



Summit County
CHILDREN SERVICES
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MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Local Organization 'Fosters Independence' in Summit County Children Services Youth

AKRON, OH – June 2018 – For the Summit County Children Services' (SCCS) youth receiving Independent Living services, the transition to life after foster care is full of unique challenges.

Cecilia O'Donnell created Fostering Independence, Inc. to empower youth with the confidence and opportunities they need to succeed, and she bridged the partnership with SCCS when she first realized the immense needs of children aging out of foster care. "Helping the emancipated youth is not only important for them to become self-sufficient, but is also vital to our community to see that they become their best selves. We offer a hand up, not a handout," O'Donnell said.

SCCS Independent Living, Teen Permanency and Transitional Housing Supervisor Michelle Wood said although the needs of Independent Living youth are similar to any youth's needs, these children must learn to adapt quicker than most. "Most of us had parents, grandparents, or other family members to fall back on when we needed help with doing laundry, budgeting or renting our first apartment. These youth have to do these things essentially on their own," she said.

Wood also said Fostering Independence, Inc. prepares youth for successful futures while providing essential household items they otherwise might not have access to. "Fostering Independence has been so helpful in launching our young adults into the world," she said. "Things such as pots and pans, bedding, towels and cleaning supplies have been provided to many of the young adults as they are moving into their own homes for the first time."

Many of these items were collected during Fostering Independence Inc.'s 3rd annual collection drive, which was hosted by Today's Bride on May 18. SCCS appreciates and relies on the support of community leaders like O'Donnell and Today's Bride owners James and Denise Frericks.

While child welfare in Ohio is the most underfunded in the country, programs like Fostering Independence, Inc. are essential to SCCS in preparing young adults to live successful lives after emancipation. The organization gathered numerous household items including new dishes, clean towels and bed sheets that will benefit Independent Living youth.

To learn more about Summit County Children Services and the Independent Living program, please visit summitkids.org.

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