

Myers family always willing to make room for one more

“There’s always room for one more” might need to become the new sign on Jodi and Jason Myers’ front door. With three children by birth and four through foster care in their Springfield home, the Myers say they are never bored. They had to get a waiver to have over six children, but that was nothing new to them. Since becoming licensed in 2005, they have had over 30 children in their home, ranging from babies to teenagers. They have taken in boys, girls, different races and even a pregnant teen.

Doug Raffa, their former licensing worker, said, “The Myers have been a pleasant surprise. Jason is very involved with the kids and Jodi is a dream. She is very disciplined and is excellent. They are both all about the kids.”

Even with a full house, Jodi and Jason both find time to hold outside jobs. Jason is a pension accountant and Jodi works for a medical office group. It was a joint decision for the family to foster. Before that, Jodi had a home daycare, and she knew foster parents.

They both enjoyed kids, and fostering seemed to be a natural fit.

The Myers believe seeing progress is the greatest reward. As one example, a girl who came to the home at 11 is still with the family at 16. She just got her driver’s license, gets decent grades and holds a statewide track and field record.

“Of course,” Jodi said. “There is always the daily stress of dealing with seven kids – fighting and everyday problems. Sometimes it is difficult to accept limitations on how much you can do.”

Still, the benefits to the youth outweigh the temporary frustrations. The way the Myers see it, children in foster care have had a rough start to life. As caregivers, they can provide a new home and hope to see them come out of their shell enough to “just be a child.”

Jodi and Jason do not believe foster care is for everyone. They say that it is life changing and you need to be able to manage chaos. The Myers stress



The Myers with their three children by birth have made room in their home and hearts for four more through foster care (not photographed for privacy).

that you should not come into foster care with false expectations about kids adjusting overnight. It is a process that takes time and patience to build trust.

Sometimes perseverance is not enough. Despite the endurance, some children may leave. There can actually be a sense of relief, along with disappointment, resignation or any number of emotions depending on the circumstances. For example, in their rural

area scarce educational resources can be a barrier for some youth. There is no alternative school nearby if the local school is not the right fit. When it is decided that a move is the last resort, but the best response, Jodi and Jason try to focus on the bright side. Whenever any child leaves, they would like to think that they are taking something positive away with them.

Central Region sends 12 to college with DCFS full scholarships

This year, 12 students whose cases were served by programs in Central Region headed to college with the benefits included in the DCFS Scholarship program. The scholarship includes the waiver of tuition and mandatory fees at one of the nine Illinois state universities or an Illinois community college, a monthly maintenance grant of \$471 and a medical card.

Scholarship recipients were chosen statewide on the basis of scholastic aptitude, a written personal statement and demonstrated community involvement. 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.



Trinity Bankhead

Trinity graduated from Danville High School where she earned a 3.81 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. She was on both the honor and high honor rolls and was a member of the Latin club, the Student Council and Young Women Aware. Trinity

volunteered with the summer program at her church and assisted with the after school program. She now attends Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, majoring in pre-pharmacy.



Jenna Carter

Jenna, from Kilbourne, graduated from Havana High School where she earned a 3.89 weighted grade point average on a 4.0 scale. While in high school, Jenna was a member of the Interact Club, Spanish club, Future Farmer's of America, and Student

Council. She participated on the volleyball team, cheerleading squad, and softball team. She was also on the High Honor Roll and was inducted as a member of the National Honor Society. Jenna volunteered with her community food drive and with a program to assist children to obtain necessities they cannot afford to purchase. Jenna is studying at Illinois State University, majoring in business.

Anthony Ehrgott (no photo available)

Anthony is a graduate of Rushville High School where he earned a 3.66 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. Anthony participated in the marching band and concert band, on the golf team and in the choir during high school. He performed in several dramatic and musical productions hosted by the Drama Department. He was also on the Student Council and in the local French club. His volunteer experiences encompassed many community events with the Boy Scouts, including work in the community garden, food collection for the food

basket, and work for his Eagle Scout project at a local outdoor theater. He is now a student at Spoon River College with plans to major in English.



Sarah Hall

Sarah is a graduate of Danville High School where she earned a 3.8 grade point average. While in high school, Sarah excelled in honors courses and participated in soccer, cheerleading, the National Honor Society, Student Council and Marching Band. She was

selected for a Golden Apple Scholarship. Sarah was also involved with her community through the program Lose the Training Wheels, the Festival of Trees and math tutoring for high school students. Sarah now studies at Illinois State University, majoring in elementary education.



