



Mahoning Matters

1. matter (n.) – material, topic, issue or subject
2. matter (v.) – to be of importance, to count, to make a difference

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April 2010

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Mahoning County Children Services Celebrates Child Abuse Prevention Month

Inspired by the new statewide slogan, "It's Your Turn to Raise the Leaders of Tomorrow", Mahoning County Children Services and the Child Advocacy Center will host the 5th Annual Pinwheels for Prevention Event. The event will held on April 22, 2010 at 10:00 a.m at Akron Children's Hospital Mahoning Valley Beeghly Campus. This year the Keynote Speaker will be The Honorable Supreme Court Justice Evelyn Stratton. Please plan on joining us to find out how you can help to prevent child abuse and neglect in our community!



Pinwheels for Prevention 2010 is different because the campaign focuses on the importance of a proactive approach to the PREVENTION of child abuse and neglect in our community. The pinwheels represent Ohio's effort to change the way our state and nation think about prevention right from the start. Program and strategies like home visits, parent education, mental health services for new mothers, expanding the availability of affordable daycare programming and substance abuse treatment all play an important role in the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

This month, it is important that EVERY member of our community consider what they can do to improve our collective well-being. Whether it is volunteering, making donations or advocating for family-friendly policies, everyone can take their turn in making a difference.

Remember behind every successful adult there was a positive mentor in their youth. This person could have been a family member, a neighbor, a teacher, a coach or a tutor. ***This month, it could be you!*** Every child in our community needs a caring adult for guidance and support. This love and attention helps them prepare for the future and keeps them safe from abuse and neglect.



April is Child Abuse Prevention Month



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From The Director's Desk

In recognition of the month of April as Child Abuse Prevention Month, our agency will participate in a variety of events to increase public awareness of our work with abused and neglected children. Of special interest is our "Pinwheels for Prevention" event on April 22, 2010 at 10:00 a.m. at Akron Children's Hospital Beeghly Campus, 6505 Market St. in Boardman. Prominently placed in the front lawn of the hospital grounds will be 1311 pinwheels which represent cases of child abuse and neglect that have been reported to our agency. It is of significant importance to note that not only do the pinwheels represent reported cases, but each pinwheel also represents a person who took the time to make the call that resulted in the report. Mahoning County is fortunate to have a dedicated community that is responsive to issues of child abuse and neglect and supportive of agency services.

The state-wide theme for this year's Pinwheels for Prevention campaign is "Winds of Change: It's Your Turn to Raise the Leaders of Tomorrow". As you drive by the display this year you are reminded that by taking an active role in prevention, you are helping to protect and advocate not only for our children, but for the future leaders of our community.

Denise Stewart – Executive Director

Board Member Spotlight - The Newest Additions Mary Kay Earnhart and Edwin J. Torres, Jr.

Mary Kay Earnhart



Mary Kay Earnhart

When were you appointed to Mahoning County Children Services Board?

On November 19th, I was appointed to The Mahoning County Children Services Board, which I consider an honor. Having dealt in a limited capacity with Children Services during my teaching career, I was anxious to see the organization from a different viewpoint.

What is your experience working with children?

After a long absence, I returned to Youngstown State University and received a B.S. in Elementary Education and a Masters Degree in Early Childhood Education, and was hired by the Youngstown City School System. During my tenure I taught all grade levels (k - 8) spending many years teaching remedial math to grades 3 - 6. Towards the latter part of career I began taking classes for several different early reading programs, and taught small group intervention. A teacher has to wear many

hats in addition to the normal teaching responsibilities. I was a member of our building team for the ONTASC early drug and alcohol prevention program, served as interim principal whenever he/she had to leave the building, and many other tasks that often occurred. For the school year 2002 -2003, I was received the Jennings Scholar Award for outstanding teachers.

After retiring, I returned to work part-time with 7th and 8th grade boys to improve their test-taking skills and continued for the school year. Then, after fully retiring - again. I had the time to enjoy my interests and hobbies. As I stated I was always involved in music, taking guitar and piano lessons. Other interests include playing golf and acting as an assistant to my Master Gardener husband in his widespread horticultural endeavors.

What is your background and interests?

Growing up in Youngstown, I graduated from Ursuline High School where I participated in all things musical. I was fortunate to be a stay at home mom while my children were growing up and did all the volunteering, car pools, field trips, that moms do.

