

# Illinois Families Now and Forever

*Families by Foster Care, Adoption and Guardianship®*

## DCFS awards scholarships to 48 college students

A grateful group of 48 young people headed to college with a full-tuition waiver at participating state institutions, compliments of the 2008 DCFS Scholarship Program. They also will have continued medical coverage and a \$458 monthly stipend to help with expenses. Reaching for the Stars was the theme of the 2008 DCFS Scholarship luncheon held in July. Keynote speaker Rev. Chris Harris, likened the students' journey to a rocket ascending through the atmosphere. After they take off, they will eventually have to release the booster rockets that launched them into orbit, leaving behind the familiarity of friends and family. He encouraged the students to remember the lessons learned and to stay focused on their new mission.

The scholarship luncheon is an annual event that is always a highlight for the students and caregivers, along with the DCFS staff who provide support and encouragement. The Division of Service Intervention sponsors the event, which is always a draw.

"This is one of the best DCFS events that I can come to," said Director Erwin McEwen. "It gets



*The 2008 DCFS scholarship program recipients enjoyed the luncheon held in their honor in July. Now the 48 students are attending college.*

more competitive each year as we have more youth doing well academically."

First Lady Patti Blagojevich said the Scholarship Program is an example of the good that can happen when government and the private sector come together to "help children who had a rough start overcome odds that were stacked against them."

This event gets an added layer of special attention because for a decade the Walter and Connie Payton Foundation has supported the scholarship luncheon with DCFS. Mrs. Payton and children Brittney and Jarrett, continue to share the legacy of Chicago Bears great Walter Payton through their commitment to serve young

people in need.

The 48 scholarship awardees were selected from hundreds of applications, based on their scholastic aptitude, written personal statement and demonstrated community service. Four youth whose parents served in the military also earned the veterans awards. Sherrell Cannon, Ann Fitzpatrick, Erin McAuliff and John Phillips each received an additional \$500 scholarship.

At the luncheon, the excited group of young scholars eagerly accepted their awards and all of the accompanying accolades. Now they are off to substantiate the faith that their caregivers, parents and supporters have placed in them.

*Continued on page 2*



## From the DCFS Director

Erwin McEwen

Another season has ended for my son's baseball team. It was bittersweet, despite the best efforts of Coach Dad. Even in that seeming defeat, watching those young players work hard and enjoy the games reminded me of the children we serve. First, children have an uncanny skill to cope. They can bend without breaking; and quite often they can bounce back. Secondly, the odds of them bouncing back are much greater if they have an adult who cares about them to provide perspective and support, even in a loss.

My third lesson learned was in how to define victory. Every coach wants to win; just as every parent wants to see their child succeed. Yet a child won't always "hit it out of the park." Sometimes just getting on base is enough to make us cheer. For another child, just having the nerve to pick up the bat and take a swing is a home run.

Recently, I spoke to our group of DCFS Scholarship recipients. I was in awe of what they had accomplished academically, in spite of the family obstacles that could have knocked them down. They sat next to caregivers and caseworkers who were proud and relieved to see them off to college.

Yet for those 48 "home runs," we have many more youth who will find victories in other ways. You may have to define it for them in terms of perfect attendance, all homework turned in or days without detentions. In your efforts, I hope that you will utilize the caseworkers, education advisors and local resources that we have in place so that this season of school will be a success.

## Scholarships, con't.

The DCFS Youth in Scholarship program is available to youth currently in DCFS care, or 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 (CFS 438) 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 of Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959 for more information.

