



2008

HONORING FAMILIES  
VALUING CHILDREN

ANNUAL REPORT



855 W. Mound St. Columbus, OH 43223 [www.franklincountyohio.gov/children\\_services](http://www.franklincountyohio.gov/children_services)  
Franklin County Children Services ANNUAL REPORT

HONORING FAMILIES VALUING CHILDREN



# SAFETY, PERMANENCY AND WELL-BEING FOR EVERY CHILD



**Protecting Children by  
Strengthening Families**

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND FRONT DOOR SERVICES



### Our Mission and Guiding Principles

2008 marked the beginning of a new era for Franklin County Children Services as we began to define ourselves by our core values. With help from the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement, we developed a new mission statement and a set of guiding principles designed to capture our values and shape our services to children and families.

#### Our new mission:

Through collaboration with families and their communities, we advocate for the safety, permanency and well-being of each child we serve in a manner that honors family and culture.

#### Our guiding principles:

##### We are Child Welfare Professionals

- We constantly pursue excellence
- We recognize the importance of providing effective and timely service
- We value, respect and support each other
- We are proud that we improve the quality of life for families in our community
- We are fiscally responsible
- We aspire to be culturally competent

##### We Value Every Child

- We respect the individuality of each child we serve
- We advocate for each child's safety, permanency and well-being
- We honor each child's family and culture

##### We Honor Families

- We respect families' strengths
- We understand families are the experts of their own experience
- We recognize that children are best served within their family and community
- We separate what parents do from who they are

##### We Value Partnerships

- Families have the right to be a part of the decision-making team
- Casework is the most important function of the agency team
- Families, communities and government share the responsibility to keep children safe

As most of you know, child abuse continues to be an unfortunate reality of the times we live in. It's insidious and permeates all levels of society affecting families from generation to generation. But for those of us who advocate, love and care about children, this is one battle that we do not intend to lose.

Franklin County Children Services has set some pretty high standards when it comes to protecting children by strengthening families. Each of our guiding principles: We value every child, we honor families, we are child welfare professionals and we value partnerships, are designed to steer us in a direction that lessens incidents of child maltreatment and safely maintains children in their own homes whenever possible. However, guiding principles are not enough unless we see changes in practice and they are mirrored in how we serve our children and families.

One of the ways our agency is changing is with our new alternative response pilot that began in 2008. Franklin County Children Services was one of 10 Ohio counties selected to participate in this innovative program of family engagement and assessment. The alternative response model allows caseworkers flexibility in their approach to assessing and providing services to families who have abuse and neglect allegations. While serious cases of child maltreatment will continue to have traditional investigations, other less severe incidents may be assigned to the alternative response model.

The alternate response model will allow the agency to look at the needs of the child and family, and offer services without a formal investigation that may result in a disposition of abuse or neglect. Research has shown that alternative response results in increased child safety, increased family involvement and increased family satisfaction.

I am thankful that our efforts to provide increased family-friendly services at the front door, begun a few years ago and continued with the alternative response model, have resulted in record lows in the number of children in paid placement and in custody. Yet our standard of keeping children safe has not been compromised.

2008 was also a year of increased partnerships with the addition of family support services and other evidence-based programs designed to better meet the needs of children and families locally.

Also among the things celebrated in 2008, our agency successfully re-negotiated a union contract and earned reaccreditation from the Council On Accreditation. Franklin County Children Services remains one of only 17 counties in the state to hold this elite distinction.

While our agency concentrated on providing effective quality services in 2008, we were also fiscally responsible, ending the year under budget.

Yes, Children Services has set the bar high for 2008 and beyond. But our children deserve no less.

Eric D. Fenner  
Executive Director  
Franklin County Children Services



“...we developed a new mission statement and a set of guiding principles designed to capture our values and shape our services to children and families.”



“ Ericka Gunnell is actively involved in the daily lives of the children she serves and is always willing to do what's necessary to enrich these children's lives. ”



# WE ARE CHILD WELFARE PROFESSIONALS

## S O C I A L   W O R K

# WE HONOR FAMILIES

## B I R T H   A N D   K I N S H I P



Social workers are people who care about people, who want to make things better, who want to relieve suffering, and who want their work to make a difference in people's lives.

