

# AAAC Newsletter

African American Advisory Council • Spring 2011



## ***A Tribute to Amie Joof***

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## From the Chairman

On behalf of the African American Advisory Council, we wish everyone a happy and prosperous New Year. I am pleased that the AAAC met the organizations goals for the calendar year of 2010. These goals are centered on Black History Month celebrations, planning for the annual conference, community collaborative efforts, Permanency Enhancement Program (PEP) and whatever we can do to support and promote the various initiatives that have been established by the Department to support children and families.

As with every new year, the first thing on the agenda is to determine how the AAAC will participate and support Black History Month activities that have now become a tradition in regions throughout the state. Last year we were honored to participate with Cook Central Region and it was indeed a fantastic program and luncheon that took place at the 3518 West Division office. We commend the volunteers that helped to plan the program at Cook Central and also the many volunteers that planned activities in each of the regions. We look forward to publishing information about this year's Black History Month celebrations in our next newsletter.

Of course I would never brag, however as with the previous 17 annual conferences, our 18<sup>th</sup> was great as noted in the conference review section of this edition. I was especially proud of the closing Luncheon Keynote Speaker, Michael Simelton. I have always been extremely interested in learning about the child welfare experiences of former youth in care after they have become young adults out in the real world. Michael is very comfortable talking about his experiences and is very much devoted to giving back to youth currently in substitute care. Additionally, Michael provides critical advice to child welfare workers, managers and executives. He has a very busy schedule with his employment at Exelon; however he always takes time to work diligently with the DCFS Youth Advisory Board. This is a young man that is going many places and will definitely place his blueprint on society in many different ways.

The Council has worked with Audrena Spence, Metropolitan Family Services, Randy Sadler, Youth 1<sup>st</sup> Counseling, Glasetta Barksdale, Olive Harvey College and LAN Liaison Ron Wynne for the past two years regarding youth violence on the Southside of Chicago. As a result of successful efforts in planning community events to address the escalation of youth violence, Director McEwen met with the group and requested that they plan a Provider Summit for the LAN 86 area. This event took place on March 12, 2010 at Corliss High School where providers were able to hear a presentation from Director McEwen regarding new initiatives within the Department. The Director's address was well received by those in attendance.

The Provider Summit was a prelude to the annual "I am Queen" day of mentoring of young ladies that took place in June of 2010 and "Real Men Moving Forward" for adolescent males that was held in July. The Council provided assistance with both of these events where over 400 females attended the "I am Queen" and the same amount of participation occurred with the males for "Real Men Moving Forward." Political leaders, social service agency's directors, community leaders/activists and DCFS staff volunteered to be mentors, workshop presenters, speakers, and assumed registration responsibilities. We thank Wanda Holloway, Brooke Taylor and Veronica Coleman for their support from Training and their staff with pre-registration and on-site assistance. Executive Deputy Director Denice Murray delivered a message to the audience at "I am Queen" for the second consecutive year that was well received by the participants. We seriously believe that these events are effective in helping youth learn alternatives to violence based on the manner in which they express themselves at the event. I encourage you to please read the article one of the participants submitted that is in this newsletter. Most of the participants do not know each other and it is remarkable how they engage and dialogue with each other in such a positive and passionate way in the workshops and entertainment activities.

The Permanency Enhancement Project (PEP) has really progressed since its inception in 2007. One of the goals for 2010 was to have all staff meetings in each region where PEP presentations could fully inform staff about what has taken place with this project and to encourage them to get involved with their local Action Teams. This goal was successfully achieved with maybe a minor exception where a few presentations will take place this year. We commend the university partners, Quality Assurance, Regional Administrators and their management staff, Action Team leaders, community partners and LAN Liaisons for making these presentations a success. It has really been great for me to travel throughout the state to see the progress being made where representatives from the community at large have really invested in helping children to achieve better permanency outcomes. Please stay tuned as more exciting things will be occurring with the PEP in 2011.

Happy New Year  
Michael Burns



Michael D. Burns

## Tribute to a Genuine African Queen *Amie Joof, M.S.W., J.D.*

The African American Advisory Council members have suffered a great loss in the recent passing of our devoted member, Amie. She became an active and contributing member August 31, 2005. Amie was a go-getter and never shyed away from any assignments that needed to be completed. She served as the chairperson of our newsletter and during her illness she continued to be active. I recall Amie giving each Council member a wrist band of our birth month in the African language. We will miss her smiling face and generosity. A testament of her greatness was exemplified by the tremendous outpouring of people that attended her memorial held Saturday, September 4, 2010 at the Carruther's Center for Inner City Studies. Amie will live in our hearts.

Amie was laid to rest in Banjul, Gambia on August 23, 2010. Three of her siblings and daughters were present, in addition to other friends, relatives, dignitaries and religious leaders from all over Banjul and other areas of Gambia and Senegal.

As a tribute, below is the biography (edited) of her life.

Amie Joof was born on June 23<sup>rd</sup> in Banjul, The Gambia, West Africa. She was the seventh child of Alhagi Ousman Kaliba Joof and Aji Sainabou Njie. As a child, Amie was energetic, honest, extremely compassionate and caring toward her many relatives and friends.

Amie loved school and emerged as a top student of her class very early. Family members remember her always carrying around a huge stack of books at home, which she read for pleasure. She was outgoing as a young girl and made friends easily. At home, she got along well with her siblings, did her chores without complaint and was respectful of her elders. She was very close to all of her family members but

had a special relationship with her maternal grandmother, Mam Amie, who she was named after.

In 1979, Amie graduated from St. Joseph High School, in Gambia. After graduation, she worked in the Gambia Department of Statistics as a junior clerk. She moved to the United States to further her education. She began her undergraduate studies at Macalester College, Minnesota; baccalaureate degree in Political Science and master's degree in Women's Studies from Loyola University, Chicago; MSW from University of Chicago and finally a Law Degree, a Doctor of Jurisprudence from DePaul University College of Law.

While attending school, she worked at Marshall Fields as a sales clerk; Evanston Hospital as a lab technician and at the Evanston YMCA. Upon receiving her college degrees, Amie worked as a social worker/therapist at Englewood Community Health Organization and then joined the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Amie began as a case worker but soon moved up the ranks to supervisor and subsequently to Field Service Manager of Cook North Region.

In addition to her heavy workload within DCFS, she found time to practice her true passion – Law. As an attorney, she primarily worked on immigration cases of which much was done pro bono.

