

Illinois Families Now and Forever[®]

Families by DCFS Foster Care, Adoption & Guardianship

DCFS scholarship helps 48 students attend college

College comes with enough built-in stressors, ranging from grades to roommate conflicts to homesickness. The 48 recipients of the 2013 DCFS Scholarship won't have to add money concerns to that list. More than 200 students applied for the competitive scholarship that is open to youth who are currently in DCFS care or whose cases were closed through adoption or guardianship. The award includes a waiver of tuition and mandatory fees that they can use at one of the nine Illinois state universities or any Illinois junior college. It also provides a monthly stipend of \$451 to offset other expenses, and students can continue the medical coverage.

"There is no way to put a value on how fortunate it is to be able to focus on learning without having to worry about how to pay for school," said Kethan Hedrick, a scholarship recipient in 2009 who is now in law school. He was one of two alumni featured speakers at a July luncheon to celebrate the awardees.



DCFS sent 48 students off to college with scholarships and a celebration lunch for them and their families held in Chicago.

2013 DCFS Scholarship Recipients

- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Kenisha Adams | Jordan Curry | Matthew Peters |
| Kyra Amerson | Jihan Dubose | Troy Pierce |
| Jordanne Beaulieu | Heather Giesecking | Margaret Pierson |
| Ajustice Bernadez | Joseph Godwin | Mary Presley |
| Tracy Bohlken | Julian Grills | Shannon Rogers |
| LeeAnn Book | Sarah Hardin | Sirnetra Scott |
| Brittany Britton | Anthony Hettinger | Nicholas Sodt |
| Lamonte Brown | Albert Hogan | Cortesha Spencer |
| Ashley Brown | Lawrence Holmes | Dominga Stewart |
| Marquise Brown | Emily Johnson | Brianna Stewart |
| Dariontay Cobbs | David Kruse | Hayley Thomas |
| Georgia Coleman | Jessica Kupsik | Brandon Vandegrift |
| Ashley Collins | Kaitlyn Lipe | Raven Warford |
| Ashley Cook | Rapheal Mathis | Michaela Wheeler |
| Sheryl Coyle | Andrea McCabe | Fabian Young |
| Lorenzo Crim | Jose Medina | Savannah Young |

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From the DCFS Director

Richard H. Calica



Dear Parents,

As foster parents, you have the difficult task of helping your foster children imagine what they would like to be when they grow up, understand what they have to do to get there, and acquire the skills necessary to live as independent adults. Children try out different roles/jobs as they develop. They also identify with those adults who are meaningful to them and try to emulate them. You need to help them express and imagine what their desired future looks like through many ages and phases. Whether you have a child for a

month or several years, getting to know their hopes and fears and helping them to deal with them is part of what we expect of you. Giving them a sense of worth and a confident expectation that they can succeed in life is one of the most valuable gifts you can give a child.

Many foster children will not have natural families to rely on in later adolescence and young adulthood. Their abilities to: balance income and expenses; negotiate leases; take care of their homes, clothes and selves needs to come from YOU. Also, knowing how important and enjoyable school can be is part of what all children need help with. History, literature, mathematics and gym are all about defining and solving problems – personal, interpersonal, physical and computational. Discovering how others have solved problems and comparing that to how your child

solves problems can be a wonderful adventure.

Thanks to foster parents like you, this year DCFS awarded 48 college scholarships to youth in or formerly in DCFS care out of hundreds of applicants. Their academic success, community service and student leadership make them shining examples to each and every one of us. Next year, we hope to double the number of scholarships and see the number of children attending college rise as well. With your continued love and devotion, and continued innovation from the department, we will do an even better job of making the dreams of every child a reality.

