

Advocate

News for Chicago Metro Area Foster Parents

The Christmas That Starts in July

For the past five years, the Northeast Foster Parent Association has worked with Father Sam Sherry of the Orthodox Christian Clergy Association of Greater Chicago to assist Santa in providing thousands of Christmas gifts to foster and adoptive children and families. Father Sam, as he is lovingly referred to by foster and adoptive parents, performs pastoral duties at the St. Michael's Greek Orthodox Church located in Niles. He is president of the clergy association, which is a network of 16 Orthodox churches across the Chicagoland area and northwest Indiana.



Father Sam first contacted the Northeast Foster Parent Association after meeting with Orthodox ministers in the clergy association. The Clergy Association was looking to unite its ministry in supporting some type of charitable contribution to less fortunate children and families. What initially started out as a small gift-giving project to provide children and families with Christmas gifts in the spirit of the season has blossomed into an enormous effort. This year, the involved churches will have provided gifts to 1,500 children and families living in Cook County.

The project, which is coordinated by Father Sam and members of the Northeast Foster Parent Association, begins a little earlier every year in order to accommodate its ambitious goals. Identification of Christmas wishes for children and families began this past July. Permanency workers, LAN liaisons, DCP investigators and intact family workers provided lists to the associations with the Christmas wishes of the children and families on their caseloads. The foster parent association as well as Father Sam track and monitor every request that comes in. "Wish lists" as they have come to be called, are distributed to the various involved congregations with targeted dates for pick-ups and deliveries of the gifts.

The amount effort in coordinating this is enormous and truly takes a team effort. Members of the congregations shop for presents and have them wrapped and labeled. Volunteer semi-truck drivers and various youth groups or youth sport leagues are recruited among the congregations to assist with loading and delivering the gifts to the foster parent association. More volunteers catalogue and secure the gifts that are then distributed to the children and families.

Father Sam wishes that he could provide every child or family in need with gifts. The joy of conjuring up mental pictures of the unknown faces of children as they open their gifts and the happiness that they bring motivate Father Sam and the congregations to continue their efforts. He says that many congregations look forward to this project year round, and that the "spirit is good, the effort is successful and God has blessed it." On his wish list is the hope to see that all of the children's wishes are fulfilled and that people would remember the spirit of giving year round.

New South City Parent Group

Foster and adoptive parents living on the Chicago's South Side and in the surrounding suburbs are invited to join the South City Foster Parent Association. The group is reorganized, with new leadership, and is looking for new membership.

The South City organization has set a new agenda to help foster and adoptive parents stay on top of DCFS policy, share information with other families and keep children engaged with fun events.

All foster and adoptive parents are invited to attend meetings on the second Tuesday of the month from 10:00 until 1:00. The group meets at the DCFS office at 6201 S. Emerald. For more information about the meeting schedule, contact Mattie Lathion Collins at 773/445-9628.

The newly elected officers are pictured below.

President, Carol Lukacek
Secretary, Betty Johnson
Corresponding Secretary, Mattie Lathion Collins
Treasurer, Crystal Perdue
Parliamentarian, Marjorie Brazelton
Financial Secretary, Cynthia Crosby



Mark your calendar for Chicago's family fun

This *New Year's Eve*, the skies above Chicago will glow as the city celebrates the New Year. A spectacular fireworks presentation promises to illuminate the lakefront skies above Buckingham Fountain. Viewers are asked to gather at 11:40 p.m. at Buckingham Fountain (located at Congress Parkway and Columbus Drive in Chicago) in order to witness a pyrotechnic wonder that features a fountain style countdown to the new year. At midnight, an explosion of fire and light will continue above the lakefront at Monroe Harbor. A compilation of music including rock, pop and classical will prelude the Buckingham Fountain countdown to midnight. Admission is free.



Families can also ring in the year 2003 at Navy Pier with Fireworks and a Chicago-style Ferris wheel countdown.

2003 Calendar of Events

January-March	Chicago Winter Delights: It's A Cool Place
May 3 & September 27	5th Annual Mayor Daley's Kids & Kites
May-September	Mayor Daley's Jumping Jack Program
May-September	Summer Neighborhood Festivals
May 16-June 15	Bike Chicago 2003
May 17-18	5th Annual Great Places and Spaces
May 29-June 1	20th Annual Chicago Blues Festival
June 6-8	19th Annual Chicago Gospel Music Fest.
June 12-22	Puppetropolis Chicago
June 27-July 6	23rd Annual Taste of Chicago
June 28-29	13th Annual Chicago Country Music Fest.
June 29	11th Annual Race to the Taste
July 15-August 26	4th Annual Chicago Outdoor Film Fest.
July 19-20	10th Annual Mayor's Cup Youth Soccer Tournament
August 2	46th Annual Venetian Night
August 16-17	45th Annual Chicago Air & Water Show
August 23-24	15th Annual Viva! Chicago Latin Music Festival
August 28-31	25th Annual Chicago Jazz Festival
September 12-14	7th Annual Celtic Fest Chicago
October	6th Annual Halloween Pumpkin Plaza
October 25	Halloween Happening
November 27-December 24	Daley Plaza Santa's House
November 28	Tree Lighting
December 26-28	Mayor Daley's 4th Annual Holiday Sports Festival
December 31	New Year's Eve Fireworks at Buckingham Fountain

