

FAMILY MATTERS

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

March 2008

From the Desk of Moira Weir, HCJFS Director

Our Best Recruiting Tool ... YOU!

No doubt you have seen the new "Everyday Heroes" commercial on local television. Part of a larger campaign aimed at adding at least 100 new foster homes in Hamilton County, the ad features super-suit clad adults doing everyday things around the house, at the grocery store and at work. These are things we all do each day to provide safe, loving homes for kids – both our own and foster children in our care.

While I believe the ad will help a great deal toward achieving our goal, there's still nothing that compares to the personal experiences that you as foster and adoptive parents share with others each day. You have worked hard – and in some cases, wonders! - with the children placed in your home, and it shows through the stronger, more confident children that feel encouraged and loved.

In short, I – along with our Community Recruitment staff – believe you are our best recruiting tool! No advertisement comes close to the experiences you can share with others who may be interested in becoming foster and adoptive parents.

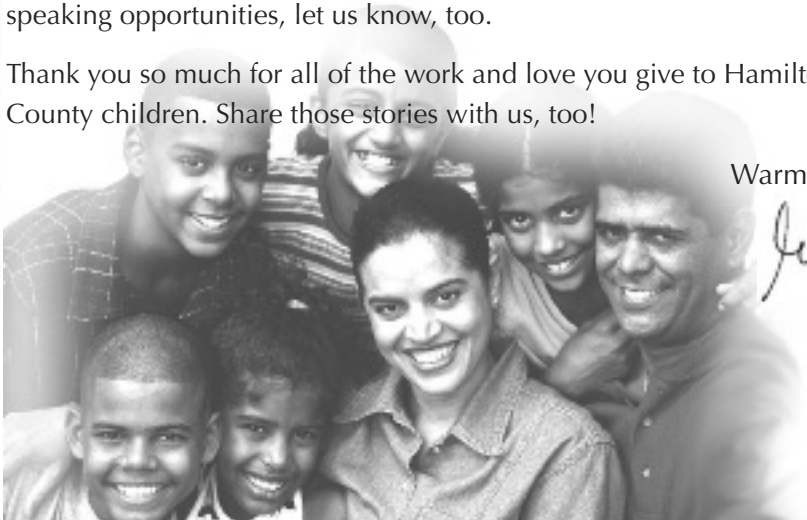
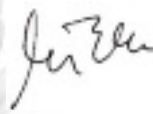
That is why I encourage you to talk with friends, co-workers, neighbors, and fellow parishioners at your place of worship, to name a few.

It does not have to be a big presentation. Just an informal talk over coffee about the changes your family has experienced by fostering or adopting a child can touch others deeply. It may even motivate them to join you in providing safe, loving homes for children in our care.

Our community recruitment unit would love to have you join us in our own efforts to find and train new foster and adoptive parents. If you know of speaking opportunities, let us know, too.

Thank you so much for all of the work and love you give to Hamilton County children. Share those stories with us, too!

Warmly,



Give us your feedback!

We need your ideas, your stories
and your feedback!

Let us know what you think
about Family Matters
by e-mailing us at
familymatters@jfs.hamilton-co.org

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Governor Signs Foster Parent Reform Bill

Earlier this month, HB 214, the foster care reform legislation addressing foster parent training and support, was passed in the Ohio Senate and was quickly signed into law by Gov. Ted Strickland.

The legislation expands pre-placement training from 24 to 36 hours, encourages foster parents to mentor each other and works to ensure that a child's needs are properly measured through a "placement level of care tool."

The final bill also included language that shields foster parents' identifying information from public records laws. Throughout deliberations, this provision caused controversy as members of the media questioned whether keeping these records from public view was appropriate.

Compromise language added to the bill last fall narrowed what was originally a broader public records exemption. The bill as passed would allow access to records in cases where the parent has been convicted of a crime or has had their license revoked.

Child welfare advocates celebrated this result saying that shielding foster parents' identities will help keep children safe and facilitate the recruitment of new foster parents.