Have a great school year,

Richard H. Calica
Director

Scholarships, con't. from page 1

It took a lengthy and thorough review process to select 48 finalists, based on their academic achievements, community involvement and personal successes. Almost all of the recipients came to Chicago for the scholarship luncheon. They began the day with an overview of the scholarship program and instruction on

how to make the most of their college experience. With that done, they enjoyed a meal shared with the family members, caseworkers and mentors who helped them reach this educational milestone. This event is one that the DCFS leadership always looks forward to attending. The Office of Youth and Family Development spends months preparing for a proper sendoff that included school supplies and items for living in the dorms. Now, the 48 scholars are embarking on their college journeys at more than two dozen different campuses.



The American Legion awarded \$300 scholarships to children of veterans: Kenisha Adams, Ashley Brown, Ashley Collins, Joseph Goodwin (not pictured) Andrea McCabe, Troy Pierce, Brandon Vandegraft and Savannah Young

The DCFS Youth in Scholarship Program is available to youth currently in DCFS care and to those who left department guardianship through adoption or private guardianship arrangements. The purpose of the program is to ensure that those selected have the opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree in four years or less. Scholarship Program Student Applications are routinely available in January with a deadline of March 31. Applicants must have a high school diploma or GED by the end of the current school year. Contact the Office Youth and Family Development at 312-814-5959 for more information.



DCFS Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council update

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council held its July meeting in Aurora. In addition to the standing items and updates, the council invited several speakers to discuss new initiatives that DCFS has launched.

Increasing Permanency

In the recent restructuring, there will be renewed emphasis on permanency. Julia Camacho-de-Monzon is heading the Permanency Initiative for DCFS. A group of specialized caseworkers will focus on doing “whatever it takes” to avoid cases getting stalled in foster care longer than federal guidelines. This could be assisting in completing the subsidy packet or navigating the legal screening process. The group will analyze regular reports on how many months children have been in care so they can track cases that need more assistance.

Measuring CIPP results

The council also offered its ideas about a new evaluation tool that is being designed by the Clinical Intervention for Placement Permanency (CIPP) program. Lee Annes explained that when a child’s placement may require a significant change in level of care or services needed, a CIPP staffing could help clarify the options. Going forward, the cases that have CIPP intervention will also incorporate an assessment of the family’s situation before the interventions and afterward. The council supported having an added layer of accountability and a means of measuring results.

Joint youth meeting in October

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council will meet with the Statewide Youth Advisory Board in October. The adult group will conduct its customary business

starting in the afternoon, then the youth will arrive for the joint meeting that evening. The adult group will then continue their regular agenda the following day. Over the years of conducting joint meetings, the two groups find that they often have similar interests and find value in the ability to discuss different perspectives on a topic.

Improving adoption outcomes

Cheryl McIntyre, the statewide adoption administrator, briefed the group on changes that have been made to finalize adoptions. New adoption workers have had updated training. McIntyre described the intensive review process to track and intervene in cases that are not moving swiftly toward finalization. Even the logistics for mailing subsidy packets have been streamlined.

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council was founded in conjunction with the Illinois Foster Parent Law. Membership consists of caregivers, agency representatives and other experts in child welfare, who are appointed by the DCFS director. The mandated positions for caregivers are spread among the DCFS regions.

The council holds open meetings at least six times a year, and more as needed, in locations around the state.

Add your input to new implementation plans

Each year the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council must review each of the foster care programs’ Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans. The implementation plans must clearly describe how each foster care program upholds the foster parent rights and responsibilities outlined in the law.

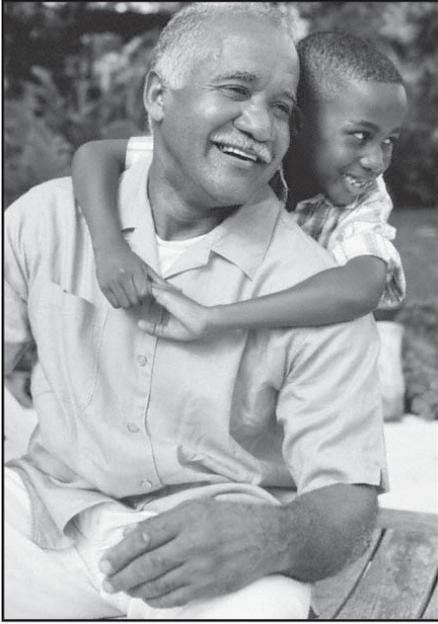
The Foster Parent Law stipulates that the implementation plans demonstrate that caregivers participated in creating it. Typically DCFS and agencies announce meetings in the fall to discuss the previous plan and changes for the new plan, which is due to the council by November 30. The public period for review and comment is