Christmas Treasures

We asked some of our foster parents to think back on some of their most treasured holiday moments with their children and families during the holiday season and this is what they shared:



Lost and loving it in Las Vegas

One of our most memorable Christmases was when we packed up all of the family: my mother and her family as well my foster children, adoptive children, biological children and grandchildren and went to Las Vegas by train to spend the holiday vacation with my daughter. We all arrived safely but our luggage didn't!!!

Donsetta Blakely

Foster Parent and Adoptive Parent

The perfect Christmas gift - A Family

We had been fostering a child for several months. Her goal was adoption, but at that time we were not in a position to pursue adoption. But, we worked together with her prospective adoptive family toward the goal of placing her with her new family during the holiday season. We have pictures with her enjoying the holidays under our Christmas tree as well as pictures with her new family...It worked out so well. As a special "gift," her adoptive family and she had the same last name so it really was a smooth transition!!!!



Ellen Kazaras

Foster and Adoptive Parent

Little creatures stirring in the night...

My husband and I were new foster parents and had been caring for two siblings for about 5 months. It was Christmas Eve and my husband and I had gone to bed after making preparations for Santa's first visit to our home. We were awakened by noises coming from the living room in the early morning. My husband got out of bed only to find that we had been locked in our room from the outside.



After numerous tries to get out of the door, he climbed down the fire escape in his robe and slippers. The owner of the grocery store below our apartment let him into the building. My husband ran up the stairs to the apartment, unlocked the door and found our two foster children stuffing the presents into their pillowcases. Our four-year-old was whispering into her younger brother's ear, "Hurry up so they don't steal the presents!"

All we could do was stand there, shake our heads and laugh. Several years ago, we adopted our children. Now our kids go with us to visit, entertain and distribute gifts to children in hospitals during the holiday season. To this day we still look back on that first Christmas together and it brings tears to our eyes as we laugh about it.

Edwina and Benjamin Williams

Adoptive Parents

Cook County Training Calendar

FosterPRIDE In-Service Training

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 - *Child Development* (One 3-hour session = 3 training hours)

Module 4 - *Child Sexual Development and Sexual Abuse* (9 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
Chicago South February 24, 26 & March 3 (Mon/Wed)	6:30-9:30 p.m. 2

COOK NORTH

	Module
Galewood Church January 14, 16 & 21 (Tues/Thurs)	6:30-9:30 p.m. 4
Irish Center January 27, 29 & February 3 (Mon/Wed)	6:30-9:30 p.m. 2

Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training

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.

COOK NORTH

	Irish Center
February 15 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
February 20 & 27 (Thurs)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

COOK SOUTH

	ABJ Community Services
February 22 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
	DCFS South Area Office
February 8 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
February 24 & 26 (Mon/Wed)	6:30-9:30 p.m.

COOK CENTRAL

	Circle Family Care
February 24 & 26 (Mon/Wed)	6:30-9:30 p.m.
	Lutheran Child & Family Services
February 6 & 11 (Thurs/Tues)	6:30-9:30 p.m.

	Harvey Illinois Mentor
February 20 & 25 (Thurs/Tues)	6:30-9:30 p.m.
February 6 & 11 (Thurs/Tues)	6:30-9:30 p.m.

All classes are coordinated by
Harold Washington College in Chicago.

Call **312-553-5821** or **-3031** to register.

Dressing for Cold Weather

When the temperature drops below freezing and the wind-chill factor is below zero, it is best to stay indoors. But, if you must go outdoors, dress properly for the weather. Follow these suggestions to make yourself more comfortable and protect your body from excessive heat loss:

- Wear several layers of lightweight clothing rather than one or two layers of heavy garments. The air between the layers of clothing acts as insulation to keep you warmer.
- Cover your head. You lose as much as 50 percent of your body heat through your head.
- Wear mittens rather than fingered gloves. The contact of your fingers keeps your hands warmer.
- Wear warm leg coverings and heavy socks or two pairs of lightweight socks.
- Wear waterproof boots or sturdy shoes that give you maximum traction.
- Cover your ears and the lower part of your face. The ears, nose, chin and forehead are most susceptible to frostbite.
- Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect the lungs from directly inhaling extremely cold air.
- Use sunglasses to protect your eyes from winter glare.