

# ACCENT<sub>on</sub>KIDS

A Publication of Franklin County Children Services

Spring 2018



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Protecting Children by Strengthening Families

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Protecting Children by Strengthening Families

# Social Work Has its Rewards

By Marion Thompson

The work life of a social worker can be difficult. This is particularly true of those who work in various capacities at Franklin County Children Services. They are called upon to ensure the safety of children, motivate and support families, encourage youth to succeed, and spread the word about preventing child abuse and neglect. All of this is done while managing multiple cases and helping families deal with complex issues, such as poverty and the opioid crisis. So why do they do it? Whether they're involved with kinship care, adoptions, intake and investigations, or another specific function, FCCS staff members derive great satisfaction from social work.

Caseworkers are on the front lines of child protection, investigating cases of abuse and neglect and helping find solutions for families. They are motivated by the desire to protect children and equip

families with what they need to be successful. "The kids keep you going," said Ongoing Caseworker **Erinn Anderson**. "You want to see the best for them."

"I feel successful when a family is thankful for our help, but is now able to cope without assistance from FCCS," added Intake and Investigations Caseworker **Emily Brentlinger**.

Kinship Casework Supervisor **Renee Kasheer** appreciates being able to help children who need to leave their homes during crisis situations by placing them with relatives or non-relatives who are close to them. "Being able to place children in the least restrictive environment possible after a crisis is so important and I'm happy to support kinship families and make sure they have what they need," said Kasheer.

Adoptions caseworkers feel a great sense of accomplishment when they find forever homes for youth. "The best part of my job is when families contact me

after the adoptions have been finalized and they're settled in, just to let me know things are going well," said **Kelly Crawford** who has been with the agency more than 20 years. "That makes me feel like I've done something good in the world."

Even in cases that don't end in adoption, satisfaction can be found in making a positive impact on someone's life. Twenty-five year veteran **Deric Cobb** enjoys working directly with youth, building a relationship with them, and seeing them prosper. "Seeing young people achieve something that they didn't think they were capable of makes my work worthwhile," he said.

Members of the volunteer department are driven by the desire to help youth lay the foundation for a bright future. College-Bound Mentoring Program Coordinator **Chuck Cochran** commented, "I get satisfaction by helping kids define their own success—that may be finding a job, going to college or whatever success looks like to them—and helping them achieve it."

Youth Transition Services Caseworker **Neshaun Coleman** appreciates being able to help youth find independence after aging out of the child protection system. "The most significant positive impact I can make on youth that I serve is helping them quickly reach the point where they know how to provide for themselves, and supporting them in reaching their goals," he said.

"Seeing young people achieve something that they didn't think they were capable of makes my work worthwhile."

"I get satisfaction by helping kids define their own success..."

## Franklin County Children Services

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This publication is available online at [childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov](http://childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov)

# Be a Super Hero For Child Abuse Prevention

By Valancia Turner



During Child Abuse Prevention Month in April, we raise awareness of abuse and neglect in the community. According to the Ohio Children's Trust Fund, every 30 minutes a child abuse case is substantiated or reported in Ohio. Last year, Franklin County Children Services received over 32,000 reports of child abuse and neglect. All children deserve to grow up in a caring and loving environment, but each year thousands are abused or neglected. Families and community members must work together to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Franklin County Children Services honors Child Abuse Prevention Month by teaming with The Center for Family Safety & Healing and the Ohio Children's Trust Fund (OCTF) to

educate the community about preventing child abuse and neglect. Everyone can be a hero by preventing abuse and neglect through simple acts of kindness, such as holding a crying baby, volunteering in your community or babysitting for an overwhelmed parent.

FCCS and the agency's Citizens Advisory Committee will highlight the success stories of heroes on the front lines of fighting abuse and neglect during the annual Child Abuse Prevention Breakfast on Wednesday, April 11 at the Boathouse. The breakfast is a time to showcase the work of the agency and recognize the accomplishments of youth, families, social workers, and community advocates who assist us in our mission of protecting children by strengthening families. The community can also get involved in spreading awareness about child abuse and neglect prevention by wearing blue on April 11 and emailing photos to [fccsoutreach@fccs.us](mailto:fccsoutreach@fccs.us).

Every child deserves to be safe, and with your support children can move beyond the hurt and lead healthy lives.

Learn more about how you can be a hero and fight to end child abuse and neglect here:

- [childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov](http://childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov)
- [centerforhealthyfamilies.org](http://centerforhealthyfamilies.org)
- [jfs.ohio.gov/OCTF](http://jfs.ohio.gov/OCTF)

If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, call Franklin County Children Services' **24-hour Child Abuse Hotline** at (614) 229-7000.