The child welfare social work professionals at Franklin County Children Services work by the agency's guiding principles – pursue excellence, provide effective and timely services, be fiscally responsible, culturally competent, value and support each other, and last but not least, improve the quality of life for families and the community.

Visiting with clients who face serious problems is common for Children Services' case workers. These problems may include child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, substance abuse, anti-social behavior, inadequate housing, unemployment, financial distress, and serious illness.

Erika Gunnell (pictured) is a dedicated child protection case worker at Franklin County Children Services. She exemplifies what it truly means to be a case worker by consistently taking extraordinary measures to advocate for the families on her caseload.

Gunnell is an ardent supporter of reunifying children with their biological families. One such case of reunification was with a mother and child who have been reunified for nearly a year. This mother cried with joy upon learning that her child could come home, and let everyone know how wonderful Gunnell had been to her family.

While she worked full-time at the agency, she completed her bachelor's and master's degrees in social work. Gunnell completed her master's program while also winning a battle against breast cancer and she never let down the families on her caseload in the process. She has also been a mentor to her co-workers and a constant source of reliable support for her colleagues.

Furthermore, Gunnell is actively involved in the daily lives of the children she serves and is always willing to do what's necessary to enrich these children's lives. Even after the cases have closed, she makes sure she is accessible to her former clients and that they feel comfortable and confident in calling her. Gunnell encompasses all of the things it means to be a social worker – compassion, integrity, service, and the belief in the dignity and worth of each client whose life she touches.

Franklin County Children Services has a long history of supporting biological and kinship families. It is such a part of what this agency does that honoring families is one of the agency's four guiding principles. Respecting families' strengths and recognizing that children are best served within their family is a key component. Being open and understanding is also very important, because families are the experts of their own experiences and it's often necessary to separate what parents do from who they are.

### A Biological Family

Heather and Joshua Cook (top photos) have come a long way in the past year and a half. Just a short while ago the couple was dealing with issues of abuse and alcoholism, and lost custody of their son, David. When David was placed in foster care, the Cooks decided to turn things around for the better. Rising above their adversity, the Cooks devoted themselves to resolving their issues by going to drug and alcohol treatment, counseling and parenting classes. The family is now reunited and has happily welcomed the arrival of two more children.



### A Kinship Family

Danella Hicks (bottom photo) thought she was done with active parenting as her two daughters were well on their way to independence. Hicks had visions of the “good life” with fewer commitments and responsibilities. But in February of 2008, her world changed dramatically. Her cousin died, leaving behind six wonderful but dependent children. Hicks stepped up and received guardianship of the children.

Her home, which was designed for three, became a castle for seven. And her vision of relaxation and vacations became a flurry of activities and commitments. To ask Hicks today, she will tell you this IS the good life. She marvels at the accomplishments of her new family. All of the children are improving in their grades and attendance at school. She speaks of indescribable joy when her six year old, who had never been to kindergarten, mastered his reading assignments.

In spite of limited resources, Hicks is turning trauma into triumph. She feels this experience is a win-win. The children are happy and she is rewarded through their joy.





The children whose lives are touched by Franklin County Children Services come from all cultural and economic backgrounds, and from diverse neighborhoods and communities.

Franklin County Children Services values every child in the community – and advocates for each one's safety, permanency and well-being. Children who are on the agency caseload receive services and opportunities to help them grow and develop. Those services may vary depending on their unique needs and family circumstances.

## WE VALUE EVERY CHILD OUR AGENCY CHILDREN



While ensuring a child's safety is always paramount, maintaining family connections in that process is also essential. That is why the agency makes every effort to work with families to resolve their issues while the children remain in the home. If this cannot be done due to child safety issues, Children Services places children in out-of-home care. When this occurs, the agency seeks the least restrictive placement possible – with family members or other kin, or in foster homes within a reasonable distance for the parents to visit. The goal for children in placement is for them to return home whenever safely possible. When the child cannot return to family, Children Services seeks an adoptive home or makes other permanent plans, such as emancipation of older youth.

### DUSTIN SMITH JR. – Embracing the Challenge

Dependable, hard-working and motivated, Dustin Smith Jr. (bottom photo) is a senior at Academic Acceleration Academy, where he ranks first in his class and is the class valedictorian. He is a highly capable, intelligent student who has been described as an “engaged learner” and a “natural leader” with an “amazing heart.”

