

Cook Region students earn DCFS college scholarships

The 2009 DCFS Scholarship program sent 25 students, whose cases were served by programs in the Cook Region, to college with several added layers of support. The scholarship includes the waiver of tuition and mandatory fees at one of the nine Illinois state universities and Illinois junior colleges, 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.



Jasmine Agnew

Jasmine is a 2008 graduate of Hyde Park Career Academy where she earned a 3.3 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. She is a member of National Honor Society. While in high school she participated on the Debate Team, in the Upward Bound Program, the Peer Jury Program, and served as the Cheerleading Manager. Jasmine completed several volunteer activities with her church and the Board of Elections, and was employed as a Peer Tutor at Hyde Park Academy. Jasmine is in her second year at Northern Illinois University. She plans to pursue a career in law with a major in psychology.

Alaina Barnes

Alaina graduated from Ridgeway High School in Memphis, Tennessee. She earned a 3.8 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was recognized for the Distinguished Honor Roll and Honor Roll. In high school she participated in the Honor Choir and Leadership Club. Alaina's volunteer activities included preparing Thanksgiving food baskets and gathering toys for the Toys for Tots program. She also was employed at the Chick-Fil-A as a team member and cashier. Alaina attends the University of Memphis and plans to major in nursing.



Leslie Baske

Leslie, of Orland Hills, is a 2008 graduate of Victor J. Andrew High School where she earned a 3.134 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. She earned the Prairie State Achievement Award for writing, was named to the Honor Roll, and achieved perfect attendance in high school. Additionally, she participated in the marching band, drumline, winter percussion, concert band, symphonic band, and wind symphony. She was awarded the Best Senior Marcher honor. Outside of school, Leslie volunteered at her church as a Faith Companion and helped with games at Girl Scouts of America. She also wrote a column for the Southtown Economist Star focusing on her high school's news and issues. Leslie completed her freshman year at Moraine Valley Community College and is now studying at Illinois State University.



Karyn Burns

Karyn, of Blue Island, is a 2008 graduate of Eisenhower High School where she earned a 3.75 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. In high school she participated in Cheerleading, Teen Court, the Spring Musical, the African-American Cultural Awareness Step Team, and Future Teachers of America. Additionally,

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she earned admission to the National Honor's Society, Who's Who Among American High School Students, and the Tri-Musical Honors Society. Karyn completed her freshman year at Illinois State University with a 3.1 grade point average. She returns to ISU to major in Special Education, with a specialization in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.



Ruby Dominguez

Ruby, of Burbank, graduated from Reavis High School where she earned a 3.3 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. While in high school, Ruby participated in the Environmental Club, Student Council, Fiber Arts Club, Blueprint school newspaper, International Club, Art Club, and soccer. Ruby was also nominated for the Triple "A" (Activities, Athletics, and Academics) Student of the Month award and volunteered her time to the community service project at her local library. Ruby completed a Certified Nurse's Assistant program at Moraine Valley Community College as part of a dual credit program while still in high school. Now she is a student at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where she is pursuing a nursing degree.



Carmelita Duncan-Taylor

Carmelita, from South Holland, is a graduate of Seton Academy where she earned a 3.68 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. During high school Carmelita participated in Art Club, Youth and Government Club, Prom Committee, SADD, and the Peer Ministry. She was a member of the National Honor Society and the National English Honor Society. She received numerous English and Math awards and was on the Dean's List for three consecutive years. As a volunteer, Carmelita assisted with the school Math-a-Thon and freshman orientation. She is studying at the University of Missouri to pursue a nursing degree.



Evelyn Harder

Evelyn, of Oak Lawn, graduated from Richards High School where she earned a 3.28 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. While in high school, Evelyn participated in the Choir, Drama Club, Environmental Club, and the yearbook staff. She was a member of the District Honors Choir, was named to the Honor Roll, and received a Certificate of Musical Achievement. Evelyn volunteered at her church to help with Vacation Bible School. She attends St. Xavier University and majors in English.



Keithan Hedrick

Keithan, from Markham, is a graduate of Bremen High School where he earned a 4.41 grade point average on a 5.0 scale. In high school, Keithan consistently made Honor Roll and was selected to be a member of the National Honor Society. He participated in the African-American Culture Organization, basketball, and track. Keithan received many honors and awards for his performance on the football team, for which he was also named Captain of the team for two years. Keithan's volunteer activities included participating in Mayor Daley's Sports Clinic, reading books to local grade school children, and serving with the Country Club Hills Youth Foundation Football Team. Keithan is a student at Eastern Illinois University with plans to pursue a degree in either business or sports management.

