

Cook Region students earn DCFS scholarships

Most students head to college with the basic supplies, including books, clothes and a calculator. But some students whose cases are handled in Cook 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.



Mauriell Amechi

Mauriell, from Chicago, graduated from Von Steuben Metro High School where he earned a 3.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. While in high school, Mauriell participated in the Yearbook Club where he was a photographer and an editor. His academic honors include the Principal's List and Honor Roll Award. He was also named Student of the Year at Lawndale Academy. Mauriell attends University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana where he will major in business administration.

Society, Demoiselle 2 Femme, Trio Upward Bound, Ambassadors for Abstinence and Northwest Indiana Newspaper's Teen Panel. She attends the University of Illinois at Chicago, majoring in psychology.



Timeica Bethel

Timeica, from Chicago, is a graduate of Francis W. Parker School. She obtained a 3.7 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and scored a 31 on her ACT. While in high school Timeica was involved in Students United, the Diversity Council and Black Student Union. She was Senior Class President as well as the Sergeant at Arms for the student body. She was also a freshman mentor and a member of the STAND chapter. She worked as a tutor and office assistant and had an internship at JP Morgan Chase Bank. She is majoring in Biology at Yale University.



Jasmine Banner-Hubbard

Jasmine, from Dolton, is a graduate of Thornridge High School where she obtained a 3.95 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was ranked 18th in a class of 399. She received many high school honors including National Honor Roll, Scholastic Journalism Award, Who's Who Among American High School Students and recognition as a "Rising Star" by Northwest Indiana Times Newspaper. In high school, she was involved in the school newspaper, yearbook staff, student council, Principal's Cabinet, Peer Mediation, National Honor



Michael Cordero

Michael, from Dolton, graduated from St. Rita of Cascia High School where he earned a 3.11 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. While in high school he participated in band, History Club, Computer Club, track and the Chess Club. He also received honors for the National Latin Exam and in the Know Your Heritage competition. He has been ordained as a Junior Deacon in his church. Michael attends Calvin College where he is studying biology.



Sophia Davis

Sophia, from Chicago, is a graduate of Christian Fenger Academy where she achieved a 3.3 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. She received the Bringing Up My Grades award, and she was named to the Honor Roll and National Honor Society. She was also named to Who's Who Among American High School Students twice. She was involved in Key Club, Student Council, softball, Student Aid, Cheerleading, and Dance Team. She was a judge for the Mikva Challenge and has tutored. Sophia now attends Chicago State University to study pre-law.



Whitney Donley

Whitney, from Chicago, graduated from Lane Tech High School where she achieved a 3.38 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. She was involved in the Leo Club, Black Student Scholars, Accounting Leaders of Tomorrow, Economics Club and Inroads. She also participated in an internship with Washington Mutual Bank and volunteered with Sin Fronteras. She now attends University of Illinois at Chicago where she is studying accounting.



Alex Gahan

Alex, from Tinley Park, is a graduate of Victor J. Andrew High School where he achieved a 3.4 grade point average on a 4.0 scale as well and scored a 27 on his ACT exam. He served as the Junior class secretary and as both Treasurer and Vice President for the Wind Ensemble. Alex was chosen

as the most outstanding freshman and sophomore with the band and was selected for the Conference Jazz Band. He also volunteered as a day-camp counselor and at DARE fest. Alex is a student at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, pursuing a major in psychology.

Dominique Hall

Dominique, from Chicago, graduated from Carver Military Academy where she obtained a 3.8 grade point average on a 4.0 scale as well as being 8th in her class of 137. She was involved in basketball, soccer, wrestling and the Raiders group. Dominique was named to the Honor Roll and was also selected Cadet of the Month. She attends University of Illinois at Chicago where she studies criminal defense/law.

