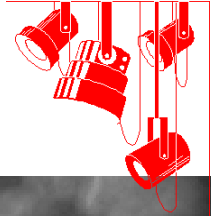


Advocate

News for Chicago Metro Area Foster Parents

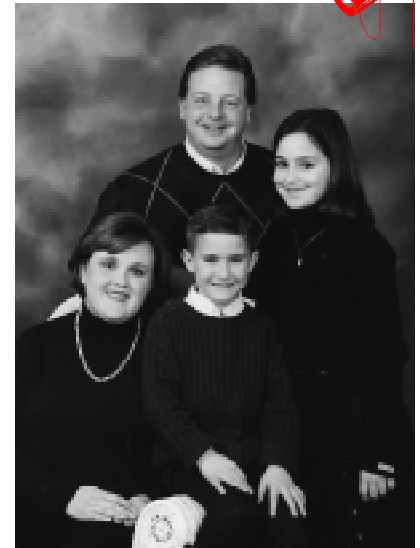
From Homeroom to Home Forever: Teacher gives first grader a permanent family



It started out like any other report card pick up day for first grade teacher Brigid Bullington. However, when the foster mom to Zachary, one of Brigid's students, told her that she could no longer keep the child, Brigid's life took a sudden turn.

"My husband Joseph listens to all my stories about being a public school teacher. But when I came home and told him what was happening, he wanted to see what we could do to help," said Brigid.

The next day, Brigid called Zachary's caseworker partly out of professional concern about his schooling, but also to see what it would take to become foster parents. When she heard the agency was having a hard time finding another home for Zachary, Brigid took it as a sign. The couple, who had no other children, immediately took time off work to get fingerprints and physicals. In three days they had all the application paperwork turned in.



Soon their home was cleared for an emergency placement and Zachary went home with his teacher. In Brigid's classroom there were six other foster kids. When they found out what was happening for Zach, they wanted to go home with their special teacher too.

While her other students stayed put, there was another child waiting for the Bullington family. Zachary had an older sister who had remained in his former foster home. Their visitation plan was not working well and it was hard for Zachary to be apart from Danielle. Within a few months, the Bullingtons decided it would be best to become foster parents to Danielle also and reunite the siblings.

Meanwhile, proceedings were underway to free both children for adoption. Within a year, parental rights were relinquished. The Bullingtons adopted Zachary, now 8, and Danielle, now 11.

"We couldn't be happier or feel more blessed," said Brigid. "I want to do anything I can to spread the word about foster parenting to more people. It's the best thing you can do."

Next month the family will celebrate their one-year anniversary together. Both children are adjusting well and have been on the honor roll. The counseling they needed early on is over and by all accounts they have written a happy ending to their story.

Cook County Presidents' Council Addresses Post-Adoption Services

The Cook County Presidents Council held a mini-conference to make parents aware of the many services and programs available to support their families after adoption or guardianship. The programs included a presentation by Gretchen Schulert of the Midwest Adoption Center (MAC). MAC works with the Department to help individuals who have been in DCFS care obtain non-identifying information about their birth families. MAC can also assist in search and reunion efforts.

The DCFS Division of Foster Care and Permanency Services also presented several of its initiatives including: an updated Post-Adoption and Guardianship Services Booklet; Crossroads, a new resource guide for teens transitioning to adulthood; and Forever Families, an upcoming newsletter feature for adoptive families. For more information on these items, call 217/524-2422.



Gretchen Schulert of the Midwest Adoption Center described the search and reunion services available to provide information about birth families.

Mark Your Calendars for Family Fun

Chicago prides itself on the variety of festivals and family activities available throughout the year. Make plans now to take advantage of the holiday and recreational programs being offered. For more information on these events, contact the Mayor's Office of Special Events at 312/744-3315.

