

Cook County Advocate

2011 • Vol. 3

News for Chicago Metro Area Families

Caregivers have their say in May for Appreciation Month

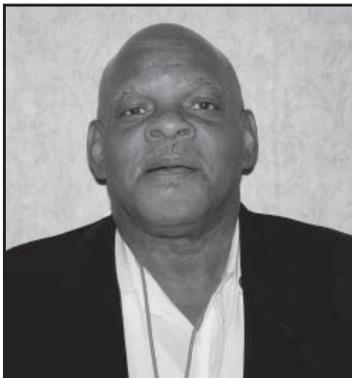
In honor of Foster Parent Appreciation Month, we asked Cook County caregivers: What makes you feel appreciated for the work you do in foster care?



"I feel appreciated when the kids say thank you. Because you know that they really mean it. When they say 'thanks for picking me up...or thanks for being there.' I feel good about that. That doesn't happen so much. So when it does you know it is real."

*Mercedes, Foster/
Adoptive Parent,
Matteson*

"To see my son make the honor roll was gratifying. When I look at where he started from to end up on the honor roll, it is amazing. It's very gratifying when I see the children be successful at whatever they endeavor, whether it is sports or academic. I stress education so hard, so to see them take me seriously gives me a great lift."



"I also look forward to the Appreciation Month Dinner at the DCFS Maywood office. It is a time that we are appreciated for our efforts."

-Billie Ray, Adoptive Parent, Chicago

"I look at the children and how far they have come. They make me feel appreciated. When I look at them and look at how far they have grown. I have had them for 17 years. They have grown in so many different ways. That is where my appreciation comes. It is like when you plant a seed and you look at the flower."



"They are not always able to say thank you. Sometimes they don't really know that what you are doing is for them just being a parent."

-Patricia, Adoptive Parent, Chicago

"I feel appreciated by my kids every time they tell me thank you. I am blessed to have these beautiful kids in my life. They make me get up and keep trying to help them. They are a blessing and that is how I feel appreciated."



Zaida, Foster/Guardianship Parent, Chicago

Message from the Cook South Region Administrator

It has been an exciting year at Cook South with lots of activities that extend beyond the work we do. Since the first of the year I have been communicating electronically with you to offer valuable information on products and services in the community. I have passed along academic/tutorial information to assist you as you provide guidance, supervision, and direction to the youngsters in your home. My office is also always willing to receive information directly from caregivers about the concerns that impact you day to day.

Children do not come with instruction manuals and can be quite challenging to manage. That is why we remain available to talk you through tough situations. When workers come to visit, carve out a few minutes to talk to them about your experiences so together you can develop an approach that will have the greatest impact on children. We all have the best interest of the child as the driving force that keeps us committed to protecting children and strengthening families. Teamwork makes the dream work.

I hope you and your families share many special moments during Foster Parent Appreciation Month.



*Dianne
Bradie-Baskin,
Regional
Administrator*

Veteran caregivers remember pain and joys

May, Foster Parent Appreciation Month, is for honoring the unsung foster parent heroes who work in the trenches 24/7. At a recent meeting of the Cook South Harvey Support Group, caregivers swapped stories about the sacrifices they made and the victories they had shared through foster care.

