



2008

JANUARY  
FEBRUARY  
MARCH

# E-Alert

*Newsletter of the Clark County  
Department of Job and Family Services*



## Generosity all year long ...

**G**enerosity knows no limits with the employees of Clark County Department of Job and Family Services. Over the last year, DJFS employees have donated to many worthy causes including United Way and Second Harvest Food Drive, as well as giving to customers who walk through our doors.

The agency is proud to be a pacesetter in the Clark County United Way Fund Drive. Over 200 staff donated to the drive. Employees had the option of selecting numerous local non-profit organizations as benefactors of their donations. Some of the chosen organizations were: the American Red Cross-Clark County Chapter, Interfaith Hospitality, Family Service Agency, and the Springfield YMCA. Payroll deductions alone totaled \$17,254.02. This successful effort was spearheaded by a team of eight DJFS employees: Megan Brown, Sandy Curtis, Kristie Heckman, Holly McHenry, Kerry Pedraza, Kim Smith, Trish Wagner, and Peggy Walling. The team used creative fund raising which included a candle sale, raffle, and the  very popular Jeans Day. Overall, DJFS employees generously donated \$20,504.86 to United Way of Clark, Champaign, and Madison counties!

Read another story  
about holiday  
generosity  
in Clark County  
on page 8

Every year, the spirit of Christmas starts in October when the Second Harvest Food Bank food drive begins. Employees and the agency take pride in the fact that for the third year in a row, they have led other businesses and organizations in collections. After receiving a letter from Catholic Social Services requesting

[See GENEROSITY, Page 8]

**Hat & Mitten Tree** • Employment and Benefits Division staff created a hat and mitten Christmas tree this season and generously donated items to it. Whenever a caseworker spotted a customer without a hat or gloves, the customer was invited to select items from the tree.

**... especially during the holidays!**

# Domestic Violence

EAlert

January-March

**Topic focus: Domestic Violence**

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## TANF Family Violence Option Began Statewide on January 1st



Recent studies estimate that 50% to 60% of all public assistance recipients have experienced domestic violence.... and 20% to 30% are current victims of abuse.



On January 1st, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services began implementing the TANF Family Violence Option in all 88 Ohio counties. This initiative is supported in both Federal and State law. The Ohio policy was designed through a cooperative effort involving representatives from the ODJFS Director's Association, domestic violence service providers and advocates, Legal Aid, the state legislature and ODJFS Offices of Family Stability, Child Support, and Children and Families.

Recent studies estimate that 50% to 60% of all Public Assistance recipients have experienced domestic violence over their lifetimes, and 20% to 30% are current victims of abuse. The victims suffer abuse that includes physical acts, threats, sexual abuse, mental abuse, and neglect or deprivation of medical care.

As the initiative begins this month, all applicants and participants in the county administered Ohio Works First (OWF) cash and Food

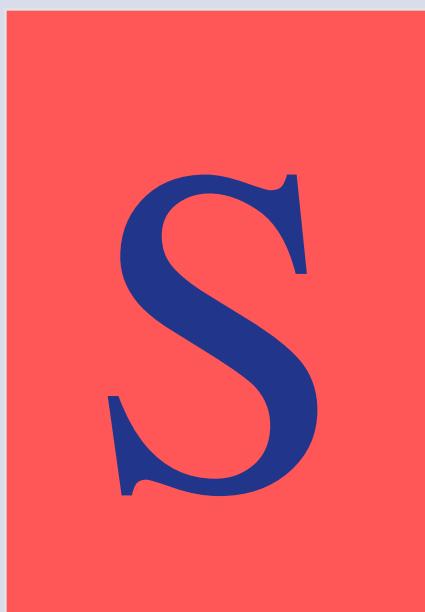
Stamp programs will be screened to identify potential domestic violence victims. They will also receive printed information describing domestic violence and explaining what they can do to get help. If they make their circumstances known to the case manager conducting the interview, they will be referred to a provider of domestic violence services, and will be provided information about obtaining a waiver of certain program requirements that could otherwise put them at risk. Examples of these waivers are: time limits for OWF case assistance, participation in mandated work activities, and cooperation with child support establishment and enforcement.

The effects of domestic violence on individuals and families can be devastating, and the thought of confronting the abusers can be paralyzing to the victims. Based on experiences in other states, the more bureaucratic and intrusive the questions, the less likely it is that the victim will reveal their domestic violence issues. As a result, Ohio's plan includes a universal procedure of providing information to all applicants and participants, rather than targeting only suspected victims. There are two questions asked during the interview related to domestic violence, and they have been constructed in a manner that will open the door for a positive conversation without intimidating the victim.

