

Dialogue

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
Spring 2003

A newsletter for and about DCFS employees
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Bryan Samuels, Director

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Who Make A
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Credits

DIALOGUE - A publication of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Dialogue welcomes your comments, articles and contributions. Please send them to the Office of Communications: 406 E. Monroe, Springfield, Illinois 62701 • Phone: 217-785-1700 • Fax: 217-524-0014 • DCFS website: www.state.il.us/dcfs

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2003 Child Abuse Prevention Month Awards

Prevent Child Abuse Illinois teamed up with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services to provide statewide leadership for the Illinois Child Abuse Prevention Month (April) Campaign. The campaign features a kick-off media event where “Program Excellence Awards” and a “Blue Ribbon Campaign Award” was presented.

Six programs were selected from various DCFS regions to receive special recognition at the 2003 kick-off media conference for Child Abuse Prevention Month on March 25, 2003, at the State Capitol Rotunda in Springfield. Regional selection committees were established throughout the state including DCFS staff, PCA Illinois staff and local representation from schools of social work. The criteria for the “Program Excellence Award” includes: the program must serve Illinois children, be an exemplary child abuse prevention program, exemplify family-focused and community-based ideals, include collaboration with other family service organizations, be in existence for three or more years and be a not-for-profit organization.

One community blue ribbon campaign committee was also selected to receive special recognition at the 2003 kick-off media conference. The purpose of the “Blue Ribbon Campaign” award is to encourage continuation and development of local community blue ribbon campaigns throughout the state by recognizing an exemplary community campaign. Selection of the award recipient was the responsibility of Prevent Child Abuse Illinois. Several of the award criteria include: the

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(Left to Right) PCAI Executive Director Roy Harley; Pediatric Resource Center staff clerk Jodie Fordham; Advisory Board President Tim Krueger; Administrative Secretary Sue Weiss; Representative Dave Leitch; Executive Director Linda Simkins; and Senator Dale E. Risinger

The Peoria Blue Ribbon Campaign has been in existence for several years and includes a collaboration of agencies, organizations, staff and volunteers from the Pediatric Resource Center, Peoria Medical Society Alliance, Peoria Local Area Network, Tri-County Child Abuse Prevention Council, Stark victim-witness advocate, PRC board members, Squeeky Clean Laundromat, Maui Jim's, private citizens and others. The Peoria Blue Ribbon Campaign serves various communities in a 10-county area.

2003 Child Abuse Prevention Month Awards



(Left to Right) Board member Dr. Amy Luke; Gymnastics Coach Ernie Bauman; President Lois Bauman; Senator Kimberly A. Lightford; and PCAI Executive Director Roy Harley

The Maywood Fine Arts Association was established in 1996. Their mission is to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which children throughout the western Cook suburban area can develop skills and appreciation of the arts that will enable them to succeed academically and socially.



(Left to Right) Director of Development Jodi Doane; Case Manager Anne Huffman; HomeWorks Director Robert Thurman; Chief Operating Officer Diane Scruggs; and PCAI Executive Director Roy Harley

HomeWorks has served families at risk of child welfare system involvement and families needing additional supports to maintain a safe home environment since August, 1996. HomeWorks is a free, voluntary program that works with families in the Edgewater, Uptown, Rogers Park, Lincoln Square, Ravenswood, Horner Park and Lakeview communities.



(Left to Right) Board President Harold Spooone; Executive Director Elouise Spencer; Program Director Sharon Newton; Senator Jacqueline Y. Collins; Representative Charles G. Morrow III; and PCAI Executive Director Roy Harley

WellSpring Center for Hope is an agency dedicated to the victims of domestic violence in the Englewood community. Its mission is to help abused and battered women and their children move out of poverty into self-sufficiency in a safe and stable environment.

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campaign must serve an Illinois community, it must involve partners, include distribution of blue ribbons and include one or more special features/events.

2003 Child Abuse Prevention Month Awards



(Left to Right) Representative Randall M. Hultgren; Liaison Patricia Luster; Secretary Cathy Moe; Administrator of Psychological Services Angela Zoloto and PCAI Executive Director Roy Harley.

The first community resource center, The DuPage Prevention Partnership, opened its doors in 1998 to serve children ages 5-18 in high-risk neighborhoods and schools. Today there are 27 centers in DuPage County, providing services to 50-60 children per day. Successes include a decreased juvenile crime rate, stronger commitment to complete education, increased sense of community and providing a safe haven for kids.



(Left to Right) Educator Kim Kliment; Assistant Director Christine Lindsey; Director Jonna Cooley; and PCAI Executive Director Roy Harley

The Sangamon County Child Advocacy Center believes that education is the key to reducing the risk of child sexual abuse, and it is their goal to prevent sexual abuse from continuing. The Center developed programs for children in Pre-K through 6th grade which focus on the concept that "No one should touch the private parts of your body except to keep you clean or healthy." The importance of telling an adult if anyone breaks the safety rule is a key component to the program. Prevention education is offered to every public and private school in Sangamon County at no charge.



The Lutheran Child and Family Services' Family Support Program is a proactive deflection effort that began in 1995. It is an intensive, in-home, educational skills training and counseling program for families with children ages 0-5. Families are then linked to a mentor who provides continued support to the family for a minimum of one year of follow-up. The program serves approximately 275 families.

(Left to Right) Representative Dan Reitz; Home-based Specialist Frances McKinstry; Mentor/Trainer Rosette Clay; Supervisor Becky Springston; CEO Gene Svebakken; and PCAI Executive Director Roy Harley

White House Invitation Highlights 30 Years as Foster Parent



Adrienne Welenc Meets the President of the United States

by John Hamm

Chicago foster parents Adrienne and Jerry Welenc weren't surprised when the President of the United States called their names in front of a national television audience and asked them to stand up as examples of volunteers who made America strong. After all, only hours earlier, the couple had spent private time with President Bush chatting about child welfare issues, joking how the White House would make an excellent foster home. Adrienne, a DCFS Lead Foster Parent Support Specialist, even received a Presidential peck on the cheek.

"We were representing foster parents all over the country who've opened their homes to help children,"

said Adrienne Welenc, noting that the President's May 2002 Chicago visit coincided with National Foster Care Month. In addition to a private morning meeting at Meigs Field, the Welencs, who have raised two biological children, six adopted children and more than 90 foster children, were also honored at a noontime event that focused on welfare-to-work success stories and the importance of volunteers in solving local problems.

Nearly a year later, Welenc reflected that the life of a DCFS Lead Foster Parent Support Specialist is not always so glamorous. However, she added, "at national conferences, we have workers from other states ask us about what we do (because the program is so unique).

They think it's great."