# Mentor Readies Youth for a Successful Future

By Marion Thompson

"When we first met, I think we both thought: 'what did we get ourselves into?' Now we're like family," said Greg Carlucci, who has been mentoring seventeen-year-old Tywan for a little more than a year. Not only are the two close, but Tywan is also on track to attend college with Carlucci's help. Tywan and Carlucci were matched through FCCS's college-bound mentoring program, which matches youth with adults who help them plan for the future. Both mentor and youth say that their biggest challenge was "breaking the ice." Coming from different backgrounds and generations, they feared they'd have nothing in common. "We decided to just let things play out," said Carlucci. They became fast friends.

As an empty-nester, Carlucci decided that he wanted to spend his time giving back and helping youth in need. "As a mentor, I have a chance to give this young man a road map to achieve his objectives," he said. And so, the duo have spent a lot of time visiting colleges and filling out financial aid paperwork and applications. Tywan hopes to go to Columbus State Community College in the fall to study computer science. He looks forward to having a career and living in his own apartment. Carlucci also encouraged Tywan to improve his grades. "I told him if he got his grades up, I'd give him my son's skateboard," he said. Now Tywan is maintaining straight A's.



FCCS youth Tywan (left) is poised for success with the help of mentor Greg Carlucci (right).

Continued on next page.

# Pursuing Permanency for Every Child

By Cynthia Greenleaf

Spirited and compassionate, Renee Morrison works tirelessly to help the kids on her caseload find their forever families. Based at Franklin County Children Services, Morrison is a recruiter for Wendy's Wonderful Kids, which is funded through the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. Working on behalf of children most in need, such as those with fragile medical conditions or complicated behavioral or mental health issues, Morrison's goal is to help youth who have been waiting the longest find their adoptive family or other permanent connections. According to the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, by the time children are referred to a Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiter, 86 percent are older than age 8, 35 percent have had six or more placements, and 53 percent have been in foster care for more than four years.

Because Morrison was also involved in the child protection system as a child, she brings a wealth of wisdom and life experience to her job. Removed from an abusive situation, Morrison came into Franklin County Children Services' custody when she was 10 and eventually emancipated from foster care in 2006. Because she has had to navigate so many challenging circumstances on her own, she knows firsthand the distinct adversity a child in foster care faces. "I can see the pitfalls," she says. "I've been homeless. I've slept in the Greyhound station." Fiercely headstrong and independent as a teen, she remembers that "I was scared to ask anyone for help."

**"I am looking for forever...I want people who will love unconditionally."**

After Morrison left FCCS custody, she realized her lifelong dream of attending a historically black college and graduated from Kentucky State University with a degree in mass communication and public administration. In her present job, Morrison is grateful for the chance to pay it forward and help youth like her. "They are everything that I was," she says.

Being a child-focused recruiter is all about creating permanency: finding a lasting, stable connection for a child in need. While the clearest example of permanency is adoption, Morrison is mindful that there are countless other ways to establish a lifelong connection



Renee Morrison

for a child. Ultimately, it's about giving youth someone to count on in a time of crisis or someone to call when they need to share good news, ask for advice or visit during the holidays. "You never know when you're going to need someone," Morrison says.

When she first works with youth, Morrison asks them to "give me a list of everybody who cares about you and who you care about," she says. This could be a friendly neighbor, a former foster mom, a distant cousin in Milwaukee or a devoted basketball coach. Anyone the child knows is a possibility, since "you never know what connection you're not seeing," Morrison says. "I'm looking in places other people don't look."

Morrison is a detective of sorts, looking anywhere and everywhere for someone who is always going to be there for a child. "I am looking for forever," she says. "I want the people who will love unconditionally." Joking that her car doubles as her office, Morrison drives thousands of miles a year throughout central Ohio, visiting children, their friends, family and other connections, investigating potential permanency leads.

Morrison gets attached to the youth for whom she advocates. "I'm so emotionally invested," she says. "They're like my little brothers and sisters." To that end, the biggest challenge of her job is "not knowing what the end result is," she says, once a child's case is closed. "You want to know that they're going to be OK."

For more on the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program, visit [davethomasfoundation.org/adopt/wwk](http://davethomasfoundation.org/adopt/wwk).

## Mentor (continued)

Tywan spends time with both Carlucci and his wife, who helped provide Christmas gifts for Tywan's four younger siblings this past year. "We go to movies, have cookouts, and do other stuff," Tywan said. Carlucci is also planning to take Tywan to New Jersey this summer as a graduation gift. "I've never seen the ocean," Tywan said.

Not only is Tywan a fan of his mentor, he's really enthusiastic about the college-bound mentoring program. "At first I didn't want to do it, because I didn't think that I needed any help," he said. "But I want other people to know that it's really worth a shot. You don't have all of the answers. It's better to have someone show you how to do things and it's a good feeling to have someone believe in you." Carlucci encourages others to reach out and become mentors, especially men. "It's more rewarding than I anticipated," he said. "It's more than mentoring...You're building a relationship that could last a lifetime."

