

# ACCENT<sub>on</sub>KIDS

A Publication of Franklin County Children Services

Summer 2013



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Protecting Children by Strengthening Families

## SUMMER 2013

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# Rite of Passage for Youth 70 Celebrate High School Graduation

By Bruce Cadwallader

The youthful milestone of high school graduation or its equivalent became a reality for more than 70 FCCS youth this Spring, an impressive achievement for those also facing issues with the child welfare system and foster care.

For Rose Gee, a 17-year-old animal lover and artist who attended Westland High School, it means she can make some choices on her own. She can pursue work as a tattoo artist or live one dream of becoming a veterinary technician.

"My grandmother had a farm and we had horses, sheep and cows. She showed me how they milk the cows and such," Rose said. "But I'm really not thinking about college right now. I think I want to take a tattooing apprenticeship. I'm good with drawing names and crazy stuff."

Since coming under the care of FCCS, Rose has made great improvements. "I have come a long way from when I lived with my biological family," said Rose.

Teachers have taken note.

"Rose had made incredible strides in both her academic and social experiences at Westland High School. She maintained a part-time job, did well academically and had a clear goal in life," said Doug Pazak, a Westland social studies teacher. He described Rose as "passionate, wise and helpful."

As an FCCS service, a volunteer in the college-bound mentoring program took Rose on a college visit and will work to ensure that her mentee is ready for the transition after high school.

In honor of Rose and more than 70 others, Franklin County Children Services recently held a graduation party for agency youth who received their GED or high school diploma this year. The party was held in the agency's Family Center, where graduates' families, friends and FCCS support teams celebrated with them. This party not only celebrated the youths' achievements but helped solidify the idea that this one accomplishment can lead to many more.

Sponsored by the FCCS Volunteer Department, the party was perhaps the only opportunity for some of the youth to be recognized for graduating. It featured donated door prizes from FCCS employees and community partners, including four suitcases from the FCCS Citizens Advisory Committee filled to the brim with more great gifts, countless restaurant and store gift cards, and tickets to a Columbus Crew soccer game.

Wesley, 18, who just graduated from Focus Learning Academy, was happy to be a part of those honored at the graduation party. His FCCS caseworker Jenny Breckenridge says Wesley has come a long way. "He has been through a lot of adversity and has worked hard to become a responsible young man," said Breckenridge. "I am so proud of him." Wesley will be attending Columbus State in the fall.



Recent high school graduate, Wesley, celebrates with his FCCS caseworker Jenny Breckenridge at the agency's graduation party.

# Scholarships and Honors Awarded to College-Bound Youth

Franklin County Children Services is proud of our youth who have made great academic achievements and are now moving on to higher education. The following youth were recently recognized for their accomplishments at the FCCS Child Abuse Prevention Breakfast for their perseverance through some very challenging times.

## Jack Donahue 4-Year College Scholarship – Antonio Roan

Antonio Roan is no ordinary young man. Disciplined and goal-oriented, this Washington Court House High School graduate sets very high standards for himself and is clearly destined for success.

While he has experienced difficult family circumstances throughout his life, Antonio is not about to let this adversity get the better of him.

Wise beyond his years, Antonio truly knows the value of education and is intent on earning his college degree. He's off to a very good start

– he was accepted into all four colleges he applied to, a huge accomplishment which bodes well for this bright, dedicated student.

Antonio wants to use his college education to make a difference in the lives of others. His plans include getting his master's degree in education and becoming an elementary school teacher. He wants to have a positive influence in the lives of not one, but many children. He said, "I want to be able to build a relationship with the children and parents."

## Jack Donahue 2-Year College Scholarship – Ashli Reames

A mature young woman full of optimism and self-confidence, Ashli Reames is the very definition of resilience. Despite a difficult, unstable childhood spent in many places and many schools, Ashli has stayed

positive and intent on building a bright future for herself. As one of her teachers said, "She is a go-getter that will get all that she wants out of life as she pursues her dreams and goals."

As a senior at Lancaster High School, Ashli did well in school, getting good



Antonio Roan (right) and his FCCS Emancipation Caseworker Neshawn Coleman at the Child Abuse Prevention Breakfast. Antonio was recognized for his accomplishments.

grades and running as a member of the varsity track team.

