

Cook County Advocate

News for Chicago Metro Area Families

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Cook County students earn DCFS college scholarships

The students highlighted here, whose cases were served by programs in Cook County, headed to college with the honor of receiving one of 48 DCFS Scholarships. The scholarship includes 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 2008 DCFS Scholarship were selected from more than 200 applicants, based on their record of academic achievement, community involvement and personal successes.

Next year's scholarship application process begins in January and ends in March. Contact the youth's caseworker or the DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959 for more information.



Yesenia Barzaga

Yesenia, of Chicago, is a 2008 graduate of Northtown Academy. She earned a 2.65 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and achieved the score of 23 on her ACT. She has been employed at CVS Pharmacy and worked for a local doctor. She served as a Goodwill Ambassador and a mentor at her school. Yesenia attends Northeastern University where she plans to study chemistry or psychology.

Jacqui Batts

Jacqui, from Chicago, graduated in 2008 from Gwendolyn Brooks College Preparatory Academy High School where she earned a 4.24 grade point average and a 26 on her ACT. She has been employed as a cashier at a grocery store and an assistant to the Science Chairperson at Burnside Scholastic Academy. Jacqui has been listed in Who's Who Among High School Students for four years as well as being on the high honor roll. She was the winner of the "Women Can Change America" essay contest and was a Debate City Championship finalist and semi-finalist. She is at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, studying English.



Jaquta Box

Jaquta, of Chicago, is a 2008 graduate of New Millennium High School of Health. She ranked 8th in a class of 68, and she earned a 3.74 grade point average. She volunteered at her high school and participated in clothing and food drives at her church. Jaquta was recognized as an honors student. She placed first at her school science fair and also received first place in HOSA in the area of practical nursing. She is now a pre-med student attending the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



Christine Caffey

Christine, formerly of Illinois, graduated in 2008 from Bishop Seabury Academy in Lawrence, Kansas. In high school she achieved a 3.37 grade point average and scored 23 on her ACT. Her volunteer experience includes working in her church's nursery, helping at the Salvation Army, cleaning up her community and participating in the penny war for the Leukemia/Lymphoma Society. Some of her high school honors and special recognitions include

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the Nunemaker Citizenship Award, Seabury Scholar, Key Award and being elected to the Student Senate. Christine will attend the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign this fall to study food science.



Donald Curry

Donald, formerly of Illinois, now resides in West Olive Michigan. He graduated in 2007 from West Ottawa High School in Holland, Michigan where he obtained a 3.16 grade point average and was ranked 156th out of 503 students. He has volunteered with Peer Assisted Listener (PAL), Habitat for Humanity and Pine Ridge Assisted Living. He has been a member of the National Honor Society and Student Senate as well as participating with his high school competition choir and the youth orchestra. He has also been active in theater productions. Donald received the Grand Rapids Community College Diversity Award as well as the Bert Price Diversity Scholarship. He will continue his academic career at Grand Valley State University to study Geography/Regional Planning.



Rose Davis

Rose, of Chicago, graduated from the High School of Technology at South Shore. She earned a 3.33 grade point average and scored 21 on her ACT exam. She was consistently on the honor roll while being active in the school newspaper, the Peer Jury, and the South Shore Choir. Rose attends Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, where she studies journalism.



Shaayna Day

Shaayna, of Chicago, is a 2008 graduate of Paul Robeson High School, where she achieved a 3.31 grade point average and was ranked 19th in a class of 143. While in high school she participated in Science Club, volleyball, bowling, student government, as well as the science and history fairs. Her honors include honor roll and National Honor Society. She volunteered both at her

high school and at the park district. Shaayna now attends Northern Illinois University, where she studies chemistry and biology.



Ann Fitzpatrick

Ann, from Elk Grove Village, graduated from Elk Grove High School. She achieved a 3.33 grade point average and scored 23 on her ACT exam. In high school, she played on the volleyball, basketball, and soccer teams. She was recognized as an All-Conference and All-Area player for volleyball. Ann now attends Harper College to major in nursing.



