

Our Kids

For Southern Region Foster Parents

2002 Vol. 2
Special Foster Parent
Appreciation Issue

A special woman devotes 33 years to kids with special needs

Thirty three years ago Nancy and Bill Miller accepted their first foster child placement. Nancy laughs as she recalls his first words. "My name is Leo, but they call me Butch." Butch became a permanent member of the Miller household. As the years went on, Nancy and her husband continued fostering. They later had three birth children, who grew up with foster brothers and sisters. Even after Bill's death, Nancy did not want to stop her mission.

The word "leaked out" that Nancy was a nurse and her life changed dramatically. She became "The Home" for all the kids with special needs. Her house only partially belonged to her. It also belonged to the children she accepted, as well as the support staff that was needed to care for these children.

"It's nice to have a nurse, physical therapist, occupational therapist and caseworkers on your team, BUT not all at your house on the same day," she would often find herself thinking.

Nancy cared for failure to thrive babies, developmentally delayed children, autistic children, children with multiple disabilities and an array of other conditions. She has become the "encyclopedia" for services for special needs children. She has been a strong advocate for all her kids, assuring they have every service and opportunity they need and deserve.

Nancy has also recruited other foster parents over the years. "People have to realize what they're getting into, it is a challenge," she advises.

Never one to watch others do the job, Nancy continued her own fight to help children. Twenty children have been placed in the Miller home. Many stayed for years. Nancy adopted Butch, her first foster child and Tim 13 years ago. Tim has multiple disabilities and needs many special services.

Nancy laughed as she reminisced about Tim. "He was five months old. He was sitting in a baby seat and his hair was wild. He was so cute," she remembered.

Many of the kids Nancy cared for stop by, call or send letters. It's always nice to hear from them according to Nancy.



Nancy Miller and Tim enjoying a western themed prom.

Continued on page 2.

A special woman (con't.)

Carol Aubuchon, lead support specialist had the opportunity to work with Nancy for over ten years.

“Nancy was a blessing to DCFS. She was always willing to provide services and love to any child. She was always very successful with her children. She helped all her children progress in developing their milestones and new skills.”

Now after 33 years, Nancy will take down her license. But the phone hasn't quit ringing. Nancy thinks there is a conspiracy afoot to keep her from retiring, by continuing to offer her just one more child. The reality is that DCFS is proud to have Nancy as part of the team. Everyone that has worked with Nancy has the utmost respect for her. She is a compassionate woman who shared her life and heart with those in the most need.

OUR KIDS

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Call with foster parent association news and schedules; local training; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and news articles and support all foster families can use.

News from the Youth Advisory Board

The Southern Region Youth Advisory Board is gearing up for a membership drive. The board is actively looking for teens to join in making a difference for all Southern region youth who are or have been in DCFS care. The regional board meets each month to discuss topics that matter to young people. The meetings are run by the teens and they work with staff to come up with solutions.



The regional youth advisory board (RYAB) is open to all youth currently or formerly in care, between the ages of 14 and 21. The RYAB takes on serious issues, and manages to have some fun while they do it. The youth involved with the board learn how to solve problems, resolve issues and work with each other and adults to bring about changes they would like to see. The six regional boards also work with the Statewide Youth Advisory Board to help youth in all parts of the state.

Southern region's board will be reaching out to youth in area group homes so those young people can have a chance to get involved. They have met with foster parents so the youth in their homes can join the RYAB. Additionally, board members have been creating flyers and speaking at local high schools to spread the word about the group and encourage other teens to join.

The board recently moved its meeting to the first Tuesday of the month in the E. St. Louis field office, located at 10 Collinsville Avenue. The meetings start at 5:30 p.m. and end at 7:30, including a break for dinner. The first part of the meeting addresses the issues that youth raise, for example, difficulty getting services or placement concerns. During the second hour they take part in presentations or workshops to gain credit for life skills trainings.

Youth interested in attending should contact their caseworker for help with transportation, if needed. All youth 14 to 21 are invited to attend the meetings. Those who would like to join as members should request an application packet from Chuck Murphy, the Downstate Transitions Manager for the Division of Education and Transition Services (DETS), at 217/524-2033.

FIVE Deadly Mistakes Parents Make With Car Seats

Approximately 80 percent of children are improperly restrained in safety seats. Many injuries and deaths caused by car crashes could be prevented if safety seats were used correctly. Make sure to avoid these mistakes.

