

## Foster parent finds ways to help kids succeed in school

Foster parent Darlene Hoard of Alma says she doesn't have a wand to help her foster children with their educational challenges, but she does seem to work magic. She has developed her own approach to help the children who have been placed in her home find success at school. Many of the techniques she uses are the same techniques she used with her six birth children.

During her seven years as a foster parent, she has had a variety of children who presented various challenges. She has worked with children who were developmentally delayed, diagnosed with attention deficit disorder, or academically years behind grade level.

Darlene's approach is hands-on. When a child first comes to the family, she takes stock of his or her educational skill level. One of her next steps is to meet with the child's teacher to determine what skills need to be reinforced at home. Frequently she supplements the materials, especially the reading materials. She helps the children prepare by giving them a practice test at home and encouraging them to take their time.



*Darlene and Tom Hoard*

Children are encouraged to do their best, but are not pressured. The night before a test the children get a good night's sleep and a healthy breakfast in the morning. They are praised when they have done their best. Darlene commented that living in a small school district does offer some benefits. She knows many of the teachers as they taught her birth children. She remains in close contact with the teachers so that she is aware of the child's progress and challenges.

Caseworker Debbie Dagg describes Darlene as patient and nurturing with her kids. "Her experience with children enables her to make sound and independent judgments about the children in her care."

## Bowlins honored as Southern Region Foster Parents of the Year

Josie, 13, thinks the world of her foster parents of nine months, Howard and Joanne Bowlin of Christopher. She nominated them for the DCFS-sponsored Foster Parent of the Year essay contest in May. Members of the Statewide Youth Advisory Board selected the Bowlins from the southern Region nominees. Below are excerpts to illustrate why Josie thinks so much of Howard and Joanne.

"When I came into the house there was my new mom. I knew by her smile I had found a mom and dad who cared and loved me. I was finally HOME."

"They always want to know what is going on in our lives and we can talk to them about anything."

"The words, 'I love you' sound so beautiful to me."

The Bowlins have been foster parents for 20 years to nearly 40 children. They have adopted four times and are in the process of a fifth adoption. Josie and the Bowlins are planning to complete her guardianship soon.

## Implementation Plan gets high marks

The DCFS Southern Region Foster Care Advisory Council has a lot to be proud of, after the hard work that went into preparing the Southern Region's Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. The plans are to be done with input from foster parents. Southern Region's plan received 100.15 out of a possible 104 points. The reviewers of the plan commented that it was an outstanding plan that was well organized.

Currently members of the Foster Parent Advisory Council are presenting the plan to DCFS staff and foster parents. It is the goal of the Advisory Council to have staff and foster parents fully aware of their rights and responsibilities as outlined in the Foster parent Law. The Council continues to look for suggestions to update and strengthen the plan.

The Council meets the third Wednesday at 10 a.m. on the odd months. If you are interested in attending a Council meeting, please call Cindy McCleary at 244-8400 or Carolyn Cleveland at 394-2100 to verify the meeting location.

## Local foster parent groups welcome Regional Administrator Bill Peyton

DCFS Regional Administrator Bill Peyton was a special guest speaker at both the Belleville Foster Parent Association and the Twin Counties Foster Parent Association.

At both meetings Peyton presented general information on the Department as well as highlights of upcoming programs such as integrated assessment. The floor was then opened for foster parents to ask specific questions or ask for clarification on policy/procedure issues.

He emphasized that foster parents with concerns should always work through the chain of command, starting with the child's caseworker and continuing up as needed. He praised the groups for

their achievements and was impressed by the numerous family-oriented activities hosted by the groups. Foster parents in attendance said they were delighted to meet Peyton and appreciated his straightforward responses to their questions.

If you would like to become a member of a local support group, call your local DCFS office and ask for the foster parent support specialist, who can help make the connection.



*Gary Trentman, president of the Belleville Area Foster Parent Association; and Bill Peyton*

## Fingerprint party meets requirement with fun

Over 50 wards were recently fingerprinted and photographed at the Olney field office. The child's photo and fingerprint card become a part of the child's record along with other identifying information about the child and their birth parent. This information may be used by law enforcement, national agencies and caseworkers to locate and expedite the return of youth who become absent from Department authorized placement.

In appreciation to the foster parents who brought their child-

ren, the Olney staff hosted a cake and punch get-together. The staff had the opportunity to meet the foster parents who serve their area. The kids gave the extravaganza high marks. They thought the hi-tech fingerprint machine was cool. They left the Olney office with a balloon for themselves and a flower to present to their foster parent. The kids were careful to pick the prettiest flower for their special caregiver. Children also received an updated personal photo to add to their life book.

