

Winter 2021

The Cornerstone Connection

Serving Foster & Adoptive Parents

A publication of Stark County Job & Family Services'
Division of Children Services Foster and Adopt



Stark County Job & Family Services
HUMAN SERVICES—CHILDREN SERVICES—CHILD SUPPORT
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A message from the Program Administrator:

I would like to wish you all a very happy New Year! I think it's safe to say that 2020 was an unusual and unpredictable year. I am very proud of our staff for **safely providing essential services** to the children and families of Stark County through the pandemic. We have had to make many adjustments to ensure the health and safety of our residents and employees. Court hearings continue to be held via Zoom and most of our office meetings are held virtually.

Despite all the changes made in 2020, one thing has stayed the same: the wonderful generosity of Stark County businesses, organizations, and residents. I am pleased to let you know that our Project Kare provided holiday gifts to **over 800 children**! Staff and volunteers worked tirelessly to maintain their annual tradition of collecting toys and gift cards through the Adopt-A-Child program.

Looking toward 2021, I am very excited about our new **partnership with Stark Help Central**. We will have a video featured on their website that discusses foster care and adoption in Stark County. You will be able to view it in the near future at www.StarkHelpCentral.com. The video will include commentary from some of our case workers and will communicate the great need in our community for foster families. Stark Help Central is a one-stop website that provides residents with resources and services close to their home.

Be on the look out for our new public awareness campaign! We recently **joined the Newsymom network** to broadcast articles and videos to parents in our community. Over the next several months, Newsymom will help us get the word out about foster care and adoption by sharing personal experiences from foster families and staff members. Follow our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/StarkFosterAdopt to read, like, and share these stories. You can also visit the Newsymom website directly at www.newsymom.com.

May you and your family have a year full of health, love, and prosperity! I can't wait until we can all meet in person again, **I truly miss seeing everyone**. Thank you for your continued support of foster care and adoption in Stark County.

Sincerely,

Stacy DeChellis



Stacy DeChellis, MSA, LSW
Program Administrator of the
Permanency Area



A Look Back at Adoption Month 2020

November was National Adoption Month. In commemoration, we planned a series of virtual and socially distanced events to bring attention to the more than 120,000 children in the U.S. waiting to be adopted from foster care.

The 2020 Heart Gallery featured photographs and biographies of eight waiting children in Stark County, edited into a special video. The video was shared on our website and social media pages throughout the month of November.

Due to COVID-19, we were unable to hold an in-person reception for the 2020 Heart Gallery. To thank our adoptive parents, we invited them to enjoy the day with their family at Arrowhead Orchard on October 17.

The Heart Gallery can still be viewed on our website at www.starkjfs.org/children-services-division/heart-gallery-video-tour.



Youth – Centered Permanency Roundtables

Youth Centered Permanency Roundtables (YCPRT's) are case consultations for foster youth 12 years or older, who have spent a year or more in agency custody. Program goals are to ensure every child attains permanency by way of reunification with birth family, legal custody, legal custody with a kinship caregiver, or adoption.

YCPRT meetings are unique in that youth attend the meetings. They have a seat at the table to have their voice heard. At each meeting, youth are invited to support someone they trust and care about, such as a mentor, birth parent, foster parent sibling, cousin, or grandparent.

Meetings are held until permanency is achieved. It is hoped that no child ages out of foster care without permanent and lifelong connections.

To learn more about the YCPRT, visit <https://ycprt.wpengine.com/program-model>.



Our Adoption Unit Finalized 53 Adoptions in 2020

Meet the Team:



Patricia Hill, Supervisor: "We believe that every child is adoptable and deserves permanency."



Katie Speicher, Caseworker: "Children in foster care hope to have someone be there for them, whether it's a good time or bad time. They just want to be loved unconditionally and forever."



Carlson Wilkerson, Caseworker: "I am humbled to have had the privilege to be part of so many adoptions over the years. I always remember the adoption process is not about me, it is about making sure the family and children are prepared for their lifetime commitment to one another."



Kari Merrick, Caseworker: "There is nothing more rewarding than seeing the happy faces on adoption day. The kids and families I have worked with have all taught me so much. We've laughed together, cried together, and always found a way."



Emily Jones, Caseworker: "I believe that every child deserves to know they are welcomed and loved, and I love working with kids to find the adoptive family waiting out there just for them. It's the best thing in the world watching them grow and thrive in families of their very own!"



Cayla Dunn, Caseworker: "I strive to match children with loving and supportive families that best suit their needs. Being written into the lines of their journey towards permanency is the absolute greatest part of my career."

Darrylynn Hamilton, Caseworker: "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men."

Meet our Adoption Team

Meet Our Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiters

What is the Wendy's Wonderful Kids Program?