Kamill Holmes

Kamill, from Chicago, graduated from Hope College Prep where she earned a 3.89 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was 5th in her class of 160. She worked at Chicago Kid Start Program and at Chicago Sports Service/Soldier Field. While in high school, Kamill was recognized as Student of the Month, as well as being named the Most Valuable Decathlete. She received the Principal's Scholars Award. She was also the editor of the Yearbook and Vice President of the National Honor Society. Now Kamill attends University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, studying biochemistry.



Leslie Hunter

Leslie, from Chicago, is a graduate of Dunbar Vocational Career Academy. She achieved a 4.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale was ranked 3rd in her class of 269. Her high school honors included the Chicago Urban League Scholar Award, third place in the local school science fair, third place in an AIDS awareness talent show and 11 years of perfect attendance. Leslie's numerous activities included National Honor Society, Local School Council, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), University of Chicago's Collegiate Scholars Program, First Rely on God (FROG) Youth Ministry, Principal Scholars, Student Council, Know Your

Heritage team, Anointed Motions of Praise Dance Ministry and World Vision Youth Advocacy Program. Leslie is now a student at Spellman College, studying psychology.



DeAndre Jackson-Richmond

DeAndre, from Harvey, graduated from Thornton High School where he obtained a 3.5 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was 56th in his class of 502. His high school activities included

Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE), Speech Team, National Honor Society, Senior Senate, Student Council and Varsity Band. DeAndre's recognitions included High Honor Roll, the Certificate of Excellence for Outstanding Academic Achievement, National Honor Society, National Honor Roll, Outstanding member of SAVE, and a plaque of recognition from the Chicago Urban League for Youth Leadership. He is studying law/criminology at Illinois State University.



Brad Johnson

Brad, from Chicago, is a graduate of Austin Community Academy where he obtained a 4.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. He was ranked 2nd in his class of 242. He has had volunteer

experience with the Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust and the Angel Tree Foundation. Brad's high school activities include the Debate Team, Peer Jury, Yearbook staff, school newspaper staff, National Honor Society, Math Club, LSC Student Representative and JROTC. He is a student at Loyola University, pursuing a degree in political science.



Christopher Kammerer

Christopher, from Skokie, is a Niles West High School graduate. He achieved a 6.54 grade point average on a weighted scale and was 48th in his class of 657. His honors include

High Honors for semesters 2 through 7, Honors for semester 1, National Honor Society, Illinois State Scholar, Poet Laureate for the Senior Class and Central Suburban League Leadership Conference

representative. Christopher was involved in track, cross country, basketball, golf, and drama/theater. He was a found-er of the Slam Poetry Team and a participant with the Chicago Young Authors. He is studying English at Washington University.

Shawanda Kornegay

Shawanda, from Broadview, is a graduate of Proviso East High School where she obtained a 3.6 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was ranked 41st in her class of 409. In high school, she was involved in track, basketball, class council, Student Council and Future Business Leaders of America. She was a flag girl for the band and was named to the Honor Roll. Shawanda attends Southern Illinois University, where she studies political science.



Ashley Lepse

Ashley, of Chicago, graduated from Senn High School where she achieved a 3.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. Her high school activities and honors included three years of the

International Baccalaureate Program, Senior Class Vice-President, President of the Junior National Honor Society, member of the Pom-Pon Squad, After School Matters participant, and tutor/mentor for freshmen and sophomores. Ashley was inducted into the National Honor Society and was listed on the Honor Roll. She attends Illinois State University where she studies social work.

Vivian Mack

Vivian, from Chicago, is a Christian Fenger Academy graduate. She earned a 4.3 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was ranked 4th in her class of 197. While in high school, she was involved in the school newspaper, choir, class executive board, Student Council, Prom Committee, Graduation Committee, and JROTC Drill Team. Vivian's academic honors include the Principal's Scholars Award, Honor Roll, National Honor Society and Student of the Month. She is a student at University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and studies journalism/pre-communication.



