



Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

FOSTERING

Linking Families Together for

Holiday Issue 2002 Vol. 5

ILLINOIS

Children's Futures

DCFS Uses Technology to Take Child Welfare Practice to the Next Level

After several years, the terms “Best Practice” and “SACWIS” (pronounced sack-wiss) have begun to trip off the tongues of DCFS staff. Yet the terms are definitely foreign to foster families and children.

The benefits of creating a new computer system (SACWIS) that supports and guides the highest level of quality casework or “best practice” are now becoming apparent. Phase I of Best Practice and SACWIS (Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System) has been implemented in DCFS field offices across the state. During Phase II, the impact will be even more visible to caregivers.



*Best Practice/SACWIS Phase II Implementation Team:
(L to R) Sam Traylor, Carla Amato, John Chesniak, Marilyn Arnold, Connie Flower and Joy Duling.*

Best Practice and SACWIS began with intake and investigations—from the time a case is first called into the hotline until the investigation is complete. The Best Practice team looked at every rule, policy and procedure involved in this stage of a child’s case to ensure that actions taken led to statewide consistency. Then the new computer information system (SACWIS) was designed to complement the new procedures.

Phase II planning is underway and will involve everything that comes after the case has been assigned to a follow-up or permanency worker. Implementation of Best Practice Phase II is scheduled to begin early next year, while implementation of SACWIS Phase II is scheduled to begin around the end of next summer. It is during Phase II that foster parents and other caregivers working toward positive permanency outcomes will feel the impact of Best Practice and SACWIS.

For example, when Phase II of Best Practice is implemented, there will be a Child and Family Team on every case. The team will include the birth parents, foster parents, caseworker, service providers and children (as appropriate by age). The goal of the Child and Family Team is to make a comprehensive plan for each child that involves input from all those who play an important role in the child’s life.

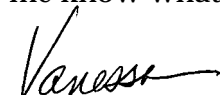
From the Editor



I am happy to extend to you and your family my heartfelt wishes for a holiday season that is full of joy and great memories. To savor those memories, now is a great time to add some “happy” pages to your children’s life books. For youth whose lives have seen trauma and disappointment, a life book can answer questions and inspire them to look toward better times. Caregivers can give children an invaluable gift by creating a record of important information and special times with family and friends.

Your caseworker can help get you started gathering information and ideas to go into a life book. DCFS is also creating a template life book to use with children in care. I will keep you posted on that progress. Meanwhile, make lots of memories with your families, and take steps to save them to enjoy in the years to come.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you, with your ideas, critiques and compliments. This newsletter exists to provide the information you need. In the coming months you will see changes that will help get more news to more foster, adoptive and guardianship families. Please feel free to let me know what you think.


Vanessa James
Editor

Deputy Director Announces Departure



Dear Foster and Adoptive Parents,

This is a letter I knew I would be writing someday, but I never dreamed it would be so soon. I have decided to take advantage of the State’s Early Retirement Program, and I will be leaving the Department of Children and Family Services on December 31, 2002.

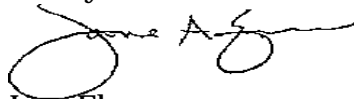
However, I do not intend to leave the field. I am exploring other opportunities to continue work in the field of child welfare, both in professional and volunteer capacities. I am looking forward to new challenges. I am also curious to see what it feels like to have a more “family-friendly” schedule.

As fellow foster and adoptive parents, I am sure you can relate when I say that working for the Department has been tremendously fulfilling, but frustrating at times. I am proud of all the children that we were able to move to permanency, but heartbroken over all the children who still just age out of the system. I’m gratified by the range of post adoption and guardianship services we have in place, but clearly believe there is much more we could offer. I am pleased by the improvements we’ve made in providing services to foster families and children, but recognize the great amount of work that remains to meet every child’s needs in an acceptable manner while they are in our care.

Foster and adoptive parents, and the children who are growing up in the system, must continue to demand that their voices be heard by the administration. The Department of Children and Family Services exists to meet the needs of the children it serves. It is up to all of us to insure that the child welfare system does its job well.