A caring, compassionate person, Ashli eventually wants a career that helps others and plans on studying either social work or sonography at the University of Rio Grande.

There is no doubt that Ashli is going to go on and succeed in every aspect of her life. As she said, "I really want to make something of myself and I believe I have so much potential to do it."

## Alvin Hadley UNCF College Scholarship – Shaun Fedrick

Having cooked, cleaned and cared for his younger siblings since he was just a child himself, 17-year-old Shaun Fedrick is the first to admit his life experiences haven't been typical.

"My background is not like a lot of other kids my age."

A true survivor, Shaun isn't about to let the adversity and instability he's faced defeat him. Highly motivated and full of energy, he's been actively volunteering since the sixth grade, having given back as a kindergarten tutor as well as at the Boys and Girls Club of Columbus. Shaun currently serves on the FCCS Youth Advisory Board.

With his sights set on the future, this ambitious young man recently earned his GED and plans on getting his bachelor's degree in social work. Shaun wants to eventually help children who have gone through what he has. He said, "I plan on becoming a child welfare caseworker to give back for all the help and support I've received from Franklin County Children Services."

Shaun is the first in his family to go to college and has already started classes at the University of Toledo.

## Rising Up & Moving On Award – Shariece Terry

This young lady has fought through adversity more than once in her lifetime and at age 18 is perched to roar into the college ranks with determination and independence. It was not always that way for Shariece.

Her family history with FCCS involves much of her formative years, but she took it upon herself to endure and take responsibility for her own actions, some involving behavior and school issues. Shariece overcame many obstacles with the help of her Children Services casework team. She has made significant strides in her lifestyle and has developed more positive relationships.

Since making school a priority, Shariece has had academic success and plans to go to Columbus State Community College this coming fall.

# What's Happening at FCCS?

## JULY

### **Simba Faith on 8th Cookout at Homeless Shelter**

**July 27**

FCCS Simba mentors are teaching their mentees about giving back to those in need by putting together this annual cookout at the Faith Mission on 8th Avenue near downtown Columbus.

The mentors will donate and grill hot dogs, hamburgers, along with chips and refreshments for those living in the shelter. The mentees will be on hand helping to make sure everyone has good food and a good time.

## AUGUST

### **FamJam and Mayor Coleman's Neighborhood Pride Block Party**

**Aug. 3 — 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

**Columbus Commons Park, 160 S. High St.**

Franklin County Children Services and the city of Columbus invite you to a free, family enrichment festival at the city's downtown park. FamJam will bring families together with community resources, 75 vendors and information tables, along with tons of fun and entertainment, and free food. Rain or shine! For more information, call (614) 341-6085

### **Stuff the Bus**

**Aug. 10 — 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

**Hoge Memorial Presbyterian Church, 2930 W. Broad St.**

Join the Hilltop Kiwanis Club and FCCS volunteers as we stuff a school bus with donated school supplies in this annual drive for area youth. For more information, call (614) 341-6017.

### **Back-To-School Cookout for Mentors and Youth**

**Aug. 24**

This back-to-school cookout for FCCS mentors and their matched youth will kick-off the school year right. There will be fun games to play and a cookout. Plus there will be a special treat for youth – a backpack full of donated school supplies. For more information, call (614) 275-2690.

## SEPTEMBER

### **Kinship Family Conference**

**Sept. 21**

The FCCS Kinship Department will be holding its annual kinship conference for FCCS kinship providers and the youth in their care or custody. For more information, call (614) 341-6175.



### **Children's Day at COSI**

**Sept. 27 — 5 to 9 p.m.**

**COSI, 333 W. Broad St.**

This free annual event for FCCS families at COSI includes snacks, door prizes and entertainment for the entire family. Generous donations and support by the Franklin County Commissioners allow abused and neglected children to enjoy a free evening at COSI. The general public is also welcome at a reduced price. For more information, call (614) 275-2523.

