

## Adoptive parents' support has youth turning flips in world gymnastics competition

Judy Draeger, a DCFS Support Specialist and Ray Draeger, an engineer, are proud foster and adoptive parents. Recently, their parental pride expanded to national pride when their son DeAndre, 12, represented the United States at the World Championship of Tumbling competition of 2005 in Eindhoven, Netherlands. DeAndre had a solid mid-range finish in a field of more than 30 international athletes.

The Draegers provide the financial and emotional support needed to help their son by adoption find success in tumbling. They believe involvement in sports builds self-esteem, leadership, confidence, discipline and character.

"When DeAndre was placed with us as an infant, he was always high energy and very active," said Judy.

She and her husband felt DeAndre would do well in gymnastics. DeAndre started gymnastics at the age of four, and at age six he entered into competition. He is on the Gymnastic Academy of Rockford Tumbling team, which involves a lot of trav-

eling to other states. In addition, DeAndre is now on the USA Gymnastics team that competes every two years with 38 other countries, taking him and his friend Maurice Dunker to competition in the Netherlands.

DeAndre is not the only Draeger to see the world. Son Kevin, who followed Ray's tradition of military service, recently returned home from serving in Iraq.

The Draeger brood includes three more children through adoption. Mitch works in construction, and Kelly is a legal assistant. Richard is a busy high school student who loves hockey. They have one son by birth, Brian, who has been around to watch his parents care for more than 80 foster children during 30 years.

Judy's background includes many efforts dedicated to serving children. She has experience as a preschool teacher and provided day care for many years. Now as a support specialist, Judy is especially aware of the demands of being a foster parent. She can



*Ray, Judy and DeAndre and Judy Draeger are happy to support their son DeAndre's pursuit of gold in tumbling.*

use her personal experience to support foster families in the Northern Region.

Judy and Ray have had their share of headaches and heartaches but have many good memories as well. They have enjoyed being foster parents. They have served as role models to children who at one time or another had no one to lean on. The satisfaction that comes from seeing young people succeed is as precious as any medal their children earn.

## Elgin Field Office Holiday Bowling Party

Elgin area foster parents and children had their annual holiday bowling party on December 17<sup>th</sup>. Approximately 100 foster parents, children, and staff came together for a wonderful day of fun and friendship. Foster parents appreciated that staff came and brought their families to socialize.

One foster parent commented that her foster son looks forward to the party every year because he doesn't feel different there.

"It is a time where he doesn't have to explain his situation to other children; he can just relax and have a good time like a "normal child," she said.

The Girl Scouts were at the party and gave every child a stocking filled with hats, gloves, candy and small toys. After two games of bowling and lunch the partygoers declared it another memorable holiday party.



*The annual holiday bowling party sponsored by the Elgin Field Office is a guaranteed hit for families each year.*

## Northern Region families provide assistance to Hurricane relief effort

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina Illinois Foster/Adoptive Parents and DCFS staff rose to the occasion. We would like to take this opportunity to recognize their efforts.

### Woodstock

The Foster First Support Group for Foster/Adoptive Parents in McHenry County purchased and delivered underwear for Hurricane Katrina victims housed at Camp Algonquin.

This group meets on the first Monday of each month from 7 p.m. - 9 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church at 201 W South St, Woodstock. Contact Carrie Taylor (current president) at 815/568-3507.

### Elgin Field Office

Staff from the Elgin Field Office donated clothing and Christmas gifts to the Elgin Mental Health Center for evacuees being housed there.

The State of Louisiana requested 75 Illinois volunteers to assist with clerical and data entry aid for displaced residents who need social services. Illinois Central Management Services supplied the mobile command posts. Some volunteers stayed in shelters and tents for up to two weeks assisting in the relief efforts.

### DCFS Northern Region volunteers:

- Deborah Anderson, Business Unit, Aurora Region
- Cindy Jackson, Office Associate, Woodstock Field Office
- Susan Michaelson, Day Care Licensing Representative, Elgin Field Office
- Donna Riedl, DCP Clerical, Elgin Field Office

### Rockford

Red Cross Volunteers from Northern Region assisted relocated evacuees:

- Jennifer Zaluckyj, Adoptions, Rockford Satellite Office
- Joan Watkins, Day Care Licensing, Rockford Satellite Office
- Renee Small, Day Care Licensing, Rockford Satellite Office

## Northern News

### Regional Reporter

Catherine Johnson  
DCFS Reporter/Editor  
841 N. Lake  
Aurora, IL 60506  
Phone: 630-844-8400  
Fax: 630-844-8968

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 Youth Advisory Board sets new goals for 2006



Jeremy  
Harvey

### Meet The Chair: Jeremy Harvey

Jeremy is 21 years old and is currently a senior at Northern Illinois University, majoring in

History with a minor in Sociology. He has been involved with the Northern Region Youth Advisory Board and Statewide Youth Advisory Board for five years. He is a member of the Illinois State Ward Association and a strong advocate for youth in college. He tirelessly works to address college issues and concerns regarding higher education for youth in care.

