

## Long arm of the law reaches out to help Cook North Families during the holidays

The Gift of Love Foundation is a charitable organization that was founded almost seven years ago by Sergeant Maurice Taylor of the Cook County Sheriff's Department of Corrections. Over the years, the dedicated officers, guards and civilian staff with the Sheriff's Office have provided thousands of gifts to DCFS children, intact families and other vulnerable community families across Cook County. Three years ago, Sergeant Taylor retired and Sergeant E. Roldan and Sergeant Charles Brazelton accepted responsibility for coordinating the program in addition to their regular duties as sheriff's deputy.

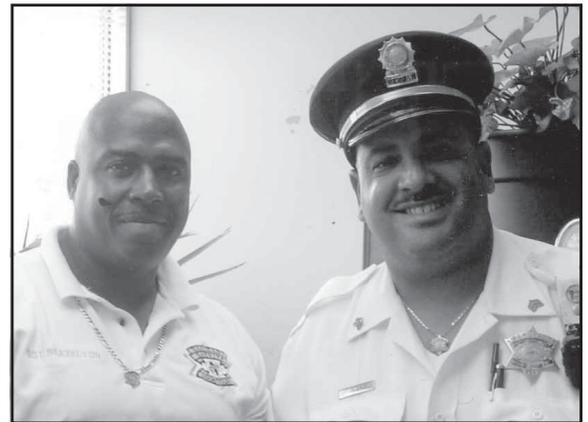
The project originally started as a way for the officers to give something back to the community, as well as to show others that the officers really care about young people and families. They, along with other employees of the Sheriff's Department receive much satisfaction from working to provide unforgettable holiday memories. Both sergeants speak passionately about their work and what it means for them professionally and personally. Sergeant Roldan shares that the

program means a lot to him as he looks at where he's been in his life.

"There is a great number of young people who need to know that someone cared enough to think about them during the holidays," he said.

For Sergeant Charles Brazelton, the program holds personal meaning that hits even closer to home. He is the son of Marjorie Brazelton. Marjorie was a staunch advocate for foster care and foster children, having been a foster and adoptive parent for over 20 years. She was a PRIDE Master trainer, member of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council, and a foster parent support specialist in the Cook South Region until she passed away in 2003.

As a youngster, he spent many hours over the years by his mother's side, sitting with her at the giving tree or assisting her in carrying and delivering gifts to other foster and adoptive families. He fondly recalls the late



*Sergeant Charles Brazelton and Sergeant E. Roldan now lead an effort to collect more than 1,000 holiday gifts for children.*

nights, massive toy drives and bouncing from party to party. For the last several years, Sergeant Brazelton's own son has been by his side as he collects gifts as well as helping his dad to deliver them. Sergeant Brazelton takes much pride in the fact of continuing this tradition with his own family.

His mother is his biggest source of inspiration in his continuing dedication to this project. The most important thing that Sergeant Brazelton learned from his experiences as a watchful observer and participant along side his mother was that he learned how to share.

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## Gift of love, con't.

“Sharing becomes much easier after observing the generosity of others,” he said. This is the legacy he hopes to pass on to his son, as well as many others.

For those who receive the gifts, that sharing can have a profound impact. One little girl asked for a bed of her own and got a complete bedroom set. A young man was so excited to receive a bicycle that he rode it home in several inches of snow.

The project has made a difference for many youth and families. For this reason, Roldan hopes to meet a goal of gathering 1,000 gifts for this year, with a significant number of those gifts going to our older youth in care. The Northeast Foster Parent Association works with the officers to make sure children’s wish lists make it to the “Sergeant Santas”. Sergeant Roldan indicates that 65 to 70 percent of the gifts collected by their project come from the officers themselves. The rest come from other Department of Correction’s staff, a few churches, schools and even individual classrooms. The project has the support of the entire Cook County Sheriff’s Department of Corrections and is solely voluntary.

