

ACCENT_{on}KIDS

A Publication of Franklin County Children Services

Summer 2016



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Protecting Children by Strengthening Families

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Come to FamJam for Family Fun

By Bruce Cadwallader

You are invited to FCCS's FamJam and Mayor Andrew Ginther's Family Reunion on August 27.

Franklin County Children Services and the mayor's Neighborhood Pride program have once again partnered to present the 8th annual FamJam - A Family Enrichment Festival, on Saturday, August 27, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., at a new location at downtown's Genoa Park next to COSI.

This joint collaboration between city and county offices, and donations from individuals and corporations, allow this event to be free and open to the public. Genoa Park is a scenic park near the Scioto River with amphitheater-style stage seating, paved walkways and green space in downtown Columbus.

Families and children throughout Franklin County and their guests are welcome to attend. The day will be filled with entertainment featuring youth performances on stage, along with 75 community resource booths, free giveaways, bounce houses, face painting, free food while supplies last, and many more games and activities throughout the park. Children Services will have parenting tips, as well as information about adoption, volunteer and mentoring opportunities. An array of community organizations and exhibitors will be present to share valuable family information and prizes.

In keeping with Children Services' mission to protect children by strengthening families, FamJam will allow participants to engage in educational and interactive activities as well as have tons of fun. Neighborhood Pride community partners will bring even more resources and a climbing wall from the city's parks and recreation department. Local police, sheriff and fire units will be on hand to meet the public and display some of their special vehicles. There will also be a chance to walk through a COTA bus, a library bus and free health screenings. Whit's Custard will be giving out treats, while supplies last.

"Last year, we had 12,000 people attend FamJam and it keeps getting bigger and better," said Chip Spinning, executive director of Franklin County Children Services.

"We welcome the opportunity to work with Mayor Ginther and his staff. We also look forward to partnering with local businesses, non-profits and government organizations."

Parking is available for a nominal fee at area lots and meters, or ride a bicycle, take the COTA bus or carpool to the event. FamJam will occur rain or shine. For more information, call (614) 341-6085, visit childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov, or www.columbus.gov/pride.

Check out our Facebook and Twitter pages for regular updates throughout the summer.



Former FCCS Youth Becomes Dedicated Kinship Caregiver

By Pam Prosser & Marion Thompson

Alice Williams is a success story in many ways and her road to becoming a FCCS kinship caregiver is unique. She spent much of her childhood under FCCS care, in and out of foster care. Then as a teen, Williams became pregnant and called her caseworker for help. This was when she turned her life around, learned to care for her baby and focused on school.

“Six generations of my family have been involved with Children Services,” Williams said. “Once I became a mother, I decided to break that cycle.” Williams received the 2016 Kinship Caregiver of the Year Award during FCCS’s Child Abuse Prevention Breakfast.

A caring mother to her two children, Williams has also opened her home to two family member’s children. She took legal custody of a nephew with special needs, ensuring that he has all the medical services and love that he needs. Then she suspected that a niece was being abused. Williams pursued her suspicions, which were



Alice Williams, a former FCCS youth and now an FCCS kinship caregiver, (pictured, right, with her family) was recognized for her strength, compassion and accomplishments.

validated and obtained custody of that niece.

Over the past year, she has persevered through various difficult and tragic situations including the death of her partner and has kept all of her children safe and in a loving home. With determination and hard work, Williams was able to move from living in Section 8 housing to becoming a home owner. Her ambition is to one day open a group home for young mothers. “I want to help them work with the system, rather than let it control them,” she said.

Williams appreciates FCCS for the guidance and support she’s been given over the years.

“I want people to know that Children Services is a tool that is there to help you make positive changes that your family may not be able to help you accomplish alone.”

FCCS Celebrates Graduating Youth

By Cynthia Greenleaf

Franklin County Children Services had 62 especially compelling reasons to celebrate this spring. Sixty-two agency-involved youth on the brink of high school graduation were recently recognized with a party in their honor. The festivities took place on May 11 at the agency’s West Mound Street location and featured food, a DJ, dancing, photos and door prizes for every graduate in attendance.

This was a party worth having for youth involved in the child welfare system, since graduating from high school or earning a GED is a significant achievement. Many of these youth have experienced difficult childhoods and significant trauma throughout their young lives. For these kids to stay in school and remain committed to getting an education despite often overwhelming circumstances is remarkable, according to FCCS Executive Director Chip Spinning. “We are tremendously proud of our grads and wish them all the best in the future,” he said.

