

Answering the call to be a family for teens



Terry and Theresa Mowers

Terry and Theresa Mowers, of Alton, first “answered the call” over twenty years ago when they applied to adopt a child with disabilities. Shortly after Thomas joined their family, they were told that a two-year-old boy was available. They were reluctant at first, because they had hoped to adopt a girl next. But, after thinking about it, they decided to meet the little boy and eventually went on to adopt Nathan. Two years later, their daughter Penney was born. But there were still more children in their picture.

While their kids were growing up, the Mowers home was a gathering place for neighborhood children. This magnetic attraction extended to other children as well. In 1997, Theresa became a volunteer for Catholic Children’s home. She took children to the movies and to other outings. Later, the Mowers decided to apply to become foster parents. They found that the process was much more comprehensive than when they became adoptive parents in 1981. The Mowers went through training, consented to a background check and did a mutual home study assessment with an agency social worker.

Although training was a considerable time commitment, both the Mowers found it to be very helpful. It made them aware of resources and strategies for helping kids. While attending initial training, the Mowers found that the greatest need was for more homes for teenagers.

“They’re not ‘cuddly’ like younger kids, and as a result, they’re harder to place,” Terry said.

“But, teenagers who have been neglected and abused deserve a chance to learn that abuse is not the normal way of life,” Theresa said. “They’re really just regular kids and they fit right into our family.”

Shortly after completing the training and home study process, the Mowers were asked to meet a 16-year-old girl who was living in a group home and ready to be placed with a family. A social worker met with the Mowers to discuss how the teen might fit in to their family. The Mowers visited “Monica” several times. They talked about their family and things that they liked to do and encouraged her to ask questions. They explained their house rules and asked what things she enjoyed. To make her more comfortable, they brought along pictures of their family, their house and their pets – just as they had learned in training.

“She had a lot of questions,” Theresa said. “She wanted to know what Terry did for a living, and if I worked outside the home.”

I explained that Terry is a tool and die maker for Boeing and that I used to be a nurse, but now I’m a volunteer clown. It was the clowning that broke the ice! She was curious about it and thought it was interesting,” Theresa remembered.

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Answering The Call (con't.)

After several visits, Monica came to live at the Mowers home. It worked out well. One reason for the success of this placement and those that followed is the contact before the placement occurred.

“The caseworker would tell me about a particular child, and arrange visits if it sounded OK. Finally, we would mutually decide if we could meet the youth’s needs,” Theresa said. “There’s no wrong or right, and we didn’t get into trouble if we said no,” she added, smiling.

The Mowers believe that all children deserve the chance to be kids. Their purpose now is to give children a “chance at a normal life.”

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.

Conference helps with attachment issues

One hundred foster and adoptive parents recently attended a conference on attachment disorders. The presenter, Dr. Daniel Hughes is one of the most sought after experts on emotional and behavioral problems rooted in early attachments. Dr. Hughes, who practices in Maine, specializes in child abuse and neglect, attachment, foster care and adoption.

The conference provided foster parents with practical ideas and insights on how to successfully raise a child with attachment issues or Reactive Attachment Disorder. Participants were reminded that children placed in their homes usually want to be moved after three or four months of placement. He explained that usually children are given slack for the first few months as they learn the boundaries. But when they are expected to know the rules and abide by them, they are ready to move.

To help the transition, he encouraged parents to be playful, to relax and to avoid taking their child’s negative actions personally. He said it was important to “catch” children doing good. He cautioned parents not to show their anger. Foster and adoptive parents were also given the opportunity to ask Dr. Hughes for assistance with specific situations that they have encountered with children they were caring for.

The conference was sponsored by Children’s Home & Aid Society, LAN 12, Department of Children and Family Services and Madison County Mental Health Board.

