

## Cook graduates celebrate with cruise, lunch and gifts

High school and college graduates from Cook County sailed toward a bright horizon aboard the Mystic Blue for a Lake Michigan cruise on June 30 to celebrate their accomplishment. The boat launched from scenic Navy Pier in Chicago, carrying more than 150 students and their invited guests.

Once on board, they enjoyed a generous buffet luncheon. After getting to know each other the youth relaxed with dance music by a DJ who kept the party atmosphere lively. Students heard inspirational words from speakers and were encouraged during the awards ceremony. At the end of the cruise, students departed with certificates, a \$50 VISA gift card and various raffle prizes.

Much of the day's bounty was donated and many of the activities were planned by the Cook County Youth Advisory Boards. The DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services coordinated the overall event.



**Courtney Thompson, Asia Thompson and Ashley Lapse of the Statewide Youth Advisory Board address the 2010 graduates.**

## Fatherhood front and center at Real Men Cook



**Jimmie Whitelow of the DCFS Communications Division checks out his renowned jerk chicken. Also on the DCFS menu were grilled vegetables by Director McEwen and flank steak by Deputy Director Daniel Fitzgerald.**

The parking area of the DCFS Emerald office gave way for rows of white tents during the 21st Real Men Cook event. This fundraiser invites the public to purchase food cooked by volunteer fathers/chefs on Father's Day.

Director McEwen was among 50 cooks serving delicious foods. DCFS staff volunteered to support activities in the Children's Pavilion, which was free to the community.

Director McEwen spoke to the crowd about how important fathers' involvement is to their children's future success. He has committed resources to provide additional supports to the fathers whose children require DCFS involvement.

"It can be too easy to overlook the dads or to underestimate their important role," he said.

Through programs such as the Family Advocacy Centers and the Fatherhood Initiative fathers can receive the assistance they need to positively influence their families.

## Cook County Youth Summit gives teens a springboard to adult life

Nearly 200 young people gathered at Malcolm X College for the Youth Summit on June 16. They learned about services and resources that could help launch them toward successful adult lives. The summit was a full day of workshops and presentations developed for and by young people. It was one-stop shopping for information on education, employment, health and responsible decision making.



The Youth Summits are sponsored by the DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services. Youth from across the state could participate in summits held in each of the six DCFS regions this summer.

Students who missed the summit and would like information can contact the Lynda Swan-McClendon in the DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959.

## Project SOAR student-made movie accepted by international film fest

Project SOAR (Statewide Opportunities for Arts and Recreation) has a new accomplishment that is getting national and international attention. The Movie Making program presented by the Community TV Network teaches young people to create films. The group of young writers and directors learned that their film would be included in the International Children's Film Festival sponsored by the Boston Institute of Contemporary Art.

Students produced an animated film called *Our Parks, Our Future*. Their piece highlights the importance of recycling and the dangers of littering. The film festival jurors were said they were very impressed with the students' work and have requested more video from the Project SOAR

program, according to Jennifer Smith who instructs the youth. The Movie Making program is taught at Washington Park in Chicago and at Memorial Park in Blue Island.

*Our Parks, Our Future* and another student film will be showcased at the upcoming event "Soaring with the Stars," a celebration of the creativity and accomplishments of youth enrolled in various SOAR programs. The students who worked on the film are:

Tupac Barfield  
Edward Dade  
Levonte Turner  
Raymond Hopgood  
Semaja Deal  
Yasmine Fullilove  
JaShaun Fullilove

Najee Manney  
Vivian Carter  
Khari Sulton  
Demetrius Sulton  
Kameron Clinton  
Carlos Jones  
Destiny Ashford

Project SOAR is a free program for youth ages 3 to 18 who are currently under DCFS care or who left through adoption or guardianship arrangements. Classes include music, art, media, dance and drama, and are conducted weekly to coincide with the school calendar. Transportation is available based on need, availability and transport guidelines. For more details and to register, contact the Project SOAR office at 312-814-4145.



## Cook annual back-to-school picnic celebrated 20th year with food, fun and information fair

On August 6, the three Cook Regions came together for a Back to School Picnic at Central Park in Park Forest. Hundreds of children, caregivers, youth who are in care, siblings, parents, and staff gather for a day of fun.

