

## Knickrehms love baby back to health and return home

**D**avid and Bets Knickrehm have been foster parents 15 years to more than 30 children. They have two sons by birth and two daughters by adoption. Bets seems to have a knack for working with children who have special needs. But the entire family's perseverance and skills were put to the test when a baby girl, just weeks old, came to their home. She (her name is withheld for privacy) had been in a traditional foster home, but her medical needs were too great. When the baby came to the Knickrehms' home, she had survived brain surgery, but was not expected to live past her first birthday. This started a new story of hoping for medical miracles, struggling to obtain services and building a strong relationship with the baby's family.

"The Knickrehm family has been extremely supportive of our little one, not only in ensuring that her needs are being met, but also being a model for what foster care should be like," said DCFS caseworker Dahlia Roman.

The Knickrehms worked diligently to find occupational, developmental, physical, speech and vision therapy for their foster daughter, which can be a very time-consuming and difficult task to undertake. Due to the Knickrehms' dedication, doctors



***The Knickrehm family rallied to nurse a seriously ill new baby back to good health and prepare her family for reunification.***

are amazed at the accomplishments their foster daughter has made. The baby who was not supposed to make it is now almost three years old. She recently started pre-school, and is able to say some words.

"It has been an amazing experience as her caseworker to have been a part of watching her grow and learn. She is now crawling, strengthening her stance and using a walker! To see her take those steps brought us all to tears!" said Roman.

In addition to the physical improvements, the Knickrehms have helped her emotionally by

encouraging supportive ties to her parents. They welcomed the parents into their home, offering to train and support them in learning more about their daughter's needs.

"The success of a child initially begins with the teamwork of the foster parents. We are grateful that Dalia made us part of the team and made us feel our opinions matter," Bets said.

They do believe that the little girl should go home to her parents. They say they will remember this time together as a blessing for their own family.

## Walter and Connie Payton Foundation helps to spread holiday cheer

The Walter and Connie Payton Foundation recently spread holiday cheer to youth in foster care programs with DCFS, LSSI, Catholic Charities and SOS Village in Kane and Will Counties. For 18 years the foundation has carried on the Chicago Bears legend's legacy of caring. It has supported DCFS in providing gifts to children in foster care programs. It also gives gifts to young people in residential centers, independent living programs, the armed forces and the Youth in College program.

This year's party did not disappoint. More than 600 children came to celebrate the season with food, fun, gifts, and fellowship. Connie chatted with children and their families, as they all enjoyed the festivities. Walter and Connie's son, Jarrett lent a helping hand to unload and give out the many gifts for children.

DCFS staff were there serving food, running games and keeping everything going smoothly. Foster parents seemed to enjoy seeing the hard work staff put into the

party to help make the holidays merrier for the children in their homes.



**Foster families in Kane and Will counties celebrated the holidays with help from the Walter and Connie Payton Foundation, Santa and youth volunteers.**

## Elgin and DuPage foster families joined staff for holiday party

The Elgin and DuPage County DCFS offices teamed up again this year to make another holiday party memorable for children in foster care and their foster families. The party was hosted by the members

of Christ Community Church in St. Charles. Approximately 175 guests from the DCFS foster care programs in Kane and DuPage counties enjoyed delicious food, games, and music.

Children look forward to this party each year, not only for the fun, but because it also gives them a chance to meet other children that are in similar life situations. Caregivers also get the opportunity to network with other foster parents and to meet DCFS staff in a relaxed environment.

The Girl Scout Troop #692 stepped up again this year to provide stockings for all the children. They were also in charge of ensuring that

the children had plenty of games to play for prizes. Retired foster parents Mr. and Mrs. Baldowsky were kind enough to provide the food again this year. The Baldowskys and their children always enjoyed attending the DCFS parties. They said they like sharing their experiences in foster care with others.

One caseworker commented that the party was a great opportunity to spend time with children in such a fun atmosphere. Also, staff from the investigation teams were able to put faces to the names of foster caregivers and get to know them better. The party's organizers and families were grateful for another memorable celebration.





## Youth Services Bureau helps McHenry County youth stay on track

McHenry County Youth Service Bureau offers many community services for children and families in McHenry County. The organization can help families through the issues that can hamper success in school including delinquency, substance abuse and teen pregnancy.

### Delinquency Prevention

The United Way of McHenry County funds the Delinquency Prevention program for elementary, middle school, and junior high school students. Trained prevention specialists work with school personnel to tailor groups that meet the needs of the school's population. Groups are available during and after school. Topics most requested by schools cover bullying, anger management and study skills.