# Rise Sister Rise Uplifts African-American Girls

By Cynthia Greenleaf

Every child deserves to be “at promise” instead of “at risk.” Local advocacy group Rise Sister Rise (RSR) is ensuring that this is a reality for African-American girls, building brighter futures and encouraging resiliency, according to the organization’s co-chair **Charla Sheppard**.

In an ideal world, all children would grow up with the same encouragement and opportunities, but sadly that especially hasn’t been the case for African-American girls in metropolitan areas. For girls growing up in urban areas, research has shown that they experience more maltreatment and trauma than children of other races/backgrounds, such as exposure to racism, gender discrimination, violence, and mental and emotional abuse. RSR aims to address this inequality and disparity by focusing on academic success and positive socialization.

Originally launched in partnership with the Ohio Department of Mental Health, RSR was founded in 2011 by **Frances Frazier**

and currently has 14 Columbus-area girls participating in its Black Girl Think Tank, who are supported by RSR’s REAL Women of Columbus network. Sheppard is careful to point out that they use the word “girls” for a clear reason throughout all of RSR’s programming. “We specifically use the term ‘girls’ as opposed to ‘young women’ for the sake of acknowledging and honoring all of the very significant and important developmental stages that take place between our target ages of 11 to 18,” she says.

RSR has a full calendar for 2018. Upcoming events include a 5K walk at Wolfe Park on June 9 as part of RSR’s “I Am Good Enough” mental health campaign; a traveling mural and documentary *Playing Girls at Promise*; and “Stay Woke With Us,” a series of girl/boy conversations about critical thinking and healthy relationships. For more information or to get involved, especially if you are an African-American girl age 11 to 18, visit [www.risesisterrise.net](http://www.risesisterrise.net) or follow “Rise Sister Rise” on Facebook.

# Children Services Preserves Child Welfare History

By Marion Thompson

Franklin County Children Services recognizes the importance of preserving the agency’s history to see how far we’ve come in preventing child abuse and neglect, and how far we have to go as a community. The agency has meticulously preserved records and can produce artifacts from the time when the Franklin County Children’s Home was erected in 1870, to the founding of Franklin Village in 1951, up until the present. As a result of these efforts, FCCS received the 2017 Archives Achievement Award from the Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board. The award was presented to the agency by **Fred Previts**, state archivist at the Ohio History Connection and accepted by **Roger Hansen** and **Kathleen Dalton** of FCCS’s data management team in February.

Among the artifacts catalogued in the archives are board meeting minutes, photographs, newspaper clippings, brochures and other documents. These records will be preserved and accessible for future generations. “Franklin County Children Services is commended for this project which can serve as a model for other agencies,” said Previts.

The archivists’ achievements have been commemorated in historical timelines which have been installed as wall murals at the agency’s 1919 Frank Road and 855 West Mound Street locations. A review of the wall murals shows changes in the agency’s approach to addressing child welfare.

They include the creation of the Holiday Wish gift-giving program for youth in 1963; the introduction of the volunteer program which provides lasting positive mentoring relationships for youth in 1964; the expansion of the foster care and adoptions programs in the 1970s; and the formalization of the kinship program in 2011 in an effort to keep youth who must be placed outside of their homes with loved ones. They also show major milestones including the closing of Franklin Village and opening of 855 West Mound Street in 2003.

Visit [childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov](http://childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov) to learn more about FCCS history.



FCCS history displayed at 1919 Frank Road



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## Safe Havens for Infants

By Marion Thompson

Keeping children safe is a top priority of any society. It is especially vital to ensure the safety of newborns and offer assistance to parents who are unable to care for them. Tragically, sometimes infants are abandoned in unsafe environments with dire consequences. Fortunately, safe havens for newborns laws have been enacted so that these parents have an opportunity to safely relinquish their children without facing repercussions.

While their content may differ, safe havens laws exist in all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. According to Ohio's Safe Havens Law, a parent can leave an infant (up to 30 days old) with a staff member on duty at a hospital, a firefighter, an emergency medical technician, or a peace officer at a law enforcement agency.

Birth parents are the only ones permitted to relinquish infants under Ohio's Safe Havens Law. The law provides protection for them, providing no abuse or neglect is suspected. Parents may relinquish the child without providing any information (including names), but will be offered a form to list basic health information and medical history. This information may be vital to a baby's health in the future.

Mothers should go to a hospital to have their babies delivered. This is the safest option for both mother and child. Once the baby has been born, they may relinquish the child to hospital personnel.

When babies are relinquished, they receive any necessary medical care. The staff person who receives the infant will then contact the local child protection agency. When an abandoned infant is taken into custody by Franklin County Children Services, child protection professionals work to ensure that the child is placed in a safe and healthy environment. This may include a permanent adoptive home.

For a printable brochure on Ohio's Safe Havens Law, visit [childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov](http://childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov).

