

## Family ties point students toward college



Jamar Heywood admits that his behavior problems and many placements took their toll. Despite being a good artist, Jamar found himself giving in to peer-pressure and emotions.

"I was kicked out of East Side school when I was younger for fighting because I did not want to be told what to do by anyone" he said. Following his placement in an Alternative School in the St. Louis area, Jamar was able to reflect on his life and make some changes.

"I felt that it is better to be in school and working towards a future than on the streets and in trouble," he said.

It was his dedication and support of his foster parents that made this change possible. "My foster parents did not give up on me. They worked with me to establish and reach goals," stated Jamar.

He worked his way back into mainstream school, and his grades flourished. In May, Jamar graduated from Cahokia Senior High School with a 3.8 Grade point average and ranked 11th in his graduating class of 201.

With the encouragement of his foster parents, Cappalina Foster and Chris Moore, Jamar has maintained a relationship with his biological family. Now Jamar attends Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, majoring in architecture. He plans to stay in touch with his foster parents during breaks, because "they have taught me that you can care about more than one family."



Jennifer Poston, now 18, had multiple foster home placements over 15 years, many of which disrupted due to her behaviors. She made significant progress after being placed at Kemmerer Village in Assumption in May 2007.

Despite her unsettled background, Jennifer generally received good grades in school, and she was promoted regularly. In May she received her high school diploma from Kemmerer's on-grounds school. Jennifer moved to a transitional living program in Rockford in August, and she began attending Rock Valley Community college with her ultimate goal of becoming an Early Childhood Educator on track.

While Jennifer still maintains contact with her extended family in Iowa, she has also enjoyed the continuing support from a number of her previous foster parents. Ralph and Nancy Fuller frequently sent "care packages" to her at Kemmerer and visited her there. Pat and Bill Koniak have also kept in close touch via letters and frequent phone calls, as well as the occasion monetary gift. Gail and Ed Saunders also opened their home to Jennifer over the holidays so she could enjoy an extended visit with her younger sister, whom the Saunders adopted a few years ago.

Jennifer has not forgotten the support and concern her foster parents have displayed. "I appreciate what they did," she said. "It showed me that they still cared and that meant a lot to me."

## Splashy send-off for new graduates

The Southern Region Youth Advisory Board hosted its annual Graduation Celebration at Splash City in Collinsville. Twenty-three graduates were honored for their educational achievements by a group that included DCFS staff, foster parents, and parents.

The theme of the celebration, "Living on Today's Hopes, Waiting for Tomorrow's Dreams," was referenced in the remarks from Regional Administrator Mike Ruzicka and Rena Gillison, former president of the Statewide Youth Advisory Council and Southern Region's representative. Gillison encouraged the graduates to continue their education and take advantage of the various Department programs that are designed to assist them.

Each graduate received gifts with college in mind. These included a handmade blanket, linen set, desk lamp, alarm clock, miniature room fan, and backpack full of personal care products. Each graduate also received a \$50.00 check from DCFS. The multitude of gifts was made possible by the generosity of many regional organizations: the Poshard Foundation, Jefferson County Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 241, Project Linus, Hamilton County 4-H Ambassador Program and the Omicron Alpha Chapter of Delta Theta Tau. The Human Services Networking Council coordinated the graduate gift program.

## Southern Region students earn DCFS college scholarships

The students highlighted here whose cases were served by programs in the Southern Region, headed to college with the honor of receiving one of 48 DCFS Scholarships. The scholarship includes 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 2008 DCFS Scholarship were selected from more than 200 applicants, based on their record of academic achievement, community involvement and personal successes.

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.



### Sherell Cannon

Sherell, of Cahokia, is a 2008 graduate of Cahokia High School where she earned a 3.74 grade point average and was ranked 11th out of 210 students. While in school she participated in the Spanish Club, track and field, tennis, Key Club, Saturday Scholars, and Beta Club. Her numerous awards/honors include National Honor Society, National Honor Roll and High Honor Roll. She set the school pole vault record and was a varsity letter winner. Sherell attends Eastern Illinois University where

she plans to major in mathematics and/or biology.

### Brittany Helfrich

Brittany, from Fairview Heights, graduated in 2007 from O'Fallon Township High School where she earned a 3.64 grade point average and scored a 30 on her ACT exam. Her high school activities included LifeSavers, Students Against Destructive Decisions, National Honor Society, Spanish Honor Society, and choir. Brittany's volunteer activities include Relay for Life, Polar Plunge, tutoring and activities with her church. She is a student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, studying psychology.



### John Phillips

John, from Oblong, is a 2008 graduate of Oblong High School where he achieved a 3.94 grade point average and an ACT score of 28. His activities included Foreign Language Club, Cultural Arts Club, Future Business Leaders of America, Science Club, pep band, jazz band, marching band, concert band, Scholastic Bowl, Math Team, and the Drama Club. His numerous honors include IMEA State Concert Choir, Illinois State Scholar, Patrick S. Gilmore Band Award, Heartland Honors Band and being a member of the Star Spangled Singers. He attends Belmont University, where he studies commercial music performance.

