

## Rookie caregivers pass crash course with sib group, medical needs and return home goal

Tim and Lisa Pederson of Granite City did not realize what they were getting into when they agreed to accept a sibling group of three in March of 2007. Though they had been licensed for a year, they had no children placed with them. Taking the three children (ages 11, 2, and two months old), managing a medical condition and balancing activities toward a return home goal, was a huge leap.

At the time, the pressing concern was for infant Cindy, who had been born two months premature. She had already had one surgery to correct cardiac issues. The prognosis was optimistic, although the Pedersons knew that regular follow-up contacts with a host of doctors would be necessary.

When Cindy suffered a series of cardiac arrests, she was rushed to the hospital for emergency surgery to place a pacemaker. It was clear that the Pedersons would need to devote even more time and energy. In a show of extreme dedication, Lisa resigned from her job in order to be home full time with Cindy because the pediatrician was concerned that day care environments posed a significant risk to her.

With the support of their case manager, the family not only addressed Cindy's on-going medical issues, but also ensured that she received necessary developmental assessments via the Child and Family Connections program. Fortunately, Cindy displayed no significant developmental delays, but will need to be re-screened when she is older.

Though Cindy clearly needed the extra attention, her brothers also had their own needs. Eleven-year-old Jeremy, in particular, had trouble accepting the fact that he was in placement.

"Our case manager took the lead in explaining things to Jeremy, and that really helped," said Tim.

The caseworker also made a referral to System of Care (SOC) mental health services that the Pedersons credit with helping Jeremy understand his circumstances.

The Pedersons have also been involved in working toward the children's return home. They have frequent contact with the children's mother and she has come to their home for Thanksgiving and birthday parties. They also send detailed notes on the children to



*Lisa and Tim Pederson*

all of the parental visits so the mother stays up-to-date on their lives while they are apart.

Tim is hopeful that by building and maintaining a positive relationship with the mother they will not lose touch with the kids when they return home. "I'd like to stay involved with them and be a part of their lives," he said.

Despite the extra attention Cindy requires and the challenges of integrating three children into the home simultaneously, both Tim and Lisa continue to be enthusiastic at the prospect of continuing to foster. "I love knowing that the kids are safe and healthy when they're here," said Lisa. Tim echoed her words and noted, "I never thought fostering would be this rewarding."

*\*Children's names have been changed*



## Summer Camp Options for Southern Region

Some children may benefit from a summer camp experience. This is a conversation that caregivers and caseworkers should have soon. There are myriad camps serving various interests and needs. The Southern Region has procedures to fund foster children's camps on a case-by-case basis.

Caregivers who want to explore a summer camp opportunity should provide the caseworker with basic information about the camp such as location, duration, and cost. The worker can request payment for the camp by going through the region's chain of command. Michael Ruzicka, Regional Administrator, has indicated that he can approve payment. In some instances, it may be necessary to prove that there are no other resources available for payment such as scholarships or individual grants. Caregivers should be prepared to document this if requested.

Children and foster families served by private agencies can also request payment for camps through their respective caseworkers. Each agency may have their own set of criteria for determining eligibility and/or payment.

## Local help for age 0 to 5 screenings

DCFS requires that all children under age five entering substitute care receive a developmental screening through the Integrated Assessment Program (IA). The IA process uses tools that are accepted methods of providing this screening for physical, emotional, social, and educational development.

There are some Southern region children under five who entered care before Integrated Assessment. Additionally, some children who were screened when they initially entered care and did not exhibit any signs of delay could develop such signs later. The Region's Early Childhood Coordinator, Jayne Crader, has the primary responsibility to ensure that all children under five receive the required screenings.

If caregivers believe a child may be exhibiting symptoms of a developmental delay, they should contact the caseworker. Arrangements can be made for that child to be screened by a Child and Family Connection provider. There are five CFC offices throughout the Southern Region:

- Effingham: ARC Community Support Systems, 217-347-5601
- Swansea: Special Children Inc., 618-624-3309
- Centralia: Regional Office of Education, 618-532-4919
- Norris City: Wabash Ohio Valley Special Ed District, 618-378-2131

- Carbondale: Archway Inc., 618-529-3147

Crader works closely with these offices and has developed contacts with many other early childhood resources. She can connect caseworkers to various programs so they can work with caregivers to make choices for a child's specific needs. Foster caregivers who have questions regarding early childhood programs, developmental screenings, or associated resources should first discuss them with their caseworkers. Jayne Crader may also be contacted at the Fairview Heights office (618-394-2100) for further consultation, or if caregivers are encountering difficulties in having their children assessed.