Amie was also actively involved in community and cultural organizations both as a member and leader. As a Pan-Africanist, she was a member of The All African People's Revolutionary Party, The Pan-African Revolutionary Socialist Party, African on the Move; board president of the Gill Park Cooperative; Illinois Bar Association; Board of Directors for the Phi Alpha Delta International Law Fraternity and of



*DCFS Director Erwin McEwen presents Amie Joof with the AAAC Outstanding Achievement Award in 2007.*

course the African American Advisory Council.

Everyone who knew Amie knew that she was more than just a casual sports fan, she knew player stats. Family members and friends would often “hang-out” at Ya Amie's during the playoffs. She was always warm and hospitable.

Amie was an avid traveler, traveling throughout America, the Middle East and Europe. She was a strong advocate of women, children and oppressed people's rights. One of her dreams was to build a school for young women in Gambia. She understood the importance of education, especially higher education and was a source of inspiration to family, friends and everyone she encountered.

Amie is survived by her father, Alhagi Ousman Kaliba Joof and mother Aji Sainabou Njie. Her siblings, Aji Sirra Nji Fye, (Alhagi Alieu), Pa Joof (Kim), Boli Joof (Yassin), Isatou Joof (Alie), Ebou Joof, Fatou Joof (Madika), Minnie Secka (Bemba), and Yama Bobb (Pa). She is also survived by her daughters, Oumie Jatta (Omar), Dr. Binn Jatta (Abdoulie), and Rama Secka, numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, aunts, uncles and extraordinary friends.



## 18<sup>th</sup> Annual African American Advisory Council Conference • April, 2010



The conference theme: *Revisiting Our Approach to Engaging the Family, Youth and Community: Connecting Systems for Comprehensive Supports* is long, but packed with a great deal of meaning. A paradigm shift is rapidly taking place despite the unwillingness of some to accept the change. We have come to the point where we must do more with less. There comes a time when we must stop and look – really look – at “what” and “how” we are doing things. In some situations, there is only a need to get some fine tuning, and in others a complete overhaul might be needed. As noted in this theme, we addressed not only revisiting our approaches but connecting for comprehensive supports in the community. Our families require supports that will be “all inclusive”.

Each year the African American Advisory Council’s vision and purpose is to provide all staff and providers in

attendance with information that will empower, encourage, promote, and reposition them in serving children and families. We are especially seeking to increase the involvement of our Purchase of Service providers in these conferences. We are pleased to announce having an increased number of POS staffers in attendance at last year’s conference. Comments received were gratifying and encouraging. The active attendance of POS staff members removes some of the “us” versus “them” stymie, thus reinforcing the connecting.

Last year’s conference was opened by keynote speaker, Dr. Marco Clark, an educator from Baltimore, Maryland. Mr. Clark was instrumental in developing reform programs for the Baltimore City School System, and shared his message of the urgency to deliver significant changes in urban education of our youth.

One of the highlights of the conference was a Mega Workshop on Differential Response conducted by Director Erwin McEwen. The Director provided conference participants with an overview of the comprehensive facts about Differential Response. He also introduced the Demonstration Project, and described how it impacts practice and service delivery.

Throughout the two days, workshop participants received information regarding innovative practice methods and service delivery for our youth and families.

The conference concluded with the luncheon keynote speaker Michael Simelton, who is a former ward and currently employed as a Senior Analyst for Exelon Corporation. He shared his experience of overcoming adversity and making numerous achievements in life’s journey.

## Reflections on the AAAC Conference

By Regina Young, Division of Child Protection



It is an honor to have been given the opportunity to share my thoughts and impressions about the African-American Advisory Council's 18<sup>th</sup> Annual conference. Over the years, I've attended many professional conferences since my tenure with the department and I can honestly say this was by far one of the best and memorable conferences I've attended. Not knowing what to expect as this was my first AAAC conference, there were so many fantastic occurrences that were captivating and left me with a feeling of 'WOW'!

**Overview:** The planning and attention to detail was very noticeable and was demonstrated throughout my time at the conference. From the time I checked into the hotel, to the selection of food and the evening entertainment, as well as the selections of the top-notch speakers, I was impressed. This was an impeccable event and seemingly went off without a hitch. The amazing flow and organization of everything made this conference memorable for me.

**Sessions:** I found the presenters to be well prepared. They did not lecture nor did they recite notes from a textbook. The speakers were astute and came equipped to deliver a message, and articulated their experiences and views to a group of seasoned professionals extremely well.

**Personal:** The conference created an atmosphere whereby all attendees were able to freely connect and dialogue with their colleagues while at the same time make valuable contributions. The panel discussions and the presentation on *Differential Response* were phenomenal. At the close of the day,

I went to my room feeling proud and thankful to be in the midst of Director Erwin McEwen, the presenters and my colleagues. They all demonstrated a passion for their work. The energy and compassion they all showed was contagious to the entire group.

**Value:** My attendance at the AAAC conference was an invaluable experience and was well worth my time. The conference challenged me to want to do more. It caused me to reflect on the question, "*Why am I employed at DCFS?*" For me that answer is "*My work at DCFS is not merely a 'job' but rather a profession*".

The AAAC conference made me smile not only on my face but in my heart. I smiled because DCFS has some of the brightest professionals that I've ever encountered and I was proud to be among them at this conference. The skilled, competent, expert professionals of the department are doing great things. The conference gave me an opportunity to see them shine and see the wonderful work and the various initiatives that the department is involved in for children and families across this entire state.

**Final thoughts:** The AAAC conference was a fabulous event and left me feeling Challenged, Charged, Revived and Changed! It afforded staff an opportunity to get to know other staff in various regions of the state. This allowed us to come together and learn the direction of the department. It's a great feeling to associate with staff who have passion and drive, as that is what it takes to do the hard work that is required. In combining the passion, drive, competency and commitment, Illinois families will be strengthened and we can change an entire future generation.

Thanks AAAC for a job well-done!

## Comments from conference vendors

The AAAC prides itself in making sure there is an array of vendors and exhibitors present during our conferences, allowing participants to shop in addition to obtaining information from community organizations. Below are some of their comments/suggestions:

"Great conference, friendly and approachable audience for our product. Hotel conference center was great, wonderful. Would love to participate again. Stayed in the hotel and loved it. Suggest more break time for participants to shop."

**Ada T.**

"Allow a prime time slot during the conference for staff to as visit vendors/exhibitors. Currently schedule only permits this during 15 minute breaks or on the way to workshops or leaving early."

**Shirley M.** (an exhibitor)

"I enjoyed the event and everyone was pleasant and helpful. I am looking forward to your next event."

**Sam C.**

"Great show! It was a good interaction with new Chicago customers. I was impressed with the staff, very organized. Look forward to next year."