underway as of September. DCFS and private agency programs take any public input into consideration as they prepare the plans for 2013.

All caregivers can review the previous year’s plan. Some foster care programs mailed the plan to licensed homes. Others may have copies available at the administrative offices. If a foster caregiver needs more information about the actual plan or the process for drafting the new plan, each program has a Foster Parent Law liaison. The liaison is the primary contact for matters concerning the Law and how it is enacted at that agency or DCFS region.

The next meeting of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council will be on October 18 in Urbana at 3 p.m. Call DCFS Caregiver and Parent Support at 217-524-2422 for details.

Relative caregivers gain more resources when licensed for foster care



Children who are not able to stay in their homes safely require love and protection, plus support specific to the trauma they are facing. If there is a family crisis that requires DCFS to step in, relatives are the first source asked to help. The children can gain support from the familiarity and the love that a family member can provide. Relative foster care is a critical part of the child welfare system, but it is often complicated. There can be difficult dynamics between family members that have to be sorted out. For several years, DCFS has made extra efforts to give relatives resources by encouraging them to become licensed. Licensed relatives caring for children placed with them by DCFS receive the benefits of more training and increased monthly payments to provide for children's needs. When relatives become licensed, DCFS also receives more federal money to use to support children and families.

In order to be licensed, relative caregivers can take a six-hour course in-class or use the DVD training

course in their home. Training will help relative caregivers understand the developmental and emotional stages of the children in their care. By learning in advance what foster parenting can entail, they will be better able to handle the challenges that may come along. The training was designed specifically to reflect and address parenting situations from the perspective of a relative. Many substitute caregivers decide to go on and take the full 27-hour Foster PRIDE series of classes required to be a foster parent to non-related children.

When relative caregivers become licensed, they also become eligible for the foster care board rate. This monthly payment is typically higher than the "standard of need" rate for unlicensed relatives. For example, a great-aunt from Champaign providing care for her 11-year-old niece could receive \$292 a month at the standard of need rate. After becoming licensed, she would receive \$453 for the child's clothing, board and personal allowance.

Both DCFS and private agency caseworkers receive training on how to help unlicensed relatives become licensed. These relatives will have to comply with current licensing standards, including fingerprinting, medical exams and training. In some cases, workers can request waivers to allow an applicant to become licensed, even though they are not in full compliance with a specific licensing standard.

Taking care of a child during a family crisis that requires DCFS involvement is not an easy task. Becoming licensed will give these caregivers more educational and financial resources.

Resources for Older Relatives Caring for Children

Grandparents and older relatives over the age of 55 raising grandchildren/children are also eligible for services under the Illinois Family Caregiver Support Program.

The five basic services offered to caregivers include:

- Information about available services;
- Assistance accessing services;
- Individual counseling, support groups and caregiver training;
- Respite care to enable caregivers to be temporarily relieved from their caregiving responsibilities; and
- Supplemental services, on a limited basis, to complement the care provided by caregivers. Supplemental services can include assistive devices, home modification, legal assistance, transportation, school supplies and any other gap filling service which attempts to address a short-term caregiver emergency.

