When Ryan Baggott was first placed at the Catholic Children’s Home in Alton over a year ago, there was hope, but not certainty, that he would make so many positive advances so quickly. Yet, with encouragement from adults in his life and targeted programs to spur him on, he had a chance to grasp the elusive potential.

Mary Ward, a residential program manager, remembers a 17-year-old boy who had difficulty in social situations and did not appear particularly motivated. Like so many others, Ryan’s turbulent past had left him with a number of hurdles to overcome.

However, Ryan realized that this placement just might be an opportunity. He had been an average student, with some occasional high marks. However, things really started to click during his last year at Alton Senior High. He began to focus on his career goals and took classes that met his objectives.

Ryan ended the academic year on the high honor roll. He was especially proud of his marks in the advanced math courses he took.

Now, Ryan’s goal is to obtain a college degree in graphic arts. His path started at Lewis and Clark Community College, where he will work to earn an associates degree. Next comes two more years at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale for his bachelor’s degree in graphic design. Ryan hopes eventually to design video games.

One key to Ryan’s success was the commitment of adults in his life. He counted on staff at Catholic Children’s Home, as well as his case manager Michelle Glasco to work directly with him to apply for financial aid as well as DCFS educational benefits.

His newly found focus has impressed those who knew him last year. “Ryan is a very smart, competent youth who has a bright future,” said Glasco. “If he applies himself, which is now his norm, he will be a successful young man.”

Ryan moved from the residential portion of CCH to their LIFT transitional living program in August. Even those who had been unconvinced initially felt that he was ready to move on. When Mary Ward looked back on their first meetings, she said, “Ryan has come a long way. He’s more relaxed and has maintained his focus on education. He’s been motivated to succeed.”

DCFS understands that young people need assistance as they move toward adulthood. The Division of Service Intervention has designed many programs to help youth and the adults who support them. Johnnie Williams serves as a Transition Manager. He travels to meet students, families, and staff in the Southern region. He can meet with youth, their caregivers or case staff to discuss options for education, employment, housing and other issues as youth advance toward success as adults. To reach Williams, call his Springfield office at 217-557-5710.

Ryan Baggott used DCFS programs to carve a path to college.
Southern Region students earn DCFS college scholarships

Most students head to college with the basic supplies, including books, clothes and a calculator. But some students whose cases are handled in Southern Region had a send-off that included 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 2007 DCFS Scholarship were selected from more than 200 worthy applicants. Based on their record of academic achievement, their community involvement and personal successes, the young scholars featured below can now focus on their new path toward a college degree.

**Shayna Bowlin**

Shayna, from Christopher, is a 2007 graduate of Christopher High School where she earned a 4.65 grade point average on a 5.0 scale. She has volunteered in the nursery and Sunday School of her church as well as at a local daycare. Her activities in high school included Float Committee, track, Color Guard, yearbook, Dance Team, Prom Committee, Prom Court and teacher’s aide. She attends Round Lake College and plans to major in teaching.

**Constance Ruholl**

Constance, of Lebanon, graduated from Lebanon High School where she achieved a 3.53 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was ranked 11th in her class of 50. She was involved in softball, soccer, Explorers, cross-country, cheerleading, Drama Club, Read for a Lifetime, Model U.N., Ecology Club, Saturday Scholars, Pep Club, National Honor Society, Science Olympiad, and school plays. Constance's honors included a 4th place medal for Forensics in the Science Olympiad, Congressional Student Leadership Conference Invitation for Academic Excellence, Saturday Scholars Recognition, Rotary Youth Leadership Award, Science Olympiad Certificate of Achievement, Blackburn College Talent Recognition, and a McKendree College Model U.N. Honorable Mention. She is now studying international business at Illinois State University.

**Alexandra Smith**

Alexandra, from Swansea, is a 2006 graduate of Belleville East High School where she achieved a 3.46 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. While in high school she was on the Honor Roll, was listed in Who's Who Among American High School Students and traveled extensively with the People to People Student Ambassador Program. Since starting college, Alexandra has been involved in Student Activities Board, The Rambler, Coalition of Ethnic Awareness, Illinois College Democrats, United Campus Women, competitive debate and forensics teams, Chi Beta Literary Society, and theater. She was the Freshman Class President in college. Alexandra will continue to study political science at Illinois College in Jacksonville.

