



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
CONTACT: Laurie Petrie, 946-2188

Girl Scout leaders share ways to help foster children

April 18, 2005 – Two Hamilton County social workers will speak to a national child abuse conference about their experiences leading a Girl Scout troop made up of girls in foster care.

“We hope to inspire more people to help disadvantaged youth become productive adults,” said Gaja Karyala, who works for the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services (HCJFS).

Karyala, and her friend, Andie Barker, a former HCJFS caseworker, lead Girl Scout Troop 7009, which they founded in 2002 and operate as volunteers. The troop has five girls, all in foster care and in permanent custody of the county. Despite struggles in their personal lives, the girls have earned several badges and have traveled together to New York and other cities.

“One of our goals is to instill in the girls the value of education,” Barker said. “One of our troop members got into Walnut Hills for next year. We are very excited about that. “

The Great Rivers Girl Scout Council named Karyala and Barker outstanding troop leaders in 2004.

Karyala and Barker will speak on “Innovative Pathways to Reaching Girls in Foster Care” at the National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect sponsored in Boston this week by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

##