What committees or special projects are you serving on for Mahoning County Children Services Board?

I have been asked to serve on the Finance Committee and have agreed to do so with the hope that I can contribute positively to that committee as well as a board member in general.

What would you like the community to know about Mahoning County Children Services and your desire to serve on it's Board?

Even though I have been on the board a few months, it is evident to me the Mahoning County Children Services is a well run organization with dedicated hard working people having the safety and welfare of our county's children as their primary goal.

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Edwin J. Torres, Jr.

When were you appointed to Mahoning County Children Services Board?

I was appointed to the board on January 14, 2010.

What is your experience working with children?

I participate in a mentorship program in Youngstown which reaches out to youths that have been in trouble with the law. The young man that I sponsor is a 15 year old boy who lives in Austintown. He has previously been in trouble for truancy and drugs. I spend one day a week with him and encourage him to do well in school and participate in sports. He is a great kid and we have a lot of fun together.

What is your background and interests?

After high school, I worked at GM for a few years. I wanted to pursue a career as an Investment Advisor so I took a buyout and went to work for Wells Fargo Advisors, formerly Wachovia Securities. I have a bachelor's degree in International Business and am currently in school full-time working on my Master's in Finance from YSU. I play on a couple of different golf leagues in the summer months and I enjoy weight training and jogging all year round. I serve on the finance committee of St. Patrick's Parish on Oak Hill Avenue in Youngstown, where I also serve as a Eucharistic minister. Lastly, I serve on the Hispanic Heritage Week Planning Committee at YSU.



Edwin J. Torres, Jr.

What committees or special projects are you serving on for Mahoning County Children Services Board?

Currently, I am serving on the nominating committee, the by-laws committee and finance committee.

What would you like the community to know about Mahoning County Children Services and your desire to serve on it's Board?

I would like to spread community awareness about the many wonderful services that the Mahoning County Children's Services performs in Youngstown and the surrounding areas. I don't think enough people know about the many services that are available and provided by the wonderful and talented staff members. My desire to serve on the board stems from my interest in the welfare of children and in the Mahoning County as a whole. I think we all have a responsibility to help others however we can.

Mahoning County Children Services Celebrates the Careers of Amy Chismar and Brad Price



Amy Chismar By Meghan Tarantino

When I volunteered to write this tribute about our Chief Supervisor, Amy Chismar, as she embarked on her future retirement journey, I began to consider what is most important that people know about her time at Mahoning County Children Services.

I could tell you that she started at the agency on February 2, 1976, at the age of 22! I could tell you how she held a variety of positions during her time here, such as general caseworker, the first Title IV-E Coordinator, Intake/Community Educator, Adoption/Foster Care worker, and subsequently, Supervisor and then Chief Supervisor of the Resource Department.

I considered mentioning she was part of the first Pre-Service Training for Foster Parents at Mahoning County Children Services; that she saw many changes take place at the agency, including the creation of the adoption unit, the expansion of infant adoptions to adoptions of children of all ages and the addition of subsidy, which aided in the adoption of many children who had been lingering in the Child Welfare System.

But then I thought, are these the most important aspects about Amy? The answer was a resounding NO, so I will tell you about Amy the person. Amy is the type of person who was always on our side, even if she did not agree with us. She always took the time to listen to us and always made us feel that our opinions matter. She exhibited patience and a positive attitude. Through her work she displayed dedication and love for her passion of adoption and of helping others. She explained to me that working at children services made her to grow as an individual, helping her to realize how blessed she was as child to have a good home life; and how blessed she was to be able to be a parent to her own children. Working at Children Services lead her to be a more spiritual person, which helped her through all the tough decisions regarding children that she had to often make.

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Amy Chismar *Continued from Page 3*

Amy Chismar had a 34 year career with Mahoning County Children Services, but also made great memories and friends that she will carry with her always. She will leave behind a legacy of change. Her shoes will be difficult to fill and she will be remembered fondly by many and certainly, never forgotten.

Brad Price *By Philip Murphy*

Longtime agency administrator Brad Price retired from Mahoning County Children Services on February 26 after thirty-five years of distinguished service. A Purple Heart recipient for his 1970 tour in Vietnam, Brad began at MCCS in 1974 after having served on the Baltimore police force. Following a three-year stint as an intake caseworker, Brad began his long association with the agency's group home system—first as a group home coordinator (1977) before his promotion to supervisor of residential services (1984).