### Substance Abuse

Adolescents between ages 12 and 17 who have experimented with or abused alcohol or other drugs are eligible to participate in this education/counseling program called New Pathways. A certified

addictions counselor will provide an overview of the program and assess the client's needs. The client will participate in a four-week basic substance abuse education group. The group meets for one hour per week to address use of and addiction to alcohol and other drugs.

### Teen Pregnancy and Parenting

T.A.M.I. (Teen Age Mothers Initiative) provides linkage to services, education, support and social activities for pregnant and parenting teens in a small group setting. There is no fee for this program.

Pregnancy Prevention Program, funded by the Department of Human Services, serves adolescents ages 12 to 18. The main goal is to prevent teen pregnancy. Prevention specialists facilitate weekly small group meetings in McHenry County schools, with an emphasis on abstinence. Group participation is voluntary and requires parental consent. Topics are covered through discussion, activities and videos.

The group addresses:

- Healthy Relationships
- Protective Behaviors
- Goal Setting
- Decision Making

These programs take referrals for youth living in McHenry County. More information is available on the McHenry County Youth Service Bureau Web site [www.ysb4kids.org](http://www.ysb4kids.org) or by telephone at 815-338-7360.

### Youth services in other areas of Northern Region

There are similar programs for youth living in the other Local Area Networks (LANs) in 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

### Northern News

Sponsor: Debbie Palmer-Thomas, DCFS Northern Regional Administrator



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Anyone can call the regional reporter with story suggestions about:

- foster parent association news and schedules
- local training notices
- features on foster families and community members working for children
- photos
- ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.



## Northern Region Caregiver Training

*For the most up-to-date and complete schedule information, visit the on-line Virtual Training Center anytime at [www.DCFStraining.org](http://www.DCFStraining.org) or call the DCFS Office of Training at 877-800-3393 during regular business hours. In addition to the slate of classroom courses, caregivers can take advantage of these other options.*

### Learning and credit hour earning options outside the classroom

Classroom training is the preferred method for training caregivers. Interacting with instructors and other caregivers brings a unique richness to the training experience. Still, there are other methods of learning that can take advantage of technology and flexible scheduling. DCFS can offer caregivers the additional options of computer-based training and the DCFS Lending Library of books and tapes.

The in-service PRIDE training modules are now available as an interactive CD-ROM format in addition to the traditional classroom format. The digital format provides anytime, anywhere use, allowing caregivers to receive training, while working around the other responsibilities that compete for their time.

The nine in-service modules in PRIDE Digital Curriculum use the same combination of cotrainers that are featured in all the PRIDE classroom training programs. A child welfare professional and a foster parent professional guide at home learners through each module. Using video and an easy-to-use computer format, the computerized course presents the information and recorded discussions from other caregivers, adopted individuals and agency staff with knowledge of Illinois' child welfare system. The digital system takes learners

through exercises to test their understanding of the material. It saves exercises so caregivers can document their work.

To order a CD set for one of the PRIDE in-service modules, call 312-328-2828.

The DCFS Lending Library can also be used as a convenient alternative for obtaining approved training credit for license renewal. Licensed foster and adoptive parents can borrow materials for a two-week period at no charge. The Lending Library catalogue highlights a multitude of books, audio cassettes and videos for self-directed training in parenting and family life, spanning 17 categories.

To borrow these or one of the myriad titles in the Lending Library, simply fill out the order form at the back of the catalogue. Send it to the DCFS Office of Training, Station 122, 406 E. Monroe, Springfield IL 62701.

To request a catalogue, call 877- 800-3393. The catalogue is also available on the DCFS Web site: <http://www.state.il.us/DCFS/docs/lendinglibrary.pdf>.

#### Lending Library Categories

- Child Sexual Abuse
- Children with Sexually Aggressive Behaviors
- Children with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Children with Behavioral Disorders and/or Emotional Disturbances
- Disciplinary Strategies for Difficult Children
- Separation and Visitation
- Drug-Affected Infants and Children
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Effects (FAS/FAE)
- The Medically Complex Child
- The Child With HIV/AIDS
- Promoting Educational Success Through Improved Learning Skills
- Building A Healthy Self Esteem in Kids
- From Foster Care to Adoption
- Child Development and Parenting
- Parenting Adolescents
- Families and Diversity—Parenting with Greater Understanding
- Children With Mental Health, Language and Physical Challenges