### 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.

## School help in Local Area Networks

Child and Adolescent Local Area Networks (LANs) are a group of agencies, organizations, community members and individuals within a set geographic area. They bring all of the necessary parties together to respond to the express needs in the community. Each LAN in the Southern Region has community-based programs that focus on supporting youth and their families where truancy, suspension, expulsion, school moves due to behavior, or risk of school action are issues. These programs are available to all families, including foster, adoptive and guardianship families. Within the LAN, the Family Centered Services programs and “wraparound” services are two avenues available to assist families with academic achievement.

Family Centered Services (FCS) programs are administered by an agency selected by the LANs and DCFS. All FCS programs focus on services to youth who are at risk of (or are already experiencing) school issues related to truancy, suspension, or expulsion. However, they have unique program plans based on their target population and the types of services they offer. Some programs work with a specific school district or concentrate on a certain age group. A program might combat truancy or may focus on students facing suspension. One common characteristic is that they take a case-management approach to join the student, the caregiver or parent, and the school administration in finding solutions that will help students succeed.

For example, one FCS program intervened with a chronically truant student and helped coordinate transportation. The student also received tutoring and mentoring to get back on track. Most often, the school will initiate a referral for a student showing signs of trouble. Alternatively, the DCFS LAN Liaison can connect caregivers to available programs in their community.

The second option within the local community is LAN screening and “wraparound services.” Wrap services continue to be an option for youth who experience the educational issues noted above. A caseworker, caregiver, or other individual can refer a youth to the local LAN screening committee. The committee will then identify any known services and supports and review the referral for eligibility. The next step would be to create a family/child team to work with the caregiver and child to develop a comprehensive action plan. Although caregivers can make a referral directly to their LAN, it is advisable to consult with the caseworker beforehand. For families with Internet access, referral forms are available at [www.umchome.org](http://www.umchome.org).

Families who are interested in pursuing either one of these options for youth may contact the Southern Region LAN liaisons for more specific information. For families in the Marion area, please contact Kay Teel at 618-244-8439. In the East St. Louis area, call Duane Phillips at 618-583-2105.

## St. Louis Magic House free to foster families

The Magic House, an interactive museum for children and adults in St. Louis, recently announced that foster caregivers and children living in their home will be admitted to The Magic House at no charge, at all times. This children’s museum is among the most visited children’s attractions in the St. Louis area. The Magic House provides a variety of interactive learning experiences on a wide range of topics, including magnetism, electricity, and the environment. Its Star-Spangled Center is a unique learning environment with a courtroom, legislative chamber, Oval Office, exhibits and educational programs on citizenship. The museum offers programs for children toddler age through teenagers.

Caregivers will have to provide documentation that they are currently licensed for free admission. This offer does not include adoptive parents unless they can prove that they are currently licensed foster parents. Foster parents are requested to bring only members of their household, not extended family.

The Magic House is located at 516 South Kirkwood Road in St. Louis. It is open daily in the summer with extended hours on Tuesday and Friday. Check the Web site for more details at [magichouse.org](http://magichouse.org).

# Southern Region Training Calendar

## Foster PRIDE In-Service Modules

All caregivers are welcome to attend PRIDE In-Service Training. Advance registration is required. Training dates, times and locations are subject to change.

### 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.*

**Carbondale** **Civic Center**  
 May 13, 15, 20 & 22 6-9 p.m.  
 (Tue/Thu)

**Fairview Heights** **Ramada Inn**  
 May 5, 7, 12 & 14 6:30-9:30 p.m.  
 (Mon/Wed)

### Module 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.*

**Fairview Heights** **DCFS Office**  
 April 1, 8 & 15 (Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

### 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 the 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.*

**Carbondale** **Civic Center**  
 April 14 & 21 (Mon) 6-9 p.m.

### Attachment and the Teen in Family Foster Care (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.*

**Effingham** **DCFS Office**  
 April 2 & 15 (Tue/Sat) 6-9 p.m.

## 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 trauma.

**Granite City** **Catholic Charities**  
 June 28 (Sat) 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

## 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.*

**Belleville** **Catholic Social Services**  
 June 7 & 14 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

**Carbondale** **Civic Center**  
 May 3 & 10 (Sat) 9 a.m.-Noon

**Fairview Heights** **DCFS Office**  
 April 5 & 12 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.  
 (Sat)

June 5 & 12 (Thu) 6-9 p.m.

**Fairview Heights** **Ramada Inn**  
 June 24 & 26 6:30-9:30 p.m.  
 (Tue/Thu)

**Godfrey** **Church of the Nazarene**  
 April 5 (Sat) 9 a.m.-Noon

**Caregivers must register to attend any of these training classes.**

**Call the DCFS Office of Training**

**877-800-3393 toll free**