City of Chicago Calendar of Events for 2002

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| January - February 2002 | Winter Delights: Chicago's A Cool Place |
| April 27 & September 28 | 4th Annual Mayor Daley's Kids & Kites Festival |
| May 17-June 16 | Bike Chicago 2002 |
| May 18-19 | 4th Annual Great Chicago Places and Spaces |
| May 20-24 | 2nd Annual Asian American Festival |
| May 30-June 2 | 19th Annual Chicago Blues Festival |
| June 7-9 | 18th Annual Chicago Gospel Music Festival |
| June 28-July 7 | 22nd Annual Taste of Chicago |
| June 29-30 | 12th Annual Chicago Country Music Festival |
| June 30 | 10th Annual Race to the Taste |
| July 16-August 27 | 3rd Annual Chicago Outdoor Film Festival |
| July 20-21 | 9th Annual Mayor's Cup Youth Soccer Tournament |
| July 27 | 45th Annual Venetian Night |
| August 17-18 | 44th Annual Chicago Air and Water Show |
| August 24-25 | 14th Annual "Viva! Chicago" Latin Music Festival |
| August 29-September 1 | 24th Annual Chicago Jazz Festival |
| September 14-15 | 6th Annual Celtic Fest Chicago |
| September 20-29 | World Music Festival: Chicago 2002 |
| October 11-31 | 5th Annual Halloween Pumpkin Plaza |
| October 19 | Halloween Happening |
| November 28-December 24 | Daley Plaza Santa's House |
| November 28 | Jingle Elf Parade |
| November 29 | Tree Lighting |
| December 27-29 | Mayor Daley's 3rd Annual Holiday Sports Festival |

Juvenile Court Orientation Schedule

For an overview of the Cook County Juvenile Court stop in for an orientation session. Foster parents, caseworkers, students and new court employees are invited to a half-day orientation to the Juvenile Court from 9:00 a.m. until noon. The session will include a tour of the court facilities and a question and answer period following presentations by individuals from the State's Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, DCFS Legal and Judge's staff.

Orientations will be held on: Wednesday, February 27; Wednesday, April 24; Wednesday, June 26; Wednesday, August 28; and Wednesday, October 30.

Cook County Juvenile Court, 2245 W. Ogden, Chicago, IL 60612

Reservations are required. Call 312/433-6990 to reserve a seat. No children are allowed at the orientation. Parking is available for \$2. Be sure to allow extra time to pass through security.

Cook South Youth Advisory Board Seeking Teens To Make a Difference

The Youth Advisory Board at Cook South held a “Town Hall Meeting” in the fall to recruit new members. They want to encourage all Cook South DCFS and private agency foster children between the ages of 14-21 to become members.

The group deals with and discusses issues that are relevant to our youth in foster care. One of its goals is to improve communication between youth and the Department. They also strive to let staff know about problems and help come up with solutions to them.

The group has discussed such topics as: Working with the Caseworker to Get Things Done; Independent Living Programs; Issues Related to Being in Foster Care; Employment; and Breaking Down Barriers.

The group meets the fourth Thursday of every month at 4:00 p.m. at the Emerald Office located at 6201 S. Emerald. If transportation is an issue, or for more information about the group, please contact Patricia Davis at 773/371-6120.

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Cook South FP Association Halloween Party

More than 150 kids and their families celebrated Halloween with the Cook South Foster Parent Association. The group provided refreshments, along with games and lots of candy. There was even a toy raffle. With the costumes, music and decorations, the DCFS Emerald office was the place to be for Halloween fun.

The Cook South Foster Parent Association invites all DCFS and private agency families to participate in its meetings and events. The group meets at 6201 S. Emerald on the second Thursday of the month from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.

The group is led by: President Ardyce Thomas, Vice President Carol Lukacek and Secretary Donsetta Blakely.

Mind, Body & Soul

“Sound really does travel slower than light. The advice parents give to their 18 year olds doesn’t reach them until they’re about 40.” - *Unknown*

“A well-spent day brings happy sleep.” - *Leonardo Da Vinci*

“Be yourself. (Everyone else is taken.)” - *Unknown*

“Striving for excellence motivates you. Striving for perfection is demoralizing.” - *Harriet Beraiker*

Planning for the 2002 Implementation Plan

During the months of October and November, the region held several focus groups to review and revise our annual plan to support the Foster Parent Bill of Rights and Responsibilities. The three focus groups (one was cancelled due to an unexpected after hours fire drill!) were attended by approximately 30 foster parents, and were facilitated by Chris McGrath, Regional Administrator, Jackie Bright, Program Manager and Sari Rowitz, Resource Development Manager. These groups met for several hours to review the region's accomplishments for the past year and discuss the strengths of the plan and the areas needing enhancement. Copies of the Cook North Implementation Plan, Regional Grievance Procedure, Visitation Tool and Directory will be mailed to all Cook North foster parents in the beginning of March. Copies of all of these documents will also be available in each Cook North site.

