

## Caregivers have their say in May for Appreciation Month

*In honor of Foster Parent Appreciation Month, we asked Northern Region caregivers: What aspect of foster care makes you feel appreciated for what you do?*



One of the most surprising and awesome sources of that appreciation has come directly from the birth mothers. We have been extremely lucky in that over time we have been able to develop relationships with two

of our birth mothers. Hearing these two women thank us for caring for and loving their birth children has been an amazing gift. We never expected it and previously had not thought of them as a likely source of support and appreciation.

—Todd and Diane Kinney



Once we started to work with the birth mom, she would thank us for taking care of her child. There was no stress between us because she knew that we weren't trying to keep her daughter. Everyone worked together on the same goal of return home. We enjoyed watching our foster daughter grow into rules like going to bed at a set time. She really appreciated having rules and learning boundaries. It was a joy to see her grow and flourish and to know we had a part in that.

—Jeremy and Cary Witkins

Our journey began with a few bumps along the way, but they were all worth it the day that our foster daughter, Samantha, came into our lives seven months ago. Each day that she has been with us has



brought with it a new blessing. To be honest, she has probably given us far more than we can ever attempt to give to her. We also feel so fortunate that we have been able to maintain very close contact with some of Samantha's siblings that were in the foster care system and have since been adopted. It is like having gained this whole extended family that we never would have known about had we not embarked on this journey. Watching the kids interact and form a close bond makes our hearts swell with pride.

I guess to make it simple... the reward of being a foster parent is love. That, and hoping that just maybe you made a difference in someone's life.

—Joe and Nicole Urban

I feel my reward is seeing the children grow and blossom. I fostered twin brothers when they were eight years old. They are currently sixteen and I am very proud of the young men they have become. Being able to give back at something I enjoy doing is very rewarding. It is amazing how providing nurturance and stability in a child's life can alter their path in life.

—Jeanine Smith-Brown



## Message from the Northern Region Administrator



On behalf of the Northern Region staff and myself, I would like to recognize all foster parents for their commitment to our

children. Through teamwork we are able to shed a positive light on foster care and our commitment to children and their families.

Having grown up in a family that fostered children, I have a unique perspective of what challenges foster families face. However, I also know the rewards that come with fostering. As the Regional Administrator I would like to extend my support and that of my staff.

Please know that your input is very important to me. I would personally like to invite you to attend the Northern Region Foster Parent Advisory Council meetings. This is a forum by which foster parents can share their experiences and first-hand knowledge of our children's needs.

Words cannot describe the appreciation we feel towards our foster parents in the Northern Region. You have touched the children's lives and shown them hope for the future.

—Debbie Palmer-Thomas

## Local Area Networks “wrap around” services

WRAP-around planning can help provide children resources that may not readily be available through typical child welfare channels. Wrap-around plans are offered through the 62 Local Area Networks (LANs) across the state. LANs are comprised of the traditional human service systems, families, community members, service professionals and educators working together to meet the needs of the at-risk children and their families.

A WRAP-around plan starts with an application stating the need and how it will benefit the child in school, at home or in the broader community setting. When a WRAP plan is approved it will be managed by a facilitator and will use the Child and Family Team model to ensure that the plan is relevant and effective based on the services and providers that are involved.

One of the key functions of the LAN is to screen requests for WRAP plans and to provide applicable resources. WRAP uses a team approach to determine needs, identify resources and provide support to the child and their family. All decisions are made with family's participation and approval. The child and family team will coordinate between multiple service providers and community partners to meet the need.

### Youth services in Local Area Networks

For information on resources available through the Local Area Networks contact one of the DCFS LAN Liaisons. These services are open to all families, including foster, adoptive and guardianship families. The DCFS LAN Liaisons can provide more information.

Phil Biage  
630-801-3400  
Kane, Kendall, McHenry, and Lake counties

Sidella Hughes  
815-967-3731  
DeKalb, Lee, Ogle, Whiteside and Winnebago counties

Sharon O'Bryant  
815-730-4000  
DuPage, Grundy, Kankakee, and Will counties

### Northern News

Sponsor: Debbie Palmer-Thomas, DCFS Northern Regional Administrator



Regional Reporter  
Colleen Woolwine  
595 South State St.  
Elgin, IL 60123

Phone: 847-888-7635  
Fax: 630-844-8968  
Colleen.Woolwine@illinois.gov

Anyone can call the regional reporter with story suggestions about:

- foster parent association news and schedules
- local training notices
- features on foster families and community members working for children
- photos
- ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.



## Families can find support among caregivers in a nearby group

One of the responsibilities in the Foster Parent Law is to “Be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent associations.” DCFS, private agencies and community organizations sponsor many support groups and associations to assist foster and adoptive parents. The following list can help identify a group that may suit your family. This list will be updated annually. Please contact the Editor at [vanessa.james@illinois.gov](mailto:vanessa.james@illinois.gov) with any corrections or additions for next year.

### Adopted Kids World

Contact: Deb Rosengren at 630-530-7917  
[Debbie@adoptedkidsworld.com](mailto:Debbie@adoptedkidsworld.com)  
 Meets monthly. Call for schedule.  
 Focuses on families who adopted children age five and older.