**Donovan M.**

"Reinforce spending with the vendors and provide incentive to go to the shopping area i.e. a drawing or entertainment."

**Kamau F.**

"I was very impressed with the conference and clientele. My thanks to Millie for inviting me."

**Leonard C.**

"The event was great and I look forward to next year."

**Tarsha B.**



## AAAC Conference input from participants

*This year we decided to ask conference participants to share their thoughts about our 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. Special thanks and appreciation to Ms. Audrey Sneed-Morton, DCFS Administrative Assistant II, Division of Placement and Permanency and Ms. Sharon Hayes, Children's Home Association, Peoria, Illinois for allowing us to use their names.*

*“Revisiting Our Approach to Engaging the Family, Youth, and Community: Connecting Systems for Comprehensive Supports” is the theme of this year's Conference. In its provision of workshops, do you believe a framework was created to have meaningful discussion about how engagement should occur?*

**Conference Participant #1** – Yes. We as child welfare professionals are looking to empower and assist our clients so they will have needed support to succeed.

**Conference Participant #2** – Yes, in that collaborations with other agencies were informative. I had a discussion with a service provider who felt that DCFS does not include POS in a lot, creating a split. I raised the question of what he is doing to make his concerns known.

**Conference Participant #3** – I believe that all of the workshops were meaningful in providing resources and information that can contribute to more effective and meaningful social service delivery to our clients. However, I suggest that the workshop curriculum be more focused in order to concentrate on the stated theme.

*Are you aware of the Department's initiatives to accomplish this goal?*

**Conference Participant #1** – The Department's initiatives are cutting edge and should set a pattern for agencies in other states.

**Conference Participant #2** – Yes, action teams and training.

**Conference Participant #3** – Yes, I am aware of the initiatives and will become more knowledgeable upon completion of the scheduled trainings.

**Ms. Sneed** - No, I was not until I came to the conference. I can now pass it on and spread the word.

**Ms. Hayes** - Yes

*The workshops have focused on addressing the issues of different populations. In the structure of the Department's initiatives, do you see the ability to connect what you have learned in this forum with those programs?*

**Conference Participant #1** – Yes



**Conference Participant #2** – Yes, such forums as this one help disseminate information.

**Conference Participant #3** – Yes, I see the ability to connect but it is based on a combination of department initiatives, learned professional skills and life experiences. This has been a learning experience but it must be on-going, adaptable, and continuously reviewed for efficacy.

**Ms. Sneed** – Yes. Today was making good leaders and supervisors (2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop): Cultivating Staff for Supervision and Leadership Roles in Child Welfare). Ms. Bradie-Baskin needs to teach this segment in the training curriculum for leadership not just supervisors.

**Ms. Hayes** – Yes the presentation of the workshop was connected in this matter.

*What workshop did you attend and did you find it germane to the services you provide to children and families?*

**Conference Participant #1** – Case Management Services for Adults that Return to DCFS and Community Services for Dually-Involved Youth

**Conference Participant #2** – Dianne Bradie-Baskin and Dana Weiner. Yes, how an employee works and the employee's knowledge of services in the community both affect service delivery.

**Conference Participant #3** – The information was useful but not as germane as it could be with additional re-working. As a suggestion, can the workshops be identified for the type of audience, e.g. beginner, intermediate, etc.?

**Ms. Sneed** – I think the Violence workshop could help with psyche unit MICL program. As youth get older we can see the difference in how they experienced violence and also in this setting.

**Ms. Hayes** – Cultivating Staff for Supervision and Leadership Roles in Child Welfare. Yes, it relates to our leadership roles within my agency.

*Within your region, are service providers capable of assisting you in service delivery around these issues?*

**Conference Participant #1** – Yes, but more service providers are needed.

**Conference Participant #2** – Yes, our service providers are equipped and able to provide adequate service delivery.

**Conference Participant #3** – Service providers, in general are capable. However there is still a need in the southern suburbs for more minority and male therapists with whom our young African American men can identify.

**Ms. Sneed** – Yes

**Ms. Hayes** – Yes

*Is there an issue that you believe should have been addressed at this conference as it relates to engaging families, youth and communities?*

**Conference Participant #1** – Not at this time.

**Conference Participant #2** – Yes, as residential treatment provides services to many wards that are people of color, service providers of private agencies are not taught or receiving training in cultural competency. Perhaps a workshop can be developed to address the adverse affects of how this lack of knowledge hinders children in care.

**Conference Participant #3** – Yes, we still must address institutional racism.



*Michael Simelton and Mike Burns*

**Ms. Sneed** – I think the workshops were appropriate and fit the needs of our agency's initiatives and programs.

**Ms. Hayes** – More about diversity

*What other systems do you believe need to be added to address additional supports?*

**Conference Participant #1** – None at this time.

**Conference Participant #2** – Salvation of relevant trainings.

**Conference Participant #3** – Medical systems need to be addressed, especially in respect to over diagnosis and over medication.

**Ms. Sneed** – Differential Response appears to be the system of supports that will impact families support. We should engage all workers, POS agencies and the community.

**Ms. Hayes** – The Court System

*Are you familiar with the mission of African American Advisory Council? What would you like to see the Council address in upcoming years?*

**Conference Participant #1** – Yes, the Council is progressing positively with addressing issues facing child welfare professionals

**Conference Participant #2** – I would like to see the Council address more workshops on staff development similar to what Diane Bradie-Baskin addressed this year. LCSW, employment options for Child Welfare Professionals, outlook for employment in the next 10 years; DCFS direction for service delivery for the next 10 years and the department direction in the upcoming years.

**Conference Participant #3** – Yes, I am aware of the AAAC mission. I would suggest that a future session should focus on employee well-being.

**Ms. Sneed** – (A) No I am not familiar, this is my first engagement. (B) Continue to address needs of the community and people we serve. This was one of the better events and the workshops were good.

**Ms. Hayes** – (A) No I am not familiar, this is my first time participating. (B) Balancing income for staff working in POS Disproportionality of money causes staff turns over.

**Ms. Sneed's Final Comments:** The Director was excellent and I now know about Differential Response. The visual was great and seeing the data and how it connects.

**Ms. Hayes' Final Comments:** The Director's comments were well thought out and seem to be similar to past initiatives. He seemed committed and open to keep children at home; it seems to be his main objective and more family focus and keeping families together. I really enjoyed the conference and it feels good to be appreciated. It's not always about the money.