In the early 1980s, the Department began hiring experienced foster parents to provide an array of support services for other foster parents. "It was almost a clean-up effort when we started in 1982," remembered Welenc, who was among the first supervisors hired to oversee other Foster Parent Support Specialists. "We've changed as the Department and its policies have changed, and we've evolved to the point where workers are coming to us for help, as well as the foster parents."

Welenc and other contracted Foster Parent Support Specialists throughout Illinois work up to 160 hours each month, adjusting their schedules in response to changing needs. "We help

Welenc Meets the President

foster parents navigate through the bureaucracy, and we're available to help them handle a crisis in the middle of the night, like when a teenager shows up high or drunk," explained Welenc. "We're not there to take a caseworker's place, but sometimes people just need a bridge to smooth out the rough waters."

Noting that a majority of the six Specialists working with her have at least 20 years of experience, Welenc boasted that "We probably know more about the Department than anybody. We can tell foster parents what to expect in juvenile court, or during an investigation involving their homes. We can also help find medical providers, track late payments and explain how their foster children can apply for DCFS scholarships."

Welenc added that Specialists also collect donations of toys, books and food that caseworkers for intact families and DCP teams can bring when they visit client families. "It helps (relieve tension) when workers can bring something to families when they go out. Kids are kids; they always enjoy getting something. We've even had grandmothers cry, because they had enough gifts to wrap at Christmastime. We try to help with a lot of constructive things people need."

"Foster Parent Support Specialists are people who feel they can make a difference," concluded Welenc. "Because of their work, there are drastically fewer calls being made to the administration by foster parents with complaints."

However, it was the Welenc family's 30+ year commitment as foster parents that caught the notice of President Bush that cold weekday morning. Sitting inside the cavernous two million square foot UPS Sorting Center, the Welencs listened intently to the familiar Texas drawl.

"Today," said President Bush, "I had the honor of meeting Adrienne and Jerry Welenc. Would you all stand up for a second, please? These good folks -- hold on, don't applaud yet, until you hear what they've done. They have fostered over 90 children over the last 35 years. (Applause.) These good Americans didn't need a law, they didn't need a government telling them what to do. They decided to love a neighbor just like they wanted to be loved themselves. These good Americans asked the question, what could they do to save one person's life. If you want to join the war on terror, help somebody in need."

"That was pretty exciting," said Jerry. "He even pronounced my name right." The Chicago area pharmacist, who a decade earlier cut back his work hours to devote more time to foster care advisory groups and a DCFS task force, said that that he was awed by the President's personal style and genuine concern for children. "He's a pretty impressive,

very warm, gutsy guy," said Jerry. "He's very aware of people, what they do, and he does his homework."

Adrienne found the President even more impressive at Meigs Field. After more than an hour of wading through onsite security checks of their car and themselves and waiting for President Bush to appear, they caught site of four Sikorsky VH-3D Marine helicopters looming in the distance. One helicopter carried the Presidential limousine, another the President, while others delivered members of his security detail.

"It looked like a movie," recalled Adrienne. Finally, after greeting Chicago Mayor Richard Daley and other dignitaries, President Bush strolled to the spot where secret service agents instructed the Welencs to wait. "We talked with the President for 10 or 15 minutes. I asked him about becoming a foster parent, because the White House and his ranch offered some nice rooms for foster children to stay in," she laughed. "We also told him that foster children, especially older teens about to age out of the system, need extra support."

President Bush was likely aware from background briefings provided by DCFS and White House staff that the Welencs spoke from years of experience. Jerry Welenc is the vice chair of the Cook Central Foster Parents Advisory Council and a former member of the Statewide Foster Parent Advisory Council. He also co-chaired a Best Practice task force with Deputy Director Jerry Slomka. Adrienne currently sits on the Statewide Foster Parent Advisory Council and works closely with the Statewide Youth Advisory Board.

After the private meeting, the President's address and multiple interviews with reporters, the Welencs were quietly driven back to the Meigs Field parking lot by a UPS executive. "It was a really strange day, having people coming at you from all different directions," remembered Adrienne. Although her daily schedule as a Lead Foster Family Support Specialist was busy, the intense attention of that day felt happily draining. Jerry also felt relief, as they returned to their usual routines later that afternoon.

Jerry chuckled that "Adrienne went back to work and I fixed a toilet." However, both considered their moment in the national spotlight as part of an ongoing, 33-year-old commitment. "We made a promise years ago to help children, and 90 some children later, we're still at it," said Jerry. So it was no small wonder that when asked by the White House to help select a family who could represent foster families throughout Illinois – and the nation – Adrienne and Jerry Welenc rose to the top of the list.

"We were representing foster parents all over the country who've opened their homes to help children."

**Foster parent
Adrienne Welenc**

From Fostering To Family

by Marjorie Newman

Fred and Chris Tippit hadn't thought about being foster parents. With eight children of their own, their home already felt quite complete. But the couple living in rural Findlay found themselves faced with a challenge that would change their lives forever.

"I had one 13-year-old student who would hardly ever come to school due to her home situation," said Chris Tippit, a special education teacher. "It took three months to get her to come to school regularly, and then DCFS came and placed her in foster care. I was so angry because all the work I had done was now useless. I contacted the caseworker and told him how unhappy I was and how now the girl would have to start all over again. The caseworker said, 'maybe you should become a foster parent, and then I could place her with you.' So we did."

That was in 1985. Since then, the Tippits have fostered at least 42 children, ranging from 18-months to 19-years-old. Approximately 10 of their foster children were special needs children. They currently have two children placed in their home.

Early in the licensing process, the Tippits felt frustration with repeated delays. "We made the phone call and completed the paperwork," said Chris. "But then our paperwork either just sat for almost a year or got lost, because no one called us. Amazingly," she said, "the same caseworker who challenged me to become a foster parent called one day regarding the same student I worked so hard to get into school that previous year. I explained how we had been at a standstill, and then he made a few phone calls. Soon afterwards, we got our license and the child was placed with us until she graduated from high school."

Chris' husband, Fred, was very accepting about the challenges of being a foster parent. He said helping others out is what people are supposed to do. "Chris and I both come from

The Tippit
Family Still
Growing

From Fostering To Family

big families, and with the eight kids I thought ‘one more won’t hurt’. Our next placement was a sibling group, and the list continues to today.”

Adding to the family was never a problem for the Tippits. Once they knew another foster child was asked to become part of their family, a family meeting would be held. All of the biological or foster children living in the home were allowed to ask questions about the child, and then they would vote. Chris admitted there is potential for problems when people are brought into a home, whether it’s your own mother or a foster child, so the meetings were held to alleviate any issues before a placement.

“The children never voted ‘no’ to an incoming child,” said Chris. “If anyone sounded as though they were not sure, one of the other children would say, ‘you guys gave me a chance, so we should give this kid a chance, too’.”

