

# Cook County Advocate

2007 • Vol. 3

News for Chicago Metro Area Families

## Students have alternatives to dropping out of school

Sometimes, despite even the best efforts, many young people decide to drop-out before receiving a high school diploma. DCFS is focusing resources to make sure those students who want to return to school can have another chance. The Alternative Schools Network reaches out to youth who have dropped out of school, been expelled or are at risk of missing out on their diploma.

In the Chicago area, the Alternative Schools Network maintains 15 neighborhood schools with curriculum targeted to help youth get back on the academic track. Youth who have been adopted can also apply to schools in the network. However, for youth who still have open DCFS cases, the Alternative Schools Network offers the Youth Skills Development and Training (YSDT) program. This program is open to young people ages 16 to 21 who are in DCFS foster care, group home or independent living programs. The YSDT program combines in-class instruction with after school courses in life skills, leadership, financial literacy and social/cultural development. On top of the instruction are added layers of support through mentoring, tutoring and counseling.

As students work their way to their diploma, they can also earn money to continue their education. For each computer-assisted course a young person completes in the after school program, they receive \$250, of which \$200 goes into a scholarship account. Students also earn \$2 per hour for the time they spend in the after school programs, which also gets deposited into their account. After the student graduates and enrolls in college or some other type of vocational training, they can draw down from the funds accumulated in their scholarship account plus an additional \$600 award.

"Because of the many moves these young people made, they often have deficiencies. But when they finally have stability and incentive, they can do well," said program manager Christine Garza.

Typically, the schools in the Network are small schools in neighborhood settings that operate like their own mini-communities. Students attend classes during the school day and participate in the after school activities. Adult mentors are available to assist youth. The mentors go beyond role models and accompany youth



*Consuelo Garcia, a mentor at the Olive-Harvey Middle College, accompanied students Kimberly Jackson and Sherita McGruder to an Alternative Schools Network luncheon for child welfare staff.*

to court, or go to doctor's appointments and help with schoolwork. There are also services for students who are parents.

Alternative Schools Networks have 250 openings for DCFS youth. A caseworker must complete the referral for the DCFS programs, however caregivers, counselors and others can start the process. Enrollment is on a rolling basis so there is no need to wait. Contact Christine Garza at 773-728-4030 for more information.

*Continued on page 2*

## Alternatives, con't.

### Alternative Schools Network

**Ada S. McKinley**  
2929 S. Wabash 60616

**Antonia Pantoja (Aspira)**  
3119 N. Pulaski 60641

**ASA Academy**  
4651 W. Madison 60644

**Bronzeville**  
4622 S. Dr. Martin Luther King Dr. 60653

**CCA Academy**  
1231 S. Pulaski 60623

**Community Youth Development Institute**  
7836 S Union 60620

**Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos**  
2739 W. Division 60622

**Howard Area Community Center**  
7647 N. Paulina 60626

**Jobs For Youth**  
50 E. Washington #400 60602

**Latino Youth**  
2200 S. Marshall 60623

**Olive Harvey**  
10001 S. Woodlawn 60623

**Prologue Learning Ctr.**  
640 W. Irving Park Road,  
3rd Floor, 60614

**Sullivan House**  
8164 S. South Chicago Ave.  
60617

**West Town**  
2021 W. Fulton 60612

**Westside Alternative**  
839 N. Central 60651

## Cook North's Education Advisor eager to help with education issues



This year Cook North welcomed Robena Morgan to the region. She is the newest Education Advisor. She fills the vacancy left by Deseree Edwards, who recently relocated with her family out-of-state. The Education Advisors can help foster, guardianship and adoptive parents with school-related concerns.

Morgan brings a wealth of experience in the Chicago Public School System. She has been a teacher, case manager, parent coordinator and guidance counselor at both the high school and elementary school levels. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education and a Master's in School Guidance and Counseling.

In her new role as an Education Advisor, Morgan will address students' educational needs from early childhood education through preparation for college. She is committed to addressing literacy problems, school discipline issues, special education concerns, decreasing truancy and promoting academic achievement.