1. Installing a car seat too loosely – The safety seat should be fastened snugly against the vehicle’s seat back. To secure a rear-facing infant seat, lean into the back of the seat with your arm or forearm while fastening the seat belt; with a forward-facing seat, push down into the seat with your knee. Once, it’s fastened, if the seat moves an inch or more forward or to the side, then it’s too loose. Check that the seat is secure each time you use it. For specific advice on how to use the seat correctly, carefully review the directions that come with the device and your vehicle’s seat belt information in the owner’s manual. Cars built before 1996 may require a locking clip (which positions the seat belt and keeps the seat snugly in position).
2. Using the Harness Incorrectly – Make sure the seat’s harness straps are threaded through the proper slots. When seat is rear-facing, thread the straps at or below your child’s shoulder level. When forward-facing, the harness should be threaded through the top slots in most seats. (Always read the instructions for your seat) Harness straps must fit snugly without pinching the child’s skin; you shouldn’t be able to slide more than one finger between the strap and your child.
3. Putting Retainer Clips in the Wrong Place – Seats with a retainer clip attached to the harness strap need to be fastened at the child’s armpit level in order to keep the straps from slipping off your child’s shoulder.
4. Placing a Baby in Forward-Facing Seat – Leave your infant in a rear-facing seat until she’s 1 year old and weighs at least 20 pounds. If your child reaches this weight limit well before her first birthday, switch to a convertible seat that holds up to 30 pounds in the rear facing position.
5. Not keeping a child in a booster seat long enough – Use a booster seat until your child can sit against the car’s seat back with his knees bent at the seat’s edge. The shoulder belt should fit correctly with no slack, and without cutting across the face or neck. The lap belt should fit snugly across the top of his thighs. The shoulder belt should never be put under the child’s arm or behind his back.

Source – Parenting February 1999

10 Ways to Calm an Anxious Child

1. Respond as quickly as possible to the child’s signs of distress by approaching the child and showing interest in what the child is feeling.
2. “Listen” to what the child is saying with words and actions.
3. Take the child’s feelings, especially fear and anger, seriously.
4. Get another adult to take care of siblings or other children so you can talk to the child privately.
5. Relax. Be as low key as possible when helping a child calm down.
6. Restate to the child what the child is saying to make sure you understand.
7. Provide appropriate outlets for strong emotions, including anger, frustration, sadness and loneliness. Examples include letting the child use a punching bag, going with the child to a quiet corner, running in a special “running space” or painting.
8. Do not personalize it. You are not a “bad” caregiver and the child is not a “bad” child.
9. Comfort the child with extra hugs, a place in your lap or special soothing at bedtime.
10. Be there for the child. Nothing is more reassuring than your presence and care.

From: Silent Realities: Supporting Young Children and their Families Who Experience Violence.
By E. Cohen and B. Walthall.

Southern Region 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 - *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)

East St. Louis
618-650-3213

Marion
618-536-7751

	Module
ALTON - Holiday Inn	
July 6, 13 & 20 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. 3&4
FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS - Ramada Inn	
June 8 & 15 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. 9
July 3, 10 & 17 (Wed)	6:30-9:30 p.m. 3&4

Other In-Service Trainings

Transracial Parenting Training	
FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS	Ramada Inn
Sept 3, 5 & 10 (Tues & Thurs)	6:30-9:30 p.m.

How to Handle Children and Back to School Stress

ALTON	Holiday Inn
August 6 (Tues)	7:00-9:00 p.m.
FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS	Ramada Inn
August 27 (Tues)	7:00-9:00 p.m.

	Module
CARBONDALE - Hampton Inn	
July 2, 9 & 16 (Tue)	6:30-9:30 p.m. 2
EFFINGHAM - Hampton Inn	
July 3, 10, 17 & 24 (Mon)	6:30-9:30 p.m. 1
HARRISBURG - Southeastern Illinois College	
Sept 4, 11 & 18 (Wed)	6:30-9:30 p.m. 2
MARION - Comfort Inn	
August 5, 12 & 19 (Mon)	6:30-9:30 p.m. 5
OLNEY - Richland Memorial Hospital	
July 29, Aug 5, 12, 19 & 26 (Mon)	6:30-9:30 p.m. 10
SALEM - Salem Township Hospital	
September 4, 11 & 18 (Wed)	6:30-9:30 p.m. 2
ULLIN - Shawnee Community College	
July 3, 10 & 17 (Wed)	6:30-9:30 p.m. 8

Other In-Service Trainings

Transracial Parenting Training	
MT. VERNON	Hampton Inn
August 7, 14 & 21 (Wed)	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 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.

Marion
618-536-7751

CARBONDALE	Hampton Inn
September 1 (Sat)	9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
EFFINGHAM	Comfort Suites
September 21 (Sat)	9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
MARION	Comfort Inn
September 5 & 12 (Thurs)	6:30-9:30 p.m.
MT. VERNON	Hampton Inn
September 7 (Sat)	9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
ULLILN	Shawnee Community College
August 10 (Sat)	9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

East St. Louis
618-650-3213

BELLEVILLE	Catholic Social Service
September 21 & 28 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS	DCFS
July 6 & 13 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
July 11 & 18 (Thurs)	6:30-9:30 p.m.
August 5 & 12 (Mon)	6:30-9:30 p.m.
Sept 24 & Oct 1 (Tues)	6:30-9:30 p.m.



Pre-registration is required for all classes!
Call the number listed for your area.