

Family Matters

Published for foster and adoptive parents by the Adoption & Foster Care units of the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services

January 2008

Images of a new family

Hamilton County's first 'mass' finalizations highlight joy of adoption

John Cummings, Community Recruitment Manager

Sara's exclamation after court said it all.

"I'm a Deerwester now!" she said after appearing with her brother and adoptive mom before Hamilton County Probate Court Judge James Cissell.



Photo by Mark Lyons

Charles & Robin Spivey hold their adopted son, Jacob, during his finalization hearing in November. Jacob was one of eight children adopted in Hamilton County's first 'mass adoption' day on Nov. 17.

Sara and her brother Sean were among eight children formally adopted into five families on National Adoption Day (November 17). It was Hamilton County's first "mass" adoption finalization.

"We really wanted to highlight the joy that adoption can bring," said Mary Eck, Permanency section chief in the Children's Services division of Hamilton County Job & Family Services. "The smiles on everyone's faces made it all worthwhile."

With those adoptions on Nov. 17, Hamilton County counted 106 finalized adoptions for 2007 – already well above the 77 adoptions in 2006, and on pace to break Children's Services' all-time adoption record of 124 in 1997 (currently, 135 adoptions have been finalized in 2007).

The adoption event was one of several to thank adoptive and foster families, and to highlight National Adoption Month:

- Invitees kicked off the month with an exclusive private pre-release screening of "Martian Child" on Nov. 1.
- Several adoptive and foster families enjoyed light appetizers and hot chocolate while roaming the "Festival of Lights" at the Cincinnati Zoo on Nov. 17.
- Potential adoptive parents and children waiting to be adopted got to meet and enjoy a Bengals game on Nov. 18.

Many thanks to Grace Gottenbusch and Servatti's for donating a cake to help the families celebrate, as well as cookies sent to area media to highlight National Adoption Month.



Photo by Mark Lyons

Newly-adopted children surround Hamilton County Probate Judge James Cissell following the county's first 'mass adoption day' Nov. 17.

Give us your feedback!

We need your ideas, your stories and your feedback! Let us know what you think about *Family Matters*! E-mail us at familymatters@jfs.hamilton-co.org.

Looking forward: a brighter 2008

It's hard to believe 2007 has come to a close already!

For me, it's been a busy and sometimes difficult year of change. A lot has happened that affects you as foster and adoptive parents, how we operate as an agency to



care for children entrusted to us, and how we work together to provide permanency and stability to those children.

The events of 2007 – particularly the tragedy of Marcus Feisel's death that touched us all so deeply – have brought about great change for the state's foster care system. Legislation is currently working its way through the Ohio House

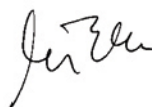
and Senate that will change training and background check requirements for every county. HCJFS Children's Services has initiated changes in response, including the new instant notification program with the Hamilton County Clerk of Courts. We are also working to clear up concerns about records checks and barriers that could prevent some residents from becoming foster and adoptive parents.

We are also working to grow the number of trained and available foster homes in Hamilton County. A new collaborative effort with our partner agencies, called "Everyday Heroes," will kick off in January. We are also working to complete homestudies faster.

The most important change, however, is to say and show our thanks to you more often. Whether you are new to foster and/or adoptive parenting or you have worked with us for awhile, you should know we treasure your work with us. We could not do our work without you.

The new year will bring challenges, but it will also bring new opportunities to provide permanency and stability to the lives of children in our care. All the best to you and yours in 2008 and beyond!

Warmly,



Congratulations, Pat McCollum!!

SWOECA's own Pat McCollum has added another honor to her resume! She was among seven women honored in October at the 19th Annual E. Kathleen Cook Unsung Heroine Scholarship Luncheon.

Pat and the other honorees were recognized for their involvement with foster care and adoption, or their help to children during moments of crisis. The award acknowledges Greater Cincinnati women who have contributed to the advancement of the community.