### 2008 DCFS Scholarship Recipients

- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Jeffrey Bakken    | Ashley Hawkins     |
| Yesenia Barzaga   | Brittany Helfrich  |
| Jacqui Batts      | Zehabu Herd        |
| Jaquta Box        | Betty James        |
| Christine Caffey  | Osiris Johnson     |
| Sherell Cannon    | Gregory Keller     |
| Celetha Chatman   | Jennifer Logan     |
| Milton Colbert    | Jason Lopez        |
| Donald Curry      | Sheila Manns       |
| Jody Danna-Hoehne | Felicia McAllister |
| Rose Davis        | Robert McAuliff    |
| Shaayna Day       | Erin McErlean      |
| Robert Dodd       | Danielle Moon      |
| Heather Eckart    | Victoria Nelson    |
| Andrew Ehrich     | Melisa Ori         |
| Ryan Fageron      | John Phillips      |
| Ann Fitzpatrick   | Joshua Rademaker   |
| Renee Fix         | Ladiedre Rugen     |
| Lindsey Flowers   | Nicole Sikora      |
| Yesenia Gonzalez  | Nickolas Steele    |
| Jomyron Graham    | Kimberly Tracewski |
| Nathaniel Griffin | Marian Trella      |
| Vesta Hall        | Shantaye Wonzer    |
| Martell Halloran  | Desiree Woodson    |

## School Readiness Program for Pre-K

The Department's Division of Service Intervention recently launched its first Statewide School Readiness team. The team's goal is to ensure that every child age three to five years old is enrolled in a quality early learning program.

Foster caregivers of children who are three years old or older and not enrolled in a preschool program should contact their caseworker right away. Quality preschool promotes children's academic readiness and it also helps them learn to play, make friends and receive positive attention from adults. Youth in foster care especially need the stability of an early education program that can help them "catch up" from any educational or developmental setbacks due to trauma in their family life. Then, when they reach kindergarten, they will understand how school works and will be ready to perform well.

The school readiness team will promote collaboration among the early childhood experts who work with DCFS and child welfare professionals. Each DCFS region has an assigned School Readiness Specialist who can connect children to a variety of suitable programs, including Headstart Quality Early Learning Programs and Strengthening Families Learning networks, to meet the enrollment objective.

The School Readiness Specialists are available to foster parents who would like more information or have questions about this

initiative. They will work closely with caseworkers, educational advisors and the Erickson Institute Child Development Specialists as needed to coordinate enrollment. They are also available to assist in regional training or to present to foster parent support groups and staff development meetings.

### School Readiness Team:

#### Cook South Region

Michael Stripens  
708-210-3590  
Michael.Stripens@illinois.gov

#### Cook North Region

Jackie Rivers  
312-328-2537  
Jackie.Rivers@illinois.gov

#### Cook Central Region

Nubia Rodriguez  
773-854-0627  
Nubia.Rodriguez@illinois.gov

#### Northern Region

Rafael Serrano  
630-801-3437  
Rafael.Serrano@illinois.gov

#### Central Region

David Morris  
217-557-3698  
David.Morris@illinois.gov

#### Southern Region

Dock Conner  
618-583-2100  
Dock.Conner@illinois.gov

## Movin' On Up

### For youth transitioning to adulthood

Money matters are top-of-mind for youth. These Web-based resources can help older youth prepare for the realities of independent life.

- **Practical Money Skills** ([www.practicalmoneyskills.com](http://www.practicalmoneyskills.com))  
The site utilizes Financial Football Advanced Edition to teach "financial literacy." The program has three difficulty levels suitable for independent college age students.
- **Banking on Our Future** ([www.bankingonourfuture.org](http://www.bankingonourfuture.org))  
Banking on Our Future (BOOF) is Operation Hope's financial literacy program for children in grades four through 12. The program provides basic information on banks and credit unions, checking and savings accounts, insurance, credit, and investments.
- **Mapping Your Future** ([www.mappingyourfuture.org](http://www.mappingyourfuture.org))  
Students and their parents will find information on financial strategies, career options, and college planning at this site.
- **Career Voyages** ([www.careervoyages.gov](http://www.careervoyages.gov))  
Users of this site will explore career options in relationship to growth potential and wages.
- **Next Steps** ([www.nextsteps.org](http://www.nextsteps.org))  
This site provides job resources and career development information.

For more information on services for youth approaching adulthood, contact the DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959.