Olivia Hoving

Olivia, from Elk Grove Village, graduated from Conant High School where she earned a 3.83 grade point average on a 5.0 scale. She was a member of the National Honor Society, peer mediation, track, swim team and junior class council. Olivia is active in her church and participated in numerous outreach activities, including volunteering at Pacific Garden Mission. She also was employed in customer service at David's Bridal. Now Olivia attends the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she is majoring in communications.



Breanne Jackson

Breanne, from Hawthorn Woods, is a 2009 graduate of Adlai E. Stevenson High School where she earned a 3.42 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. While in high school, she was a mentor to freshman students, and she participated on the synchronized ice skating team, Lady Jazz acapella group, hip-hop club, ski and snowboard club, and in school musicals. As a competitive ice skater, she won many medals and is a member of the Chicago Jazz Figure Skating Team. Breanne also maintained employment at Chuck E. Cheese as a birthday host. Breanne is studying vocal performance at the McNally Smith School of Music at St. Paul, Minnesota.



Regina Krenz

Regina is from Elgin. She graduated in 2009 from Larkin High School, where she earned a 3.975 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was ranked 42nd in a class of 507 students. While in high school, she was a member of the Spanish Language Honor Society and the girl's varsity golf team. She was also a recipient of the Volunteer Service Award from the Dundee Evergreen VFW Post. Additional volunteer service included: Salvation Army Bell Ringer, Habitat for Humanity and Katrina Relief Housing Renovation. Regina is a student at the University of Illinois at Chicago, majoring in accounting.



Ashley Jefferson

Ashley, of West Chicago, graduated from Community District High School where she earned a 2.8 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. She was an honor roll student, a member of the Student Council, Photo club, Yearbook Staff, Varsity Cheerleading, Steppers, Rotary Youth, CORPS, and was recognized as a 4 year athlete-scholar. Ashley is was active in her community, serving the West Chicago Park District as a swimming instructor and volunteering with the Wheaton Christian Center, the State Farm Insurance Chicago inner-city clean-up, and the Carol Stream Outreach Center. Ashley is now a student at Western Illinois University, pursuing a major in pre-physical therapy.



Devion McArthur

Devion, of Dolton, is a graduate of Thornridge High School where he earned a 3.5 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was ranked 55th in a class of 399 students. He is a member of the International Thespian Society and participated on both the Speech Team and National Forensics League. Devion is the 2008 IHSA State Champion in Drama and earned medals for Dramatic Duet Acting and Dramatic Interpretation at the State Championship level. Devion is now studying acting at Rutgers University.



Torian Knox

Torian, of Posen, is a 2009 graduate of Bremen High School where she earned a 3.6 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and was ranked 35th in a class of 287 students. She was a member of the National Honor Society and was on the honor roll throughout high school. She was a member of the Key Club, Energy Club, and Bremen's African-American Cultural Organization. Torian did volunteer work with the Chicago Food Depository and as a math tutor for an after school program. Torian attends the University of Illinois at Chicago, majoring in nursing.



Nathan Miranda

Nathan, formerly from Richton Park, graduated from Olive Branch High School in Mississippi, where he earned a 3.8 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. He is a member of the National Honor Society, Mu Alpha Theta (National Mathematics Honor Society) and the International Thespian Society. Nathan received numerous awards which include: North Mississippi Theatre Alliance for Best Performance by a Young Actor for his performance in the "The King and I," and the First Tennessee Bank Academic All-Star Award. He was a member of his high school power lifting team and competed in the State Finals for his weight class. Nathan also stayed active in his community and participated in numerous projects benefiting the Leukemia Society, YMCA, Ronald McDonald House,



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and the Memphis Botanic Gardens. Nathan attends Southern Illinois University at Carbondale to major in theatre and pre-law.



Richard Paduch

Richard is a 2009 graduate of Elmwood Park High School where he earned a 2.8 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. He stayed active with his church as a member of the Youth Group, assisting with volunteer activities and also serving as a Eucharistic Minister. He is the recipient of the Vicariate IV Youth Leadership Award for his contributions to his church. While in high school, Richard was active in student government, played with the rugby club and was on the sophomore baseball team. He also maintained part-time employment at Jewel Foods. Richard is now a student at Eastern Illinois University, majoring in mass communications.



