

## Jachna's family tree keeps adding new branches

Bob and Kathy Jachna started working with kids in crisis when they took private guardianship of their first child, John, at 10 months old. John's early life was complicated by many traumatic events, going back to being exposed to drugs before his birth.

"He required a lot of care and patience, he was a handful," said Kathy.

Apparently, the rookie parents had what it takes because they got licensed for foster care and in 18 years they have cared for more than 150 children. They obviously did many short-term emergency placements, but also adopted John who is now 21 and 18-year-old Amy. They keep their fire for foster care burning by advocating for other foster families, carving out a special place for teens and reaching out to birth families.

Both John and Amy came to the family as babies. As the children grew, the family got involved with adoption support groups. Kathy realized that her family and other families had needs. She started organizing. It began with coordinating fingerprinting to make it more convenient for foster parents. Next, her volunteer efforts

spread to Christmas parties with "giving trees." Then she started recruiting other families to do foster care. Amy eventually took a position as a DCFS foster parent support specialist in DuPage County. She has worked out of the Glen Ellyn field office for 15 years. She is a listening ear and the voice of experience when caregivers need assistance navigating the system and juggling the many needs of their children.

As John and Amy grew older, the Jachnas kept taking on new challenges. They expanded their foster care license to include teenagers. They both felt so blessed to have had their own kids come to them as babies, that they wanted to give something back. Although Kathy knows teens aren't easy, she feels that they have been the most fulfilling to parent.

"Just getting a kid through high school is the most rewarding experience. It is an indescribable sense of accomplishment," she said.

She likes to foster teens because she recognizes that they are such a neglected population. The Jachnas believe that they have had successes in fostering older kids



*Kathy Jachna is a foster parent trainer and active advocate. Her daughter Amy carries on the tradition as president of the youth advisory board.*

and teens because they keep their expectations realistic.

"You can't compare your children, or your nieces and nephews with kids that come into care, because they have lived very different lives. You need to be able to differentiate what's normal, and what's not. Have patience, choose your battles, and remember that these children have so much stuff in their background," she said.

Understanding each child's unique background led the Jachnas to a conviction about working cooperatively with birth parents. When providing foster care to a

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## Jachna, con't.

child who is due to return home, Kathy recommends working hard to establish a connection to his or her parents. That way, the child can stay connected to his parents and hopefully to the foster parents, too. A young man named James drove that point home for the Jachna family. He arrived on their doorstep with a bag of rags for clothes, Kathy recalls. He was the type of kid that everyone took advantage of. He required a lot of supervision and work. Kathy had to keep reaching out to his mom to initiate some level of a relationship, for James' sake. That relationship paid off when James was returned home.

"When James graduated high school, his mother invited me to attend a graduation party she threw for him, and took me aside to thank me for taking care of her son," said Kathy.

James is now 30 years old, and will be married this summer. As an adult James recently shared with his former foster parents that everything good in his life has happened because of Kathy and Bob.

"Had I not maintained an open relationship with his mother, I never would have watched him graduate high school, or get married. He is like one of my own kids. There aren't enough words to describe what it feels like to know you made that kind difference in someone's life, it is totally worth it," said Kathy.

## Back to school fair in Will County

Catholic Charities DAYBREAK Center will hold a health and education fair for Will County low-income families and foster children on August 2. Foster parents can bring children to receive: immunizations, physical exams, lead screenings, asthma screenings, vision screenings, dental exams, T.B. testing, and HIV testing/counseling. There will also be information on education, nutrition, child development and other topics. School supplies for youth in grades K-12 will be available.

Foster parents must bring a 906 placement form, the child's medical card and a copy of the medical consent form from the DCFS Office of the Guardian. Also bring a shot record to obtain new immunizations.

Thursday, August 2, 2007

11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

University of St. Francis

500 Wilcox St, Joliet, IL 60435

For more information contact DAYBREAK at 815-774-HOME.

## Education Advisors can help at school

Caregivers and caseworkers working together most often successfully advocate with schools for the children in their care. However, when families need additional expertise to work through school issues, contact the Education Advisor. They can support DCFS-supervised foster families and families who adopted or took guardianship of children who were in DCFS care. Families with licenses supervised through private agencies can receive similar help from their agency's education liaison.