The Epsilon Lambda Sigma Alumnae chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho sorority hosted the annual reception.

Congratulations, Pat!!



News & Information

State to expand coverage to qualified individuals

Former foster children, poor pregnant women would benefit most

By Josh Sweigart
Staff Writer

(from The Western Star, Dec. 12, 2007)

HAMILTON — The State Children's Health Insurance Program will soon expand free health care coverage to former foster children and pregnant women in Ohio — and may raise the cap on free coverage for other residents.

By the end of January, adults aging out of foster care will qualify for free health care up to age 21, as well as pregnant women in families earning twice the poverty line — \$41,300 annually for a family of four — according to Dennis Evans, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services spokesman.

But a larger change — extending free coverage to children in families earning 300 percent of the poverty line, up from 200 percent now — is still awaiting federal approval.

“In the next couple weeks, we should be hearing something,” Evans said.

Under this change, a family of three earning \$4,292 per month would qualify for free children's medical coverage. The current income cap for a family of three is \$2,863.

Butler County is preparing for the change, according to Jerome Kearns, assistant director of Butler County Job and Family Services.

“On a conservative number, we're planning on adding an additional 500 kids,” Kearns said.

“This health insurance is really designed for working families,” he said. “This is now including a larger segment of our population than it ever has.”

But, he cautioned, the law doesn't permit someone to cancel existing insurance to enroll in the program.

To meet the new demand, the agency is contracting for an additional caseworker, at an annual cost up to \$50,000.

More than 7,000 Butler County children are currently enrolled.

But more are out there, according to Holly Rush Earle, community relations director for the nonprofit Supports to Encourage Low-Income Families. Her agency helps more than 15,000 Butler Countians near the poverty line, and she said 3,185 of them had no health insurance last year.

“We do see a lot of families that are struggling because of medical bills,” she said.

Butler County Children Services Director Michael Fox said dozens of foster kids age out of the system every year and need health care as much as shelter, education and jobs.

‘By the end of January, adults aging out of foster care will qualify for free health care up to age 21...’



Resource phone numbers & Web sites

Southwest Ohio Family Care Association (SWOFCA):

www.ofcaonline.org/pages/resources/resources-by-region/resources-for-region-10.php

Ohio Family Care Association (OFCA):

www.ofcaonline.org

Post-Adoption Services:

call 241-KIDS (241-5437) and request a referral

Have a resource suggestion? E-mail us at familymatters@jfs.hamilton-co.org!

SWOFCA on the rise

Southwest Ohio Family Care Affiliate is moving forward with plans to hire a Program Director and move into new office space. We have reached an agreement with Hamilton County Job and Family Service to house our office on the 5th floor at the HCJFS downtown office, located at 222 E. Central Pkwy., Cincinnati.

Our Program Director and officers will coordinate the office. HCJFS will also provide us with technical assistance, supplies, equipment, and partial funding for the Program Director position.

Beginning in January, we will have regularly scheduled meetings with JFS Section Chiefs and other staff. We look forward to a very rewarding relationship with JFS to improve the lives of foster and adoptive families in Hamilton County (location & phone number to be determined). We have also requested additional funding from the Board of County Commissioners for the Program Director position, and we intend to present grant requests to other funders.

Our Holiday Party was a great success with wonderful food and conversation and a visit from



SWOFCA's Sherrie Mathis (left) stands with HCJFS Director Moira Weir and fellow SWOFCA leaders Dave Willis and Pat McCollum after a meeting with Hamilton County Commissioners in December.

About SWOFCA:

Mission: To unite and support foster, adoptive, and kinship families in Southwest Ohio

Meetings: 2nd Mondays, 6:30-9:00 pm

Location: Zion Hill Community Church,
6834 Parrish Ave, 45239,
North College Hill

Contacts: Pat McCollum (513)477-6041 or
Sherrie Mathis (513)378-2888

the new Director of HCJFS Moira Weir.