A survivor in every sense, Dustin has dealt with tremendous adversity to get where he is today. A turbulent family life, child abuse, and substance abuse are just a few of the challenges and hardships he's overcome.

While he wasn't always on the right path, Dustin has stepped up and turned things around for the better. As Dustin himself said: “I am proud of the things I have accomplished. I seem to be headed in the right direction with my life.”

After he graduates, Dustin plans on attending Columbus State where he will major in business management. An aspiring business owner, he would like to eventually run his own sporting goods store. He would also like to become a basketball coach and help other kids succeed.

### JOHNATHON – In Search of a Loving, Permanent Home

Although he is 14-years-old, Johnathon (top photo) really wants to be adopted and believes the right family is out there for him.

Caring, artistic, and a dog-lover are three terms that describe Johnathon. He is also a great help around the house, assists with summer flea markets, runs errands with his foster mother, pampers the family dog, and enjoys visiting with other adults and children. Other interests include art (he has a knack for drawing), football, rap music, going out to eat, playing video games, and watching movies with friends.

An avid sports fan, the Michigan Wolverines and Dallas Cowboys are his favorite football teams. Johnathon thinks he might join the military and become a Navy Seal when he gets older. Whether he is at home or school, consistent structure and individual support help him do his best work. To make the most of his future, Johnathon needs an energetic, committed, and patient family who can lovingly guide him through life's challenges.

For children like Johnathon who cannot return to their birth families, adoption means new families and new beginnings. Currently there are more than 100 children under the agency's care who want to be adopted, but continue to wait for families. Most are teens or boys.

## WE VALUE PARTNERSHIPS OUR ADAMH PARTNER

One of Franklin County Children Services' guiding principles, We Value Partnerships, is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the agency's collaboration with ADAMH, the Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Board of Franklin County. Formally established in 2007, this partnership aims to give children and families better access to high-quality behavioral health care and other services in a more efficient, cost-effective manner. “Our goal is to sit down as a partner and research what services are needed, so we're better able to help families in our community,” said Pam Schirner, Franklin County Children Services assistant director.

The partnership has fostered a much-needed dialogue between agencies, adds Kythryn Carr Hurd, director, integrated system of care for ADAMH and FCCS. “Before this initiative, the systems didn't really work well together—there was not a lot of communication,” Carr Hurd said. “This initiative has really allowed us to move ahead in a unified and collaborative way.”

By capitalizing on the idea that there's strength in numbers, the FCCS and ADAMH partnership has yielded a range of benefits, including being able to pool funding for greater value and “being able to hold providers much more accountable,” Schirner said. “They're doing what we want them to do.”

Most importantly, being on the same page has helped to better match clients with necessary services. The partnership makes it “so much easier to get at what the service needs are,” Schirner said.

Examples of the collaboration's success include the joint purchase of two apartment buildings, also in partnership with North Central Mental Health, that will help better serve children with severe mental health issues. Children Services also joined forces with Juvenile Court and ADAMH to provide in-home family therapy for children and families.

The ongoing FCCS/ADAMH collaboration is a welcome change from the days when agencies operated independently and often in isolation, offering “silos of service” that were frequently redundant or not fully tailored to the needs of a child, according to Schirner. After all, our “kids cut across all systems,” she said, so programs and services should reflect that often complicated reality.

“ The partnership (between FCCS and ADAMH) makes it so much easier to get at what the service needs are... ”



# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Franklin County Children Services follows the agency's Guiding Principles and Mission in everything we do.

# MISSION

*In everything we do.*

## We Are Child Welfare Professionals

At Franklin County Children Services, we are proud that we improve the quality of life for families in our community. We participate in Pinwheels for Prevention (top right), and value our dedicated and professional staff (middle right). We are constantly pursuing excellence in our staff, volunteers and clients, and recognize their achievements at the Child Abuse Prevention Breakfast (bottom right) and other annual events.



## We Honor Families

We recognize that children are best served within their family and community. We strive to celebrate families at events, such as National Family Week (top right) and Children's Day at COSI (bottom right).

“Through collaboration with families and their communities, we advocate for the safety, permanency and well-being of each child we serve in a manner that honors family and culture.”