## Lifebooks help youth heal as they tell their life story

A “lifebook” is like a living scrapbook that outlines a child’s life with pictures, vital records, mementos, and personal expressions. It has become a common way to help children prepare for a move to an adoptive family, illustrating the start to a new chapter in their lives. However, a lifebook can be equally, if not more important, for a child in foster care. Because of the intense emotional component of a lifebook, when used effectively, it is a valuable therapeutic tool. As children work through trauma and sort out their lives before and during foster care, caregivers can provide crucial support.

For example, children in the foster care system will often have many questions about how they came into the system. There are often gaps about their birth families and fuzzy recollections of previous placements. Many times they haven’t had the simple pleasure of holding on to scrapbooks and memorabilia from childhood. A life book can address those needs and also be a therapeutic way to build a stronger emotional foundation for them while in care and for their future after DCFS care.

“Every child deserves a sense of his or her own history, said Ruth Jajko of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois. “Many foster children lose that after being separated from their original families, and the emotional damage can deepen if children have to move to more than one foster home. Lifebooks are a source of healing. They can help children reconnect with

people and fill in the gaps of their personal stories.”

Putting the Pieces Together: Lifebook Work with Children is the new training DVD that Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) developed to train caseworkers, therapists and caregivers in how to address childhood trauma while creating a lifebook. The DVD is the cornerstone of the first systemic effort to focus on lifebook therapy with children while they are in foster care. LSSI intends to train each of the agency’s caseworkers in lifebook development and to create lifebooks for all the youth in the foster care program. The program is also available for purchase so that others can learn of the benefits of lifebook work and how to guide a child through the creation of his or her own book.

“We have laid out a training method for using these books as a therapeutic tool. We are taking lifebooks to a new level, aiming to impact child welfare training nationwide,” said Monica Johnson of LSSI. She led the project’s development with researchers from the Center for Adoption Studies at Illinois State University.

At DCFS, many regions have hosted lifebook parties for caregivers and youth to demonstrate the importance of developing and continuing to add to a child’s lifebook. Last year in the Cook North region, one young man came to the party reluctant to participate. He had only vague



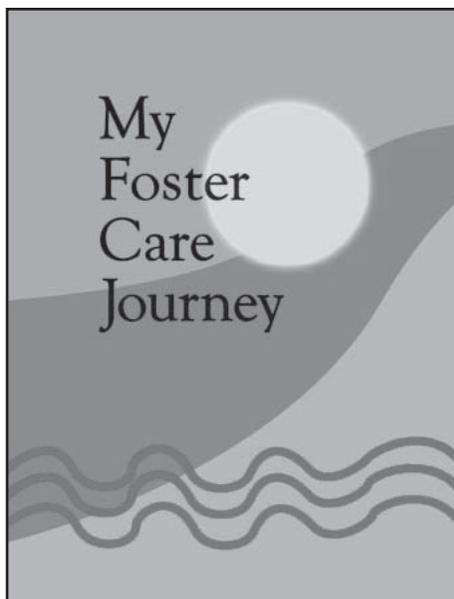
recollections of his family history and many questions about his deceased parents. After staff pored over his records, he learned that at one time, he lived in a home across from the cemetery where his mother was buried. He learned that his middle name is one that is passed along to all males in his family. By the end of the afternoon he was sharing some recent family stories. He also developed a list of questions and activities that his caseworker along with his caregiver could follow up with in order to fill in some of the gaps of his lifebook.

Caseworkers or therapists can help gather the elements that a child might like to include, and therapists can assist in sorting out questions and potentially troubling answers. While lifebooks require preparation and emotional guidance, they don’t have to be elaborate. The goal is to create a collection of information that the youth feels is important and preserve it. There are many printed and on-line resources that offer sample pages. Whether

the lifebook is a sturdy three-ring binder or a leather-bound album, it needs to allow for customization and personalization. With a disposable camera, double stick tape and a collection of markers, youth can have a keepsake to follow them through their time in foster care and beyond.