Since 2012, our agency has had the honor of being part of the Wendy's Wonderful Kids Program (WWK). We have two recruiters dedicated to finding adoptive homes for children in foster care. These recruiters implement an evidence-based, child-focused recruitment model that has been proven to be up to three times more effective for serving children waiting in foster care the longest.

The program especially benefits teenagers, children with special needs, and siblings. The child-focused recruitment model works with smaller caseloads of children, ensuring they have the time and resources to give each child as much attention as they deserve.

By the time these children are referred to a recruiter:

- 90% are older than age 8
- 33% have had six or more placements
- 52% have been in foster care more than four years



Dedicated to Finding the Right Home for Every Child



WWK recruiters begin their search within a child's familiar circles of family, friends, and neighbors. If a family is not identified, they reach out to the communities in which the child lives. *Hear more from our recruiters:*

Alisa Grass, Supervisor: "I have had the pleasure of working at the agency for over 12 years! We believe unadoptable is unacceptable and will continue to help our children in foster care find connections. The world may not change if you foster and adopt a child, but for that child, their world will change forever. Be the change a child needs."



Ivy Bell, WWK Recruiter: "I have been working at the agency for over 20 years. I was an adoption worker for 12 years and finalized a lot of adoptions during that time. I am now a Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiter for 8 years. One of my favorite quotes from the Dave Thomas Foundation is 'Unadoptable is Unacceptable'. There is a family for every child and you may be that family!"



Joseph Ashley MSSA, LSW, WWK Recruiter: "Since November 2017, I have had the unique pleasure of partnering with the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption as a Child-Focused Recruiter with the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program. Prior to this, I spent 5.5 years in Stark County's Intake/Assessment Department. In my tenure with the WWK program, I have had the honor of being a part in 16 adoption finalizations and 2 changes of legal custody to kinship homes."

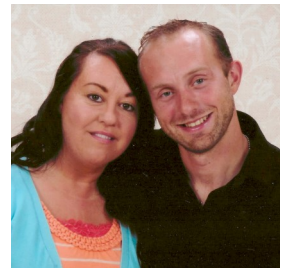
A Warm Welcome to Our Newly Licensed Families

Being a foster and adoptive parent is a unique experience. The journey can be both challenging and rewarding. Getting to know and staying connected with other foster and adoptive families is one of the best ways to find support and share celebrations. Our community is constantly changing and we want to provide an opportunity for our newly licensed families to introduce themselves:



Meet the Snyder and Ramos Family: Erica and Jonas became licensed on September 1, 2020. They lived in Mozambique, Africa for approximately 9 years. Jonas grew up there during the civil war. He is multilingual, and can impressively speak three languages! The Ramos' both taught at an international school with children from all over the world. They cooked solely over a fire for the first year of their marriage, Jonas even taught Erica to bake a cake over an open fire.

Meet the Sax Family: Philip and Ada became licensed on September 8, 2020. They enjoy hiking, fishing, four wheeling, going out to eat, and spending time together. They own a mini farm, which has two friendly goats, a black and white cow, and a puppy named Ginger. Their whole family enjoys taking care of the pets. Philip and Ada also have plans to plant a large garden in the future.



Meet the Benton Family: Brittney became licensed on September 9, 2020. She is the youngest child in her family. Family is important to her, and she lives with her older sister and mother. Her favorite hobby is traveling, especially vacations to the beach. She visits the beach every year with her family. Brittney's favorite season is summer because she loves being in the sun and having cookouts with family and friends.

Meet the Downin Family: Emily became licensed on October 14, 2020. She was born and raised in Canton, and continues to live here because she "loves this community"! Emily recently rode in a hot air balloon for the first time. She always gets a live Christmas tree and loves going to local markets and shops. She says if she could have any job in the world, it would be to choose the music for movies and television shows.





Meet the Troyer Family: Marion and Marilyn became licensed on November 11, 2020. They enjoy spending time together as a family. Their hobbies include outdoor activities, especially camping, fishing, hiking, and sitting around a campfire. They look forward to taking their annual winter vacation, usually somewhere sunny to escape the Ohio winter. Foster care and adoption has always been special to the Troyer's and they are forever grateful for the beautiful gift of adoption.

Meet the Miller Family: Alan and Gina became license on December 2, 2020. They love sports and camping in the summers. Their children are very active and they enjoy watching and cheering them on. They have a son and daughter who play soccer, a daughter who is working on her black belt in karate, and a son who is involved in swimming. The family loves animals and have several pets including two dogs, a cat, a rabbit, two birds, a bearded dragon, and three fish. Gina and Alan are looking forward to helping children in foster care feel safe and heal from past trauma.



Meet the Lydic Family: Michelle became licensed on December 11, 2020. Her family loves to go on vacation, especially visiting different zoos to see the animals. They are also very active in Alliance youth soccer. Michelle has a large extended family with a lot of children. They have their own playground in the backyard!