### **Girls Self-Esteem Workshop**

**September 28 — 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

Franklin County Children Services Citizens Advisory Committee will host its annual Girls Self-Esteem Workshop. The event is geared towards girls ages 13-18 who are involved with FCCS. Participants will attend workshops throughout the day that focus on building positive self-esteem. For more information, call (614) 275-2523.

## OCTOBER-DECEMBER

### **Holiday Wish**

**October 21 – December 23**

The FCCS Family Center is transformed into a holiday workshop as public donations of gifts pour in to support more than 5,000 children who may have suffered abuse, neglect or difficult home situations. There is no guarantee these children will receive a gift without the help of individual donors, businesses or community groups.

To donate online go to [www.franklincountyohio.gov/children\\_services](http://www.franklincountyohio.gov/children_services).

# FCCS Caseworker Spotlight: Arlene “Sam” Jones

By Cynthia Greenleaf

Franklin County Children Services caseworker Arlene “Sam” Jones is especially qualified to help teens in crisis, because she was once a teen in crisis herself. A homeless teen mom at the age of 16, Jones knows what it means to deal with family conflict, and be in desperate need of empathy, encouragement and support. She uses this life experience every day to better the lives of the children and families on her FCCS caseload.

For Jones, who is from Dayton, her young life began to turn around once she got involved with Daybreak, a program for homeless youth. This is where she met her case manager Tom, whom Jones credits with inspiring her to go into social work and dedicate herself to helping others. Once Jones got her life back on track, which included being the first person in her family to graduate from college, Tom told her to “pay it forward,” she remembers. “He said ‘Help one more person just like you.’” Jones did just that and then “couldn’t stop,” she said, laughing.

Today, Jones works as an ongoing caseworker in FCCS’s West Region, frequently helping teenagers navigate the challenges of adolescence. Simply letting a teen in crisis know that they’re supported is crucial, Jones said. She never forgets that when she was a struggling teen, she “just needed one person to say ‘I believe in you.’” Jones recalled. She is this support person again and again to her teens, even writing her phone number in permanent marker on the palm of a kid who’s about to run away. Jones wants them to know they always have someone to call who cares about their well-being.

While Jones clearly cares for teens, she’s equally committed to helping FCCS’s ever-expanding roster of kinship care providers – because she’s one herself. In addition to raising sons Nick, 7, Junior, 10, and Emmanuel, 14, Jones and her husband Shawn have legal custody of her sister Shirlene, 15, and temporary custody

of her nephew Josiah, 5. There was never any doubt that Jones would step up to care for her relatives if the need arose. She said she wasn’t about to let her nephew or sister go into foster care. It was a financial burden

to take on the extra responsibility, but she and her husband would manage. “Whatever it was, we would figure it out,” she said.

Jones knows firsthand that a child who can’t safely be with their birth parents still needs the familiarity of family, if at all possible. Maintaining this comforting connection to culture and tradition, such as living in a household where “they’ll see pictures of people they recognize,” is imperative, Jones said. Because she’s bonded to her nephew, Jones instinctively knows what he needs. “When he starts crying, I know what comforts him,” she said.

As a caseworker and an advocate for permanency, Jones actively puts FCCS’s “protecting children by strengthening families” tagline into practice. She prides herself on helping families help themselves, so they can achieve stability and self-sufficiency. Being able to safely reunify children with their parents is one of the most rewarding parts of her job, she noted. “Telling a mom that her kids are coming home, and hearing her scream with joy, there is nothing better,” Jones said.



## Guidestone – A Valued Community Partner

It is easy for Franklin County Children Services to partner with an organization that shares its beliefs, especially when a not-for-profit community resource such as Guidestone meets the needs of children and families.

Guidestone, formerly known as Berea Children’s Home and Family Services, has been serving children and families in Ohio for nearly 150 years with a continuum of services including home and community-based behavioral health treatment services, skill-building programs, workforce development programs, foster care services, and residential treatment and group homes. With 15 offices in 6 counties, Guidestone served over 17,000 children and families throughout the state of Ohio last year.

While Guidestone and Franklin County Children Services have been working together for many years, in 2007 Guidestone opened a Central Ohio office and began providing contracted parent mentoring and early childhood mental health services for Children Services referred youth and families. They now provide a full complement of mental health services, including outpatient psychiatric care, youth mentoring and home-based counseling for youth of all ages, as well as foster care services.