### Resources:

- **Lutheran Child and Family Services Lifebook Training**  
For information on the lifebook training DVD *Putting the Pieces Together*, contact Jo Ann Dillard of LSSI at 847-390-1446
- **www.Adoptionlearningpartners.org**  
Adoption Learning Partners, founded by The Cradle, offers an on-line course Lifebooks: Creating and telling your child's life story.
- **www.adoptionlifebooks.com**  
The site contains tips and re-



sources along with two books written for children and teens adopted from foster care: *My Foster Care Journey* and *For When I'm Famous: A Teen Foster Care Adoption LifeBook*.

- **www.scrapandtell.com**  
Sells adoption scrapbook/lifebook supplies and information, a wide selection of accessories, samples of actual page layouts, articles and other items.
- **www.dmarie.com/timecap**  
Find headlines, popular toys, movies, or even famous people born on a specific day and year.
- **www.ifapa.org/resources/publications.asp**  
The Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association created free, electronic lifebook pages to allow a child to pick the pages that fit his or her style. Lifebooks are also available for purchase at the site.

**The Day You Came To Our Family**

The date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your age: \_\_\_\_\_

Who brought you: \_\_\_\_\_

How we felt: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Homeward Bound

*When Return Home is the Goal*

One way to look at reunification is to see it as a beginning, rather than an end. Caregivers who work with parents to bring their children back home are building lasting relationships. A child can benefit from knowing that while foster care is by definition temporary, the person taking care of them can be part of their life even after returning home.

Cecelia Ruffin, a foster caregiver with Catholic Charities, found the reunification work especially gratifying, even when the siblings left her home. She and the children's parent spent many months discovering how to share parenting responsibilities and activities as the case moved toward the children returning to their mother's care. When moving day came, Ruffin even went to the mother's home and spent time with her setting up her children's room. They discussed expectations and ways to make the transition smooth.

"The children hugged me with delight and I assured them that our connection was intended to last a lifetime and I am here whenever they or their mother need me," Ruffin described to her caseworker afterwards. "This entire process was a success and I look forward to the next family reunification."

Foster caregivers who want to consider new reunification placements should discuss it with their licensing representative. The caseworkers of children already in the home can go over resources for caregivers when return home is the goal.

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## “Ask Before You Eat” highlights risk of food allergies

Nationwide, some 3 million children suffer from food allergies, including 1 out of 17 children under 3 years of age. Food allergy reactions in children can range from mild symptoms such as skin rashes to anaphylaxis, a sudden and severe response that can end in death. Caregivers especially should be on alert, as children who come to their homes may not always come with a complete understanding of their medical backgrounds.

“Ask Before You Eat” is a new statewide education campaign designed to prevent unintentional and potentially life threatening harm to children with food allergies. Illinois’ First Lady Patti Blagojevich participated in the program’s launch in May.

“We’re stepping forward to help parents and caregivers protect children from a danger we cannot ignore,” said Mrs. Blagojevich. “As a parent of a food allergic child, I understand the difficulty of safeguarding children that simply want to have the same food and fun as their friends. Working together, we can protect children’s health and prevent the tragedies of severe reactions.”

### What causes allergies?

There are eight foods that cause about 90 percent of all food allergies: milk, soy, eggs, wheat, peanuts, fish, shellfish, and tree nuts (which include walnuts, pecans, almonds, and cashews). A food allergy is a person’s immune system response to a food or a part of the food that their body

mistakes as something harmful. Once the person’s immune system identifies a food as being harmful, it learns to produce chemicals or antibodies to protect the body from the food. These antibodies cause allergic reactions that can affect different body functions including the respiratory system, skin, cardiovascular system, and the gastrointestinal tract.

### Food allergy symptoms

Some symptoms of a food allergy reaction may include one or more of the following: hives, drippy or stuffy nose, itchy eyes, tingling in the mouth, sweating, paleness, panting, swelling of the lips, tongue or throat, difficulty breathing, abdominal cramps, vomiting, diarrhea, eczema, rash, coughing, wheezing, hoarseness, rapid pulse, dizziness, or loss of consciousness. Many allergic reactions cause mild symptoms, but some reactions can be severe and even life-threatening (an anaphylactic reaction). The allergic reactions may become worse each time the child is exposed to the food. Food allergy reactions may be sudden and severe or occur hours after a child is exposed.

