

## Regional advisory council keeps caregiver interests at forefront

Southern Region's Foster Care Advisory Council represents caregivers in a swath of homes that stretches from Effingham to the tip of the state. To meet that geographic challenge, the region can depend on two members who advocate actively in their local areas and who represent the region at the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council. Andrew DeLao and Michael Simpson volunteer to attend statewide council meetings scheduled nearly every month and to fulfill council duties on their personal time. This includes scoring Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans and serving on various committees.



Michael Simpson recently began his first term on the statewide council. He has been licensed for foster care for five and a half years. He remembers going to his first local advisory council meeting and being a bit overwhelmed. He has since found the rhythm of

advocacy and says he is looking forward to representing the Southern Region at local meetings and on the statewide council. Speaking up for youth in care will actually be a family affair. Simpson has also encouraged his son who is in foster care to join a Southern Region youth advisory board.



Andrew DeLao also represents Southern Region on the statewide council. He is in the third year of his first term. He and his wife Rae have been involved in foster care for nearly 10 years. In addition to their three children by birth, they have made a home for approximately 20 other children.

DeLao moved to Salem from Los Angeles where he was a police officer. He spearheads a local parent group and has been an active statewide council member, serving on several committees.

### *Advisory Council update*

The Southern Region Advisory Council in November completed one of its most important tasks—to complete the final draft of the region's Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. Caregivers signed off to confirm they had input to the plan. The plan covers how the foster care program complies with the rights and responsibilities laid out in the Law.

There was also an update provided by the DCFS Local Area Network (LAN) Liaison. Duane Phillips

described the community programs available to help school-age children who are at risk of truancy, suspension or expulsion. He informed the council about wrap-around services that can provide specific resources that children may need. These referrals are managed by United Methodist Children's Home. More information can be found at [www.umchome.org](http://www.umchome.org).

The council also reviewed several DCFS policies regarding licensing that could impact foster homes. These included new requirements for homes that have pools and other

water hazards. Andrew DeLao has made contact with a Marion-area fire department to assist with CPR training for those caregivers. Gloria Pounds of DCFS will provide more information at the next meeting on a policy regarding foster family dogs that might be deemed dangerous.

In 2011, the council will meet quarterly. The meetings will begin with a pre-meeting in each site at 6 p.m. to allow those present to get familiar with local issues. Caregivers can go to any of the following locations and the groups will be linked by teleconference starting at 6:30 p.m.

*Continued on page B*

## DCFS and private agency licensing staff can answer your questions

Foster caregivers are encouraged to contact their licensing representatives first if they have questions or concerns. Occasionally, caregivers whose licenses are supervised by a private agency will contact a DCFS supervisor or other staff to resolve issues or obtain information. Those inquiries should be directed to the licensing representative at the agency that licenses them. Following is contact information for DCFS workers, who are assigned by county, and private agency workers who are typically assigned by their office location.

### DCFS Foster Care Licensing Staff

Cindy McCleary, Supervisor - Mt. Vernon  
Ardi Ancona - Mt. Vernon 618-244-8448  
Counties: Bond, Clinton, Washington, Effingham, Fayette, Marion and Jefferson

Bev Rightnowar - Olney 618-393-2979  
Counties: Clay, Crawford, Edwards, Hamilton, Jasper, Lawrence, Richland, Wabash and Wayne

Sharlene Necco - Metropolis 618-524-2428  
Counties: Franklin, Gallatin, Hardin, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Saline and White Counties

Cathy Lang - Belleville - 618-257-7523  
St. Clair county

Nomie Whitaker - Marion 618-993-7055  
Counties: Alexander, Jackson, Monroe, Perry, Pulaski, Randolph, Union, and Williamson

Vicki Misloski - Belleville 618-257-7522  
Counties: Madison

### Private Agency Foster Care Licensing Staff

#### *Illinois Mentor*

Marion 618-997-9470: Courtney Muncha  
O'Fallon 618-628-9424: Linor Williams

#### *Catholic Charities*

Alton 618-462-0634 x224: Carolyn Yinger  
Effingham 217-857-1458: Michelle Barnes

