

# Portage JFS Open Lines

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

## PRC Plan expands transportation services for gas, bus tokens

*PRC: Prevention: Prevent families from having to apply for OWF cash assistance when crises arise.*

*Retention: Help family members retain employment by enhancing job skills, overcoming barriers and providing short-term assistance or wage supplementation if necessary.*

*Contingency: Provide for contingent needs by helping families with one-time urgent problems that, if left unattended, could result in families' need of long-term public assistance.*

Expanded transportation services are a new feature of the Prevention, Retention & Contingency (PRC) plan that will assist Portage County residents formerly on OWF cash assistance to obtain and keep employment. Gas cards and bus tokens will be given for up to four months to eligible members of an assistance group who are working.

The entire PRC plan is designed to provide benefits and services to low income working families in need of help with essential supports to move out of poverty and achieve self-sufficiency. It provides the Department of Job and Family Services (JFS) the flexibility to encourage employment and promote self-sufficiency. The program utilizes Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds.

Portage County JFS provides assistance to families with children under 18, or up to 19 if still in secondary school, for short term emergency necessities. PRC is designed to deal with a specific crisis or need.

Eligibility depends on the applicant showing their need by filling out a PRC application and providing verification. After they verify the information, JFS will approve or deny within five work days.

The family's income must be at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline: \$2,200 gross per month for families of two members, \$2,767 for three, \$3,334 for four members. The income guidelines increase about \$544 for each additional member. The guide-

lines may change as determined by the state. Expanded transportation services are available for assistance group members that have a need to keep a job or to get a job. The starting date of the job must not be more than 30 days from the date of the PRC application.

Tokens/passes will be provided for free transportation on Portage Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA) buses to those in the eligible assistance group who are working. Tokens are limited to four (4) months of service and are for the actual cost of the bus tokens

To receive cards to purchase gas, a driver's license and proof of current auto insurance coverage in the name of the applicant, spouse, or parents of a child in the PRC assistance group must be shown as well as registration or title to the vehicle in the name of the applicant, spouse, or parents of a child in the PRC assistance group.

Gas cards are limited to a total of \$250 a month for the four month period.

Both the bus tokens/passes and the gas cards will be provided for up to four (4) months with proof of employment such as a pay stub or a letter from an employer with a date of hire for employment. This verification of employment must be submitted monthly to the caseworker.

The applicant must also work at least 30 hours weekly at \$5.15 per hour or earn at least \$154.50 gross a week.

The first step in the process to receive the gas cards or bus tokens is to fill out the PRC application at the Portage Workforce Connection, 1081 W. Main St., Ravenna. While there, they are encouraged to use the computer job search programs and receive assistance regarding training and jobs from the Workforce staff.

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## Child Health's Windham Clinic moves ; Physicals, screenings available to public

Child Health Services of Portage County is pleased to announce that the Windham clinic will now be located at East Elementary School, 9005 Wil Verne Dr., Windham, according to Administrator Ruth Carnes.

The clinic will be available for appointments on the first Friday of the month, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and on the third Friday of the month from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Child Health staff will continue to provide complete physicals and exams and all other services previously offered.

Services provided, for anyone from birth to age 21, include physicals for school, work, daycare, sports; hearing and vision testing; develop-

mental screening; lab work; well child care and sick child care.

The Ravenna Child Health Clinic remains located in the county Administration Building, 449 S. Meridian St., Ravenna, with offices next to the WIC office.

The Ravenna clinic is open for appointments on Tuesday and Thursday from 8:20 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and Monday, Wednesday and Friday 8:20 to 11:00 a.m. The first Monday of the month, unless it is a holiday, the Ravenna clinic has late hours, taking appointments from 10:20 a.m. to 5:20 p.m.

The clinics provide medical services on a sliding fee scale, or will accept insurance or Medicaid.

To schedule an appointment for the Windham clinic or the Ravenna clinic, call 330-297-5437.

## Grant benefits students

Ravenna School District has been awarded \$122,405 for the 2006 After School and School Readiness Enrichment Program Grant. Portage JFS and the Family and Children First Council endorsed and sponsored the grant, enabling the school to be eligible for federal Dept. of Health and Human Services funding.