This picnic got its start 20 years ago with the Cook South region. This year was a combined effort with Cook Central and Cook North regions so that more families could take part in all of the resources and activities. Staff and caregiver volunteers served on numerous committees that worked for months in advance to produce an extravaganza. Grills were going for more than a thousand servings of hamburgers, chicken and hot dogs. Tables were full with side dishes, desserts and drinks. There will be children's games with prizes, face painting and a DJ.

In addition to the fun, it was also a practical picnic. DCFS Licensing staff was on hand to answer caregivers' questions. Many community service providers hosted resource

tables so they could bring families important information about education, housing and health.

Staff from the DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services were there to answer questions. They were joined by representatives of area colleges who encouraged youth to consider higher education. This segment was a continuation of the college fair that Cook North previously hosted for several years.

Caregivers who missed the event can contact the foster parent support specialists at the three regional offices for additional information or handouts.

Cook Central  
Denise Spires or Alice Couch  
773-292-7879

Cook South  
Carol Lucacek  
773-371-6119

Cook North  
Mattie Brown  
312-328-2572

## Cook South Regional nurses on-call for medical help



Foster Caregivers should know that the Child Welfare Nurse Specialist (CWNS) is available to advise on health-related concerns for youth in foster care. Although they do not take questions directly from foster caregivers, it should be of some comfort to know that your caseworker can consult with a medical expert.

Consultations might include, but are not limited to:

- Participating in school staffings
- Participating in hospital discharge planning
- Reviewing and/or interpreting medical files
- Participating in Child and Youth Investment Teams (CAYIT)
- Reinforcing education for caregivers and or assisting in obtaining appropriate training relative to health care needs
- Assisting staff in making appropriate health safety decisions
- Assisting staff with understanding what an MD is proposing relative to medications.

The nurses that serve the Cook South Region are Patrice Pennix and Patricia Stewart, located at 6201 S. Emerald. All DCFS Nurse referrals are received by the Chief Nurse Jerrilyn Pearson-Minor for review and assignment.





## Trauma training provides caregivers information plus positive outlook



Every month, Cook South caregivers gather at the office at 6201 S. Emerald for the support group “Foster Parents, Our Greatest Resource.” At a recent meeting, all those in attendance earned training credit hours while participating in the training Child Trauma: A Workshop for Foster Caregivers. This class of four hours was well attended by both DCFS and families with private agencies.

The class teaches foster parents what trauma is, along with the types of trauma. It also covered circumstances that cause or lead to trauma, as well as its possible effects. While the training is about children, it is for those who care for children. Caregivers need to understand how different ages respond to trauma and how to help a trauma-affected child feel safe.

Patricia Hawkins from the DCFS Office of Training incorporated

many examples and useful ideas for the parents to try, often speaking from personal experience. She told them how she learned to direct an angry child to sit at the table and tear up newspapers when they are having an episode, or she may take the child for a walk. Hawkins also stressed that caregivers should use the resources that are available as they advocate for children.

Caregivers discussed how taxing it can be as the “front line defense and offense” helping a trauma-affected child. Hawkins reminded caregivers that they cannot help a child if they do not take care of themselves. Compassion-fatigue and burnout are real and can hamper a caregiver’s efforts, even when they have the best intentions. It is vital to learn how to relieve stress and to call for help when things are too much before they get entirely out of hand. Hawkins provided the prompt “Focusing: SOS.” This means ‘slow down, orient yourself, and do a self-check.’ This tip reminds caregivers to pause, take a deep breath, bring

yourself to the present to note your environment, and rate your personal distress and control.

“I wish we had this 15 years ago” said one long-time caregiver at the end of the class.

“This is invaluable information that will assist us with the complex children that we are asked to take into our homes,” said another caregiver.

It seemed that caregivers left the training encouraged, reenergized, feeling good about themselves and more knowledgeable.

Caregivers who missed the trauma training with the support group can register for “Child Trauma – Informed Practice for Foster Caregivers” by calling the DCFS Office of Training toll-free at 1-877-800-3393 or logging on to [dcfsttraining.org](http://dcfsttraining.org). Attendance can be used to comply with in-service training for relicensing.

### Cook South Support Groups

#### **Foster Parents, Our Greatest Resource Support Group**

Contact:  
Elisse Worrell: 773-371-6114  
Info line: 773-371-6113

Meets 2nd Tuesday  
10 a.m. to Noon  
DCFS Office  
6201 S. Emerald, Chicago

For DCFS and private agency families. Training credits offered.