*A statistical look at  
the living conditions  
and circumstances  
of Clark County  
families and the  
performance of  
the Clark County  
Department of Job  
and Family Services  
in response.*

# THE STATISTICS

Children under our protection who remain in their own homes	September 2004	September 2005	Individuals receiving job training assistance
682		646	591
September 2006	September 2007	September 2006	September 2007
932		850	523
562			
Individuals receiving food stamps			
September 2004	September 2005	Individuals paying on child support	
14,867	15,746	September 2004	September 2005
September 2006	September 2007	7,943	8,205
16,004	17,023	September 2006	September 2007
		8,241	8,315
		Children receiving subsidy for child care	
		September 2004	September 2005
		734	1,004
Individuals receiving health insurance through Medicaid			
September 2004	September 2005	September 2006	September 2007
24,892	25,732		
September 2006	September 2007	1,055	1,088
25,508	26,126		
Children under county protection who are in custody		Families receiving ongoing cash assistance	
September 2004	September 2005	September 2004	September 2005
154	160	640	691
September 2006	September 2007	September 2006	September 2007
164	181	589	658



# *Sweet Dreams Project*

By Shelley Robbins, R.N.



## **WorkPlus Board Adopts Strategic Plan**

At its November meeting, a year-long process culminated in the approval of a three-year **WorkPlus Strategic Plan**. After months of meetings with board and committee members, partners and other key stakeholders, the board embraced a comprehensive set of objectives of which the implementation has already begun. Of immediate significance in 2008 will be efforts to identify and deliver services valued by employers. More specifically, efforts are already underway to increase the capacity of WorkPlus to screen jobseekers on behalf of employers.

As the nurse coordinator for the Collaborating, Habilitating, and Maximizing Potential (CHAMP) initiative for the foster program, I see each child who comes into foster care for a complete nursing assessment. After completion of the assessment, every child is presented with a CHAMP notebook which contains valuable medical information. This notebook accompanies the child to all medical appointments.

One year ago, I began a project called "Sweet Dreams" for the children. With the help of the auxiliary volunteers of The Rocking Horse Center: The Women's Aide Group, Karen Packer, director of volunteers at Community-Mercy Health Partners, Wal-Mart, and Kohl's department stores, every child placed in foster care is given a new bed pillow covered by a handmade pillowcase. If the child is an infant, they receive a new quilt. Additionally, each child gets a new backpack with age-appropriate hygiene items such as a toothbrush, body wash, shampoo, razors, baby wipes, and deodorant.

Children also get age-appropriate books about foster care. Older children receive "Maybe Days," and the younger ones get "The Star", which foster parents are encouraged to read to them. Perhaps the best testimonial has been a book report on "Maybe Days" presented by a foster child to his class.

Having witnessed the appreciation of the children over these few small gestures, I count the blessings every day that we are able to help.

Shelley Robbins, R.N., CHAMP Coordinator, Clark County DJFS/Rocking Horse Center "Because Every Child Deserves a Medical Home"

# Paternity Establishment

EAlert

january  
february  
march

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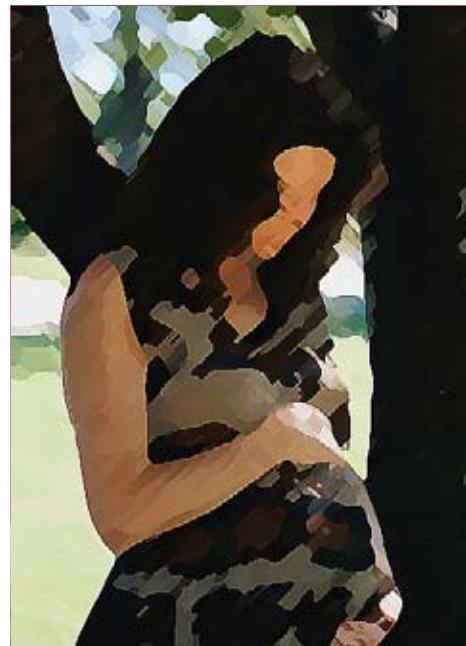
## Topic focus: Paternity Establishment



Paternity gives children a sense of identity and belonging.

