

Portage JFS Open Lines

Portage County Department of Job & Family Services, Anita D. Herington, Ph.D., Director

Emergency food pantries “swamped”; JFS plans training for Change Hunger on clients’ food stamp eligibility

“We need assistance to help our people access food stamps, because we are just an emergency cupboard. We can’t function as a daily food source,” Daryle Fullum, President of Change Hunger, said.

Emergency food pantries in Portage County are “getting swamped” the staff of Change Hunger emphasized at a recent meeting with the Portage County Department of Job and Family Services (JFS), which plans to coordinate efforts to get information on food stamps to clients of the food pantries.

“We need assistance to help our people access food stamps, as we are just an emergency cupboard. We can’t function as a daily food source,” said Daryle Fullum, President of Change Hunger. Change Hunger is a consortium of Portage County’s 14 food pantries and hot meal sites.

JFS will be increasing the outreach to members of the community, many who are elderly, about their ability to receive food stamps to help them extend their budgets which have seen big increases in utility and prescription costs. The working poor that can’t make ends meet are also a target group that often qualify for food stamps, according to Anita Herington, JFS Director.

The Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank has reported that its Second Harvest study shows 48 percent of clients surveyed said they must choose between paying for food or paying for utility or heating bills.

“Many of the needy in the county have barriers to getting the food stamps they are entitled to because of barriers with transportation and literacy. Another barrier we have frequently with the elderly is privacy issues surrounding their finances,” Herington noted. “Also when people are in crisis, they don’t al-

ways hear all the information they are told clearly at first,” she said.

The staffs of JFS and Change Hunger are planning to enumerate the problems people may have with applying for food stamps and then JFS will provide training for food pantry and hot meal site volunteers who can communicate to their clients in a comfortable environment before and after meal times.

Due to the demand, the Center of Hope in Ravenna has had to go to a system of having people make appointments to pick up food packages, Fullum explained. The Second Harvest regional study showed that 98,000 different people were served by area food pantries in 2001 and 163,000 in 2005, an increase of 66.3%.

The new food stamp issuance program that went into effect in Ohio in March, automatically adds benefits monthly. There is no longer a need to leave home to have the benefits “loaded” onto their cards at JFS or certain grocery stores. Linda Seeman, Manager of Direct Services at JFS noted that the number one way to help the clients is to help them get that food stamp application mailed or delivered to JFS.

“If a family is eligible, benefits will be effective the day we receive the person’s signed and dated application, even though the agency has up to 30 days to process the application,” Seeman said. As long as they have their name and address filled in and

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Job Fair and Youth Job Fair to match employers & job seekers

With a very successful Youth Job Fair behind them, the annual adult job fair featuring employers ready to hire Portage County job seekers is being planned by the Portage Workforce Connection.

The Youth Job Fair served 110 county residents between 18 and 21 years old May 22 and May 24 at the Kent State University Wellness Center. It was organized by Leadership Portage County through Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funding.

Local employers and educational organizations were available with information on job openings, educational programs and leads on more information for job seekers.

Each young person left with a printed resume prepared with the assistance of Human Resource professionals from the community. The young job seekers also practiced their interviewing skills in mock sessions with professionals who offered tips. Prize drawings were held for jump drives, gas cards, t-shirts, a lap top and X-Box.

Building on last year's success, where 108 people were hired, the second annual Job Fair for adult residents will be held Wed., June 14 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Workforce Connection, 1081 W. Main St., Ravenna.

The resource center in the Workforce building will also be open during the fair. Staff will be available to show job seekers the computers, computer job information sites and other office equipment available to help them in their job searches.

Workplace haircuts will be given at no charge and a fashion show will be held. Free hot dogs will be given out.

Resume writing workshops are a new feature this year, held prior to the Job Fair so job seekers may bring finished resumes to prospective employers. They will be held at the Workforce Connection from 5 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, June 7, and Friday, June 9.

JFS to communicate food stamp information to food pantries

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the application dated and signed, JFS can get started on authorizing the benefits, even if the person is not sure how to fill out the rest of the form.