## Jewish Child and Family Services Gets Into the Holiday Spirit

Every year in October and November, a dedicated squad of special agents agrees to take on a mission. They shop. They shop to fill the wish lists of children in foster care and other JCFS programs with its Winter Coat Shopping program. Volunteers shop until they drop, seeking practical items like coats and new gloves in the requested colors and styles. Bags begin to pile up in offices so case managers can get them to families in time for Thanksgiving’s chill.

In early December, toy-sorting volunteers come on board. Agency clinicians sit down with children and learn what they would like for the holidays. Donors fill these wishes directly. Volunteers sort the lists and the gifts to ensure that every wish for eligible kids in foster care and other JCFS programs is fulfilled.

The JCFS volunteers are not social workers and are not otherwise involved in foster care. They are mostly women, which may not come as a surprise. What is surprising is that these volunteers primarily are of the Jewish faith. Ironically, the Jewish Child and Family Services Foster Care program primarily serves children who are not Jewish. In most cases, the foster parents licensed by the agency aren’t Jewish (including the Editor of this newsletter).



Nancy Dorfman-Schwartz, the director of foster care explains, “Our organization does have a private foster care program dedicated to Jewish families. However, our calling is to work in child welfare and we are dedicated to working with all the children who need us.”

The agency, formerly known as the Jewish Children’s Bureau or JCB, has a long-standing reputation for being able to handle the tough cases well. Since the early 1990s, the agency has been one of a select group granted a DCFS contract to provide “specialized” foster care for children with high-end needs.

Of course, religion does not factor into the services the agency provides through its DCFS foster care program in Chicago and the South suburbs. However, Jewish faith does include the concept of *mitzvah*, which has come to mean an act of human kindness. That call to give is the underpinning of the volunteer effort to make the winter more joyful for foster children of all faiths and their families.

## Chicago Public School info for parents

The DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services would like to share some important information with caregivers and students regarding this academic year.

### Report Cards

- Parent pick-up and conferences: April 18 (high school) and April 19 (elementary)
- Sent home: January 31, 2007 and June 15, 2007

### Progress Report Distribution Date:

- December 8, 2006
- March 2, 2007
- May 18, 2007

### Holidays for 2006-2007 Academic Year

- November 23-24  
Thanksgiving
- January 15  
Martin Luther King's Birthday
- February 12  
Lincoln's Birthday Observed
- February 19, Presidents Day
- March 5, Pulaski's Birthday
- May 28, Memorial Day

### Non-attendance days for students

- Friday, January 26, 2007
- Friday, April 13, 2007
- Wednesday, June 13, 2007
- Thursday, June 14, 2007

### Half-days

- Friday, December 8, 2006
- Tuesday, January 16, 2007
- Thursday, February 8, 2007
- Wednesday, March 7, 2007

- Tuesday, May 1, 2007
- Thursday, March 29, 2007
- Wednesday, May 23, 2007

### Winter Vacation

Schools close at the end of the school day on December 22, 2006 and will reopen on Monday, January 8, 2007.

### Spring Vacation

School closes at the end of the school day on Friday, March 30, 2007 and will reopen on Monday, April 9, 2007.

### Summer Vacation

Schools close on June 15, 2007

### Summer school

- **GRADES 3-6-8 SUMMER PROGRAM** will operate for six weeks beginning Monday, June 18, 2007 and ending Friday, July 27, 2007.
- **HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER PROGRAM** will operate for seven weeks and may start on June 18, June 25, or July 2, 2007 at the discretion of the high school and end on August 3, August 10, or August 17, 2007

### Additional Important Dates

- Application period for magnet schools and programs concludes December 22, 2006

Contact Angela Foster, Education and Transition Manager at 312-814-6389 for more information.

## New facility for emergency shelter

At the end of September, DCFS announced the opening of the Children's Reception Center (CRC), a new program providing shelter care to Chicago and Cook County children and youth. The facility is located at 5001 S. Michigan in Chicago.

The Children's Reception Center will accommodate up to 50 youngsters. Youth will be temporarily placed there for assessment and treatment prior to moving to the most appropriate living situations. It will also serve as a hub for the recently developed Cook County specialty shelter system.

DCFS has selected Aunt Martha's Youth Services, an organization with 34 years of experience in serving children, to operate the program at the CRC.