Paternity tests are quick, painless, non-invasive, convenient, and have no side effects. A test takes about 20 minutes.

## Fathers have the right and responsibility to support their children... in many ways



### What is Paternity?

Why is it important to establish paternity? Paternity means to establish fatherhood. If a mother is not married to the child's father at the time of the child's birth, paternity must be established.

### Importance of Paternity Establishment

Paternity gives the child a sense of identity and belonging. Medical history will be available, which may be important to the child's health. The child may be eligible for social security benefits or inheritance rights from the father if he becomes disabled, or dies. Also, the father has the right to be aware he has a child. He has the right and responsibility to support the child emotionally and financially.

### Ways to Establish Paternity

The buccal swab test, a simple method to test paternity, was implemented in Clark County in 1994. Paternity can be established in two ways: Mother and father may (1) Sign a notarized Acknowledgement of Paternity Affidavit at the

hospital, birth registrar's office, or at the child support agency; (2) the mother, father, or custodian may request the child support agency to conduct genetic testing. This involves using a buccal swab. Samples are collected from inside the cheeks of an alleged father with cotton swabs. The areas of DNA are then compared with samples taken from the child and mother. Buccals provide a 99.999% accuracy rate in determining the biological/genetic descendency of a child.

Clark County's Paternity Specialist, Michelle Bender, notes that the test is quick, painless, non-invasive, convenient, and has no side effects. The entire procedure takes about 20 minutes and includes some paperwork, pictures, and fingerprinting. Michelle usually administers the test at the child support building and, if the need arises, travels to the Clark County jail to test inmates or to a hospital to test newborns.

### Statistics

In Clark County from October 2006 to June 2007, 348 cases were processed and 977 people were tested. It is important to establish paternity, because the psychological advantages of children knowing their heritage cannot be over expressed. Michelle often empathizes this with clients: *"I try to be sensitive. You never know what stage of life they are in and how this will affect them."* There is an array of emotions, she notes – relief, anger, joy, sadness, and tears, both happy and sad. The final results can be a chapter beginning or a chapter ending, and it will affect individuals for the rest of their lives. Click here to view Clark County's Heritage Commercial: [http://www.clarkdifs.org/admin/Videos/Child Support Video.htm](http://www.clarkdifs.org/admin/Videos/Child%20Support%20Video.htm)

## Project Jericho Youth Summit

For the second year in a row, students from Springfield City Schools, Project Jericho, and the Champion City Scholars attended a Youth Summit at Clark State Community College. Instructor Dee Garwood said, "The Project Jericho Youth Summit is an opportunity for the collaborative effort of many concerned groups within the greater Springfield community to extend a supportive hand to its youth.

*It is a joy to watch them shine as they hesitantly experience the challenging components of the Youth Summit. In the course of four short hours, each child practiced and exhibited courage, tolerance, and exploration. This is a perfect example of Application Based Education."*



Clark State sociology students also participated in the Youth Summit to gain a clearer understanding of Application Based Sociology. They came away with a much greater gift – the gift of courage, tolerance, and exploration. Student Kevin McDowell noted, "The Project Jericho Youth Summit was a life changing experience for all participants, young and old. It gave me, as a SOC 110 student, the opportunity to apply the content of sociology material outside of the classroom setting – in a true working environment. I feel that the kids at the Youth Summit benefited from this experience as well. They received inspiration, direction, and a clearer sense of self. I would love to volunteer my time to help these kids. I am a student of the Registered Nursing Program, and I am actually considering changing my major to a career field that will give me an opportunity to tie in my chosen profession and the satisfaction I gained from participating in the Project Jericho Youth Summit. Thank you to all who have made the Youth Summit possible!"



Project Jericho

# VITA and Rise Above

Tax season is quickly approaching. The Clark County Department of Job and Family Services (CCDJFS) will again be offering a free tax service program called VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance). VITA is an IRS certified program in which qualifying Clark County residents will receive free preparation of basic 1040A and 1040EZ tax returns.

Certified tax training has been scheduled for the volunteer tax preparers who are currently being recruited. Volunteers will attend a seven hour training session on tax law and basic tax preparation, plus the IRS will provide e-file training.

In addition, the VITA site will educate the community about the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). To qualify, taxpayers must meet certain requirements and file a tax return, (even if they do not earn enough money to file a tax return).