As many of you know, this position has been my passion. I truly believe that every child deserves a home where they are loved and treasured; where they can thrive and reach their true potential. I am honored to have been a part of making that happen for many of our children in care. To all of you who I have come to know: thank you so much for your kindness and support. I have enjoyed every minute of this “ride.” It has truly been my pleasure to serve you.

Always,



Jane Elmore
Deputy Director
Division of Foster Care and Permanency Services
406 E. Monroe Station #225
Springfield, IL 62701
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Celebrating the Holiday the Latino Way

Three Kings Day Celebration

Three Kings Day is based on the account of the Three Magi who traveled to Bethlehem with gifts to honor Baby Jesus. Following that tradition, on the eve of Three King's Day, which begins at dawn on January 6th, Puerto Rican children cut grass to put in a shoe box under their bed for "the Kings' camels" to eat. Children place their wish list on top of the grass. The *Reyes*, or Three Kings, come only if the child has been good all year.

On this night, children sleep lightly, listening for any strange noises, whispers, camels' hooves, or any telltale signs of the Kings' arrival. Sometime during the night, the *Reyes* arrive and quietly leave their gifts for the children while their camels eat the grass. In the morning, the island is filled with joy and laughter of happy children playing with the new toys left for them. It is a joyful day of celebration. Later, a holiday dinner is prepared where friends and relatives join in the festivities.

The Three Kings Day is also known as the Epiphany and is traditionally the day in which the Three Kings arrived bearing gifts for the Christ child. The tradition of *Los Reyes Magos* for Latino families is customary. The Three Kings were magi (magicians), and members of the ancient Medes and Persians. Christian tradition, from about the 7th century, named them: Melchior, the oldest of the Magi who bought gold for Jesus, and whose feast day is January 7th; Gaspar, who bought frankincense (an aromatic gum used in sacred incense) whose feast day is January 6th; and Baltazar, who bought myrrh (an ingredient of Holy ointment) whose feast day is January 8th. They were also called the Three Kings of Cologne.

Las Posadas

In Mexico, Christmas is an important holiday season with strong traditions. One of the most colorful traditions is the *posada*, celebrated every evening from December 16 to 24. These celebrations commemorate Mary and Joseph's cold and difficult journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem and their search for shelter. *Posada* in Spanish simply means lodging or shelter.

To celebrate *La Posada*, on each of these nights before Christmas, a home in the neighborhood hosts a party. There is plenty of food and drink, with candies and fruit for the children. At dusk, all the guests gather outside the house. A small child dressed as an angel leads a procession to the home, with children dressed in silver and gold robes carrying figures of Mary and Joseph, followed by the adults and musicians.

Everyone sings *alguinaldos* (Christmas carols) as they walk slowly along, carrying their lit candles. When they reach the house, the group divides in two. One half goes inside the home while the second group remains outside and begs for shelter. When the door opens, the religious part of the celebration ends, and the fun begins.

The happy end to each *Posada* has always been the *piñata*. The *piñata* is a fragile earthenware jar covered with paper mache, traditionally made in the shape of a star, to recall the one that so mysteriously guided the Three Kings to the newborn Jesus. Now piñatas come in all shapes and sizes and are filled with candy, toys, and sometimes money. Blindfolded children take turns swinging a stick at the hanging *piñata* and try to break it to release the treats inside.



DCFS Policy for Foster Parents Providing Separate Beds

The recently revised Rule 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes states that licensed foster homes must have provided a separate bed or crib for each foster child by October 2002. That policy was clarified to include a waiver if it is in the best interest of the child. For example, a larger bed for twins or siblings close in age could be acceptable. Your caseworker can request the waiver on your behalf if appropriate.

In licensed homes, DCFS does not pay for the required beds. However, in the case of a child placed with an unlicensed relative, DCFS may assist with the purchase, if the cost of a bed would be a deterrent to the relative becoming licensed.

To help relative caregivers meet this requirement and become licensed, the Department has compiled a list of stores around the state that sell beds at an inexpensive rate. Licensed foster parents may also want to check out the list as they shop for their needs. The list is not an endorsement of a particular vendor and does not attempt to include all retailers. It does offer options for families to consider. Those interested in reviewing the list of vendors can call the Advocacy Office for Children and Families at 800-232-3798.