During his ten-year (1987-1996) tenure as the chief supervisor of residential services, Brad made perhaps his most lasting marks on the agency. He championed the recreational and therapeutic benefits of having gymnasiums in each group home and had prominent, hands-on roles in the design and construction of each facility. He engineered a smooth transition of youth leaders' change to eight-hour shifts. He led educational trips that saw group home kids visit Gettysburg, Orlando's Epcot Center, and Washington D.C.'s many historic venues. During the once annual camping trips to Lake Pymatuning, Brad could be found in the center of it all—canoeing, pitching tents, and teaching kids how to fish. In sum, Brad oversaw the agency's group home system during some of its most progressive, eventful times, and his leadership touched the lives of countless children and staff members alike.

After a brief stint as the agency's program development specialist (during which he stewarded the North Side Project—a program of neighborhood-based casework), Brad finished out his career with an eleven-year turn as chief supervisor of intake services. That period marked the beginning of Children Services' partnership with the Child Advocacy Center along with the ushering in of state-based computer systems SIS and SACWIS. Again, Brad's supportive, steadying leadership made for smooth transitions.

Brad's final years revealed him as a talented playwright who penned three hilarious satires that served as effective training tools and will long remain part of agency lore.

Over the course of his career, Brad became a friend and mentor to many at the agency. His professional wisdom, sense of humor, and willingness to lend a helping hand will not soon be forgotten. Asked to name his most significant career achievement, Brad, without pause, replied, "Befriending a lot of kids." That says all one needs to know about Bradley Price.

It Matters To Meghan

By Meghan Tarantino

Parents of special needs children have big challenges and lots of joys. Whatever the different ability: autism, ADD, ADHD, or any other developmental delays, the child is a child first! Parents of children with special needs want others to understand that they do need extra support and understanding of what they are going through. Caregivers need resources and good coping skills. They need friends and people who will listen. Not having these supports leave an already stressed out parent with no avenue for releasing their stress or finding the extra help they need.

Parents of children with special needs need to pay extra attention to how they discipline. Often times, depending on the different ability, the child with a special need is not able to control their behavior or reaction to the environment. Often times it may appear as though a child is being "bad", when in fact they are struggling to cope with their surroundings. In building a relationship with your child, you have the ability to learn what methods work best for that individual child.

Most importantly, no child's life should be considered less valuable because they have special needs. It is only one part of who they are and who they may become with love and support. It is important for every parent to work hard to connect with his or her child in a positive way every day.

April is Autism Awareness Month! Parents of children with autism struggle daily to help their children receive services they need and deserve in order to help them attain skills they will need to function better in life. Community resources are often limited and although these parents have extra financial burdens, financial assistance is very limited.

Be aware of those parents around you and in your life who need that extra support and encouragement. You can make a big difference sometimes by just listening.

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Department News *This month we are featuring Mahoning County Children Services Intake Department*

By Philip Murphy, Abuse Unit Supervisor

The intake department investigates reports of child abuse and neglect while also facilitating alternative placements for dependent children. Comprised of nineteen staff members, the department receives over 3000 reports of child abuse and neglect annually. Each month, the intake department conducts more than 150 investigations involving upwards of 300 children. The department also heads the agency's emergency team charged with around-the-clock response to reports of child abuse and neglect.

The intake department maintains strong working relationships with all members of a vast child protection network that includes courts, law enforcement agencies, schools, medical facilities, and community resource organizations. As parties to first response, all value the importance of an investigation's initial stages and work cooperatively with Children Services to ensure the safety of children.

The intake department works closely with police officers and prosecutors in pursuing justice for those who harm children. Local police departments and the Mahoning County Sheriff's Office are particularly helpful in tracking registered sex offenders and interviewing alleged perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Intake department staff members meet regularly with police officers and prosecutors to share information and coordinate efforts to hold accountable those charged with criminal acts against children.

One in five intake cases involve Mahoning County's domestic relations court or juvenile court. Intake caseworkers assist the domestic relations court in assessing risk and identifying appropriate placements for children whose parents are divorced or estranged. Children Services works collaboratively with the juvenile court to aid children needing acute interventions or, in some cases, short-term alternative placements aimed at keeping families intact.