Yesenia Gonzalez

Yesenia, of Chicago, is a 2008 graduate of Mother McAuley High School, where she obtained a 3.13 grade point average. She achieved honors including Academic Excellence in Art and Science, Outstanding Service to Student Ambassadors, Honor Roll and the Daniel Murphy Scholarship. Yesenia's high school activities included Anime club, math club, student ambassadors, student council, Brother Rice Acting Club and National Arts Honor Society. She is a student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, majoring in math.



Jomyron Graham

Jomyron, of South Holland, graduated from Thornwood High School. He earned a 3.38 grade point average and scored a 25 on his ACT exam. His high school activities included football, wrestling, and track, as well as the Lettermen's Club. He was awarded the "African American Male Image Award" for his community and school involvement. Jomyron now studies computer science at Northern Illinois University.



Martell Halloran

Martell, from Palatine, is a 2008 graduate of Palatine High School, where he earned a 3.15 grade point average and scored 24 on his ACT exam. While in high school he received numerous awards, including being on the honor roll and the Pirate Pride Award. He earned a varsity letter in track and field and was an IHSA state qualifier in track. Outside of school he volunteered with the Shop with a Cop program as well as the Palatine Park District. Martell attends Eastern Illinois University to study kinesiology with a teacher certification in special education.



Ashley Hawkins

Ashley, of Sauk Village, graduated from Bloom Trail High School. She earned a 3.38 grade point average and was ranked 30th in a class of 282. Her high school honors include honor roll and high honor roll as well as Who's Who Among American High School Students. She remained active in her community through participating in food drives. Ashley is a student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign studying business marketing.



Betty James

Betty, from Riverdale, is a graduate of Thornton High School, where she earned a 3.74 grade point average and was ranked 42nd from a class of 310. Her volunteer experience includes Big Brothers Big Sisters, Sister 2 Sister, tutoring, and her church youth group. She received numerous honors including the Distinguished Scholar Award, high honor roll, Big Brothers Big Sisters Peer Leader Award, Sister 2 Sister Peer Leader Award and the National French Honor Society award. Betty now attends Loyola University, majoring in nursing.



Osiris Johnson

Osiris, from Chicago, graduated from Hyde Park Academy High School. He achieved a grade point average of 3.56 and ranked 55th in a class of 470. His honors include National Honor Society and an academic achievement award from the Chicago Urban League. He also has won the Anthology of Poetry. He served as a volunteer at his local YMCA and the Army Recruiting Center. Osiris is a student at Eastern Illinois University, studying psychology.



Jennifer Logan

Jennifer is from Arlington Park. She graduated from Carl Sandburg High School, where she achieved a 2.94 grade point average. Her high school activities include choir, yearbook homecoming committee and prom committee. She participated in Relay for Life and was a teacher in a preschool program. She attends Quincy University and is studying social work and psychology.



Sheila Manns

Sheila, of Chicago graduated from Simeon Career Academy with a 4.26 grade point average. She ranked 1st in a class of 390. She participated in the Academic Decathlon and the volleyball team. Her honors include Honor Roll Certificate, National Honor Society, and achievement certificates for recreational leadership, women's volleyball and the After School Matters program. Sheila is now a student at the University of Illinois, studying mathematics.

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Felicia McAllister

Felicia, from Sauk Village is a 2008 graduate of Bloom Trail High School. She earned a 4.44 grade point average and ranked 7th in a class of 282. In high school she was involved in the Junior Board, Senior Board, African American Society, and Dance Group. She also volunteered at the Chicago Heights Public Library. Her awards and honors include National Honor Society, high honor roll, Academic Letterman's Club, and a certificate for a Summer Nursing Immersion in Washington, D.C. Felicia now attends Northern Illinois University with plans to major in elementary education.



Erin McErlean

Erin is from Chicago. She graduated from Guerin College Preparatory High School, where she earned a 3.42 grade point average. She was a member of the volleyball and basketball teams, as well as the Irish Club. Her volunteer activities included the Adopt-A-Kid organization at Guerin, work for a Hurricane Katrina relief fund and a Student Ambassador. She is a student at Illinois State University, where she plans to study family and consumer science.