### Managing food allergies

There is no cure to food allergies. Epinephrine, also called adrenaline, is the medication typically given to someone when he or she experiences an allergic reaction to foods. If a child experiences an allergic reaction to foods, he or she should also be seen immediately by a medical professional, even when they have received epineph-

rine. The best way for someone to prevent severe allergic reactions is to avoid the foods that they are allergic to altogether. Teaching a child to be aware of the foods that he or she is allergic to and reading ingredient labels for all foods is the key to avoiding a reaction. It is also important to inform anyone who provides care for your child about the food allergy. School personnel, including the school nurse, the school bus driver, and those working in the cafeteria should also be aware of a child’s food allergy.

Being able to identify allergic reaction symptoms as soon as they occur, as well as knowing what to do when your child experiences an allergic food reaction will help if a child does experience an allergic reaction to food. Caregivers with questions about a child’s food allergies or suspicions that he or she may have a food allergy, should discuss this with the child’s primary care physician.

For additional information on food allergies, consult the following Web sites:

- The Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network: <http://www.foodallergy.org/>
- Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America: <http://www.aafa.org/>
- Mayo Clinic: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/food-allergies/AA00057>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Institutes of Health (NIH): <http://health.nih.gov/result.asp/265/29>



## Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council bulletin

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council is chaired by Robyn Harvey, a foster and adoptive parent from DeKalb. In June, she led the group in setting priorities for the new fiscal year. The Council will focus on:

- Monitoring how changes in the state budget could affect caregivers
- Closely tracking legislative issues and activities that pertain to foster care
- Collaborating with other child welfare advisory groups and regional advisory councils

### Joint meeting with youth board

The Statewide Youth Advisory Board (SYAB) and the foster care council continue to explore issues that impact caregivers and youth in care. In June, the SYAB President visited the Council to discuss the shared agenda for the September joint meeting of adults and youth. The focus of the joint meeting will be on life skills. The youth boards are developing a proposal to Director McEwen for enhanced life skills training and requested involvement from caregivers.

DCFS sponsors regional youth advisory boards in Cook County, Northern, Central and Southern regions, in addition to the statewide board. Membership is open to youth 14-21 who are in or were formerly in DCFS care. Members of the adult board expressed that the youth board is an excellent way to help young people develop leadership skills as they learn to

advocate for themselves and other youth. To learn more about the youth advisory boards, contact Rena Gillison of Chicago Area Project at 312-588-3841.

### New members join Council

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council is by law comprised of active foster parents and individuals with experience in the child welfare profession. The Council welcomed two new members at the June meeting.



Debra McGhee

Debra McGee, Director of Foster Care at Beatrice Caffrey Youth Services, has been in the foster care field for 25 years.

She has worked in various foster care positions and is very invested in children and families.



Kim Perez

Kim Perez, Vice President of Child and Family Services at Lifelink, has been in the field for 12 years and she is responsible

for foster care and early childhood programs.

### Next meeting

The Council meetings are open to the public. The next meeting will be a joint meeting with the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council, held in Lisle on Friday, November 21. For more information, contact the DCFS Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422.

## Plan for flu shots

The flu season typically runs between November and April. Influenza, more commonly referred to as the flu, is a respiratory tract infection that is typically caused by the influenza virus. Getting the flu vaccination is the primary tool for preventing influenza. Most people over the age of five months can get the flu shot, including breast-feeding mothers. The normal period for getting a flu shot is during October through December each year.

A flu vaccination can lower the risk of a bothersome and potentially serious bout of the flu. Some of the symptoms associated with the flu are fever, headache, cough, runny nose, nausea, and vomiting. 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.

Discuss with your child's primary care physician whether your child (or you) should receive the flu shot. The flu vaccination is available at no charge through the Vaccination of Children Program for those children enrolled in Medicaid, children with no health insurance or children whose health insurance plans do not include vaccinations.

Remember to teach youth to cover their mouth and nose when they sneeze or cough, and remind them to wash their hands each time.





