

Caregivers have their say in May for Appreciation Month

In honor of Foster Parent Appreciation Month, we asked Northern Region caregivers: What aspect of foster care makes you feel appreciated for what you do?



"We have been fortunate in our experience with foster parenting. Unlike the horror stories you hear where no one listens to you, we felt our efforts and ideas were valued at many levels. The caseworkers worked closely with us to get the necessary services for our kids. The

judge expressed appreciation every time that we appeared in court. In a couple cases, a parent even thanked us for taking good care of her kids."

McCoy Family of Hampshire

"The most rewarding part of foster care is ...everything. It's knowing that I'm making a difference in someone's life. One day that really sticks out for me is when our son and me were taking a bike ride together. He said, 'I like my life' out of the blue. Then a few minutes later he said, 'God sure made this world beautiful.' That made me so happy to hear words like that coming from a child that was so depressed a few months earlier."



"A few people have asked me how I could foster because it would hurt so much when they leave. I know it would hurt, but I focus on the fact that I was there for someone when I could be, and hopefully that will have positive impact on a child's future."

R. Goberville of Joliet

"I think when the communication is good, and you know they (caseworkers) are hearing what you said about the child and responding promptly it makes a big difference. Also, knowing they appreciate the work I am doing with my foster child makes a huge statement. A simple 'thank you' or 'I can see her improving,' or 'I appreciate your efforts in working with the birth mom' means a lot."

M. Novacek of Montgomery



"Twelve years ago, I was blessed with an angel name Cora Lee who happened to come into the life of me and my daughter Andrea. I didn't know if I would be able to pass on the love I had inside of me to another child.

When Cora first came to our home, my heart was beating fast because I saw a child that needed my love, attention, and affection. This made me aware of the joys of being a foster parent to someone else's child. I discovered that they need attention in different ways than my biological daughter."

"I feel that this is a great experience and has warmed and softened my heart tremendously. I love it, and feel blessed being given the chance to share my life with her."

B. Butler of Bartlett



Regional Administrator's message to Northern Region caregivers



**Debbie
Palmer-Thomas**

I am so grateful that May has been designated Foster Parent Appreciation Month. With spring in full bloom, there is no better time to stop and thank all of you for making the choice to open your lives to the children who come into our care.

They come to you for the nurture, guidance, and safety of a family environment. You have opened your hearts and your homes to them. For that, we can breathe a sigh of relief that you have answered the call to fostering.

Foster parents are all unique in your own right, yet you share a common commitment to enhance the lives of

children. Your loyalty and valued service to the State of Illinois' children make you heroes of child welfare.

I am glad to have this opportunity to make sure our foster families don't miss your deserved accolades. You will never be a waning memory to me, the workers and advocates you work with. More importantly, the children will remember you. You touch their lives because you are willing to carry their burdens for however long it takes. Like a perpetual spring, you are the promise of bright futures, warmer hearts, and lasting memories.

On behalf of all of us in the DCFS Northern Region, who are here to serve, thank you.

Rockford student intervention program decreases school truancy

Truancy from school is an issue that can signal other problems and warn of more serious future problems. The Truancy Intervention Center is a collaboration between the Rockford Public School District 205 (RPS 205) and Youth Services Network, Inc. (YSN). The YSN Truancy Intervention program is an intensive 180-day program that uses a holistic, wrap-around approach to connect a truant student and his or her family to a strength-based learning environment at school.

Caregivers, parents, school staff or the courts can refer students to the program. The YSN staff will assess the youth to determine the reasons for the truant behavior. The Home School Counselor will work with the school to track the student's attendance progress toward reducing the number of missed school days. After all assessments are completed, a wraparound meeting is held with youth, parent/guardian, school staff, and other involved persons the family may choose to invite. The group

will develop a plan to comfortably transition the youth back to school.

Rockford Public School staff will provide on-going support and connection to resources such as tutoring, make-up work plans, and after-school activities. YSN staff provides individual therapy, family therapy, intensive case management, and parent education.

In the first three months after the program's start in November 2009, 72 students received help from the Truancy Intervention Center. The staff has addressed issues including substance abuse by the child or parent, mental health concerns and poverty issues. YSN staff work with families and other service agencies to provide what is needed to stabilize the student's situation as they transition to regular attendance.

This service is open to all families associated with District 205. For more information about the Truancy Intervention Center, contact Mary

Ellen Compare, YSN, 815-986-1947, ext. 214.

There are similar programs for youth at risk of truancy, suspension or expulsion who live in other Local Area Networks throughout Northern Region. For more information on local resources contact one of the DCFS LAN Liaisons. These services are open to all families, including foster, adoptive and guardianship families.

DCFS Local Area Network (LAN) Liaisons

Phil Biage

630-801-3400

Kane, Kendall, McHenry, and Lake counties

Sidella Hughes

815-967-3731

DeKalb, Lee, Ogle, Whiteside and Winnebago counties

Sharon O'Bryant

815-730-4000

DuPage, Grundy, Kankakee, and Will counties



Families can find support among caregivers in a nearby group

One of the responsibilities in the Foster Parent Law is to “Be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent associations.” DCFS, private agencies and community organizations sponsor many support groups and associations to assist foster and adoptive parents. The following list can help identify a group that may suit your family. This list will be updated annually. Please contact the Editor at 312-814-6824 with any corrections or additions for next year.

Adopted Kids World

Contact: Deb Rosengren at 630-530-7917
Debbie@adoptedkidsworld.com
Meets monthly. Call for schedule.
Focuses on families who adopted children age five and older.

Adoption Network

Contact: Michelle Mattes at 847-515-3921
5070 Highwood Ln., Lake in the Hills

Adoptive Families Today

Contact: Kathy Casey at 847-382-0858
P.O. Box 1726, Barrington
www.adoptivefamilies.today.org
Serves families in Cook, DuPage, Lake, McHenry and Kane counties.

Adoptive Families Together

Contact: Stacy Rapach at 815-969-8836, ext. 4115
or stacy.rapach@lssi.org
Meets first Monday from 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
321 W. State St., 4th Floor, Rockford
Open to all types and stages of adoption
Call to request childcare. Snacks provided.

Children’s Home + Aid Specialized Foster Parents Educational/Support Group

Contact: Barb Buchavekas at 815-962-1043
Meets third Tuesday from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Children’s Home + Aid Northern Region
910 2nd Ave., Rockford

Children’s Home + Aid Support Group for Adoptive and Guardianship Parents

Contact: Carma Blackburn at 815-962-1043
Meets second Tuesday from 5:45 p.m. - 7:45 p.m.
Children’s Home + Aid Northern Region
910 2nd Ave., Rockford
Childcare is provided.

DeKalb Area Adoptive Families

Contact: Diane DeMers at 815-756-3874
Email: Ballantine@aol.com
246 Rolfe Rd., DeKalb
Serves families in DeKalb and nearby counties.

DCFS Regional Foster Parent Advisory Council

Contact: Roybn Harvey at 815-793-5847
Meetings rotate among locations throughout the region.
Call for schedule or teleconference info.

Family Focus Foster Support Program

Contact: Juana Ruiz at 630-844-2550 or juana.ruiz@family-focus.org
Meets third Monday of the month 6:30-8:30 p.m.
1575 Reckinger Rd, Aurora
Dinner and childcare provided. Open to foster families in DuPage and surrounding counties.

Foster/Adoptive Single Moms Group

Contact: Kelia Guyton 630-844-2550, ext.227 or fakelia.guyton@family-focus.org
1575 Reckinger Road, Aurora
Meets first Friday of the month. Dinner and child care provided.

Fox Valley Adoption Group

Contact: Maureen Van Scoit at 630-844-9385
968 Wellington Circle, Aurora
Serves families in DuPage, Kane, and Kendall counties.