"Emergency care is always a difficult prospect. This change will allow us to take care of youth at a time when they are most vulnerable," said DCFS Director Bryan Samuels.



## Cook South teen tells family story in video



Jamelle is the son of Mrs. Leonie Smalling, a foster parent active in the Cook South foster parent group. They are “stars” in a new DCFS video for the Family Connections Project. Family Connections Project is the outcome of a federal grant to develop recommendations and practices that will allow teens to experience successful adoption outcomes by maintaining connections with birth families.

The Smallings are one of several families who describe how maintaining birth family ties through visits, on-going relationships with other birth siblings and a range of options help strengthen the relationship with the adopted family. Several teens in the video also describe how they felt when they did not have those continued relationships.

Cook South Regional Administrator Michael Byrd participates in the FCP workgroup and contributed to the development of the video. Cook South caseworkers are now in the process of selecting caregivers and youth from their caseloads to be part of the project. The hope is that more youth will benefit from connections with their families of origin and establish lifelong ties with the adults who care for them as family.

## Cook South Regional Advisory Council is seeking new foster parent members

It is a time for re-building the Regional Advisory Council. Foster parents from private agencies and the Cook South foster care program can step up to be heard. Licensed foster parents who live in Cook South Region will receive a mailing about the Council and the important role of foster parents.

### Mission Statement

The Cook South Regional Advisory Council hereafter referred to as “The Council” is created with the objective of identifying issues and concerns of Foster Parents. “The Council” will serve as an Advisory to Cook South Region Administration and make recommendations that will address those issues on behalf of the broadest base of Foster Parents providing care and services to children of Cook South Region.

### Purpose

The Council serves as the recognized voice of foster parents to the Department of Children and Family Services Cook South Region. The purpose of this recognized Council is to:

- Provide the opportunity for foster parent organizations to have input on the issues that affect foster care and the services received by children who are in the care of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

- Promote regional collaboration and pooling of information in the area of foster care.
- Ensure the opportunity for foster parents to raise relevant issues, study and suggest resolutions to the region.
- Review and make recommendations on the Department’s foster care and child service delivery policies, guidelines, and procedures.
- Promote foster parent involvement in local and statewide planning for foster care.
- Review the Department’s proposals for foster care training and recommend training that will improve the quality of childcare received by children.
- Interpret to the public the need for foster care and the services provided by foster parents.
- Review and respond to the Statewide Council on enacted or pending legislation and the position of the Department regarding that legislation.
- Review administrative structure and recommend effective and efficient social service delivery systems.

Foster and adoptive parents interested in joining the Regional Advisory Council should contact Johnnie Rambo at 773-371-6020.

## South Side and South Suburban support groups serve caregivers

### Chi – City (Southside) Foster Parent Support Group

Caregivers on the South Side gather regularly on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month for a support group at 6201 South Emerald in Chicago. Recent meetings have covered important issues such as domestic violence and its effect on youth. Caregivers also reviewed the rights and responsibilities covered in the Cook South Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan.

The next meeting on December 12 will be a Morale Building Celebration of Foster Parents.

Plans are also underway for a series of trainings on mental health issues by Riveredge Hospital after the start of the new year.

### The South Suburban Foster Parent Peer Support Group

Meet, greet, and train with foster parents and staff from other agencies! Share ideas and dreams for working together to benefit our children with this active organization. This group has tackled issues including youth who run from home, violence in dating relationships and services for drug-addicted youth.



*Foster parents and DCFS staff come together at Chi-City Support Group*

All seminars are held on the fourth Thursday from 10 a.m. – Noon at the DCFS Harvey Field Office, located at 15115 Dixie Highway in Harvey. Register by calling Harold Washington College at 312-553-3117.

## Cook Central Advisory Council stays up on the issues

Jerry Welenc, chair of the Cook Central Regional Advisory Council, has set an agenda that emphasizes knowledge. The advisory council meetings often include a training component to give caregivers vital information as well as needed training credits. DCFS staff members also attend the meetings and learn alongside the families they support.

