

Emergency pros spring into action for kids

Anyone with kids is used to “putting out fires,” but Jeff and Julie Randecker do it outside the home too, working as a firefighter and paramedic. They have only been foster parents for three years, yet in that time they have cared for more than two dozen children.

From babies to teens, the Randeckers are ready for anything. One of the first children to come to them was a five-week-old boy who had open-heart surgery when he was just five days old. They have cared for drug exposed infants and one child who required a feeding tube. With their emergency training, they can take those situations in stride.

“If you can make one day’s difference in the life of a child, then you have achieved a great goal.”

-Julie Randecker

Still, even “everyday” parenting can have challenges, and Julie and Jeff always answer the call. Julie brought four birth children to her marriage with Jeff. She describes Jeff as the most wonderful father a kid could ask for. Since they hadn’t had children together, she didn’t want Jeff to miss out on the whole parenting experience. They decided to open their hearts, home, and lives to fostering, and ultimately adopting.

“Jeff is so kind, and great with my own kids. He just has what it takes to be a good father,” said Julie.

The Randeckers have packed a lot of experience into a relatively short amount of time. They both have the right mix of patience and perseverance for such a rapid succession of foster care placements. They also have a lifetime of love to share with the kids that come into their care.

Julie and Jeff adopted their first foster child, Jay. Jay wove himself in the family fabric so well that they were soon able to adopt a brother for him. Now, Shane and Jay are currently actively lobbying for a sister.



Julie and Jeff Randecker

The Randeckers know you have to take it one day at a time and still look at the big picture to be successful parents.

“If you can make one day’s difference in the life of a child, then you have achieved a great goal,” said Julie.

When loving seems hard she says you just have to keep hoping. She found that to be especially true when caring for teens.

“Teens are the most rewarding because some of them will come back to you and thank you,” Julie said. That they want to stay in touch makes you feel so good. It makes you feel like you have done something.”

Northern Region students earn DCFS college scholarships

Most students head to college with the basic supplies, including books, clothes and a calculator. But some students whose cases are handled in Northern Region had a send-off that included paid tuition and academic fees at any of the participating Illinois universities and junior colleges, a monthly stipend of \$458 and a medical card for up to four years. The recipients of the 2007 DCFS Scholarship were selected from over 200 worthy applicants. Based on their record of academic achievement, their community involvement and personal successes, the young scholars featured below can now focus on their new path toward a college degree.



Katheryngrace Anczer

Katheryngrace, from Beecher, is a graduate of Beecher High School where she earned a 4.68 grade point average on a 5.0 scale. In high school, she was involved in Peer Mediation, the Math Team, Scholastic Bowl, Spanish Club, and National Honor Society. She was also the Junior News Editor for the school newspaper and the Co-Editor-in-Chief for the Yearbook. Katheryngrace has volunteered extensively with her church, going on three mission trips and mentoring a group of young women on a weekly basis. She now is a student at Moody Bible Institute, majoring in Social Work.



Alex Garcia

Alex, from Lombard, graduated from Glenbard Township High District 87 where he earned a 3.36 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. In high school, he was involved in Buddies/Mentors, football, track, and Lake Geneva Leadership Weekend. He received numerous awards for football including three-time Academic All Conference, team MVP, Special Mention All Conference, and Honorable Mention All Area. His teachers also voted him a Senior Leader. He is currently a student at Elmhurst College, studying education and business.



Amber Balster

Amber, from Darien, graduated from Hinsdale South High School. Amber was on the Honor Roll and was selected for the National Honor Society by obtaining a 4.5 grade point average on a 5.0 scale. In high school, she was involved in intramural sports, Diversity Club, math tutoring and the Phoenix Literary Magazine. She is now studying at Olivet-Nazarene University where she will major in Biology and Secondary Education.

Kristin Green

Kristin, from Tampico, is a graduate of Prophetstown High School, where she has achieved a 4.16 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was ranked first in her class of 66. She has volunteer experience at Franklin Grove Nursing Center, Big Brothers Big Sister, Vacation Bible School and the Ronald Regan birthplace. Kristin was involved in many clubs and activities, including Art Club, Science Club, Spirit Club, Band, Chorus, the school musical, Envirothon, Student Council, Scholastic Bowl, National Honor Society, Prom Committee, and Tech 2006. She was the Sophomore Class President and a wrestling manager. She is studying psychology at Monmouth College.



Nathan Baxter

Nathan, from Rockford, is a 2006 graduate of Rockford Public Schools where he obtained a 3.5 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. Nathan's high school activities included Key Club, football and band. Among his volunteer activities are Walk a Mile in My Shoes and the River District Association. He is studying business at Northern Illinois University.

Scholarships, con't.