## 2010 AAAC Awardees

*Each year the Council seeks to honor African American employees who have exhibited outstanding behavior while working within DCFS as well as going beyond the call of duty in working within their communities. We are proud to announce the following:*



**Gloria Bell**, CAYIT Implementation Coordinator, has been employed with DCFS for 33 years. She is described as being very knowledgeable and exudes patience. Gloria is a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, NAACP Chicago South Side Branch and Greater Institutional A.M.E. Church.



**Carole D. Booth** works in the Division of Placement and Permanency in Springfield. She has been with DCFS for 16 years but has an extensive social work background based upon 25 years of experience in an array of positions held nationally and internationally. Carole has worked with the Multiple Sclerosis Society as an activist, during which time she provided education about the disease to the public as well as volunteered to work on weekends with physically and mentally disabled adolescents.



**Tatjiann Brown**, Child Welfare Advanced Specialist, has been employed with DCFS for 19 years. She is being recognized as a team player who promotes harmony in the workplace and being creative in how she approaches her work. Her commitment does not end at 5 p.m. She mentors teen girls in her neighborhood and church.



**Tracie Crockrell**, Human Resource Specialist began working with DCFS 19 years ago as a unit secretary. She was

significantly impacted by the mass early retirement of employees several years ago and had to assume additional responsibilities due to the loss of staff. Staff has greatly benefited from her willingness to accept her new assignment as she performs a valuable role in assuring paperwork is processed in a timely manner. Tracie is known as the “go to person” in DCFS because she will always have an answer to an issue or problem.



**Dana Drummer** is a child Welfare Advanced Specialist in Cook South. She has been employed with DCFS for 16 years and is recognized for her skills to navigate the child welfare system on behalf of children and families. She is well respected for the manner in which she testifies in court and the reflection on her abilities to positively engage youth. She is one that can be counted on to say yes whenever there is a need for a volunteer to support the Region.



**Veronica Edmonds**, a Management Operation Analyst in the Division of Quality Assurance, is a 29-year DCFS employee. She has worked as a child protection worker, child welfare specialist and worked in the Dicken’s Shelter. While working in the Shelter, she was able to get young adolescent females of different gangs to show respect for each other. She participated in the first overnight weekly camping trip with girls where she worked from 8p.m. to 8 a.m.



**Wanda Holloway** is a Senior Manager in the Office of Training and Professional Development. She is noted for her tireless efforts of working to improve the manner in which we serve our public. Wanda’s passion goes beyond the walls of DCFS. She partici-

pates with Hope for the Future, a youth-based organization that provides mentoring, tutoring, college prep (including college tours to Historical Black Colleges and Universities) and life skills training.



**Lela Humble**, DCP In-tact Supervisor in Cairo, IL has been employed with DCFS for 15 years. She initiated an annual toy drive with Tamms Correctional Center to ensure every DCFS ward in the facility received a Christmas gift and organized and participated in the Sickle Cell Anemia Awareness Walk-a-Thon. She is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.



**Aline Knight** has been employed with DCFS for 31 years, of which she has supervised for 25 years. Aline works in the Harvey Field Office and was commended for supervising not one, or two, but three teams during which time she never neglected her assigned staff. She is also known for working late hours while home and during vacations.



**Martha Knight** is a 33-year veteran of DCFS and is currently an Executive II in the Division of Child Protection. While raising a family and working, she returned to school and obtained a Bachelor’s and MBA degree. Martha also served in the United States Army Reserve for 24 years.



**Nemiah Matthews**, Administrative Case Reviewer is known to promote harmony and is often referred to as the social director because of his ability to orchestrate activities in his unit and the Cook South region. Nemiah has been a supporter of the Council for many



years and played major roles in skit productions. In an earlier production, he broke his leg while doing the moonwalk and walked right off the stage. This did not deter him from continuing his acting career. He has been employed with DCFS for 22 years.



**Stacy Mixon** is a 12-year employee currently working as a Public Service Administrator in the Division of Monitoring. She conducts presentations on child protection and mandated reporter training in the community. Stacy is the chair of the Reaching Up Toward Heaven ministry where she mentors young African American females ages 11-17. She is the assistant to the Christian education ministry and works with Family First, bible study and the scholarship program. Stacy is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.



**Avril Riley** is described as a hard worker for the over 10 years of employment with DCFS. During the department's reorganization, she transferred from Cook County as a placement worker to becoming an investigator in the East St. Louis area. While this transition might have been difficult she has maintained her focus on protecting children by strengthening and supporting families.



**Martha Saines** is a supervisor in the Cook North Region and has been employed with DCFS for 16 years. Martha's mental health experience has made her a valuable asset to her staff in addition to her knowledge of policy and practice. She is well respected and promotes harmony within the Region. She embraces the value of utilizing community stakeholders to help achieve positive permanency outcomes for children. Additionally, Martha chairs on one of Cook North's Action Teams.



**Olivia Walker**, employed with DCFS for 16 years, works as a Public Service Administrator in Day Care Licensing, Peoria Office. She is extremely concerned about her staff and showed this true dedication when they experienced an unexpected death of a team member. She supported the family of staff members by becoming a medical monitor where she logged medical appointments and encouraged staff to keep appointments. She would also take staff to appointments when a family member was not available.

We congratulate our awardees and encourage staff to submit nominations for our Annual Conference.



The chairperson and Director McEwen also presented an award to AAAC Council member Jimmie Whitelaw in recognition of his contribution to the organization. Jimmie has been a tremendous asset since becoming a member in 2007. He chairs the Legislative Committee and accepted the challenge of taking the lead in developing a historical book about the Council. Jimmie has been employed with DCFS for 30 years and currently serves as the Associate Deputy in the Communications Division.



The Chairman's Award is given to an individual that has been very supportive of the AAAC, its projects and activities. In 2010, the award was presented to Ms. Audrena Spence, Executive Director of Metropolitan Family Services, Calumet Site and also President of the Association of Black Social Workers, Chicago Chapter. She has a dynamic working relationship with our Chairman and when the two of them get together, a community project is born and we are involved in a joint venture generally involving African American adolescents. As a result of this meeting of the minds, we have collaborated and held many events over the past three years aimed at solving problems for African American males, females and families.

## Reaching out to former youth

I am sure there are some of you that have maintained communication with youth since they have aged out of the child welfare system. The Council is seeking to develop a network of former youth aged 25 years and older who might be in Illinois or residing in other states. The purpose is to provide opportunities for these young adults to network and develop a platform to share with us what can be done differently and better. For more information please contact Jacquelyn Johnson, Juvenile Court, at 312-633-3407.

