



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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June 2011

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Mahoning County Children Services Celebrates Foster Parent Appreciation Month

May is National Foster Care Month...You Can Change a Lifetime!

Each May, Mahoning County Children Services salutes the compassionate people who make a difference by serving as foster parents. Thanks to these unsung heroes, many formerly abused or neglected children and teens will safely reunite with their parents, be cared for by relatives, or be adopted by loving families.

All children — including the 463,000 American children and youth in foster care — deserve a safe, happy life. Young people in foster care especially need nurturing adults on their side and a loving family to care for them.

Mahoning County currently has seventeen children in the permanent custody of the agency —who are waiting for the right family to come along. In addition, Mahoning County Children Services has 141 children currently living in 85 licensed foster homes.

We have a great need for families who are willing to parent children, age 12 and older. Nationally, each year an estimated 20,000 of these youth emancipate or “age out” of the foster care system, and are discharged from the system, whether or not they are prepared to transition to adulthood. Interestingly, studies indicate, that generally most people say that the age at which the average young person is completely on their own is 23; 1/3 of respondents say it is 25 or older (<http://www.financeproject.org>).

Providing a stable link to adulthood --which all of our children need-- can start by sharing your home and your heart with a waiting child.

Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner



Call 330-941-8888 for more information about becoming a Foster Parent

222 West Federal Street, Youngstown, Ohio 44503
(330) 941-8888 www.mahoningkids.com

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From The Director's Desk

Inspired by our Foster Parent Recognition Dinner in May, we look forward to growing and expanding our foster home network. We know that children experience better outcomes living in family settings and, when placement becomes necessary, we strive to provide the least restrictive placement setting possible. In line with one of the goals of our Strategic Plan of assessing our placement resources, we have identified the need to recruit and train foster parents to provide care for children who are ready to step down from more restrictive placements.

To that end, we are actively involved in plans to co-host the National One Church, One Child Conference on October 12, 13 and 14, 2011. The conference will be held at the Avalon Inn in Warren, Ohio. Other co-hosts for this conference include Trumbull County Children Services and Homes for Kids. The conference Program Committee is finalizing conference training sessions and special activities featuring presentations from children in our agency's custody. The goal of this conference is to bring attention to the need for foster and adoptive homes for all waiting children and to especially enlist the help of our faith-based community.

Watch our website (www.mahoningkids.com) for additional information!

Denise E. Stewart
Executive Director

Walk, Roll or Stroll for Foster Care

By Radhika Cruz

On Saturday, May 14th the Mahoning County Children Services Foster Parent Association hosted a 2k/5k walk for foster care awareness. This **walk for a cause** raised awareness of the ongoing need for foster families while also recognizing the families who serve the children who find themselves in foster care. Those who attended included foster parents, children in foster care, child welfare caseworkers, supervisors and community supporters. Although it rained at this event, it did not dampen the spirits of those who attended. The president of the Mahoning County foster parent association, Marita Emmert, hopes to make this an annual event to raise awareness and support of the foster families in this county.

Strong Families Growing Safe Kids

By Radhika Cruz



Mahoning County Family and Children First Council (MCFCCFC) in collaboration with Mahoning County Children Services, Help Me Grow and Help Hotline Crisis Center hosted its first “**Strong Families Growing Safe Kids**” child abuse prevention event on Saturday, April 16, 2011 at Fellows Riverside Gardens in Mill Creek Park. Mahoning County Children Services staff and volunteers assisted families with various crafts and games which all had a child abuse prevention or educational message. The event included local public officials who read stories to children and also included appearances by children's characters *Biscuit*, *Curious George* and *Mc Gruff* the crime dog (with the help of CSB staff!). Educational seminars were presented to the public on internet safety, stress management, nurturing and attachment and non-physical discipline. Special Guest performers included “*The Youngstown Connection*” who sang and danced at the event.