Senior HelpLine

Monday - Friday
8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. CST

Toll-free within Illinois:

1-800-252-8966,
1-888-206-1327 (TTY)

Outside of Illinois:

217-524-6911

FAX: 217-524-6968

E-mail: aging.ilsenior@illinois.gov

**211,919 children under
the age of 18 are living in
grandparent-headed
households**

Complete the form for more than a free lunch

Among the many forms that schools require families to complete, one that is especially important is the application for free or reduced-price school meals (commonly referred to as the free lunch form). Funding from federal resources is often based on the number of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Additionally, the income information from the applications can determine what programs a school may be able to offer.

Students who have an open DCFS case will automatically qualify for free meals. The form asks for a check mark “if a foster child (legal responsibility of welfare agency or court).” However, once a child moves to adoption, his or her case is closed and there is no longer an automatic qualification. Adoptive parents will have to complete the

form with income information to determine if the family is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch based on income.

Some families choose not to apply, knowing their income will not be eligible. Still, it is important to write that on the form, sign it and return it. From the school’s perspective, every form counts when funding is at stake.

As one more reason to fill in the form, consider this warning. Some caregivers have reported that their child received meals at a reduced rate without a form, and then received a bill at the end of the year. The DCFS education advisors urge caregivers to return the forms promptly so they can take advantage of the benefits and avoid possible problems.

Fall flu season calls for flu vaccination

Getting the flu vaccination in October through December is the primary tool for preventing influenza. Most people over the age of five months can get the flu shot. Some of the symptoms associated with the flu are fever, headache, cough, sore throat, chills and fatigue. Some people are at higher risk of complications from having the flu, such as developing pneumonia. Those people who may be at higher risk for complications are children between six months and five years, pregnant women, people 50 years or older, and those with chronic illnesses.

The flu vaccination is available at no charge for children enrolled in Medicaid, children with no health insurance or children whose health insurance plans do not include vaccinations. For more information about the upcoming flu season, contact the Illinois Department of Public Health at 217-782-4977.

Illinois State Fair tradition continues



DCFS once again offered discounted tickets for entry, food and rides during the Illinois State Fair. DCFS provided \$3 entry and other specials to more than 800 households. It is one way of showing appreciation to the families who are doing foster care or who have moved to adoption or guardianship.

Families in the Southern part of the state also received invitations

to attend the Du Quoin State Fair. There, families enjoyed rides, lunch and a relaxing time with other families and DCFS support staff.

Attending the state fair in Springfield and in Du Quoin has become a long-standing tradition for foster, adoptive and guardianship families.



Get digital delivery

Many caregivers have decided to skip the paper and request electronic versions of the newsletter, *Illinois Families Now and Forever*®.

When you move to the online version, you still receive all the same valuable information with more benefits. It comes faster, is easier to file, saves money and protects the environment.

To make the switch, send an email to vanessa.james@illinois.gov (there is a dot before “james”) Be sure to include your name and mailing address. We will stop the hard copies and send you an e-mail each time a new issue is ready to read online.



Tools to handle tricky school situations for adopted children

Parental instinct is to protect children from uncomfortable situations. Particularly in school, there are many things that could trigger confusion or hurt feelings for a child who comes to a family through adoption. While it is impossible to be everywhere all the time, there are proactive ways to manage sticky situations. For example, teachers may not realize how assignments like “family trees” to teach history or genetics can be complicated for a child who was adopted. Even a game to match baby pictures to the present-day snapshot could be difficult if the family doesn’t have a photo.

The magazine *Adoptive Families* addresses six of these typical, yet possibly sensitive assignments in a classic article available for reprint.

The article is called “Tackling Tricky Assignments.” It presents alternative means of accomplishing the teaching objectives, with flexibility around the adoption topic.

The topic of adoption in general is also likely to come up in class or on the playground. *Adoptive Families* also has suggestions for a letter parents might want to write to teachers in advance to explain or elaborate on their family. There is also a handout that could be distributed or discussed at home so children can prepare for how they can handle situations in a new school year.

These and more “clip and save” materials are online at www.adoptivefamilies.com.

