

Dear Caregivers:

As your regional administrator, it is my pleasure to recognize your efforts during Foster Parent Appreciation Month. I want you to know that I and each one of my staff understand the importance of the work you do, the dedication you show, and the love you put into that work.

These are exciting times for child welfare in Illinois. As you may know, Director Samuels has made great strides in enhancing our collective ability to better serve the children we place in your care. New initiatives such as Integrated Assessment, Youth Investment Teams, and others show great promise. It is important to understand that foster parents have crucial roles in these and other programs.

More than ever during Foster Parent Appreciation Month, let me congratulate you, thank you, and convey the appreciation of all my staff as we recognize and celebrate Foster Parent Appreciation Month and the important work that you do. Thank you.

Debbie Palmer-Thomas
Regional Administrator

Fostering teens for the past 20 years...Ann and Bob Baldowsky

When called to talk about her experience in fostering teens, Ann Baldowsky remembers a snowy Sunday, 20 years ago. She had told her husband that she was going shopping. With money in hand, off she went, but for some reason she ended up in a church. Nobody had asked her to go to this church; she just ended up there and had a brief encounter with the pastor. The next Sunday, she and her husband Bob went back for a visit. People at the church brought up foster care, and that set Bob and Ann to thinking.

Bob and Ann had two boys at the time and didn't know if that was what they should be doing but they decided to call DCFS and find out more information. They learned that there were a great many kids that needed help. Once they decided to answer the call, they have not looked back. After twenty years, they have brought 99 children into their home. They have taken guardianship of eight.

"One has to have a big heart to be a foster parent," said Ann.



Ann and Bob Baldowsky

The Baldowskys take mostly teens. The youngest child they ever took in was three years old; she is now 15 years old. At their home this past Thanksgiving there were 24 kids in the house, including eight or nine foster grandkids.

Ann and Bob keep in contact with most of the youth that have been in their home. Some youth just stop by to say hi. Others stop by to show off their own children and some want her to know, now that they are adults, they understand and appreciate everything she and Bob did for them when they were kids.

Northern Region Youth Advisory Board ready to take on new issues

One of the many positive things that DCFS youth have available to them is an organization known as the Regional Youth Advisory Board (RYAB). The purpose of the RYAB is to advise the Director on how the lives of youth in care can be improved and enriched. The RYAB also teaches members how to better advocate for themselves and for the other youth they represent.

The Northern Region Youth Advisory Board meets once a month. During these regional meetings youth get together to discuss issues they may be having and how to address them. They also get updates on new resources and opportunities that may be available to them. Additionally, youth participate in different life skills programs. Each regional board has four (4) officers and an unlimited number of members. Meetings are run in accordance with the Robert's Rules of Order, allowing youth to vote on motions, and giving all members an equal opportunity for input.

The four officers from each of the six regions together make up the Statewide Youth Advisory Board (SYAB). The SYAB meets for a weekend in different locations across the state once every other month. During this weekend the SYAB members come together to share what is going on in each region and to work on developing solutions and improvements for all DCFS youth. The SYAB members work with different

DCFS staff to pass along their recommendations. They also receive life skills and advocacy training while obtaining information to bring back to the youth in their regions.

Some of the projects the Youth Advisory Boards have completed and/or are working on are:

- Host Family Program at NIU and expanding the program to other college campuses
- Sibling Bill of Rights Legislation
- Annual Graduation Ceremonies for DCFS youth

To be a member of the Regional Youth Advisory Boards, the requirements include being:

- A current or former DCFS ward
- Between the ages of 14 and 21
- In attendance for three (3) consecutive regional meetings as a guest
- Voted in by current regional members
- Dedicated to helping improve lives of youth

The Northern Region Youth Advisory Board meets every second Thursday of every month, except December. Meetings are held at 8 East Galena in downtown Aurora, Illinois, in a third floor conference room. The meetings begin at 6 p.m. and end at 8 p.m. Dinner is always provided to all who attend. The next meeting dates are Thursday, June 9 and Thursday, July 14.

For questions about the Northern Region meetings or information about regional meetings in other areas please contact: Marcus McCaskill at 312-663-3574 ext. 232 or 888-472-0990 ext. 232, or feel free to come check out a regional meeting.

The Statewide Youth Advisory Board is planning to produce a newsletter that will be published quarterly beginning this Summer. They are in the process of soliciting the following writing contributions:

- Articles
- Recognitions
- News about the Advisory Board
- Short stories
- Announcements
- Concerns
- Topics of interest
- News about Regional Boards
- Accomplishments
- Upcoming events
- Photographs
- Cartoons

Submissions are not limited to this list. However, all entries must be approved by the Department of Children and Family Services' Office of Communications. There will be no exceptions!