Danielle Moon

Danielle, of Chicago, is a 2008 graduate of Whitney M. Young Magnet High School. She earned a 4.24 grade point average and scored 27 on her ACT exam. Her high school activities include concert choir, African American Culture Club, Pre Med Club, Junior Statesmen of America and All City Chorus. Danielle achieved many honors such as Principal's Scholar Honor Roll, Who's Who Among High School Students, Illinois State Scholar and National Achievement Scholarship. She now attends University of Southern California to study business.

Victoria Nelson

Victoria is from Glenwood. She graduated from Homewood Flossmoor High School, where she earned a 3.09 grade point average and ranked 138th in a class of 713. During her high school career she was involved in band, speech, volleyball and badminton. Her volunteer activities included working with Key Club, Kids Who Care and tutoring. Victoria attends the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where she plans to study biology and chemistry.



Ladiedre Rugen

Ladiedre, from Flossmoor, is a 2008 graduate of Homewood Flossmoor High School. She achieved a 3.75 grade point average and ranked 73rd in a class of 713. Ladiedre's awards include National Honor Society, Thespian Honor Society, Tri-M Music Honor Society, French National Honor Society, the Distinguished Scholar Award, Outstanding Scholastic Achievement Award and the South Suburban PADS Appreciation Award. Her volunteer activities included working with the Public Action to Deliver Shelter (PADS) and Cancer Support Center, as well as with a therapeutic riding center and a retirement horse barn. She is studying animal science at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale



Nickolas Steele

Nickolas is from Bellwood. He graduated from Proviso West High School, where he obtained a 2.76 grade point average and scored 26 on his ACT exam. His volunteer activities included working for the Leukemia/Lymphoma Society, participating in local blood drives and shoveling snow and mowing grass for local senior citizens. He won the Award for Academic Excellence and a varsity athletics certificate. He was named Most Valuable Player, Academic Decathlon Team Captain, cross-country and track team captain, and is listed in Who's Who Among High School Students. Nickolas is now a student at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale where he plans to study computer science or physics.



Marian Trella

Marian, of DesPlaines, is a 2008 graduate of Maine Township High School. She earned a 3.72 grade point average and ranked 41st in a class of 506. Marian's high school activities included pom squad, Orchesis Dance Troupe, symphonic orchestra, National Honor Society and the Senior Leader Program. Her volunteer experience includes work with Habitat for Humanity, working in the nursery of her church, a mission trip to Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota and working during the special education basketball tournament at Maine West High School. She attends Bradley University, where she plans to study business administration and public relations.

The DCFS Youth in Scholarship program is available to youth currently in DCFS care or those who left Department guardianship through adoption or private guardianship arrangements. Applications are routinely available in January with a deadline of March 31.

Applicants must have a high school diploma or GED by the end of the current school year. Contact the Office of Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959 for more information.

Chicago Public School Student Days Off

September 26	Staff Development Day
October 13	Columbus Day
October 24	Staff Development Day
November 7	Professional Development Day
November 10	Staff Development Day
November 11	Veterans Day Observance
November 12	Parent-Teacher Conference: Elementary schools
November 13	Full Day Parent-Teacher Conference: High School
November 27 - 28	Thanksgiving Holiday
Dec. 22 - January 2	Winter Vacation
January 19	Martin Luther King Jr. holiday
January 23	Professional Development Day
February 12	Lincoln's Birthday
February 13	Staff Development Day
February 16	Presidents' Day
March 2	C. Pulaski's Birthday
March 27	Professional Development Day
April 1	Parent-Teacher Conference: Elementary School
April 2	Parent-Teacher Conference: High School
April 6 - April 10	Spring Break
May 25	Memorial Day
June 11	Teacher Institute Day

More information and specific calendars for students attending year-round schools can be found at www.cps.edu/calendar or by phone at 773-553-1000.