“I say try to raise these kids the way you were brought up,” noted Fred. “Chris and I had good parents and I know some people weren’t as fortunate to have good parents and a good home. But to that I say, treat these children the way you would have wanted to be treated when you were a child.”

Every foster parent points to different challenges of fostering. According to Chris, one challenge is finding out everything you need to know about the child, so you can communicate with them and give them what they need. Another challenge is finding where they are socially and then teaching them what is or isn’t acceptable in public.

“There was one child placed in our home who went with us to visit someone in the hospital. He just couldn’t handle it. He looked into patients’ rooms. He wanted to touch everything and ask questions, but it was because he had never visited someone in the hospital and just didn’t know how to act,” she explained.

Chris noted that she doesn’t want people to think that fostering produces only negative emotions, nor does it always produce positive emotions. She said the longer a person fosters, the more emotions they will encounter. She added that the number of people a foster parent can share with is limited because of confidentiality requirements and the availability of people who would understand.

“We wouldn’t be able to do this without a solid faith in God and a supportive church family,” admitted Chris. “Being involved in the church has really helped us. Fred is my right hand, but our foundation is our faith.”

It is not only clear this couple relies on their faith and church, they also show an appreciation and respect for each other’s role in this extended family situation.

“Chris is a great person to go in every day and be a teacher all day long, and then come home to continue to be a teacher in the evenings,” said Fred. “She’s really helped a lot of children, as well as continually being my angel.”

Chris and Fred agree that foster parents need to hang in

there when circumstances seem overwhelming. They suggested that foster parents should seek a support group that can identify with their frustrations or issues, to always remind themselves why they became foster parents, and to remember that foster parents are needed and valued.

The Tippits continue to maintain relationships with most of the children they have fostered. Some have moved out-of-state, while others nearby stop for a visit. Fred and Chris have a big family reunion the second weekend in July. The reunion started with Fred’s side of the family, but many of their foster children return to participate in the annual event. “They are always welcome home,” said Chris.

“I say try to raise these kids the way you were brought up. (Wife) Chris and I had good parents and I know some people weren’t as fortunate to have good parents and a good home. But to that I say, treat these children the way you would have wanted to be treated when you were a child.”

**Foster Parent
Fred Tippit**

500 Foster Children and Counting...

A Foster Parent Reflects on 16 Years of Caring For Difficult-To-Place Children

by Kim Broome

As foster parents go, Cyd Runde is somewhat of a rarity: she will care for any child in need, regardless of his or her age, race or special needs. Runde has fostered more than 500 children over the past 16 years. Many of the children, whose ages range from infants to 19-year-olds, have a myriad of behavioral and medical challenges that land them in the “difficult-to-place” category. But Runde is not afraid to get involved, often with limited notice.

“I have fostered children with behavioral issues, such as Reactive Attachment Disorder, as well as those with various medical conditions, such as heart problems and chronic asthma,” said Runde.

Runde has often been called upon to provide respite care to families. She has also provided emergency placements, like the time a young child was

left in the care of a babysitter while his mother who is a trucker, traveled to California. The babysitter died while the child was in her care and the mother was a two-day drive from home. Runde was there to take care of the child and make him feel safe, until he was reunited with his mother.

Runde, a former police officer, has worked at DCFS for the past six years as a special project coordinator in the Aurora Regional Office. Her current assignment is to work with DCFS staff and foster children who have been negatively labeled, resulting in difficulty in finding or maintaining placements. Runde takes the needed time to get to know the children and, in most cases, learns that they are just children who have had some problems but deserve a second chance. Runde also works with



Foster Parent Cyd Runde

potential foster parents to help them understand the particular needs of each child, while highlighting their assets.

Because of Runde’s DCFS employee status, her placements have been handled through Our Children’s Homestead, a Naperville private child welfare agency specializing in treatment foster care and adoption. CEO Bob Geniesse, who has worked with Runde for many years, said he is impressed with her willingness and ability to advocate for children, regardless of their needs.

“Of all the foster parents I’ve worked with over the years, Cyd Runde stands out.”

**Our Children’s Homestead
CEO Bob Geniesse**

500 Foster Children and Counting...

“Of all the foster parents I’ve worked with over the years, Cyd Runde stands out,” said Geniesse. “She believes strongly in giving kids a second chance by doing whatever it takes to help normalize their lives. She is also a great resource for other foster parents.”

In the past, Runde has provided DCFS workers input about the type of permanent home a child placed in her care would thrive in best. This advice was frequently valuable, because Runde’s experience as a long-time foster parent has given her a unique insight regarding the needs of foster children.

“Early on, the (child welfare) system was not necessarily foster parent friendly,” stated Runde. “Some of the policies and procedures were just not all that helpful. For example, there were instances where it would take weeks just to find out my worker’s name or to get immunization cards for the kids—these were very basic requests.”

As a result of her early experiences, Runde founded a local foster parent association, which she previously served as its chairperson. In that role, she observed that some foster parents felt alienated from the system. Runde reasoned that true change would have to occur at the state level, so she began testifying before the state legislature on behalf of Illinois’ foster parents.

“It was a very humbling and exciting experience to help get laws passed, to follow a law from its conception to inception,” said Runde. “On several occasions, I was at the actual bill signing with Governor Edgar, and that was very rewarding.”

Today we have systems in place that support and encourage foster parents to care for children who are in desperate need of families. Runde hopes that her work has made a small contribution to the progress.

Runde, who is a cancer survivor, has two biological children and one adopted son. She also has two foster children, ages 16 and 18, who have

stepped down from a residential treatment facility. Her family has been very supportive of her foster care involvement. In fact, when Runde decided to take a break from foster parenting a few years ago, it was her adopted son who convinced her to take in another child.

“My son, John, had a friend who

“It was a very humbling and exciting experience to help get laws passed, to follow a law from its conception to inception. On several occasions, I was at the actual bill signing with Governor Edgar, and that was very rewarding.”

**Foster Parent
Cyd Runde**

needed a place to stay, and John said to me, ‘It’s not fair that there are so many kids who don’t have families of their own’,” reflected Runde. Runde has often told this story to her children to partially explain her motivation for becoming a foster parent.

In addition to providing a loving home to foster children, Runde’s biological children consider many of their foster siblings to be blood relatives. They call each other for rides, loans, or just to talk, just as any siblings would.

Runde noted that the experience has taught her family, including her foster children, a lot about human nature.

“There have been some instances where a placement was just not working and we all had to sit down and work through it together,” said Runde. “Sort of like a ‘no fault divorce’ where we would agree that the child is a still a wonderful child, just not necessarily a good fit for our family. We would discuss their transition, and it taught us how to disagree the right way.”

There are many other challenges associated with caring for children with such diverse needs. Runde often has to maneuver her schedule to accommodate a variety of doctor appointments, counseling and therapy sessions, school functions and other activities. “At one point, I was taking a different child to therapy Monday through Thursday and on Friday, yet another child had asthma clinic sessions,” remembered Runde. “I had become a full-time taxi service.”