### Adoptive Families Today

P.O. Box 1726, Barrington  
[www.adoptivefamilies.today.org](http://www.adoptivefamilies.today.org)  
 Serves families in Cook, DuPage, Lake, McHenry and Kane counties.

### Adoptive Families Together

Contact: Jocelyn McMahan at 815-969-8836, ext. 4115  
 or [jocelyn.mcmahan@lssi.org](mailto:jocelyn.mcmahan@lssi.org)  
 Meets first Monday from 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.  
 321 W. State St., 4th Floor, Rockford  
 Open to all types and stages of adoption.  
 Call to request child care. Snacks provided.

### Children’s Home + Aid Specialized Foster Parents Educational/Support Group

Contact: Donna Kasper at 815-962-1043  
 Meets third Tuesday from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.  
 Children’s Home + Aid Northern Region  
 910 2nd Ave., Rockford

### Children’s Home + Aid Support Group for Adoptive and Guardianship Parents

Contact: Lynda Nguyen at 815-962-1043  
 Meets second Tuesday of the month  
 5:45 p.m. - 7:45 p.m.  
 Children’s Home + Aid Northern Region  
 910 2nd Ave., Rockford  
 Child care is provided.

### DeKalb Area Adoptive Families

Contact: Diane DeMers at 815-756-3874  
 Email: [Ballantine@aol.com](mailto:Ballantine@aol.com)  
 246 Rolfe Rd., DeKalb  
 Serves families in DeKalb and nearby counties.  
 DCFS Regional Foster Parent Advisory Council  
 Contact: Robyn Harvey at 815-793-5847  
 Meetings rotate among locations throughout the region.  
 Call for schedule or teleconference info.

### Family Focus Foster Support Program

Contact: Juana Ruiz at 630-844-2550 or [juana.ruiz@family-focus.org](mailto:juana.ruiz@family-focus.org)  
 Meets third Monday of the month  
 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
 1575 Reckinger Rd, Aurora  
 Dinner and childcare provided.  
 Open to foster families in DuPage and surrounding counties.

### Fox Valley Adoption Group

Contact: Maureen Van Scoit at 630-844-9385  
 968 Wellington Circle, Aurora  
 Serves families in DuPage, Kane, and Kendall counties.

### Family Focus - Grandparents & Relatives Raising Grandchildren (GRRC)

Meets third Tuesday of the month  
 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.  
 1575 Reckinger Road, Aurora  
 Contact: Juana Ruiz @ 630.844.2550, ext.239 or  
[juana.ruiz@family-focus.org](mailto:juana.ruiz@family-focus.org)  
 Dinner and child care provided.

### Lutheran Social Services of IL Foster Parent Group

Contact: Sharon Franklin at 815-284-7796 ext. 2108  
 Meets fourth Monday of the month  
 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.  
 1261 Illinois Route 38, Nachusa



# Northern Region Caregiver Training

DCFS Office of Training has scheduled sessions of in-service training modules and other courses in locations across the Northern Region. The listing below can help caregivers plan for their training needs. To get specific dates and locations, visit the on-line Virtual Training Center (VTC) anytime at [www.DCFStraining.org](http://www.DCFStraining.org) or call the DCFS Office of Training at 877-800-3393 during regular business hours. In addition to classroom courses, caregivers can also take advantage of videos, books and online training.

## May

Module 2	Joliet
Adoption Certification (worker referral required)	Wheaton Loves Park
Educational Advocacy	Aurora Rockford

## June

Adoption Certification (worker referral required)	Elgin
Educational Advocacy	Wheaton Loves Park Rockford

## In-service Training modules (scheduled periodically in classroom sessions or available on DVD)

**Module 1 - Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children at Risk (12 hours)** The focus of this module is how to build self-esteem in children; how kids act when they need recognition, power, freedom, enjoyment and to belong; and how to listen to what kids say and not what we think they say.

**Module 2 - Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs (9 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; how to catch kids being "good" and what to do to encourage positive behavior.

**Module 4 - The Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse (9 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.

**Module 5 – Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families (9 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 before and after visits with the birth family and how to share the parenting role with birth parents.

**Module 6 - Working as a Professional Team Member (9 hours)** Foster parents learn everyone's role 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.

**Module 7 – Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity (6 hours)** Culture includes traditions, values, customs and history. What "culture" means to a child's self-esteem, how to manage cultural diversity in a foster home, how to discuss sensitive issues with children and how to help a child record his or her history are topics covered in this module.

**Module 8 – Promoting Permanency Outcomes (9 hours)** The focus of this training is on families who have children in care and supporting reunification of the children and parents.

**Module 9 – Managing the Impact of Placement on Your Family (6 hours)** In this training caregivers learn how fostering children can affect family relationships, how to minimize stresses that can result and how to find available supports.

**Module 10 – Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children and Families (15 hours)** Foster parents will study the risk factors for chemical use, abuse, and dependency. They will understand relapse and recovery and be able to acquire skills necessary to be an active member of the team to support parents' recovery.

**Module 12 - Understanding & Promoting Pre-Teen and Teen Development (6 hours)**

This course will assist caregivers to identify developmentally appropriate ways to best promote healthy development for preteens and teens who have experienced abuse, neglect and trauma. This module will help foster/adopt caregivers to understand teen brain development and the impact of trauma and loss on preteens and teens. Participants will learn specific strategies that caregivers can use as fostering teenagers in the day-to-day life of the foster family.