



Protecting Children by Strengthening Families

media release

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Honoring Those Who Help Prevent Child Abuse

Agency Recognizes the Successes of Youth, Families, Social Workers, and Community Advocates

Child abuse prevention efforts have made dramatic improvements in the lives of children and youth. More and more children and families in crisis are being linked with resources, information, support and opportunities to help them on their road to success.

Franklin County Children Services and the Citizens Advisory Committee recently hosted the annual Child Abuse Prevention Breakfast to recognize the accomplishments of youth, families, social workers and community advocates. Because April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, it is a time for Children Services to focus on educating the community about the effects of child abuse and its prevention. At the breakfast, the agency honored those who have promoted child abuse prevention and those who have overcome its effects.

Franklin County Children Services provides help for more than 24,500 children each year and believes that the key to preventing child abuse and neglect is the education and involvement of individuals and community organizations.

Jack Donahue College Scholarship Recipients

The Jack Donahue College Scholarship awards went to Bianca Morgan and Joe Humphries. Despite a turbulent childhood spent in and out of foster care, Bianca Morgan has remained positive throughout her life and set her sights firmly on success. "Since as early as I can remember, I have had a love for school and a dream of making my life better," said Morgan. She plans to attend The Ohio State University this fall, to study psychology and neuroscience, with the goal of becoming a private-practice psychiatrist.

Joseph Humphries is a hard-working student who has been described as bright, personable, and driven. He hasn't had the easiest life, but that hasn't stopped him from staying focused and committed to his goals. In addition to getting into college, among the accomplishments this motivated young man is most proud of is turning things around for the better. He plans on attending Hocking College to study culinary arts.

Alvin Hadley United Negro College Fund Scholarship Recipient

The Alvin Hadley UNCF college scholarship went to Heather Prestidge. Growing up in a chaotic and stressful environment was difficult for Prestidge and her five younger siblings, but today she is a senior at Lancaster High School and focused on her future. She will be the first in her family to graduate high school and she plans to attend Ohio Christian University to work with young people, perhaps women or foster children who have faced similar challenges.

Rising Up and Moving On Award Honorees

The purpose of the Rising Up and Moving On award is to bring attention to children served by the child protection system who have been successful and have benefited from services. This year's honorees are Dontell Higgins and Henry Pohr.

Despite a rough start in life and several challenging detours, Dontell Higgins has literally hit the ground running toward a bright future. Eighteen-year-old Higgins became involved with Children Services at an early age due to family problems. Even though Higgins has made some mistakes, he is now an honor roll student at Groveport Madison High School and has excelled at track. He placed 3rd in the division 1 state 100 meter dash and his 4x100 relay team finished in the top 10 at the outdoor nationals. Higgins plans to attend college to major in actuarial science and wants to represent the USA in the Olympics one day.

Henry Pohr and his siblings came to the attention of Children Services in 2003 due to neglect and abuse issues. In addition to being separated from his siblings, Pohr went through a series of foster homes and residential facilities due to his treatment needs and behavior. Once Pohr was placed with the Yates foster family he turned his life around. Little improvements like keeping his room clean soon stretched into big things like becoming a role model for other children in the home and volunteering to serve food to low-income families at church. Pohr plans to attend the C-TEC career center for architectural engineering.

Nancy Fitzgivens Child Protection Award Honoree

FCCS established the Nancy Fitzgivens Child Protection Award to honor social worker Nancy Fitzgivens who was killed in the line of duty during a home visit in October 2001. The 2010 Fitzgivens award went to alternative response caseworker at Intake, Nancy Triffon. Acting as a voice for those who feel they have no voice, is one of Triffon's many strengths. She has persuaded unresponsive landlords to make needed repairs so that children will have safe places to live and coordinated an effort to clean a family's home so the children would not be removed. Triffon puts the agency's guiding principles to work everyday as she honors children and families by taking the time to understand them and their strengths.

Family Achievement Award Honoree

FCCS honors Marissa Gentry and her children, 17-month-old Myka and 5-month-old Marcus for overcoming serious challenges. Rising above adversity, Marissa has devoted herself to resolving her issues and bettering her family situation. She demonstrated a firm commitment to her case plan and made the most of family visitation when Myka was removed from the home. She also has taken every advantage of available resources, diligently attending Juvenile Court's drug court program, and utilizing other resources. "I know my children love me and it feels so good to be a sober mother," said Gentry.

Pinwheels for Prevention Honoree

Children Services recognized kinship providers Guy and Martha Renda, who through their selfless devotion have created a brighter future for their three grandchildren. Some grandparents dream of trading their sedan for a sports car but Guy and Martha Renda traded their car for a mini van and their retirement plans for diapers, pre-school and tricycles. The Rendas made the sacrifices necessary to take on three special needs children under three. From switching work hours to cashing in retirement savings, the Rendas give their all to their grandchildren.

Community Advocate Award Honorees

The Community Advocate Awards recognize people and organizations who commit to helping the children of Franklin County Children Services. This year's Community Advocate Award honorees:

- The AT&T Pioneers have played an active role in a variety of agency events, graciously serving up complimentary meals to families and children.

- Go Wild for Opera at Zoo Committee ensured that hundreds of agency children were provided tickets to this event, plus they arranged extras such as pizza and meeting an animal trainer.
- Pickaway Correctional Institution Jaycees inmates held fundraisers and donated items for Thanksgiving dinner for 50 kinship families.
- Express managers collected \$10,000 in donations and hand-made hundreds of beautiful Valentine's Day cards for the children, featuring kind words of inspiration and hope.
- Eastland Mall hosts a child abuse prevention breakfast each year and supports Holiday Wish with donations and Christmas tree displays that feature children's wish lists.
- The Orient Correctional Reception Center-Seven Step Group, through fundraisers and donations, the inmates were able to donate \$1,000 worth of new toys and bicycles to the agency's Holiday Wish program.

Preventing and reporting child abuse is one of the most important things a community can do for the future of its children. To report child abuse or neglect, anyone can call the Franklin County Children Services 24-hour child abuse hotline at (614) 229-7000. Visit www.franklincountyohio.gov/children_services for more information.

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