"This position helps ensure that all children are educated to the limits of their talents regardless of their social or economic background," she said.

She relies on a tone of mutual respect and a friendly manner with school personnel as well as with the students and their families. She is especially proud that her work can help students feel better about themselves.

## Cook North's new Advisory Council rep



Nancy Lauffenberger was appointed to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council to represent Cook North.

Lauffenberger and her husband have been foster parents for more than seven years. They have a one-year-old daughter by birth and son whom they adopted from foster care three years ago.

"I am especially interested in balancing the needs of older youth in care with that of the foster family, looking at areas such as family visitation, permanency and confidentiality," she said.

She hopes that her role on the council would help to increase her knowledge of foster care and allow her to more actively advocate for foster families and youth.

## Cook North lifebook party makes memories for a lifetime

Recently several youth, their caregivers, case managers and supervisors participated in "Life Book Parties" sponsored by Cook North regional adoption staff. The parties were held at DCFS offices in Skokie and at 1911 S. Indiana. Each child could develop their own story through collecting important papers, pictures, and personal items. They added memories of people and events that have been important to them over time. At the end of the party, children took home their own lifebook, filled with supplies so they can keep adding more memories.

Caseworkers and adoption staff contacted the youth's current caregivers ahead of time, requesting items for the books. Staff also assisted by contacting some of the youth's previous caregivers or other important people in their lives for information. They also went through the records looking for letters, pictures or other documents that might be important to include.

"Lifebooks are important for youth in foster care, as well as those being adopted. They offer positive information about their experiences in care and answer questions about their family and past that they may not be comfortable asking," said Lisa Timberlake, the region's adoption supervisor.

Doing lifebooks as a party is a great way of demonstrating the



*Youth, caseworkers, and their caregivers created lifebooks at parties sponsored by Cook North adoption staff.*

importance of developing and continuing to add to a child's lifebook for caregivers and caseworkers. One young man came to the party reluctant to participate. He had only vague recollections of his family history and had many questions about his deceased parents. After staff pored over his records, he learned that his middle name is one that is passed along to all males in his family. By the end of the afternoon he was sharing some recent family stories. He also developed a list of questions that his caseworker and caregiver could search out to fill some of the gaps in his lifebook.

For more information on lifebooks or to access different types of materials to create your child's lifebook, refer to the Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association Web site at <http://www.ifapa.org/resources/publications.asp>. The site has many pages that a child can select to complete his or her lifebook.

## Cook North RA says thank you



*May gives the Cook North regional staff a special opportunity to recognize our caregivers for their willingness to open their homes and hearts to our children in care and their families. Whether you are fostering, assumed guardianship or have adopted, you will leave an impact on the children in your care. We appreciate your efforts in making our children part of your families.*

*During the year we often forget to acknowledge the commitment and support that our caregivers provide. Let me confirm for you that we view our caregiver community as an invaluable resource. You take the time to go to their doctor's appointments, their school meetings and are there for them when they need a caring adult. We turn to you for information about your observations about each child's strengths, challenges and needs. You provide us with continuing updates as to what is and is not working. We could not do our jobs without you!*

*We want you to know that your efforts do not go unnoticed or unappreciated. On behalf of the Cook North Staff, we want to thank you for your continuing commitment to providing quality care to our children and youth.*

*Chris McGrath  
Regional Administrator*

## Cook South RA thanks families



*When I look at an apple, I am reminded of children. Each apple, like each child, is unique in its color, its shape and its taste. Yet apples are the same in that the seeds it carries inside have the power to grow into a strong, mighty tree. But, that tree can only come to be if a seed lands on fertile ground where it can take root.*

*Foster parent provide the essentials to nurture youth to their full potential. You are the sunlight, the rain and the fertile soil. Yours is an awesome responsibility that you willingly accept. As the Regional Administrator for Cook South, I will harness all the available resources to support you in your efforts. The foster parent advisory council is on the move. Your staff is listening and responding as the group makes very solid suggestions. We have also devoted resources for support groups to make your role more manageable.*

