

## Calm, cool and collected leads to success with teen boys

The phrase “teenage boy” can strike fear in the heart of some, but not Larry Emerick. His compassion for teenagers has changed the lives of several boys. Even though it wasn’t supposed to happen like that, he wouldn’t have it any other way.

Ten years ago, Emerick obtained his foster care license to provide care to children age zero to three. Yet, the first child placed with him was a 17-year-old boy, named Scott. Scott stayed for more than a year, until he was offered emancipation. Emerick remembers being at the court hearing with Scott when he was granted independence. Even now at age 30, he still keeps in touch.

Emerick “had so much fun with Scott” that it fanned a flame for parenting teenagers. That led to Gabe, a 13-year-old from the Chicago-area who needed an adoptive home. During the summer of 2004, he came to the Southern region for several visits and moved in time for school to start. He and Emerick celebrated his adoption the following year.

Even though everything about working with older youth seemed “right,” it was not without some hesitancy.

“My biggest concern when I began fostering teens was whether I would be able to deal with the emotional ups and downs that teens demonstrate on a daily basis,” he said.

So, he decided that he would do what his parents did with him. They were supportive and very encouraging of their three children. Emerick’s parents managed to discipline without raising their voices or saying hurtful comments. He can remember them coming to him and explaining why he was being disciplined and what would be the appropriate way to handle that situation in the future. Emerick decided to use those same techniques with the teens placed in his care.

He admits it took a lot of patience and, “believe me, there were times when I wanted to yell and lose my temper. But, I found that by staying calm, it de-escalated the situation and helped the child to be able to listen to what I was saying rather than react to my anger.” This has worked throughout his time as a foster parent, and several of the kids have commented to Emerick that they were always amazed at the fact that he would not yell even when they tried to get him to argue with them.

Emerick in turn is often amazed by how far the young men have progressed. Gabe participated in every sport available, and received the IHSA soccer award for attitude and sportsmanship. In addition to excelling as an athlete, Gabe also excelled in academics, winning an American Legion Essay Contest as well as a DCFS scholarship. Gabe is



Larry Emerick

currently a senior in college, majoring in Psychology.

Emerick is also very proud of another teenager he had in his home. CC came to Emerick at 16. He had been in numerous prior placements, with little stability. Yet, while they were together, this foster father advocated for every service available, and would not take no for an answer. CC graduated from high school and joined the Army Reserves. He served his country in Afghanistan, earning the Bronze Star. After CC finishes his military commitment in 2010, he plans to go on to college.

Emerick has had a hand in the success of several other young men, even when they were just short-term placements. Among the DCFS office staff, his name always comes up when a teen-aged boy is in need of a home. At this point, he sees no reason to have it any other way.

## Southern Region students earn DCFS college scholarships

The 2009 DCFS Scholarship program sent four students, whose cases were served by programs in the Southern Region, to college with several added layers of support. The scholarship includes the waiver of tuition and mandatory fees at one of the nine Illinois state universities or Illinois junior colleges, a monthly maintenance grant of \$471 and a medical card.

Scholarship recipients were chosen statewide on the basis of scholastic aptitude, a written personal statement and demonstrated community involvement. Next year's scholarship application process begins in January and ends in March. Contact the youth's caseworker or the DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959 for more information.



### **Raquel Bowlin**

Raquel is a 2009 graduate of Christopher High School where she earned a 4.99 grade point average on a 5.0 scale and was ranked 2nd in her class. While in high school, Raquel was a member of the W.Y.S.E Team, National Honor Society, math team, Environthon Team, newspaper staff, Scholar Bowl Team, and yearbook staff. She earned the IHSA scholastic achievement award and was nominated for the Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizenship Award. She volunteered many hours of her time to help with Red Cross blood drives, Special Olympics, Cystic Fibrosis Walk-a-Thon and Red Ribbon Drug-Free Week. She also assisted with numerous projects within her church and community. Raquel now attends Rend Lake College and plans to major in psychology and secondary education.