In September, DCFS Regional Counsel, Jim Greve was the featured speaker. Greve has provided legal consultation to Cook Central for many years. His presentation covered confidentiality laws to help parents answer the questions what, when and with

whom to share information about the children they care for. He also walked foster parents through the system of juvenile court hearings. He encouraged foster parents to attend court hearings and speak, where possible, on behalf of their foster children.

In October, the advisory council came together to review the Cook Central draft of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. This plan is required of all DCFS regions and foster care agencies. It explains how the region's foster care program will address each of the rights and responsibilities included in the Foster Parent

Law. Caregivers had been meeting regularly with staff since August to draft the 2007 plan. In October, they made final recommendations to the draft. The final plan is due to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council at the end November. Copies of the plan will be delivered to all foster families in homes supervised by DCFS Cook Central.

The next meeting of the council is November 28 at 9:30 at 3518 W. Division. All caregivers who reside in the Cook Central region are invited. Contact Adrienne Welenc, Lead Foster Parent Support Specialist at 773-292-7879 for more details.

## Chicago offers lots to see and do during the holiday season

The holiday season in Chicago is offering many events to keep children busy and excited. Among the fun, you can also sneak in education and health. Here are just a few of the free and low-cost activities your family might consider.

### Christkindlmarket

**November 23-December 24  
Daley Plaza, 50 W. Washington (Washington, Clark & Dearborn Streets)**

Experience a traditional German Christmas at Christkindlmarket, inspired by the famous Nuremberg Christmas market dating back to 1545. For the past 11 years on Daley Plaza, this outdoor market has offered exquisite handmade gifts, unique ornaments, rare European fabrics and textiles and the opportunity to devour German delicacies like brats, goulash, potato pancakes, cookies and Gluhwein (a warm spiced wine). Admission is free, with varied pricing for food and products.



Christkindlmarket hours are: Mondays - Thursdays 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday-Saturday 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Sunday 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. December 24, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

### Daley Plaza Santa's House

**November 23- December 24**  
Santa Claus sets up his "workshop" on the Plaza for the holiday season. Santa will be available for pictures and taking wish lists. Visits with Santa start on Thanksgiving Day, November 23 at 11 a.m. and end at 4 p.m. From November 25 through December 23, hours are 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. On December 24, hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Santa takes a break each day from 3 p.m. - 4 p.m.).

### Holiday Flower Show

**November 23 - January 7  
Garfield Park Conservatory**  
Celebrate the holidays where fir trees decorated in holiday lights hold court surrounded by bold splashes of color from hundreds of poinsettias. Other featured plants include ornamental peppers, plumbago and Jerusalem cherries. Free admission 9 a.m to 5 p.m. daily with late hours until 8 p.m. on Thursdays. For more information, call the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance at 773-638-1766 or visit its Web site at [www.garfieldconservatory.org](http://www.garfieldconservatory.org).

### Winter Flower and Train Show

**December 9 - January 7  
Lincoln Park Conservatory**  
Several model trains, including an old-fashioned steam engine, freight train and trolley, wind their way through a miniature village set in a field of vibrant red, delicate white and soft pink poinsettias. The village, comprised entirely of natural materials including willow, spruce and birch woods, features a variety of Chicago style homes and famous buildings such as the neighborhood bungalow, Chicago Theatre and Chicago Water Tower. Admission is free from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day.

### Brunch with Santa

**December 12  
South Shore Cultural Center  
7059 S. South Shore Drive**  
Get together with family and friends this holiday to enjoy brunch with Santa! Join in on the festive caroling over a plentiful and delicious brunch. Reservations are required. This event is in partnership with the Parot Cage Restaurant and Washburne Culinary Institute. Cost: \$19 per adult, \$8 per child, plus tax and gratuity. For more information, call 773-602-5487.