He is a motivated leader and a strong advocate for DCFS youth. Being in care for 17 years himself, he brings an understanding, along with a refreshingly focused and positive attitude that can be contagious. Jeremy describes himself as having a “relaxed” style of leadership but believes in “getting business done” by delegating responsibility. That way, each member of the council will feel a sense of accomplishment.

### What's in store for the New Year?

- Addressing participation! Jeremy is asking Foster Parents to get their foster kids involved by bringing them to the meetings. A plea will also be made to case-

workers to encourage foster parents and kids to participate.

- Advocating for DCFS Youth, by getting them involved. Answering their questions about DCFS policy, what is available to them and how they can use it to their advantage.
- Initiative to work with Department of Correction Youth Care Package Program. This program involves the organization of donations for care packages that are given to incarcerated youth who do not have families or outside support.
- June graduation party planning!

Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month (with the exception of December) from 6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m at the Aurora Office, 8 East Galena Blvd. Dinner and soft drinks are provided by the council.

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

## Join the Northern Region Advisory Council

The Northern Region Advisory Council also holds its meetings for caregivers at the same time that the youth board meets. Each second Tuesday at 6 p.m., parents, DCFS and private agency staff come together to share a light meal and discussion on foster care. The meetings are held at the DCFS Aurora office at 8 E. Galena Blvd.

The council meeting is a forum to receive information on agency programs and procedures. It is also a means for solving problems that have not been resolved through the chain of command. These meetings serve as a platform to discuss issues that affect all foster parents. Council members Judith McAtee and Ray Chasteen are the Northern Region representatives to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council. They report on statewide activities and channel local concerns to the broader board.

All Northern Region foster, adoptive and guardianship families with DCFS and private agencies are invited to attend. Contact Don Jack for more information at 815-730-4014.



Judith  
McAtee



Ray  
Chasteen

# Northern Region Training Calendar

## Integrated Assessment Training

### College of DuPage Area 630-942-2903

**AURORA** *Comfort Suites City Ctr.*  
Feb. 9 (Thu) 7-9 p.m.

**ELGIN** *Judson College*  
Feb. 28 (Tue) 7-9 p.m.

**GLEN ELLYN** *College of DuPage*  
Jan. 30 (Mon) 7-9 p.m.

**JOLIET** *Catholic Charities*  
Feb. 14 (Tue) 7-9 p.m.

**LOCKPORT** *SOS Children's Village*  
March 14 (Tue) 9:30-11:30 a.m.

**WAUKEGAN** *Ramada Inn*  
March 16 (Thu) 7-9 p.m.

### Rock Valley Area 815-921-2010

**ROCKFORD** *Rock Valley College*  
March 2 (Tue) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

## 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.

## Non-PRIDE Inservice Training

### College of DuPage Area 630-942-2903

*Understanding Childhood Trauma and the Implications for Education*

**WAUKEGAN** *Ramada Inn*  
Feb. 16 (Thu) 6:30-9 p.m.

*The Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse and Neglect*

**GLEN ELLYN** *College of DuPage*  
March 2 (Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

### Rock Valley Area 815-921-2015

*School Discipline and Behavior Plans*

**ROCKFORD** *DCFS Office*  
March 30 (Sat) 6:30-9 p.m.

*Domestic Violence 101*

**ROCKFORD** *Strenstrom Center*  
Feb. 7 (Tue) 6-8 p.m.

### College of DuPage Area 630-942-2903

**AURORA** *Comfort Suites*  
March 11 (Sat) 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

**GLEN ELLYN** *College of DuPage*  
March 18 (Sat) 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

**ROMEOVILLE** *Comfort Inn*  
March 18 (Sat) 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

### Rock Valley Area 815-921-2010

**FREEPORT** *Catholic Charities*  
March 4 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

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](http://www.state.il.us/dcfs).



**For more information call:**  
College of DuPage Area ~ 630-942-2903  
Rock Valley Area ~ 815-921-2015