The companion foster care reform bill, SB 163, would implement more extensive background checks for foster parents and would expand the list of disqualifying offenses. It has passed the Ohio Senate and is currently being heard in the House Criminal Justice committee.✚

Mixed Bag of Foster Care Reforms

After 3-year-old Marcus Fiesel died at the hands of his foster parents, there were myriad efforts to memorialize him, from holding fundraisers to dedicating projects in his name. But in terms of saving other children from his fate, the most meaningful memorial took place [February 13] when Gov. Ted Strickland signed into law a package of foster care reforms.

The new legislation is, with one glaring exception, sensible even if it is not earth-shaking. Its strongest benefit is that it provides more training and support for foster parents. Its gaping weakness is that it exempts the names of foster parents from public access unless they are charged with a crime or their certification is revoked.

The two provisions, in a sense, work in opposite directions in terms of increasing foster children's safety. The training provisions not only better prepare families to deal with the challenges of raising foster children, most of whom have been traumatized, but draw foster families into more outside contact and thus more informal oversight.

The blocked public access is a loss of accountability. The public should know who is being licensed to care for some of our most vulnerable and dependent children. As we have editorialized before, foster parents accept public money and contract with the state to provide a service, and therefore are not above public scrutiny. The argument that releasing parents' names may present security concerns has never been supported by a significant number of cases of harm to foster parents.

Releasing foster parents' names doesn't mean identifying foster children or revealing which children live in which foster homes. But it does increase transparency around who is caring daily for these children and, by that act alone, may serve as a deterrent for less desirable candidates. The Enquirer filed a lawsuit to make the names public that is now before the Ohio Supreme Court.

As both Hamilton and Butler counties run campaigns to recruit more good foster families - an effort that would go a long way to keeping foster children safer - it's important to appreciate how tough this job really is and to support people who want to do it well. The new reforms increase pre-placement training from 12 to 36 hours, pay current foster parents to mentor recruits and offer information-sharing forums and other support for families with children with special needs. That last provision is especially important. Half of the nation's 518,000 foster children have an identified disability.

Taken together, such efforts lower the odds - although unfortunately can never completely erase them - that the children put into state care will suffer harm as a result of it.✚

reprinted from The Cincinnati Enquirer's Editorial Page



Answers to p. 3 crossword:

4	E	L	A	W
3	C	O	L	A
2	I	D	L	E
1	D	I	E	T

I am a foster child

by
Cherrie, age 13

I am a foster child
wonder if I'll always be
hear people talk
see nothing change
want to be adopted
am a foster child.

pretend that I am not
feel lonely
touch my parent's hand
...to guide me through
worry if my dreams will
...ever come true
cry when I'm hurt
am a foster child.

understand I am
say my feelings
dream of having a family
try to be patient
hope to be adopted
am a foster child.

From *Fostering Families Today*,
January/February 2008

Gary Shine, who had been an HCJFS
foster parent since October, 2003, passed away
suddenly on January 28, 2008.
Mr. Shine is survived by his wife
Lucrecia Shine, who plans to continue
in the foster care program.



Speedy Little Crossword Puzzle

1	2	3	4
2			
3			
4			

Across

1. Low sugar
2. Actor Eric _____
3. Soft drink
4. Actor Jack _____

Down:

1. Andrew ___ Clay
2. Rocker Billy _____
3. Singer ___ Fitzgerald
4. Squad

See p. 2 for answers

Resource Phone Numbers & Web Sites

Southwest Ohio Family Care Association (SWOFCA):

[www.ofcaonline.org/pages/resources-by-region/
resources-for-region-10.php](http://www.ofcaonline.org/pages/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?

Email us at familymatters@jfs.hamilton-co.org

Caramel Apple Cheesecake

Recipe courtesy Paula Deen



- 1 (21 ounce) can apple pie filling
- 1 (9 inch) graham cracker crust
- 2 (8 ounce) packages cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 cup caramel topping
- 12 pecan halves, plus 2 tablespoons chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Reserve 3/4 cup of the apple filling; set aside. Spoon remaining filling into crust. Beat together the cream cheese, sugar and vanilla until smooth. Add the eggs and mix well. Pour this over the pie filling.