The intake department continues its longtime partnership with the Child Advocacy Center (CAC). Operated by Akron Children's Hospital, the center offers a private, family-oriented setting in which alleged victims of child sexual abuse can be interviewed and medically examined. CAC works conjointly with Children Services caseworkers to provide supportive services to children and families coping with a most difficult time.

Mahoning County Foster Parent Association By Peggy Messer

The month of May is designated as National Foster Care month. Each year we host a Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner in recognition and in appreciation of our foster parents. This year's dinner will be held on Friday, May 21, 2010 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at Elm Tree Hall. This event is open to all foster parents. Training will be provided by Emily Wetherill on the importance of creating and maintaining lifebooks for children. The Foster Parent Association will also hold their annual Chinese Auction.

Foster parents may be interested to know that according to a report recently released entitled "Hitting the M.A.R.C.-- Establishing Foster Care Minimum Adequate Rates for Children", Mahoning County Children Services' foster care rates scored very favorably. "This project to establish foster care minimum adequate rates for children was developed and implemented by Children's Rights in collaboration with the Ruth H. Young Center (RYC) for Families and Children at the University of Maryland School of Social Work and the National Foster Parent Association (NFPA). This report presents the first-ever calculation of the real expenses of caring for a child in foster care in the United States. "

Overall, the report states that many states need to improve their foster care rates. However, after crunching the numbers, I realized that Mahoning County's rates for foster care really do **HIT THE M.A.R.C.!** Not only are our rates fair, but we also provide for things like photographs, haircuts, proms, an allowance for taking foster children on vacations, and transportation to the child's medical, mental health appointments, family visits, etc. We also provide clothing for children, not just at the time of placement, but throughout the year.

This report also indicates that children in child welfare systems that lack adequate foster home resources may be more likely to experience multiple placements and may be placed in residential or institutional foster care facilities, which are significantly more expensive than family foster care. The experience of multiple placements has also been shown to negatively affect a child's well being and to decrease a child's chances of being adopted. This study indicated that 60 percent of children who are adopted from foster care are adopted by their foster parents. (Mahoning County percentages are much higher!) Thus, placement in a stable foster home is a critical factor in increasing a child's chances of stability, well-being and ultimately being adopted-- when family reunification efforts fall.

In recognition of the month of May as National Foster Care Month, we would like to thank all of our foster parents for their love and dedication in providing homes for our children.

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Saying "I could care less" to express abject indifference is inaccurate. The proper expression is "I couldn't care less." The expression's intent is to convey a degree of apathy that is absolute rock bottom—indifference of maximum proportion. The expression "I could care less" allows for a greater level of apathy while "I couldn't care less" does not. Therefore, an individual devoid of interest should say "I couldn't care less."

TIP: When choosing the proper first-person singular pronoun (i.e. *I* or *me*) to complete a compound subject or compound object, simply read or rewrite the sentence without the first part of the compound and the correct choice will be obvious:

Step #1: Ben treated Amie and ____ to lunch. (Is it *I* or *me* in the compound object?)

Step #2: Ben treated ____ to lunch. (Obviously, *me* is correct here.)

Step #3: Ben treated Amie and *me* to lunch. (The question posed at Step #1 is answered.)

By the way...it's *supposed to NOT suppose to*.

Correct usage example: Tracy was *supposed to* study for the math test, but she watched television instead.

E-mail me your English questions at pkm32mpf@aol.com and I'll give you my words.

Did You Know?

That... www.mahoningkids.com is a valuable source of information about Mahoning County Children Services and provides information on *Upcoming Events and links to other community Resources!*

That... in the 1500s, England was so small that the local folks started running out of places to bury people. So they would dig up coffins and take the bones to a bone-house, and reuse the grave. When reopening these coffins, 1 out of 25 coffins were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive. So they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night (the graveyard shift.) to listen for the bell; thus, someone could be saved by the bell or was considered a dead ringer... *Flore Stubbs*

That... if you mouthed the word "colorful" to someone, it looks like you are saying "I love you"! www.mundayweb.com

That... On any given day in Ohio, more than 22,000 children are living with foster families or in another out of home placement setting. Nearly 2,800 of these children are waiting for adoptive families. *ODJFS*

That...the muzzle of a lion is like a fingerprint – no two lion share the same pattern of whiskers! *Theresa Pancoe*

Community Resources

• Mahoning County Children Services

Offers FREE Informational Child Abuse and Neglect Awareness Presentations throughout the community and to children in Mahoning County School Systems. For more information contact Theresa Pancoe at 330-941-8888.