Programs in 2008 for which you will receive two (2) training hours include the following:

- Hair & Skin Care
- Adoption Subsidies
- IEPs & MFEs
- Childhood Trauma
- Permanency
- Independent Living
- HCJFS Policies and Procedures
- Ohio Family Care Assoc Executive Director Report

Activities and special events in 2008 will include the Foster Care Day at Krohn Conservatory, "Walk Me Home" fundraiser, a local mini conference, and Recruitment Day for Families at Parky's Farm.

We need foster, adoptive and kinship parents to step forward to help with these events. If you would like a SWOFCA representative to give a presentation at your Support Group Meeting, contact Pat McCollum or Sherrie Mathis.

For more information about SWOFCA, go to the HCJFS website at www.hcadopt.org. You can also find information about SWOFCA through the Ohio Family Care Association website at www.ofcaonline.org. Click on Resources then Resources by region.

Wanted: supportive, loving families for these young people (& others!)

Steve

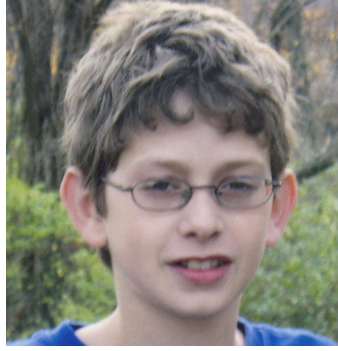


Born April 1994

This teenager describes himself as funny. He wants to be an actor someday. Steve loves utilizing his creativity in art class, and generally enjoys school and gets good grades.

Like other kids his age, Steve likes to watch television and go to movies and the mall. Disney programs are his favorite. He also enjoys listening to gospel music. Steve looks forward to being adopted by a family who cares about him.

Cody



Born October 1992

This strong and intelligent teenager enjoys playing football for his school team. His favorite class in school is gym; he loves being active and participating in sports. Cody also is a good artist and enjoys drawing. When he grows up, he would like to be a football player in the NFL or an architect.

This respectful and pleasant young man likes listening to rap music and watching movies featuring Robin Williams. He doesn't have a favorite food, but his favorite colors are blue and red. In addition to playing sports and drawing, he also likes going to the bowling alley or playing cards.

Cody would prefer a calmer family without a lot of other siblings. He would thrive in a supportive, nurturing family.

Taren

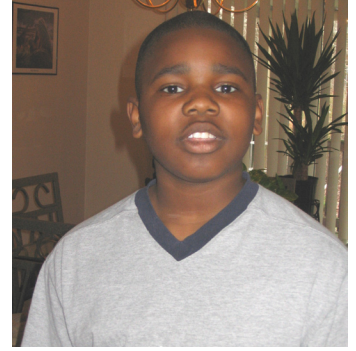


Born April 1994

This strong and intelligent pre-teen enjoys school and does well in her classes. Taren participates in an IEP at school, but is academically on-target. Her favorite class is math, because she enjoys the challenge it presents.

Taren is a member of her community basketball team, which she enjoys. Like many pre-teen girls, she also likes listening to music and practicing her singing and dancing skills. When she grows up, this sweet, bold young woman wants to be a cosmetologist.

Charleston



Born April 1995

Charleston is bright and intelligent. He is very quiet; initially he is shy until he becomes comfortable. He can be very engaging when he chooses to be.

Charleston doesn't enjoy school much, because he gets frustrated when he is unable to complete his work. He also has some problems at times with authority figures. Charleston is easily frustrated and needs help managing his anger.

Many times Charleston seems more like an adult than a child. He is in therapy and works hard to help himself. Sometimes he minimizes and mixes up words in his attempt to make his point.

Charleston enjoys sports and sporting activities. This season Charleston is beginning to play football. He especially enjoys family and outdoor activities. He enjoys riding his bike and attempting tricks with his bike.

To learn more about these children or others available for adoption, call (513) 632-6366 or visit www.hcadopt.org