

Foster care as a teen ends with adoption at 24

Ten years ago, Julie was scared and anxious about what was ahead of her. She was also relieved that she had been removed from a volatile home situation. At 14, she felt like her prayers were answered. When the investigator drove her up to the door of the foster home, Julie was relieved to see a woman waiting on the porch. That woman was Sue Hodgkinson who, with her husband Tom, welcomed the nervous young lady.

Julie had her own room in the big, comfortable house. At that point Julie realized that all of her prized possessions had been left behind: her stuffed animals, her mementos and even her clothes. That night at dinner she was nervous and broke a plate. She panicked and was relieved when she heard Sue's kind reassuring voice say, "It's just a plate, don't worry about it." Nerves led to more broken plates, but Tom and Sue just replaced them. The next day Sue took Julie shopping for clothes and enrolled her in school.

As they found their routine, Julie thought Tom and Sue were super people. They were the family she had wished for. As time went on, the Hodgkinsons loved, nurtured and supported Julie. Julie can't remember exactly when, but she started calling Tom and Sue, "Mom and Dad."

Julie graduated from high school at 18. About a year later she moved into an apartment. She had met a "great guy" named Matt and they planned to get married. But on her wedding day, foster father Tom was in the hospital with a serious medical problem. He told the doctor that he had to walk his daughter down the aisle, and then he would return

to the hospital. It was little unorthodox, but he made it happen.

Moments like that helped Julie understand that emotionally she was a part of the Hodgkinson family. She had been included in every family function since she

was 14 and never doubted her family status. But at the age of 24 she received a surprising phone call. Her mom and dad had an important question. "How would you feel about being adopted by us?"

Julie was thrilled at the possibility. It sounded great to her and the adoption soon took place. Julie, Matt and adorable daughter Caitlyn are thrilled to spend the holidays with mom and dad. They find comfort in knowing that Caitlyn has grandparents who adore her and parents who are always just one phone call away and always willing to listen.

"Julie is a wonderful daughter, a wonderful sister and a wonderful mother. She is truly our pride and joy."

While children definitely need families while they are young, the need for strong family ties can be just as strong when they become adults. From what started as a temporary home, a new generation a family is growing.



Tom and Sue Hodgkinson with their daughter Julie on her wedding day

Thank you!

Dear Foster Parent,

May is Foster Parent Appreciation Month in Illinois, and the staff of the Southern Region wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for the work you do caring for Illinois children and families. By opening your home and heart, you play a vital role in helping children and families in crisis heal.

Illinois foster families not only provide temporary homes, safety and nurturing to our children, but they also help birth families by ensuring that children can be safely reunited with them. And when reunification is not possible, many of our families choose to adopt the children who have been placed in their homes, offering permanency and stability the children would otherwise not know.

Your commitment leaves an indelible mark on generations to

come. You are helping to end cycles of neglect, abuse and or drug addiction and are often helping a child be the first in his family to finish high school or even go to college. Children leave your home knowing there are many other paths in life than what they've known.

We know you don't get nearly enough thanks or recognition for your efforts but we appreciate all you do and wanted you to know. And although all the children you've helped don't always tell you, their lives have been changed forever having known and been helped by you. Thank you for sharing your family and your home, giving love, encouragement and hope to children and families in need.

Sincerely,

Southern Region Staff



The DCFS Southern Region hosted several events throughout the year to make foster parents feel appreciated. Families attended the DuQuoin State Fair and were special guests at local banquets.

I appreciate foster parents because:

“Foster parents provide the kids in residential the ability to be reintegrated into the community from the residential setting. This is necessary and valuable to the children we serve.”

*Rick Rockwell,
Targeted Case Manager*

“Foster parents are the most giving people I have ever met. They open their home and family to virtual strangers in time of need.”

*Dennis Price,
Administrative Case
Manager*

“Foster parents are so giving. Workers really value them as an important part of the team.”

*Chandra Ramudamu,
Family Development
Specialist*

“Foster parents are an integral part of our team. They are our link to the child. They give us input with regards to needed services and ensure their medical and educational needs are met and supported. We couldn't do our job without them.”

*Carolyn Nelson,
Caseworker*

Summer vacation can be a time to set educational and personal goals

Educators consider summer reading a very important tool for developing life-long reading habits, maintaining literacy skills and promoting reading for pleasure. Studies have shown that children who continue to read during the summer months perform better when school resumes in the fall. Research also has shown that when parents are actively involved in learning at home, their children become more successful in and out of school.

When summer vacations start, many children want to put away their books.

They want to be outside, riding bikes, playing softball, or cooling-off in the neighborhood pool. Commitment to reading, even just a little each day, can be a struggle especially when outdoor activities and the modern distractions of television, video games and the Internet may seem more exciting.

Following are a few tips to make reading enjoyable for summer:

- Buy books on tape, especially for a child with a learning disability.
 - Take your children to the library regularly. Many libraries have children's programs.
 - Subscribe, in your child's name, to magazines like Sports Illustrated for Kids, National Geographic, or Highlights for Children.
 - Ease disappointment over summer separation from a favorite school friend by encouraging them to become pen pals.
 - Make trips a way to encourage reading by reading aloud traffic sign, billboards, and notices.
 - Encourage children to keep a summer scrapbook.
- During the summer you can:
- Read aloud together with your child every day.
 - Set a good example by reading yourself each day.
 - Read the same book your child is reading and discuss it.
 - Build on a strength. If your child enjoys sports, possibly he could attend a sports camp.
 - Address a weakness in your child's skills. If math is a problem, consider tutoring.
 - Strengthen and expand your child's peer group. Encourage



them to meet new friends and engage in new activities.

- Strengthen the family bond. Family activities like camping or trips to the zoo or museums create pleasant family memories.

OUR KIDS

Regional Reporter

Carolyn Cleveland
DCFS Reporter/
Editor

10251 Lincoln Trail
Fairview Hts., IL 62208
Phone: 618-394-2100
Fax: 618-394-2123



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.

Southern Region Training

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 - *Child Development* - New module being written

Module 4 - *Child Sexual Development and 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 & 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 Fostering Experience* (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)

Marion
618-536-7751

Module

East St. Louis
618-650-3213

Module

Please call the number listed above for upcoming training dates.

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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

Please call the number listed above for upcoming training dates.

East St. Louis
618-650-3213

EDWARDSVILLE *Comfort Inn*
June 16 & 23 6:30-9:30 p.m.
(Wed)

FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS *DCFS Office*
June 3 & 10 (Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

DCFS Contact Information

Chicago Headquarters

100 West Randolph Street
6-200
Chicago IL 60601
312-814-6800
TTD 312-814-8783

Springfield Headquarters

406 East Monroe Street
Springfield IL 62701-1498
217-785-2509
TTD 217-785-6605

Child Abuse Hotline
800-25-ABUSE

Missing Child Helpline
866-503-0184

Advocacy Office
800-232-3798

Day Care Information
877-746-0829

Foster Parent Hotline
800-624-KIDS

Inspector General
800-722-9124

Youth Hotline
800-232-3798