



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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By Peggy Messer & Radhika Cruz

In observance of May being National Foster Care Month, Mahoning County Children Services held an appreciation dinner for agency foster families and hosted a 2k/5k "Walk for Foster Care" awareness.

As of May 2012, our foster parents provided safe and caring homes for approximately 108 children. According to the most recent U. S. Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Report (AFCAR) there were approximately 408,425 children in foster care as of June 2011. The average age of children in foster care is 9 years and the average length of stay in foster care placement is 25 months.

Placement settings for children can range from relative placements to group home placements, however, 48% of the placement settings for children are state certified foster homes.

In Mahoning County, there is an ongoing need for the recruitment of additional foster parents to provide safe and stable homes for children, specifically teenagers. To become successful adults, teens need someone to provide guidance. Teenagers can be many things to many people. They can be promising students and/or budding athletes. Most importantly, they can be



the building blocks to a better tomorrow for all of us.

"Foster Parents are the glue that connects youth to the community, impacts young lives FOREVER, and offers hope for a successful future"...
Shane Fisher, Courier-Journal.com

Please consider opening your heart and home to a teenager. If you are interested in becoming a foster parent or would like further information, please contact Peggy Messer at 330-941-8855 or by e-mail at: Messep02@odjfs.state.oh.us

Abuse & Neglect Prevention

There are 5 Protective factors or conditions in families and communities that have been identified as reducing the risk of child maltreatment. Please visit www.childwelfare.gov for more information on how families and communities can be strengthened by promoting these factors:

1. Nurturing & Attachment
2. Knowledge of Parenting & child development
3. Parental Resilience
4. Social Connections
5. Concrete Supports

Promote Employee Well-Being

- Foster an environment of fun, interest, care and contentment
- Pay attention to and respond to basic needs by providing clear work expectations and materials
- Provide opportunities to contribute to the organization
- Recognize good work
- Create an environment where progress and growth areas can be discussed
- Provide forums for employees to voice their opinions
- Allow involvement in decision making related to employee issues
- Actively engage employees in organizational development

“positive emotions (in the workplace) are facilitated by actions within organizations that support clear outcome expectancies, give basic material support, and encourage individual contribution and fulfillment, a sense of belonging, and a chance to progress and learn continuously”

(Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2002).

From the Director's Desk *by Denise Stewart*

Northeast Ohio Looks at Permanency Solutions for Foster Children

The first of four forums being held throughout the State on "Permanency Solutions for Foster Care Youth" was convened on May 30, 2012 at the D.D. Davis Center in Mill Creek Park. Sponsored by the Casey Foundation and in collaboration with the Public Children Services Association, Mahoning County was proud to be the host county for the Northeast Ohio Forum. Over 75 people from 16 counties were in attendance including judges, prosecutors, agency directors, adoption advocates, and representatives from private provider agencies.

In recognition of the month of May as National Foster Care Month, special events were held to recognize and honor our foster families who tirelessly provide loving homes for children in our care. Through the Permanency Forum, however, a glimpse of another side of foster care was provided --that from the perspective of the child.

A unique presentation from a panel of three of our young people who have emancipated or soon will emancipate from the foster care system provided such insight at the Forum. The panel members shared their feelings regarding "what permanency means to me" and what changes they would like to see in the foster care system.

One panel member spoke cautiously about trust --and how he had to learn to trust that there were certain people in his life upon whom he could depend.

Another panel member described his experiences of being "really on your own" and urged that foster children should obtain experiences in "real life" skills. The third (age 18) reflected on --and counted--her various foster homes, commenting "they were good."

As I listened to "our kids", it became apparent that level of trust previously described, has been developed with our staff members who provided the encouragement to these young people to participate on the panel and helped guide them through this experience.

Following this presentation, I observed the panel members being congratulated on their presentations and their courage to "share their stories." One of our Independent Living staff added that not only did this interaction provide valuable information for the professionals who were present, but also provided a valuable experience for the young people who came away with a sense of pride that their "story" and life experiences were important.

This year's theme for National Foster Care Month "You can Change a Lifetime" was seen in living proof through the eyes of the panel members. A fitting and proper conclusion to "National Foster Care month indeed!"



Well-Being In the Workplace

by Julie Rudolph

In promoting wellness in the workplace, many employers offer resources to their employees to ensure their overall well-being and functioning.

Some employers offer educational presentations to enhance employee knowledge regarding healthy eating habits, stress management, opportunities for exercise on-site at lunchtime or before or after work.

Many employees' insurance policies offer wellness programs that include rewards for maintaining healthy living habits, case management to individuals with chronic health issues and/or pregnancy, and discounted memberships to weight watchers programs and gyms.