Portage County is one of only 49 counties out of 88 in Ohio to receive the grant. It is distributed through the Ohio Department of JFS with federal funding coming from the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) allocation.

"We will be focusing on academic intervention and youth development programming which will focus on helping students develop positive decision making skills," Beatrice Florida, Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the Ravenna School District, said. The program will be a collaborative effort between Family and Community Services, (FCS), Portage JFS and the Ravenna district.

"We will be working with youngsters in 5<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades offering after-school programming for students who need support academically and socially," she said. Drug and violence prevention programming will be included in the social skills component of the program.

There will also be a parent component, she noted. Program staff will be working with parents to explain what the students are learning and doing in the academic and youth development programs.

At the high school, there will be 3-6 week sessions for students with an overview during each for parents who become involved when their child participates. The school will work with FCS at the high school for both academic tutoring and youth development programming. In Rausch Intermediate and Brown Middle schools, the district already provided an academic tutoring program. The grant allows a youth development component, delivered by FCS.

"We hope this is the beginning of many good things to come for children in the Ravenna community," Ms. Florida said.

## Help Me Grow hosts summer kick off picnic



Enjoying the summer picnic which starts the "Bright Beginnings" parenting meetings are: (from left): "Bubbles" –Julie Smith, Service Coordinator with Help Me Grow; Marvel Zhou; Bobby Rumble; Laurie Bassett, Service Coordinator with Help Me Grow; Andrew Jones and Christine Rumble.

Robert Joseph Jeff enjoys playing with hoops at the Help Me Grow picnic. Over 80 parents and children attended the event with games, food and a visit by a Ravenna Township fire truck.

"Bright Beginnings" is a free educational parenting group co-hosted by the Help Me Grow and Family Literacy First at Even Start programs in Portage County. Monthly meetings, which are open to the public, feature a speaker or parent discussion and a fun activity for the children. Interested families can obtain more information by contacting the Help Me Grow central intake office at (330) 298-4545.

## Welfare Conference President announces forum

Elizabeth Stein, Contract Administrator for Portage JFS, is serving as the President of the Ohio Welfare Conference (OWC) this year. She invites all human services professionals to attend the annual forum held by OWC, Oct. 25 and 26 in Columbus.

The theme of the 116th annual forum is "Reaching Out, Touching Lives". It will include educational training workshops on topics in such areas as health and social services, elderly issues, mental retardation, employment issues, management issues, youth and juvenile justice, welfare reform, child welfare and care, education, mental health and social work issues.

Keynote speaker will be Barbara Riley, Director of the Ohio Department of Job and Family services.

"The Ohio Welfare Conference forum attracts a broad spectrum of human services professionals from private and public agencies, educational institutions and government sectors, providing the opportunity to network

work and access the expertise of hundreds of human services professionals from around the state," Ms. Stein said.

In addition to attending the forum, the OWC is encouraging the participation of exhibitors, volunteers and any organization that would like to advertise in the conference program.

For information about advertising space in the program, or being an exhibitor, call 330-297-3818 or e-mail to Steine02@odjfs.state.oh.us.

"I'm thrilled to serve as President of the Ohio Welfare Conference and I'm looking forward to the forum which is the largest single gathering of human services professionals anywhere in the state," Ms. Stein said.

She joined Portage JFS in February after serving in similar positions with Summit and Mahoning counties.

Professional credentials are available. It will be held at The Midwest Hotel & Conference Center, 4900 Sinclair Rd., Columbus, 614-846-0300.

## ERI program aids stability

A new program to promote job retention and family stability among those previously receiving cash assistance is being implemented statewide by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services including Portage JFS.

The Employee Retention Incentive (ERI) program offers up to four cash payments to eligible workers whose family Ohio Works First (OWF) cash assistance cases are closed anytime after July 31, 2006 and who are employed after their cases have closed. It assists those working a minimum of 25 hours or earning \$128.75 per week which is the minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour multiplied by 25 hours per week.

"The goal of the program is to help families continue the transition off assistance while maintaining employment or achieving a better job," according to Tim Beckner, Training Supervisor. Applicants determined eligible could receive up to \$1,000 within a nine month period.

