

Taylors turn to foster care for the next chapter of parenting

Seventeen-year foster and adoptive parents Carl and Hatti Taylor say they have a lot to be thankful for. They gave birth to five children, all boys, and then adopted the first boy who came to them for foster care. Many more children have been long-term placements with them— some as long as four years. Currently, they are caring for a brother and sister.

Foster care played a role in Carl's life even before starting his own family. His mother, who was a foster parent, encouraged Carl and Hattie to do foster care, and they have no regrets. In fact, they consider it a blessing. They found it to be the perfect prescription for the "empty nest syndrome" after their boys grew up and left home.

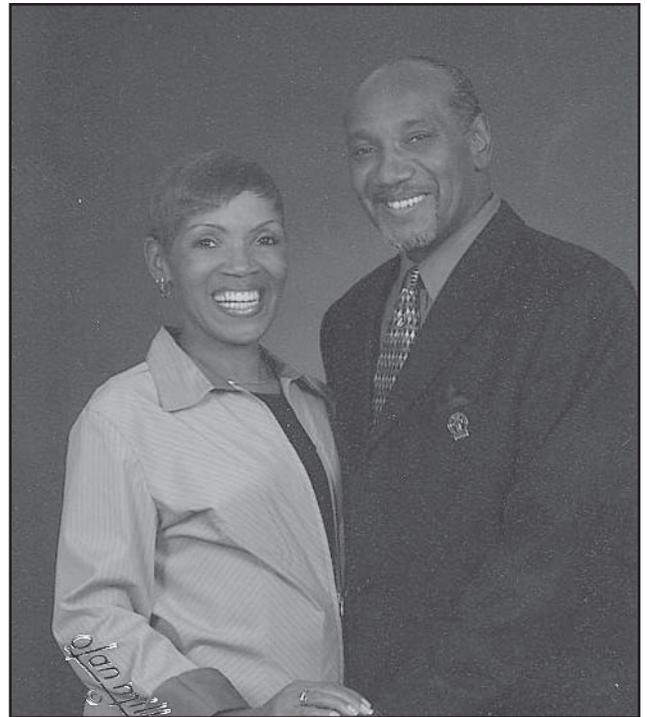
Even though they love having children in their home, the real joy for the Taylors is seeing children return home to a healthy family. They do acknowledge that the closer the time comes for a child leave, the greater is the challenge. Children's emotions are running wild, and for the caregiver it means more issues and more discipline. For Hatti, sometimes the greatest struggle is after a family visit when the child comes back and is acting out their emotions. It can seem like two steps backwards from the progress that had been made. But,

to get to the goal, "that is something you just deal with."

In 17 years they have dealt with much. Most foster parents or parents come up against with a child who doesn't cooperate at bedtime. Carl remembers one eight-year-old boy who reacted to bedtime as if his mission in life was to stay awake

"He was very stubborn at nighttime," Carl said. "He would cry and put holes in the walls because he didn't want to go to bed."

Since the bedroom walls were starting to look like Swiss cheese, Carl decided a one-on-one chat with the boy was needed. Together they took a walk outside one evening and while talking, the boy quieted down as Carl explained where all the unfamiliar nighttime sounds came from. Carl suggested that the walls had taken enough pounding and that they could put up a pad in the garage if he needed to hit out his anger. The little



After raising five boys, Hatti and Carl Taylor find foster care fulfilling. They especially enjoy doing reunification foster care.

guy was still concerned about the sounds, but was convinced enough to try sleeping. Just talking it out, offering some explanation and presenting options seemed to solve the problem.

The Taylors recommend that foster and adoptive parents be patient and listen to the kids.

"Remember that no matter what, love and prayer will help you out. The family that prays together," Hatti said, "stays together."

Parent Cafés offer support to families

The Strengthening Families Illinois program is an initiative designed to prevent child abuse and neglect. It brings together early childhood center staff, parents, child welfare agencies and others to strengthen families that have young children. At the heart of the program are Parent Cafés, where parents can talk freely about the challenges of raising children and also find support among their peers.