Cook South

- One caregiver gave up a good paying job to take three sibling teenagers into her home in order to keep them together. "It is important to spend time with them and communicate. It is a two way street. They talk, I listen. They cry, I cry," she said.
- A foster mom took in five teen girls that were known for wanting to fight everyone. She invited their families over for barbecues. She taught the girls how to enjoy board games together... Now all five want to be adopted.
- One foster family cared for an eight year old who had moved often because of many behavioral problems. The child could not read. Now at age nine he is adopted, on the honor roll, and much better behaved.
- A caregiver for 18 years, after adopting, is now raising five children. She respects the parent's relationship, and the children know they have two mothers who care about them.
- A multi-generational family has fostered for 30 years. The foster dad assists his 80-year-old father who adopted a child. The younger father said, "A support system is a must as kids have a lot of peer pressure."
- A foster parent of 38 years spoke of a 17-year-old who stole from her and eventually left her home. "He can call and I can visit him. It is important to maintain a connection, otherwise your life's work goes down the drain," she said.
- One caregiver of 13 years took a four-year old boy with ADHD and problems focusing in school. When he was suspended from the regular high school, he went and got his GED. The secret was getting him connected to music. Now 17, he plays the organ, piano and sax at church and wants to pursue a music career.
- Another remembered saying, "Lord, if you need me, here I am," when she was 23. For 40 years she raised three generations of children in foster care. "I gave them love and hope. I was honest and was there for them as much as possible. I liked to look good and I made sure they did also. You have to give something to get something back," she said.
- "My boy was in eight homes in one year and five the next year. He has been with me six years now and is constantly improving."
- I adopted six children out of a terrible abusive situation, after raising 7 of my own children. They stayed with me until they got married.



Cook South Support Groups

Foster Parents, Our Greatest Resource Support Group

Contact: Elise Worrell
773-371-6114
Info line at 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

Contact: Angela Barber
773-578-0079

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

DCFS Cook South Suburban Support Group

Contact: Adrienne Taylor
708-210-3578
Sandra Montgomery
708-210-3594
Foster Parent Info line
773-371-6113

Meets 4th Thursday (January, March, May, July, September and November)
9 a.m. to Noon
DCFS Office
15115 Dixie Highway, Harvey

School Readiness team stresses connections

Recently at a Cook South Suburban Support Group meeting, Mary Beth Corrigan, Statewide Coordinator of the School Readiness Team and Michael Stripens, who serves Cook South, described the importance of building connections for children at school. These early connections lay the foundation for lifelong connections. Connections can and should start even before kindergarten. The School Readiness Initiative has the goal of enrolling every child in DCFS care in a preschool program at age three.

Preschool readies a young child for academic growth, but equally important is the social and emotional development. In early childhood, the youngest of students learn lessons about trusting teachers and making friends. For youth dealing with the trauma of being involved in the child welfare system, these can be difficult lessons to grasp.

Stripens pointed out that when children are removed from their birth home, connections are broken. He said children have two sets of roots. In addition to “family tree” roots, they need to be rooted deeply in valuable relationships with teachers, friends, coaches, pastors and others. Both sets of roots have to be nourished in order for children to flourish. When a placement disruption triggers a school change, connections get broken. If the student makes it to college, but doesn’t have a home to come back to on spring break, there is another broken connection. Lack of connections can lead to homelessness and a host of other social ills.

Corrigan, who is a parent by birth and adoption, used examples



from her own life to illustrate how parents and caregivers can foster connections at school. She recognized how her twins reacted to their young classmates differently, with one often coming home in tears. Corrigan visited the school to observe and to help her child socialize. She built a connection with the students and with the teacher. That time investment paid off when her daughter had an improved preschool experience.

For more information on making connections at school and preparing a young student for learning, contact Michael Stripens at 708-210-2800.

Correction:



The newest Cook Central Foster Parent Support Specialist is Betty Anderson.

Anderson was incorrectly identified in 2011 Volume 2. Betty Anderson is a familiar face to many families in the Cook Central Region. The region is pleased to welcome her back for another term as a support specialist.

For more information, call the Cook Central support specialists office at 773-292-7979.



Join the Cook Central Regional Advisory Council

The Cook Central Regional Advisory Council welcomes all caregivers who live in the area (both DCFS and private agency supervised homes) to join the council's monthly meetings.

Last Tuesday of the month
9:30 a.m.
3518 W Division, Chicago
Contact: Denise Spires
773-292-7879

Cook Central names new Regional Reporter for newsletter



Clyde Thompson is the new regional reporter for Cook Central. His full-time position with DCFS as a family development specialist brings in him close contact with caregivers. With that background added to his effort on behalf of the newsletter, he will be able to share information that can make a real difference at the home level.

Feel free to contact him with suggestions for articles and news of events happening in Cook Central at 773-371-6114 or by email at clyde.thompson@illinois.gov.