• Akron Children's Hospital - Child Advocacy Center

Offers FREE Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Training. To learn more please contact Andrea Mistovich at 330-743-2539.

• Help Hotline

2 – 1 – 1

Providing Information and Referral Services. Get connected. Get answers.

• CASA – A child's voice in court.

Mahoning County Court Appointed Special Advocate Program "Speak up for a child." CASA is a volunteer organization – for more information contact: Renee Battafarano, Executive Director at 330-740-2239.

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Health Matters

By Melinda Lackner



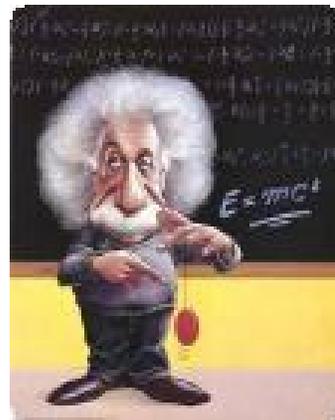
Tips for Teaching Healthy Eating

Guide your children to eating healthy early on to instill a healthier lifestyle.

Keep junk food out of the house, then it will not be an option when your children need a snack. Make small bags of cut up vegetables and keep them in an easy to reach spot in the fridge. Part of the success of the "Fast Food" industry is the ease of obtaining it. By making access to healthy food easy - fruits and vegetables on the counters within reach or in a bowl where the kids play, makes it a fast healthy snack.

Try to introduce new healthy foods at the time of day your child is the hungriest, such as their afternoon snack time, they will be more tempted to try it. Show them by example by eating these foods yourself with enthusiasm to demonstrate without pressing them how good it is to eat good food. Don't get frustrated if they won't eat it the first time. Just give them a small amount and keep on trying, they will eventually want to try it because of how good you make it look.

Don't expect small children to eat 3 big meals a day – they have "tiny tummies" and "grazing" on healthier foods all day is said to be better for them. They get use to feeling satisfied with less and may help them to not develop overeating habits.



"Insanity: doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results."

Albert Einstein

"Measure wealth not by the things you have, but by the things you have for which you would not take money."

Anonymous

"Too much credit is given to the end result. The true lesson is in the struggle that takes place between the dream and reality. That struggle is a thing called life!"

Garth Brooks

Upcoming Community Events



A Nationally Recognized Facility for the Study and Treatment of Autism

A Center of Excellence

The **Rich Center for Autism**, located in Youngstown, Ohio is hosting their 6th Annual "Austistically Speaking" Variety Show. The funds raised support programs that help children with autism lead their best possible life. The evening features live, Chinese & Silent auctions, a raffle for a flat screen TV and great entertainment by Rodd Coonce and the Music at Madison Singers. Rich Center Students will also perform a special song. The event will be held at Mr. Anthony's in Boardman, Ohio on April 23, 2010 beginning at 6:30 p.m. Reservations are \$50.00 and can be purchased by contacting Trisha Perry at 330-941-2047. Please come out and support the Rich Center!

Probate Court Town Hall Meeting

Tuesday, April 13, 2010 at 7:00 PM

Boardman Township Park

Boardman Rotary Room

Lariccia Family Community Center

Information will be presented by various agencies throughout the County that work with Probate Court (including Children Services!)

This event is **FREE** to the public.

Refreshments provided by the Mocha House of Boardman
For further information call the Probate Court at 330-740-2310

We are looking for agency staff to be an active part in the Newsletter. Would YOU consider contributing to the Newsletter? If the answer is Yes, please contact a member of the Newsletter Committee.

Newsletter Committee:

Theresa Pancoe, Editor

Floree Stubbs, Supervisor

Philip Murphy, Abuse Supervisor

Melinda Lackner, Receptionist

Glenna Ress, Supervisor

Shawn King, Technical Support

Peggy Messer, Casework Specialist/Resource Department

Megan Tarantino, Casework Specialist/Resource Department