At the suggestion of some of our foster parents, we will address a Right and/or a Responsibility and the Region's response in each edition of Fostering Illinois. If you have any questions, concerns or comments regarding our plan, you may contact either Jackie Bright at 312/328-2507, e-mail address: JBright@idcfs.state.il.us or Sari Rowitz at 312/328-2481, e-mail address: SRowitz@idcfs.state.il.us.

FOSTER PARENTS' RIGHT

The right to be treated with dignity, respect and consideration as a professional member of the child welfare team.

COOK NORTH REGION'S PLAN

It is the expectation that every staff person in the Cook North Region recognizes that foster parents are key members of the multi-disciplinary professional team that provides an array of services to children and families involved with the child welfare system. We make every effort to integrate into local practice that foster parents are to be treated with mutual respect, dignity and consideration. These efforts include working with foster parents in soliciting their input into regional activities and initiatives, working to share case-specific and regional information in a timely manner and continuing to maintain an open and ongoing dialogue to promote teamwork and problem resolution.

The region has established a teamwork committee that focuses on encouraging relationships between staff and foster parents. This committee supports activities to promote respect and relationship building. In the past year the activities included organizing a regional picnic, appreciation day celebrations and developing the visitation tool to enhance caseworker, youth and foster parent conversations during monthly visits.

We work to ensure that each staff person recognizes that this is a mutual exchange of information, giving information as well as listening and receiving information from foster parents. To this end, the region is developing standardized performance objectives related to supporting the Foster Parent Bill of Rights and Responsibilities that will be incorporated into the annual evaluations for all staff at every level by 1/1/02.

Cook North Youth Wins Poetry Competition

Tomeka is a 16 year old who wrote an award-winning poem entitled, "Royal Sparkling". She is a delightful young lady who enjoys writing poetry and short stories. Tomeka submitted her poem to Famous Poets Society and learned that her poem, "Royal Sparkling", was eligible for presentation at their Seventh Annual Poetry Convention on September 16-18, 2001, in Reno, Nevada. Unfortunately, Tomeka's trip to Reno had to be cancelled after the terrorist attacks. Still, Tomeka was glad to have her work honored and said that she was happy to be alive.

Cook North extends congratulations to Tomeka on her success. We are very proud of her.

Royal Sparkling

***What if there were only
royal sparkling champagne rivers
And a place where you could go -
When your sea Level is Low***

***No Longer then your beautiful tears
could drown the world
And your only savior would be a
dove floating above.***

People you should know.....

Ursula Angielski is the adoption supervisor located at the Cook North Skokie office. She supervises the adoption staff who work with the permanency teams located at Skokie and 4055 N. Western. Ursula became the adoption supervisor of the team previously supervised by Jackie Wert, who retired April of last year. She has a Master's Degree in Social Work and has been involved with adoptions for the past eight years. Prior to that, she was a Child Protection Investigator for four years and a Chicago public school teacher. Ursula believes that she continues to learn a lot from working with our adoptive families.



*Ursula Angielski,
Adoption Supervisor*

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"I am grateful for adoptive families' commitment to our children and hope they realize how much they are appreciated and needed. It is very important that the foster parent feels comfortable working with us and approaching us with any questions or concerns," said Ursula. Ursula wants parents to consider the adoption staff as part of their team working towards the same goal.

"It is our job to help you help our children, until they become legally yours. And even then, DCFS is still available to help you with post-adoption services," she said. If families are uncertain about the available services or procedures, please feel free to call Ursula at 847/745-3073.



