

Master Adoptive Parent masters helping families

Debi Morgan is not only a foster parent, but has also been a PRIDE trainer since 1993 and a Master Adoptive Parent for the past 5 years. Actually, she is the first and only Master Adoptive Parent in the entire southern region, which covers 27 counties.

She staffs the Adoption Inquiry line (1-866-258-9225) and has become the point-person for many phone calls about a variety of topics related to adoption, fostering, training, and the list goes on.

“Debi Morgan is the most amazing person I know,” said Mary Harlan, a supervisor in the Mt. Vernon Field Office when asked for a name of a stand-out foster parent.

Debi knows every family that has been referred for an adoption home study. She conducts an in-home orientation session for families that will be considered for adoption. She takes pride in making good matches, the first time, when kids need an adoptive home and believes the only way to do that is to know the families. Her job started out at 10 hours a week and has now grown to 30 – 35 hours each week. Her supervisor, Belinda Etheridge, states, “I don’t know what we’d do without her! She does well with everything she does.”

Debi and husband Charlie Morgan have been foster parents since 1990 and have fostered 12 children. They helped transition many of the children into adoptive families. Most of the kids still come back to visit when they can.

The Morgans became interested in fostering because their neighbor was a foster parent.



Debi and Charlie Morgan

“God blessed us with a family and good jobs and we wanted our (birth) children to understand other children who are not as fortunate. Fostering is a way to share what we have,” said Debi.

Overall, it has been a good experience. Debi gives credit to good workers for making the experience positive. The big challenge was sharing the parenting experience with an agency.

“We had to learn we couldn’t do everything with foster kids as we had done with our (birth) kids,” she said. Sharing the parenting role was a new concept, but with the help of good workers, they were able to make it through the tough times.

In addition to work and fostering, this couple has three grown children: Eric, 26 who is married;

Morgan (con't.)

Chad, 23; and Cassie, 20, who are both college students. The three are all part of the Bakerville Free Will Baptist Church Praise Band. Each plays guitar and each sings. In addition to his studies, Chad manages the Living Room Coffee House where there is Christian music and recreation. Cassie just returned from Africa where she did counseling with AIDs victims and street kids.

Relay for Life became another event that the family is dedicated to, after Debi was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1999 and again in 2000. Debi has faced this challenge the same way she does the rest of her life with faith in God and a smile on her face. She just keeps answering the calls that come in and continues to assist children and families.

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.

A message to parents from the Youth Advisory Board: We need your kids

From President Mario Chairs and Secretary Kim Feldpausch

Help the Southern Regional Youth Advisory Board (RYAB) recruit 14 to 21 year-old youth to attend Board meetings. Foster and adoptive parents fulfill a critical role in the life of youth in care and can exert some "influence" to encourage children to join the advisory board.



Southern Regional Youth Advisory Board members address issues and concerns as they prepare for independence.

Although to be a voting member youth must be between the ages of 14 to 21, RYAB meetings are open to all youth in care. In addition, former wards, including those now in guardianship and adoptive homes, are eligible to attend meetings and become members. Membership is open to all adolescent youth regardless of their type of placement or what kind of program they are in.

The Southern RYAB meets the first Tuesday of every month (except December) in the first floor conference room at the Regional Office Building in E. St. Louis from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. That location offers the advantages of available conference room space and the presence of professional security officers that keep the building, parking lot and grounds safe and secure. Additionally, there has been a \$25.00 stipend available for each Board meeting that a member attends.

The board meetings are a great opportunity for youth to voice their issues and concerns, but it is also much more. The Board is committed to working with youth to help them become more responsible and, therefore, more effective self-advocates. Empowering youth to help them become better prepared to successfully make the transition to independence and adult living is one of the Board's most important roles.

The RYAB would appreciate it if parents would share this information with youth, and let them know that they have an open invitation to attend Board meetings. Help with transportation would also be appreciated. If you have any questions or would like to discuss how families can work with the board to increase the number of youth participants, contact Johnny Williams, downstate transition manager in the Division of Education and Transition Services (DETS) at 217-524-2030. Along with regional and contractual staff, Mr. Williams and his DETS colleagues have lead responsibility for the youth advisory board network throughout the Department.

Region's foster parent plan scores in top 10

This year the Southern Region's foster Parent Law Implementation Plan gained the second highest score among the DCFS regions. Out of the 86 plans submitted by all the regions and private agencies, Southern Region scored in the top ten, with a score of 100.55 out of a possible 104 points. Congratulations are due to all the staff and foster parents who worked on the plan.

If you have not received a copy of the 2003 Foster Parent Implementation Plan and would like one, or if you would like to submit comments to be considered for the 2004 Foster Parent Implementation plan, please contact your Foster Parent Support Specialist, Field Office or Licensing Representative. The Implementation Plan is lengthy, so it is being distributed on computer disk. If you need a hard copy, please discuss this when making the request.

Hot Dog! Sparta Foster/Adoptive Parent Association bites off big profit

The Sparta Foster/Adoptive Parent Association is busy raising money to offer more fun family activities. Recently, the group hosted a refreshment stand at a local auction and had quite a profitable day for the Association. The funds are used to plan family events such as skating, movies or Six Flags Great America for members of the Sparta association.

Foster/adoptive parent Doris Gagen cautioned that although the lunch stand is quite profitable for the Association, some of the workers left with empty pockets after they got caught up in the spirit of the auction. If you are interested in joining the Sparta Foster/Adoptive Parent Association, please call Doris Gagen at 618-443-4317.

Remember this...before your children remind you

Parents can tell but never teach,
unless they practice what they preach.

—Arnold Glasow

What's your favorite summer activity?

Thomas, age 12 – Swimming

Hannah, age 6 – Bike Riding

Ricky, age 11 – Camping

Debbie, age 16 – Shopping at the mall

Jericho, age 6 – Outside, playing any sport

Maggie, age 15 – Going to the movies and getting a tan

John, age 11 – Swimming, but not in deep water



Thomas, age 11, Jim, and Jon Gagen, age 10, are ready for a day at the beach.

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)

East St. Louis
618-650-3213

Marion
618-536-7751

Module
FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS - Ramada Inn
August 16 & 23 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. 9

Module
CARBONDALE - Hampton Inn
September 6 & 13 (Sat) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. 1
ULLIN - Shawnee Community College
September 3, 10 & 17 (Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m. 5
EFFINGHAM - Hampton Inn
August 2 (Sat) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. 7

Other In-Service Trainings

Transcultural Parenting
FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS - Ramada Inn
September 8, 10 & 15 (Sat) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Other In-Service Trainings

Transcultural Parenting
CARBONDALE - Hampton Inn
August 6, 13 & 20 (Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

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

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

CARBONDALE August 2 (Sat)	Hampton Inn 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
MT. VERNON September 10 & 17 (Wed)	Hampton Inn 6:30-9:30 p.m.
OLNEY September 20 (Sat)	Richland Memorial Hospital 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

East St. Louis
618-650-3213

FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS August 5 & 12 (Tues)	DCFS 6:30-9:30 p.m.
September 20 & 27 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
September 22 & 29 (Mon)	6:30-9:30 p.m.

Up to a point a man's life is shaped by environment, heredity, and movements and changes in the world about him. Then there comes a time when it lies within his grasp to shape the clay of his life into the sort of thing he wishes to be. Only the weak blame parents, their race, their times, lack of good fortune, or the quirks of fate. Everyone has it within his power to say,
“This I am today; that I will be tomorrow.”

—Louis L'Amour