#### *Catholic Social Services*

Belleville 618-394-5900: Sharon Siewert, Pam Fiscus, Tina Bilzing and Leslie Boyd  
Carbondale 618-351-0743: Kendra Barnes and Indira Perkins  
Mt. Vernon 618-244-0344: Kaelin Pierce and Jonelle Joiner

#### *Children's Home + Aid*

Alton 618-462-2714: Holly Kieu  
Belleville 618-235-5335: Michelle Camden

#### *Hoyleton*

East St. Louis 618-398-0557: Tijuana Ingram and Sherry Knox

#### *Lutheran Child & Family Services*

Belleville 618-234-8904: Paula O'Neil-Wade  
Mt. Vernon 618-242-3284: Mary Lutz

#### *Lutheran Social Services of Illinois*

Marion 618-997-9196: Kim Holder, Kim Davis, and Sarah Harris

#### *United Methodist Children's Home*

Mt. Vernon 618-242-5600 x243: Audrey Buescher

## Council, con't.

### Meeting Locations

Belleville Field Office  
1220 Centreville Ave. Suite 101

Wood River Field Office  
1403 Vaughn Road

Effingham Field Office  
401 E. Industrial Blvd, Suite B

Mt Vernon Field Office  
321A Withers Drive

Marion Field Office  
107 Airway Drive

Cairo Field Office  
1315 Washington

### Meeting dates

January 18

May 17

August 16

November 8



## Holidays were happy days for families across Southern Region

There was plenty of holiday fun happening across the Southern Region as staff from many DCFS offices and private agency foster care programs celebrated with the families they support. What follows is a sampling of the spirit of giving.

Children's Home and Aid held a holiday skating party for the fourth successive year at the YMCA in Edwardsville, which donated the use of their facility. As always, Santa was on hand to distribute gifts to all the children.

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Catholic Social Services in Belleville sponsored a skating party for foster families and children in Belleville. Along with free skating, participants had pizza, soda and dessert. Santa also distributed gifts. This was the fifth year for a skating event, along with the regularly held holiday parties for caregivers.

CSS also sponsored a Secret Santa as they have for the last 16 years. A child in foster care was linked to a local family who agreed to purchase gifts from that child's wish list.

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Catholic Social Services in Mt. Vernon held a bowling party in Salem. Foster families and children bowled for free and received complimentary drinks. Each child received a "goodie" bag to take home. Approximately 120 people attended this event.

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A 20-plus year tradition continued in the DCFS Anna Field office. Union County Addus Healthcare homemakers again coordinated a county-wide food and gift distribution for foster and intact families. Community interest in this activity is very high and referrals for children and families are accepted from other agencies and organizations. Children were matched to various community businesses, organizations, and individuals. The team arranged to deliver gifts in time for Christmas. The program also includes referrals for food vouchers and an Angel Tree at Wal-Mart.

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The DCFS Marion Field Office continued its holiday tradition with its "Share the Blessing" program. This is a community-wide effort coordinated by DCFS staff. Intact families involved with DCFS were the primary focus, although foster families with extenuating circumstances and children who come into substitute care right before Christmas were also included. Referrals and wish lists were solicited from DCFS case managers and other agencies. Individuals, businesses, and DCFS employees, were matched to qualifying families. Gifts and food baskets were then purchased, wrapped, and delivered by DCFS employees.

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The Emmanuel Free Methodist Church graciously sponsored the Madison County foster parent Christmas Party. Dinner was provided by the church, with Santa's arrival following. All children received gifts from Santa. Family activities, games, and crafts were also available.

### Our Kids

Sponsor  
DCFS Southern Region Administration

Regional Reporter  
Chiquita Adams  
1220 Centreville Ave. Suite 101  
Belleville, IL 62220  
Phone: 618-257-7431  
Fax: 618-257-7507  
Chiquita.Adams@illinois.gov

Anyone can call the regional reporter with story suggestions about:

- news and schedules from foster parent associations
- 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.



## Southern 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