## Mayor Daley's Holiday Sports Festival

**December 28 - 30**

**McCormick Place, Halls A & B  
2301 S. Martin Luther King Drive**

Admission and interactive zones to the biggest indoor gym are FREE of charge. Activities take place daily, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Interactive zones include Golf, Climbing Walls, Football, Skills Area, Obstacle Course, Tot's Zone, Bowling, Martial Arts, Table Tennis, Inflatable Tumbling, Tennis, Badminton, Boxing, Fishing Ponds, Footbag, Giant Slide, 50-Yard Dash, Skateboarding/Blading area, cheerleading clinics, and open courts for volleyball and basketball if you bring your own ball.

The event will also include fitness classes, lectures on nutrition, bike safety, and family fitness. For those inclined, you can participate in a 20-minute fitness walk complete with pedometer reading. Essential health screenings will also be available, including body fat composition measurements.



## Kwanzaa Karamu December 28 DuSable Museum of African-American History

**740 E. 56<sup>th</sup> Place**

It's a family evening for learning about Kwanzaa and the traditional Watch Night Service. The Genesis Connection will perform their musical production of Kwanzaa through song and dance. Dinner will be served at 7 p.m. and the program begins at 8 p.m. Reservations are required and can be made by calling 773-947-0600 X225. General Admission: \$12; Children: \$8; DSM Members: \$10.

## DuSable Museum's Coca-Cola Children's Penny Cinema

**December 27 at 10:30 a.m.** Showing films: *Rugrats-Kwanzaa* and *The Celebration of Kwanzaa: Echoes of Africa*.

**Thursday, December 28 at 10:30 a.m.** Showing films *Seven Candles for Kwanzaa* and *Santa and Pete*. Reservations are required and can be made by calling 773-947-0600 ext.225 Admission: \$5.00.



## New Year's Eve Celebration

**December 31**

**Buckingham Fountain (Congress Ave and Columbus Street)**

Ring in the New Year at one of Chicago's most recognizable landmarks. Buckingham Fountain will be a gathering spot for a spectacular fireworks display.

## Cook County Advocate reporters

### Cook South ~ Jacquie Johnson

773-371-6468 office  
773-371-6065 fax  
Jacqueline.M.Johnson@illinois.gov  
6201 S. Emerald, Chicago, IL 60621

### Cook North ~ Sari Rowitz

312-328-2484 office  
312-328-2688 fax  
Sari.Rowitz@illinois.gov  
1911 S. Indiana Ave., Chicago, IL 60616

### Cook Central ~ Joyce Hall

773-292-7700 office  
773-292-7861 fax  
Joyce.Hall@illinois.gov  
3518 W. Division, Chicago, IL 60651

Anyone can call the regional reporter with foster parent association news and schedules; local training notices; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.

# Cook County Training Calendar

## FosterPRIDE In-Service Modules

### COOK NORTH

#### Module 2 - *Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs*

(Three 3-hour sessions in two days = 9 training hours)

#### CHICAGO, *Irish American Center*

Dec. 9 (Sat) & 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
 Dec. 16 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

### COOK CENTRAL

#### Module 4 - *The Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Sexual Abuse*

(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

#### CHICAGO, *LCFS*

Dec. 5, 7 & 12 (Tue/Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

### COOK SOUTH

#### Module 9 - *Managing the Impact of Placement on Your Family*

(Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

#### CHICAGO HEIGHTS, *Aunt Martha's*

Dec. 5 & 7 (Tue/Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

## Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 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.

### COOK NORTH

CHICAGO *Harold Washington Coll.*  
 Dec. 2 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

### COOK CENTRAL

CHICAGO (Spanish) *Association House*  
 Dec. 2 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

OAK PARK *Hebzhibah*  
 Dec. 16 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

The DCFS Lending Library is a resource to allow foster and adoptive parents access to a multitude of books, audio cassettes and videos for self-directed training in parenting and family life. The materials span 17 categories. Licensed foster and adoptive parents can borrow materials for a two-week period at no charge. The order form is available in the 3rd Edition of the Lending Library Catalog, which can be viewed on the DCFS web site at [www.state.il.us/dcfs](http://www.state.il.us/dcfs).



**For more information call:  
 877-800-3393**

All classes are coordinated by Harold Washington College in Chicago.

**Call 312-553-5829  
 or -5830 to register.**