# Tribute to African American Women in Defense of this Nation”

By Rochelle Crump, United States Army veteran

African Americans have been a part of the military within the United States of America since wars and other skirmishes have taken place, albeit without laws granting official sanction. For African American women there is little difference. During colonial days African American women provided major support to wives of slave owners in the absence of their husbands and assisted with medical treatment. History reports that during the Revolutionary War, African American women played a major role as spies. Phyllis Wheatley was invited to visit General George Washington in 1776 as a result of her writings of praise and appreciation to him.

According to history, Cathay Williams or William Cathay was a female Buffalo Soldier 1866 – 1896. Of course during her enlistment she did not report being female nor was an appropriate physical examination conducted. She was deemed “fit for duty” and served in the 38<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry. It was not until two years later upon seeing the doctor that her gender was learned, at which time she was discharged despite efforts to remain. Because of her illegal enlistment she was denied a pension.

“We didn’t just walk in, someone paved the way”...It was women like Margaret Wynne...imagine what it was like in 1942...



**Margaret Wynne**  
Margaret Wynne served honorably in the United States Women’s Army Air Corps (WAAC) from 1942-1944. Her

hus-band Lewis Wynne was serving in Europe and later in the Pacific during WW II during the time she enlisted into the Army Air Corps. Margaret is the mother of Ron Wynne, LAN Liaison.



**Rochelle Crump**  
**Acting Deputy**  
**Affirmative Action**

In October 1971 during the Vietnam War, I joined the United States Women’s Army Corps (WAC) on a buddy plan with my cousin. I never gave a second thought about the war going on even though it was somewhat trying to wind down. I began basic training at Ft. McClellan Alabama Army base in Company E - Echo; that is also where I learned about different cultures, meeting a black girl who barely spoke English but was fluent in Spanish (Puerto Rican), and where I found out that racism was everywhere.

I still remember some things as though they happened yesterday. The first night we did company competition field training and our job was to catch the infiltrators and not get caught by them. That night we also went through the gas chamber where you had to say your name, rank and serial number in a specified time. I think that was the first time I wondered what had I gotten myself into. The first time I fainted was at a parade, standing in formation at attention with my knees too tight together.

After eight weeks at Ft. McClellan and one visit home during the Christmas holiday, I went on to Advanced Individual Training (AIT) at Ft. Gordon Georgia, where telephone, radio, radio linemen and military police were trained. I completed the communications training in two months and then went on to my permanent duty station at Oakland Army base in Oakland, California. It was an overseas terminal station where most of the soldiers were returning and many were still going to Vietnam. Amazingly from time to time I would see high school and neighborhood guys at the PX store, theatre or

bowling alley. Oakland Army base was a great facility and working with the civilians was great because they really cared a lot about the military personnel. With the exception of two separate break-ins that we had at our barracks, I really liked living on base. After the second one I couldn’t sleep at night and started working midnights with the civilians. Thinking back, what I remember most that left an impact on me was when I went to Presidio Military Hospital in San Francisco, where I was in awe of so many shell-shocked men and amputees. In hindsight, what I regret most was not making a career of the military. Although I wasn’t in for a long period of time, I benefited greatly for my small contributions for many years. I am reminded often of this veteran motto: “All gave but some gave all”.



**Martha Knight,**  
**Division of Child**  
**Protection**

During her attendance at the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual DCFS African American Advisory Council Institute, Martha became amazed at the longevity of so many DCFS staff and their commitment to the community as shown by the services that they so willingly provided. Martha has served in the Division of Child Protection for more than 30 years, working in various job titles. She was one of the 2010 Conference awardees. The passion Martha has for helping people led her to enlist in the United States Army Reserves in 1983. During this tenure she worked in many support positions and ultimately served honorably for 24 years.

Martha and I both agree that as an Agency we should be prepared to assist soldiers with children when they return home because the adjustment from combat to civilian life is often-

times difficult. Services are especially critical for those single mothers and fathers who come home with little or no family support. Martha performed active duty at Fort McCoy with her Unit for two years during Operation Enduring Freedom/Iraqi Freedom. Even though she did not see direct combat, Martha experienced emotional combat in the Soldiers' Readiness Center, performing the stressful job of preparing soldiers for overseas deployment and then oftentimes preparing paperwork for their insurance benefits when they didn't return home. Sometimes she saw them come home, but not the same as they left. This also takes a toll on your mental state. It is extremely hard seeing such young men and women engaged in war.

Although Martha has retired from the military, her sentiment is that the agency should allow for some type of support and assimilation back into the civilian work world. Even though she feels there was an adjustment period where she worked to "fit back in," Martha states that "I would not trade one day of my military service and experiences, and I would do it all over again if needed."



**Tracy Marshall, MSW**  
**Division of Field**  
**Operations, Cook**  
**South**

Tracy has been employed with the department since June, 1993 and a member of the African American Advisory Council since 1995. She also serves on the Training, Conference and Host Families/Care Packages committees.

Tracy describes her job as a Multi Service Worker where she provides placement services, follow up with adoption, reunification and intact services. She finds the position rewarding mostly because some of her past clients, many of whom are now grown, still call and tell her how much they appreciate her. She receives updates on their progress as well as pictures of their children. Reports are good and bad, but overall

many are doing okay and this makes her feel good about the support and intervention she provided.

In 1986 Tracy and two of her friends were kidding around talking about joining the military on the buddy plan and decided to pursue the idea by completing the applications and testing. However, only Tracy technically qualified to enlist and she began her military service in the United States Army Reserves and later changed over to the IL Army National Guard until completing her service time in 1994. While in the military Tracy was in Administrative duties, which included processing military identification cards and discharge papers, and later she worked in other fields of medical supply and the motor pool where she drove five-ton trucks, humvees and was a dispatcher.

Would she do it again? Her response was "yes." As she reflects, she attributes her organizational and attention to detail skills to her military training. "The structure, leadership and discipline instilled during training are some of the best tools in life". The military helped me grow and I learned a lot about myself. I still make my bed every morning," she chuckled. From a clinical perspective she got an opportunity to better understand the needs of people. It was a "great experience" she proclaims, and wishes that the military personnel and veterans could mentor our kids and share their experiences so that teenagers could understand how those basic skills can help them. When asked about DCFS and servicepersons now, she believes that if staff learns what the red flags are for those that are coming home from deployment it would help them if they encounter a military or veteran family.



**Sondra Badie**  
**Division of Service**  
**Intervention**

Sondra has been employed with DCFS for 12 years and worked at the Illinois Department of Public Health for three years before coming to DCFS.