Bake for 30-35 minutes, or until center of cake is set. Cool to room temperature.

Mix reserved pie filling and caramel topping in a small saucepan and heat for about one minute, or until spreadable. Spoon the apple caramel mixture over top of cheesecake and spread evenly. Decorate edge of cake with pecan halves and sprinkle with chopped pecans.

Refrigerate the cake until ready to serve.

Yields 8 servings.

COUNTY LAUNCHES FOSTER CARE CAMPAIGN

Recognizing the urgent need to increase foster home capacity in the County, Hamilton County Job and Family Services (HCJFS) and the Hamilton County Commissioners are spearheading a campaign to recruit new local foster homes.

During the past year, HCJFS has experienced a significant drop in the number of people interested in foster parenting. Much of this decline can be attributed to media coverage that has painted foster parenting in a negative light, stigmatizing what should be an honorable and respected service.

Because of this drop in interest, local foster home capacity has reached a critical low point. With fewer homes available, more than 30 percent of Hamilton County foster children must be placed in homes outside the County.

Placing foster children further away from their home communities has harmful consequences for their long term success. Many problems are created, including:

1. The transition into foster care is even more traumatic, magnifying behavior issues.
2. Changing schools makes academic success even more unlikely.
3. Keeping sibling sets together becomes more difficult.
4. Reunification is more complicated, causing longer stays in foster care.

These hurdles can make a dramatic difference in the eventual outcome for each child, making it all the more essential that new homes are licensed.

In response to this critical need, a coalition of community leaders has developed a publicity campaign to recruit new foster parents. This collaborative is led by HCJFS and Hamilton County Commissioners Todd Portune, David Pepper and Pat DeWine.

Also partnering in the campaign are Northlich, the United Way of Cincinnati, Clerk of Courts Greg Hartmann, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, the Foster Child Enrichment Council and eight of the region's foster care providers.

Working throughout the summer and fall as a pro bono creative consultant, Northlich developed a campaign concept to raise

awareness and generate interest in foster parenting. The theme, "Everyday Heroes," shows foster parents are heroes for providing stable homes to children in need. Throughout the campaign, foster parents will be portrayed as super heroes.

This message will be incorporated in a TV commercial, outdoor advertising and a grassroots recruitment effort. The commercial will air in 24 Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana counties, enabling the campaign to recruit new foster homes throughout the Tri-State region.

Interested parents will be directed to call 211, the United Way's community resource hotline. United Way will take the caller's contact information and one of the area's private foster care providers will contact each person to answer questions and begin the licensing process.

Jim Anderson, CEO of Children's Hospital Medical Center, is serving as the chair of the Everyday Heroes campaign. Anderson is spearheading a fundraising campaign to generate the significant resources necessary to mount an effective advertising campaign. Many members of the business community have expressed interest in donating funds to the campaign, or in having recruitment presentations given to interested employees. "We are so very fortunate that so many com-

munity leaders have stepped forward to aid in this important effort," said Moira Weir, director of HCJFS. "Their commitment to making this recruitment campaign a success will make a meaningful difference in the lives of Hamilton County's most vulnerable children."

HCJFS is planning on running the campaign through August. The goal is to recruit 100 new foster homes and increase the number of youths placed inside Hamilton County to 84 percent (from 70 percent).

The agency's Recruitment Team will continue to hold informational sessions concerning foster care in the community; the campaign is in addition to their continuous efforts to recruit more foster parents. Over the next several months, the Everyday Heroes Collaborative is looking for opportunities to distribute posters, feature the campaign in newsletters or on Web sites and to give presentations to groups interested in learning more about foster parenting.

Posters are available for employees to display or distribute in their churches, community centers, etc. Anyone interested in helping with the Everyday Heroes campaign can visit www.fosterhero.com or contact Kristin Frissora, JFS public affairs specialist, at 513-946-2137 or via e-mail. ✉

Who are foster children?