## Back to School Safety Tips

Share these Safety Tips with your children.

### Riding the School Bus

- Have a safe place to wait for your bus, away from traffic and the street.
- Stay away from the bus until it comes to a complete stop and the driver signals you to enter.
- When being dropped off, exit the bus and walk 10 giant steps away from the bus. Keep a safe distance between you and the bus. Also, remember that the bus driver can see you best when you are back away from the bus.
- Use the handrail to enter and exit the bus.
- Stay away from the bus until the driver gives his/her signal that it's okay to approach.
- Be aware of the street traffic around you. Drivers are required to follow certain rules of the road concerning school buses, however, not all do. Protect yourself and watch out!

### Walking and Biking to School

Students walking and biking to school face a wide variety of decision-making situations and dangers while walking to and from school. Here are a few basic safety tips to follow:

- Mind all traffic signals and/or the crossing guard – never cross the street against a light even if you don't see any traffic coming.



- Walk your bike through intersections.
- Walk with a buddy.
- Wear clothing or accessories with reflective material...it makes you more visible to street traffic.

### Riding in a Car

You might have heard before that most traffic crashes occur close to home...they do.

- Safety belts are the best form of protection passengers have in the event of a crash. They can lower the risk of injury by 45%.
- A person is four times more likely to be seriously injured or killed if ejected from the vehicle in a crash.
- Everyone needs to be buckled up properly. That means older kids use seat belts, younger kids sit in booster seats and infants or toddlers ride in child safety seats.

Reprinted from the National PTA, [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)

## Angels in April have giving hearts year-round

The Family Support Unit at Scott Air Force Base has participated in a very special project for the past several years. In April they requested the names of needy children with gift suggestions for their giving tree. Military and civilian personnel pulled a name off the tree and purchased clothing, shoes and a toy for a needy child.

Ella Duncan of the Family Support Unit has coordinated the project for several years. She is never surprised at the generosity of the military personnel. She laughed as she said, "the names get taken off just as quickly as I hang them up." It's great to know that the spirit of the holidays is alive even in April.

### OUR KIDS

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Call with foster parent association news and schedules; local training; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and news articles and support all foster families can use.

## DCFS Lending Library offers alternatives for education credits

The Training schedules were unavailable at press time, due to the state's transition to a new fiscal year. Please consult your local education provider to obtain a schedule for any upcoming training sessions.

When you cannot attend training in person, the DCFS Lending

Library can be used as an alternative for obtaining approved training credit for license renewal. The 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition of the lending Library Catalog, which can also be viewed on the DCFS website at [www.state.il.us/dcfs](http://www.state.il.us/dcfs).

**Marion ~ 618-536-7751**  
**East St. Louis ~ 618-650-3213**

### Lending Library Categories

- Child Sexual Abuse
- Children with Sexually Aggressive Behaviors
- Children with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Children with Behavioral Disorders/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

### Excerpts from the many titles available to borrow...

#### **When a Child or Youth is Sexually Abused...A Guide for Youth, Parents, and Caregivers**

*by Children's Aid Society Foundation*

Foster parents can read this comprehensive booklet or listen to the audio cassette. Both give the same overview of child sexual abuse focusing on the caregiver/child relationship after disclosure. The information contained in this booklet/audio cassette is valuable to all caregivers of children who were sexually abused.

Reading Level: Easy

Credit: 1 hour

#### **Bruised Before Birth: Parenting Children Exposed to Parental Substance Abuse**

*by Amy Bullock, Elizabeth Grimes and Joan McNamara*

This book introduces and describes the signs and effects of a child that was prenatally exposed to drugs. It offers various parenting tools, techniques, and strategies that may assist in positive and effective caretaking.

Reading Level: Easy to Moderate

Credit: 2 hours

#### **All About Attention Deficit Disorder: Symptoms, Diagnosis, and Treatment**

*by Thomas W. Phelan*

This book touches on basic symptoms of ADD and how it effects the child at home, school, and socially. The book also discusses possible treatments through counseling, school intervention, behavior management, and medication.

Reading Level: Easy

Credit: 3 hours

#### **The Explosive Child**

*by Ross W. Greene, Ph.D.*

For some children, the standard approach of reward-and-punishment doesn't always work. Such children may have difficulty telling you what they're frustrated about or thinking through potential solutions to problems. In this book, the author discusses that the difficulties of these children comes from developmental deficits in two critical skills: flexibility and frustration tolerance. Using stories about the lives of children, parents and teachers with whom Dr. Greene has worked, he offers the reader a systematic approach and advice to helping these children.

Reading Level: Moderate

Credit: 4 hours