To help new foster parents prepare for the challenges ahead, Runde offers the following advice. “First, document all activities and keep good records. Second, really talk to the kids and listen to what they need from you—not what you think they need. Third, work as a team with social workers and let them know what you are going through. If you are tired or frustrated—tell them. Finally, get involved with foster parent support groups or volunteer your time at one of the local DCFS offices to learn as much as possible about foster care.”

According to Runde, foster parenting offers plenty of intangible rewards. She remembers weddings where she was present as mother-of-the-bride, as well as the numerous births of “grandchildren” who call her “grandma” without giving it a second thought. There’s also the camaraderie with DCFS staff and other foster parents who have become lifelong friends. These are some of the irreplaceable perks that have encouraged her to continue caring for foster children throughout the years.

A Life's Mission

The Margaret Brazelton Story



The Brazelton Family

by Liz Calhoun

If you can't remember who the Director of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) was in 1975, ask Marjorie Brazelton. She's fostered under the direction of nine DCFS Directors, and has seen many changes over the years. If a person were to describe Brazelton in a word, it could be dedicated... or committed... or devoted... or loyal. But perhaps the best description is simply amazing.

Having fostered more than 200 children over the past 28 years, even while experiencing divorce and battling cancer in between, Brazelton has quite a few stories to tell. Brazelton began her mission of caring for children when she became a licensed foster parent in 1975. After having two birth children, Brazelton was told by her physician that she could no longer become pregnant. This news did not sit well with Brazelton, because she loved caring for children, which she now calls her "niche". However, instead of taking the revelation as bad news, Brazelton accepted it as a blessing. She began to foster and share her love with children who were not her own.

Brazelton already had two little boys of her own. However, she had always wanted a girl. Brazelton got her wish in 1977. A little girl, Tina Marjorie, was sent to Brazelton at just six days old. Tina was born to a 13-year-old girl who could not take care of her. Brazelton took the foster child into her home, then ended up loving and adopting her years later. This may seem like the best part of the story, but it gets even better. In 1979, Tina's teenage mother had another child, Daisy, and in 1980 she had a third child, Timothy. And, yes, Brazelton adopted them too. When asked how and why she made a commitment to adopt three children, Brazelton said that it was because she wanted the children to remain together and she wanted them to know who their family was.

Brazelton continued to take children into her home, even after three adoptions. At one point, her household became an emergency foster home for children who needed an immediate, temporary place to stay. When asked if she ever became attached to the hundreds of children that she's fostered, she stated that, "In the beginning I became very attached. I had to learn how to let the kids come and let the kids go. I feel that fostering is a ministry. Foster kids have parents, but a foster parent is temporary. I had to learn that it is temporary."

Although she learned to accept the short-term nature of fostering, it didn't stop her from adopting two more girls, Chynna and Amber, years later. When asked about how she felt about the birth parents of foster children and their relations with their children as they grow older she stated that, "Children should know their birth families. You can't pretend like that part of their life didn't happen. The foster parent and birth parent should get along. It's better for the child. The child won't feel like they have to choose whom to love more. If I were a parent who needed a foster parent to take care of my kids, I would want one who could take care of them, but at the same time not try to take my place [as their parent]."

Brazelton doesn't want children in her care to feel badly about being foster children, but rather to feel that they have extra love because of the extra parent in their life. Although Brazelton has been busy caring for children, it didn't stop her from other activities, as well. She has participated in many advocacy events on behalf of foster care. Some of her accomplishments include being the presi-

Brazelton

dent of the South City Foster Parent Association from 1991 - 1998; helping to write the manual, Foster Pride Adopt Pride; helping to create the 10 Modules for Foster Parent In-Service Trainings used by DCFS; and participating in Statewide Advisory Councils.

Brazelton has also served as a DCFS Support Specialist for the past 18 years. This work consists of being on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year to answer questions from foster parents, which may range from child care tips to money management issues.

Brazelton's depth of knowledge and value as an advisor on child welfare issues are based on years of close involvement with the system. When asked about important changes throughout the years, she gave credit to Director Jess McDonald for his leadership in bringing reforms and openness to the Department. "Jess was a good Director," said Brazelton. "He was hands on and accessible and that's what I liked," said Brazelton. "He knows me by my first name. If you walk up to him and ask him a question, he won't say, 'see my secretary.' He'll speak to you, himself. He [also] agrees to disagree, and he has an ear to listen."

Brazelton also credited her daughter, Tina. Brazelton explained that with all the changes that she's gone through, Tina was dependably right there with her. "If there's going to be a story about me," said Brazelton, "Tina has to be mentioned. She was a big help during the time of my chemo and radiation treatments. She went to the treatments with me, and she helped me with the kids at that time. She was a support to me."

Brazelton gives credit to whom it is due and will not leave anything, good or bad, out of her life's experiences. When asked if there was any information that she wanted to be kept confidential during the interview, she quickly replied, "Not at all. All of this is a part of me." And those experiences have made her the outstanding person that she is.

The Foster Parent Who Would Never Adopt Teens

Grant Goes From Fostering To Adoption

by Marjorie Newman

"I was single and always loved kids and wanted to be a mother," said Marsha Grant, a Beardstown resident who has fostered 38 children since 1994. "So I set out to help kids and show them a different way of living. I wanted to reach out to kids and be a positive example in their lives."

Marsha Grant never married and has no biological children, but she always had a desire to care for children. She began babysitting at age 12, which confirmed the fact that she enjoyed caring for children and one day wanted to become a mother. She ran a daycare for 17 years, became a foster parent in 1994 and has adopted four children.

"My best friend was a foster parent for seven years before I met her," explained Grant. "I've now known her for 12 years. She never encouraged or discouraged me to become a foster parent but she served as an unspoken example of what it was like to foster. When I did tell her I was interested in fostering she was a great source of information and inspiration."

Of the 38 children Grant fostered, she recalls her experience with the teenagers placed in her home. Among those experiences: one stole from her and another intentionally disobeyed her rules.

"A lot of teens are defiant and

intentionally disregard rules," explained Grant, "but I don't think its all teens, it's their history, their background. If they have been mentally, physically or sexually abused, they tend to guard themselves because they've been hurt. Guarding themselves, in most cases, is a means of survival."

However, Grant has experienced that being guarded can happen at any age due to a myriad of situations. Therefore, in an effort to make the transition from a biological parents' home to a foster home, Grant believes foster parents should get more background history, upfront. That way the foster parent can determine how they can best care for and help the child being placed in their home.