*Rose Love,
Adoption Supervisor*

Rose Love has a Master's Degree in Social Work and is the adoption supervisor for the South end of the region at 1911 S. Indiana. She has worked for the Department for more than 27 years and has been involved in working with adoptions for the last 12. In addition to adoption work, Rose has worked in several regions including the old East and West areas and Cook Central where she was a follow-up worker. She has done daycare licensing and was the supervisor of a POS (purchase of services) monitoring team.

Now, as the supervisor of one of the region's adoption teams, Rose works with her staff to be honest with and supportive of potential adoptive families as they approach their commitment to adoption. She states that both families and staff need to be truthful about their needs, concerns and expectations regarding adoptions.

"We need to recognize that adoption is a beautiful thing. If children cannot be safely reunified, all children deserve to be with a loving family," she stated.

For families that are in the process of, or have already adopted, Rose has some helpful hints that she believes adoptive parents need to remember:

- create a file to maintain all of your adoption documents including the adoption decree, subsidy agreement and any correspondences you may receive, etc.
- when your child's case is closed, workers often provide families with information on post-adoptive services—make sure that you keep this information.
- remember that policies sometimes change and parents should keep informed about issues related to post adoption services and subsidies.

Rose very much enjoys being a part of the work that makes adoptions happen for our children. Rose is available to talk with prospective adoptive families and can be contacted at 312/808-5000.

Meet the Cook Central Foster Parent Support Specialists

The Foster Parent Support Specialists provide information and resources to DCFS-supervised foster parents so they can better meet the needs of the children in their homes. The support specialists have first-hand experience in foster care and adoption and share their knowledge with the families they serve. They are also trained to know Department policies and procedures so they can effectively advocate within DCFS for foster families. The foster parent support specialists serve families in specific geographic areas.

**Adrienne Welenc, (773/292-7879)
Lead Foster Parent Support Specialist**

Adrienne started as a supervisor to the support specialists (formerly foster parent advocates) in 1982. She believes that foster parents have an extremely important role in the lives of children. Adrienne says, "Foster parents need all the help and support we can give them."

Adrienne and Jerry, her husband of 43 years, have fostered more than 90 children. They have eight birth and adopted children. They are looking forward to their 13th grandchild this summer. "I love the work and I truly feel we make a difference," Adrienne said.



Rosie Fluker, (773/522-8896) serving Chicago's 60644 zip code

Rosie served families for 11 years as a support specialist until 1997. She recently resumed her duties as FPSS last August after recovering from a long battle with kidney failure. After the successful transplant of a kidney donated by her husband, Rosie is happy to be back supporting DCFS families on Chicago's West Side.

The Fluker family has fostered children for sixteen years. Additionally, Rosie and John have four birth children and four adopted children.

Synola Okparaji, (708/334-4152) serving Chicago's 60651 zip code

Synola has been a support specialist since 1997. She enjoys her work. "Helping other foster parents gives me a greater awareness of the diverse need of foster parents and children," she says.

In her 11-year tenure as a foster parent she has had eight children in her home. She has experienced return homes and relative care. She has cared for infants and seen two teens graduate from high school.





Alice Couch, (708/652-3521) serving Broadview, Berkley, Westchester, Maywood, Bellwood and Forest Park

Alice has been a foster parent since 1975. In 1982 she started as what was then called a foster parent advocate. She has served families from Lawndale to the far South suburbs. Her days can be quite busy as she also works as a special education program assistant at the local school.

Her experience in fostering and in education help Alice meet the many needs of the families she serves in the Western suburbs. She welcomes calls from more foster parents.

Denise Gajewski, (847/455-2969) serving Chicago 60639, 60647, 60618, 60622, Oak Park, Cicero, Berwyn, Lyons, River Forest and Justice

Denise has worked with DCFS since 1982 as a recruiter and a foster parent support specialist. She enjoys working with Cook Central families and being able to help them in many different ways.

Denise and her three birth children have opened their home to many foster children since she became a foster parent in 1981. She has had long-term and emergency placements. Her time spent fostering helps her help other families. Denise believes that "good foster parents are the most important thing in a foster child's life." She hopes she can continue to help Cook Central families for a long time.