Javia Harris

Javia, from Maywood, graduated from Proviso East High School where she achieved a 3.2 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. Awards that she received in high school include multiple choir awards, perfect attendance, Honor Roll and membership in the National Honor Society. Javia's work experiences include being a junior counselor with the Maywood Parks and Recreational Center, and working at L.D. Enterprise and Eddie Bauer. She will study Pre-Med or Psychology at Western Illinois University.



Crystal Hoornstra

Crystal, from Vernon Hills, is a graduate of Vernon Hills High School where she earned a 3.2 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. Along with school, she was employed as a Kennel Worker/Veterinary Assistant with Greentree Animal Hospital, as a representative of "Personally Yours" with Brookdale Communities, Inc. and as a Pet Care Associate with Petsmart. Crystal also volunteered with her church's Vacation Bible School, with Interact, and with an after school program as a tutor for Hispanic youth. Crystal is now attending Eastern Illinois University and studying biology.



Amy Jachna

Amy, from Lisle, graduated from Lisle Senior High School where she achieved a 4.44 grade point average on a 5.0 scale and scored 25 on her ACT exam. While in high school she was involved in the Environmental Club, school newspaper, tennis, yearbook, and humanities organizations. She was also active in the DCFS Northern Region Youth Advisory Board, Statewide Youth Advisory Board and the For Youth, By Youth Newsletter. Amy also received many awards including Quill and Scroll, Honor Roll, Ride of Lions and National Honor Society membership. She is studying psychology at University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana.



Christopher Johns

Christopher, from Glen Ellyn, graduated from Glenbard South High School where he achieved a 3.9 grade point average on a 5.0 scale and scored a 30 on his ACT exam. He participated on the football and track teams and was recognized as an Illinois State Scholar. Christopher is now a student at the University of Illinois at Chicago, majoring in architecture.



Ryan Kastel

Ryan, from Bolingbrook, is a graduate of Bolingbrook High School where he obtained a 3.45 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. His high school activities included the Illinois High School Association Solo and Ensemble Contest, the Illinois Music Education Association, Jazz Band, Wind Symphony, Marching Band, Choir, and the Brass Quintet. Ryan's high school honors included the Outstanding Freshman Band Award, participation in the Illinois High School Association Solo and Ensemble Contest, an invitation to the Southwest Suburban Conference music event, and participation in the Illinois Music Education Association concert. Ryan is a student at Western Illinois University studying music education.



Julian Vojensky

Julian, from Plainfield, graduated from Plainfield High School. He achieved a 4.75 grade point average on a 5.0 scale and scored a 28 on his ACT exam. He received the Good Samaritan Award and was a member of the Math Tutoring Venue and the National Honor Society. He also volunteers at local 5K runs. Julian is now studying engineering at University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana.

Northern Region Training Calendar

Foster PRIDE In-Service Modules

All caregivers are welcome to attend PRIDE In-Service Training. Advance registration is required.

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

Waukegan *Ramada Inn*
Oct. 2, 4, 9 & 11
(Tue/Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

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

Waukegan *Ramada Inn*
Oct. 16, 18 & 23
(Tue/Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

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

Romeoville *Comfort Inn*
Nov. 5, 7 & 12 (Mon/Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Module 11 - The Teen in Foster Care: Supporting Attachment (6 training hours)

Kankakee *Kankakee Comm. Coll.*
Oct. 2 & 4 (Tue/Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.
Nov. 10 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

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

Aurora *Comfort Suites*
Oct. 25 & 30 (Thu/Tue) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Kankakee *Kankakee Comm. Coll.*
Oct. 15 & 17 (Mon/Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Nov. 17 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Educational Advocacy

6 training hrs.

It is mandatory for at least 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 *Comfort Suites*
Dec. 1 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Elgin *Judson College*
Dec. 4 & 6 (Tue/Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Kankakee *Kankakee Community College*
Oct. 22 & 24
(Mon/Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Romeoville *Comfort Inn*
Nov. 17 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Waukegan *Ramada Inn*
Oct. 13 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Dec. 1 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Caregivers must register to attend any of these training classes.

Call the DCFS Office of Training

877-800-3393 toll free

Northern News

Regional Reporter

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

Child Trauma

4 training hrs.

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

Aurora *Comfort Suites*
Oct. 9 & 11 (Tue/Thu) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Elgin *Judson College*
Nov. 8 (Thu) & 9:30-11:30 a.m.
Nov. 10 (Sat)

Kankakee *Kankakee Comm. Coll.*
Oct. 1 & 3 (Mon/Wed) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Nov. 3 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Waukegan *Ramada Inn*
Oct. 8 & 10 (Mon/Wed) 6:30-9 p.m.