



Announcing the Foster Parent of the Year Essay Contest

ATTENTION CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE:

May is Foster Parent Appreciation Month, when DCFS thanks and honors foster parents for the good work they do with children and youth. The *Foster Parent of the Year* essay contest is your chance to write about why your foster parent is the best one in the state.

One-page essays should describe how foster parents have inspired, encouraged, and helped you, or even changed your life. From your essays, we will choose 24 foster parents for regional recognition. They will receive a framed copy of the essay written about them. And the children and youth who write those essays will be given prizes.

From the 24 regional essays chosen, one foster parent will be selected as the *Foster Parent of the Year*, and receive a family day at *Six Flags Great America*. The family day, to be held on July 31st, includes park admissions, unlimited rides, show passes, and a two-hour all-you-can-eat lunch buffet with DCFS staff, for the entire family.

The child or youth who writes the winning *Foster Parent of the Year* essay will also receive recognition and a prize at the July event. The winning essay will be framed and displayed in the office of DCFS Director Bryan Samuels. A framed copy of the winning essay will also be delivered to Governor Rod R. Blagojevich.

Contest Rules:

1. The child must be 10 years of age and older.
2. The child must be in the care of DCFS and reside in the home of an Illinois foster parent.
3. The child must be enrolled in and attending school.
4. The child must be able to *independently* form sentences.
5. The child's name, address, age, grade level, school name, and foster parent's name must be written in the top left corner of the essay.
6. Essays will be sorted by grades: 3-5; 5-8; 9-12; and college. One essay will be chosen from each category in every region of the state, so that 24 foster parents will be honored, four from each region.
7. Submissions must be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to the address below and **must be received by April 9, 2004**.
8. Your foster parent will be notified if they are selected to receive the *Foster Parent of the Year* Award.

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