Sondra served in the United States Army Reserves for 17 years, from November 1986 to December 2003. During this tenure she served in various positions, such as an administrative specialist and a unit clerk reporting to the Unit Commander and First Sergeant (senior non-commissioned officer in charge of a unit). In 1991 her unit was activated for Desert Storm and she was deployed to Ft. Rucker in Alabama. Sondra was responsible for ensuring all records for soldiers were up to date and preparing insurance forms, enlistment contracts, identification tags and documentation for soldiers leaving and returning from Saudi Arabia.

"I think the Army taught me discipline, structure, tolerance of people and definitely patience," she said. "I also learned how to rely on my fellow soldiers, and they depended on me. You had to be on top of your game because people's lives were at stake." Sondra reflected on her military service and said "it took some getting used to, growing up as an only child, but I learned what the buddy system was really about. My tenure was very important. I felt I was making a huge sacrifice (so were my fellow soldiers) other people couldn't match." She said everyone is not cut out for the military. "Knowing that I served and accomplished a great task, I am proud."

I asked if DCFS should be concerned about returning soldiers, and Sondra said they are human and have the same needs, if not greater, than the people we service. "Our returning men and women should come back with a feeling of knowing some type of normalcy. Their lives have been forever changed and we should try to reward them in some way. Men and women should not come home to unemployment or without access to services. Our soldiers, sailors, airmen and every military entity should be taken care of above and beyond."

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*See page 13 for a list of military firsts for African American women.*



## The AAAC: Staying involved in the community

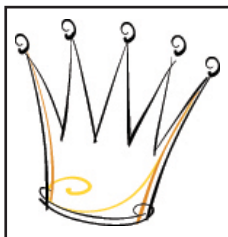
The Council actively participates with community organizations by co-sponsoring events to advocate for and promote African American youth. We were delighted to work in conjunction with the African American Mental Health Professionals, Metropolitan Family Services, Chicago Commission on Human Relations, Healthcare Consortium of Illinois, Nehemiah Restoration Coalition, Youth 1<sup>st</sup> Counseling, Rose-land Community Hospital and Senator Emil Jones III in one-day forums for African American children.

The forums were designed to empower our young people through a day of character-building training and mentoring to assist them make positive life choices, make healthy decisions and develop a positive self image. Both forums took place on Chicago's south side at Olive Harvey City College. The day began with motivating speakers, followed by youth participating in thought-provoking interactive workshops. The workshops encompassed many aspects of daily life: health, education, mental health, teen parenting, relationship building, and conflict resolution. The interaction by the young people during workshops was great as reported by the presenters and mentors. It was marvelous to see so many energetic, happy and excited young people milling around. The young people conducted themselves in a very orderly manner. (Where are the cameras when you need them?) Following the workshops, lunch was served and youth were surrounded by mentors from various academic and professional backgrounds who engaged them in additional dialogue.

Special thanks to our DCFS co-workers who assisted in making both events a success by volunteering their services. The Council seeks your support as we endeavor to become more involved in community activities that will strengthen the African American community. If you have not had an opportunity to participate in these activities, we encourage you to contact an AAAC member in your region for information.

### I am a Queen

Denice Murray, Executive Deputy Director of DCFS opened this session to over 400 African American girls and young women ranging in age from 12 to 18 years old with a **REAL-I-T-Y check**. She began by telling them how cute they looked and were dressed only to later lower the bomb. Reciting one of her famous quotes **“Smart lasts a whole lot longer than cute”** brought the entire audience to a point of silence and contemplation. The giggles from the girls immediately ceased and they became serious and serene. Denice went on to inspire them to aim for more knowledge as they continue through life's journey. The young women



were later directed to participate in one of 18 workshops presented by professional African American women. A few of the workshop topics included: “Fabulosity”; “The Woman in the Mirror”; “Why Good Girls Like Bad Boys”; and “One Life to Live”.

### Breaking Barriers: Real Men Moving Forward II

Picture 300 to 400 African American boys and young men, aged 10 to 17 years old, sitting in the bleachers of the gymnasium at Olive Harvey City College attentively listening to renown African American leaders such as: Richard Jones, CEO of Metropolitan Family Services; Emil Jones, Illinois State Senator; Dr. Wayne Watson, President of Chicago State University; Will Davis, Illinois State Representative and Dr. George Smith, CEO of Diversified Behavioral Comprehensive Care during the opening session of the third forum for Real Men. These were the young men not hanging on the street corners. These were the ones striving hard not to become a part of the negative statistics reported on the evening news. They were bright eyed and eager to attain greatness. As many of us realize, all of our young men are not standing on street corners, nor are they walking with their pants sagging, but rather they are eager to become positive and productive men in tomorrow's society. During lunch the young men were able to dialogue with workshop presents and other male mentors present for the event. These avenues of expression are especially good for males whose households are headed by women as they may not have an opportunity to really express themselves to another male. Each young man had an opportunity to attend interactive workshops, some of which were entitled: “There Are Other Neighborhoods”; “Keep on Movin-Don't Stop”; Looking for Love in the Wrong Places”; What Does it Take to be a Man?” Gangs versus Families/ Making Smart Choices”; and “Proud 2 B African American”.



*Young men from Howard University perform a skit about the importance of not leaving your friends behind on the road to complete college.*

## Reflection on “I am a Queen”

The “I Am a Queen” Conference for African American Girls and Young Women, sponsored by the Community of African American Mental Health Professionals (CAAMHP) and Metropolitan Family Services motivated me to look deeper into myself as a young woman. I feel empowered to make better choices and decisions for myself. I realize the true meaning of behaving like a queen, and through meeting mentors who have accomplished so much, I see that my goals in life are tangible.



*More than 400 African American girls and young women attended the “I Am a Queen” workshop at Olive Harvey City College.*

The conference makes me grasp that the decisions I make now will affect my future.

We started with a continental breakfast and were provided time to socialize. I was feeling a little awkward because I didn’t recognize any faces in the crowd. However, things turned around quickly and I made friends with a group of older girls. We sat together and they gave me advice on high-school life. These girls made it clear to me that homework is extremely important and everything else will come and go.

We dispersed into separate workshops. I participated in both the “Girlfriends” and “One Life to Live” workshops. I was surprised to learn that most girls feel the same way I did. For example, they didn’t really trust their female friends and had been mistreated by a female in the past. Overall, I learned that to be known as a queen I must behave as a queen. I must rise above ugly words, rumors, and looks. In order to be a queen, I had to support and encourage my female peers (my sisters). Instead of treating them like enemies, I should be friendly. I should kill the tension with my kindness in high honor, because I am a queen.