Do you want to help a deserving FCCS youth get to college? FCCS has a college-bound mentoring program focused on assisting agency-involved high school students achieve their higher education goals. For more information on becoming a mentor, visit childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov.



Cody, a recent graduate, enjoyed the FCCS graduation celebration with family, friends and his FCCS team.

Volunteers Honored During Annual Reception

By Marion Thompsen

Champions for Children was the theme of FCCS's 32nd annual Volunteer Recognition Reception, which was held in April. The occasion drew volunteers, community partners, friends, families and agency staff to honor those who share their time and energy to support and inspire youth served by FCCS.

"Our volunteers do so much to enrich the lives of the children we serve, often times looking for little to no recognition for it," said FCCS Director of Volunteer Services and Holiday Wish Elizabeth Crabtree. "This reception provides the opportunity to come together as a community to celebrate the many ways lives are being changed and families strengthened through the power of relationships."

Volunteers were honored for their tenure. They included 20-year volunteers Lori Steigerwald, Curtis Philips and Helen Campbell, as well as 25-year volunteers Nancy Page and Brian Groves.

In addition, Volunteers of the Year were recognized. Friendship program volunteers are matched one-on-one with youth to create continuing, meaningful relationships. Jacqueline Yurkoski, Amy Sarver, Heidi Lorenz, and Gary and Cheryl Krygier were named Friendship Program Volunteers of the Year for their efforts to provide positive connections for their mentees.

College-Bound mentors work with youth who are preparing to pursue higher education. They help their mentees research schools, fill out applications and find financial aid options, while being positive role models and offering support. Gina Langen was named College-Bound Mentor of the Year.

The Simba and Malaika programs match African American youth with African American males and females respectively to provide



Volunteer of the Year Honorees left to right: Gary and Cheryl Krygier, Heidi Lorenz, Cheryl Harger (Volunteer Services Advisory Chair), Amy Sarver, Sarai Hathaway, Jacqueline Yurkoski, Peyton Watts and Diandra Gordon

Afrocentric mentoring and rites of passage. Diandra Gordon was named Malaika Mentor of the Year, while Peyton Watts was named Simba Mentor of the Year. Jill Frost received the Sharon Burks SOAR Award which recognizes a spirited advocate for African American girls.

Volunteers also serve in FCCS's crisis center, where they care for children who arrive at the agency during emergency situations. Sarai Hathaway was named Crisis Center Volunteer of the Year.

New Malaika Director to Guide Girls and Mentors

By Bruce Cadwallader

Malaika, a Swahili word meaning angel, is a culturally specific mentoring program for African American girls and African American women. Through individual relationships, creative programming efforts, and community building, Malaika mentors address the unique challenges faced by African American girls while supporting their transition into womanhood.

This program has currently experienced its own transition with the introduction of a new director, Eboni Partlow. With a 10-year career in child welfare and youth involvement, Partlow began leading the Malaika mentoring program in early June.

She has always had a passion for working with and advocating for minority groups such as LGBTQ youth through her work at Kaleidoscope Youth Center. In addition, she helped at risk teenage girls through her work at Rosemont Crisis Center both as an intervention specialist and supervisor. Partlow started her child



FCCS Malaika Director Eboni Partlow

welfare career in 2008, as a family case manager at the National Youth Advocate Program. She came to FCCS in 2010, where she has served as a caseworker in a specialized sex abuse unit located at the Center for Family Safety and Healing. In 2013, she was promoted to caseworker supervisor.

As the FCCS Malaika Director, Partlow looks forward to continuing the important work of empowering black girls through mentorship, increasing cultural awareness and improving self-worth. "I believe that consistent and meaningful relationships can impact positive outcomes. My goal is to speak unapologetically on behalf of black girls and bring attention to their issues both locally and nationally."

To learn more about volunteering and mentoring youth through the Malaika program and other FCCS programs, visit childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov or call (614) 275-2690.

Scholarships Awarded to FCCS Youth

By Pam Prosser

Three Franklin County Children Services youth, who have overcome difficult circumstances recently received college scholarships from the FCCS Children's Fund. The scholarships were awarded by FCCS and its Citizens Advisory Committee at the Child Abuse Prevention Breakfast in April. The 2016 college scholarship recipients are Maggie Ng, Destinie Preston and Quarizma Williams.