Those who do foster care are best recruiters



The saying "It takes one to know one" has a very real meaning in the foster care arena. The person doing foster care is the best recruiter for new caregivers. Research shows that most people who inquire about getting a foster care license have thought about making the call for over two years. Most of these people have successfully raised their own children and as they put it – "they have more to give."

While the basics of parenting are fairly straightforward, the hard part of foster parenting comes when you have to deal with a child's feelings of separation or the trauma of a court hearing on parental rights. Experienced foster caregivers know the territory well.

As the region works out its recruitment strategy, current caregivers have an important role. Think of one or two homes that could be a good candidate for a foster home license. Current caregivers can also be mentors and lend support during the first few placements to help launch new caregivers off to a good start. As you talk about the rewards of foster care you may find that person who has thought about it for two years. Ask them if they would be open to receiving a call from DCFS. If so, pass their information to your licensing worker.

RA message to Cook Central caregivers



As the Regional Administrator of the Cook Central Region, I am extremely proud to be a partner with the caregivers of our Region. They are capably served by Mrs. Denise Spires, the Lead Foster Parent Support Specialist. Our caregivers fully participate in the decisions that affect the children to whom you are so committed.

Most of our foster children will be wrapping up the 2010-2011 school year soon. Some of them need a tremendous amount of support and assistance from our caregivers in order for them to complete this school year successfully. As you approach the finish line, know that the region's Education Advisors can still assist you. Hopefully, you can take advantage of the provisions

for summer camp and activities and keep the learning going over the summer break.

The same way you are so diligent about the children's academic growth, I trust you can also look to the region to deepen your own parenting knowledge. Cook Central foster parents continue to participate in various trainings and seminars in order to stay abreast of all the resources and information available to them.

Cook Central caregivers do an excellent job of meeting the needs of children—sometimes when children aren't able to articulate those needs or issues. I salute you this month and always respect the extra mile that each of you goes to give our children the opportunities and love they need in life!!

—Joyce E. Hall, Regional Administrator

From the Cook North Region Administrator



The month of May is designated to giving thanks and acknowledging our foster parents. You have partnered with the DCFS Cook North Region in making a profound commitment to achieve the purpose and mission of protecting our children by providing a safe, nurturing, and loving home environment. As Regional Administrator, I find comfort in the work that you're doing and the partnerships we continue to establish.

Through teamwork, we have made numerous accomplishments. You've joined us in strengthening and supporting our families by involving our children and youth with community programs and activities, and partnering with families to ensure timely reunification. It was a pleasure to see the joy and excitement during the Cook County Christmas Party.

Thanks to your participation in the process, ALL of our children received an abundance of toys that helped them to have a joyous holiday season.

I would like to extend a special thanks to you, our caregivers, for your commitment. Cook North Region will continue to support your endeavors to ensure that the needs of our children are met. Please be assured that you can contact me when you experience any difficulties, and we can work together to reach resolution. You are indeed a part of our team and we treasure your commitment to our youth in care.

Happy Foster Parent Appreciation Month!

—*Jackie Bright,*
Regional Administrator



Cruz new Lead Support Specialist

DCFS Cook North welcomes Edith Cruz as the new lead foster parent support specialist. When she began working for DCFS



27 years ago, Cruz worked mostly with Spanish-speaking families. Since then she has worked closely with caregivers of all backgrounds, assisting them in any way possible.

Cruz and her husband have been licensed for foster care since 1983, and they have adopted two daughters. She has been active in the Northeast Foster Parent Association, the Hispanic Association and was recently appointed to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council. She looks forward to working with caregivers who are part of the DCFS Cook North foster care program.

Join the Cook North Regional Advisory Council

The Cook North Regional Advisory Council welcomes all caregivers who live in the area (both DCFS and private agency supervised homes) to join the council's monthly meetings.

First Tuesday of the month
10 a.m.
1911 S. Indiana, Chicago
Contact: Iris Cuevas
312-808-5000

LAN offers emotional aid to Elk Grove teens

The Kenneth Young Center in Elk Grove Village provides intensive adolescent services for adolescents who are acting out and for depressed adolescents in Local Area Network (LAN) 42.