Statistics at the end of February 2003 show that there were approximately 21,370 children in substitute care. About 5,877 or 27.5% are between 13 - 17 years old. In terms of children needing permanent homes, there were 2,610 children waiting to be adopted. Of those, 491 or 18.8% are between 13 - 17 years old.

"I think there are many challenges to caring for teens as well as being a teen in foster care," said Grant. "If a teen reports an abusive parent, relative or foster parent, they

Continued on page 14

From Fostering to Adoption

Continued from page 13

tend to blame themselves if they are separated from their siblings. But on the other hand, teens are learning about independence and can speak up if they are being treated badly by a foster parent. They can initiate a call to their caseworker, and foster parents don't like that."

Another challenge for foster parents, explained Grant, is the foster parents' eagerness to give their foster child a lot of love. "That works for a younger child who needs you to feel secure and loved. But teens think they don't need all that cuddling or loving attention. They definitely need someone who they can talk to, trust, and someone that will help them sort out their emotions and learn how to be adults. But if a foster parent enters a relationship with a teen and strongly displays the thought that, 'I'm gonna love you to death', that's when the teen resists and then the foster parent labels them as 'unmanageable' or 'bad'. But in all actuality, teens really do want someone to love them unconditionally."

Although adoption was always in the back of her mind, Grant didn't pursue adoption until two years after she received her license. Her first adoption involved a two-year-old boy placed in her Beardstown home in 1997. He is now eight years old. Her next adoption was for a teenager named April (not her real name), whose adoption was completed in 2001.

"For many years as a foster parent I had teens and said I'd never adopt teens," admitted Grant. "But April's transition into my home went very smooth. She was supposed to move to another temporary placement, but I said I'd keep her until a permanent home was located. We both felt very comfortable together, and because of that I knew this would work. I really think God placed her here."

As April and Grant became closer and began to trust each other more, April opened up and admitted to ruin-

ing two placements prior to Grant's by 'acting out' because she didn't trust one family and the other family was abusive. Grant notes: "She felt she had nothing to lose to turn in her foster parents who abused her because for her it was 'just another placement'."

As Grant began to consider adopting 15-year-old April, the open conversations they had multiplied. April, who had begun to wholeheartedly love and trust Grant, voiced her concerns about being adopted.

"She told me she didn't want to be

"There are so many positives when siblings are kept together while in foster care or through adoption. I believe siblings should remain together at all costs."

**Foster Parent
Marsha Grant**

adopted because she wanted to be with her siblings. That really touched me," Grant said. "Well, after that conversation I put the wheels in motion to get her brother and sister."

Even though Grant had originally said she'd never adopt teens, she strongly believed siblings should be together, Grant adopted April in June 2001 and then her siblings Anthony 14,

and Angel, 13 (also not their real names) were placed in Grant's home in August 2001. Their adoptions were completed in May 2002.

"This process was easy, not only because I wanted children, but because I was organized and I kept on top of anyone involved with the adoption process. I made sure everything that needed to be done was done," said Grant.

Anthony and Angel were excited about the opportunity of being permanently reunited with their big sister, April. They also liked the new feeling of having a younger brother.

"There are so many positives when siblings are kept together while in foster care or through adoption," explained Grant. "I believe siblings should remain together at all costs."

One positive outcome Grant has seen has been with Angel's schoolwork and behavior. She had previously been in detention, suspended from school and was diagnosed with Behavioral Disorder/Oppositional Defiant Disorder (BD). But Grant proudly boasted that things have changed since Angel has been reunited with her biological sister and brother.

"Angel has been working hard in school and now gets A's and B's and an occasional C. Her behavior has improved tremendously, and after a recent review of her Independent Educational Plan (IEP), she is no longer labeled BD. We credit the change to being with her biological siblings and being with a mother who loves her the way she is," explained Grant.

The secret to Grant's success is actually no secret. "I respect my kids and they respect me, and we make sure we communicate," said Grant, who noted "communication makes a relationship, especially with three teenagers."

"Also, recognizing that God placed this family together and is making it work is another big key to our success. I know God is my strength and I'd never put that lightly."

Journey of Acceptance and Advocacy

Former DCFS Ward Becomes National Advocate for Gay and Lesbian Rights

by John Hamm

Kristi S. DeWall, a former DCFS ward, never intended to become a national voice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth living in foster care. “Everything started to happen when I was invited to speak at

“Youth and sexuality is a touchy subject, but if people start talking, it won’t be such a taboo topic.”

Nearing her graduation with a Master’s degree in higher education administration, DeWall acknowledged that much of the energy expended in her early life focused on

social isolation, conflicting feelings and misunderstandings with caregivers and child welfare staff. She lived in a deeply religious foster home and attended a church-run school during the time she began questioning her sexuality, then she enrolled in a nearby Bible College.

“Every Sunday, I sank lower and lower in the pew and prayed that God would turn me straight like other ‘normal people’,” DeWall wrote in a recent article. “I felt cursed that I had to be a foster kid and gay.”

“I’ve been in and out of seven foster homes and 13 schools since I was two years old,” added DeWall.

“But my overall experience has been positive, and I wouldn’t change a thing because it’s all made me stronger.”

DeWall’s speaking appearances range from small gatherings of foster parents and

Highlights
from Policy
Guide
2003.02

Child welfare workers do s and don ts when working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth.

Do s

1. Child welfare staff must seek consultation immediately with the consultants identified below in Section VIII on all cases involving children and youth having known or suspected sexual orientation or gender identity issues.

2. Child welfare staff should always respect and maintain a youth s privacy regarding his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. Never disclose this information without the youth s permission. To ensure safety and privacy, any observation, suppositions or conclusions regarding a youth s perceived or stated sexual orientation should be referred to only in case notes.

3. Child welfare staff



Kristi S. DeWall, advocate for gay and lesbian rights.

a social work class at Illinois State University,” said the 24-year-old graduate student, who was later encouraged by then Deputy Director Jane Elmore to continue telling her story.

“I’m not an expert in the field, but I know what I’ve experienced,” said DeWall.

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A Journey of Acceptance and Advocacy

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students to state and national forums attended by policy-makers and child welfare practitioners. She recently spoke at the Child Welfare League of America's national conference in Washington, D.C. "The most difficult part was telling about my final foster home and learning how to accept the love and support they were so willing to offer. It was the first time I talked about that in front of such a big group. It's been easier to talk to people about all the problems I had to deal with in foster care, because I've been so

Highlights from Policy Guide 2003.02

must consider their own attitudes, beliefs, prejudices and lack of knowledge surrounding issues of sexual orientation and gender identity.

4. When there is a risk of impending emotional or physical harm to the youth in his or her placement due to his or her sexual orientation or gender identity issues, child welfare staff will consider the removal of the ward from that placement when the risk cannot be mitigated.

5. Document only service recommendations in the ward's service plan, as they relate to specific daily living, emotional or behavioral concerns. Child welfare staff will implement recommendations made from expert consultation within five working days of the consultation.