#### **Cook South DCFS Regional Foster Care Advisory Council**

Contacts:  
Angela Barber: 773-578-0079  
Gloria Orange-Long: 773-371-6115

Meets 3rd Wednesday  
10 a.m.  
DCFS Office  
6201 S. Emerald, Chicago

#### **DCFS Cook South Suburban Support Group**

Contacts:  
Adrienne Taylor: 708-210-3578  
Sandra Montgomery:  
708-210-3594  
Info line: 773-371-6113

Meets 4th Thursday (Jan., March, May, July, Sept. and Nov.)  
9 a.m. to Noon  
DCFS Office  
15115 Dixie Highway, Harvey

## Fun and appreciation on May agenda for Cook Central caregivers



May was celebration time for Central Region's foster care program. Department staff from across various functions came together to make plans for Foster Parent Appreciation Month events. Staff compiled a survey to get input from caregivers about how they would most enjoy being celebrated, and after much consideration, several activities were developed.

On May 12 caregivers and children came to the 3518 W. Division office for Family Fun Night with food, movies, face painting and games. Later in the month the adults came to the Maywood office for an appreciation dinner. Along with great food and time for "grown up" conversation, the caregivers received certificates to show how much staff appreciate their time and effort to provide care for children.



**Cook Central caregivers enjoyed a delicious meal topped with entertainment by the Lafayette Elementary School Orchestra.**

## Community Forum updates caregivers on services and school resources



The DCFS Cook Central Region's Community Partners had a forum to help familiarize both providers of services and the community about some of the new DCFS innovations.

DCFS Deputy Director Arthur Bishop gave the keynote address. He described policy and practice changes that have resulted in a drastic reduction in the number of children in DCFS substitute care. More children and families are now being served in their home environment. After his address, he had Dana Weiner unveil the Statewide Provider Database. This database is a computer-based resource guide, providing information about social service programs available in Illinois. Caseworkers can use the database

to find specific services or resources that children need, ranging from camp to counseling. The providers learned how to enter their updated information to the database so their programs can reach more families.

After the training and a break, five concurrent workshops were offered. One session gave information about "The Life of a Case." This workshop explained the process of a case from the hotline call all the way to the eventual closing of the case. A second workshop, "Educational Road Map" talked about the child from Early Childhood to College/Vocational School. The third and fourth options were "Strengthening Families and Community through Collaboration" and "Family Advocacy Centers." Cook Central has four Advocacy Centers. These Centers are to help the families whose cases would benefit from services

while the children can remain safely at home. The four Centers are: Westside Family Advocacy, 2100 S Marshall Blvd; Christian Fellowship Flock, 2435 W. Division; Mujeres Latinas en Accion, 2124 W 21st Place; and Erie Neighborhood House, 2542 W 25th St.

Following the final workshop, which focused on outreach to the Spanish-speaking caregivers, was an hour-long DCFS Exchange Resource Fair. Different tables had information and were staffed by DCFS Staff who explained about the various DCFS programs.

This event was organized by the Cicero Community Center to recognize the importance of reaching out and partnering with the community to continue the efforts of keeping more children and families together.

## *Cook North Caregivers come to appreciate food and relaxation at May events*



Cook North's theme for Foster Parent Appreciation Month was "Fostering in Difficult Economic Times: Your Community, Our Children, Together."

The administration and staff coordinated events that let caregivers know that they understand the intensity of foster care and are there to help lighten the load.

Cook North foster parents enjoyed a Foster Parent Appreciation Month Luncheon on May 14, at the DCFS Cook-North Office at 1911 S. Indiana in Chicago. The guest speaker for this luncheon was Dr. George Smith, PhD., an educational and motivational speaker from the Management Planning Institute. Smith helped caregivers see the importance of stress relievers like laughter to keep foster care commitment in perspective.

Later in the month, the Foster Parent Appreciation Month dinner was held on May 27 at the Skokie Office. The guest speaker for this dinner was Amy Baur, a Registered Play Therapist at the Bridge Youth & Family Services in Palatine.

At both events Antoinette Sanchez spoke to the foster parents about relaxation techniques they could use at home. At the lunch and the dinner, caregivers enjoyed games and entertainment including gifts and raffle prizes.

DCFS Cook North administration wanted caregivers to know they do an outstanding job and need to be recognized for it at all times, and not just for one month of the year.