Illinois Adoption Advisory Council Update

The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council meets six times a year with the mission to advise DCFS on all matters involving or affecting adoption and guardianship services. The council addresses ways to preserve and expand funding for post-adoption and adoption preservation services, and to improve the permanency outcomes for teens and other children.

The DCFS director appoints all council members. Membership includes adoptive parents and adopted persons, as well as experts in child welfare and adoption from DCFS and other agency partner organizations. All meetings are open.

Illinois Adoption Advisory Council 2013-14 Meeting Schedule

October 4, 2013 at 10 a.m.
Conference call

November 22, 2013 at 9 a.m.
Bloomington

February 7, 2014 at 10 a.m.
Conference call

April 4, 2014 at 10 a.m.
Springfield

June 6, 2014 at 10 a.m.
Bloomington

For details, contact DCFS Caregiver and Parent Support at 217-524-2422.



ADOPTION DAY

Celebrating a Family for Every Child

Make plans now to celebrate adoption

This year on November 23, families and communities will be united around adoption. On that day, hundreds of judges, attorneys, adoption agencies, adoption professionals and child advocates will stand together on behalf of forever families for waiting children. Courts and communities across the country will open their doors on a Saturday to finalize thousands of adoptions of children from foster care and to celebrate all families who adopt.

In addition to finalizing adoptions, the community events throughout November can raise awareness about adoption and encourage others to adopt children waiting for families.

There are many ready-to-go resources that can help families prepare to celebrate adoption throughout the month. Individuals and organizations can plan events, letter-writing campaigns, community marches and countless other activities for November. The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council is planning a celebration and welcomes adoptive parents to get involved. Contact co-chair Elizabeth Richmond at elizabeth.richmond@illinois.gov.

To find more information about National Adoption Day activities, events, templates and resources take time now to visit the website www.nationaladoptionday.org.

Cook County Region sends 17 to college with DCFS scholarships

This year, 17 students whose cases were served by programs in the DCFS Cook County region headed to college with the benefits included in the DCFS Scholarship program. The scholarship includes a waiver of tuition and mandatory fees that students can use at one of the nine Illinois state universities or an Illinois community college. All recipients also receive a monthly maintenance grant of \$471 and a medical card.

Scholarship recipients were chosen statewide on the basis of scholastic aptitude, a written personal statement and demonstrated community involvement. Next year's scholarship application process begins in January and ends in March. Contact the youth's caseworker or the DCFS Office of Youth and Family Development at 312-814-5959 for more information on the scholarship program.



Kenisha Adams, from Chicago, is a graduate of Kenwood Academy High School with a 3.85 GPA on a four-point scale. In high school she was a member of the National Honor Society and the International/Travel Club. She also worked for her school's newspaper. Kenisha is very active in her community,

performing volunteer activities for the Vital Bridges Program and tutoring students at the YMCA. Kenisha is now a student at Illinois State University and plans to be a pre-medicine major.



Kyra Amerson graduated from Kenwood Academy High School in Chicago, where she earned a 3.94 out of 4.0 GPA. She was a member of the National Honor Society and the National Latin Honors Society. She received awards for perfect attendance, Outstanding Scholastic Achievement and Best Helper. Kyra also participated in a dual

enrollment program with the City Colleges of Chicago. She attends Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and plans to major in clinical psychology.



Ajustice Bernadez, from Chicago, is a graduate of Orr Academy High School. She earned a 4.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale. She participated in the Book Club and on the volleyball team, where she was named captain and the Most Valuable Player. Ajustice earned awards for the honor roll, highest GPA, leadership

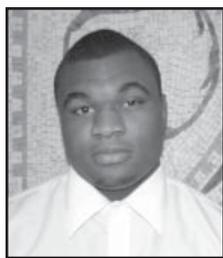
and perfect attendance.

Ajustice attends the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and plans to major in psychology.

Marquise Brown, from Chicago, is a 2012 graduate of Gary Comer College Prep High School, where she earned a 4.62 GPA on a 4.0 scale. In high school, Marquise was a member of the National Honor Society, student council, cheer team, and the math team.

