

## Communication key to successful reunification foster care

Allison and Rodney Mayo started their foster care experience while living in South Carolina. They felt it was such a positive experience that when Rodney's Air Force career brought the family to Scott Air Force Base, they became licensed here. Now their home base includes three children by birth, ranging in age from 16 to 21 years, and two children adopted through South Carolina's foster care system. Additionally, three children are in their care who all have a return home goal.

The family is committed to reunification and has structured their home life and parenting around it. Allison is a stay-at-home parent, and she is very involved in maintaining parent-child contact. She provides transportation for weekly visits and is open to accepting telephone calls from the children's relatives, including parents and grandparents. They have sent letters to incarcerated parents so they can stay up-to-date with their child's development.

"We treat parents with respect. We don't judge them," she said.

The Mayos embrace their role as members of the team alongside parents and caseworkers, and pride themselves on being able

to contribute. They advocate for the children in their care, while being careful to maintain their role as caregivers. Rodney and Allison feel most supported when an open dialogue can be established between the foster parent and the worker.

"We voice our concerns when it's necessary," said Rodney. "We say what we feel we need to if it's in the best interest of the children." Allison added, "But we don't make the decisions. We're foster parents, not social workers."

In addition to communicating with parents and caseworkers, the Mayos feel that foster parents need to be more involved with other foster parents. They participate in Foster Parent Advisory Council meetings whenever they can, and would like to link with other families, particularly new foster parents. Experience is the best teacher, and Allison feels that sharing knowledge can be valuable.

"It's not a weakness if a new foster parent calls an experienced one to get some ideas," she noted. "We



Allison and Rodney Mayo

like to be there for other families," said Allison.

The Mayos' openness to cooperation and communication underpins all of their reunification work.

"We need to do our part to keep kids safe and happy," said Allison. Rodney agrees, noting, "We're thrilled if kids are able to go home. That's a real success story."

## Southern Region sends 6 students to college with DCFS scholarships

This year, six students whose cases were served by programs in Southern Region headed to college with the benefits included in the DCFS Scholarship Program. The scholarship includes waiver of tuition and mandatory fees at any one of the nine Illinois state universities or Illinois junior colleges, a monthly maintenance grant of \$471 and a medical card.

Scholarship recipients were chosen from more than 250 candidates statewide on the basis of scholastic aptitude, a written personal statement and demonstrated community involvement. Next year's scholarship application process begins in January and ends in March. Contact the youth's caseworker or the DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services at 312-814-5959 for more information.



### Jamie Crockett

Jamie is a 2010 graduate of East St. Louis High School where she earned a 4.86 GPA on a 5.0 scale and was Valedictorian of her class. In high school she participated in the Upward Bound college preparatory program,

was a member of the speech team and served as the senior class president. Additionally, she earned admission to the National Honor Society and served as the vice president for the local chapter of the National Beta Club and treasurer for the Academy of Forensic Science. Jamie is also an active member of her church's Outreach Mission. She attends the University of Missouri, majoring in journalism/communications.



### Carolita Holmes

Carolita, from Fairview Heights, graduated in 2009 from East St. Louis High School where she earned a 4.3 GPA on a 5.0 scale. Carolita earned honor roll recognition and ranked tenth in her graduating class. She

completed and passed a Certified Nurse's Assistant program. Carolita is in her second year at Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville, studying nursing. At SIUE she is a member of the STARS (Student Assisting in Recruiting) and the F.A.M.E. (Females of African Decent Modeling Excellence). The F.A.M.E. organization helps African-American females succeed in college by providing support, encouragement, and positive self-esteem to those in the program.



### Joshua Majerus

Joshua, from Pocahtonias, is a 2010 graduate of Bond County High School. Joshua earned a 2.8 GPA out on a 4.0 scale, and took honors classes. Josh participated in football, basketball and track, while being very active with his

church. He also achieved Eagle Scout status before his 18th birthday. Additionally, Josh set an example for his peers by committing to not use drugs or alcohol. He organized bonfires at his home so that he and friends had a place to have fun after games. He has held jobs as a grill cook and dish washer, and through Eagle Scouts he volunteered on projects that included a flower garden for a local funeral home and completion of a high school sports complex. Josh is a student at Eastern Illinois University, majoring in physical therapy.

### Charles McGuire (photo unavailable)

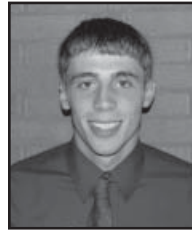
Charles, from Watson, is a 2010 graduate of St. Anthony High School. He earned a 3.3 out of 4.0 GPA and was selected for the National Honor Society and as an Illinois State Scholar. In high school he was president of the Spanish Club, a member of the track team and captain of his high school soccer team.

Additionally, Charles has worked since he was 12. He has experience detassling corn, dishwashing, frying chicken and in cable construction. He has also managed to accrue over 80 hours of community service. He worked with Relay for Life and Catholic Charities, and he helped coach young boys in basketball. Now he is a student at St. Louis University and he plans to major in biology/pre-medicine.