## Midwest Adoption Conference

The Midwest Adoption Conference will be held on Sunday, November 2 at Trinity International University in Deerfield. The theme for the conference is The Journey Continues. This conference is put together by Adoptive Families Today, Stars of David and Families with Children from China. Caregivers licensed through DCFS will find much of interest and can receive training credit. It is a conference for those looking to adopt, adoptive families and other triad members, foster families, and professionals. The conference will offer training opportunities in many aspects of adoption including:

- General Parenting Topics
- International Adoption
- Legal Issues in Adoption
- Domestic Adoption
- Parenting Children with Challenges
- Issues Unique to Pre-Adoption
- Post Adoption Services and Resources
- Adoption and the Schools
- Race and Culture in Adoption
- Teen Issues
- Therapeutic Issues
- Single or Gay/Lesbian Adoption
- Openness in Adoption
- Advocacy and Public Policy
- Fostering
- Search and Reunion

For more information or to register call 847-934-4385 or go to [www.adoptivefamilies.org](http://www.adoptivefamilies.org).



## Illinois Adoption Advisory Council update

The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council started the new fiscal year in July by setting priorities. Then, Council co-chairs Elizabeth Richmond and Jim Jones shared the priority concerns in a recent meeting with Director McEwen. The Adoption Advisory Council advocated for:

- Expanded breadth of Adoption Preservation programs to respond to increased need for therapy and mental health services
- Increased resources for the Older Caregivers Program, Family Matters and the Deceased Adoptive Parents Program as the population of adoptive parents ages
- Closer collaboration with community programs that serve post-adoption families and youth that are in crisis

Director McEwen responded that he supported much of what concerned the Council. He pledged to work closely with the Adoption Council and to explore resources within the budget for fiscal year '09.

### Crisis Intervention

The Adoption Advisory Council and Director McEwen spoke in greater detail about the Comprehensive Community Based Youth Services (CCBYS) program as it pertains to adoptive and guardianship families. The Department of Human Services operates CCBYS to provide crisis assistance to youth ages 11 to 17 who are at risk of being involved with DCFS or the legal system. Services are for youth who:

- Have been locked out of their home
- Have run away from home, or
- Are homeless without their parents

A significant number of youth who were adopted out of DCFS care are receiving services from this crisis program. Some agencies reported 10 to 20 percent of the youth receiving crisis intervention came from adoptive or guardianship homes. The Council will examine ways to improve communications with CCBYS providers and to augment training so that providers will better understand how to serve the needs of adoptive families.

### Membership openings

Membership on the Adoption Advisory Council includes adoptive and guardianship parents, professionals in the adoption arena and individuals who were adopted. Currently the Council has openings for adopted individuals living in Cook County. Those interested in applying for membership should contact the Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422.

### Next Council Meeting

The next meeting of the Illinois Adoption Council will be in conjunction with the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council on Friday, November 21. The councils will meet in Lisle. For more information, contact the Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422.



## November is National Adoption Month

What started as a weeklong celebration of adoption in Massachusetts, blossomed into an entire month of activities that has been nationally recognized since 1990. One special highlight of the month is National Adoption Day when courts and communities across the country will come together to finalize thousands of adoptions of children from foster care and to celebrate all families who adopt.

Traditionally, National Adoption Day is celebrated the Saturday before Thanksgiving. This year only, out of respect for the nation's remembrance of the 45th anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on November 22, the celebration moves to Saturday, November 15. 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.

The goals of National Adoption Day 2008 are to:

- Finalize adoptions from foster care in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico
- Celebrate and honor all families who adopt
- Raise awareness about the 129,000 children in foster care waiting for adoption
- Encourage others to adopt children from foster care

NOVEMBER 15, 2008



Celebrating a Family for Every Child

- Build collaboration among local adoption agencies, courts, and advocacy organizations
- Communicate availability and need for post-adoptive services

National Adoption Day is a collective national effort to raise awareness of children in foster care waiting to find permanent, loving families. More than 300 events are held each year throughout the country to finalize the adoptions of children in foster care, and to celebrate all families who adopt. Since 1999, more than 20,000 children have been adopted from foster care on National Adoption Day.