**Percy Stewart**

Percy, from Brighton, graduated from Southwestern Community Unit School where he achieved a 3.1 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. His high school activities included football, track, Scholar Bowl, Drama Club, FFA, FCCLA, History Club, Spanish Club, Student Government, Chorus and Model United Nations. Percy's volunteer activities have included participating in a puppet ministry, reading to local elementary school students and participating in a youth praise band at his church. He is a student at Chicago State University and plans to study communications.
**Partnering with Parents Information Fair**

Southern Region hosted parents who have children in DCFS care for the Partnering with Parents Information Fair, held on June 21 at the Fountains Conference Center. The staff developed the event in record time with support from the Division of Clinical Services and Professional Development, Office of Foster Parent Support Services.

The information fair was non-stop activity from 3:00 in the afternoon until 7:00 in the evening. The success of the event turned on frank and open discussion about the realities of DCFS involvement with children and their parents. Presentations included:

- **Getting Past the Anger**, where Dr. Rachel V. Tompkins, a clinical psychologist who works with families in crisis, discussed the intense emotions around child welfare involvement.

- **Parents’ Experiences: Ideas to help other parents**, delivered by three parents successfully raising their children again.

- **Working Together**, where a panel of child welfare experts explained the legal process and parents’ rights while receiving services.

After the formal presentations, parents stopped at the information tables where representatives from numerous community organizations waited to be of service. This made for one-stop shopping for information on topics including supports for housing, health care, education, home safety and other resources. Managers from DCFS made themselves available to answer questions and problem-solve. Additionally, some foster parents attended the event so they could also be involved in Partnering with Parents.

As an offshoot from the event, on July 26, the Southern Region hosted its first meeting of the newly formed Parenting with Parents Council, where parents and staff work together on issues of policy, practice and resources. For more information on Partnering with Parents, contact Vendetta Dennis at 618-394-7200.

The Partnering with Parents initiative is designed to engage parents in a teamwork approach to better serve families. Leadership for this statewide program is provided by the DCFS Division of Clinical Services and Professional Development.

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**Metro East parent group back in action**

Foster parents in the East St. Louis area can again gather for support, information and family fun. The Metro East Foster Parent Association is back in operation. Bettie and Lamour Williams, veteran foster parents, have helped the group gather steam.

Williams networked with other foster parents she had become acquainted with, approached community stakeholders for modest financial donations, and enlisted the support of the JoAnne Woods, the placement supervisor in the East St Louis field office. The small, but dedicated group has already begun making a difference.

The Association’s primary focus in their first year has been on foster children placed in the immediate community. Their first event was a Christmas party in December 2006 held at the Caseyville township hall where foster children received gifts from Santa. The second event was a back to school picnic held in August 2007 at a local park.

The Association welcomes new participants whether they’re affiliated with DCFS or its private agency partners. Interested foster parents can call Bettie Williams at 618–271–0118 for more information.
Foster PRIDE In-Service Modules

All caregivers are welcome to attend PRIDE In-Service Training. Advance registration is required.

Module 2 - Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs (9 training hours)
This workshop provides practical information to foster parents about how to use effective discipline techniques such as I-messages, natural and logical consequences, time out and how to catch kids being "good" and what to do to encourage positive behavior.

Fairview Heights Ramada Inn
Oct. 20 & 27, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. & Nov. 3 (Sat)

Module 4 - Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse (9 training hours)
Participants learn to differentiate normal from problematic sexual behaviors in children and youth, signs and symptoms of sexual abuse and ways to help sexually abused children recover.

Fairview Heights Ramada Inn
Nov. 7, 14 & 21 (Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

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
Dec. 29 & Jan. 5 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Carbondale Civic Center
Oct. 25 & Nov. 1 (Thurs) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Fairview Heights DCFS Office
Oct. 18 & 25 (Thurs) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Marion The Pavilion
Nov. 3 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 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 traumatic events.

Carbondale Carbondale Civic Center
Oct. 6 (Sat) 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Fairview Heights Ramada Inn
Oct. 20 (Sat) 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Mt. Vernon Hampton Inn
Nov. 3 (Sat) 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

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Southern Region Training Calendar

Caregivers must register to attend any of these training classes.

Call the DCFS Office of Training
877-800-3393
toll free