents.
- *Creative Paths to Healing*, describing the benefits of music and play as therapeutic means to building stronger families.

After the formal presentations, parents stopped at the information tables where representatives from numerous community organizations waited to be of service. This made for one-stop shopping for information on topics including supports for housing, health care, education, home safety, and other resources. Regional Administrator Bob Blackwell and managers from DCFS made themselves available to answer questions and problem-solve. Additionally, some



Youth "praise dancers" added a joyful note to the Partnering with Parents Information Fair.

foster parents attended the event so they could also be involved in Partnering with Parents. At the end of the evening the praise dancers from Mount Pisgah church made sure everyone left on a high note.

As an offshoot to the event, the Central Region is developing a Parenting with Parents Council, where parents and staff work together on family issues. For more information on Partnering with Parents in Champaign, contact Maria Miller at 217/278-5500.

The Partnering with Parents initiative is designed to engage parents in a teamwork approach to better serve families. Leadership for this statewide program is provided by the DCFS Division of Clinical Services and Professional Development.

Foster care alum receives hero's memorial

Danville residents lined the streets and packed the chapel to remember Army Specialist Frank Trussell, Jr. His former foster parents, classmates and family members passed under an arch made by two fire truck ladders as they honored his life given in service. Trussell, a tank operator was 21 when he was killed in Tahrir, Iraq on May 26.

Trussell graduated from Deland-Weldon high in 2003. He studied art at Lincoln College and then joined the Army in 2005, because he felt driven to serve his country.

DCFS Caseworker Jim Leeds recalled the troubled teen who, after nearly his entire life in foster care, turned things around. He made a career and started a family with wife, Jodi, and two sons.

"He is a hometown hero...I was proud to work with this boy. Maybe this is the reason we show up everyday to do our jobs," said Leeds.

Lt. Governor Pat Quinn attended the service and said of Trussell, "his sons will know their dad was a special American."

Central Region Training Calendar

Foster PRIDE In-Service Modules

All caregivers are welcome to attend PRIDE In-Service Training. Advance registration is required.

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.

Urbana *Webber Street Christian Church*
 Oct. 4, 11 & 18 (Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Module 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.

Springfield *Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church*
 Oct. 2, 9 & 16 (Tue) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

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 and the supports that are available.

LaSalle/Peru *Catholic Charities*
 Nov. 3 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

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.

Child Trauma

4 training hrs.

This four-hour course helps caregivers recognize the signs of trauma and understand how to work with children who have experienced traumatic events.

Beardstown *Super-8*
 Nov. 3 (Sat) 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Bloomington *Eastland Suites*
 Dec. 1 (Sat) 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Peoria *Proctor Hospital*
 Nov. 3 (Sat) 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

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.

Charleston *Coles County Center for Human Services*
 Oct. 18 & 25 (Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Decatur *Webster Cantrell Hall*
 Oct. 2 & 9 (Tue) 6-9 p.m.

Normal *BabyFold*
 Oct. 18 & 25 (Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Urbana *Webber Street Christian Church*
 Nov. 12 & 19 (Mon) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Peoria *Children's Home Asso.*
 Oct. 9 & 11 (Tue/Thu) 6-9 p.m.

Springfield *Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church*
 Oct. 29 & Nov. 5 (Mon) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Caregivers must register to attend any of these training classes.

Call the DCFS Office of Training

877-800-3393
toll free