Meet the Graham Family: Cassy and Ryan became licensed on December 18, 2020. They love kids and feel very blessed to have the opportunity to make a difference. Both of them work with families who are in recovery. They enjoy traveling, seeing new places, meeting new people, sports, and camping (in a cabin). Cassy and Ryan try to share joy and enthusiasm everywhere they go.



Meet the Miller Family: Rick and Shannon became licensed on December 18, 2020. They have two sons, Gideon is 7 years old and Judah is 5 years old. Rick is employed as a concrete finisher and Shannon is a part-time hair stylist. They enjoy going camping, fishing, and biking as a family. The highlight of their year is the annual beach vacation they take with extended family.

*Thank you all for making a difference
in a child's life!*

Featured Foster Family:

Meet the Muckley's



Hello! We are the Muckley's, and we have been licensed foster and adoptive parents in Stark County since 2003. We have hosted over 60 foster children in our home (10 new kids this year!) with varied lengths of stay.

We have always had a passion for helping those in need, improving our community, and sharing God's love with those around us. After our biological family was complete with four children, we felt led to give foster children a safe, loving home. We enjoy helping them until they could return home, or transition to family members or an adoptive home.

When we welcome new children into our home, we never know how things will end. Our hope is that children will be able to return to their biological parents or relatives, but sometimes that is not an option. This uncertainty can give us a wide range of emotions. Sometimes it is pure joy, and other times it has been excruciating heartache.

Adoption is a lifelong relationship and commitment. It should not be taken on lightly. This is why it was not in our original plans, but the Lord changed our hearts through the years. Within a year of having our license, a biological parent asked us to adopt her son just months before she died. We were happy to meet her request. Since adopting Danny, we have adopted a set of twins. They were both 12 weeks premature and came straight to us after spending two months in the NICU. Our last adoption was a 17-year-old, who is Danny's older brother.

It has been so exciting to see our adult biological children join us and be involved in caring for our foster children. Our entire family has been blessed by both our extended and church families coming alongside us and providing support.



Training Schedule: January–April 2021

January

941-22 Helping Children with Peer Pressure (3.0)

Date: Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 6 to 9 p.m. / Trainer: Susan Tucker

Competencies addressed: 925-01-009, 941-01-002, 941-01-006

928-11 Packing and Unpacking: How to Deal with the Baggage of Visitation (6.0)

Date: Saturday, January 23, 2021 at 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. / Trainer: Jim Still-Pepper

Competencies addressed: 928-01-002, 928-01-003, 928-01-004

949-31 Lifebooks: The Gift that Keeps Giving (3.0)

Date: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 at 6 to 9 p.m. / Trainer: Beth Cardina

Competencies addressed: 949-04-001, 949-04-003, 949-04-006, 949-04-002, 949-04-005, 949-04-008

February

925-80 Working with Aggressive Children (3.0)

Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2021 at 6 to 9 p.m. / Trainer: Sister Madeleine Rybicki

Competencies addressed: 925-02-002, 925-02-007, 925-03-001, 925-03-006, 925-03-008

989-PA23-S Building a Healthy Adoptive Family: Ten Factors of Success (6.0)

Date: Saturday, February 6, 2021 at 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. / Trainer: Ann Bagley

Competencies addressed: 989-02-001, 989-02-005, 948-02-008, 948-04-006, 989-02-002, 948-02-004, 948-03-003, 949-03-001

928-FF8A-S Engaging Primary Families (3.0)

Date: Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at 6 to 9 p.m. / Trainer: Bert Nero

Competencies addressed: 928-01-002, 928-01-004, 928-01-006, 925-02-003, 928-02-004, 928-02-005, 928-02-009

925-94 Dynamic Discipline for Kids in Care (3.0)

Date: Wednesday, February 24, 2021 at 6 to 9 p.m. / Trainer: Anthony President

Competencies addressed: 925-03-001, 925-03-002, 925-03-003, 925-03-004, 925-03-010

990-42-NOS AHA Heartsaver Pediatric First Aid and CPR Without Skills Testing (4.0)

Date: Saturday, February 27, 2021 at 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. / Trainer: Ronna Johnson

Competencies addressed: 946-01-004, 990-02-003

March

991-52 Building a Better Brain: How Trauma Affects Brain Development (6.0)

Date: Thursday, March 4, 2021 at 6 to 9 p.m. / Trainer: Susan Darden Kautz

Competencies addressed: 991-01-001, 991-01-002, 991-01-003, 991-01-005, 991-01-006

945-22 Computers, Children and Solicitation: What Caregivers Need to Know (3.0)

Date: Thursday, March 11, 2021 at 6 to 9 p.m. / Trainer: Bobby Grizzard

Competencies addressed: 945-02-008, 945-02-010

947-13 Going Back Home: Perspectives on Family Reunification (6.0)