Don'ts:

1. Do not make written reference to a youth's sexual orientation or gender identity.
2. Never address youth with sexual orientation or gender identity concerns as deviant or pathological.
3. Do not contract or seek treatment services for the purpose of changing a youth's sexual orientation or identity.

MEETING THE NEED

Most needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning youths can best be met through caregiver and family support, community support, education groups, and/or peer counseling. The ward's family and foster family members may also need assistance in supporting the LGBTQ youth. Families and friends participation in education and support groups, such as Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) should be encouraged.

used to it."

The ISU speaker's bureau coordinator and former president of the University's PRIDE chapter explained that much can be done to relieve pressures felt by LGBTQ youth in foster care. Even simple measures, such as changes in language, can significantly improve a youth's self image and feeling of acceptance.

"It's an issue of helping kids feel safe and respected," said DeWall. "A kid knows if someone is supportive by the way they talk. Some people also display rainbow stickers in their offices as a cue that it's a safe place to talk about these issues. Workers should also put aside personal beliefs and understand that they need to be neutral. It's also important to avoid assuming someone's sexual orientation when they meet."

DeWall added that many of her talking points parallel the Department's recent Policy Guide regarding the assessment and treatment of LGBTQ wards. Policy Guide 2003.02 emphasizes that child welfare staff respect and maintain a youth's privacy regarding his or her sexual orientation or gender identity, never disclose this information without the youth's permission, and never address youth with sexual orientation or gender identity concerns as deviant or pathological. Also, if there's risk of emotional or physical harm, the child's removal from the current placement must be considered when that risk can't be mitigated; and when placement stabilization or reunification isn't viable or in the best interest of the child, the case manager must make every effort to ensure that the child is placed into a "gay-affirming" environment.

The opportunity to move out of the daily life in the child welfare system provided DeWall an opportunity to relax and grow. "Transferring to ISU was a big change for me," said DeWall. "I felt that for the first time I was around people who felt it was okay to be who you are. It made it easier to come to terms with myself."

DeWall still keeps in contact with foster parents she has known, and visits with a foster family she feels especially close to each month. "It's rewarding to go back and make contact with foster parents I've known along the way," noted DeWall, remembering that "when I graduated with my Bachelor's degree, I sent a picture of myself when I was in their homes and another picture of me when I graduated, so they could know what happened to me and to thank them. All of them contributed to what I am now."

After this Spring's graduation with a Master's degree, DeWall expects to work in university administration, concentrating in student services. "However, my ultimate goal is to eventually work in child welfare," said DeWall. "I really feel that's where I want to be and where I belong. I'd also like to become a foster parent and help mentor foster kids. When you're a foster child, you feel that no one understands you. It would be good for them to meet someone who has been in their shoes before."

Scholarship Winner Inspires Others to Excel

by John Hamm

From marathons to triathlons to coaching aerobics classes at the local YMCA, Elaine Morrissy literally walks her talk about healthy lifestyles. Morrissy, a DCFS scholarship recipient attending Illinois State University, devotes most of her waking hours to the staggering requirements of a double major in exercise physiology and nutrition science. However, her limited free time is filled with an amazing inventory of activities.

"I love competing," said the 21-year-old member of a regional running club who recently completed the Chicago Marathon in just over four hours and placed seventh in her division at Springfield's Ironhorse Triathlon. "Marathons are so much fun, I don't care where I finish. Triathlons just take a lot of discipline, time and money. I practice four or five months to get ready."

"I've always been interested in physical fitness and played sports," acknowledged Morrissy. "As I got older, I noticed that more people seemed to be getting heavier. That's when I decided to explore the health fields. Right now, I'm particularly interested in working with people who have diabetes."

Morrissy works part-time at the Bloomington-Normal YMCA coordinating summer camps, teaching aerobics and weight management classes, and helping at the front desk. "Aerobics motivates people and gets them energized," said Morrissy. "People like it because it's healthy, active and fun. I also teach water aerobics, which is great for people who are

obese, out of condition or have medical problems."

Growing up in foster homes since age nine, then transitioning into campus life at a large university initially proved difficult for Morrissy. Although appreciative of the four year DCFS scholarship, which was recently extended to five years to enable completion of a double major, she felt ill-equipped. "I didn't understand what life was going to be like, after foster care," explained Morrissy. "I didn't know how to buy a car, pay taxes or do other things adults do. More support would have made the transition easier for me then, and I believe DCFS is helping students with that now."

"My experiences have made me stronger, more independent and more focused," acknowledged Morrissy, who is also among 200 volunteers staffing a local crisis hotline. In addition to answering calls, the four-year veteran also trains new volunteers. "Since my freshman year, I've spent a lot of my free time working at the crisis hotline," said Morrissy. "I like the one-on-one contact. People may call about Social Security, losing their apartment, or dealing with rape. Anything is fair game. Sometimes people need referral for services, and sometimes they just need someone to talk with."



Elaine Morrissy (left) with her sister.

"I remember a call from a woman who just got out of jail and was looking for her children. It was a hard call for me to handle, because I couldn't imagine being a mother and not knowing where my children were."

A single thread runs through Morrissy's busy, seemingly unconnected schedule of activities. "I've always been interested in helping other people," said Morrissy, who recalled helping to build homes for Habitat for Humanity as a teenager.

"I had a lot of emotional baggage growing up in foster care," said Morrissy. "But it was a good experience. I've come a long way, and I wasn't sure how foster care would affect me. The situations have taught me how to grow as a person. Now I want to work in a health club or a hospital. I especially like the idea of teaching younger kids that exercise and healthy choices are the right routes to take."

An Example of Personal Strength

by Marjorie Newman

Stanley Wolf's morning activities begin before sunrise, when he opens the doors to the synagogue he attends. Afterwards, Wolf, a DCFS Family Development Specialist in Chicago, travels to the Department's 2500 W. Bradley office, arriving before the majority of his colleagues, to start, complete and review paperwork. After hours of paperwork, phone calls, e-mails, faxes, meetings and site visits, he goes home to his wife of 33 years. His current hobby is to follow Middle East events, relying on as many as 10 different news sources, and then it's off to bed around 9:30 p.m. He's got to be ready for tomorrow, which begins at 3:45 a.m., when he prepares to go to the synagogue.

Although Wolf has followed this hectic schedule for 28 years, he will celebrate 30 years of service with the State this September.

"I'm proud to say I work for DCFS," said Wolf. "I'm proud of the workers, too. Each one that I have encountered has given their all and constantly prove that we do care about the kids. That's what has kept us all going for the past



DCFS Family Development Specialist Stanley Wolf

years."

Wolf's team, located in the Cook North Region, handles foster home license applications for the areas north between Howard St. and south to Roosevelt Rd., and from Lake Michigan going west to the city limits.