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June is National Internet Safety Month By Radhika Cruz



The internet offers the “world at one’s fingertips” and unfortunately, this unlimited access comes with many safety risks including inappropriate content, contact and conduct online. Children are posting personal videos and photos online and sending live broadcasts of themselves to people all over the world to view. Unfortunately, children can not be supervised at all times and children must be taught strategies to protect themselves from inappropriate internet sites, sex offenders, cyberbullying, sexting, online video gaming and social networking sites (facebook). Children need to be taught how to recognize and avoid dangerous

situations online and parents, teachers, counselors etc., need to ensure their children have these strategies to self-protect. Children need to be encouraged to engage in online behaviors that are non-offensive and safe.

Internet resources for parents and children that provide safety tips include **NetSmartz** (netsmartz.org) and **NetCetera** (www.onguardonline.gov). These Resources provide information on socializing online, how to establish parental controls, sexting lingo, online avatars, online scams, video chatting and more. We must know what are kids are doing and talk to them about online safety. We must model and teach them online manners and how to set privacy parameters. If a child has ever been sent inappropriate materials by someone online or if they inadvertently encountered inappropriate material, a report can be made to **CyberTipline.com** or you can call **1-800-THE-LOST**.

Juneteenth By Radhika Cruz

Juneteenth is one of the oldest known celebrations that commemorates the end of slavery in the United States. When the word spread throughout the south that the war ended and the enslaved were now free, there was great rejoicing in the land. Even though these newly freed slaves did not know what to do or where to go with their new found freedom, they felt leaving the plantation and heading North was a great start. As they traveled north, they began to settle in other states along the way and formed traditions to commemorate this great day of freedom that began on June 19, 1865. This date has now been coined “**Juneteenth**” which is not only a time of gathering to celebrate freedom but also a time for African Americans to support each other in their personal experiences.



Historically, *Juneteenth* celebrations have focused on education and self improvement and prayer has also been a vital part of the festivities. Today, *Juneteenth* “celebrates African American freedom and achievement, while encouraging continuous self-development and respect for all cultures” (juneteenth.com). This respect and appreciation for individual differences creates new friendships and understanding where people will “not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character”(MLK). In essence, this is the true spirit of *Juneteenth*.

The National Juneteenth Observance Foundation is promoting a United States Commemorative Stamp. If you would like to support this cause, please sign the online petition at

<http://www.nationaljuneteenth.com/petition.html>

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Continuous Quality Improvement By Julie Rudolph

The CQI Department is busy completing a variety of organizational tasks. We asked for and received a great deal of support when we were looking for individuals to participate on several CQI Committees that are being formed. Employees from various positions at the agency have volunteered to examine key issues for MCCS through their participation on the Permanency Review Team, the Health, Safety and Employee Relations Team, the Clinical Risk Management Team, and the Case Review Team. These teams are in the process of composing their charters and defining their roles in the agency's comprehensive CQI Plan.

The CQI Department is also working closely with our Technical Assistance Specialist from the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services to complete our bi-annual Child Protection Oversight Evaluation quality assurance review. This review will be completed within the next two months; we have enjoyed the opportunity to work in cooperation with the Technical Assistance Specialist to ensure quality services for the families with whom we work.

Vision:

Mahoning County Children's Services will be the best, most caring child protective service agency working cooperatively with the community to preserve quality of family life.

Mission:

Mahoning County Children Services, in partnership with the community, is committed to being the leader in protecting children while helping to preserve families.

Guiding Principles:

We are child welfare leaders

- We take pride in working with families and our community with care and compassion.
- We provide quality services that respect each family's culture.
- We are fiscally responsible, effectively utilizing resources to benefit the families we serve.
- We educate the community on recognizing and preventing child abuse and neglect.

We respect and value families and their children

- We respect families' strengths and provide individualized services.
- We empower parents and partner with families to ensure child safety, permanency and well being.
- We recognize children are best served within their family and community.

We value our partnerships with the community

- We recognize the need to work in collaboration with the community to protect children and preserve families.
- We support the well-being of children and families; it is a shared agency and community responsibility.



Summer is fast approaching. We've already had a string of above average temperatures for this time of the year. When the temperatures soar and the humidity is high, some of us tend to feel tired and cranky. So, with Father's Day coming, it would be nice to plan some cool, stress-relieving, low cost, family activities. How about a trip to the beach? If you can't make it to the beach, you could put a wading pool in the backyard, sit back with your feet in the pool and tell stories.