*Every day that you commit to a child, you are producing fruit that will last. Please accept my gratitude during Foster Parent Appreciation month—and every time you pick up an apple.*

Michael Byrd  
Regional Administrator

## Cook South shows appreciation with free shopping day for foster parents

The Cook South City and CHILD foster parent associations and the DCFS-sponsored support groups teamed up to host a Grand Bazaar in honor of Foster Parent Appreciation Month. The planning committee challenged each and every DCFS worker to submit a donation of gently used clothing, books, toys, and videos for the children as well as their caregivers. On May 19, at the DCFS offices in Harvey and in Chicago, the celebration began.

Caregivers came to peruse the items and “shop.” However, this was one shopping spree that did not require cash. The event went over so well they had several items left over so they blessed another group of families from the Restoration Ministries, domestic violence and homeless shelters on the Southside of Chicago. This was truly the gift that just kept on giving. They have decided to make this an annual event.

## Cook South families get help, get skills and get involved in region’s groups

Cook South region hosts several support groups for foster and adoptive parents, as well as an active advisory group. These groups allow caregivers to learn about DCFS policies, problem-solve and meet other parents. In most cases, the meetings also are eligible for training credits toward license renewal.

The South Suburban support group meets at 10 a.m. on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month at the Harvey office, 15115 Dixie Highway. The June 28 agenda will focus on adoption preparation, subsidies and post adoption services.

The Chi City support group meets at 10 a.m. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of

each month at 6201 S. Emerald Avenue. Topics for upcoming meetings:

- June 12 – Strengthening your relationship with your teen—practical strategies
- July 10 – Family Reunification...What’s it about?

The DCFS Regional Foster Parent Advisory Council meets at 10 a.m. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month. The advisory council discusses DCFS policy and how it affects foster families.

Call the Cook South Foster Parent Support and Information Line at 773-371-6113 for more information.

## Caregivers get preview of reunification at Cook institutes

The 2007 Caregiver Institutes this year focused on *Building Families: Connecting Caregivers, Parents and Youth*. The DCFS Clinical Division's Office of Foster Parent Support Services presented the daylong training that previewed the Department's new emphasis on reunification.

Caregivers attended two institutes at Cook South's Emerald office and Cook Central's Maywood office. The morning opened with several young people and a foster parent sharing their perspectives on maintaining connections to families of origin while in foster care. After their moving personal testimonials, Michael Byrd, Cook South Regional Administrator and Donna Steele Program Manager at Cook Central gave an overview of recent changes at the Department and how they affect foster families.

For the remainder of the day, caregivers had an opportunity to



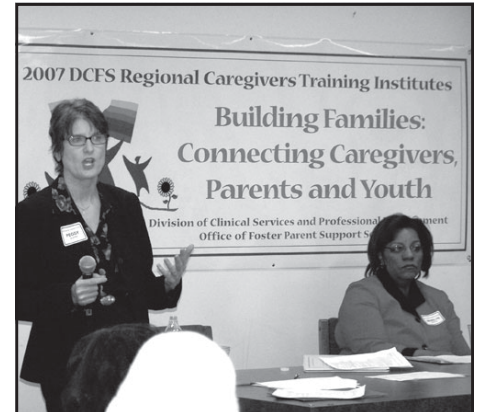
*One highlight of the Cook County Caregiver's Institute was the panel of parents and foster parents sharing their experiences.*

learn how they can interact with parents, collaborate with case-workers and support children's emotional needs when the goal is to return home. One of the program's most compelling components was a panel of parents whose children were previously in DCFS care. The parents spoke very frankly about what it is like while they were apart from their children and how they worked to reunite their family.

"It was a wonderful chance to have caregivers, staff, youth and birth parents in the same room learning how to work together to achieve the best outcome for children," said Ray Gates, Administrator for the Office of Foster Parent Support Services.