Applicants determined eligible

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## CSEA receives state award for improvement of collections

An award recognizing the Portage County Child Support Enforcement Agency was recently presented by the Office of Child Support of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. The award was presented to "recognize the outstanding performance of the Portage County CSEA for having the highest percentage of improvement in collections on current child support in the large caseload division," Joseph J. Pilat, Deputy Director of the Office of Child Support of the ODJFS said.

In presenting the awards at the annual Child Support Training Conference, Mr. Pilat said the awards were presented to "honor county successes and recognize county achievement."

"Our staff has worked hard and changed a lot of processes to increase payments of child support to local families," Sylvia Strasshofer, CSEA Administrator noted. "A lot of children have been positively effected." CSEA was also recognized in this category last year.



County Commissioner Chuck Keiper (second from left) presents a proclamation declaring August as Child Support Month in Portage County to Sylvia Strasshofer, Administrator of the Child Support Enforcement Agency; John Haynes, Case Manager; Kris Diezman, Supervisor and Patti Lang, Case Manager.



## 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

### Moving In, Moving Up

#### New Hires:

Traci Larlham - Eligibility/Referral Specialist 2 (One Stop)

Shannon Weiss - Social Service Worker 3 (Children Services)

Matthew Walker - IM Worker 3 (Public Assistance)

Jared Slanina - Moves from temp assignment to full-time Social Service Worker 3 (Children Services)

Heather Kimbrough - IM Worker 3 (Public Assistance)

Promotion: Mary Jo Wood—from IM Aide 2 (One Stop) to Fiscal/Eligibility Specialist (Fiscal)



Jodie Strausser and Eileen Billings, both IM Aide 2, create sundaes as Director Anita Herington and Supervisor Terri Brunswick dish out ice cream at the Ice Cream Social. The summertime treats were provided by PA Managers and Supervisors along with the Director to thank the staff for their work.

### Workforce to hold events for Businesses

Informational seminars for employers in Portage County are being sponsored by the Portage Workforce Connection in collaboration with the Local Workforce Policy Committee and the Portage County Board of Commissioners on Thursday, Sept. 28. The free services available at the Portage Workforce connection to aid businesses will be presented in two sessions— one from 8:00 to 10:00 a.m. and one from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Hampton Inn & Suites at 800 Mondial Parkway, Streetsboro. For more information, contact Manager Becky Porcase at porcab@odjfs.state.oh.us. Or 330-297-6016.

Employment and training services for residents and businesses will also be featured at the free county-wide Business After Hours event to be held Tuesday, Sept. 26 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Workforce Connection, 1081 W. Main St., Ravenna. Staff will give tours of the One Stop resource center. Refreshments will be served. The event is held in collaboration with the area Chambers of Commerce, Local Workforce Policy Committee and the Commissioners.

### ERI program provides transition from assistance

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for the ERI program would receive the first ERI payment of \$200, issued upon approval of their application by JFS. Then, as continued employment is verified by JFS, both in the 3<sup>rd</sup> month and in the 6<sup>th</sup> month another \$200 would be paid to the individual and in the 9<sup>th</sup> month of confirmed employment, \$400 would be received by the individual.

Only one 9 month cycle of ERI payments can be received in a 3 year period, beginning with the first month an ERI payment is received.

Each eligible individual in an assistance group (or

in an assistance group (or family) may be able to receive their own ERI payment.

The ERI application can be picked up at the 2nd floor front desk at JFS, 449 S. Meridian St., Ravenna. The application must be turned in prior to or no later than the second month following the end of the individual's cash assistance case. Applications for ERI can also be found at:

<http://jfs.ohio.gov/001InfoCenter.stm#applications>.

The program is funded by the Ohio Dept. of Job and Family Services and federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.



*Portage County is filled with people who care about their neighbors. That's why the Portage County Department of Job and Family Services Children Services Agency is making an appeal. Our county is in urgent need of foster caregivers, for temporary placement of children and adoptive parents for permanent placement of children. For more information call 330-297-3462 or 330-297-3745*