“Even if people think they won't be eligible, we encourage them to come to JFS and talk with someone, because they may actually be eligible, and we can get more complete information at a face to face interview,” said Susan Stark, Manager of Special Services at JFS.

Appointments are not necessary anymore, she said. Walk-ins are taken for interviews between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Donations to the food pantries and hot meal sites are down, Fullum said, due to

the uncertain economy in the state, and the many disasters to which people have been donating.

An additional problem is that the Akron-Canton Food Bank, where Portage groups pick up the major amount of their food which is supplied by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, now charges a 10 cent per pound handling fee. This has amounted to a substantial additional expense that has to be paid by Portage Change Hunger, Fullum explained. It also causes them to make decisions of what food to purchase such as cutting back on orange juice, which is heavy.

Financial donations to Change Hunger may be sent to 1034 W. Main St., Ravenna, OH 44266.

Location of Portage County Food Pantries and Hot Meal Sites:

Hot Meals:

- Center of Hope, 1034 W. Main St., Ravenna
- Kent Social Services, 1066 S. Water St., Kent
- Randolph Suffield, 2643 Waterloo Rd., Randolph
- Skeels Mathews Community Center, 4378 Skeels, Ravenna
- Winfield Church of God in Christ, 6595 Winfield St., Ravenna

Food Pantries:

- Brimfield Community Cupboard Faith United Methodist Church, 1235 Tallmadge Rd., Brimfield
- Crestwood Coalition for Community Care, 572 Prospect St., Mantua
- The Lord's Pantry, 1066 S. Water St., Kent
- Randolph-Suffield Food Shelf, 2643 Waterloo Rd., Randolph
- Ravenna Christian Cupboard, 1034 W. Main St., Ravenna
- Ravenna Church of Christ, 3897 Summit Rd., Ravenna
- Streetsboro Christian Cupboard, United Methodist Church, 8940 SR 43, Streetsboro
- The Salvation Army's Northeast Portage Food Shelf 9690 E. Center St., Windham
- Winfield Church of God in Christ, 6595 Winfield St., Ravenna

Adult Protective Services work together with Senior Center staff

May is Older Americans Month and as the Baby Boomer generation begins to age into that category, the cases handled by the staff of JFS Adult Protective Services (APS) and the Portage County Senior Center increases.

APS works closely with the Portage County Senior Center and its Director Sally Kelley to help each other in assisting the senior citizens of the county.

"We work together with the Senior Center to refer to each other senior citizens in the county who are in need of services or socialization," Cathi Rufener, Assessment Supervisor, stated.

The Senior Center

sees 150 different seniors a month referring many to APS. "It's a good situation for the Center to be able to see people coming in to socialize with others and in seeing and talking with them the staff often hears of concerns and needs that they have," Director Kelly said. If needed, they then make referrals to APS.

Last year, APS investigated 105 cases of reported elder abuse. Along with Rufener, Assessment Supervisor Laura Esposito, Social Worker Kimberly McPhail, and Administrator Kathi Guckelberger comprise the APS team

APS conducts investigations of abuse, neglect or self neglect, emotional abuse or exploitation including exploitation of financial or personal assets.

According to the State of Ohio Elder Abuse Task Force, for every one case that gets reported five others go unreported.

Mandated by the state to provide investigations, if the person is in need of case management, they are referred to the Senior Tract program of Family and Community Services or the Passport Program of the Area Agency on Aging.

The Senior Center held a Senior Celebration of Achievement luncheon May 11. The man, woman and couple of the year were inducted into the Senior Citizen Hall of Fame to recognize them for their service to others. Companies and agencies, including JFS, provided information on programs and services for Senior Citizens.

"We work together with the Senior Center to refer to each other senior citizens in the county who are in need of services or socialization," Cathi Rufener, Assessment Supervisor, stated

To report Elder Abuse call the CARES line, 330-296-2273.

CSEA planning Legal Seminar

A seminar for legal professionals interested in child support law and issues is being planned by the Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA), Administrator Sylvia Strasshofer has announced.