Mariah Pierce

Mariah, of Chicago, graduated from St. Ignatius College Prep, where she earned a 3.4 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. She was chosen to be a member of the National Honor Society and the Spanish Honor Society and was also a competitor for her high school team on the television quiz show, "Know Your Heritage." She was president of the gospel choir, participated in the pep band her senior year, and was an intern/mentor for junior high students in the St. Ignatius Higher Achievement Program. Mariah is attends the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she is studying Chemistry/Pharmaceutical Studies.



Derrius Quarles

Derrius, of Chicago, is a 2009 graduate of Kenwood Academy High School where he earned a 4.2 grade point average on a 4.0 scale, and achieved the score of 28 on his ACT exam. He received the Most Talented Science Student Award, was a member of the National Honor Society and was published in the Who's Who Among High School

Students for the 2006-2007 school year. He received the Chicago Bulls Sprite MVP Award, which is given to the top 50 African-American males in Chicago Public Schools; and was honored as an ISAC State Scholar. He participated in a 10 week bio-chemistry internship with the Rush University Medical Center completing research projects and did an oncology research internship with Northwestern Memorial Hospital. Derrius is now attending Morehouse College to study biology and pre-medicine and pursue a degree in Pediatric Medicine.

Christopher Ricely

Christopher, from Lombard, graduated from Glenbard East High School, where he earned a 4.37 grade point average on a 5.0 scale. Chris was a member of the National Honor Society, Mathematics Honor Society and Glenbard East Marching band as a clarinet player, where he served as a band section leader. He was involved in the Glenbard Big Brother/Big Sister mentor program to help new students adjust to high school. Outside of school, he stayed actively involved in his community, including volunteering for the annual elderly yard clean-up. Christopher was also employed as a cashier at Jewel. He is a student at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale studying biology, with plans to pursue a career as an orthodontist.



Jewel Robinson

Jewel is a 2009 graduate of Marion Catholic High School where she earned a 2.95 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and scored a 24 on the ACT. Jewel took on many leadership roles in her high school and community. She was a member of the Marion Catholic marching and concert bands. She founded the Pure Love Club and the Culture Club, which promote self-respect and cultural diversity. She was also a teacher and mentor at the Aunt Martha's Head Start Program. She is attending Northern Illinois University, pursuing a career as a pediatrician.



Jason Silver

Jason is a 2009 graduate of Murphysboro High School, where he earned a 3.53 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. Jason has earned a black belt in Tae Kwon Do. He was a member of the Key Club and marching band in high school. He volunteered at the local nursing home, Annual Apple Festival, and at the Free Again Organization, which rescues wild animals. He was also a loyal employee of Annie Mae's Restaurant. Jason worked in the high school's automotive shop, inspiring him to pursue a career in auto mechanics, custom fabrication and a degree in mechanical engineering. Jason is attending the College of Lake County.



Justin Vlaovic

Justin is a 2009 graduate of Wauconda High School where he earned a 3.5 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. Justin was an active member of his community where he was the co-founder of the Peace Organization, and volunteered for the Pet Adoption program and the Wauconda Food Pantry. He was involved with The Chapel Church food drives and was employed by Wauconda Health Care as a Dietary Assistant at the Senior Assisted Living Clinic. Justin is studying at the University of Illinois at Chicago with plans to major in biology and chemistry.



Katherine Swanberg

Katherine, from Burr Ridge is a 2009 graduate of Nazareth Academy where she earned a 3.6 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and scored a 26 on her ACT exam. She was a member of the State Champion Dance and Pom team, served as secretary for the Pre-Med Club, and performed for chorus and Pom/Dance at Disney World. She received the Nazareth Academy Road Runners Senior Scholar Athlete Award. She was an active volunteer at the St. Thomas of Canterbury Soup Kitchen and worked at the Hinsdale Pool. Katherine is now a student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, preparing for a career in medicine and biological sciences.



Ashaunti Wills

Ashaunti, of Calumet City, graduated from Morgan Park High School where she earned a 3.75 grade point average on a 4.0 scale and scored a 21 on the ACT exam. She was a member of the Student Development Leadership Team, the American Red Cross Club, and Senior Mentors. She was an active volunteer at the Roseland Christian Ministries' Homeless Shelter, South Side Help Center, Lemuel Austin Youth Foundation, Peace Institute Program, and Chicagoland Christian Center. Ashaunti is a student at Illinois State University and is majoring in elementary education.