Important CPS phone numbers:

- Chicago Public Schools General Information: 773-553-1000
- Elementary School Enrollment: 773-553-2150
- High School Student Enrollment: 773-553-3540
- Student Attendance and Truancy: 773-553-2180
- Truancy Hotline (anonymous reporting): 773-553-4000
- Homework Hotline: 312-645-5555
- Academic Enhancement (magnet, gifted and selective enrollment programs): 773-553-2060
- Language and Culture (provides information on bilingual programs): 773-553-1930
- Military Academies/JROTC: 773-553-9770
- Specialized Services (provides information for students with disabilities): 773-553-1800
- Student Records (provides transcripts for former students): 773-535-7722
- Student Transportation: 773-553-2860

Cook North Youth Fair

Youth Creating Change was the theme for the Cook North first annual Youth Fair, held in August. Young people ages 13 to 21 came to the office at 1911 S. Indiana to soak up information on education, health, and employment. Resource tables overflowed with literature on programs, and many organizations sent staff to discuss options and opportunities as they transition to life as an adult.

Along with the serious business there was also time for food, music and a raffle. All of the teenagers left with gifts to help them prepare for the school year and new links to services they can use now and as they move toward adulthood.



DCFS Education Advisor Yesmina Sefiane (right) spoke with youth about the many education services available to help them in their high school careers and after graduation. This table was just one of several resources with staff on hand to speak with Cook North youth.

Cook North families can link to bilingual school services

Centro de Informacion is a bilingual, bicultural not-for-profit social service agency founded in 1972 in Elgin to help address the needs of a growing Hispanic community. For 36 years, Centro has been a place where Spanish-speaking families for whom language and culture are barriers can find out how and where to get the help they need. Centro has offices in Elgin, Hanover Park, and Carpentersville. The service area also extends to Streamwood, Bartlett, Hoffman Estates, Schaumburg, East and West Dundee, and McHenry County.

School assistance for Spanish-speaking students

Centro de Informacion provides bilingual and bicultural educational support services to promote positive behavior and academic engagement of Spanish-speaking children. Centro offers:

- Children's after school homework assistance during the academic year on Monday through Thursday afternoons. Children's books (through the national First Book program) are awarded as incentive prizes for attendance and completion of reading program goals. Informal group sessions focus on such topics as self esteem, anger management, gang awareness, and communication skills.
- Monthly family nights provide information, support,

and resources to Spanish-speaking parents of children whose social, emotional, and/or behavioral problems are leaving them vulnerable to poor school attendance, truancy, suspensions, and/or expulsions.

- Program staff collaborate with School District U-46 Ontarioville, Laurel Hill Elementary School, and Tefft Middle School. Staff can also link to other agencies such as Boy Scouts and Renz Addiction Counseling Center that can provide additional services for the children and their families, as well as advocacy, referral, and support.
 - As needed, other Centro services such as emergency food, immigration and naturalization, community outreach, and family-centered mental health services are made available to program participants.
- These services are available through the Local Area Network (LAN). They can accept referrals from all families, including foster, adoption and guardianship families where there is concern for students at-risk of truancy, suspension or expulsion. For more information about this and other LAN programs, contact Joann Niemuth, DCFS LAN Liaison at 708-745-3048.

Cook South back to school picnic celebrates return to school

More than 200 youth, parents, foster caregivers, adoptive parents and child welfare staff celebrated the start of a new academic year at the annual Back to School Picnic for the DCFS Cook South Region. Central Park in Park Forest was the place to be for fun activities, information on services, food, and fellowship among families. There were organized games with prizes for winners, plenty of music for easy listening, and a bounty of barbeque with all the picnic favorites.

In addition to the fun, guests could visit many information booths to learn of services and programs to help families. Staff handed out brochures and other items that pertain to their area of expertise and answered peoples' questions. Educational advisors, medical providers, service providers, DCFS workers and others were there

throughout the day.