To find out more information about National Adoption Day activities, events and resources go to [www.nationaladoptionday.org](http://www.nationaladoptionday.org).

## Illinois State Fair

The Illinois State Fair was the place to be for a dose of summer fun. DCFS invited foster, adoptive and guardianship families to the fair with discounted admission, refreshment coupons and reduced-price rides. The DCFS tent served as a gathering spot for a cool drink and plenty of information on programs and services. In addition to the fun, an important safety issue was also addressed. Youth who came to the fair with their parents could get their picture taken to have on file in case they ever were to go missing. They also received a free family photo to capture their good memories.

"I love that we can help our families have a good time just being a family at the fair," said Director Erwin McEwen.

Nearly 1300 families took advantage of the special invitation to the Illinois State Fair this year.



Caregivers came to the DCFS tent for resources and refreshments during the Illinois State Fair.



## Tell it like it is

Families Now and Forever wants to hear the real deal on caring for children from those who know best...YOU!

Here's what you had to say about the question: *We hear a lot about preparing children for life as an adult. What do you do to get kids ready for life after they turn 18?*

"My husband and I are teaching our two children that they have to work hard to get what they want and that nothing comes free. We go to church every Sunday so they have a foundation. We're preparing them for adulthood by teaching them that they need to get their education before they start a family and that if you work hard at something that you can achieve it...

...We're also teaching them about relationships with peers, each other and family so they can begin to understand what it takes to sustain a relationship. We also provide them with chores and they receive weekly allowance so they can begin to understand money and how it works. They have savings accounts so they can put money in the bank. We teach them our principles to succeed is that you must pay God first, pay yourself (save some) and the rest you can do what you like with. And if they follow these principles in life they will have less worries."

*Bridget & Ronald Battle*

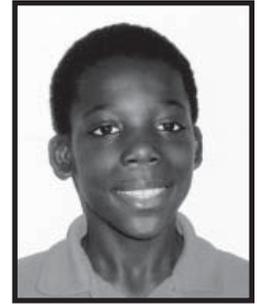
"I teach all kids (regardless of age) to pickup their room, make their beds (including change sheets), do chores, cook, take care of themselves (hair, bathing, picking up after themselves), laundry, dishes, house cleaning, schedule their own doctor appointments and yard work. I do not expect perfection just that the child try to do the job to their best. At age 9 I start teaching how to cook and read a recipe. By 10 or 11, I start making them their own cookbook with things they have made and like to make including simple things like spaghetti, hard boiled eggs, etc. ...At 15 I buy them their own set of towels and I start getting them used to buying their own personal items and clothes on a budget. I expect all kids to get up to an alarm. If they can't then they have to go to bed earlier and earlier until they can get up.

Do my kids appreciate all the "things" that I expect them to do - NO!!!! Would it be easier to just "do it myself" - YES! by all means, but I know that one day something will "click" and they will appreciate it then.

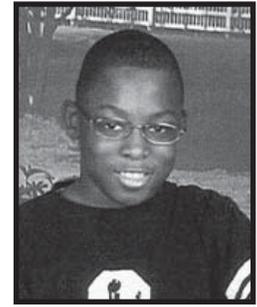
*Robin Dikkers*

The new question is: *Sometimes, all you can do is laugh. What is the funniest thing a child in your care has said or done when caught misbehaving?*

You can contact me with your response by e-mail at [Vanessa.James@illinois.gov](mailto:Vanessa.James@illinois.gov) (Note: there is a "dot" after Vanessa) or by phone at 312-814-6824. I am looking forward to sharing your responses in the next issue.



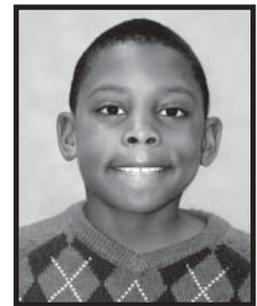
Chrishton (7371)



Lamar (7674)



Michael (7676)



Robert (7670)



Gwendolyn, Deandrea,  
Breanna, and Corvaughn  
[7659, 60, 61, 62]

Please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390.