"Although we work independently at times, we do strive to keep a team atmosphere," said Wolf, who was offered - but refused - the state's Early Retirement Incentive. "We are very proud of our licensing work and the efforts during the accreditation process. Under the leadership of Regional Administrator Chris McGrath and our Manager, Sari Rowitz, we have developed and maintained a family-like atmosphere that has allowed us to accomplish all that we've set out to do."

Wolf, a very quiet and humble man, further explained that he and his co-workers produce great outcomes because of the leadership that exists in their office. "My supervisor, Carolyn Griggs, has been the head of our team for four years," he said. "She makes it a point to be kept up-to-date with all of our cases and truly helps us focus on whatever

Personal Strength Behind Foster Care Licensing

the current task is. She truly guides in a professional manner, but is also always there for us as a friend.”

The majority of Wolf’s morning work involves telephone contacts. Calls include conferences with families or supervisors, court cases, in-depth discussions with adults interested in becoming foster parents and follow-up to background checks for potential foster parents.

“We screen calls that come in inquiring about licensing,” said Wolf. “Then the next step is to conduct a home visit where we discuss rules and regulations of being a foster parent, and determine if the home meets the requirements listed in the application packet for foster family home licensing. If it does, we then issue the packet and the licensing process begins.”

Licensing standards provide details about the requirements for becoming a licensed foster family home. The following forms, which can be obtained at local DCFS sites, are among the items needed to complete an application for a license:

- Application form
- Authorization for background check
- Medical report(s) on all household members
- Character references
- Fingerprints

Completing an application is but one step in an important process to ensure a home is safe for foster children. The licensing process also includes a detailed home study, and applicants must complete 33 hours of training. Foster parents also need to complete 16 hours of continuing education in order to renew their four-year licenses.

Applicants can use a variety of avenues to begin the licensing process. They can ‘cold call’ out of a general interest (General Resource Applicant). They can be relatives identified by a worker (Home of Relative). They may be adults who know of a non-related child living in DCFS care (Child Specific Applicant), or they could be adults who know of a non-related child

not in state care who needs a home (Independent Licensee).

“We also work closely with One Church One Child and other organizations that recruit applicants,” explained Wolf. “In addition, we attend various functions, such as the LAN 65 Expo 2003, where we recruit potential applicants.”

Wolf, who has three adult children, two sons-in-law and four grandchildren, explained that licensing homes that will care for children in DCFS care is a very serious responsibility. “Licensing affects each entity in a different way,” noted Wolf. “It shows that a home is capable of providing a child with a good meal, emotional love, clothes and other supports to meet the child’s educational needs.

“It also assures that the foster parents are very clear of their responsibilities and the consequence of not meeting their responsibilities. By us licensing a home, the biological parent can be assured this home has been checked out in terms of criminal and medical backgrounds, and that it is safe and clean.”

Guidelines mandate that a foster home should be visited within 60 days from the date of licensing (post-licensing visit) and again close to the one-year anniversary of licensing (annual visit). However, Wolf visits the homes he licenses once every two to three months, as guidelines also allow staff to make additional visits – either announced or unannounced – as deemed appropriate.

“I know nothing is 100 percent,” Wolf added. “But we do monitor the home according to licensing guidelines – sometimes more often – especially when a caseworker feels there are concerns that need to be addressed.”

“Every day is different,” said Wolf, who stands five-foot, three inches tall and wears his Yarmulke daily. “When the phone rings it could be from someone who is interested in becoming a foster parent, or a request from a current foster parent to extend their license to take in more children. If so, I then schedule a meeting to check the

home and make sure the new home meets the requirements in terms of safety and capacity. I’m always moving forward.”

The fast-paced environment is now a little smoother for Wolf, compared to previous years when there were no fax machines or e-mail capabilities.

“Technological advances have also worked to our benefit,” said Wolf. “I’m constantly e-mailing caseworkers and foster home support specialists about different homes to maintain the lines of communication. And since forms need to be completed on each home, and every phone call and visit must be documented, computers really help.”

After 28 years, the process of licensing homes can begin to feel very routine. All of the forms needed to license a home are the same, and each home must go through a home study step-by-step; the same steps at that.

But Wolf said that families make the process fresh each time. Every family has a different design, a different belief system and a different story to tell.

“I remember one couple who became foster parents and then adopted the child,” said Wolf. “Soon after, the husband died and the wife became a single parent. She worked hard and raised the child to be very respectful. When I’d come and visit, he’d stand to greet me. It was definitely something that was instilled in him to do for all adults. This boy grew to become a very well-respected man, and ended up receiving his Doctorate from IIT. What a mom!”

Wolf noted that this is just one example of how different families can be, and how important it is for DCFS staff to work in the best interest of the state’s most precious commodity – the children.

“Every day ends differently, too,” added Wolf. “Sometimes it doesn’t end until I go to sleep, and sometimes not even then. You make the job the way it is. If you say ‘I’m going to have a good day,’ then it will be a good day. There are still challenges, but you will have a good day.”



The Baby Fold Celebrates 100 Years of Excellence

by Kim Broome

For 100 years, The Baby Fold has served children and families by helping them build safe, loving and healthy environments. While the Normal-based Agency's mission has remained the same over the years, its services have evolved to meet society's changing needs.

Dynamic change swept the nation in the early 1900s, during a time now known as the Progressive Era. From that time of compassionate energy emerged a visionary named Nancy Mason and a group of dedicated Methodist Deaconesses who saw great unmet needs among the most helpless of the population—children. Originally founded as an orphanage by Mason and her volunteers in 1902, The Baby Fold has built a legacy of caring and support for children and families.

"The key to The Baby Fold's success has been its staff's level of dedication," said CEO Dale Strassheim. "We strive to provide the highest quality of services to children and families and have earned a reputation for excellence in Illinois and beyond."

The Baby Fold's success and longevity have also been

largely due to the surrounding community, which has provided support since the Agency's inception. When The Baby Fold moved from its original location on North Street to its present location on Willow Street, a long-time board member initiated a chain letter requesting dimes to finance the property. Local merchants even helped board members transport babies in buggies to the new location.

In 1910, the Agency supplemented its income with a vegetable garden and a milk cow. Churches also donated eggs and canned goods. A generous gift became The Baby Fold's first annuity in 1911. Much of the community became involved in an ambitious 1950 building fund drive, including support from WJBC radio, local celebrities and clergy of all faiths. Annual open houses were also an important part of the agency's initial fundraising efforts. In addition, the Bloomington Pantagraph gave extensive publicity to the many special events and celebrity benefits sponsored by The Baby Fold.

Today, The Baby Fold is a \$10 million, 225-employee child welfare organization that specializes in residential,

The Baby Fold Celebrates 100 Years of Excellence

educational, therapeutic, adoption and foster care services. The organization also offers pregnancy counseling, family support and prevention services for children and families in Central Illinois.