Not a water person? A trip to one of the local museums, (they're air-conditioned), is lots of family fun. And of course, Mill Creek Park always has some little or no-cost activities going on. If you are a dad, the best gift you can give yourself this Father's Day, is spending some quality time with your children. It will be a day you'll never forget!

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By Meghan Tarantino

As we celebrate Fathers day this June, I'd like to recognize the important role that fathers of special needs children play in the lives of their families and the needs those fathers have themselves.

Every father has a unique reaction to the news and the reality of his child's diagnosis. Finding out that a child has a diagnosis may mean that the father fails to picture their child being able to participate in simple things that he had anticipated, like playing catch or attending a ball game together. Many fathers go about readjusting their expectations in a businesslike way, researching topics and finding resources. No matter how they react, each father has a grieving process to go through and needs the support of those around him to deal with this unexpected life issue.

Unfortunately, the divorce rate among parents raising children with special needs is 82%. This means that the majority of families with children with special needs have only one full time parent. Couple this with the added stress of numerous appointments to get to, dealing with difficult behaviors, the medication regiment, and fighting with schools to get services, leads to many undesirable situations: Siblings are less likely to get needed attention and support; children without a father at home are at higher risk to abuse substances, have pre-marital pregnancy, and have a higher rate of mental health issues. The school drop -out rate in these homes is twice as high as that of homes with two parents, and the absence of a father has been linked to poor inter-relationship skills, abuse, and domestic violence.

So, how can we help these fathers and give them the edge they need to be successful fathers?

A father's activity program can help men feel more comfortable with their style of parenting, teaches skills they need to communicate with and support their child with special needs, as well as maintaining relationships with their typical children. Taking their children to father's program activities builds stronger bonds and also gives mom a break. Programs which invite speakers to provide expert information, resources and support can be valuable. Fathers who participate are powerful voices in their children's education and therapy.

Having a child with a disability brings some families closer, but others that were on their way to falling apart may continue in that direction. When systems incorporate support for the men, the quality of life improves for the whole family.

This Fathers Day let us celebrate the contributions that fathers everywhere make in our children's lives. Their individual strengths are a resource that helps us all carry on during difficult times and maybe make our burdens a little lighter. Thank the man or men in *your* children's lives for *their* contribution and help them to remember just how important they really are. **Happy Fathers DAY!**

References:

www.bellaonline.com

www.washingtondads.com

Mahoning County Foster Parent Association

By Peggy Messer

The month of May is designated as National Foster Care month. The Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner was held on Friday, May 20, 2011 from 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. at the Elm Tree located in Struthers, Ohio. The theme of this dinner was TEAM BUILDING. After a blessing and a terrific meal the foster parents were trained and entertained by Cindy Holik, facilitator and a very special panel made up of foster parents, caseworkers, and supervisors on the importance of working with birth parents and reunification. What made this dinner extra special was being able to give honor and pay tribute to two of our foster parents who have decided to retire. Marge Chaibi, after over 40 years as a foster parent and William and Phyllis Benton with 34 years as foster parents, were honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award. In keeping with the theme of the evening, a former foster daughter of the Benton's who was reunified with her birth parents but at the age of 21 chose to return to the Benton's home, gave a beautiful tribute to the family. The Foster Parent's Association held their annual Chinese Auction, and it was a huge success.

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Mahoning County Foster Parent Association By Peggy Messer

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A toy drive to benefit the children in foster care will be held at the Lemon Grove, located at on Thursday, June 16, 2001 from 9:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. The theme for the evening will be the 80's.

The Foster Parent Association annual summer picnic will be held on Sunday July 24, 2011 at the Wick Jr. Recreation Area, rain or shine.

The Foster Parent Association is in need of speakers who are willing to donate an hour of their time to present their agency or program to Mahoning County Foster Parents. Please contact Peggy Messer at 330-941-8888 if you are interested.

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.



In American culture, it is common to hear someone make reference to his or her "little" brother or sister. Though widely accepted, such a reference is often a misspeak in that the adjective *little* connotes size and can be at odds with an individual's stature. (For example, if one's brother is 6'7" and weighs 255 pounds, he is NOT little!) Therefore, it is more appropriate—and, always accurate—to use the adjective *younger* in such expressions as it connotes age and perfectly conveys the born-later-than status the writer/speaker intends.