Another occasionally overlooked benefit of some health insurance policies includes mental health services. The best way to find out about the availability of these services is to utilize the health insurance company's website or customer service phone number. Both are typically available on the employees' insurance card.

Employee assistance programs (EAP) are also available in many work places to assist



people dealing with issues or crises that may arrive and need to be addressed in order to help someone perform at their optimal level.

Often these EAP programs offer short term assistance as well as referrals to other resources in the community.

Individuals can also find activities to increase their physical fitness and reduce stress by searching the internet to take advantage of activities in their communities including hiking, family activities, recreational sports leagues and outdoor concerts in the summer months.

Why should employers and employees place an emphasis on wellness?

The employees will benefit from improved mental and physical health leading to increased productivity and better outcomes regarding the work being completed. The employer and the customers and clients served will both reap the benefits of those improvements.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines wellness as "good health especially as an actively sought goal," and "lifestyles that promote, such. The key words in this definition are **actively sought goal** and **lifestyles that promote**.

You see, wellness doesn't just happen, one must pursue it. It's not something to put on just in the workplace, or only at home.



It is a lifestyle and in order to achieve this goal of wellness, we must take care of ourselves physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

It takes a lot of practice and we must diligently work at it daily.

We must watch what we put into our bodies, get plenty of exercise and rest, and spend quality time in spiritual development.

Then, and only then, can we say, "it is well with my soul."

Tips for Employee Wellness:

- Join the Community Cup
- Take a walk at lunchtime
- Attend a lunch-and-learn session
- Host a conflict resolution course or lunch & learn
- Buy fresh produce at a local Farmer's Market
- Read for pleasure
- Keep a daily gratitude journal
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator

Did you know?

June is:

- PTSD Awareness Month
- Employee Wellness Month

July is:

- National Minority Wellness Month

UV Safety Month

August is :

- Cataract Awareness Month

September is:

- Baby Safety Awareness Month

Hunger Action Month

October is:

- Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Children's Mental Health

by Radhika Cruz

According to the PCSAO Mahoning County Job and Family Services Profile snapshot as of 9-30-2011, there were 128 children in licensed/certified foster homes due to experiencing one or multiple forms of abuse, neglect and dependency.

Children in foster care not only have a difficult time coping with the loss and separation from their birth family, but they may also suffer from cognitive, physical and social delays as a result of experiencing abuse and/or neglect.

When children are traumatized as a result of abuse or neglect, they are at a high risk of experiencing mental health and emotional disorders. In order to ensure the overall well-being of these children, they must be provided with supportive services that are strength based, culturally sensitive and accessible.

Mental health services for children should also promote healthy development/



functioning and focus on building resiliency skills.

Fostering resiliency in children includes promoting: **social competence** (empathy, prosocial behavior), **problem solving skills** (thinking abstractly & reflectively) **autonomy** (self-efficacy & independence) and a **sense of purpose/future** which includes goal directedness and achievement motivation.

As child welfare and mental health professionals, we must ensure the children we serve receive supportive services that promote healthy development and well-being. For more information on this issue, visit www.fcmh.org and www.nimh.nih.gov

By the way...*all together* and *altogether* are NOT interchangeable words. The two-word version *all together* denotes a group of people or things assembling as one whereas *altogether* is a synonym for *entirely*.

Since the wedding made for a rare day when the family was *all together*, Winthrop seized the opportunity and announced he has dropped his plan to sell the family business *altogether*.



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

Community Resources

Mahoning County Children Services

offers **free** child safety and mandated reporter presentations in the community. Contact Radhika Cruz at 330-941-8852 for more information

Akron Children's Hospital

offers **free** child sexual abuse prevention training. Contact Andrea Mistovich at 330-743-2539 for more info.

Help Hotline 2-1-1

Information and community referral services.
Get connected. Get answers.

C.A.S.A.

Court Appointed Special Advocates "Speak up for a child." Contact Patti Fisher at 330-740-2239 for more info.

Community Events

August 18 & 19
Spanish Heritage Festival
Youngstown

August 29-Sept. 3rd
Canfield Fair
www.canfieldfair.com
Children 6 and under Free
Youth 7-12 - \$2
Youth 13-17- \$7
Adults 18 & over- \$7

Visit our booth in the
Medical Health Building!



When using the preposition *of*, beware of adding unnecessary words to the construction, and remember that including *of* itself may be redundant.

For example, there is no need to write/say "As an expert dartsman, Ethan hits his intended target nine out of ten times" when simply writing or saying "As an expert dartsman, Ethan hits his intended target nine of ten times" will suffice. Likewise, *of* itself is unnecessary when writing/saying "The toddler jumped off of the couch onto the floor." Instead, simply write/say "The toddler jumped off the couch onto the floor."