My final workshop, “One Life to Live”, exposed the peaks of pregnancy and STDs in the teenage years. For example, 1 out of every 4 girls will get pregnant before they reach the age of 18. All of them won’t have their babies due to miscarriages and abortions. However about 30% of the same group will be pregnant again in the following year. It is a devastating statistic. I will not be subjected to this statistic or any of the others the doctor provided us with. My body is worth so much to me, and I vow to treat it as such.

Lastly, we ate lunch and listened to the closing remarks. One of the speakers who stuck out in my mind was a 25-year-old very pretty and petite lady. She explained to us that while in high school she thought she had the world in the palm of her hand, but when reality set in she actually had a set of twin boys at the age of 16. The most important lesson I received from her presentation was that things most teenage girls think are important really are not. She closed it out by telling us that our life is not a joke, and to center it with our education and personal goals. Guys won’t look at us for our looks, but instead will respect us for our education.

I was encouraged by the “I Am a Queen” Conference. I gained so much and met some wonderful people. I am a Queen! I will demand to be treated like one and I will not settle for anything less! I will behave like a Queen! I give much gratitude to all of those who contributed to the conference. It was a truly remarkable experience, and I would love to be a part of it again.

### **Military firsts for African American women**

**March 8, 1945**

*Phyllis Mae Daily became the first Black nurse sworn into the Navy Nurse Corps in New York.*

**July 1974**

*Reverend Alice Henderson was commissioned as a chaplain, becoming the first female chaplain, Black or White.*

**May 1975**

*Lieutenant Donna P. Davis became the first Black woman doctor in the Naval Medical Corps.*

**November 1979**

*Second Lieutenant Marcella A. Hayes became the first Black woman pilot in the U.S. armed forces.*

**September, 1979**

*Hazel Winifred Johnson became the first Black woman promoted to the rank and position of Brigadier General, Chief of the Army Nurse Corps.*

**December, 1980**

*Ensign Brenda Robinson became the first Black female aviator in the U.S. Navy, assigned to the Fleet Logistics Squadron Forty in Norfolk, Virginia.*

**May, 1993**

*Ensign Matice Wright became the first Black naval flight officer, assigned to Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron 3 (VQ-3).*

## Children, families matter to college alumnus

*The following article originally appeared in the Fall 2010 issue of "Affirmations," a magazine for alumni and friends of the Jane Addams College of Social Work.*

For Michael Burns, social work is a family matter, in every sense of the term. "From the time I was young, I've had an interest in being in the social work field," he says. "My uncle, Clyde French, was a social worker, and when I was young he would talk to me about his work. When I first graduated with my bachelor's degree and was out of school, he got me a job teaching at a school for boys."

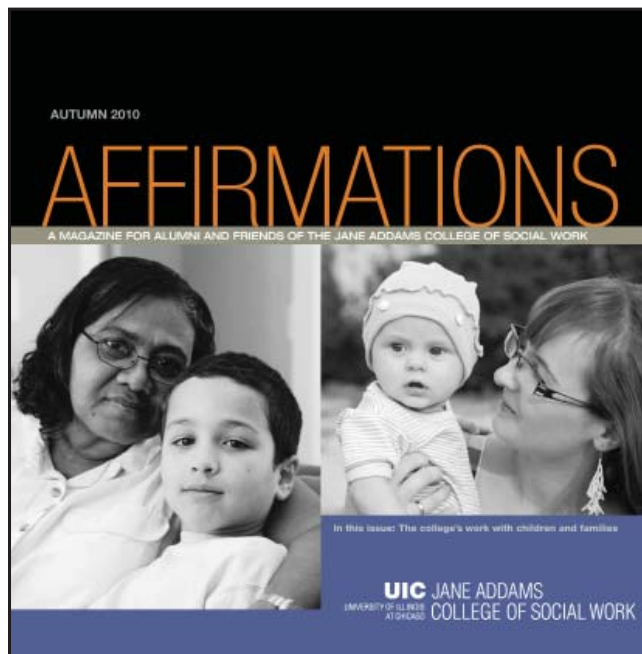
Burns (MSW '98) has had an interest in helping young people ever since. Today, he serves as Statewide Local Area Network (LAN) Coordinator for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). He is responsible for 62 LAN action teams across the state. These consist of community members, organizations and agencies that work together to prevent school failure for at-risk children and keep children out of the child welfare system by finding families the resources they need.

"Our main purpose is to address whatever problems a family may have that would put their child at risk of being truant, suspended or expelled from school," says Burns.

Burns also serves as point person for the DCFS sponsored Permanency Enhancement Project and its community action teams—groups of child welfare, judicial, legal, parents/foster parents and other professionals who work to improve permanency and reduce disproportionality of children in the child welfare system in their area. Action teams throughout the state are working to create community support for families to remain together or to reunify, if this can be safely accomplished. The Permanency Enhancement Project is a partnership between DCFS, the African American Advisory Council, the Illinois African-American Family Commission, and four universities, including the University of Illinois at Chicago.

As a student, Burns says he was influenced by Associate Professor Jim Gleeson, among others. "I had a strong interest in policy, and from all of them I learned a great deal about the dynamics of policy and government: getting a really good grasp of what policy is all about, how policies come about, and how to influence that process."

Burns says his education at the college has enhanced his ability to work with programs designed to help children and families. "I try to help our programs be the best they can be



based on the resources we offer. I really enjoyed my time at the Jane Addams College. I learned the broader aspects of programmatic planning. Shortly after graduation I worked with the college through the African American Advisory Council to put together a foster parent recruitment program. That was a great experience."

Burns's current efforts are part of DCFS's current focus on community involvement. "With the LANs, we have created an organization of people who are there for people to come to for assistance rather than wait for someone to report problems. We want to be able to broaden our impact on children and families—to help someone before a situation becomes a crisis."

Burns acknowledges that the effort in community involvement through LANs and the Permanency Enhancement Project Community Action Teams might surprise some who only know about the agency from its stereotypical image.

"We used to be known as the agency that takes away people's children," says Burns. "We want to be known as the agency that keeps families together."

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# Book Review: *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing*

By Joy DeGruy Leary, Ph.D

Dr. Leary redefines Post Traumatic Stress Disorder from an African American perspective through the lens of the African American experience. Throughout her book, she identifies historical repeated traumas in the African Diaspora, visited upon generation after generation. She discussed in detail the legacy of trauma within African American families, and how it's passed down through the community. To quote Dr. Leary: "Today, the African American community is made up of individuals and families who collectively share differential anxiety and adaptive survival behaviors passed down from prior generations of African Americans, many of whom likely suffered Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS)." She describes several behaviors in scenarios that are related in part to past traumas of slavery and ongoing oppression.