DCFS held nine institutes in locations throughout the state, from February through April. Many DCFS staff representing several department divisions and agencies assisted with developing the event and traveled to present workshops at the institutes.

"Each year, we sponsor these institutes so our caregivers can have first hand information about DCFS initiatives that will help them care for children more effectively," said Deputy Director Velma Williams. "I am pleased that the feedback from caregivers was so positive."



*Peggy Slater and Marilyn Arnold of DCFS explain the caregiver's role in reunification cases.*

### 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 ~ 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.

## Groups and associations offer advice and assistance statewide

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 is a beginning and will be updated. Please contact the Editor at 312-814-6824 with any corrections or information on other groups that should be listed.

### CATHOLIC CHARITIES FP NETWORKING GROUP

Contact: Margaret Monahan at 312-655-7984  
Meets last Thursday from 6:30 p.m. – 8 p.m.  
1717 Rand Road, Des Plaines  
Serves families licensed with Catholic Charities

### C.H.I.L.D. ASSOCIATION

Contact: Ida Lopez (Support Specialist) at  
708-755-5314  
Meets last Friday (Apr. – Dec.) at 10 a.m.  
DCFS Harvey Office  
15115 Dixie Highway, Harvey

### CHILDREN OF EASTERN EUROPEAN REGIONS (CHEER)

[www.cheerchicago.org](http://www.cheerchicago.org)

### CIRCLE OF PARENTS

Contact: Stacey Saffold at 773-419-4660  
Meets third Saturday from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.  
Includes Boy and Girl Scout programs  
Sherman Park Library  
5440 South Racine, Chicago

### COOK CENTRAL DCFS REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Contact: Jerry Welenc at 773-582-8354  
Meets fourth Tuesday at 9:30 a.m.  
DCFS, 3518 W. Division, Chicago  
No December meeting

### COOK NORTH DCFS REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Contact: Sari Rowitz at 312-328-2484  
Meets second Tuesday at 10 a.m.  
1911 S. Indiana, Chicago

### COOK SOUTH DCFS REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Contact: Gloria Orange-Long at 773-371-6115  
Meets third Wednesday at 10 a.m.  
DCFS Office  
6201 S. Emerald, Chicago

### DCFS CHI CITY FOSTER PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

Contact: Info line at 773-371-6113  
Meets second Tuesday at 10 a.m.  
DCFS Office  
6201 S. Emerald, Chicago

### DCFS COOK SOUTH SUBURBAN SUPPORT GROUP

Contact: Info line at 773-371-6113  
Meets 4th Thursday of the month at 10 a.m.  
DCFS Office  
15115 Dixie Highway, Harvey

### GRANDPARENTS AND SENIORS RAISING CHILDREN TRAINING AND SUPPORT GROUP

Contact: Jean Xoubi at 773-884-2266  
Meets first Thursday from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. (September to June)  
Metropolitan Family Services-Midway Site  
3843 W. 63<sup>rd</sup> Street, Chicago

### HISPANIC ASSOCIATION (COMBINES WITH NORTH EAST FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION)

Contact: Edith Cruz at 773-425-4634

### HULL HOUSE ASSOC. FOSTER PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

Contact: Julia Johnson at 773-374-9451, ext 136  
Call for meeting schedule  
8753 S. Greenwood, Chicago

### ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON ADOPTABLE CHILDREN

Contact: Pat Cooper at 847-698-3668  
Meets periodically, call for schedule  
327 North Stewart, Lombard

### ILLINOIS PARENTS FOR BLACK ADOPTION

Contact: Drucilla Fair at 773-734-2305  
7930 S. Colfax Avenue, Chicago  
Offers pre-and post-adoption support

**JEWISH CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Contact: Thomas Stabnicki at 312-673-2748  
 Meets third Thursday at Noon  
 216 West Jackson, Chicago

**LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES OF ILLINOIS ADOPTION GROUP**

Contact: Tessa Schneider at 312-949-4852 or  
 tessa.schneider@lssi.org  
 Contact Tessa for schedule  
 Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
 611 Randolph Street, Oak Park (street parking  
 available)  
 Focuses primarily on international and private  
 adoptions.

**LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES OF ILLINOIS FOSTER PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Contact: Bernadine Drew at 312-949-4340  
 Meets first Monday every other month from 6 p.m. -  
 8 p.m. Call to confirm.  
 11740 South Western Avenue, Chicago

**LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES OF IL SOUTH OPEN ARMS**

Contact: Beth Novotney at 773-371-2700  
 Meets third Wednesday at 6 p.m.  
 11740 S. Western, Chicago  
 Child care provide with reservation.  
 Open to adoptive families and pre-adoptive families.

**NEW BEGINNINGS FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENT ASSOCIATION**

Contact: Regina Boyd at 708-385-6263  
 Meets first Monday from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.  
 Fernwood Park  
 10436 S. Wallace, Chicago  
 Children are welcome with adult. Bring a dish.

**NORTHEAST AREA FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION**

Contact: Donsetta Blakely at 773-778-7445  
 Meets third Thursday at 10 a.m.  
 Sherman Park Library  
 5440 S. Racine Avenue, Chicago

**NORTH WEST SUBURBAN FOSTER/ADOPT NETWORK**

Contact: Sandra Reinhard at 847-255-8783  
 Meets second Wednesday at 9:30 a.m.  
 Arlington Countryside Church  
 916 E. Hintz Rd., Arlington Heights

**SOUTH CITY FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION**

Contact: Carol Lukacek at 708-891-2206  
 Meets second Thursday at 10 a.m.  
 DCFS 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago

**YOUTH CAMPUS ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Contact: Johnna Adams at 312-243-0533  
 Meets the third Wednesday of every other month  
 Woodson Regional Library  
 9525 South Halsted, Chicago



*DCFS Cook South Foster Parent Advisory Council members meet monthly to go over changes to policy.*

# Cook Region Training Calendar

## Foster PRIDE In-Service Modules

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend PRIDE In-Service Training. Foster parents will receive training credit hours after completing the training. Licensing and child welfare staff are invited to attend the training if they inform the college of their attendance a week prior to the training.

**Call the DCFS Office of Training to Register  
877-800-3393**

### Cook North

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

**Chicago** **DCFS Office**  
**1911 S. Indiana**  
June 23 & 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
June 30 (Sat)

### Cook South

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

**Harvey** **DCFS Office**  
**15115 Dixie Hwy.**  
June 16 & 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
June 18 6:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.  
(Sat & Mon)

**Module 5 - Supporting Relationships Between Children and their Birth Families**  
(9 training hours)

**Harvey** **DCFS Office**  
**15115 Dixie Hwy.**  
June 23 & 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
June 25 6:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.  
(Sat & Mon)

### Cook South

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

**Harvey** **DCFS Office**  
**15115 Dixie Hwy.**  
June 5, 7 & 12 6:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.  
(Sat & Mon)

**Module 7 - Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity**  
(6 training hours)

**Harvey** **DCFS Office**  
**15115 Dixie Hwy.**  
June 30 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
(Sat)

**Module 8 - Promoting Permanency Outcomes**  
(9 training hours)

**Chicago** **DCFS Office**  
**6201 S. Emerald**  
June 4, 6 & 11 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.  
(Mon & Wed)

**Module 9 - Managing the Impact of Placement on Your Family**  
(6 training hours)

**Matteson** **Aunt Martha's**  
June 12 & 14 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.  
(Tue & Thu)

## 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.

**Call the DCFS Office of Training to Register  
877-800-3393**

### Cook Central

**Chicago** **Association House**  
**(Spanish)**  
June 16 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
(Sat)

### Cook South

**Chicago** **DCFS Office**  
**6201 S. Emerald**  
June 4 & 6 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.  
(Mon & Wed)

**Harvey** **DCFS Office**  
**15115 Dixie Hwy.**  
June 2 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
(Sat)