# HONORING FAMILIES VALUING CHILDREN

## Protecting Children by Strengthening Families



## We Value Every Child

We respect the individuality of each child we serve, as with our Therapeutic Arts Program (TAP) (top left) and a foster child youth rally at the Ohio Statehouse (bottom left). We honor each child's family and culture.

## We Value Partnerships

Families, communities and government share the responsibility to keep children safe. We have many partnerships, as in the National Adoption Month docudrama (top right) and the college-bound youth event at Easton Town Center (bottom right). We are grateful for the community support for Holiday Wish (top), and other programs.



In 2008, Children Services provided help for 28,643 children and their families through direct services by the agency's professional staff and by purchasing services from 80 provider agencies.

## Safety

Franklin County Children Services believes that its mission to protect children by strengthening families can best be carried out by offering a variety of family support services to families at every stage of a case. Prevention services are designed to provide help to families and children to prevent case openings, to prevent placement of children on the open caseload, to prevent further maltreatment of children, and to prevent the recidivism of children who have returned home following placement.



## Placement

Every effort is made by Children Services to keep children with their families whenever safely possible. When out-of-home placement is necessary, the agency's goal is to place children in the least restrictive environment, to provide opportunities for and to facilitate regular visitation, and to reunite families as soon as can be safely accomplished.

The numbers below represent the various categories of placements which the agency uses.

- 4,886 children in agency custody
- 4,391 children in paid care
- 694 children served in agency foster homes
- 2,436 children served in purchased foster care
- 1,375 children served in group or institutional care
- 1,183 children were placed with relatives



# 2008 REPORT OF SERVICES

Services are aligned with the Children Services mission and with meeting federal goals in four areas, including safety, placement, permanency and well-being.

**24-Hour Child Abuse Hotline:**  
(614) 229-7000

**Adoption & Foster Care:**  
(614) 341-6060

**Volunteers and Mentors:**  
(614) 275-2690

**Communications:**  
(614) 275-2523

Children Services Intake and Investigations staff provide protective services by investigating referrals of children who are alleged to be abused, neglected or dependent. These services are provided 24 hours a day. The agency also accepts referrals from the Franklin County Juvenile Court on youth who are unruly or delinquent.

When investigations indicate a need for ongoing services, a case is opened and sent to one of the agency's two regions or two managed care partner agencies. Children Services provides case management, protective and supportive services, and purchases services from community agencies within a case plan agreed to by the family and Children Services casework staff.

- 21,025 referrals received
- 12,014 family investigations completed
- ongoing services for 6,020 cases
- protective services for 17,277 individual family members
- family services to 4,328 children through managed care partnerships
- 10,836 children served on the active ongoing caseload

## Permanency

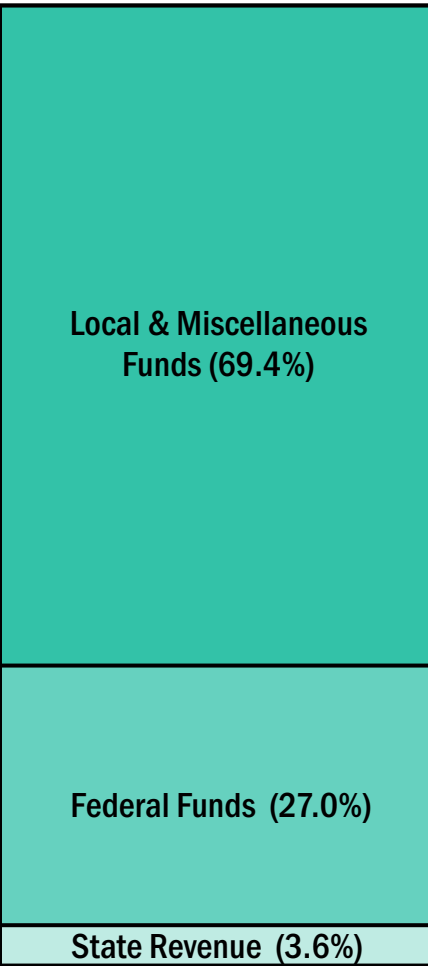
Children Services is committed to assuring a safe, permanent home for each child who cannot remain with or return to family.

- 200 children's adoptions were finalized
- 345 older youth received emancipation or independent living services to enable them to make a transition from being cared for to being on their own
- 96 agency youth graduated from high school

## Well-being

Children Services provides special opportunities and services to children and youth to enhance their well-being.