The Finding Solutions Intensive Adolescent Program for Acting Out Teens offers an individualized treatment plan that can include group therapy, individual therapy, family therapy, psychiatric services and mentoring. The adolescents in this program receive treatment that focuses on anger management, aggression and managing their behavior. The service runs two nights a week for a nine-week period.

The Finding Solutions Intensive Adolescent Program for Depressed Adolescents focuses on teenagers who struggle with severe depression without responding to weekly therapy programs. They meet twice weekly for eight weeks individually and in groups.

These services are available to families with teenagers who live in Elk Grove Township and Maine Township. To refer a teenager, contact the Kenneth Young Center at (847)524-8800 x127. For other community services, contact DCFS LAN Liaison, Joann Niemuth at 847-745-3048.

Families can find support among fellow caregivers in a nearby group

One of the responsibilities in the Foster Parent Law is to “Be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent associations.” DCFS, private agencies and community organizations sponsor many support groups and associations to assist foster and adoptive parents. The following list can help identify a group that may suit your family. This list will be updated annually. Please send an E-mail to the Editor at vanessa.james@illinois.gov with any corrections or additions for next year.

A Parent's Place

Meets second and fourth Wednesday

Family Focus Evanston

2010 Dewey Avenue, Evanston

Contact: Vanessa Allen Graves (847) 475-7570 x 15

Lunch and child care are available. Please RSVP.

Catholic Charities Adoption/Guardianship Program Family Support Group

Meets third Monday from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.

(no meetings in July, August and December)

651 W. Lake St., Chicago

Contact: Freda S. Hardaway at 312-655-8357

Fhardawa@catholiccharities.net

Dinner is served at 6 p.m. Adoptive and guardianship parents get to talk with other parents; teens interact with other teens who are adopted; 5-12 year-olds enjoy age appropriate activities; babysitters are available for children under age 5.

Circle of Parents

Contact: Stacey Saffold at 773-419-4660

Meets first Saturday of the month from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Includes Boy and Girl Scout programs

Sherman Park Library, 5440 South Racine, Chicago

Cook Central DCFS Regional Foster Care Advisory Council

Contact: Billie Ray Lewis at 773-968-6572

Meets fourth Tuesday of the month at 9:30 a.m.

DCFS Office, 3518 W. Division, Chicago

No December meeting. Training credits offered.

Cook North DCFS Regional Foster Care Advisory Council

Contact: Iris Cuevas at 312-808-5000

Meets second Tuesday of the month at 10 a.m.

DCFS Office, 1911 S. Indiana, Chicago

Cook South DCFS Regional Foster Care Advisory Council

Contact: Chair Angela Barber at 773-578-0079

Meets third Wednesday at 10 a.m.

DCFS Office, 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago

Foster Parents, Our Greatest Resource Support Group

Contact: Elise Worrell at 773-371-6114

Info line at 773-371-6113

Meets second Tuesday from 10 a.m. to Noon

DCFS Office, 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago

For DCFS and private agency families. Training credits offered.

DCFS Cook South Suburban Support Group

Contact: Adrienne Taylor at 708-210-3578 or Sandra Montgomery at 708-210-3594

Meets 4th Thursday (January, March, May, July, September and November) 9 a.m. to Noon

DCFS Office, 15115 Dixie Highway, Harvey

For DCFS and private agency families. Training credits offered.

Grandfamilies Program of Chicago

Contact: Linette Kinchen at 773-651-8800

Agency hosts five groups in Chicago:

Abbott Park Support Group

Englewood Support Group

Far South Support Group

West Englewood Support Group

Call for details on dates and locations.

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Training and Support Group

Contact: Cara Siebert at 773-884-2211
 siebert@metrofamily.org
 Meets first Wednesday 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
 Metropolitan Family Services - Midway Site
 3843 W. 63rd Street, Chicago
 Open to any grandparent or older caregiver raising a child.