Parent Cafés are a vehicle for parents to have their own conversations about keeping their families strong. The Parent Cafés are a safe place for parents to discuss with other parents how to deal with stressors in their lives. They also learn about resources in the community. Parent Cafés allow parents to ask questions and explore ways in which to help them be strong parents for their children.

Parent Cafés of McLean County is a collaboration between McLean County Health Department, The Baby Fold, Children's Home+Aid, Heartland Headstart, Noah's Ark Preschool, and Western Avenue Community Center. Free child care and dinner are available with reservations for the Parent Cafés.

Contact Maureen Sollars at 309-888-5539 or 309-557-1065 to reserve a spot at an upcoming café. Find more information on the program at the Web site strengtheningfamiliesillinois.org.

Transition Manager Gail Simpson works with Central Region youth to prepare for adulthood

Gail Simpson, one of five DCFS Transition Managers, is responsible for providing information to Central Region youth as they transition out of care onto the path to adulthood. She also shares information with workers, foster caregivers and others, regarding the various programs available through the DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services.

Several important youth programs have recently been enhanced. The Life Skills Program was revamped to include recommendations of the youth advisory board youth. Youth at age 14 should begin the process by taking the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment. From there they can receive an individualized life skills learning plan.

The Department has also expanded oversight of the Pregnant and Parenting Teen Program. Youth in care (both male and female) who are pregnant and/or parenting have a right to specific services. Providers are ready to show them how to improve their parenting skills. Caseworkers are receiving

additional training so they can better serve these youth.

Additionally, all youth between 14 and 21 can participate in a Youth Advisory Board. The Downstate Central Region Youth Advisory Board, which hosts monthly meetings, promotes youth empowerment, self-advocacy and information exchange. Anyone interested in learning more should contact Leshonda Rogers at Primed for Life 217-789-2980.

In addition to these programs Simpson can also help youth with school matters, the DCFS scholarship program and employment opportunities. She can be reached at 217-524-2525 or at gail.simpson@illinois.gov. More information on transition resources is at the Web site www.youthincare.illinois.gov.



Gail Simpson

Bloomington staff grant families' holiday wishes



Staff in the Bloomington offices pooled their own resources and volunteered time to sponsor an Angel Tree for foster families. Staff shopped for and wrapped up gifts for foster families served by the Bloomington field office.

Thanks to the Angel Tree caregivers had help in granting at least two wishes from every child's list.



Caregivers learn about policies and have their say at advisory council

All caregivers are encouraged to attend the foster care advisory council meetings that are held throughout the Central Region. There are both in-person meetings headed by Robert Blackwell, the Central Region Administrator, and teleconferences where caregivers can connect from the convenience of their own phone. The advisory council meetings provide a means for caregivers to keep up to date on new developments and to have a platform to address issues and concerns.

Julie Cebulski, a Champaign-area Foster Parent Support Specialist, attended the October 26th meeting in the Champaign/Urbana DCFS field office. Cebulski, who also represents Central Region on the statewide advisory council, reported that the in-person meeting was one of the best she had attended. The discussion covered relative foster care and children's rights for permanency. Cebulski felt everyone was able to express himself and have his or her concerns addressed.

In-person evening meetings will be held around the 50 counties that make up the Central Region. The region will send postcards to both DCFS and private agency foster parents in the area before the meeting.

The focus of these meetings is to have discussion with local area caregivers; identify strengths of the foster care system; and make suggestions on how to overcome the weaknesses. These meetings are designed to discuss issues within the system as a whole and not to deal with individual, case-specific problems. Registration information will be available on the postcards.

To participate in any or all of the teleconference calls, caregivers can call the Central Region Foster Care Help Line at 1-866-368-5204. They will receive a call-in number and pass code. Agendas for the calls will be available shortly before each call. The goal of the calls is to give caregivers an opportunity to hear about DCFS programs, upcoming events and changes in policies and procedures.