Spring Conference Registration is Open

The IFAPA/DCFS Foster and Adoptive Parent Conference, "Parenting Today – Preparing Children For Tomorrow," will be held at the Indian Lakes Resort in Bloomingdale on March 21-23. Foster or adoptive parents and relative caregivers who are interested in participating must complete and return the following two-page Conference Registration by mail or fax to DCFS Training by **February 7, 2003**. *Please remember, space is limited, so early registration is advised.* Due to limited space, liability issues and the training focus of this conference, children of any age are not to attend the conference.

There is no charge to attend the conference. Participants that request lodging are expected to share a room and should designate a roommate preference on the registration form. Those who register will receive a confirmation letter from the DCFS Registration Unit to explain if they are eligible for lodging and if so, will give instructions on how to guarantee the reservation with the hotel. The letter will also include a copy of the Conference Agenda and driving directions to the hotel.

Participants registered for the full conference will be provided with dinner on Friday, March 21, dinner on Saturday, March 22 and breakfast on Sunday, March 23 at no cost. Following the recommendation of the Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, Saturday breakfast and lunch will not be covered by the conference, in order to provide participants two nights of lodging instead. The hotel has agreed to offer a variety of ala carte food and beverages at prices ranging from \$1.50-\$3.50. There are also several restaurants within a mile of the hotel that are accessible by car.

DCFS will provide free transportation for Cook County foster parents by bus to and from the conference at two locations. Pre-registration is required. Those choosing to travel to the conference by bus should check the appropriate pick-up and drop off location on the registration form.

Contact Jean Maher at 217/782-2908 or by email at Jean.Maher@idcfs.state.il.us for questions about the conference. Call the DCFS Registration Unit toll-free at 877/800-3393, option 1, with questions about your conference registration or confirmation letter.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM ~ IFAPA / DCFS FOSTER & ADOPTIVE PARENT CONFERENCE
March 21-23, 2003 ~ Indian Lakes Resort, Bloomingdale

DIRECTIONS: Please print or type to complete both pages of this conference registration form. Couples attending this conference must each complete a conference registration form. Please make copies as needed. **All conference registration forms must be received by February 7, 2003.** Space is limited so early registration is advised.

You may return your conference registration by fax or mail-see page two for detailed return information. All registered participants are expected to arrive at the conference on time and attend the full three-day conference. Upon receipt of a completed conference registration form, a conference confirmation letter with further instructions will be mailed to you by the DCFS Registration Unit. If you have questions about this conference registration form, call the DCFS Registration Unit toll free at 877/800-3393.

ALL REGISTRANTS – Complete This Section / Who Are You? Check all that apply

Foster Parent Relative Caregiver Adoptive Parent SWFCAC Member
 Private Agency Staff DCFS Administrator or Staff Conference Presenter

Social Security Number: _____

Print Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

License Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Name of Fostering Agency: _____

What Is Your DCFS Region? Check One: Cook North Cook Central Cook South
 Central Northern Southern Central Office

Your Home Street Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Day Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

In Case of Emergency, Contact: Name _____ Phone: _____

Check here if under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) you require auxiliary aids or services. Attach requirements to this form.

Check Meals You Will Attend: (Included with Conference Registration)

Dinner, Fri., March 21 Awards Banquet, Sat., March 22 Light Breakfast, Sun., March 23

Cook County Bus Transportation / Pre-Registration Is Required Your name must be on the list in order to board the bus. Please check the boarding site you will use. Cars may not be left at either site.

Site A DCFS Office at 6201 S. Emerald Site B DCFS Office at 3518 W. Division

Lodging Requested: DCFS Division of Training will coordinate all lodging for eligible participants according to State of Illinois travel guidelines. Your confirmation letter will explain whether or not you are eligible for lodging. **AFTER you receive your confirmation letter, you must personally call the hotel by February 15, 2003 to guarantee your room reservation with a credit card, check or other means.** Private agency staff must make and pay for lodging reservations according to your own agency's policies.

Lodging Requested Yes No

Arrival Date: _____ Departure Date: _____

Smoking Room Non Smoking Room

I prefer to room with: _____ male female

Important: A roommate will be assigned to you if one is not specified.