### **Tomi Mick** (photo unavailable)

Tomi is a 2009 graduate, originally from Carbondale, who was home schooled for high school in Cook County. Her extracurricular activities included LifeSavers, a peer listening and suicide prevention group and Females United for Action (FUFA), a group that organized and participated in events aimed at teenage girls and gender-questioning youth. Tomi also attended many Social Justice conferences. Tomi has volunteered at the Carbondale Public Library Teen Advisory Board, FUFA, and the Chicago Anti-White Supremacy Initiative (CAWSI). After earning her diploma, she worked as a crewmember on various sailing ships. Now she is studying at Illinois State University where she plans to major in social work.



### **Timothy Moore**

Timothy is a 2010 graduate of Fairfield Community High School where he earned a 3.4 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Timothy participated in and earned awards for basketball, track and football all four years of high school, and he participated in baseball as a freshman. He was also a member of Student Council, Spanish Club, and Spanish Traveler, which allowed him to go to Costa Rica. He was inducted to the National Honor Society. He completed science fair competitions and entered public speaking contests. Timothy was also a member of ALPHA (Adults Learning Positive Health Alternatives), a small group of teens educating freshmen about drugs and alcohol. He taught Sunday School and participated in Relay for Life. Now he is a freshman at Frontier Community College, where he will major in criminal justice.

## **Family Centered Services give school help in Marion and other areas**

Family Centered Services (FCS) are available to all foster families in the Southern Region. These programs focus on youth who are experiencing educational issues, including truancy, suspension and expulsion, as well as being identified as at risk of academic failure. They are coordinated in Local Area Networks to serve communities.

In Marion County (LAN 9) Children's Hope United can help students who are experiencing problems in school. The agency can provide case management, work between the school and the caregivers and connect students with resources they may need.

Case manager Lucas Sigrist described his recent work with a 14-year old named here as Donald. He was referred by his school due

to truancy, poor peer relationships, and below average grades. Donald was also disorganized at school and at home. Sigrist, Donald and his father helped to reorganize his room to promote a better learning environment. They next worked to develop more focused study habits through mentoring and counseling. Donald began to display increased self-esteem and his father worked cooperatively with Sigrist and the school to improve communications, especially regarding homework.

The school noted steady improvement in Donald's academic performance as well as in his behavior. By the end of the school year, Donald was given an award as the most improved student.

Success stories like this are not uncommon when FCS becomes

involved. Caseworkers and the DCFS LAN Liaison can connect caregivers to FCS programs.

### **Finding FCS school programs in Southern Region**

**There are similar education programs for youth living in the other LANs in Southern Region. These services are open to all families, including foster, adoptive and guardianship families.**

**For more information on local resources contact the DCFS LAN Liaison:  
Dwayne Phillips  
618-257-7500 office  
dwayne.phillips@illinois.gov**



# Southern Region Caregiver Training

## Foster PRIDE In-Service Modules

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

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

### Module 1 - Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children at Risk (12 training hours)

This module focuses on building self-esteem in children. It covers how kids act when they need recognition, power, freedom, enjoyment, and a feeling of belonging. Caregivers will learn how to listen to what kids say and not what we think they say.

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

This workshop provides practical information to foster parents about how to use effective discipline techniques such as I-messages, natural and logical consequences, time out and how to catch kids being "good" and what to do to encourage positive behavior.

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

Participants learn to differentiate normal from problematic sexual behaviors in children and youth, signs and symptoms of sexual abuse and ways to help sexually abused children recover.

### Module 5 - Supporting Relationships between Children and Their Families (9 training hours)

This training focuses on helping foster parents learn how to help kids attach to caregivers and at the same time stay loyal to birth families. Caregivers learn about how to prepare and support children for and after visits with the birth family and how to share the parenting role with birth parents.

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

Foster parents learn team members' roles, when and how to be an advocate for children, what conflict is and their own personal style for managing it, and how conflict can be a "win - win" situation for everyone involved.

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

Culture includes traditions, values, customs and history. What "culture" means to a child's self-esteem, how to manage cultural diversity in a foster home, how to discuss sensitive issues with children and how to help a child record his or her history are topics covered in this module.

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

The focus of this training is on families who have children in care and supporting reunification of the children and parents.

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

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

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

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

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

This new course assists caregivers to identify developmentally appropriate ways to best promote healthy development for preteens and teens who have experienced abuse, neglect and trauma. This six-hour module will help foster/adopt caregivers understand teen brain development and the impact of trauma and loss on preteens and teens.

Participants will learn specific strategies that caregivers can use when fostering teenagers in the day to day life of the foster family.

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

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

## Educational Advocacy 6 training hrs.

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six-hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

## Our Kids

Sponsor  
DCFS Southern  
Region Administration

Regional Reporter  
Michael Bollman  
10251 Lincoln Trail  
Fairview Hts., IL 62208  
Phone: 618-394-2100 Fax: 618-394-2123  
[Michael.Bollman@illinois.gov](mailto:Michael.Bollman@illinois.gov)



Anyone can call the regional reporter with foster parent association news and schedules; local training notices; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.