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Hamilton County's Foster Children to be Honored for their Hard Work and Determination at Event that Celebrates their High School Graduations

Cincinnati (June 17, 2008) More than 50 teens in Hamilton County's foster care system will bid farewell to high school and hello to their futures at this year's "Celebration of Dreams" event.

The 10th annual event will be held June 17 at the University of Cincinnati's Tangeman University Center. A College Information Session will begin at 5 p.m. to help get the teens acquainted with college life. Dinner will begin at 6 p.m.

The event, hosted by Hamilton County's Department of Job and Family Services and the Foster Child Enrichment Council, is a chance to celebrate the teens' hard work to overcome tremendous obstacles and complete high school. The teens invite their foster families and other important people in their lives, such as caseworkers, CASAs and guardian ad litem.

The event includes dinner and an awards ceremony featuring student speakers, a keynote speaker (former foster child) and speeches from both agency and county leaders. The ceremony also includes the presentation of certificates and scholarship awards, door prizes and other gifts for the graduates. "Celebration of Dreams" and the scholarships are funded through private donations made to the Foster Child Enrichment Council.

"In many instances, these teens, their foster parents and those close to them have worked very hard to make sure graduation day arrived," said Moira Weir, director of the Job and Family Services Department. "They've overcome obstacles their high school peers did not have to face. This event is a fantastic opportunity to say congratulations to our foster children on their hard work and thank you to our foster parents, caseworkers and others who have provided the necessary support to make this day a reality."

Weir said she is hopeful this is not an end for the graduates, but a beginning that will include college, a trade school or success in the working world. Many foster children who turn 18 often find themselves on their own, long disconnected from their biological families and without roots and a support system. They're especially vulnerable to social problems and struggle when it comes to financially supporting themselves.

"This group has already shown they are fighters," she said. "Taking the next step will be a challenge, but their dedication and determination will help them be a success at anything they choose to do."

Hamilton County's Department of Job and Family Services currently serves about 850 foster children a day. Citizens interested in becoming a foster parent and helping to change a child's life should call 632-6366 or visit www.hcfoster.org. Those interested in making donations to the Foster Child Enrichment Council can call 732-5151 or visit www.helpfosterchildren.org

About Hamilton County's Department of Job and Family Services

The Department of Job and Family Services administers federal, state and local programs for those in need. The Department helps with local child protection, elderly protection, child care, child support enforcement, workforce development, cash assistance, food stamp disbursement and Medicaid disbursement. Servicing Hamilton County since 1947, the Department helps hundreds of thousands each year and is accredited by the Council on Accreditation, an international, independent, not-for-profit child and family service accrediting organization.

About the Foster Child Enrichment Council

The Foster Child Enrichment Council is a volunteer community group whose mission is to provide positive experiences that enhance the quality of life for abused and neglected children. We serve children in foster and kinship care. The Council has been in existence since the mid-1980's and is a 501 (c) 3 tax-exempt organization and is the only means through which people can give financial donations to Children's Services.

Funds are raised through grants, private donations and the annual sale of Entertainment Books. The event is possible because of private donations and many volunteer hours. If you or anybody you know would like to assist or be part of the Council's activities, contact the group at: P.O. Box, 18283, Cincinnati, OH 45218, 513-0723-5151 or www.helpfosterchildren.org.