Foster children are abused and neglected children who come into the child welfare system for their protection. An estimated 875,000 children are victims of abuse or neglect each year.

How many foster children are there?

Approximately 500,000 around the nation at any one time. 18,000 in Ohio and about 850 in Hamilton County.

How long are children in foster care?

Foster care is a temporary solution. Nationally, children stay in care for an average of 28 months. In Ohio, it's about 25. In Hamilton County, children are in foster care less than a year, on average.

How old are they?

In Hamilton County, 33% of the children are age 3 or younger; 38% are ages 4-10 and 29% are ages 11 and older.

What race?

In Hamilton County, 52% of the children are African American, 32% are caucasian and 16% are other/unknown.

Boys or girls?

In Hamilton County, it is about an even split between boys and girls.

What happens to foster children?

In Hamilton County, 36% return to their family; 28% go into the custody of relatives; 15% reach the age of 18 while in foster care; 12% are adopted and 9% go into other placements.

Helping Your Foster Child

Author(s): Child Welfare Information Gateway
Year Published: 2005

Transition

to Your Adopted Child

This is the first of four parts of a fact sheet offered by Child Information Gateway. The remaining parts will be covered in the May, July and September issues of Family Matters. For more about this fact sheet, or to find information on other issues involving permanency, visit www.childwelfare.gov

In preparing to talk to children about the changes that occur with adoption, parents and other caring adults in children's lives should remember to engage the child in the process and listen carefully to the words the child uses and to the questions the child asks. Questions about the birth family and their status may need to be addressed. It is important to always tell the truth—even if it is painful—and to validate the child's experience and feelings. While these talks may bring up painful feelings for children, and for parents who love them, helping children to grieve can also help them to move on to a feeling of permanency in their foster/adoptive family.

Talks between parents and children about the differences in status within the foster family and the adoptive family will probably need to be repeated several times and in a variety of ways, so children can fully understand at their own level. It is best if these conversations take place when the parent and child are engaged in activities together. Adoption professional H. Craig-Oldsen (1988) offers the following suggestions for making these talks beneficial for the child:

Plan the discussion. In collaboration with the social worker, the parents should decide if they want to talk with the child first and have the social worker reinforce what was said in a later conversation, or if they would like to talk to the child together about the change from being in foster care to being adopted. Parents should be prepared to answer the child's questions that may be raised by the discussion.

Help the child talk about the perceived difference in his or her own words. The parents should ask open-ended questions of the child such as, "How do you think being adopted will be different from being in foster care?" or "What do you think the biggest difference will be, when you're adopted?"

Help the child draw analogies to something in the child's own life. For instance, a parent might say, "This is like the time when . . ." There are a number of changes in status that will affect the child, and these should be discussed, depending on the child's developmental level.

1. To help the child understand the **legal differences** between foster care and adoption, foster parents might talk about how the adoption court hearing is different from other court hearings the child might have remembered from foster care. Some parents may ex-

plain adoption by using marriage as an analogy. The court hearing is like the marriage ceremony, and the adoption certificate is like the marriage certificate that makes the relationship legal and permanent. (Parents who use this analogy should be prepared for questions about divorce, depending on the child's experience.)

2. Older children who are aware of the foster care board payment or adoption assistance their parents receive might be helped to understand the **financial differences** inherent in foster care and adoption. These payments might be compared to a child's allowance; older children may be able to understand the payments as costs to meet the child's needs. Experienced adoptive parents note the importance of honesty, compassion, and developmental appropriateness in conversations with children regarding these issues (Laws, 2004).

3. To help children understand the **parenting differences** between foster care and adoption, parents might remind the child that when in foster care, the parents had to get a permission slip signed by an agency social worker to go on a field trip, spend the night at a friend's house, or travel across State lines; now that their foster parents are their legal parents, the parents can sign permissions for these types of things without needing to go through an agency or court.✱

***In the May 2008 issue of "Family Matters," we will cover the second of four topics, "Helping children understand their own history."*

One way to explain the changes from foster care to adoption is to talk about the roles that different parents play in the child's life.