Marquise is in her sophomore year at Pomona College in Claremont, California and is majoring in biology.

Cook County Advocate: Regional News



Dariontay Cobbs is a graduate of Mirta Ramirez Computer Science Charter School in Chicago, where he earned a 3.58 out of 4.0 GPA. While in high school, Dariontay participated on the football and basketball teams and volunteered as a tutor. He was on the honor roll and received the President's

scholarship, a Junior Achievement award and Who's Who of America designation.

Dariontay is now at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, majoring in mathematics.



Ashley Collins, of Harvey, is a graduate of Thornwood High School, where she earned a 2.55 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Ashley was actively involved in her community's outreach to women, where she has participated in many events, including a women's health fair and charity golf outing. She volunteered

with Catholic Charities every Monday to serve dinner to those in need in her area. Ashley has received numerous honors and special recognition during her high school career, including being named co-captain and MVP of her softball team for three years and first place in the Financial Literacy Club portfolio contest. She enjoys studying Spanish, playing basketball, and participating in mock trial law competitions.

One of Ashley's goals is to create a program for high school youth who are adopted or who are in foster care. Ashley is continuing her studies at DePaul University and plans to go on to graduate school.



Sheryl Coyle is a graduate of Tinley Park High School. She earned a 5.35 GPA on a 5.0 scale. While in high school, she was a member of the National Honor Society and the tennis and basketball teams. She was a Titan Tutor and participated in Operation Snowball, an alcohol and drug

prevention program.

In addition to being active in school extracurricular activities, Sheryl volunteered at her community's Annual Senior Citizen Prom and worked with a local third grade classroom as a teacher's assistant. She was recognized by the Rotary Club for her high school achievements. Sheryl is interested in majoring in health science, and she plans a career in occupational therapy. Sheryl attends the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



Lorenzo Crim is a graduate of St. Louis University High School in Missouri. He earned a 3.15 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Lorenzo has extensive volunteer experience; he participated in neighborhood service projects, collected clothes for homeless veterans and families, and tutored students in math and reading at Loyola Academy Middle

School. He also earned academic and athletic honors in school. He won eighth place out of 60 in a robotics competition at Missouri University of Science and Technology summer camp. Lorenzo was the National High School racquetball champion in singles and doubles. He enjoyed being a liturgist at his church and was active in many clubs at school, including the Chess Club, the National Society of Black Engineers and the African-American Cultural Enrichment group.

Lorenzo returned to Illinois to attend the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he is pursuing a degree in math and computer science.



Jordan Curry is a graduate of West Ottawa High School in Holland, Michigan. He earned a 3.41 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Jordan enjoyed playing violin as a member of the All-State Orchestra, West Ottawa Chamber Orchestra, and Holland Area Youth Orchestra. He was voted “Most Musical” by his

2013 graduating class. Outside of the classroom and orchestras, Jordan participated in track and volunteered for the Habitat for Humanity program. He also worked at a local grocer. He now attends Western Michigan University. Jordan hopes to encourage minority participation in music programs. Before leaving for college, he fulfilled his dream to perform at a DCFS event. Those who attended the Scholarship Luncheon in July listened to him play a classical violin composition.



Julian Grills is a 2012 graduate of Buffalo Grove High School. While in high school, he was an honor roll student each year and earned a 4.23 out of 5.0 GPA. Julian participated in many activities, including cross country, track and field and martial arts. In an effort to mix his desire for helping others with his interest

in the medical field, Julian volunteered at a community animal shelter, a nursing home and raised money for cancer awareness. Julian is a student at Illinois State University and plans a career as an athletic trainer.