DCFS Education Advisors are part of the Northern Illinois University Educational Access Project. They work with families where children may have learning, discipline or



Mitch Kremer



Rhonda Best

behavioral concerns at school. They can take part in meetings for special education, and they will help caregivers and caseworkers determine the best strategies to help youth make successful transitions through school. The Northern Region Education Advisors are Rhonda Best in Rockford at 815-967-3750 and Mitch Kremer in Woodstock at 815-338-1068.

## Summer presentations at Advisory Council

Northern region's Foster Parent Advisory Council has been busy working on their summer cycle of presentations called "Overcoming the Overwhelming." The council rotates meeting dates between DeKalb, Aurora and Rockford. During this cycle, Dr. Larry Small from the DCFS Division of Clinical Services is presenting and discussing the following topics that can also be applied towards training hours:

- Impact of Trauma on Mental Health
- Treatment Options
- How to help your foster child get the most out of therapy

Meetings are from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. A light dinner is provided. For more information please contact the Council's Chair Robyn Harvey at 888-533-2874.



Robyn  
Harvey

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

- July 17 - Rockford, Freeport, Sterling  
107 N. Third Street, Rockford
- August 21 - Round Lake Beach, Waukegan, Woodstock  
328 W. Rollins Rd., Round Lake Beach

## Youth Board meets legislators

The Northern Region Youth Advisory Board has been actively involved in several activities. On May 10<sup>th</sup>, Advisory Board members participated in Youth Democracy Day. Board members traveled to Springfield and participated in a march at the Capitol Building. The highlight of the event was that Board members were able to meet and talk with State Senator William Delgado and State Representative Toni Barrows.

The Board also recently conducted annual elections for the new fiscal year, which began in July. Amber Heffner was elected President, Ricardo Tirado was elected Vice President, and Juan Perez was

elected Sergeant at Arms. The position of Secretary is presently vacant. All Advisory Board members also attended the Statewide Youth Advisory Board meeting held on May 18 in Gurnee. They conducted regular business planning for their annual graduation celebration and made time for fun at Great America.

The Northern Region Youth Advisory Board meets the Third Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. with a light dinner being served. For more information and meeting locations please contact Cryssida Green at 888-472-0990 x 241 at the Chicago Area Project.

## Foster Adoptive Parent Alliance of DeKalb County

F.A.P.A. is a DeKalb County Foster/Adoptive Parent Support Group chaired by Tina Moore and Robyn Harvey. The group's mission is to connect all foster and adoptive parents together through support, and fun family events. Upcoming events include a camp-out at Yogi Bear Camp Ground in Amboy in July, and they will be hosting a Back-to-School Picnic and Swim Party on Saturday August 4 at Hopkins Park in DeKalb. The cost for the Back-to-School Picnic and Swim Party is \$10.00 per family. Reservations are required. For more information contact Tina Moore at 815-757-7333.

F.A.P.A. meets on the second Monday each month at the Malta Town Hall at 7 p.m.

### Northern News

#### Regional Reporter

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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.

# Northern Region Training Calendar

## Foster PRIDE In-Service Modules

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend PRIDE In-Service Training. Licensing and child welfare staff are invited to attend the training if they inform the DCFS Training Office of their attendance a week prior to the training.

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

**Waukegan**

Oct. 2, 4, 9 & 11  
(Tue & Thurs)

**Ramada Inn**

6:30-9:30 p.m.

**Module 12 - Understanding and Promoting Preteen and Teen Development** (6 training hours)

**Waukegan**

Sept. 11 & 13  
(Tue & Thurs)

**Ramada Inn**

6:30-9 p.m.

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

**Waukegan**

Oct. 16, 18 & 23  
(Tue & Thurs)

**Ramada Inn**

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.

**Kankakee**

Oct. 22 & 24  
(Mon & Wed)

**Kankakee Community College**

6:30-9:30 p.m.

**Waukegan**

Dec. 1  
(Sat)

**Ramada Inn**

9:30 a.m.-4:30 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.

**Lockport**

Aug. 25  
(Sat)

**SOS Childrens Village**

9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Sept. 25 & 27

(Tue & Thurs)

6:30-9 p.m.

**To register to attend any of these training classes, Call the DCFS Office of Training**

**877-800-3393**  
toll free