Aspects/Roles of Parenting for Children in Placement

Birth parent give children life, gender, physical appearance, predisposition for certain diseases, intellectual potential, temperament, and talents. These aspects never change.

Legal parents provide financial responsibility, safety, and security; make major decisions (where to live and go to school), and are legally responsible for the child's actions. While children are in foster care, the court/agency plays this role with a child. Upon adoption of a foster child, this role is transferred to the adoptive parents.

Parenting Parents provide love, discipline, daily needs (food, clothes, toys, etc.), homework help, transportation, life skills, values, religion, and more. Foster and adoptive parents play this role in the child welfare system. If children are in residential care, this role might be played by house parents or childcare workers (Fahlberg, 1991).

WANTED!

Supportive, loving families for these young people (and others!)



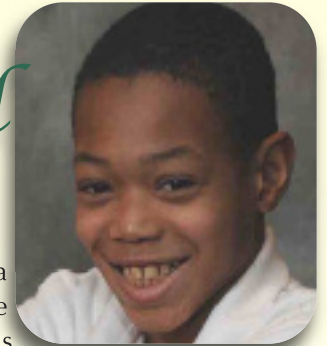
Taren

born April 1994

This strong and intelligent teen enjoys school and does well in her classes. 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.

Taren needs help with the way she expresses her feelings. A strong father figure who can model appropriate ways to communicate feelings would be beneficial, as would a family who will support her in ongoing development and help her with separation and losses she has had in her life.



Daniel

born September 1996

Daniel is an active pre-teen with a passion and talent for basketball. He is a physical kid whose favorite class is recess and whose favorite activity (besides basketball) is his bike.

Daniel does well in school, with the help of some tutoring. The quieter side of Daniel likes reading and watching television, or playing Candyland. He thinks he might like to be a shopkeeper in the future.

Visiting Disneyland is on the top of his wish list. Daniel would thrive with a supportive, nurturing family who share his love of staying busy.

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

SWOFCA meetings set

The Southwest Ohio Family Care Affiliate, part of the Ohio Family Care Association, will hold its next monthly meeting at 6pm, April 14, at Zion Hill Church, located at 6834 Parrish Ave. in North College Hill. SWOFCA meetings are open to interested foster and adoptive parents. The organization offers workshops and information sessions toward enhancing knowledge of resources and support options across Hamilton County.

Reminder to foster parents: Consent needed for medical appointments!

Foster parents are reminded to let caseworkers know as early as possible any time a child is scheduled for medical appointments of any kind. This will allow the worker to obtain and provide consent and help foster parents avoid unnecessary delays or missed appointments. If you have questions, contact your support worker or the child's caseworker.

SWORTC plans Foster and Adoptive Parent Training Conference

The Southwest Ohio Regional Training Center (SWORTC) will hold a two-day foster and adoptive parent training conference on May 16 & 17, 2008 at the Holiday Inn Eastgate. A variety of topics - 37 workshops - will cover topics such as behavior management, drugs in the community, moving youth toward self-sufficiency, and creative compromise: conflict management. Registration begins March 1. Visit <http://www.ocwtp.com/swortc.htm> to learn more.

Course helps "Raise Great Kids, Responsibly"

Registration is open for the 13-week course "Raising Great Kids, Responsibly" at Emanuel Community Center in Over-the-Rhine. The class will run each Tuesday evening from 6-9pm, from 3/25/08 - 6/17/08. It is for parents & social service providers who:

- Have teenage children or are caring for the children of teenagers
- Want to understand reasonable expectations for children of different ages & stages
- Want to learn the concepts and language associated with effective parenting
- Are coping with high personal stress needs
- Want to help build a child's self-esteem with positive discipline techniques
- Want to help a child manage stress or anger at home and school.

Emanuel Community Center is located at 1308 Race St. The program includes pizza dinner, beverages and snacks. For more information or to register for the group, call (513) 354-5718. Agency- or court-referred parents will not be enrolled in this course. For information about parenting intervention courses for agency- or court-referred clients, call (513) 354-5718.

Take Note!