Earned Income Tax Credit earnings thresholds encompass the following:

- A) \$37,783 (\$39,783 married filing jointly) with two or more qualifying children
- B) \$33,241 (\$35,241 married filing jointly) with one qualifying child
- C) \$12,590 (\$14,590 married filing jointly) with no qualifying children

The VITA site is located at the CCDJFS WorkPlus Center, 1345 Lagonda Avenue, Springfield, 45503. Clark County residents are encouraged to call the VITA direct line, 937-327-1770, for a screening process. An appointment time will be given if the caller meets eligibility. The site will begin operation on January 23 and continue through April 9. *The hours of operation at the WorkPlus Center will be Monday and Wednesday from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Saturday hours will be from 8:00 a.m. to Noon if needed.* There will also be additional daytime hours available through the INCENTA Federal Credit Union located at the Lagonda site, *call 937-327-1770* for more information.

## Rise Above Program

Rise Above is a pilot program of the WorkPlus Center. The mission is to provide employers with job-ready workers by teaching job seekers to find and maintain jobs with growth potential. Success in the program is accomplished by creating a high expectation environment, which includes a strict dress code, rigorous attendance policy, participant accountability, on-the-job training, and Personal Responsibility in Daily Effort (PRIDE).

Recently, Rise Above had 24 individuals complete an intensive series of training sessions focused on topics such as employability skills, interview preparation, time management, and conflict

# "It Was the Season" ... for Generosity

Generosity is abundant in Clark County, especially during the holiday season. Every year, families involved with the Clark County Family and Children Services Division are the recipients of many generous gifts from the community. 2007 was no exception.

The Forest Valley Freewill Baptist Church provided 10 families with a Thanksgiving dinner, complete with all the trimmings. During the month of December, several organizations provided gifts and decorated Christmas trees for many families. Staff from the Springfield Target store sponsored a family for Christmas. In addition, staff from the Assurant Group asked for specific wishes from four families.

For the past 10 years, staff of the Wright Patterson Air Force Base (NAISC Division) have sponsored a project called Angel Tree. This benefits about 500 children in the Miami Valley, including over 130 Clark County children who are residing with their families or with kinship providers. The Angel Tree is covered with wish lists from the children.



For the past three years, Oakwood Village staff have enjoyed their annual tree decorating competition, "Trees for Tots." Each department decorates a small tree, of which a panel of community members judge on a variety of factors that include theme, originality, balance, and eye appeal. The competition gets more challenging every year, with the families reaping the benefits of the wonderfully decorated trees.

## Generosity all year long [continued]

that DJFS staff take part in the 2007 Holiday Food Drive, over 15 employees joined the committee representing each division, including: Valerie Adkins, Nikki Cherry, Karena Clay, Kathy Coss, Missy Crew, Heather Eggenspiller, Holly McHenry, Courtney McKinnon, Trisha Newland, Amanda Pace, Sandy Penwell, Janine Rouch, Lori Skillings, Susan Skinner, Becky Smith, Vicky Smith, Jackie Stant, Monique Timmons, and Vicki VanWinkle. Through bake sales, Jeans Days, breakfast sales, candle sales, and various raffles, employees raised over \$5,500.00! Food Bank

employees were tremendously grateful and immediately began talking of the food baskets and pantry shelves that would be filled thanks to the DJFS donations.

Large and small ways of giving can be found throughout the agency. In December, for instance, the Employment and Benefits Division created a hat and mitten Christmas tree to which staff generously donated items (see photo, page one).

Whenever a caseworker spotted a customer without a hat or gloves, the customer was invited to select items from the tree.

Without hesitation, DJFS employees step up and help wherever needed in the community. We are extremely proud of the work that they do for Clark County and even more grateful for the generous spirit they possess!



**Recent Rise Above Program graduates**

## Rise Above Program (continued)

resolution. Upon completing the two-week program, 16 individuals obtained employment with wages averaging \$11.75 per hour. Acquired positions included production, healthcare, engineering, information technology, and customer service. One participant, Kip Corbean, secured a CAD Designer position making \$25 per hour.

The next class orientation for Rise Above is February 6. Interested individuals can enroll by contacting Lisa Dunn at (937) 328-6123. As the program continues to grow, we expect greater success for a greater number of people.

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is a quarterly publication of the Clark County Department of Job and Family Services Forward this pdf. file as an attachment, and encourage others to contact Robin Maynard at 937/327-1859, or at [rmaynard@clarkdjfs.org](mailto:rmaynard@clarkdjfs.org) to be put directly on this newsletter distribution list.