## Local Area Network offers assistance for school

Not every school problem is a discipline issue. The “wrap around” services available through the Local Area Network (LAN) can be a way for families to find school-related solutions in their communities. These programs are initiated, developed and implemented by organizations to respond to local needs. Many foster parents are not aware that wrap referrals and services continue to be available for children in their care. A recent wrap implementation illustrates the powerful affect a wrap can have on a child and his family.

Anthony (name changed for privacy) has muscular dystrophy and uses a wheelchair. He was frequently absent during his high school senior year due to complications from his illness. He had a referral to Family Centered Services, a contract that targets youth at-risk of truancy, suspension or expulsion. Shortly after that, Anthony’s case was referred to LAN 5, which serves Monroe and Randolph counties. A screening committee reviewed his situation and he was approved to receive wrap services.

As a first step the LAN purchased a laptop computer with voice-activated software so his mother and school aide would not have to transcribe all of his homework. Despite the high price of this item, the wrap committee was able to secure donations to cover the expense. The team also purchased a hand-held tape recorder for use when he was too ill to attend classes. These

items allowed him to complete his work more readily and rekindled his dream of attending college. In response, the wrap team also invited representatives from the State’s Office of Rehabilitation Services to a team meeting. They learned that there were a number of funded programs that are available to assist young people in wheelchairs who are attending college. Feeling more confident, Anthony applied to both the University of Illinois and St. Louis University, hoping that his high ACT scores as well as improved grades would present a positive picture. His hopes were well-founded, and he is now a student at SLU.

Before heading to school, the wrap team did more to help him prepare. Knowing that Anthony’s career goal was to be a newspaper journalist, the wrap team contacted his hometown paper about possible jobs or internships. After an impressive interview, he was hired and wrote his own column for the paper, which consistently received positive comments from the readership.

All told, this plan was very cost-effective, as much of the hard costs were covered through donations. The team members’ local connections and the “brainstorming” that occurred during the wrap team meeting were key to success, and represent the core ideas of the wrap process.

These types of programs are available to all families, including

foster, adoption and guardianship families. Family Centered Services programs focus on youth who are at risk of truancy, suspension or expulsion. Wrap-around services can extend to other community providers to develop a wrap plan to address a wide range of needs and circumstances, with approval by the review committee. Foster caregivers who have children with special needs, or experience difficulties obtaining specific services they feel might benefit the children in their care should first discuss their issues with the caseworker and if circumstances warrant, suggest initiating a wrap-around referral. The worker can contact the LAN liaison in their area to start the process. For more information on Local Area Networks go to [www.systemofcare.org](http://www.systemofcare.org).

### Southern Region LAN Liaisons

- **East St Louis Sub-Region:**  
Duane Phillips  
10 Collinsville Ave.  
East St. Louis, IL  
583-2105
- **Marion Sub-Region**  
Kay Teel  
321A Withers Dr.  
Mt. Vernon, IL  
244-8400

## Kendra Storme – Southern Region Foster/Adopt Training Manager

Kendra Storme assumed her job responsibilities as the Southern Region Foster/Adopt Training Manager in April 2008. Prior to joining the training staff, Storme was the Southern Region/ Marion area Educational Advisor from 1999 to 2008. In her new role, she will coordinate and schedule PRIDE trainings and supervise the trainers; schedule in-service and educational advocacy classes; and oversee the lending library. Storme wants to maintain her connections with Southern Region foster parents and has an “open door” policy on any questions, concerns, or problems foster parents encounter on training issues. She can be reached at 217-782-4805 or [kendra.storme@illinois.gov](mailto:kendra.storme@illinois.gov).

### 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 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. Detailed address information will be provided with registration.

#### Module 12 - Understanding & 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 fostering teenagers in the day to day life of the foster family.*

**Ullin** *Shawnee Comm. College*  
December 6 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

#### The Teen in Family Foster Care: Supporting Attachment (6 training hours)

*This training will help foster/adopt caregivers to understand how early attachment experiences have impacted the teen's development.*

**Mt. Vernon** *Rend Lake College*  
October 18 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

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

**Call the DCFS Office of Training**

**877-800-3393 toll free**

### 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*  
Oct. 30 & Nov. 4 (Thu/Tue) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

**Fairview Heights** *DCFS*  
December 13 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**Marion** *LSSI*  
November 12 & 13 (Wed/Thu) 6-9 p.m.

**Mt. Vernon** *DCFS*  
December 1 & 4 (Mon/Thu) 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.

**Belleville** *SW Illinois College*  
December 6 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**Effingham** *St. Anthony's Mem. Hosp.*  
November 8 (Sat) 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

**Marion** *Heartland Regional Med Ctr.*  
November 22 (Sat) 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

**Mt. Vernon** *Rend Lake College*  
October 25 (Sat) 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

**Ullin** *Shawnee Comm. College*  
November 1 (Sat) 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

**Vandalia** *Kaskaskia College*  
October 18 (Sat) 9 a.m.-1 p.m.