Based upon past and current behaviors and conditions of African Americans, Dr. Leary describes Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome as a condition that exists when a population has experienced multigenerational trauma resulting from centuries of slavery and oppression, and institutionalized racism today. She adds to this condition a belief that the benefits of the society in which African Americans live are not accessible to them. She categorically defines Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome as:

- Multigenerational trauma, together with continued oppression, and
- Absence of opportunity to access the benefits available in the society leads to...
- Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome.
- M+A=P

In her book, she expounds intensively on the power of belief and how it's

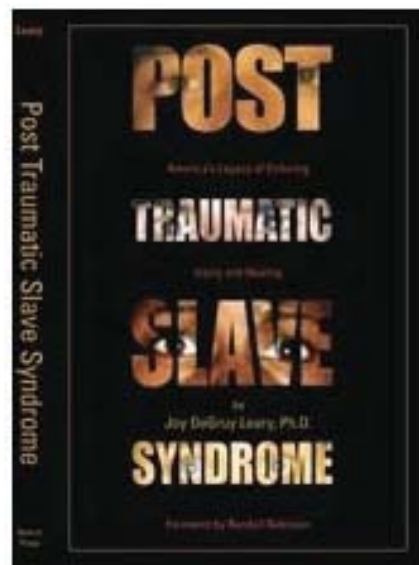
intricately woven into the Syndrome's fabric. She explains into detail how beliefs determine what we perceive, and how we evaluate. They determine what we consider unlikely and what we consider possible, shaping memories and expectations. She further describes three primary patterns of behavior associated with PTSS:

**Vacant Esteem:** A belief about one's worth, not a measure of one's actual worth. People who believe themselves to have little worth, little power, little self-efficacy.

**Ever Present Anger:** Anger that can be both a response to the frustration of blocked goals and the fear of failure. Much of the anger is a reaction to our hopes and dreams being continuously undermined by the institutions which govern us.

**Racist Socialization:** Began with slavery and continued throughout American history. African Americans have a unique socialization experience due to having centuries of systematic and traumatic programming of inferiority.

Dr. Leary encourages African Americans to view their attitudes, assumptions and behaviors through the lens of history, and concludes by identifying ways African Americans can establish new, healthier patterns of behavior through building self esteem, mov-



ing ahead and also building upon our strengths. She also places emphasis on the spirit of community, and looking within ourselves as a race to establish strong leadership.

As child welfare professionals, it is essential that we have a clear understanding of the impact centuries of slavery and oppression has had on African Americans. With this understanding we can further enhance trauma based practice as we continue to assess the well being of our African American families and children. Dr. Leary's book can indeed serve as a valuable resource.

## Interested in Joining AAAC?

Send a brief narrative stating your interest in problems and issues affecting African Americans to:

Diane Cottrell, membership chairperson

E-Mail: [Diane.Cottrell@illinois.gov](mailto:Diane.Cottrell@illinois.gov) • Phone: 708-210-3716  
15115 S. Dixie Highway, Harvey IL 60426

## “How are we looking In 2010?”

Living in the twenty-first century has been an eye-opener for many of us. For some, we never thought we would ever see the year 2000 and the myriad of changes that have occurred. Computers, cell phones, ipods and even cable television are the norm rather than the exception today. Many of us can recall much from the past but I wonder how have we categorized those changes? Of course, you can recall success with specific cases or those selected youth you worked so hard with who continue to call you to this day. How long have you been working at DCFS? Are you planning to retire? Do you recall the days when carbon paper was a valued commodity? What is the incidence of abuse and neglect in foster care from 1999 until 2010? OK, enough questions, let’s look at statistics.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> annual African American Advisory Council Conference held April 29-30, 2010, Director Erwin McEwen stated “this agency has never performed better in the history of the Department of Children and Family Services.” Staff were asked to applaud themselves for the challenges they have faced and overcome. “Director Mac,” as he is frequently called, provided data in an array of areas.

There are 442 people who are eligible for Rule of 85, amounting to more than 15 percent of the staff. There are 354 people who are likely to reach Rule of 85 eligibility in five years. (These numbers do not reflect staff leaving in December 2010.)

The average age of DCFS employees is 50. The youngest employee is 22 and the oldest is 78.

- 1,127 DCFS employees are between the ages of 46-55
- 750 are between the ages of 56-65
- 780 are between the ages of 36-45
- 79 are between the ages of 66-75

1999 - 2010 Performance Data		
	1999	2010
Repeat maltreatment rate	11%	7.1%
Incidence of abuse and neglect in foster care	.70%	.58%
Reentry rate in 12 months	13.9%	5.7%
Reunification Rate in 12 months	26.9%	57.7 %
Adoption rate in 24 months	7.1%	12.7%
Two or less placement stability rate	79.8%	83.9%
Length of stay in care rate	41 months	27 months
Disproportionality rate for African Americans	77%	54%

- 211 are between the ages of 26-35
- 5 employees are 26 or younger
- 2 employees are older than 76

As you review this information it is important to note that we are more alike than different. For some, we have seen co-workers go through many stages of life, from the birth of their children, accomplishing many educational pursuits; becoming grandparents; marriages (both children and personal); professional gains and other ventures. During those years of service, relationships were formed and we became “A DCFS Family”.

Some may look at these years as just days and hours spent going from court to the office, back to court, completing forms, looking for Lil’ Fred or Susie who was on run, and spending hour after hour with that “special foster parent,” but it has paid off. We see one another at the grocery store, church, community meetings, clubs and other venues which has brought about a common bond of comradery and confidence among us.

I employ each of you to extend your continued vote of confidence to Director Mac and the work he has done. Additionally, reach out to your co-workers, especially those who have been around

for many years, and pick their brains. You might not realize now but there is much to be learned about children and families that has not been written. Illinois continues to rein number one in the nation among child welfare and we would like to keep our rank.

Our fearless leader is working hard. He continues to encourage each of us to keep the focus on strengthening families. No matter what your age, number of years you have been employed, or your position within DCFS, we are all challenged to work toward getting the low numbers to zero percent and the higher numbers to 100 percent.

As a word of caution, let us respect those that have labored and continue to work tirelessly to ensure families and children are adequately served. Let’s not forget those who have chosen to remain these 15, 20, 25, 30, 35-plus years. They have reached a respectable tenure within the child welfare arena. As most tenured staffers, they are remaining in this profession because of a genuine love for the profession.

Child welfare staff, you have done well in the past 10 years and we are looking for the stats to improve with each passing year. As Director Mac would say: **“In God we trust, all others bring Data.”**