## A family for me: Call 1-800-572-2390 for more information

**Chrishon [7371]** Chrishon, 10, is a good athlete who is well liked by the other children in his class. His favorite subject is math, but he looks forward to summer vacation each year, when he can play outside. If the weather is bad, he'll watch cartoons like Scooby-Doo and play video games like "Need for Speed." His favorite food is French fries.

His foster parents and teachers said Chrishon is very likeable and polite. His worker said Chrishon is very enthusiastic and active.

Chrishon would like to live in a safe neighborhood, so he can play outdoors. He'd like to join an active family that has other children.

**Lamar [7640]** Lamar, 11, is a bright young man who is known as a "deep thinker." He works hard to succeed, and he pays attention to the details of any task he's given. Lamar enjoys one-on-one attention, and he shows good manners. In his free time, he likes to do artwork, watch movies, and play video games. He's interested in taking boxing or karate lessons.

Lamar's foster parent and teacher said he is a smart and likable young man. His worker said he is ready for a loving adoptive home.

The right family for Lamar would be caring and supportive. You can help him maintain contact with his sister.

Lamar hopes to have brothers or sisters, but if not, he'd like to have a family pet.

**Michael [7676]** Michael, 8, is a sweet, creative young man. He's a little shy at first, but once he gets to know a person, his warm and outgoing nature is revealed. Michael likes to sing, dance, and act. He also enjoys riding his bike and playing outdoors with other children.

His foster parents and teacher said that Michael is a nice, helpful young man who wants to succeed in life. He is very talented in the arts and loves to draw. His worker said Michael is also good at gymnastics and hands-on activities.

The forever family for Michael would be patient and kind. Michael said he'd like to join a playful family that will stay with him and love him.

**Robert [7670]** Robert, 10, is an energetic and outgoing young man who loves sports. He plays soccer, baseball, basketball, football, and tennis. Robert is a natural leader who can express his opinions well. In his free time, he enjoys watching cartoons and playing video games. He also enjoys caring for pets, especially cats.

People who know Robert say he is clever and has a good sense of humor. He is also sociable and

interacts well with others. His worker said Robert is helpful and articulate.

Potential parents to Robert would be loving and patient. They would also help Robert maintain contact with his brother after adoption. An Illinois family is preferred.

**Gwendolyn, Deandrea, Breanna, and Corvaughn [7659-60-61-62]** These youngsters are looking for a happy home. Ten-year-old Gwendolyn (top left) is a sweet young lady who loves to read and cook. Her eight-year-old brother, Deandrea (top right), is outgoing and enjoys playing sports. Seven-year-old Breanna (lower left) is respectful and gets good grades in school. Five-year-old Corvaughn (lower right) is a happy young man with lots of energy. He likes to play video games and participate in other activities with his brother and sisters.

Their foster parents and teacher said Gwendolyn is pleasant and eager to learn. Deandrea enjoys helping others and works hard at school. Breanna is a lovable young lady who likes being a leader. Corvaughn is affectionate and a joy to have around.

This group of siblings needs parents who would be loving and patient and have lots of time to share with the children. They could also help the youth remain in contact with their grandparents.



**Please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI Web site – [www.adoptinfo-il.org](http://www.adoptinfo-il.org) if you are interested in adopting one of these children or learning about other children waiting to be adopted.**



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Department of Children and Family Services©

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## Inside this issue:

- Page 1-2 DCFS awards 48 college scholarships
- Page 3 School readiness for Pre-K children
- Page 4-5 Lifebooks help youth tell their life stories
- Page 6 Ask Before You Eat info on food allergies
- Page 7 Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Bulletin
- Page 8 Illinois Adoption Advisory Council Update
- Page 9 November is National Adoption Month
- Page 10 Tell It Like It Is reader responses
- Page 11 Family for Me profiles of waiting children