Jessica Kupsik graduated from Antioch Community High School, where she earned a 3.9 GPA on a 4.0 scale. She was a member of Diversity Club, International Club, Psychology Club, and Model United Nations. She achieved honor roll status throughout her high school years and completed summer volunteer work with the Catholic HEART Workcamp in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Jessica is studying at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



Rapheal Mathis is a graduate of Plainfield East High School. He earned a 4.65 GPA on a 5.0 scale. He was member of the speech and poetry teams, student council, the peer mentoring program, and the youth retreat program. Raphael also participated in anti-bullying initiatives and school plays. He received numerous regional and

state awards for participation in poetry/spoken word competitions. Rapheal attends Lake Forest College and plans to major in communications/broadcast journalism.



Sirnetra Scott graduated from Prosser Career Academy in Chicago with a 4.76 out of 5.0 GPA. She was a student in the International Baccalaureate Program, where she excelled academically and received the IB Diploma. She was also a member of the National Honor Society. She was involved in the

Aspira Program, the Kenya Project, and the Biodiesel Reactor Club. Sirnetra attends the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and will major in English and journalism.



Brianna Stewart is a graduate of Homewood-Flossmoor High School, where she earned a 3.8 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Brianna was a participant in the choir, Viking Orchestra, Key Club, National Achievement program and student government. She was in the gifted program, was on the honor roll and graduated in the top four percent of her

graduating class. Brianna is a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and will major in mathematics.

Raven Warford is a 2011 graduate of Chicago's Simeon Career Academy High School, where she earned a 3.60 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Raven is a junior at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE). She plays on the SIUE women's basketball team and is very committed to athletics. Raven is focused and goal driven as she strives to achieve academic success. Raven is majoring in exercise science.



Fabian Young, from Chicago, is a 2011 graduate of Al Raby High School, where he earned a 3.96 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Fabian is starting his junior year at the University of Minnesota with a 3.8 GPA. He is involved in a national volunteer program at the university, conducting outreach and fundraising activities for charitable causes. Fabian has demonstrated outstanding leadership and has maintained a clear sense of purpose as he navigates college life independently. Fabian is majoring in agriculture and food business management, with a minor in entrepreneurial management.



Savannah Young graduated from Chicago Technology Academy High School with a 3.29 out of 4.0 GPA. In high school she was the public relations liaison for the Young Women's Leadership Society, and she was a leader and mentor to her peers. She volunteered to feed the homeless, served as a teacher assistant in the "Impact Kids Program," wrote her church's newsletter and served on the church's hospitality team. Savannah attends the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She will major in computer science.

Local councils back in action after summer break

Now that summer is over, the region's foster care groups are ready to support families. In addition to the information that is shared at each meeting, this fall caregivers can contribute to the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. Be sure to attend an upcoming meeting.



The Cook North regional foster parent advisory council meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 10 a.m. at the DCFS office at 1911 S. Indiana.



The Cook Central Foster Parent Advisory Council is open to all caregivers in the Cook Central Area. Families with the DCFS foster care program and homes served by private agencies are welcome to attend. The group meets the fourth Tuesday of the month 9:30 a.m. at the DCFS Maywood office, located at 1701 First Ave.



South Suburban Support Group

Caregivers can benefit from the network of fellow foster parents who attend the Support Group sponsored by the Harvey Office. This group meets every other month for education and encouragement. Typically the discussion topic will be eligible for training credit hours.

The group meets the fourth Thursday of odd numbered months at 9 a.m. to noon in the DCFS Office, 15115 Dixie Highway, Harvey.

Regional Foster Care Advisory Council

The Regional Foster Care Advisory Council meets on the third Tuesday of the month at 10 a.m. All caregivers from the Cook South area are invited to learn about new policies and to discuss issues and enhancements to the foster care program. The foster parent advisory council for Cook South meets at the 6201 S. Emerald Office in Chicago.

Cook Region Training

The DCFS Office of Training has scheduled sessions of in-service training modules and other courses in locations across the region. To get specific dates and locations, visit the on-line Virtual Training Center at www.DCFStraining.org. Click on any of the links under Training Schedule to access course descriptions, in-service training and Educational Advocacy Training or call the DCFS Office of Training at 877-800-3393 during business hours.