Youth can send their submissions to: Yvonne Jeffries, Open Book Program, 435 E. 35th Street, Chicago, IL 60616, fax: 773-288-4345, or email jyma@sbcglobal.net.

Liz Fliehler...RVC Foster Care Training Coordinator



Liz Fliehler

Liz Fliehler is the new Foster Care Training Coordinator for Rock Valley College, serving Northern region. She will be working with caregivers to deliver PRIDE classes, in-service modules and other trainings of interest. These trainings can help build stronger families as well as meet the requirements for renewal hours.

Rock Valley College's Foster Care Training Program also has an extensive Lending Library with materials for your use. Please feel free to contact Rock Valley Foster Care training at 815-921-2010 or 815-921-2014 for further information.

Rock Valley College is also responsible for the Life Skills and Pregnant and Parenting Teen classes. Fliehler will be working with foster parents and workers to schedule these classes in the future.

Please call 815-921-2010 with questions about any of the above programs, and check the following page for schedules of upcoming classes.

Join the Advisory Council to have your voice be heard

The Northern Region Foster Care Advisory Council is reaching out to more families. Your participation in Council activities will be valued and appreciated. Council meetings provide opportunities for DCFS and private agency foster parents to receive information about agency programs and procedures. This is your chance to give input on a variety of important issues.

The Advisory Council meets the second Thursday of each month. A light meal will be served at 6 p.m. and the meeting held from 6:30 p.m.- 8:30 p.m. The meetings are held at the DCFS Aurora Regional Office, 8 East Galena Blvd.

Below are the dates and topics for upcoming meetings. Training credits will be awarded.

June 16
Open Meeting

July 14
Trans-Agency Placement:
Getting Kids Appropriate Homes

August 11
Communication Issues

Please RSVP to Don Jack at 815-730-4014 to ensure sufficient food for everyone.

The Northern Region Foster Care Advisory Council also has two representatives to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council, Ray Chasteen and Judith McAtee. If you have an issue or concern, the regional council is the place to start. From there, concerns that affect caregivers on a broader scale may be addressed by the Statewide Council. The regional representatives also report the Statewide activities back to the regional council.



Judith
McAtee



Ray
Chasteen

Northern News

Regional Reporter

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Anyone can call the regional reporter with foster parent association news and schedules; local training notices; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.

Northern Region Training Calendar

FosterPRIDE In-Service Training

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend any or all of the PRIDE In-Service Trainings to enhance their skills and meet yearly training requirements.

Module 1 - *The Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children* (Four 3-hour sessions = 12 training hours)

Module 2 - *Using Discipline to Protect and Nurture* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 3 - *Child Development* - New module being written

Module 4 - *Child Sexual Development and Sexual Abuse* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 5 - *Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 6 - *Working as a Professional Team Member* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 7 - *Promoting Children's Personal & Cultural Identity* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 8 - *Promoting Permanency Outcomes* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 9 - *Managing the Fostering Experience* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 10 - *Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children & Families* (Five 3-hour sessions = 15 training hours)

College of DuPage Area 630-942-2392

Module

AURORA - Comfort Suites

Aug. 11 (Thu) & 6:30-9:30 p.m. 2
Aug. 13 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Rock Valley Area 815-921-2301, ext. 2305

Please call the number listed above for upcoming training dates.

The DCFS Lending Library is a resource to allow foster and adoptive parents access to a multitude of books, audio cassettes and videos for self-directed training in parenting and family life. The materials span 17 categories. Licensed foster and adoptive parents can borrow materials for a two-week period at no charge. The order form is available in the 3rd Edition of the Lending Library Catalog, which can be viewed on the DCFS web site at www.state.il.us/dcfs.



For more information call:
Aurora Area 630-942-2392
Rockford Area 815-921-2301 x 2305

Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hrs.

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six-hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

College of DuPage Area 630-942-2392

AURORA

June 4 (Sat)

Comfort Suites

9 a.m.-4 p.m.

GLEN ELLYN

June 25 (Sat)

College of DuPage

9 a.m.-4 p.m.

ROMEOVILLE/JOLIET Country Inn & Suites

June 18 (Sat)

9 a.m.-4 p.m.

WAUKEGAN

June 18 (Sat)

Ramada Inn

9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Rock Valley Area 815-921-2301, ext. 2305

ROCKFORD

June 4 (Sat)

Sept. 10 (Sat)

Stenstrom Center/RVC

9 a.m.-4 p.m.

9 a.m.-4 p.m.

