



# Business Update

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## ‘Youth Emancipation Task Force’ Formed To Assist Children Aging Out of Foster Care

Each year in Summit County, approximately 70 teens age out of foster care – only to face a multitude of new life challenges related to employment . . . access to medical, mental health and substance abuse services. . . housing . . . social supports . . . and more.

In fact, national studies reflect that one in five of these youth will become homeless – while yet others will find themselves facing incarceration, unemployment (or underemployment), early pregnancy or other risks.

To help these young adults cope with these daunting challenges, Summit County Children Services (SCCS) has formed a ‘**Youth Emancipation Task Force**’ comprised of some 30 community leaders with one unified goal in mind: to improve the availability of services for this underserved population.

“The average age of children leaving home in the United States is 26, but foster youth are emancipated at 18. How many 18-year-olds are truly prepared to live on their own without

assistance? Especially those 18-year-olds who have come from backgrounds of abuse and neglect . . . and who have spent large parts of their lives in the child welfare system,” said SCCS Executive Director John Saros.

The Youth Emancipation Task Force is one of the first products of the Summit on Children Project – a collaborative initiative formed in 2008 to improve our community’s services in three identified areas: School Readiness; Residential Services for Children; and Youth Aging Out of Foster Care. Summit on Children participants include: John Saros; Russ Pry, Summit County Executive; Linda Tucci Teodosio, Judge, Summit County Juvenile Court; Elaine Harlin, President of Child Guidance & Family Solutions; David James, Superintendent, Akron Public Schools; and William Harper, Executive Director of the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADM) Board.

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### Key Issues Facing Emancipating Youth

- Lack of affordable health/mental health care
- Lack of affordable, adequate, stable housing
- Difficulty accessing transportation
- Lack of food
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of social supports
- Lack of access to community services

(Source: SCCS 2009 Focus Group Research)



Summit County  
**CHILDREN SERVICES**  
*Building Families . . . Building Futures*

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Youth Emancipation Task Force *Continued from page 1*

At SCCS, youth in agency custody aged 16 and older are eligible to receive Independent Living Services to ease the transition from foster care to emancipation. This program includes a structured curriculum of educational support and hands-on experiences including budgeting, meal planning, housing, employment, relationship building and decision-making. However, despite the great work done through this program – and despite other services available in the community – studies show that these vulnerable emancipating youth indeed need much, much more.

“I recently saw a quote that truly touched me,” Saros said. “A former foster youth who emancipated from foster care was filling out a job application and he was asked to provide an emergency contact person.

“He wrote ‘911’ because he said he had no one else. We hope the solid solutions that this Youth Emancipation Task Force will find to the many critical issues facing foster youth will truly demonstrate that emancipated youth in Summit County will always have someone to count on,” Saros said.

**Is your business or organization interested in helping these youth by taking part in the Youth Emancipation Task Force? If so, call Task Force coordinator Karla McDay at (330) 379-2037.**

**Business Update Going Green**

In order to save costs . . . and help save the environment (at least a bit) beginning with the next issue (Fall 2009) we plan to distribute ‘Business Update’ via e-mail.

Should you prefer to continue receiving a printed copy, please call SCCS Director of Public Relations Chris Vasco at (330) 379-2070 or e-mail [cvasco@summitkids.org](mailto:cvasco@summitkids.org) and we’ll be glad to oblige. Thanks.

**Charter Members of the Youth Emancipation Task Force (as of July 2009)**

- Leslie Parker Barnes** - Arlington Church of God
- Cheyenne Boyd** - Summit County Children Services (SCCS)
- Kevin Brown** - SCCS
- Brenna L. Cobb** - Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority
- Kirt W. Conrad** - Akron METRO
- Robin Freedman** - SCCS
- Sharon Geffken** - SCCS
- Monique Harris** - Akron Urban League
- Montrella Jackson** - SCCS
- Bryan Kessler** - H.M. Life Opportunity Services/Humility of Mary Housing, Inc.
- Tania Lodge** - Minority Behavioral Health Group
- Nancy Ellis McClenaghan** - The Goodwill Industries of Akron, Ohio, Inc.
- Karla McDay** - SCCS
- Rob Myers** - SCCS
- Corliss A. Newsome** - Ohio Multi-County Development Corporation
- Kimberly L. Oliver** - Attorney at Law
- Paula Prentice** - Summit County Council
- John E. Queener** - Minority Behavioral Health Group
- John Saros** - SCCS
- Sheila Sims** - OPEN M
- Keith Stahl** - Community Support Services
- Judge Linda Tucci Teodosio** - Summit County Juvenile Court
- Chris Vasco** - SCCS
- Rashara D. Walker** - Summit County Juvenile Court
- Curtis Williams II** - Minority Behavioral Health Group
- Julie Wingate** - United Way of Summit County
- Ted Ziegler** - Community Health Center

**‘Beds for Kids’ Campaign Needs Your Help**



Many of the families served by Summit County Children Services face multiple problems, including overwhelming financial burdens which preclude their buying beds for their children. The agency’s “Beds for Kids” program is designed to provide beds, cribs and dressers for abused and neglected children and children at risk of abuse and neglect.

“Safe sleeping” is a priority for keeping children safe. Unsafe sleeping conditions observed by social workers can include: children co-sleeping with adults or other children (who can roll over while asleep and suffocate a small child); children sleeping routinely on floors or in sleeping bags; and children sleeping on couches (cushions can obstruct breathing during sleep). Families also lack appropriate clean bedding including mattresses, pillows, blankets and sheets for children’s beds.

As a public, levy-funded agency, Summit County Children Services is limited in its ability to use levy dollars for certain expenses, such as the purchase of beds (except in situations of extreme emergency). Therefore, our “Beds for Kids” program funding is largely dependent on funds donated to the agency – so please consider donating to Beds for Kids by calling (330) 379-2055.

*For more information or to make a donation to Beds for Kids, call: (330) 379-2055.*