



**Main Office:** 222 East Central Parkway • Cincinnati, Ohio 45202-1225  
**Neighborhood Center:** 237 Wm. Howard Taft • Cincinnati, Ohio 45219  
**General Information:** (513) 946-1000  
**General Information TDD:** (513) 946-1295  
**FAX:** (513) 946-2250  
[www.hcjfs.org](http://www.hcjfs.org)  
[www.hcadopt.org](http://www.hcadopt.org)  
[www.hcfoster.org](http://www.hcfoster.org)

**Media Contact:**

Brian Gregg  
Media Spokesperson/Communications Manager  
E-mail: [greggb@jfs.hamilton-co.org](mailto:greggb@jfs.hamilton-co.org)  
Phone: 513-946-1728  
Fax: 513-946-2248

**Hamilton County's Foster Youth Celebrate Overcoming Obstacles and Achieving Graduation**

**Cincinnati (June 14, 2010)** More than 50 teens in Hamilton County's foster care system will bid farewell to high school and say hello to their futures at this year's "Celebration of Dreams" event.

The 12<sup>th</sup> annual event will be held at 6 p.m. June 16 at the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Theater in Oakley. The event includes dinner and an awards ceremony featuring student speakers, a keynote speaker (Dr. Mitchel Livingston of the University of Cincinnati) and certificates and gifts for the graduates.

The teens invite their foster families and other important people in their lives, such as caseworkers, mentors, court-appointed special advocates and guardian ad litem.

The night will be spent honoring teens who have overcome tough backgrounds – sometimes abusive backgrounds -- to graduate high school. Dr. Livingston will relate his personal tale of overcoming poverty and discrimination to achieve success.

Moira Weir, director of the Department of Job and Family Services Department, which hosts the event with the Foster Child Enrichment Council, said this is the only graduation party most of the 54 graduates will experience.

"These young people have experienced tremendous obstacles and have to work harder than their peers to achieve academic success, so they deserve a top-notch celebration," she said. "This is also an opportunity to give a pat on the back and a huge thank you to all the 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. She noted that many are involved in the county's Higher Education Mentoring Initiative with the University of Cincinnati, which pairs foster children with mentors who help them make the transition from high school to a successful post-graduate life.

"We know the statistics on foster children are grim," she said. "They are much more likely to become incarcerated, homeless, teen parents, victims of crime ...but it doesn't have to be. This group has already shown they are fighters. 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 adopting or becoming a foster parent should call 946-1000 or visit [www.hckids.org](http://www.hckids.org). Those interested in making donations to the Foster Child Enrichment Council can call 732-5151 or visit [www.helpfosterchildren.org](http://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. Celebration of Dreams 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 you can contact us at: P.O. Box, 18283, Cincinnati, OH 45218 or by leaving a message at 723-5151 or visit our web site at [www.helpfosterchildren.org](http://www.helpfosterchildren.org).