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**Record Number of Foster and Adoptive Parents
Seek Better Ways to Raise Successful Children**

Cincinnati (May 14, 2009) More than 300 Southwest Ohio foster and adoptive parents will spend Friday and Saturday attending some of 37 different workshops in an attempt to learn the best ways to care for their foster and adoptive children.

The 300 participants mark the highest number of foster parents to attend the annual Foster and Adoptive Parent Training Conference in its five-year history.

“What a tremendous testament to the commitment our parents have to changing a child’s life,” said Moira Weir, director of Hamilton County’s Job and Family Services Department. “We are blessed to have so many who are dedicated and intent on opening their hearts and homes to abused and neglected children. This community is a better place to live because of these 300 people.”

The conference comes at a crucial time, when the region faces a shortage of foster parents and foster children often face long waits for adoptive parents. Hamilton County has about 850 foster children in its care each day. More than 200 of those children are awaiting adoption. Yet, attracting and retaining quality foster and adoptive parents is more a challenge now than ever before. The number of foster homes in the Hamilton County Job and Family Services network now sits at slightly above 200, down from nearly 400 four years ago.

The conference will be held at the Holiday Inn Eastgate, 4501 Eastgate Boulevard. Organized by the Southwest Ohio Regional Training Center, the 37 different workshops will all count toward the mandated training a foster parent must take for licensing.

The conference’s keynote address will be delivered by John Ward, a former foster care child who was later adopted. Ward and his wife have been therapeutic foster parents since 1994. He is also a trainer for the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program.

Ward will share his life as a foster child and growing up in the foster care system. He will also share his rewarding experiences of being a foster parent today, and the strong relationship he currently has with his adoptive parents.

For more information about becoming a foster and/or adoptive parent, visit www.hckids.org or call (513) 632-6366.

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.