

# ACCENT<sub>on</sub>KIDS

A Publication of Franklin County Children Services

Spring 2016



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Franklin County  
**Children  
Services**  
Protecting Children by Strengthening Families

# ACCENT on KIDS

A Publication of Franklin County Children Services

Spring 2016

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This publication is available online at [childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov](http://childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov)

# FCCS Calendar of Events

## April

### Child Abuse Prevention Month

FCCS works to raise awareness about child abuse and educate the public about how to prevent and report it. To report suspected child abuse, call (614) 229-7000.

### Pinwheels for Prevention

FCCS will plant thousands of blue pinwheels, symbolizing investigated cases of abuse and neglect, in an effort to raise awareness about the effects of child abuse.

### Pinwheels Selfie

The Ohio Children's Trust Fund is holding the #PinwheelSelfie Campaign. Upload your #PinwheelSelfie photos on Facebook (Ohio Children's Trust Fund), Instagram (@OhioCTF) and Twitter (@OhioCTF) or email them to Ohio\_Children's\_Trust\_Fund@jfs.ohio.gov.

### Kinship Family Support Group

April 2

The quarterly support groups focus on different topics relevant to FCCS kinship caregivers. These meetings may include topics such as budgeting and concerns about parenting children in kinship care.

### Wear Blue Day

April 13

Wear Blue to support the prevention of child abuse. Take a group photo on April 13 and email it to [FCCSoutreach@fccs.us](mailto:FCCSoutreach@fccs.us) and you may see your photo on the FCCS Facebook and Twitter pages.

### Child Abuse Prevention Breakfast

April 13

7:30-8 a.m. Silent Auction of Youth Art  
8-9:30 a.m. Breakfast and Program  
The Boat House  
(679 W. Spring St. Columbus, OH)

FCCS and its Citizens Advisory Committee host this annual event that highlights child abuse prevention efforts and the accomplishments of social workers, client families, youth and community advocates. For more information, call (614) 275-2523.



### Volunteer Reception

April 28, 6:30 p.m.

The Ohio State University Union  
(1739 High Street, Columbus, OH)

The FCCS volunteer department will honor volunteers and mentors for all that they do for FCCS children.

## May

### National Foster Care Month

Nationwide, there are more than 400,000 youth currently in foster care. They will eventually be reunited with their families, placed in kinship or adoptive homes, or age out of care.

### FCCS Graduation Celebration

May 11

FCCS is holding a graduation party for agency youth who are graduating from high school.

## June

### Simba & Malaika Mentor Mixer

June 9, 6-8 p.m.

(855 W. Mound St. Columbus, OH)

Learn more about FCCS's Simba and Malaika mentoring programs and talk to current mentors at this fun event. Call (614) 275-2690.

To keep up-to-date on FCCS events and activities, like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter or visit [childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov](http://childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov)

# Woman Reflects Fondly on Time with FCCS

By Marion Thompson

“They helped me smooth out the rough edges,” said Julie Freter of the many people who touched her life while she lived at Franklin Village (now FCCS) during the 1970s. Freter lived in dormitory two at Franklin Village off and on from ages 12 to 17, while she dealt with family issues caused by alcoholism. At 17, Freter became pregnant with her daughter, Antoinette, but she credits help from FCCS staff and her own desire to “make it” for her success in creating a home and bright future for Antoinette and herself.

“I was looking for love,” said Freter who had a pattern of running away. “I didn’t find it until I came to Franklin Village.” Freter met people there who genuinely cared for her. She recalls the lessons she learned from the house mothers at her cottage who were strict, but loving and fair. Mrs. Geraldine Williams was one who took Freter under her wing. “She taught me things like, a lady doesn’t curse,” said Freter. She also fondly remembers her FCCS caseworker Linda Bryant who kept in touch with her long after she left agency



Former FCCS youth Julie Freter (left) and her daughter, Antoinette Gilchrist pose before their family tree.

care. “Our kids used to play together,” Freter said. The former agency youth also fondly recalls others she interacted with at Franklin Village. “They all really cared about us and they had a lot to offer,” she said.

Freter is most grateful to FCCS for enabling her to keep Antoinette after she was born, once they determined she was capable of caring for the baby. The mother and daughter secured a home and Freter began training as a nurse’s aide. Eventually, she went on to become a registered nurse. She married and Antoinette was joined by siblings Jeff and Becca.

“My life is all about family now,” said Freter, while looking at a wall in her dining room on which her granddaughters painted large trees that are now covered with family photos. She recently retired after working as a registered nurse for 28 years and enjoys spending time with her grandchildren. Antoinette has been married for 15 years and is a mother of three daughters. She works as a project coordinator for a corporation.

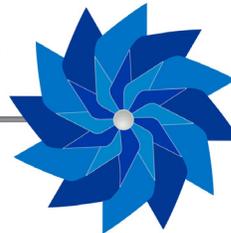
“There were certainly ups and downs, but we made it,” said Freter “...and I can whole-heartedly say it was through the help of people at FCCS.”