Practice precaution when using fireplaces

Take the following precautions before you use your fireplace:

- Move all materials that burn easily away from the furnace, including old rags, sawdust, wood scraps and flammable liquids such as gasoline and kerosene.
- Have a professional inspect your chimney and flue at least once a year and clean them if necessary.
- Only burn materials designed for a fireplace.
- Always use a fireplace screen to prevent hot embers from popping out into the room.
- Do not go to bed or leave the house until you are sure the fire is completely out. Securely shut the fireplace screen or doors.
- Put ashes in a metal container and empty it after each time you clean the fireplace.
- Install smoke detectors on every level of the home. Test the alarms periodically and change the batteries at least once a year.

Would you know what to do for a child having a seizure?

Recently, 20-year veteran foster parents Ruth and Nick Zwilling in the Olney area were caring for an infant in their home with little known medical history. Suddenly he began having a seizure. Ruth was home alone with this young child and thought quickly to call 9-1-1. The Emergency Medical Technicians responded in record time, but what was Ruth to do until help arrived? Would you know what to do?

Ruth responded by keeping the child safe and not putting anything in the child's mouth. She was relieved to learn that she had responded correctly and the child is doing fine. Ruth stated that during her many years of fostering she had never had an experience like this.

Ruth stated, "We cannot become complacent in our fostering care. Let's not forget about CPR classes and First Aid training."



Ruth and Nick Zwilling learned the importance of training for emergencies.

The DCFS Lending Library has the following resources on seizures. Both are pamphlets and do not need to be returned. The first pamphlet is titled Seizure Recognition and First Aid. A second pamphlet called Safety and Seizures: Tips for Living With Seizure Disorders is also available. To order these materials contact the training college nearest you as listed on page 4 of Our Kids. Other resources may be available at public libraries and health departments.

Regional Quality Council makes family record keeping easier

The Regional Quality Council has developed a new child's folder and a foster family folder for DCFS-supervised foster homes. The Foster Child Record Folder is designed for foster parents to record the required information as stated in Part 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes. It provides a permanent record that will follow the child when he leaves the home. There are separate sections to keep records pertaining to Medical, School, Physical and Personal Maintenance and the Service/Visitation Record.

The child's caseworker, the family development specialist and the foster parent support specialist will review the Foster Child Record Folder during visits to the foster home. For example, the caseworker could be looking for specific information needed to complete the Administrative Case Review (ACR). The family development specialist will also review the folder during their visits to the home to ensure compliance with Licensing Standards. The Foster Parent Support Specialist may also request to review the folder periodically and assist families in developing the documentation skills now required. Foster parents should allow these workers and the Administrative Case Reviewer to have access to the folder upon request.

The Foster Parent Folder will provide foster parents with licensing materials, resource materials and various forms to be completed by foster parents. It should be noted that a copy of the DCFS respite policy will be included in the resource materials, as well as a What to Do section. If you have not received your folders please contact your support specialist.

Southern Region Training Calendar

FosterPRIDE In-Service Training

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend any or all of the PRIDE In-Service Trainings to enhance their skills and meet yearly training requirements.

Module 1 - *The Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children*
(Four 3-hour sessions = 12 training hours)

Module 2 - *Using Discipline to Protect and Nurture*
(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 3 - *Addressing Developmental Issues Related to Sexuality* (One 3-hour session = 3 training hours)

Module 4 - *Responding to the Signs and Symptoms of Sexual Abuse* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 5 - *Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 6 - *Working as a Professional Team Member*
(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 7 - *Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 8 - *Promoting Permanency Outcomes* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 9 - *Managing the Impact of Placement on Your Family* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 10 - *Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children & Families* (Five 3-hour sessions = 15 training hours)

For the spring training schedule, please contact call the number listed for your area.

East St. Louis
618-650-3213

Marion
618-536-7751

Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training

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.

Marion
618-536-7751

East St. Louis
618-650-3213

EFFINGHAM
March 15 (Sat)

Hampton Inn
9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS
March 12 & 19 (Wed)
March 22 & 29 (Sat)

DCFS
6:30-9:30 p.m.
9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Pre-registration is required for all classes!
Call the number listed for your area.

There's a hole in my sidewalk

Autobiography
In Five Short Chapters

I.
I walk down the street
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost...I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

II.
I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in
this same place.
But, it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

III.
I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in...it's a habit...but,
My eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

IV.
I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

V.
I walk down another street.