Susana Flores, (773/486-2841) serving Chicago zip codes 60607, 60608, 60612 and Hispanic families in Cook Central region

Susana began caring for children in 1978 by raising two relative children whom she later adopted. After having another child by birth, she and her husband decided to spread their joy in parenting with other children in need. They have been in the lives of 32 children for short and long-term arrangements.

In 1999, Susana started as a support specialist to not only work with children, but also to help foster parents. "I am there to be their intermediary, their voice and their support. At times I just listen, if that is what they need," she said.



Betty Anderson, (773/533-5810) serving Chicago's 60634 zip code

Even with six grown children, Betty still finds herself taking care of adolescents. For 13 years she has been a foster parent, focusing on pre-teens and teen-agers. Currently she has guardianship of a child who is away in college.

Since she became a support specialist six years ago, Betty has made herself available to foster parents 24-hours a day and seven days a week. She appreciates her role because it allows her to "work as part of a team to make good things happen for children."



Cook County Training Calendar

FosterPRIDE In-Service Training Call 312-553-5829 or -5830

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend any or all of the PRIDE In-Service Trainings to enhance their skills and meet yearly training requirements.

Module 1 - *The Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children* (Four 3-hour sessions = 12 training hours)

Module 2 - *Using Discipline to Protect and Nurture* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 3 - *Addressing Developmental Issues Related to Sexuality* (One 3-hour session = 3 training hours)

Module 4 - *Responding to the Signs and Symptoms of Sexual Abuse* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 5 - *Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 6 - *Working as a Professional Team Member* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 7 - *Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 8 - *Promoting Permanency Outcomes* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 9 - *Managing the Impact of Placement on Your Family* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 10 - *Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children & Families* (Five 3-hour sessions = 15 training hours)

COOK SOUTH Module **African American Images**

March 4, 6, 11 & 13 (Mon/Wed) 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. 1
March 16 & 23 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. 7
March 19, 21 & 26 (Tues/Thurs) 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. 2

DCFS, 6291 S. Emerald, Chicago
March 25, 27 & April 1 (Mon/Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m. 5

DCFS, 15115 Dixie Hwy., Harvey
February 25, 27 & March 4 (Mon/Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m. 2

Other In-Service Trainings

Adoption Conversion Training
Chicago Association for Retarded Citizens
March 2, 9 & 16 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
DCFS, 6201 S. Emerald
February 25, 27 & March 4 (Mon/Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

COOK CENTRAL Module **Association House - SPANISH**

February 16 & 23 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. 1
March 9, 16 & 23 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. 2

DCFS, 3518 W. Division
February 12, 14 & 19 (Tues/Thurs) 6:30-9:30 p.m. 3&4

Luthern Child & Family Services
March 2 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
& 9 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. 2

Other In-Service Trainings

Adoption Conversion Training
Latoff YMCA
March 18, 20 & 25 (Mon/Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

COOK NORTH Module **Harold Washington College**

February 23 & March 2 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. 7

Other In-Service Trainings

Transracial Parenting Training (9 hrs.)
Harold Washinton College
March 12, 14 & 19 (Tues/Thurs) 6:30-9:30 p.m.
Irish Center
March 9, 16 & 23 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Adoption Conversion Training
Irish Center
March 26, 28 & April 2 (Tues/Thurs) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions =
6 training hours

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be licensed or 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.

COOK NORTH Irish Center
February 20 & 25 (Mon/Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.
March 2 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

DCFS, 1911 S. Indiana
March 27 & April 1 (Mon/Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.
Harold Washington College
March 7 & 12 (Tues/Thurs) 9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

COOK CENTRAL DCFS - 3518 W. Division
March 9 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
March 28 & April 2 (Tues/Thurs) 6:30-9:30 p.m.
Luthern Child & Family Services
February 16 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
February 21 & 26 (Tues/Thurs) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

COOK SOUTH ABJ Community Services
February 16 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
African American Images

March 9 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
DCFS South Area Office
February 23 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
March 14 & 19 (Tues/Thurs) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Harvey
February 14 & 19 (Tues/Thurs) 6:30-9:30 p.m.
March 23 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Ivanhoe Lutheran Church, Riverdale
March 26 & 28 (Tues/Thurs) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

**Pre-registration is
required for all classes!
Call the number
shown above.**