ONLY DCFS STAFF OR PRIVATE AGENCY STAFF COMPLETE THIS SECTION:

Agency Name: _____ Job Title: _____

Supervisor Name: _____ Phone: _____

Work Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Work Phone: _____ Fax Number: _____

Supervisor or Upper Level Management Signature of Approval: _____

Signature of PDC: _____

Directions: Read Across and Not Down. Please select a first and second workshop choice for each session, A,B,C,D shown below. You must register for each part of any multi-part workshop you select to attend.

Session A Saturday, March 22 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	A-1 Automobile Related Issues for Foster Parents and Teens	A-2 Part 1 - Becoming a Love and Logic Parent (Must attend all 3 parts)	A-3 Building Resilience in Gay & Lesbian Youth	A-4 Part 1 - CPR Basic Training (Must attend all 4 parts of workshop)	A-5 How to Choose a Counselor and Get the Most from Therapy	A-6 Part 1 - Overcoming the Effects of Abuse and Neglect (2 part workshop)	A-7 Psychotropic Drugs	A-8 Part 1 - Reactive Attachment Disorder (Must attend all 4 parts of workshop)	A-9 The Search for Serenity - Caring for Kids Under Difficult Times
Session B Saturday, March 22 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.	B-1 Fostering Literacy - Helping Your Child Learn to Read	B-2 Part 2 - Love & Logic	B-3 Understanding the Foster Parent Bill of Rights	B-4 Part 2 - CPR Basic Training	B-5 How to Choose a Counselor and Get the Most from Therapy	B-6 Part 2 - Overcoming the Effects of Abuse and Neglect	B-7 Psychotropic Drugs	B-8 Part 2 - Reactive Attachment Disorder	B-9 The Search for Serenity - Caring for Kids Under Difficult Times
Session C Sunday, March 23 8:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	C-1 Balancing Nutritional Needs	C-2 Part 3 - Love & Logic	C-3 Dads Make a Difference	C-4 Part 3 - CPR Basic Training	C-5 Family to Family - Working With Birth Families Toward Reunification	C-6 Supporting Sibling Relationships	C-7 Telling the Truth to our Adopted Children	C-8 Part 3 - Reactive Attachment Disorder	C-9 What Every Foster Parent Needs to Know About Going to Court
Session D Sunday, March 23 10:00 a.m. - 11:20 a.m.	D-1 Balancing Nutritional Needs	D-2 Transcultural Adoption	D-3 Dads Make a Difference	D-4 Part 4 CPR Basic Training	D-5 Family to Family - Working With Birth Families Toward Reunification	D-6 Tax Benefits for Foster and Adoptive Parents	D-7 Telling the Truth to our Adopted Children	D-8 Part 4 - Reactive Attachment Disorder	D-9 What Every Foster Parent Needs to Know About Going to Court

Directions: Place the number of your workshop choices in the blanks below. Space is limited for some workshop sessions. Your second choice will be used if one of the sessions is already filled. You must register for each part of any multi-part workshop.

1st Choice _____ **2nd Choice** _____

Session A _____
Session B _____
Session C _____
Session D _____

Registration Deadline Is February 7, 2003
FAX Both Pages to 217/557-4349

OR

**Mail Both Pages to: DCFS Registration Unit,
 406 E. Monroe, Station 122, Springfield, IL 62701**

Check Young Children's Items for Safety Recalls

Keeping young children in a safe environment means paying attention to the smallest details. Toys that are meant for fun and even safety items like a car seat could have dangerous defects that demand a recall. Department policy requires foster parents of children aged six or under to check their homes for products listed as unsafe according to the Children's Product Safety Act. At initial licensing and at license renewals, foster families are expected to update and sign a certification that they have inspected their home. The licensing worker will look for a certification that is no more than a year old.

To stay informed of new recall information, parents or caseworkers can obtain the list of unsafe products from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) website at <http://webapp2.idph.state.il.us/webapp/SRSApp/pages/index.jsp>. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission also maintains a product list, along with other helpful information at www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/prerel.html. Another source for up-to-date information is Family Education at www.familyeducation.com. Parents can search for recalls by product, company or chronologically. The site also offers a subscription feature to send automatic updates by e-mail.

Following are a few of the products for young children that have been recalled so far this year.

Recall Description	Recall Information	Contact Information
<p>Safety 1st and Beatrix Potter "Designer 22" infant car seats/carriers</p> <p>When the seat is used as a carrier, the plastic handle can unexpectedly release from the carrying position. When this happens, an unrestrained infant can fall to the ground and suffer injuries.</p>	<p>Applies to model #s and color codes 02-621-SAL, 02-620-AZY and 02-620-BEA The seats were manufactured between January 3, 2002 and February 13, 2002. The model number and manufacture date are located on the instruction and warning label on the side of the car seat/carrier.</p>	<p>Consumers can continue to use the "Designer 22" as a car seat but should stop using it as a carrier immediately and contact Dorel Juvenile Group to receive a repair kit. Consumers can contact Dorel at the firm's web site at www.djgusa.com or call 800/536-1090.</p>
<p>Precision Woodworks cribs</p> <p>The slats on the cribs can loosen and detach from the drop side rail, creating a large opening between the slats where a child's head or neck could become entrapped, resulting in serious injury or death.</p>	<p>Applies to models 7010 Alpine, 7020 Caspian, 7030 Coventry, 7040 Dunmore and 7070 Haystack Vermont Precision Woodworks is providing consumers with replacement drop side rails.</p>	<p>Consumers can contact Vermont Precision Woodworks toll-free at 866/869-7974 anytime or visit the firm's web site at www.vermontprecisionwoodworks.com.</p>
<p>Kolcraft LiteSport Model 36122 (only) strollers</p> <p>Lock mechanisms, found on both sides of the stroller, can break and cause the stroller to suddenly collapse. When the strollers collapse, babies can fall and suffer injuries.</p>	<p>A label with the word "LiteSport" can be found on the front of the footrest. The model number and manufacture date can be found on a label on the back leg frame of the stroller. These strollers were manufactured 12/97-12/99.</p>	<p>Consumers should stop using the strollers immediately and contact Kolcraft to receive a free repair kit. For more information, call Kolcraft toll-free at 800/922-2130 anytime.</p>

Forever Families



Adoption and Guardianship Preservation helps families hold fast

Families created through adoption or guardianship may experience problems that require intensive services to help a family gain stability and to reduce the risk of out-of-home placement. The Adoption and Guardianship Preservation Program recognizes that families built through adoption or guardianship may have characteristics significantly different from those created through birth. This can result in unique challenges for the family. The Adoption and Guardianship Preservation Program helps families who often feel they are at the end of their rope, by offering family-centered support and services that include:

Comprehensive Assessment/Crisis Intervention: Preservation staff will respond by phone within 24 hours and make an in-home visit within three days. A therapist will help a family identify their own strengths, complete an assessment and develop a family treatment plan within 30 days of the referral to the program.

Clinical Services: The therapist will provide the clinical services in the family treatment plan.

Support Groups: Support groups are offered for both parents and youth at times and locations that meet the family's needs.

Case Management/Advocacy Services: The preservation agency will manage the case and the services as outlined in the family treatment plan.

Children's Mental Health Advocacy Services: If a child has significant mental health needs, the program will provide or facilitate the services.

Cash Assistance: If a family participating in the program experiences economic hardships or require specialized services that cannot be obtained through other resources, a cash assistance payment (limited to \$500 per family per fiscal year) may be provided.

To contact the
Post Adoption and
Guardianship
Preservation Agency
near you,
call
800-572-2390

The key to preservation services is that they serve the whole family to keep the family together. The preservation specialists work with all members of the family, not just the child with problems, to identify ways they can work as a unit.

"Families who adopt or take guardianship of children served by DCFS, are often glad not to have caseworkers in their lives. But, when the heat is on and a family's stability is at stake, it is important that we be there to help," said Dave Matthews, of Matthews and Associates, an adoption and guardianship preservation services provider in Herrin.

The adoption and guardianship preservation service agencies understand the rhythms of the special families they serve and are able to respond to crisis situations. Preservation services are provided to adoptive and guardianship families by nine private child welfare agencies that serve a specific geographic area. Families that find they need intensive intervention to keep their family together can call the Post Adoption and Guardianship Information and Referral line at 800-572-2390 to be directed to the appropriate agency.

Meet the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council: Elizabeth Richmond, co-chair



When Elizabeth first saw Danielle, a child who had spent time at the Crisis Nursery in Peoria, she knew they were meant to be a family. Elizabeth and her husband Tom became licensed foster parents with Lutheran Social Services and invited Danielle, then age four, into their home. Continuing in foster care over the years has resulted in the adoption of Danielle, then Caden and later his sister Olivia – all children with special needs. With birth son Parker, the Richmonds work hard to build a safe and nurturing home life that meets each child's individual needs.

Yet, their positive impact resonates beyond their own family. Elizabeth left her career and income as the Wellness Coordinator at Bradley University to essentially become a full-time volunteer. In addition to serving as co-chair of the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council, she continues to volunteer at the Crisis Nursery, coordinating clothing donations. She is active in the school Parent Teacher Organization and co-chairs the Central Region Foster Care Advisory Council. She is a Trainer for the DCFS Foster and Adoptive Parent PRIDE training curriculum. For six years Elizabeth served on the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council. She is a four-year member of the Child Welfare Advisory Council and helped plan the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) 2002 Annual Conference. DCFS recently nominated Elizabeth and Tom for a national Adoption Excellence Award.

Elizabeth offers organizations what she calls “the view from the bottom of the frog pond.” She speaks from what she knows, because she is there in the muck, with sleeves rolled up doing the work. In the midst of all the activity, one will rarely hear a complaint from Elizabeth, and then it is always followed by an idea to fix the problem. She rarely says no, because she believes there is always a way to get to yes when it will help a child.

Book Review:

The Adoption Dilemma: A Handbook for Adoptive Parents, by Vincenette Scheppler, MSW

Experienced social worker and adoptive parent, Vincenette Scheppler, presents the dilemma for every adoptive child—reconciling the fact that he has two sets of parents and settling on what his relationship will be with each. The concise, practical handbook presents the “real deal” in real words from parents who have been there and children who have been adopted. The chapters are brief and easy to follow, yet cover a lot of territory.

The chapter *Before You Adopt* gives a realistic look at adoption from the perspective of the child and the potential adoptive parent. With that foundation, parents can decide if they are truly ready for adoptive parenthood. *While You Wait* offers tips on putting the time before a match is made to good use by finding an understanding pediatrician or taking care of present family situations. *Will You Take This Child* helps adults come to terms with the forever nature of adoption, despite the child's background.

Subsequent chapters on *Visiting*, *Suddenly a Family* and *The Honeymoon* offer realistic expectations of the early stages of the relationship and stress the need to *Listen* to children as the family works to meld together. The remainder of the handbook includes how to approach issues around *Heredity* and how to build family among *Biological and Adopted Children*. The author also touches on challenges concerning *Transracial Adoptions* and adoptions *If You Are Single*. She ends the booklet with her advice on *The Search* for the birth family—the parents' ultimate dilemma in nurturing a child to the point of independent self-discovery.

The booklet is available for viewing on the Arvin Publications website www.arvinpublications.com/adoption.html. Copies are also available in the DCFS Lending Library. For more information visit the website or contact Arvin Publications at 817/784-3803.

DCFS uses technology (con't)



The Phase II SACWIS computer system will support the best practice procedures by helping the caseworker manage information about the child, which in turn helps foster parents. For instance, once SACWIS Phase II is in place, caseworkers will be able to print out all the information in a child's case record and provide all appropriate information to foster parents. With SACWIS, workers only have to enter basic information into the system once, then that data will be transferred to all the forms and other materials associated with the child's case. Because it will be much easier for caseworkers to access information, it will be easier for them to provide it to foster parents.

There is much work before Phase II of either Best Practice or SACWIS is implemented. However, the hard work will pay off when it helps children and the families caring for them.

Tell It Like It Is

Fostering Illinois wants to hear the "real deal" on fostering from those who know best – you! The question was: **What holiday traditions does your family observe?**

"In our family, we always put the tree up the week after Thanksgiving. I love seeing the kids' eyes light up on Christmas morning when they see the tree decorated with the presents underneath."

Regina

Foster and Adoptive Parent

"Each year we gather at my parents' house and exchange gifts. Then we spend the day playing board games. There is a special kids' room, which is usually dominated by my kids."

Sarah Baker

Foster and Adoptive Parent

"I make sure that each Christmas Eve there are treats left out for Santa. And each year the cookies and hot cocoa "disappear" during the night. To me, anything that brings some happiness sounds like a good idea."

Donsetta Blakely

Foster and Adoptive Parent

Editor's note: Last year I shared with readers the James Family tradition of giving new pajamas on Christmas Eve. Then, I tried something new and mailed pajamas to our kids who had returned home or moved to other placements. The excited phone calls and subsequent visits more than made up for the extra postage.

The question for this issue is: **What would you want Illinois' new Governor to know about foster care?**

You can contact me with your responses by e-mail at foster@chicagonet.net or by phone at 773/548-3888 or by mail at Fostering Illinois, James R. Thompson Center, 6th fl, Chicago IL 60601. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Vanessa James, Editor

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Purpose: To help busy families handle fostering children more effectively. To bring them the best information from the most knowledgeable sources. To promote statewide teamwork in finding permanency for children.

Address Changes: Foster parents must notify their agency, who will notify DCFS. Agencies should change addresses of office locations or request staff copies through the Editor.

Fostering Illinois is published six times a year, bi-monthly, and mailed to licensed foster parents, unlicensed relatives caring for children under DCFS care, all DCFS staff and private agency staff as ordered.

Material may not be reprinted in whole, in part or in any form whatsoever without permission from the Editor or DCFS.

Opinions expressed by experts writing articles are no substitute for professional answers or opinions about a family's or child's specific situation. Consult a competent professional for answers to your specific questions.

Do You Know A Family For Me?

Perry [C5562] He's artistically talented and will show off his drawings in a minute! Perry loves to learn about animals. This active youngster is eight years old. His foster parents and teachers describe Perry as a happy child who has made many friends.

Constance [C6582] She's an excellent athlete – Constance (Connie) plays softball, runs track, and has been a cheerleader. Her other favorite activities are watching movies and “hanging out” with friends. Connie is thirteen years old. Connie's teacher said she is a hard worker and enjoys school. Her foster parent said she can be very sweet and she cares for her pet kitten responsibly.

Syreeta [C4266] This sociable young lady is always interested in those around her, and loves to spend time talking to her friends and braiding their hair. Syreeta, 12, likes to try out different crafts. She also bowls and rollerskates. Her foster mother said she become friendly with another child who lives in her home. Her teacher said she is capable of succeeding in school.

Anthony and Sade [C7059 and 7125] Anthony is already a leader at 13! He is president of his class and a crosswalk patroller at school. His favorite activities include playing basketball and listening to music on his portable CD player. Sade, 11, loves to sing, especially in church. She always tries to look her best, and she likes helping out at home. For fun, she jumps rope, skates, and swims, or plays with her collection of dolls and stuffed animals.

Anthony's foster parent and teacher said he is always the first to volunteer for a task. His foster mother said he is “very obedient” and an “all-around good kid.” Sade's foster parent said she is a sweet, helpful girl who follows directions and has a good sense of humor. Her teacher reported that she likes to do neat work and takes the time to strive for excellence.

Shawn [C7077] This 17-year old young man is on the move! He's quite versatile, too. You may encounter Shawn on hockey skates or rollerblades. He also enjoys playing video games, board games, and PlayStation. His workers said that Shawn is caring and can express affection. He has a great sense of humor and is “pleasant to be around.”

If you are interested in adopting one of these children or learning about other children waiting to be adopted, please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390 (within Illinois) or 1-312-346-1516 (outside Illinois), or see the AICI web site – www.adoptinfo-il.org.

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Perry (C5562)



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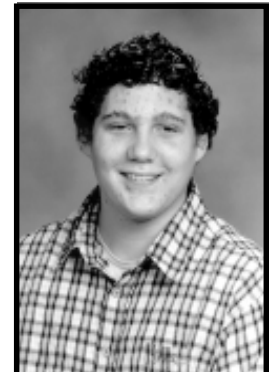


Syreeta (C4266)



Anthony (C7059)

Sade (C7125)



Shawn (C7077)

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Call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois 800/572-2390.