



## SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS CELEBRATES 100% HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE AND OTHER ACADEMIC SUCCESSES

*June 30, 2015*



Graduation is an important milestone in every child's life, but for a child who has faced challenges and unforeseen circumstances it is an even more significant accomplishment. Nationally, only fifty percent of children in foster care graduate from high school. SOS Children's Villages Illinois consistently has a one hundred percent high school graduation rate. **This year we celebrate four high**

**school, ten eighth grade, and eight kindergarten graduates, all of whom have the support of full-time professional foster parents and the staff of the SOS Villages.**

Education and Activity Coordinators Carmen Langford and Bayyinah A. Muhammad share these stories of hope, strength, and support:

For our 2015 graduates, the act of receiving a diploma is a great accomplishment, but I would say they gained much more than that in their lessons. Our 8th grade class was praised by the Principal as being one of "the best classes she has led" and was rewarded with extra graduation activities such as an ice cream social and a dinner, movie, and game night. One of the eighth graders was the 2015 Literature award winner at her school, and at the SOS Village graduation ceremony she performed the same poem she read at her school's graduation.

Our 2015 graduates celebrated reaching new heights with friends, family and staff which they didn't always think was possible given their circumstances. One eighth grader said at graduation, "Wow, I received honor roll!" and was overjoyed with the bonds of friendship she made at her new school after arriving just a few months prior. She had a newfound love of school that was exciting to watch.

One child has been accepted into a selective high school. He is on the Autism spectrum, achieves very high test scores, and is especially gifted with technology and computers. Not only has he taken this opportunity, but he has also been reunited with and is now living with his biological sisters. His Case Manager has worked very hard to bring all the necessary points together for this child. It took a lot of hard work.

One of our high school graduates is interning in southern Illinois prior to leaving the state for college. This young woman will attend the University of Southern California with a full academic scholarship. The internship is a new program at Washington University centered around youth in need. It will allow her to get to know campus life while being in close proximity to her foster placement and biological brother. If the program goes well this summer, it will provide opportunities for other children from challenging backgrounds to experience campus life and employment.

At their SOS Village graduation ceremony, two of our high school graduates shared their sources of inspiration. One spoke about the patience of her teachers, foster parent, and staff of the SOS Village who helped her remain focused and endure hardship. The other graduate said that standing firm in her goals and having a successful mindset enabled her to graduate a semester early. Throughout the unforeseen circumstances, our graduates have remained strong and determined and are reaching new heights with the love and support they have received from their SOS family during this process and transition. As all of our graduates celebrated their academic accomplishments on their designated days, their smiles were as bright as their futures.

For more information about SOS Children's Villages Illinois or to learn about becoming a professional foster parent visit [sosillinois.org](http://sosillinois.org).