The Baby Fold strengthens families from within by preparing them for the challenges that lie ahead. From programs for expectant and new parents to child abuse prevention services, The Baby Fold reaches beyond simply offering care for children to truly caring for their lives. The organization's services include a Residential Treatment Center, which provides intensive clinical and therapeutic care for children ages three through 12. The Center provides a highly structured and positive living environment with specialized mental health and residential school services aimed at serving children with psychological, emotional or physical disabilities.

The Agency's Hammitt School provides specialized educational services for young children with autism and other pervasive emotional and behavioral disorders. Other important components of the program include parent training and support. The School serves children in the Residential Treatment Center, as well as children from area school districts that are in need of consultative and training services. Many children in foster and adoptive placements also attend the school. In 2002, the Hammitt School added high school classes, with a starting class of 16 students going to the School's third campus. Local public school districts specifically requested that The Baby Fold provide these school services to adolescents, based on the quality of services previously provided at Hammitt School. The School's Director of Academic Services, Dianne Schultz, said she was pleased that The Baby Fold was able to respond to an

identified community need by bringing critical services to this at-risk population.

The Baby Fold's child welfare services encompass a broad range of foster care, adoption and post-adoption programs. The organization's foster parents work together with staff to ensure that children in foster care receive necessary medical care, educa-

“The key to The Baby Fold's success has been its staff's level of dedication.”

CEO Dale Strassheim

tional services and counseling, so their developmental needs will be met. Its adoption program finds adoptive homes for waiting children. Adoption services are available to children in need of adoption, to their birth families and to their adoptive families.

The Baby Fold's pregnancy counseling and support services to pregnant women, helping them when making decisions about the care of their children. Services are also available for fathers and other family members, as well as significant individuals who birth parents choose to involve. The organization's Family Support Services

include both community-based and home-based services for families with children at risk of abuse or neglect.

The Baby Fold continually seeks to broaden its continuum of care, and its efforts have not gone unnoticed. The Baby Fold has received numerous accolades for its work from a variety of child welfare groups over the years. The Agency received an award for top scores on its 2001 Foster Parent Law implementation plan submitted to DCFS. That same year, The Baby Fold was named the top downstate agency for permanent placement by DCFS. The Baby Fold was also selected to serve on an advisory committee that established disciplinary procedures for wards in the Department's care.

DCFS also selected The Baby Fold as the lead administrative agency for the Family Solutions program, a pilot project in McLean County that provides intact services for cases requiring extensive services. The organization was also chosen to participate in the Department's Family Service Initiative, a joint project with Illinois State University to train social work students through internships and hands-on experience.

“The Baby Fold continues its heritage of providing services to some of the most severe cases (in the child welfare field), such as children who have been abused or neglected or who are wards of the state,” said Strassheim. “We also continue to reach out to children with other mental health and emotional disabilities, and consider it a privilege to serve and nurture them.”

When asked about The Baby Fold's goals for the next century, Strassheim explained that it would be “To continue meeting the needs of children and families in the community. Over the years, we have increased our prevention programs and plan to continue along that path.”

Facts About Foster Care

Age of Children in Substitute Care

AGE	CHILDREN	TOTAL PCT.
00-00	911	4.3%
01-05	5,825	27.4%
06-10	4,875	22.9%
11-15	5,485	25.8%
16-18	3,283	15.4%
19&OVER	878	4.1%
	21,257	100.0%

Gender of Children in Substitute Care

GENDER	CHILDREN	TOTAL PCT.
FEMALE	9,915	46.6%
MALE	11,328	53.3%
UNKNOWN	14	0.1%
	21,257	100.0%

Race/Ethnicity of Children in Substitute Care

RACE/ETHNICITY	TOTAL CHILDREN	PCT.	IN GENERAL POPULATION
BLACK, NOT HISPANIC	14,504	68.2%	18.4%
WHITE, NOT HISPANIC	5,026	23.6%	59.2%
HISPANIC	1,177	5.5%	17.0%
NATIVE AMER-INDIAN, ESKIMO	21	0.1%	*
ASIAN, ORIENTAL, PACIFIC	16	0.1%	3.0%
UNKNOWN	92	0.4%	*
OTHER	421	2.0%	2.4%
	21,257	100.0%	5.4%

* Other in the Illinois child population percentages above consists of Native Americans, bi-racial, multi-racial or any other race not explicitly noted.

Placement Setting of Children in Substitute Care

TYPE OF CARE	CHILDREN	TOTAL PCT.
INSTIT/GROUP HOME	2,541	12.0%
NON-RELATED FOSTER	10,810	50.9%
RELATIVE	7,906	37.2%
	21,257	100.0%

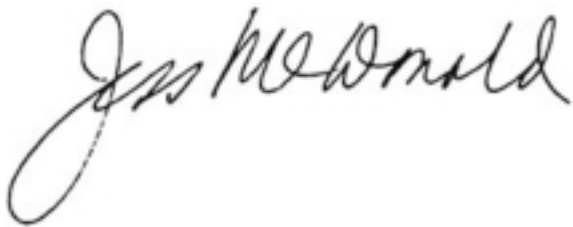
Dear Colleague,

Change is difficult, but DCFS staff are better prepared than most. No other state agency has undergone so much change, or achieved as much, as we have in the past decade. From the B.H. Consent Decree and sharp personnel budget cuts of the early 90s, to COA accreditation, SACWIS implementation and front-end redesign reforms continuing today, we have always remembered why we got into the child welfare profession in the first place. And I am proud of your commitment.

Nearly every statistical trend over the past six years says that children in Illinois are much safer, better served and more likely to be living in permanent homes. The stories found in this issue of *Dialogue* illustrate that our achievements are largely due to teamwork at the grassroots level. Credit for success belongs jointly to DCFS staff, private agency workers and especially foster parents. As the upcoming stories reveal, we are working together to help protect children, strengthen families and bring hope of permanency to foster children in our care. We are all members of a larger community of protectors and healers.

I ask that you welcome and support new Director Bryan Samuels as much as you've done for me during these past nine wonderful years. I deeply appreciate your daily sacrifices. Illinois became a national child welfare leader, because you were willing to risk doing things differently. New challenges are ahead, but have faith in your abilities and the importance of what you do. We owe the children and families of Illinois no less.

Best wishes,



Jess McDonald

Helping families cross life's bridges



May is Foster Parent Appreciation Month in Illinois

recognizing people who make a difference

*For more information about becoming a foster parent,
please call 800/572-2390.*

2003



For more information about foster care please visit
www.fostercaremonth.org
PHONE: (888) 295-6727
oncinfo@casey.org

National Foster Care Month is a joint effort of:

