

Quick family makes teenagers a personal ministry

William and Allison Quick have been fostering teens for five years. During that time they have seen approximately 15 kids come to their home. The Quicks have primarily opened their doors to children ranging in age of 12 years and older, with the exception of their current foster daughter, who is only 21 months old.

Married for 16 years, William and Allison came to fostering through their involvement with their church ministry, and both felt a calling to extend their lives to include fostering children. But not just any children. They decided to commit to the challenges of fostering older children and teens. They recently opened their home to three more foster children who are siblings. Believing it is important to accommodate sibling groups as much as possible, William said they often take in younger siblings of older teens to keep them together.

The Quicks acknowledge that there have been times they were ready to throw in the towel. They decided to persevere because they understand the need for stability in the lives of the kids unfortunate enough to be involved in the child welfare system.

“These kids have enough on them as it is. Giving them a proper start or push in the right direction is what we



William and Allison Quick

want for them” states William. “We may not see the fruit of our labor tomorrow, ten, or even twenty years from now, if at all. But hopefully some day someone else will because they have grown up to be good and productive citizens.”

The Quicks are avid supporters of education. They demonstrate a strong work ethic, and provide rules in their home to set an example that can guide the teenagers they care for. William’s 10-year career in the military, and five years of experience working as a youth pastor, helps set the tone for a stable home. Allison, a trained speech therapist who works in a high school, can bring her work experience home to help youth with

special needs.

“It’s all about them being healthy, mature, and safe. Helping them grow and mature responsibly by loving them, but not being a wet noodle at the same time” sums up William and Allison’s approach to improving the future of the kids they foster. In the relatively short time they have been fostering, they have had plenty of experiences, both good and bad. However they have demonstrated their commitment to fostering through their steadfast and unwavering faith to their calling, and in their ability to positively influence the lives of youth in their care.

Local support for families in LANs

In 1992 Local Area Networks were formed throughout Illinois with the goal of reducing out of home, school and community placements for at-risk youth. The LANs are inclusive networks in specific geographic areas that promote collaboration between agencies, parents, schools, and community groups. Agencies work together to ensure that children with mental and emotional and behavioral problems have access to the services and supports they need to succeed.

The local area networks that cover Northern Region can each develop programs that address the specific needs of the community. However, the School Initiative programs and Wraparound Plans are two basic constants. Since 2004, DCFS has asked that the LAN providers focus on services that address children in the school setting who are at-risk of truancy, suspension or expulsion. Under the School Initiative Program, providers have responded with many unique approaches to stabilize students at school. Additionally, each LAN receives a small amount of “flex funds” from DCFS and the Illinois State Board of Education. The flex funds are used to provide services that a child and family team determines to be needed but are not available through state, federal, or community programs. These funds are granted through a process called wrap-around services.

Any family can go to the LAN serving their community. Caregivers can take part in the regularly scheduled meetings to have input on the services delivered in their LAN. They can also request services on behalf of children in their home, whether they are in foster care or have moved to adoption or guardianship.

Working with a LAN can benefit families in many ways that might not be readily apparent, but could be helpful:

- The LAN provides a means to identify resources that may be unknown to an individual worker or foster parent
- The LAN can assist a worker or foster parent in accessing needed services
- The LAN looks for donated items that may be needed by individual youth and families
- The LAN pays for tutors and mentors for youth who are at risk of truancy, suspensions, and expulsion
- The LAN demonstrates to youth the community’s commitment and support
- The LAN promotes “creative out of the box” ideas to address youth needs
- The LAN uses the child and family team model, where a group of advocates work on behalf of youth and increase collaboration among service providers, schools, and parents.

Foster families are welcome and encouraged to become members of their Local Area Networks. In each LAN a local agency serves as a co-convenor and a DCFS LAN Liaison helps bridge the community needs with the Department resources. To find more information on Local Area Networks go to the website www.systemof-careillinois.com for program descriptions, referral applications and a search function to find individual LANs by zip code. To ask questions about LANs by phone, contact the DCFS Regional Office and ask for the LAN Liaison.

FAPA assists DCFS recruitment

Foster and Adoptive Parent Alliance (F.A.P.A.) hosted an Informational Open House in coordination with the DCFS Northern Region Recruitment Council last month. The Informational Open House was the first of many recruitment events slated to happen in the Northern Region.

F.A.P.A. took the initiative to contact DCFS and offered to host the event if the agency would staff it with friendly engaging staff and open up the DCFS office for night use.

"We are seeing more children from DeKalb County entering foster care," said foster parent Tina Moore. "It bothered us all when we heard those kids had to leave our county to find a foster home!"

F.A.P.A. advertised in the newspaper, on the radio, in 42 church bulletins, and put a banner in the town square in hopes of drawing people in the door. F.A.P.A. also invited Lutheran Social Services and Catholic Charities to be on hand to explain their programs.

"Getting people to take time out of their busy lives is half the battle!" responded Tina Moore, "Once they came, we shared our fostering experiences, and answered questions. It was really time well spent."

F.A.P.A. plans to continue to lend a hand in recruiting in the DeKalb area. Caregivers who know someone interested in becoming a foster parent in the area should encourage them to contact their local DCFS office or a private agency. A member of F.A.P.A. can be reached at 815-757-7333.

DCFS offers programs for teen parents

For a teenager, making the transition to adulthood while in DCFS care can be complicated. Making a transition to being a parent at the same time adds another degree of difficulty. Fortunately, DCFS has some resources to help teens who are pregnant and/or parenting. The DCFS Division of Service Intervention currently contracts several agencies to provide services in 35 counties in the northern areas of the state. These services are available to youth who are still under DCFS custody in foster and relative care, or independent living situations. The providers accept referrals from caseworkers for both male and female youth.



When a pregnancy occurs, the caseworker for the mother or for the youth who is the father files an Unusual Incident Report. The first UIR alerts the downstate Pregnant and Parenting Youth coordinator of the new pregnancy. If DCFS has a contract with a service provider in the youth's placement county, the coordinator will initiate a service referral. The service provider is to work in tandem with the caseworker and the foster parents to provide education and support to the youth.

The service providers work directly with the youth to develop skills that will make them better parents. To achieve this, the service providers work one-on-one with youth in their

home and community and can provide support to the foster parents to help stabilize placements. The providers also work to introduce youth to community-based services such as Women and Infant Children (WIC) and Department of Human Services programs. Over time the youth should learn about child development, health care services, family planning and other topics that will prepare them for parenting independently.

When a young person becomes pregnant while living in a foster home, the caregiver role shifts in important and sometimes complicated ways. Along with parenting the younger new parent, caregivers help the youth learn to be a parent as well. In cases where the youth has custody of his or her baby, caregivers should remember that DCFS has no jurisdiction over the child. DCFS will attach a payment of \$107 to the caregiver's board check and the caregiver is required to give the \$107 to the parent to buy items for their child. DCFS also starts a medical card for the baby as soon as DCFS Central Office is notified of the delivery.

With supportive caregivers and service providers, the young person can get on track to successful parenting. Questions about the pregnant and parenting teen services can be directed to the youth's caseworker. Lynda Swan-McClendon at 312-814-5959 monitors the Teen Parenting Services Network for the collar counties. Marilyn Peebles at 217-557-2689 coordinates the services in other parts of the Northern Region.

Join Youth Advisory Board

The Northern Region Youth Advisory Board meets on the third Thursday of the month from 6 to 8 p.m. The meeting is held at the DCFS Aurora office located at 8 E. Galena.

This board is an excellent opportunity for older youth to have input into the policies and procedures that directly affect them. For example, the regional youth boards across the state have recently been asked to review and offer revisions to the Department's life skills program.

The advisory board provides positive peer involvement and exposes youth to valuable leadership skills. The YAB conducts business according to Robert's Rule of Order. Youth can be elected to offices and may also participate in the Statewide Youth Advisory Board activities.

The Northern Region Youth Advisory board is open to youth age 14 to 21 who are or were involved in the child welfare system. This includes youth who have moved to guardianship or have been adopted, along with youth in residential programs. Caregivers are encouraged to have youth in their homes become part of the YAB. Transportation is available to youth who are interested in attending the meeting, regardless of their location in the Northern region.

For more information, call the coordinating office for youth boards at 312-401-5462.

**Caregivers must register to attend any of these training classes.
Call the DCFS Office of Training 877-800-3393 • toll free**

Northern Region Training Calendar

All caregivers can attend PRIDE In-Service Training. Advance registration is REQUIRED. Detailed address information will be provided with registration. Information included here is accurate at the time of publication. Training dates, times and locations may change based on enrollment and other circumstances. For the most up-to-date schedule information, 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.

Foster PRIDE In-Service Module

Child Trauma

(4 Hours)

This four-hour course helps caregivers recognize the signs of trauma and understand how to work with children who have experienced trauma.

Aurora DCFS Office
March 23, 25 (M,W) 6:30- 8:30 PM

Elgin Judson University
March 21 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Romeoville/Joliet Comfort Inn
March 28 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Module 12 Understanding and Promoting Preteen and Teen Development

(6 Hours)

This new course will assist 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 to understand the teen brain development and the impact of trauma and loss on preteens and teens.

Elgin Judson University
April 2, 7 (Thu, Tu) 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Educational Advocacy

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.

Aurora DCFS Office
March 3, 5 (Tu, Thu) 6 – 9 p.m.

Loves Park Illinois Mentor
March 17, 19 (Tu, Thu)
6:30 – 9:30 p.m.

Romeoville/Joliet Comfort Inn
March 23, 25 (Mon, Wed)
6:30 – 9:30 p.m.

Rockford Cornerstone Church
March 2, 4 (Mon, Wed)
6:30 – 9:30 p.m.

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.