Staff and foster caregiver volunteers serving on numerous committees worked for months in advance to produce an extravaganza that went from 10:00 in the morning to 3:00 in the afternoon. Despite the long commitment, the volunteers say a smile they receive from a child is the best reward they could have. The event is made possible by the generous contributions from community retailers and organizations such as Solo Cup, Ultra Food, K-Mart, Circuit City, Target Stores, Aurelio's Pizza, Beggar's Pizza, and the Chicago Bulls Organization, which provided food, supplies, and gifts for the participants. These contributions are crucial due to the limited funds available. Yet for 19 years, volunteers like this year's chairperson Michael Stripens, the region's foster parent support



Families found helpful information, along with food and fun at the annual Cook South Back to School Picnic.

specialists and many others have given from their hearts to ensure families feel special and children are prepared for the school year.

Cook South COA accreditation nears

The DCFS Cook South Region is preparing to meet with the Council on Accreditation (COA) in October. To meet COA standards, the region will be scrutinized in terms of its mission, resources, organizational culture, and the unique needs of the clients it serves. Reviewers will go through case files and interview staff. The reviewers will also meet with some caregivers and parents. Anyone who is contacted for an interview is encouraged to respond and to share candidly.

Cook South has been accredited and re-accredited once before. However, there will always be a need to improve. Caregivers play a large role in pointing the region in the right direction. Many COA-related activities will take place within the advisory groups and support groups established in the region. Regular attendance will help ensure that caregivers' perspective is put forth during the re-accreditation process.

Cook County Advocate reporters

Cook South ~ Rod Mulford

773-371-6350 office
773-371-6065 fax
Rod.Mulford@illinois.gov
6201 S. Emerald, Chicago, IL 60621

Cook North ~ Joann Niemuth

847-745-3048 office
847-745-3066 fax
Joann.Niemuth@illinois.gov
8140 N. McCormick, Skokie, IL 60076

Cook Central ~

Merrylee Guge-Jorgensen

773-292-7700 office
773-292-7861 fax
Merrylee.Guge-Jorgensen@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 Region Training Calendar

Foster PRIDE In-Service Modules

All caregivers are welcome to attend PRIDE In-Service Training. Advance registration is required. Training dates, times and locations are subject to change. Detailed address information will be provided with registration.

Module 1 - Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children at Risk (12 training hours)

This module focuses on building self-esteem in children. It will cover how kids act when they need recognition, power, freedom, enjoyment, and a feeling of belonging. Caregivers will learn how to listen to what kids say and not what we think they say.

Chicago DCFS, Cook South
Nov. 4, 6, 11 & 13 (Tue/Thu) 6-9 p.m.

Module 2 - Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs (9 training hours)

This workshop provides practical information about how to use effective discipline techniques such as I-messages, natural and logical consequences, time out. Caregivers will learn how to catch kids being "good" and what to do to encourage positive behavior.

Matteson Aunt Martha's
Oct. 14, 16 & 21 (Tue/Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Module 5 - Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families (9 training hours)

This training focuses on helping foster parents learn how to help kids attach to caregivers and at the same time stay loyal

to birth families. Caregivers learn about how to prepare and support children for and after visits with the birth family and how to share the parenting role with birth parents.

Matteson Aunt Martha's
Dec. 8, 10 & 15 (M/W) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Module 6 - Working as a Professional Team Member (9 training hours)

Foster parents learn what everyone's role is on the team, when and how to be an advocate for children, what conflict is and their own personal style for managing it, and how conflict can be a "win - win" situation for everyone involved.

Harvey Abundant Life Center
Oct. 23, 28 & 30 (Thu/Tue) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Module 8 - Promoting Permanency Outcomes (9 training hours)

The focus of this training is on families who have children in care and supporting reunification of the children and parents.

Chicago Kids Hope United
Nov. 17, 19 & 24 (M/W) 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.

Oak Park Hephzibah
October 11 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Child Trauma

This four-hour course helps caregivers recognize the signs of trauma and understand how to work with children who have experienced trauma.

Chicago DCFS, Cook South
October 18 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Chicago DCFS, Cook South
October 25 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

**Caregivers must register to attend any of these training classes.
Call the DCFS Office of Training 877-800-3393 • toll free**