Lisa McClendone

Lisa, from Chicago, graduated from Simeon Career Academy where she achieved a 4.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. She was ranked 2nd in her class of 371. Her academic honors include Honor Roll, Principal Scholar and National Honor Society. Lisa was involved in local, regional and city science fairs, and cultural exchanges. She was elected as both Vice President and President of the National Honor Society. She now attends the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, studying biology.



Markeutta McCollough

Markeutta, from Chicago, is a Carver Military Academy graduate. She earned a 3.9 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was ranked 5th in her class of 148. She received recognition for Honor Roll, perfect attendance, National Honor Society and was chosen Cadet of the Month. Markeutta also participated in volleyball, softball, soccer, cheerleading, Pom-Pon Squad and was the scorekeeper for the basketball team. She is now a pre-med student at Chicago State University.



Megan McKenna

Megan, from Lansing, is a graduate of Thornton Fractional South High School. She achieved a 3.7 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and scored 24 on her ACT exam. She was a member of the National Honor Society and received a Certificate for Outstanding Achievement in Academic Excellence. She also played on the basketball team. Megan studies psychology/social work at Eastern Illinois University.



Camille Mendoza

Camille, of Oak Park, graduated from Oak Park-River Forest High School where she obtained a 3.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. Camille was involved in the Spoken Word Club and has done make-up for school plays. Camille also

received a Human Relations Award and two Alumni Scholarships. She currently attends Northern Illinois University, where she studies art education/fine arts.

Aneisha Newell

Aneisha, of Dalton, is a graduate of Christian Fenger Academy. She achieved a 3.8 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was ranked 7th in her class of 174. She participated in Jammin' for Achievement in addition to being a representative of the DCFS Youth Advisory Board for the Cook Central Region. While in high school, Aneisha was involved with cheerleading, Student Council, Daughters Interested in Visiting a New Attitude (DIVAS), Modeling Club, Titan Torch school newspaper, and National Honor Society. She was also the manager for the wrestling team. Aneisha attends the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Jason Pruitt

Jason, from Chicago, is a Phillips High School Academy graduate. He achieved a 3.4 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was ranked 8th in his class of 122. His honors and recognitions included perfect attendance for three years, Honor Roll, Captain of the Chess Team, and representative of Phillips High School at a leadership conference in Washington, D.C. While in high school Jason was a member of the football, baseball, track and chess teams. He is attending Northern Illinois University where he studies engineering.

Dominica Sorensen

Dominica is a 2007 graduate of Castle High School where she obtained a 3.6 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and a 28 on her ACT. Her extensive volunteer experience includes the Evansville Rescue Mission, Evansville Children's Psychiatric Center, Mother Teresa's Consignment Shop and Red Cross blood drives. While in high school, Dominica has been involved in the National Honor Society, Key Club, the Castle Knight Sensations, The Castle Knightingales, Indiana All-State Choir, Thespians, Junior Civitan, the German Club and numerous theater productions. She is studying nursing at Northern Illinois University.



Claudia Taylor

Claudia, from Chicago, graduated from Austin Community Academy where she obtained a 3.2 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was ranked 18th in her class of 224. While in high school, she was involved in the National Honor Society, as well as the debate and volleyball teams. Claudia's honors and recognitions include Best Sophomore Debater, Student of the Month, Principal's Choice Award and Varsity Debate Championship. She is studying communications at the University of Iowa.

Anthony Teague

Anthony, from Glenwood, is a 2005 graduate of Bloom High School where he achieved a 3.9 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was ranked 17th in his class of 256. While in high school, Anthony was on the High Honor Roll, received an award for perfect attendance, was listed in Who's Who Among American High School Students, was voted the Most Improved for the cross-country team and was a member of the National Honor Society. His recent volunteer activities include going to New Orleans to help with clean-up efforts after Hurricane Katrina. He will continue his education at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, where he is studying Technical Systems Management.