## *Youth Outreach Services helps students find positive options to succeed in school*

Youth Outreach Services (YOS) is a nonprofit human service organization dedicated to serving youth and families in and around Chicago. As a service provider in Local Area Networks (LANs) 61 and 63, the agency provides a variety of services in Leyden Township and Northwest Chicago, geared toward keeping kids safe, healthy and ready to learn, as well as engaging and educating their families.

Through counseling services, YOS serves youth struggling with substance abuse, mental health and a variety of other issues. The agency offers individual and family counseling, based on the needs of youth involved in programming, as well as linkages to helpful community-based services.

Through academic support services, YOS coordinates community-based services essential for youth development, ultimately reducing

truancy, suspension and expulsion from school. Case managers work with youth and families to design individualized plans to meet their needs. They address all aspects of the youth's life and connect families to important resources and support, including academic enrichment programs, counseling, and prevention services that keep kids in school and away from gangs and drugs.

In addition, YOS offers after-school and summer programs, which seek to help youth increase academic performance, adopt positive decision-making skills and avoid harmful risk-taking behaviors. Through constructive recreation, art, music, health/fitness activities and cultural awareness events, youth are exposed to more opportunities for educational development. Additionally, drug and violence prevention, healthy living, counseling and character education keep youth safe, healthy

and ready to learn.

For more information about these services and how to participate or make a referral, contact the YOS Leyden-Proviso Office at 708.547.1091, or visit [www.yos.org](http://www.yos.org).

### **School help in other areas of Cook North Region**

There are similar education programs for youth living in the other LANs in Cook North Region. These services are open to all families, including foster, adoptive and guardianship families.

For more information on local resources contact the DCFS LAN Liaison:  
Joann Niemuth  
847-745-3048 office  
847-745-3066 fax  
[Joann.Niemuth@illinois.gov](mailto:Joann.Niemuth@illinois.gov)



## DCFS Education Advisors are ready to help with school concerns

Caregivers can count on a team of professionals to help with education issues for youth attending school systems in the three DCFS Cook County regions. Through a partnership with Northern Illinois University, the DCFS/NIU education advisors advocate for youth in care and also work with adoptive and guardianship families. The Education Advisors can assist with the assessments and Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for special education. When there are behavioral issues, they can work out an intervention with the school. They can answer caregivers' questions and attend school meetings with them. They will help caregivers and caseworkers obtain appropriate educational services for the children. They also will help caregivers plan for education after high school.

With the background of working in or with schools before joining DCFS, they know how to navigate the system. They understand school issues including special education, attendance policies, discipline and a host of other concerns. Working with an Education Advisor can be very positive and gratifying. They identify with and highly value caregivers and the children in their homes. They recognize and empathize with the frustrations and needs of both the education and child welfare systems, making them invaluable advocates. They advocate effectively because they know what children have the right to expect from schools. The advisors are each well versed in the federal and state education laws and DCFS Rule 314 concerning education

services that must be provided to children in DCFS care.

Since every school can have a slightly different way of doing things, it helps to have an Education Advisor sitting beside the caregiver as you both advocate for the student.

### Cook County Education Advisors

#### Cook North-Chicago

Donnis Briscoe  
1911 S. Indiana, Chicago, IL 60616  
Phone: 312-328-2444  
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E-mail: donnis.briscoe@illinois.gov

#### Cook North-Suburbs

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Fax: 708-338-6653  
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#### Cook Central-Chicago

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Phone 773-292-7732  
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#### Cook Central-Suburbs

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Fax: 708-338-6653 (Fax)  
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#### Cook South-Chicago

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Phone: 773-371-6029  
Fax: 773-371-6067  
E-mail: diane.fitzhugh@illinois.gov

#### Cook South-Suburbs

Rebecca Lawrence  
15115 Dixie Highway, Harvey, IL 60426  
Phone: 708-210-3051  
Fax: 708-210-3055 or 3053  
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### Cook County Advocate Regional Reporters

Cook North ~ Joann Niemuth  
847-745-3048 office  
847-745-3066 fax  
Joann.Niemuth@illinois.gov  
8140 N. McCormick, Skokie, IL 60076

Cook Central ~  
Merrylee Guge-Jorgensen  
773-292-7700 office  
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Cook South ~ Rod Mulford  
773-371-6402 office  
773-371-6409 fax  
Rod.Mulford@illinois.gov  
6201 S. Emerald, Chicago, IL 60621

Anyone can call the regional reporter with story suggestions about:

- Foster parent association news and schedules
- Local training notices
- Features on foster families and community members working for children
- Ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.



# Cook 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](http://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 Preeteen 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.