A similar connotative error occurs when a writer/speaker confuses the adverbs *when* and *where*. Rule of thumb: *when* connotes time; *where* connotes location. Therefore, to say "Jenna reached a point in her life *where* she realized having a college degree is essential" is incorrect. Rather, "Jenna reached a point in her life *when* she realized having a college degree is essential." It is equally accurate to say "Cal came to a spot on the mountain *where* he needed to check the map for guidance" as the reference is about location.

By the way...the past tense of the verb *lead* (meaning "to go first") is *led* NOT *lead*. Confusion with this likely stems from *read* (pronounced "RED") being the past tense of the verb *read* (pronounced "REED"). The word *lead*, though not the past tense of the verb *lead*, can serve as a noun defined as a metallic element found in pipes among other things.

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 *Children Waiting for Adoption and How to become a Foster and/or Adoptive Parent!*

That... If the government has no knowledge of aliens, then why does Title 14, Section 1211 of the Code of Federal Regulations, implemented on July 16, 1969, make it illegal for U.S. citizens to have any contact with extraterrestrials or their vehicles?
Flore Stubbs

That... 11% of people are left handed?

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 greatest recorded number of children that have been born by one mother is 69! The poor lass gave birth to 16 pairs of twins, seven sets of triplets and a measly 4 sets of quadruplets. Even in the days before IVF!
Flore Stubbs

That... There were about sixty million bison when the Europeans landed in America. By the 1880s, all but 500 bison were killed. Today there are 350,000 bison in America.

Theresa Pancoe

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Health Matters

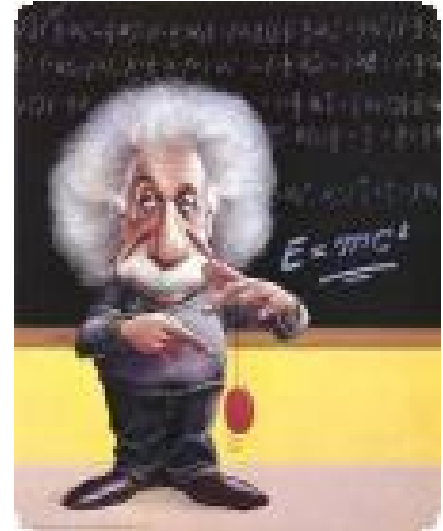
By Melinda Lackner



Happy and Healthy Fathers Day to all our Dads!

Are your kids wondering what to get dad for father's day? Here are some suggestions found on the "Nourishing Interactive" website:

1. Have the kids make coupons giving the gift of their time to do something very special for Dad.
2. Make a grilling basket and then plan a special barbecue. Include some skewers and a variety of vegetables marinated in low fat Italian dressing to grill for a healthy cook-out.
3. Give him a gift subscription to a Men's Health magazine.
4. Make a gift basket with his favorite healthy snacks. Healthy nuts such as almonds, walnuts or sunflower seeds (no or low salt), fruits, whole wheat crackers and low salt popcorn.
5. A pedometer so he can keep track of his of his steps. Take him for a long walk in the park letting him know that 10000 steps a day is what is recommended for keeping the body fit and healthy.
6. A heart rate monitor for him to use while he is working out.
7. Does your dad love chocolate? Give him dark chocolate which has been found to have some health benefits.
8. Electric Toothbrush- proper dental care helps prevent tooth decay and gum disease which can be related to heart problems.
9. Make an activity basket with a water bottle, exercise towel, exercise T-shirt and some healthy high fiber protein bars and shakes for afterwards.
10. Have each child make a list of all the things they love about their dad and what makes him special. Letting him know how important he is to everyone's life will make his heart happy too...



"We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."

Albert Einstein

"Learn as if you were going to live forever. Live as if you were going to die tomorrow"

Mahatma Gandhi

"That best portion of a man's life, his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love."

William Wordsworth

"Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be."

Abraham Lincoln

"The only reason to give a speech is to change the world."

John F. Kennedy

"No one is in control of your happiness by you; therefore, you have the power to change anything about yourself or your life that you want to change."

Barbara DeAngelis

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