Christopher Toni

Christopher, from Arlington Heights, graduated from Christian Liberty Academy where he achieved a 4.05 grade point average on a 5.0 scale. He was involved in the school choir, Chess Club, Math Team and band. He performed in school productions and was a teacher's assistant in AP Calculus. His honors included Best Singer in the choir, highest grade in advanced computers, Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society, Honor Roll, and a Youth Leadership Award from his church. Christopher attends Harper Community College, where he plans to study mathematics.



Teresa Washington

Teresa, from Blue Island, is a graduate of Eisenhower High School. She earned a 3.7 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was ranked 40th in her class of 396. She was involved in basketball, cross-country, Key Club, Teen Court and Reach. Teresa also received recognition the last three years for her participation in a Black History contest and for being in the top 10% of her senior class. Now she attends Illinois State University.

Bianca Williams

Bianca, of Chicago, graduated from Julian High School where she achieved a 4.2 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was ranked 10th in her class of 430. In high school, she was involved in basketball, softball, bowling, Beta Club, Principal's Scholars Program, National Honor Society and was on the Honor Roll. Bianca plans on studying law or medicine as a student at Northwestern University.

Cook County Advocate reporters

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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.

Cook North RA retires



Chris McGrath

After 35 years of working in Illinois state government, Chris McGrath retired as Regional Administrator on June 28. Her departure capped a 27-year career with DCFS, serving a dozen years in the top regional position.

McGrath, however, would be the first to admit that her successful tenure was the result of the contributions of the team working with her for families.

One of those team members answered the call after bidding McGrath farewell. Jackie Bright, the Program Manager in Cook North since 2000, was named acting regional administrator. Bright has worked for the Department for more than 27 years, beginning as a child welfare specialist. As the Program Manager for Cook North, Bright has been instrumental in administering many initiatives, including Integrated Assessment, the Child and Youth Investment Team initiative, Federal Reviews and the accreditation process. She also recently added regional reporting for the newsletter to her list of accomplishments.

Bright looks forward to continuing regional programs and resources for caregivers, children and their parents. For additional information, contact Jackie Bright at 312-328-2505.

Cook Central group supports Spanish-speaking families

The Logan Square Parents Care + Share Support Group meets weekly at the Logan Square Boys and Girls Club, located at 3228 W. Palmer, every Tuesday from 9 to 11:30 a.m. This free support group is designed for Spanish-speaking parents. It is open to all parents, grandparents, foster parents and adoptive parents.

The participants each set goals for their families. They also get advice and support from other parents as they work toward their goals. Parents decide the discussion topics and have the opportunity to become group leaders.

One purpose of the group is to learn to deal with stress and to learn how and who to call for help. At a typical meeting, in the first hour the group spends time talking about what is going on at home, and the parents give advice and support to each other. The second hour has a guest speaker to address topics the parents have determined are important. Some of the topics have been positive strategies for disciplining children, self-esteem, building family unity, and building connections within the family and with friends.

A professional facilitates the group. The parents are respectful and supportive to each other, and the discussions are confidential. To make it easier for parents, child care and refreshments are available.



Parents learn from each other during the Parents Care + Share support group.

Lidia Garcia, co-coordinator of the Logan Square Parents Care + Share Support Group, says it is a good way to learn more about child development. As another benefit, the group also strengthens the families by developing social connections with other parents in the group and with families in their neighborhood.

For information about this Parents Care + Share Group, phone Lidia Garcia at 773-252-4161. Cook Central has another Care + Share Group that meets at Salomon P. Chase elementary school, 2021 N. Point. Call Dora Quezada at 773-862-5999 for information about that group.

The Parents Care + Share Groups are monitored by Children's Home + Aid. They have groups statewide. For information about other groups throughout the state call Earl Kloppmann 847-991-1030.

Cook South Advisory Council News

The Cook South Regional Advisory Council is set for a busy fall. Membership continues to grow and includes families from both DCFS and private agencies. In addition to the regular business, the council will participate in several sessions to prepare for the 2008 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan process. Foster parent input is a key part of the plan that the region must submit to the Statewide Council at the end of the year.