Melissa Taylor

Melissa, of Countryside, graduated from Lyons Township High School where she earned a 3.4 grade point average on a 4.0 scale, and was ranked in the top 30% of a class of more than 900 students. She scored a 30 on her ACT exam. She was on the honor roll for four years, earned first place awards for Solo/Ensemble Clarinet her sophomore and junior years, and participated in the Symphonic/Marching Band and Rock Climbing Club. She also earned the Spanish Merit Award and recognition as an Illinois State Scholar. Melissa now studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with plans for a career in environmental science.

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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.

Special needs rec programs in Cook North suburbs

There are 28 Special Recreation Associations (SRA's) in Illinois, mostly in suburban areas near Chicago. These agencies provide year-round recreation programs for individuals of all ages with disabilities. Children with developmental disabilities, behavior disorders, sensory impairments and other special education needs are eligible for services. Working as an extension of suburban park districts and area village recreation departments, the agencies each offer a variety of seasonal activities.

Special Recreation Associations are staffed by professionals with degrees in therapeutic recreation. Individualized assistance is offered, adapted equipment is provided and small class sizes insure success. Programs include social clubs, fitness programs, excursions, day camps, Special Olympic teams, athletics, and a variety of other activities. Accessible transportation is often available.

Families who live in the suburban areas of the Cook North Region can seek services for children with special needs from these agencies:

- **Maine-Niles Association of Special Recreation**
6820 W. Dempster
Morton Grove
847-966-5522
www.mnasr.org
- **Northwest Special Recreation Association (NWSRA)**
3000 W. Central Rd., Suite 205
Rolling Meadows
847-932-2870
www.nwsra.org

Cook South meets re-accreditation standards

Congratulations are due to Cook South foster parents and staff as the region celebrates its re-accreditation by the Council on Accreditation (COA).

Caregivers played an integral role in demonstrating that the region lives up to the high standards, not just on paper files, but also in everyday practices with children and families. Foster parents served on the committees that wrote the Foster Parent Law Compliance Document. Some were interviewed by the COA review committee. Betty Johnson opened up her home for a tour and allowed the review team to interview her family. Lula Beck, Marilyn Marks and Donald and Sulan Dears also made time for interviews. The reviewers complimented all of the caregivers and were very impressed with the high caliber of their work with children.

They also took note of the high level of participation in conferences, support groups, and the Advisory Council as a testament to the commitment of caregivers in the region. In light of all the ACRs, staffings and other duties that caregivers fulfill, they can find special satisfaction in knowing that the DCFS foster care program in Cook South passed the accreditation test.

Michael Byrd, Regional Administrator, said that the reviewers consider "Illinois to be leaders in the country as a child welfare agency." He saw the arduous reaccreditation process as an opportunity "to show off our work and show that our work is worthy of being validated."

Director Erwin McEwen summed it up in three words. "Wonderful, wonderful and wonderful!"

Cook South RA leaves to head SOS Villages

Michael Byrd, the Regional Administrator for the Cook South Region, announced that he will be leaving DCFS effective September 11. Byrd led the region since 2005 after serving in the DCFS Office of External Affairs. As RA, he worked closely with caregivers, regularly attending the support groups and advisory council meetings at the Emerald and Harvey offices. He was especially accessible and responsive, and he faced most challenges with a positive and often inspirational approach.

"The special people in Cook South made leaving a difficult decision, but

the time was right for me to take on a new challenge," said Byrd.

Even though he is leaving DCFS, he will not be leaving child welfare. Byrd is now the new Chief Operating Officer at SOS Villages, a foster care program that focuses on reunification while caregivers and parents live on-site in agency-managed "communities."

Arrangements about how the Regional Administrator role will be filled in the interim are forthcoming and will be announced within the region.



Low or no cost health options in Cook Central's Humboldt Park area

The following organizations offer free or low cost programs for improving health and wellness of families living in the Humboldt Park Community.

Association House, 1116 N. Kedzie, 773-772-7170, www.associationhouse.org, offers the Healthy Lifestyles Program, which facilitates bilingual health and nutrition presentations for groups and organizations.

The Carroll Care Center, 3334 W. Carroll Ave, 773-823-1116, www.carrollcarecenter.com, offers Movie Teen Night, Youth Boxing, Praise and Hip Hop Dance Class, Entrepreneurial and Non-Violence work shops.