Haley Johnson

Haley is a graduate of Champaign Central High School, earning a 3.89 out of 4.0 grade point average. While in high school, she participated in many activities, including musicals, track and field, African-American Club, Spanish Club, Eco-club, and

TAG (Teen Awareness Group) as a peer educator. Haley was inducted into the Spanish National Honor Society and was named a National Merit Scholar. Haley is now a student at the University of Chicago and looks forward to becoming an author.



Kala McGee

Kala graduated from Danville High School where she earned a 3.5 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. She was selected as a member of the National Honors Society. She was active in the Xtreme Leadership youth advocate program, Student

Advisory Board and history club. For Channel One she reported on important news that was happening in her school. She was a contestant in the 2009 Miss Illinois Teen USA Contest, and she received the Delta Sigma Theta Academic Achievement Award. She also volunteered for Kennecuck Clean-Up Day to pick up trash in Kennecuck Park. Kala attends the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where she plans to major in business.



Asilah Patterson

Asilah is a graduate of Champaign Central High School where she earned a 3.5 grade point average. During high school, she achieved honor roll status all four years and was a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority for Academic Achievement.

Her extracurricular activities in high school included: African-American Club, peer mediation, orchestra, Peppettes Dance Team, Spanish club and Interact club. She was also a recipient of the Martin Luther King Jr. Living the Dream and Zeta Phi Beta scholarships. She was selected for the Steve Harvey Disney Dreamers program. Asilah is now a student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and is considering a degree in atmospheric science.



Isaac Puckett

Isaac is a graduate of Rushville Industry High School where he graduated early and completed 33 college credits at Spoon River College prior to graduation. After earning a Associate's degree from Spoon River College, he transferred

to the University of Illinois-Chicago (UIC) where he is currently studying electrical engineering. He is an accomplished athlete who competed in football, wrestling and track throughout his high school years. At UIC he is a member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, trains in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and is on the honor roll. Isaac intends to complete his degree at UIC and pursue a master's degree in Electrical Engineering.



Joshua Ryan

Joshua, of Decatur, is a graduate of Missouri Military Academy where he earned a 3.1 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. His extracurricular activities included serving as the varsity softball and basketball

statistician and football team manager. He was a member of the marching and concert bands and drum and bugle corps. He has volunteered for Special Olympics and Easter Seals Earth Project, and he also coordinated his high school food drive. Joshua is now studying at Lincoln College, majoring in sports management.



Adrianna Savage

Adrianna graduated from Annawan High School where she was the 2011 graduating class Valedictorian, a member of the National Honor Society and an Illinois State Scholar. Her extracurricular activities included: Spanish club, theater club, and band,

including a year as drum major. She also played on the basketball and volleyball teams. She was active in her community and church and has participated in youth mission trips to assist flood victims in Iowa. She also worked as a peer tutor for younger students in her community. Adrianna is a student at Illinois State University, studying actuarial science.

Heather Sears (no photo available)

Heather is a 2010 graduate of Archbold High School in Ohio and recently completed her freshman year at Northwest State Community College in Archbold. During her high school years she was a member of the National Honor Society with a 3.8 out of 4.0 grade point average. She was also an accomplished musician as a member of her high school jazz, pep, and concert bands. Additionally, she was very active in volunteer service in her church and community. This year, Heather transferred to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to study nursing.



Cory Winston

Cory is a 2011 graduate of Springfield High School where he earned a 3.26 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. Cory volunteered at the Mini O'Beirne Crisis Nursery Christmas store, Capital Meals on Wheels and the Capital City Breadline. His high

school accomplishments included receiving the Prairie State Achievement Award and being named a Junior Statesman of America, along with earning spots on the Honor Roll. He was also awarded a scholarship from Alpha Kappa Alpha. Cory attends Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville, majoring in pharmacy science.

Central Region Caregiver Training

DCFS Office of Training has scheduled sessions of in-service training modules and other courses in locations across the Central 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 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.

West Central Region

October

Adoption Certification <i>(Worker referral required)</i>	Macomb
Child Trauma	Moline, Peoria
Educational Advocacy	Peoria
Module 12	Peoria

East Central Region

October

Reunification Training	Springfield
Adoption Certification <i>(worker referral required)</i>	Bloomington Danville Springfield
Educational Advocacy	Champaign
Module 12	Bloomington

Central Connections

Robert Blackwell,
DCFS Central Regional
Administrator



Regional Reporter:

Sam Saladino
Peoria Field Office
2001 NE Jefferson
Peoria IL 61603
Phone: 309-671-7921
Fax: 309-671-7923
E-mail: Samuel.Saladino@illinois.gov

Anyone can call the regional reporter with story suggestions about:

- news and schedules from foster parent organizations
- local training notices
- features on foster families and community members working for children
- ideas for articles or services that would be helpful to caregivers

In-service Training modules (scheduled in classroom sessions or 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.