- 579 children and youth received volunteer or mentoring services from 589 volunteers or mentors
- 4,427 children received gifts through the Holiday Wish program provided by 1,258 individuals and 860 groups
- 293 children and youth received services through the Therapeutic Arts Program



# INCOME

Operating Fund Balance as of January 1, 2008 **\$55,632,217**

## Income (Cash Basis):

**Local & Miscellaneous Funds \$120,328,942**

Property Taxes	\$116,105,358
Interfund Revenue	2,547,261
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/PRC	1,151,659
Board & Care from Parents	257,494
Miscellaneous	267,170

**Federal Funds \$46,798,024**

Title IV-E Placement (Administration)	\$1,260,389
Title IV-E ProtectOHIO Waiver	19,559,570
Title IV-E Administration	20,864,703
Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, VA Benefits	1,026,239
Title IV-B - ESSA (Emergency Services Supplemental Assistance)	736,387
Independent Living Program	690,426
Miscellaneous	2,660,311

**State Revenue \$6,265,976**

Regional Training	\$947,183
Child Protective Allocation	5,043,847
Miscellaneous	274,947

**Total 2008 Income \$173,392,943**

**Beginning Balance Plus 2008 Income \$229,025,160**

# EXPENSES

## Operating Expenditures (Cash Basis):

**Protection Program \$78,019,352**

Intake & Investigations	\$13,997,435
Casework Protective Services	30,656,525
Care Partnerships	28,234,657
Family Support Services	5,130,735

**Placement Program \$69,363,945**

Family Care Services	\$7,238,556
Emergency Shelter Care	4,447,787
Foster Home Care	31,119,314
Group Home Care	5,940,386
Institutional Care	20,617,901

**Permanency Program \$19,853,139**

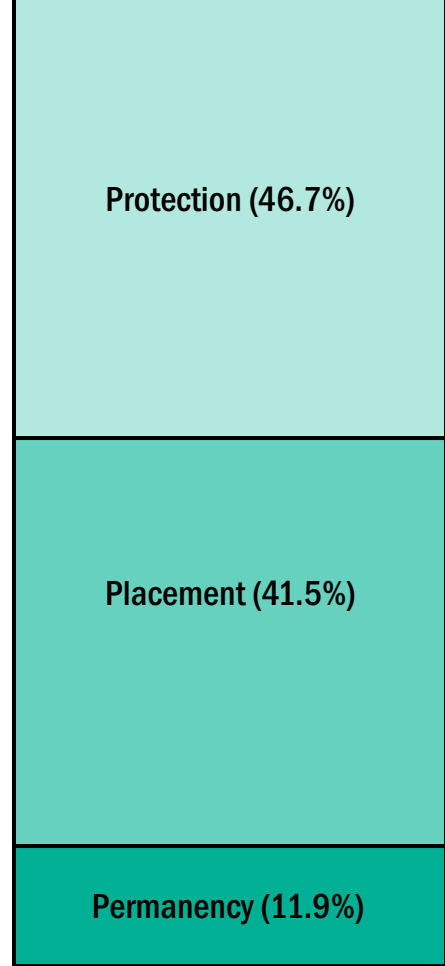
Adoption Services	\$10,760,659
Child Enrichment Services	1,281,815
Emancipation Services	7,810,666

**Total 2008 Operating Expenditures \$167,236,436**

**Operating Fund Balance as of December 31, 2008 \$61,788,724**

**Ending Balance Plus 2008 Expenses \$229,025,160**

(Slight variances possible due to rounding.)