Since opening their Franklin County office, they have provided services to more than 1,114 children and families referred by Children Services. “We are very blessed to be a part of the Central Ohio community. Franklin County Children Services has helped us develop and implement innovative strategies for assisting parents to build the skills and confidence necessary to sustain their families,” said Guidestone Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer Donna Keegan. “We are grateful for the opportunities we have been afforded in Franklin County, and intend to remain a strong, innovative partner for FCCS for years to come.” For more information about Guidestone, visit their website at [www.guidestoneohio.org](http://www.guidestoneohio.org).

# The Kindness of Strangers

## FCCS Mentors Give Support to Kids in Need of Friends

By Elizabeth Crabtree

If there is one thing that rings consistently about the success of youth who have experienced significant obstacles in their lives it is their relationship with someone who cared. This someone was there during moments of joy and sorrow, offering guidance and support. This someone believed in their potential to succeed.

Franklin County Children Services has been linking agency youth who may have experienced abuse, neglect or other difficult home conditions with these “some ones” since the 1970’s through one on one matches with mentors and volunteers.

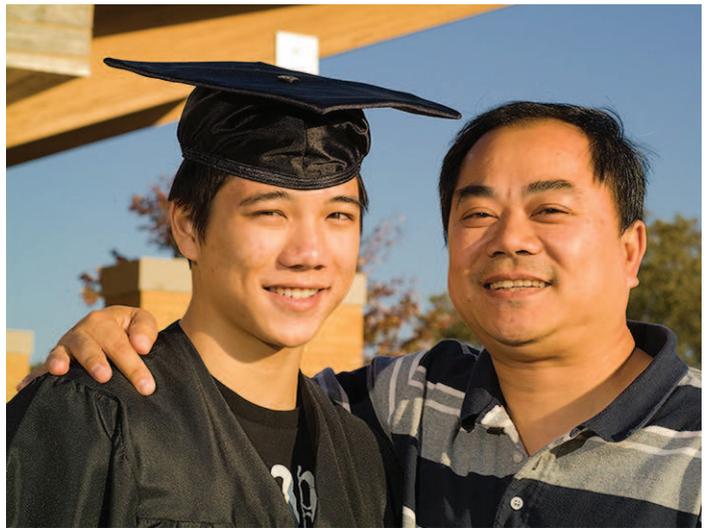
“It is important that these youth have relationships with people who will follow through, teach them that there are adults out there who care, that they are not alone,” said Chuck Cochran, FCCS volunteer coordinator for the College-Bound Mentoring program. “These youth often become survivalists, thinking that they can only depend on themselves.”

In addition to helping youth apply for college or trade schools, the agency works to engage youth when they are beginning their high school educations. “They need help understanding how to study, gain exposure to different career options, help figuring out what they want to do as they move into adulthood and what steps they need to take to get there,” said Cochran. “For some of our youth, they are not only the first in their family to attend college,

but they are the first in their family to finish high school.”

College-Bound Mentoring is just one of the six mentoring and volunteering programs offered by Franklin County Children Services. There are 500 volunteers and mentors within these six programs, but there are still more than 200 agency youth waiting for a match.

To become a mentor or volunteer, inquire online at [www.franklincountyohio.gov/children\\_services](http://www.franklincountyohio.gov/children_services) or call (614) 275-2690.



## Rise Sister Rise Research Shows Resiliency in Traumatized Youth

As a child protection agency, Franklin County Children Services is learning more about the trauma that children experience and how it impacts their lives and future well-being. The work of the Rise Sister Rise research project reinforces the importance of this issue. Principal investigator Fran Frazier and her team surveyed more than 400 African American girls in Akron, Columbus, Dayton and Lima and collected some very telling data about the trauma and resiliency they experience. They shared the results throughout the various communities and built collaborations to address some of the major concerns reflected in the research.

FCCS had the privilege of working with Frazier to host a gathering of more than 30 youth serving groups and organizations to share resources. As a result of this gathering, a girl serving group resource guide was created and shared with FCCS staff to enhance their work with girls on their caseload.