Grandparents & Relatives Raising Grandchildren (GRRC)

Contact: Juana Ruiz @ 630.844.2550, ext.239 or juana.ruiz@family-focus.org
Meets third Tuesday of the month from 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
1575 Reckinger Road, Aurora
Dinner and child care provided.

Lutheran Social Services of IL Foster Parent Group

Contact: Sharon Franklin at 815-284-7796 ext. 2108
Meets the fourth Monday from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
1261 Illinois Route 38, Nachusa



Northern Region Caregiver Training

Foster PRIDE In-Service Modules

All caregivers are welcome to attend PRIDE In-Service Training. The descriptions below will allow you to decide which classes fit your family's needs or circumstances. Advance registration is required for all classes. In addition to the slate of classroom courses, caregivers can also take advantage of Digital Pride modules on CD and the full offering of Lending Library materials.

For the most up-to-date and complete schedule information for classes offered in your area, visit the on-line Virtual Training Center anytime at www.DCFStraining.org or call the DCFS Office of Training at 877-800-3393 during regular business hours.

Module 1 - Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children at Risk (12 training hours)

This module focuses on building self-esteem in children. It covers how kids act when they need recognition, power, freedom, enjoyment, and a feeling of belonging. Caregivers will learn how to listen to what kids say and not what we think they say.

Module 2 - Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs (9 training hours)

This workshop provides practical information to foster parents about how to use effective discipline techniques such as I-messages, natural and logical consequences, time out and how to catch kids being "good" and what to do to encourage positive behavior.

Module 3 & 4 - The Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse (9 training hours)

Participants learn to differentiate normal from problematic sexual behaviors in children and youth, signs and symptoms of sexual abuse and ways to help sexually abused children recover.

Module 5 - Supporting Relationships between Children and Their Families (9 training hours)

This training focuses on helping foster parents learn how to help kids attach to caregivers and at the same time stay loyal to birth families. Caregivers learn about how to prepare and support children for and after visits with the birth family and how to share the parenting role with birth parents.

Module 6 - Working as a Professional Team Member (9 training hours)

Foster parents learn team members' roles, when and how to be an advocate for children, what conflict is and their own personal style for managing it, and how conflict can be a "win - win" situation for everyone involved.

Module 7 - Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity (6 training hours)

Culture includes traditions, values, customs and history. What "culture" means to a child's self-esteem, how to manage cultural diversity in a foster home, how to discuss sensitive issues with children and how to help a child record his or her history are topics covered in this module.

Module 8 - Promoting Permanency Outcomes (9 training hours)

The focus of this training is on families who have children in care and supporting reunification of the children and parents.

Module 9 - Managing the Impact of Placement on Your Family (6 training hours)

In this training, caregivers learn how fostering children can affect family relationships and how to minimize stresses that can result. They also learn about the supports that are available.

Module 10 - Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children and Families (15 training hours)

Foster parents study the risk factors for chemical use, abuse, and dependency and understand relapse and recovery and be able to acquire skills necessary to be an active member of the team to support recovery in birth parents.

Module 12 - Understanding and Promoting Preteen and Teen Development (6 training hours)

This new course assists caregivers to identify developmentally appropriate ways to best promote healthy development for preteens and teens who have experienced abuse, neglect and trauma. This six-hour module will help foster/adopt caregivers understand teen brain development and the impact of trauma and loss on preteens and teens.

Participants will learn specific strategies that caregivers can use when fostering teenagers in the day to day life of the foster family.

The Teen in Foster Care: Supporting Attachment (6 training hours)

Attachment and the Teen in Family Foster Care will help foster/adopt caregivers to understand how early attachment experiences have impacted the teen's development. The training covers the teen's perspective on how the accumulation of loss, separation and trauma impacts his or her beliefs, feelings, behaviors and relationships. Participants will learn specific tips for helping manage behaviors that develop over time from the teen's adaptive responses to trauma, grief and loss.

Educational Advocacy 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.

Northern News

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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.