Hispanic Association (combines with Northeast Foster Adopt Parent Association)

Contact: Edith Cruz at 312-328-2064

Hull House Association Foster Parent Support Group

Contact: Debra Whitted at 773-374-9451, ext. 155
 8753 S. Greenwood, Chicago
 Call for meeting schedule.

Jewish Child and Family Services Advisory Council

Contact: Noelle Folden at 312-673-2765
 Meets every other month on the 4th Thursday at Noon
 Alternating locations: 216 West Jackson or the Avalon Library, Chicago

Lutheran Social Services of IL Foster Parent Advisory Council

Contact: Shawanda Dixon or Ernestine Robinson at 312-949-4340
 Meets first Monday every other month from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (Call to confirm.)
 10 W. 35th St., 15th Floor, Chicago

Lutheran Social Services of Illinois - South Open Arms

Contact: Beth Novotney at 773-371-2700
 Meets third Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m.
 11740 S. Western, Chicago
 Child care provided with reservations.
 Open to adoptive families and pre-adoptive families.

Metropolitan Family Services Parent Support Group

Contact: Cara Seibert at 773-343-4280
 Meets second and fourth Wednesdays at 6 p.m.
 3843 W. 63rd. Street, Chicago
 Refreshments served. RSVP preferred.

New Beginning Foster/Adoptive Parent Association

Contact: Regina & Gladys Boyd at 708-385-6263
 Meets first Monday from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
 Fernwood Park, 10436 S. Wallace, Chicago
 Children are welcome with adult. Bring a dish.

Northeast Area Foster and Adopt Parent Association

Contact: Edith Cruz 312-328-2064
 Meets third Thursday at 10 a.m.
 Sherman Park Library, 5440 S. Racine Avenue, Chicago

Cook County Advocate Regional Reporters

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

Cook Central ~ Clyde Thompson
 773-292-7700 office
 773-292-7861 fax
 Clyde.Thompson@illinois.gov
 3518 W. Division, Chicago, IL 60651

Cook South ~ Rod Mulford
 773-371-6402 office
 773-371-6409 fax
 Rod.Mulford@illinois.gov
 6201 S. Emerald
 Chicago, IL 60621



Cook Region Caregiver Training

DCFS Office of Training has scheduled sessions of in-service training modules and other courses in locations across the Cook Regions. The listing below can help caregivers plan for their training needs. To get specific dates and locations, visit the on-line Virtual Training Center (VTC) anytime at www.DCFStraining.org or call the DCFS Office of Training at 877-800-3393 during regular business hours. In addition to classroom courses, caregivers can also take advantage of videos, books and online training.

May

Module 2

Module 5

Module 8

Module 12

Educational Advocacy

June

Module 7

Module 9

Module 12

Child Trauma

Educational Advocacy

Teen Attachment in Foster Care

In-service Training modules (scheduled periodically in classroom sessions or available on DVD)

Module 1 - Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children at Risk (12 hours) The focus of this module is how to build self-esteem in children; how kids act when they need recognition, power, freedom, enjoyment and to belong; and 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 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; how to catch kids being "good" and what to do to encourage positive behavior.

Module 4 - The Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse (9 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 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 before 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 hours) Foster parents learn everyone's role on the team, 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 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 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 hours) In this training caregivers learn how fostering children can affect family relationships, how to minimize stresses that can result and how to find available supports.

Module 10 – Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children and Families (15 hours) Foster parents will study the risk factors for chemical use, abuse, and dependency. They will understand relapse and recovery and be able to acquire skills necessary to be an active member of the team to support parents' recovery.

Module 12 - Understanding & Promoting Pre-Teen and Teen Development (6 hours)

This course will assist caregivers to identify developmentally appropriate ways to best promote healthy development for preteens and teens who have experienced abuse, neglect and trauma. This module will help foster/adopt caregivers to understand teen brain development and the impact of trauma and loss on preteens and teens. Participants will learn specific strategies that caregivers can use as fostering teenagers in the day-to-day life of the foster family.