In addition to partnering with the agency for data sharing events for community organizations and staff, Frazier and the women of Rise Sister Rise Columbus have been great partners with the FCCS Malaika mentoring program. FCCS youth and mentors benefited tremendously from a full-day conference for teen girls. Rise Sister Rise data has also been made available to Malaika mentors to help improve the quality of mentor/mentee relationships in ways that will forever positively impact the lives of the girls. Rise Sister Rise Columbus was recently honored at the FCCS Child Abuse Prevention Breakfast with a Community Advocate Award.



Fran Frazier Principal Investigator at Rise Sister Rise

# Youth Art Show

## Public Art Show & Silent Auction of Art Benefit Youth in Need

By Monique McCrystal

The stroke of a brush onto a blank canvas can express sadness, joy, pain and beauty. A poem can bring tears to the eyes of readers. These emotions also ring true for artists, including many youth artists who are involved with Franklin County Children Services. The agency's Therapeutic Arts Program (TAP), a program available to youth under the care of FCCS, creates an outlet for children who may feel more comfortable expressing their troubled past and emotions through art, dance and song. These youth displayed their creations for two weeks in May at the FCCS Youth Art Show and Silent Auction held in the FCCS



Cheri Johnson and Larry Whiteside

Family Center – an event that is open to the public.

The art show and auction started 11 years ago and only featured the work of children available for adoption. FCCS adoption employee Larry Whiteside says that when he started the art show it was small and only promoted to staff. “With time and the support of the agency’s Therapeutic Arts Program, the art show and silent auction has developed into something truly special for all FCCS youth and the entire Central Ohio community,” said Whiteside.

Cheri Johnson works with youth in the agency’s Therapeutic Arts Program and is instrumental to the success of the art show. Johnson works diligently throughout the

year to guide the budding artists and gives them positive feedback and encouragement while they often courageously express their traumatic experiences into works of art.

People come from all over Central Ohio to view and bid on the art pieces, consisting of paintings of expression, self-portraits, youth heroes, and creations like OSU lamps, jewelry, poetry and more. Hard work, sacrifice and a lot of emotion go into each piece of art. “Although many of our youth have faced challenges that involve trauma, we guide them to draw from those experiences and express confidence, creativity, self-expression, positive self-image and hope in their artwork,” said Johnson.

All proceeds from the Art Show and Silent Auction benefit the Franklin County Children Services Children’s Fund, which provides special things to youth under FCCS care that tax dollars cannot cover. For more information on donating to the FCCS Children’s Fund go to [www.franklincountyohio.gov/children\\_services](http://www.franklincountyohio.gov/children_services) and click on the Donor Opportunities page.

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***“Although many of our youth have faced challenges that involve trauma, we guide them to draw from those experiences and express confidence, creativity, self-expression, positive self-image and hope in their artwork.”***

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**Cheri Johnson, FCCS Employee**

# Keeping Children Safe at Home

By Elizabeth Crabtree

Each year, an estimated 71,000 children in the United States are seen in the emergency room for medication poisoning according to the Center for Disease Control. This is just one example of children being placed at risk unintentionally and in a manner that is avoidable. Here are some tips for keeping children safe in their homes according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.



- Keep cabinets and drawers that contain hazardous materials such as cleaners and medications locked and latched.
- Do not trust that if a childproof lid is on a bottle that is it entirely childproof. Always err on the side of caution.
- Use safety gates to keep children out of rooms with potential hazards and to prevent falls down the stairs.
- Door knob covers and door locks can keep children from getting out of the home unsupervised and keep them out of rooms that are unsafe. Each year, Franklin County Children Services responds to numerous concerns of children getting out of homes unsupervised and being at risk out in the community. These situations can be avoidable when the proper steps are taken to secure exits.
- Watch the water temperature on water heaters. Children scald at lower temperatures than adults do and it only takes a second for serious burns to occur.
- Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are a necessity in keeping a home safe, as are outlet covers in homes with small children.

Prevention is always the best way to ensure that our community's children grow up in a safe environment. For more information, visit the Consumer Product Safety Commission's website at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).



[www.franklincountyohio.gov/children\\_services](http://www.franklincountyohio.gov/children_services)

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