Maggie Ng received the 4-year Jack Donahue college scholarship. Even through difficult times, she has always excelled as a student and recently graduated from high school with a 4.0 grade point average and consistent honor roll status. Maggie will attend Otterbein University in the fall, where she will prepare for a career as a physician assistant.

Maggie actively volunteers with Blessings in a Backpack, which provides food to elementary children who otherwise might go hungry at home.

"I'm extremely grateful for those people in my life that have helped me in my goal to go to college, especially my family, friends and caseworker," said Maggie

Destinie Preston received the 2-year Jack Donahue college scholarship. Destinie is someone who is determined to stay focused



FCCS scholarship recipients Maggie Ng, Destinie Preston and Quarizma Williams

on her education. When the challenges of being a teen in foster care could have made her give up, she stayed focused. She drew support from those close to her, which include her aunt, foster mom, mentors, and FCCS support team. Destinie knows that

education is the key to her future success.

"No matter how many people are holding me back and no matter how exhausted I am, when that clock goes off at 6 a.m., I wake up to go get my education," said Destinie.

At Columbus State Community College, she will study business management and early childhood education. She hopes to one day operate her own daycare/preschool and dedicate her life to helping children.

Quarizma Williams received the FCCS Alvin Hadley UNCF college scholarship. She is hard working, determined and extremely motivated. This comes after a lifetime of uncertainty and personal struggle. In spite of the challenges she's faced, Quarizma has plans to succeed.

Quarizma has set herself upon a path for success. She has graduated high school with good grades and completed an internship which is required for her cosmetology program. She recently received her cosmetology license and will attend Wright State University this fall.

FCCS Caseworker Spotlight: Brooks Jaccaud

By Cynthia Greenleaf



Brooks Jaccaud

When a child in out-of-home care is possibly abused or neglected, Brooks Jaccaud is ready to find out what really happened. Part of the FCCS intake, assessment and investigations unit based at Nationwide Children's Hospital Child Assessment Center, Jaccaud specializes in out-of-home investigations, looking into possible child abuse in "any situation where the alleged perpetrator is caring for kids," she says. This could be, for example, a teacher, a daycare worker, a foster parent, a kinship care provider or a summer camp counselor.

Jaccaud's diverse background prepared her for this challenging role. She has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, a master's degree in forensic psychology, and worked in the mental health and corrections fields before moving into the child welfare profession. "I felt like I had a lot to contribute based on all of my different experiences," she says.

While her job can be complicated, Jaccaud excels at the detective work involved in conducting investigations. "I like figuring things out," she says. It's rewarding when "after digging and digging, looking in the most bizarre places, you finally get the information you're looking for."

As a seasoned investigator, Jaccaud knows things aren't always as they seem. "Just because there's an allegation doesn't mean that it's true," she says. "Kids might get angry at a foster parent and that's how they lash out."

One of Jaccaud's most challenging cases involved an adolescent residential treatment facility where concerns had been raised about the treatment of the youth staying there. The assessment and state review showed a need for reform and the facility made the necessary changes. This is when Jaccaud's job matters most; the moments she can act as a child advocate, "giving kids a voice," she says.



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Keep Kids Safe Around Window Coverings

By Marion Thompson

While they may seem innocuous, window coverings can pose a deadly hazard to young children. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), one child dies each month from window cord strangulation. Parents and caregivers need to take precautions to keep blind and curtain cords out of the reach of young children. This is especially important when using older corded window coverings that may not meet the most recent national standards for window safety.

While some corded window coverings feature safety measures like tassels and tension systems, the safest option is to use cordless window coverings. Parents for Window Blind Safety, a nonprofit corporation, tests products and certifies those that meet safety standards with their seal of approval. For more information, visit parentsforwindowblindsafety.org.

In cases where cordless window coverings are not an option, take these steps suggested by the CPSC and the Window Covering Safety Council (WCSC) to help prevent strangulations:

- Examine all shades and blinds for exposed cords on the front, side and back of the product.
- Move all cribs, beds, furniture and toys away from windows and window cords, preferably to another wall.
- Eliminate all dangling cords.
- Make sure that tasseled pull cords are as short as possible.
- Check that cord stops are properly installed and adjusted to limit the movement of inner lift cords.
- Continuous-loop cords on draperies and vertical blinds should be permanently anchored to the floor or wall.
- If you cannot afford new, cordless window coverings, contact the WCSC at 800-506-4636 or www.windowcoverings.org for a free repair kit to make them safer.



Visit childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov for additional parenting tips and printable flyers.