Date: Saturday, March 13, 2021 at 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. / Trainer: Gene Smiley

Competencies addressed: 947-01-001, 947-01-006, 947-01-013, 947-01-017, 947-01-002, 947-01-007, 947-01-014, 947-01-018, 947-01-003, 947-01-012, 937-01-016

928-9 Navigating the Whitewater of Reunification: Primary Family, Agency, & Foster Parent Collaboration (3.0)

Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 at 6 to 9 p.m. / Trainer: Brian Lowery

Competencies addressed: 922-02-004, 928-02-001, 928-02-004, 928-02-008, 927-01-002, 928-02-002, 928-02-005, 928-02-009, 927-02-004, 928-02-003, 928-02-006, 928-02-010

927-FF11-S Cultural Issues in Foster Care: Dealing with the Dynamics of Difference (6.0)

Date: Saturday, March 20, 2021 at 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. / Trainer: CeCe Norwood

Competencies addressed: 927-01-001, 927-01-005, 927-02-004, 927-03-003, 927-01-002, 927-02-001, 927-02-005, 928-02-001, 927-01-003, 927-02-002, 927-03-001, 927-01-004, 927-02-003, 927-03-002

995-31 Helping Children with Mentally Ill Parents (3.0)

Date: Monday, March 22, 2021 at 6 to 9 p.m. / Trainer: Sue Tucker

Competencies addressed: 995-04-001, 995-04-004, 995-04-006, 995-04-008, 995-05-001, 995-04-002, 995-04-005, 995-04-007, 995-04-009, 923-03-005, 928-02-001, 927-01-003, 927-02-002, 927-03-001, 927-01-004, 927-02-003, 927-03-002

990-25 Born Addicted: Promoting Best Care for Substance Exposed Infants (6.0)

Date: Saturday, March 27, 2021 at 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. / Trainer: Ronna Johnson

Competencies addressed: 983-01-008, 983-01-010, 990-02-004, 990-02-007, 983-01-009, 990-02-001, 990-02-006, 990-02-009

April

989-20 Turn Out Parental Burnout (3.0)

Date: Monday, April 5, 2021 at 6 to 9 p.m. / Trainer: Anthony President

Competencies addressed: 989-02-001, 989-02-003, 989-02-006

923-FF6-S Recognizing and Responding to Children who have been Sexually Abused (6.0)

Date: Saturday, April 10, 2021 at 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. / Trainer: CeCe Norwood

Competencies addressed: 922-01-003, 923-02-005, 923-04-004, 923-05-005, 923-05-010, 923-02-003, 923-04-001, 923-04-005, 923-05-008, 923-05-011, 923-02-004, 923-04-003, 923-04-007, 923-05-009, 925-01-006

991-2-NOS NCTSN's Caring for Children who have Experienced Trauma: Trauma 101 (3.0)

Date: Thursday, April 15, 2021 at 6 to 9 p.m. / Trainer: Brian Lowery

Competencies addressed: 991-01-001, 991-01-002, 991-01-003

991-3-NOS NCTSN's Caring for Children who have Experienced Trauma: Understanding Trauma's Effects and Building a Safe Place (3.0)

Date: Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 6 to 9 p.m. / Trainer: Brian Lowery

Competencies addressed: 991-01-004, 991-01-005, 991-02-001, 991-02-002, 991-02-003

995-5 Psychotropic Medications – Questions to Ask: The Who, What, How, When & Why of Kids on Meds (3.0)

Date: Thursday, April 22, 2021 at 6 to 9 p.m. / Trainer: Stacy Simera

Competencies addressed: 995-01-001, 995-01-004, 995-01-005

952-23 Preventing Placement Disruptions Before Placement Begins (3.0)

Date: Thursday, April 29, 2021 at 6 to 9 p.m. / Trainer: Deanna Prezioso

Competencies addressed: 952-01-002, 952-03-001, 952-03-002, 952-03-005

Featured Adoptive Child: Eric

Eric is a respectful and friendly high school student. He does well academically and is very proud of his work ethic. Obtaining an education is important to Eric because he would like to one day become a personal trainer. He is very active in sports, and plays on the football team in the positions of running back, safety, and defensive line. He also enjoys playing basketball and baseball.

In his spare time, Eric likes to work out, spend time with his friends, and watch TV. He said the most amazing thing he's ever done was a triple backflip on a trampoline! Eric would like others to know that he has a good sense of humor and is great at making people laugh. Someday, he would love to travel to Hawaii.

Eric believes that it's important for a family to support each other and always have each other's best interests at heart. He said families should spend time together "hanging out" or doing something exciting, like attending a big sports event. Eric would love to have family in the stands at his future football games, to support and cheer him on!

Birthdate: May 2004

Contact: Cayla Dunn, 330-451-8681, Cayla.Dunn@jfs.ohio.gov





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