A sub-committee of the council is working on the plan with regional administration. Caregivers can take part in meetings. Contact Robert Childress at 773-723-6306 for more information.

The regional council is also working with the local administration on several issues of interest to caregivers. In August, for the first time Regional Administrator Michael Byrd invited members of the council to attend the meetings he holds with his supervisory team.

"We want to improve communication between our caregivers and staff. The first step to that is talking about what is and what is not working," he said.

The participating caregivers will report the results of the dialogue at subsequent advisory council meetings.

South City foster parent group shifts structure

The South City Foster Parent Association announced it is combining its membership with the Northeast Area Foster Parent Association. The group that met in the South suburbs was often aligned with the Northeast group and had similar interests. South City leadership will make certain that members can make the move seamlessly.

The northeast group for many years has had a very broad membership base, drawing from all parts of the city.

"The important thing is that foster parents can come together as a group and make a difference," said Carol Lukacek.

The Northeast Area Foster Parent Association meets on the third Thursday of each month at Sherman Park Library, located at 5440 S. Racine in Chicago. Call Donsetta Blakely at 773-778-7445 for more information.

Cook South selects new regional reporter



Rod Mulford

Rod Mulford is the new regional reporter for the Cook South Region. This new role with Illinois Families Now and Forever is in

addition to his duties as a licensing specialist. Mulford has been with DCFS for many years. He is a familiar face in the Cook South region, as he regularly attends foster parent advisory council meetings. His duties in licensing have offered him ample opportunity to work with foster families.

"This publication is important to caregivers, but it is also a good way for staff to stay informed," said Mulford. "I always learn a lot from reading it. I am looking forward to helping with writing it now."

Regional Administrator Michael Byrd encouraged Mulford to take on this role because he has always enthusiastically supported foster families in various capacities.

The regional reporter is the point of contact for local story ideas and news from the region. Contact Mulford with suggestions for articles with at least four weeks advance notice. He can be reached at 773-371-6350.

Cook Region Training Calendar

Foster PRIDE In-Service Modules

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

Cook North

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

Chicago *DCFS Office*
1911 S. Indiana Ave.
Oct. 8, 10 & 15 6:30-9:30 p.m.
(Mon & Wed)

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

Chicago *DCFS Office*
1911 S. Indiana Ave.
Nov. 6, 8 & 13 6:30-9:30 p.m.
(Tue/Thu)

Cook Central

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

Chicago *Hephzibah*
Dec. 8 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Cook South

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

Harvey *DCFS Office*
15115 S. Dixie Hwy.
Oct. 2, 4 & 9 (Tue/Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

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

Harvey *DCFS Office*
15115 S. Dixie Hwy.
Oct. 16, 18 & 23 (Tue/Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

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

Matteson *Aunt Martha's*
Oct. 16 & 18 (Tue/Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Child Trauma

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

Cook North

Chicago *DCFS Office*
1911 S. Indiana Ave.
Oct. 1 (Tue) 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Nov. 3 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Cook South

Harvey *DCFS Office*
15115 S. Dixie Hwy.
Nov. 3 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-1:30 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.

Cook North

Chicago *DCFS Office*
1911 S. Indiana
Oct. 6 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Chicago *Irish American Heritage Center*
Nov. 17 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Chicago *Association House*
Nov. 3 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Cook Central

Oak Park *Hephzibah*
Dec. 8 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Cook South

Chicago *DCFS Office*
6201 S. Emerald Ave.
Oct. 13 (Sat) & 1:30-4:30 p.m.
Oct. 16 (Tue) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Nov. 27 & 29 (Tue/Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Harvey *DCFS Office*
15115 S. Dixie Hwy.
Oct. 15 & 17 (M/W) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Nov. 10 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Caregivers must register to attend any of these training classes.

Call the DCFS Office of Training

877-800-3393 toll free