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Date: February 22, 2006  
Contact: Lindsay Gladstone  
Governors State University  
Phone: (708) 534-7090  
Fax: (708) 534-8399  
Email: [l-gladstone@govst.edu](mailto:l-gladstone@govst.edu)

For Immediate Release

## GSU Helps Foster Pride with Digital Curriculum

University Park, February 22, 2006 - While the pitfalls and quagmires that face parents are both many and varied, the problems faced by foster parents are often more difficult and involved. Children entering new homes may bring problems exacerbated by the family situations they just left.

To help foster parents cope and to ensure they are qualified to care for some of our most fragile and susceptible youths, the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) and Department of Communication Services at Governors State University in University Park have developed a unique and comprehensive training program.

The "Foster PRIDE Digital Curriculum" is a set of CD-Rom tutorials designed to provide information and teach the skills and techniques needed by today's foster parents. The series of interactive disks comprise the equivalent of more than 36 hours of in-class training.

"This is more than training. It is a whole way of working to develop and support both foster and adoptive families," explained Mick Polowy, co-developer of the PRIDE (Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education) education model. "Components of the PRIDE model are currently used in 30 states and 13 countries."

Polowy and the Department of Communication Services of Governors State University partnered to convert the in-service portion of the PRIDE model into a digital format.

"We had to bring the written text to life in an interactive format," said Polowy.

According to Detmer Wells, Marketing and Distribution Coordinator for Digital Learning at GSU, "We used cutting edge applications for distance learning, we created an interactive program that includes interviews with foster parents from around the country, scenarios acted out to illustrate situations, and several response and feedback options to help foster parents learn the best ways to cope with problematic situations."

As the need for foster parents grows, ensuring adequate training becomes critical. Many foster parents are unable to attend training sessions because of time, distance, and work and family obligations. Many foster care agencies in the United States and Canada are relying on distance learning opportunities to provide foster parents with the educational tools they need.

According to Wells, "These are professional productions that introduce topics, explain situations, and offer solutions to foster parents. Parents can work through each module at home, get immediate feedback on their answers, or interact with their trainers via e-mail. They can complete the necessary training even though they may have difficulty attending a session at a training site. This is one of the best applications for distance learning we could ever imagine."

In addition to addressing the training needs of foster parents so they can maintain certification, the digital learning program is also a professional development tool for trainers and supervisors of foster parents.

"We are finding that this digital learning series has a multitude of applications besides helping its originally intended audience of foster parents. It is helping parent trainers, teachers, adoptive parents, licensed child care providers, and youth workers," added Wells. "Adaptations for French and Spanish speaking foster parents are currently planned."

The Foster Pride Digital Curriculum joins the library of tele-courses produced by GSU's Communication Services.

"GSU is one of the five major producers of tele-courses in the country," explained Wells. "We offer several fully accredited college courses in a variety of subject areas including literature, human relations, psychology, and sociology."

For more information about Foster PRIDE Digital Curriculum and the other Digital Learning offerings of Governors State University, call (708) 534-4018 or visit [www.digitallearning.govst.edu](http://www.digitallearning.govst.edu).