# PURCHASED SERVICES



Adriel School Inc.	\$ 672,324	Jubilee Youth Center Inc.	\$ 129,730
Advantage Adoption and Foster Care	1,799,914	Keystone Richland Center LLC	859,724
Agape	41,852	Legal Aid Society of Columbus	267,093
Alliance Human Services, Inc.	289,847	Life Start Inc.	499,644
Alps	28,768	Lifeway for Youth	1,060,594
Applewood Centers Inc.	584,435	Lincoln Behavioral Health Care	453,229
Bair Foundation	1,576,932	Maryhaven, Inc.	915,322
Beech Brook Spaulding	100,768	Mentoring Center of Central Ohio	29,009
Bellefaire Jewish Children's Bureau	407,131	National Youth Advocate, Inc.	99,583
Berea Children's Home and Family Services	410,390	Neighborhood House Inc.	131,220
BHC Belmont Pines Hospital, Inc.	11,732	New Horizon Care Network, Inc.	17,753
Big Brothers Big Sisters	57,011	New Leaf Inc.	1,481,265
Buckeye Ranch/Square One for Youth	6,852,404	North Central Mental Health Services	253,629
Buckeye Ranch (Managed Care Partnership)	12,114,553	Oasis Therapeutic Foster Care	723,798
Caregivers Helper, Inc.	137,680	Oesterlen Services for Youth	275,525
Center for Child and Family Development	87,740	Ohio Mentor Inc.	49,644
Center for Vocational Alternatives	155,941	Ohio Youth Advocate Program	4,548,688
Central Community House	92,350	Ohio Youth Advocate (Managed Care Partnership)	16,120,104
Chileda Institute Inc.	176,787	Options Treatment Center	34,240
Christian Children's Home of Ohio	23,202	Parenthesis Family Advocate	1,847,769
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center	592,603	Pomegranate Health Systems	2,638,994
Columbus Health Department	56,150	Preventative After Care Inc.	744,388
Community Refugee & Immigration Services	68,360	Rosemont Center	4,131,724
Compdrug Inc.	182,652	RTC of Columbus	2,002,968
Consumer Support Services, Inc.	1,851,264	Safe Landings, Inc.	224,526
Cornell Abraxas Group, Inc.	140,524	Salesian Boys	30,340
Correctional Management Co. LLC	869,334	Sojourners Care Network	36,237
Directions for Youth	75,526	South Side Settlement House	74,180
Department of Youth Services	303,140	Southeast Inc.	15,444
Dungarvin Ohio LLC	37,129	Specialized Alternatives for Youth & Family	2,273,415
Eastway Corporation	579,339	St. Joseph Orphanage	52,333
Fairfield Academy	226,800	St. Stephen's Community House	180,940
Family Connection Inc.	49,776	St. Vincent Family Centers	188,826
Firstlink	626,927	Starr Commonwealth	2,889,520
Franklin County Educational Services	43,752	Syntax Youth Home	1,438,591
George Junior Republic in Pennsylvania	68,145	United Methodist Children's Home	3,877,881
Gladden Community House	118,600	Viaquest Behavioral Health of Ohio	1,854,965
House of New Hope	825,469	Village Network	3,512,767
Huckleberry House	38,243	White Deer Run Inc.	139,666
Indiana Developmental Training Center	434,068	Youth Advocate Services	1,050,890

<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$90,294,335</b>
<b>Payment to Children Services Foster &amp; Adoptive Homes</b>	<b>\$9,006,174</b>
<b>Other Purchased Social Services</b>	<b>\$2,006,711</b>
<b>Total Purchased Social Services</b>	<b>\$101,307,220</b>

## Franklin County Commissioners

Marilyn Brown, *President*  
 Paula Brooks  
 Mary Jo Kilroy



## Franklin County Children Services Board

Necol Russell-Washington, <i>Chair</i>	Brent Bishop	Gale King
Joseph Mas, <i>Vice Chair</i>	Marjorie Frazier	Margaret Lewis
Sara Chase, <i>Secretary</i>	Alvin Hadley	Douglas Moore
	Jerry Hammond	Joy Soll

## Citizens Advisory Committee

Sara Chase, <i>Chair</i>	Marilyn Gravely	Sinoun Som
Gwen Abbott	Cheryl Harger	Carl Ward
Ruth Cavin	Gena Phillips	Rick Wolf
Jerry Chase	Annette Scott	

## Foster Parent Association

Gena Phillips, *President*  
 Marilyn Gravely, *Vice President*  
 Amanda Scott, *Secretary*  
 Carol Jones, *Treasurer*

## Volunteer Services Advisory Committee

Heather Popio, <i>Chair</i>	Kitty Burcu	Nancy Page
Cheryl Harger, <i>Vice Chair</i>	Beth Escue	Jim Ryan
Mark Miesse, <i>Secretary</i>	Lynn Kidd-Freeman	Debbie Sartori
	Mike Myers	Eddie Stanley