Feb. 16, 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. teleconference May 12, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. Peoria

March 16, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. Springfield June 29, 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. teleconference

April 20, 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. teleconference

Education Outreach Program ready to help students in Normal

The Education Outreach Program at The Baby Fold in Normal is a program that serves youth ages 10-18 in Unit 5 or District 87 schools. The program seeks to engage students who are exhibiting social, emotional, and/or behavioral problems impacting negatively on school performance. It strives to promote school safety, positive relationships, and avoid delinquency.

The services offered include tutoring; teaching organization skills, social skills, positive reinforcement and behavior intervention strategies at school and at home; advocating at school; and visiting the client's family. Referrals are accepted from school personnel, parents/guardians, DCFS personnel, and community agencies involved with the youth. The Education Outreach program does not serve students who currently have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). For more information or to refer a student contact Kayla Lefler at 309-557-1065 or klefler@thebabyfold.org.

School help in other areas of Central Region

There are similar programs for youth living in the other LANs in Central Region. For more information on local resources contact one of the DCFS LAN Liaisons. These services are open to all families, including foster, adoptive and guardianship families.

Champaign area: Lisa Massa
217-278-5400 E-mail: lisa.massa@illinois.gov

Springfield area: Kip Smith
217-854-2566 E-mail: kip.smith@illinois.gov

Peoria and Quincy areas: Greg Hixon
217-779-2522 E-mail: greg.hixon@illinois.gov



Central Region Caregiver Training

For the most up-to-date and complete schedule information, 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. In addition to the slate of classroom courses, caregivers can take advantage of these other options.

Learning and credit hour earning options outside the classroom

Classroom training is the preferred method for training caregivers. Interacting with instructors and other caregivers brings a unique richness to the training experience. Still, there are other methods of learning that can take advantage of technology and flexible scheduling. DCFS can offer caregivers the additional options of computer-based training and the DCFS Lending Library of books and tapes.

The in-service PRIDE training modules are now available as an interactive CD-ROM format in addition to the traditional classroom format. The digital format provides anytime, anywhere use, allowing caregivers to receive training, while working around the other responsibilities that compete for their time.

The nine in-service modules in PRIDE Digital Curriculum use the same combination of cotrainers

that are featured in all the PRIDE classroom training programs. A child welfare professional and a foster parent professional guide at home learners through each module. Using video and an easy-to-use computer format, the computerized course presents the information and recorded discussions from other caregivers, adopted individuals and agency staff with knowledge of Illinois' child welfare system. The digital system takes learners through exercises to test their understanding of the material. It saves exercises so caregivers can document their work.

To order a CD set for one of the PRIDE in-service modules, call 312-328-2828.

The DCFS Lending Library can also be used as a convenient alternative for obtaining approved training credit for license renewal. Licensed foster and adoptive parents can borrow materials for a two-week period at no charge. The Lending Library catalogue highlights a multitude of books, audio cassettes and videos for self-directed training in parenting and family life, spanning 17 categories.

To borrow these or one of the myriad titles in the Lending Library, simply fill out the order form at the back of the catalogue. Send it to the DCFS Office of Training, Station 122, 406 E. Monroe, Springfield IL 62701.

To request a catalogue, call 877-800-3393. The catalogue is also available on the DCFS Web site: www.state.il.us/DCFS/docs/lendinglibrary.pdf.

Lending Library Categories

- Child Sexual Abuse
- Children with Sexually Aggressive Behaviors
- Children with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Children with Behavioral Disorders and/or Emotional Disturbances
- Disciplinary Strategies for Difficult Children
- Separation and Visitation
- Drug-Affected Infants and Children
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Effects (FAS/FAE)
- The Medically Complex Child
- The Child With HIV/AIDS
- Promoting Educational Success Through Improved Learning Skills
- Building A Healthy Self Esteem in Kids
- From Foster Care to Adoption
- Child Development and Parenting
- Parenting Adolescents
- Families and Diversity—Parenting with Greater Understanding
- Children With Mental Health, Language and Physical Challenges

Central Connections

Sponsor
Robert Blackwell,
DCFS Central Regional Administrator



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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.