## FCCS Spreads Child Abuse Prevention Message

Franklin County Children Services’ mission of *protecting children by strengthening families* speaks to the more than 32,000 children and their families served by the agency each year. FCCS believes the key to preventing child abuse and neglect is bringing awareness and encouraging community involvement. April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, a time for all to help prevent child abuse.

FCCS will host the annual Child Abuse Prevention Breakfast on Wednesday, April 13 – 8 a.m. at the Boat House at Confluence Park, 679 West Spring St., Columbus, Ohio 43215. This event is hosted by Children Services and its Citizens Advisory Committee to honor those who have promoted child abuse prevention and those who have overcome its effects. College scholarships will be awarded to youth; and families and youth will be honored for making life changes that have helped them build more positive futures. A caseworker and community advocates will also be honored.

**April is  
Child Abuse  
Prevention  
Month**



During the month of April, the agency will partner with The Ohio Children’s Trust Fund and Public Children Services Association of Ohio to bring attention to the issue of child abuse and neglect through Pinwheels for Prevention and the #PinwheelSelfie campaign. The Pinwheels campaign invites businesses, churches, schools and others to plant pinwheels and post pinwheel photos on

social media to show their support of child abuse prevention. Details on the #PinwheelSelfie campaign are listed on page 2. The Wear Blue campaign encourages everyone to wear blue on April 13 to show unity against child abuse. For Wear Blue, participants can take pictures of themselves, their group, classmates, or co-workers wearing blue and send them to [fccsouthreach@fccs.us](mailto:fccsouthreach@fccs.us). Photos may show up on the FCCS Facebook and Twitter pages.

For more information about child abuse and its prevalence in Franklin County go to [childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov](http://childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov). To report suspected child abuse and neglect, call the FCCS 24-hour child abuse hotline at (614) 229-7000.

# Newlyweds Expand Family through Kinship Care

By Pam Prosser

In October 2012, Hildred and Billy Burroughs were still newlyweds when they received a call asking them to take care of Hildred's step granddaughter's two children for a couple of months. They agreed and worked with Franklin County Children Services to bring 1-year-old April and 3-month-old Karson (now 4 1/2 and 3 1/2 respectively) into their home.

They were shocked to find out that Karson had been hospitalized with multiple breaks all over his body in various stages of healing. Now that the mother's drug addiction and the abuse had come to light, they realized the children would be with them for longer than 90 days. They didn't want them to go into foster care and other family members were unable to take them. Then the couple heard that the mother was pregnant again.

Aurora (now 2 1/2) was born in the summer of 2013 and the Burroughs took her home from the hospital to join her siblings. The two younger ones were born drug addicted and have experienced some problems. "They have some physical problems and the doctors also diagnosed them with developmental delays and behavioral problems," said Hildred. "But I think they are just



The Burroughs: (from left) April, Hildred, Aurora, Billy and Karson

regular kids. You just need to deal with them differently."

For the younger two especially, repetition is important says Hildred. "I need to tell them over and over again not to run out the door when I open it. I tell them at the door, right before I open it and have them repeat it back to me. Then I open the door and out they go."

It's obvious that the children love their Papa and Nana. Karson insists on dressing-up like his Papa and all of them love to cuddle with Papa. April and Aurora are proud of the braids their Nana puts in their hair and they all are thrilled when Nana jokes and plays around.

Hildred says "This is our life. Four years ago, we had just gotten married and had a different idea of how we would be spending our time. But these kids needed us and that's what you do for family." Billy agrees, "We love them. These are our kids."

FCCS kinship families are relatives or non-relatives who have taken over the full-time care, nurturing and protection of a child. For more information on kinship care at FCCS, call (614) 341-6161 or go to [childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov](http://childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov).

## Caseworker Continues to Help Youth with Mentors

By Joetta McCruiter-Polk

Making personal connections is an important part of the job for Franklin County Children Services' 23-year veteran Leesa Evans. "As a direct service caseworker, I always felt that it was important to build a genuine relationship with the families," she said. "Years ago, I was working with a mother and trying to help her keep her baby, but it wasn't working out and we had to take permanent custody of the infant. The baby's mother later wrote me a letter saying that even though she lost her baby, she knew that I really tried to help her. I will never forget that."

Through her years of working with children and families, Evans has experienced many rewards and dealt with many difficult situations. "Early in my career, I shed plenty of tears," said Evans. "But as I grew up, I learned to practice personal care. It's important to be aware of how easy it is to neglect one's self in the process of caring for others. Today, I feel more empowered to handle challenging situations."

Evans is currently a volunteer coordinator and recruiter in the agency's volunteer department, where she finds mentors for agency children. Evans started her career at the agency as an intern in 1993 in South Region and was hired in 1994 as an ongoing caseworker at West Region. After working for seven years as an ongoing caseworker, Evans was promoted to an ongoing caseworker supervisor. She has a bachelor's in social work from the Ohio State University and a master's in counseling education from the University of Dayton.

Franklin County Children Services is made up of 361 caseworkers and 402 support staff members. Of these 763 staff members, 195 are licensed social workers. The agency recognized and honored the dedicated work of its child welfare employees during March - National Social Work Month.