The seminar will be held Tuesday, Aug. 29 at Reed Memorial Library in Ravenna. It is tentatively scheduled from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The seminar will qualify for CLE certification credits. Lunch will be served. The cost of the day is planned to be \$150 to each participant.

Speakers will hold sessions on topics such as Administrative Process, New Developments in Child Support, Overview of Child Support Law, Enforcement Techniques, and the new system for electronic payment of child support or "Birdwatch" program. Additional topics are under consideration.

"The seminar will be a good way to work together providing an informative session for attorneys, court staff and other professionals and will give our staff the opportunity to interact with them and answer questions," Ms. Strasshofer said.



Child Health Administrator Ruth Carnes, Help Me Grow Project Director Virginia Fehrmann and Service Coordinator Julie Nelson provide information and games at the Pinwheels for Prevention carnival.



Portage County Job and Family Services

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|--|---------------------|
| Child Support Enforcement | 330-297-3791 |
| Food Stamps, Medicaid, | |
| Healthy Start/Healthy Families | 330-297-3750 |
| Portage Workforce Connection | 330-296-2841 |
| Child Health Services | 330-297-5437 |
| Child & Adult Protective Services | 330-296-2273 |
| Foster Care and Adoption | 330-297-3462 |
| Editor, Charlene Badger, | |
| Communications Officer | 330-297-3806 |

Rain doesn't dampen appreciation for staff

A Staff Appreciation picnic was rescheduled due to rain to be held indoors Monday, May 15 at Reed Memorial Library but it still proved to be a fun time to get together and enjoy the springtime with co-workers. The Director, Assistant Directors and Managers, provided fruit salads, pasta salads, home-made baked beans, meat and cheese tray, drinks and desserts. We look forward to next year!

Change Hunger Challenge!

The County Engineer's office won the challenge with JFS to fill the 13 local food pantries. They received 10 tickets to the Akron Aeros baseball game May 26. The Engineer's office donated 635 pounds of food! County Engineer Mickey Marozzi is also hosting a pizza party. The always generous JFS staff donated 295 pounds of food and \$400 in cash. The Excellence Committee will present the food and cash to Daryl Fullum, Change Hunger Director, on June 6, World Hunger Day. We are planning another challenge for the Fall!

Special thanks to Sy Thompson, Portage County Director of Economic Development, for his help with formatting information on our new, improved website. Enjoy your upcoming June retirement Sy!

For department, program information, forms and useful links:
www.co.portage.oh.us/jfs

Children Services promotes prevention

The Children Services division provided two billboards for National Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month which drew the attention of motorists to child abuse as a critical issue for Portage County. The Pinwheels for Prevention campaign was participated in by JFS and many community agencies. It culminated in a carnival on the Courthouse lawn where Children Services staff, under the direction of Assessment Supervisors Laura Esposito and Cathi Rufener, held a coloring contest for children and provided information on programs and procedures on child abuse and neglect issues. Child Health Manager Ruth Carnes, Virginia Fehrmann, Project Director and Julie Nelson, Service Coordinator, had a booth with information on Help Me Grow, and a play area.



Children Services Social Workers enjoying visiting with children and families at their booth at the Pinwheels for Child Abuse Prevention carnival, (from left): Jenna Barricks, Cheryl Snyder, Katie Kimball, and Kerri Daly.

Congratulations and thank you for 25 years of service reached in April, 2006:

*Ruth Carnes, Administrator, Child Health
Pete Snyder, Social Services Worker 3,
Children Services*

Moving In, Moving Up

New Hires:

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|---------------|---|
| Mary Spence | Unit Support Worker 1 Income Maintenance |
| Ronald Evans | Admin. Hearing Officer, CSEA |
| Cheri Michael | Family Support Specialist Help Me Grow |
| Donna Buteau | Clerical Specialist 4, CSEA |
| Lisa Fay | Case Manager, CSEA |

Transfers:

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Darla Hylton | from Employment Services Counselor at the One Stop to Investigator 2, Investigations & Recovery |
| Christine Woodson | from IM Aide 2, Income Maintenance to IM Worker 3, Daycare |
| Tiffany Bird | from CSEA Admin. Hearing Officer to Assistant Prosecutor for Children Services. |