Chicago Park District: Humboldt Park Field House, 1440 N. Sacramento Ave, 312-742-7549, has a low cost

Fitness Center, seasonal sports and fitness programs. Sign up on line or in person. Smith Park Field House, 2526 W Grand Ave, 312-742-7534, has sports and fitness classes. Sign up on line or in person. For more information on these programs visit, www.chicagoparkdistrict.com.

Clemente High School Pool, 2334 W. Division, 312-742-7538, www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/resources/pool-schedules/, has an indoor pool that is open to the public.

Community Health Clinic, 2611 W. Chicago Ave, 773-395-9900 ext. 19. Call Anna Blankenberger, Health Education Coordinator, to enroll in the free classes in smoking cessation, nutrition, exercise, and healthy mind and body programs.

This clinic is the largest free health clinic for the uninsured in Illinois. www.communityhealth.org.

Kelly Hall YMCA, 824 N. Hamlin, 773-886-1220, has an after school program, fitness center, youth sports, senior program, and free family nights.

McCormick Tribune YMCA, 1834 N. Lawndale, 773-235-2525, has a sliding scale for membership of households earning less than \$55,000 a year.

Union League Boys and Girls Clubs are open to youth from ages 6 to 18. Programs are offered at the Lafayette School Club, 2714 W. Augusta, 773-534-9576, and the Barreto Boys and Girls Club, 1214 N. Washtenaw, 773-772-2187.

Cook County regional recruiting councils target more foster parents

Last fall the DCFS regions launched a recruiting effort to identify more foster care resources in targeted areas. The goal was to build more resources in areas where more children enter the child welfare system. Since DCFS moved to a placement tracking system that maps children to their home school district, the councils can know where they need to find new homes.

Each DCFS region has established a recruiting council that develops a local recruitment strategy. The recruitment councils have the shared objective to increase the number of licensed and available foster care homes, particularly for older youth

and Spanish-speaking youth. They are targeting specific neighborhoods including Englewood, Humboldt Park, Woodlawn, and some suburban communities. These councils have been busy attending public events, reaching out to specific schools, and distributing literature at churches and other family gathering spots.

The DCFS Local Area Network (LAN) liaisons help the councils identify community events where potential caregivers would be. Casework staff, licensing staff, child protection staff from the investigation teams, and licensed foster parents all collaborate on the recruitment efforts. They will go out to events

as team to offer prospective foster parents a view of how rewarding foster care can be.

Current caregivers can offer the best testimony to convince others to consider foster care. To get involved in local recruitment efforts, caregivers can contact Adrienne Taylor at 708-210-3590. Those who know of individuals who have expressed an interest in foster care can refer them to their licensing agency or call 800-624-KIDS. Staff will follow-up with the leads and help them move through the licensing process.

Cook Region Caregiver Training

Foster PRIDE In-Service Modules

All caregivers are welcome to attend PRIDE In-Service Training. The descriptions below will allow you to decide which classes fit your family's needs or circumstances. Advance registration is required for all classes. In addition to the slate of classroom courses, caregivers can also take advantage of Digital Pride modules on CD and the full offering of Lending Library materials.

For the most up-to-date and complete schedule information for classes offered in your area, visit the on-line Virtual Training Center anytime at www.DCFStraining.org or call the DCFS Office of Training at 877-800-3393 during regular business hours.

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.

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

Module 3 & 4 - The Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse (9 training 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 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.

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.

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

In this training, caregivers learn how fostering children can affect family relationships and how to minimize stresses that can result. They also learn about the supports that are available.

Module 10 - Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children and Families (15 training hours)

Foster parents will study the risk factors for chemical use, abuse, and dependency and understand relapse and recovery and be able to acquire skills necessary to be an active member of the team to support recovery in birth parents.

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

This new 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 six-hour 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 when fostering teenagers in the day to day life of the foster family.

The Teen in Foster Care: Supporting Attachment (6 training hours)

Attachment and the Teen in Family Foster Care will help foster/adopt caregivers to understand how early attachment experiences have impacted the teen's development. The training covers the teen's perspective on how the accumulation of loss, separation and trauma impacts his or her beliefs, feelings, behaviors and relationships. Participants will learn specific tips for helping manage behaviors that develop over time from the teen's adaptive responses to trauma, grief and loss.

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.