FCCS Caseworker Leesa Evans

# FCCS Strategic Vision

## Focus on adolescent family settings and a stronger workforce

By Deborra Armstrong

In the past four years, Franklin County Children Services has incorporated many innovative initiatives to protect children, better engage families, enhance community partnerships, support kinship care and ensure permanency for children. Moving forward in strategic planning, FCCS will focus on improving outcomes for adolescent youth and providing initiatives aimed at staff retention and recruitment.

“More children are coming into the child welfare system as teens, a major shift in the traditional abuse and neglect population the agency was designed to serve,” said Executive Director Chip Spinning. “Most of these teens are entering care for reasons associated with behavior or child conduct rather than abuse or neglect and many come from the court system.”

Previously, non-family settings or group care had become the most utilized option for this population. The data is clear that children with initial group placements experience less stability and more negative outcomes than children placed in family-like

settings such as kinship or foster care. “Therefore, the agency will focus on increasing family settings for teens which should improve outcomes,” Spinning said.

**FCCS will focus on improving outcomes for adolescent youth and providing initiatives aimed at staff retention and recruitment.**

FCCS has partnered with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to help determine how it can integrate this focus area within the larger agency vision, in conjunction with the courts and community providers.

The agency’s other focus area this year will be on building a sustainable workforce and improving staff retention. “We want staff to have the needed time and resources to

provide quality support and services for the families and children on their caseloads while maintaining a good work-life balance,” Spinning said. “Initiatives such as providing additional mentoring, enhanced orientation and training, and providing technology tools to increase mobility should help.”

These parallel efforts of building a strong, sustainable workforce and improving outcomes for all children, particularly teens, reflect the agency’s continued commitment to its core mission of child protection.

## Pathways to Success Enriches Lives

By Cynthia Greenleaf

Crittenton Youth Center’s Pathways to Success after school program is all about enriching young lives. Currently serving kids ages 8 to 13, this program has been a welcome addition to the city’s east side since it opened in May 2015.

From art classes, dance lessons and music instruction to homework help and a teen outreach group, the program aims to meet the individual needs and interests of every student. Pathways to Success’ offerings are all prevention oriented, a holistic approach designed to boost self-esteem, promote healthy behaviors and encourage resiliency and good decision making, according to program manager Nate Toops. “We’re not your typical drop-in program,” he says.

The goal is to engage youth on their terms in a safe, nurturing space and to help them discover their own strengths. “We want to find that spark, find what gives them purpose,” Toops says.

One of Franklin County Children Services’ newest community partners, Pathways specializes in imparting life skill lessons in a fun way. In an art class, for example, youth go through the creative process from start to finish, generating an idea, choosing materials and deciding exactly what it is they want to express. On one level, it’s just an art project, but on a larger scale, “it’s about getting them to be proactive and to stop and think,” says LaSandra Dent, the program’s supervisor. “We take them through the process of what it is to make a decision.”

While Pathways has been operational for less than a year, the program has seen tremendous success. “The kids are frequently so



Directions for Youth & Families’ Nate Toops (left) and LaSandra Dent

engrossed in their activities that they don’t want to leave when their parents come to pick them up,” Dent says, laughing. The program’s many success stories include a once-timid young woman empowered through her dance classes. By honing her singing and performance skills, this once-shy teen’s “self-confidence just brightened up,” Dent says. “She took ownership of her ability.”

For more on Pathways to Success and the range of youth and family-oriented programming offered through its parent agency Directions for Youth and Families, visit [www.dfyf.org](http://www.dfyf.org).



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## Tips for Handling Cyberbullying

By Marion Thompson

As children enjoy the freedom of expression that is offered by technology, they can also fall prey to cyberbullying. Cyberbullies use the internet and other technology to post hurtful statements, threats or images about another person. The effects of cyberbullying can be particularly harmful because of its wide reach. Technology makes opportunities for bullying plentiful and easy. According to the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC), many youth cyberbully because they don't think of the consequences, believe everyone does it and think they won't get caught. It is important for parents and children to recognize cyberbullying and its effects and consequences, as well as know how to handle it when it occurs.

According to the NCPC, cyberbullying comes in many forms, including using social media, texts or game streaming services to share a photo or video that will embarrass someone else, post negative information about someone else, make threats, spread rumors, or impersonate another person online.

### How should children handle cyberbullying?

- Tell a parent or trusted adult what's going on.
- Keep a record of the incident(s).
- Don't forward, respond to or erase the message.
- Don't retaliate, because it will only make the situation worse.
- If possible, report the incident to the website's administrator. Many websites have policies and procedures concerning bullying.



### What should parents do?

- Talk to children about cyberbullying and create an atmosphere of trust, so they will come to you when there is a problem.
- Don't overreact by blaming your child or threatening to take away their access to technology.
- Don't underreact by telling your child to ignore the incident or just deal with it. Recognize the pain that bullying causes and take action to address it.
- Talk to school administrators about their policies concerning bullying and take appropriate action. Involve law enforcement if bullying escalates or threats occur.