### **Kasheena Callahan**

Kasheena, of Rinard, graduated from Flora High School where she earned a 3.51 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was ranked 14th in her class of 94. She was on the Honor Roll all four years of high school and was inducted into the National Honor Society in her senior year. Her other activities in high school included participating on the track team, Communications Club, Choir, Spanish Club, newspaper staff, yearbook staff, and Pep Club. She also performed in school musicals. Outside of school, Kasheena volunteered time through mission trips and with the local Teen Reach program. She also maintained part-time employment at McDonald's. Kasheena is studying at Olney Central College, pursuing a major in education.

### **Jessica Presutti**

Jessica is a 2009 graduate of Chester High School where she earned a 3.375 GPA on a 4.0 scale and was ranked 5th out of 69 students. While in high school, she participated on both the academic and math teams, and was a member of the Spanish Club. As a participant in the Chester High School co-op program, she was employed by the Gilster-Mary Lee Corporation. Jessica attends Southwestern Illinois College, where she is studying nursing.



### **Shayla Richardson**

Shayla, of Bluford, graduated from Webber Township High School where she earned a 2.76 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. In high school, she was active in basketball, volleyball, and track and field. She was a member of the Webber Township Chorus, student council, Engineering Bowl and International (SEED) Collaborative Project, and Rotary International. She also served on homecoming and prom committees. Shayla received many honors and awards, including Athlete of the Year and Vacation Bible School Leader, along with numerous first place awards for her vocal abilities. She volunteered at the Country Side Acres Retirement Home and served as a teacher at the Vacation Bible School. Shayla is a student at Southern Illinois University, where she will pursue a degree in biology or chemistry.



## Look to LSSI for additional training options in Marion area

Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) sponsors a training event on the 4th Tuesday of every month in Marion. A different topic is presented on each occasion, and caregivers can receive training credit hours.

Each training session includes dinner, and child care is available. The evening begins with a meal at 5:30 p.m. and training from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Note, trainings are not held May, August, November or December. These events are open to ALL foster families regardless of their agency affiliation. The trainings are held at the First Union Baptist Church of Marion, 401 South Union. For more information contact Kim Holder at the LSSI Marion office at 618-997-9196.

## Foster and adoptive families celebrate at DuQuoin State Fair

This year marked the 24th anniversary of the annual Foster and Adoptive Families Day at the DuQuoin State Fair. The festivities included a picnic and activities, and prizes donated by a wide variety of local businesses, community organizations, individuals and DCFS staff volunteers who served families.

"The DuQuoin State Fair picnic experience is a great way for DCFS to show its thanks to the families who have opened their homes to children who need their love and protection, as well as to recruit new foster and adoptive families," said Director Erwin McEwen.



**Governor Pat Quinn met children and families at the DuQuoin State Fair.**

This event draws first-time and repeating families who come to enjoy free refreshments, free carnival rides for foster or adopted youth and free parking and admission for caregivers and their families. This tradition continues because so many pitch in to help. The Marion Elks Club and regional Elks programs have been long-term contributors. The DCFS Office of Foster Parent Support Services coordinated the fair invitations and ticket distribution this year. Staff from many DCFS offices and several private agencies volunteered their weekend time to make sure that foster and adoptive families had an opportunity for relaxation and fun.

## Angels in April assisted nearly 300 East St. Louis youth

The long-standing "Angels in April" tradition continued this year. Military and civilian personnel at Scott Air Force Base in St. Clair County again donated their time, effort, and resources towards providing foster children in the East St. Louis area with new clothing and toys. Caseworkers from five agencies in the area, including DCFS, Children's Home and Aid, CASA, the Violence Prevention Center, and Call for Help, all submitted names of children in March. The gifts were purchased, collected, and wrapped in April and distributed in May. Each child received a new outfit and a toy or game. In this, the seventh anniversary, 289 children reveled in the joy of their gifts. Each year the program serves an average of 300 children.

### Our Kids

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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.



# Southern 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](http://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 will cover 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 what everyone's role is on the team, 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 will 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 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 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.