The Virtual Training Center (VTC) is your tool to:

- See training news and general information;
- Check available trainings;
- View/print your training transcript;
- Register and take on-line courses; and
- Download course materials to use in class or to access after training.

DIGITAL TRAINING MATERIALS NOW AVAILABLE

As we move into the digital age and aim to use fewer printed resources, DCFS Training has made many PRIDE materials easily available on the home page of the Virtual Training Center at www.dcfstraining.org.

Anyone may print the materials or download them onto almost any electronic device and bring their device to training class. Trainees who have no digital access should speak with their trainers when they arrive in class, so we can accommodate everyone.

Who do you call when....?

...A child in your home is having a psychiatric crisis that may require hospitalization?

Call the CARES line at 800-345-9049. However, if a child is a danger to himself or others, call 911 first. The CARES line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

...You want information on becoming a foster parent or on adoption?

The Adoption Information Center of Illinois (AICI) can answer your questions and connect you with a licensing agency. The toll-free number is 800-572-2390. AICI also maintains information about the children who are featured in the newsletter.

...You have questions about your board check?

Call the DCFS Central Payment Unit at 800-525-0499 if your check comes from DCFS. If your check comes from a private agency, contact the agency.

...You need to report a child missing or have information about a youth who has run away?

To report information on missing youth call 866-503-0184. The toll-free number is available 24 hours a day every day of the week. If you feel the child is in danger, call 911 first.

...Your adoption or guardianship is final but you have questions about the subsidy?

Call the subsidy worker assigned to the case or the Adoption Support Line at 888-96-ADOPT so you can be connected to the right individual for help.

...You are having family problems with your adopted child?

Contact the Adoption/Subsidized Guardianship Preservation Program that serves your area. Call the Adoption Support Line at 888-96-ADOPT.

...You have questions about your child's medical card?

Call 800-228-6533.

...You need to find a phone number for a caseworker?

Call the main switchboard in Chicago at 312-814-6800 or the State of Illinois Operator at 312-793-3500.

...You feel you aren't being treated fairly by DCFS or a private agency?

If you've already tried to resolve the issue with the caseworker and his or her supervisor and are not sure where to turn, call the Advocacy Office at 800-232-3798.

...You are having a hard time getting services for your child at school?

Most private agencies have an education liaison, and each DCFS region has education advisors who can help. Call your agency or nearest DCFS office to be connected to the right educational resource for your area.

...You have questions about programs for youth approaching adulthood?

Contact the transition coordinator that serves your area, by calling the nearest DCFS regional office. The transition coordinator can advise on programs such as life skills training, preparation for higher education and employment assistance. Details on these programs can also be found at the Get Goal'd website www.youthincare.illinois.gov.

...You have an idea for an article in the newsletter?

Each region has reporters to help gather local news. The names and contact information are listed on the back page of each edition. You can contact the Editor, Vanessa James, at 312-814-6800 or send an e-mail message to vanessa.james@illinois.gov.



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Pat Quinn, Governor
Richard H. Calica, DCFS Director
Published by: DCFS Office of
Workforce Development, Parent
and Caregiver Support

Editor: Vanessa James
Phone: 312-814-1307
Fax: 312-814-4131
E-mail: vanessa.james@illinois.gov

Sponsor: Jackie Bright, DCFS Cook
Regional Administrator

Regional Reporters

Cook North ~ Edith Cruz
Phone: 312-328-2064
edith.cruz@illinois.gov

Cook Central ~ Alice Couch
708-338-6715 office
Alice.Couch@gmail.com

Cook South ~ Ida Lopez
708-755-5314
E-mail c/o Barbara.Walker@illinois.gov

Graphics: Jenny Florent
Produced by: DCFS Print Shop

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Illinois Families Now and Forever®
Vanessa James, Editor
Department of Children & Family Services
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