

Portage JFS Open Lines

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

CSEA offers license reinstatement through Workforce Connection

Parents who have had their driver's license suspended for non-payment of child support and who are not employed, are being given a chance to get their license back by using the job search programs at the Portage Workforce Connection. This new reinstatement program conducted by the Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA), a division of Portage County Job and Family Services, will be available during August for Child Support Awareness Month.

After reporting to the Portage Workforce Connection at 1081 W. Main St., Ravenna, the non-custodial parents will hear an orientation on all the services available and register in the Sharing Career Opportunities and Training Information (SCOTI) system. They can also get staff assistance with the programs and job search services or enroll in the Job Club which is a four week program that includes speakers, resume writing, interviewing, application instruction, internet workshops and computer classes.

They must take advantage of the services at the Workforce Connection at least twice a week and make some payment on their child support, to be eligible for reinstatement. The programs are free.

A \$25 fee is also required by the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles which must be paid at a BMV reinstatement center in order to get their license back.

Also available at the Workforce Connection are the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs that can provide paid tuition, fees and books for training programs and college plus uniforms or equipment needed for employment. Those that get hired after registering at the Portage Workforce Connection are entered in a monthly drawing for a \$50 gas card.

CSEA will be working with Portage Workforce Connection to keep a log of those that are working with the program and whether they found employment that will enable them to keep up with their child support payments. Those that don't begin their monthly child support payments or who stop attending the Portage Workforce Connection will have their license re-suspended.

Metropolitan counties in the state have developed similar programs in the past, which resulted in increased collections on the cases with reinstatement compared to the payments received prior to reinstatement, and in many instances the payments continued.

Staff kicks off Child Support Awareness Month on August 1

The kick off of Child Support Awareness Month activities will begin at our Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) staff meeting which will include a luncheon with recipes made by the staff, at Reed Memorial Library. The County Commissioners will present a proclamation which states in part "The Portage County Child

Continued on page 2

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Inside this issue:

Dougherty earns certification	2
Employee Recognition	2
Food Stamps reach families	2
Job Fair a success	3
Child Health at carnival	4
HEROS donates supplies	4
Mother-daughter duo leads	4
Moving In, Moving Up	4

Dougherty earns certification



Suzanne Dougherty, Fraud Investigator 2 in Public Assistance, has earned certification as a Certified Welfare Fraud Investigator. There are only 45 in Ohio, the most of any state, and Suzanne is the only one certified in Portage County. She will be required to complete credit units each year to maintain her certification.

Suzanne has been with JFS for three years after working as a police officer for six years following graduation from the Virginia Police Academy. She was injured during an arrest while working on the Drug Task Force there, although she says she really enjoyed her work, especially the investigations aspect. "I love to do investigations and love my job here," she said.

Suzanne is also a board member of the Ohio Conference on Welfare Fraud, assisting with arranging conferences, classes, and speakers for investigators throughout the state.

The United Council on Welfare Fraud which provides the certification test, is an organization of investigators, administrators, prosecutors, eligibility workers, and claims writers from local, state and federal agencies who have combined their efforts to fight fraud, waste and abuse in social service programs. They focus on detection, recovery and prosecution of those who fraudulently obtain government benefits.



County Commissioners Chris Smeiles, Maureen Frederick and Chuck Keiper and JFS Director Anita Herington, presented plaques to three staff members who reached 30 years of service in the county at the Employee Appreciation Luncheon. From left to right are Commissioner Smeiles, Public Assistance Direct Services Manager Linda Seeman, Income Maintenance Worker Lori Kainrad, Commissioner Frederick and Administrative Hearing Officer Cyndy Hostler. Certificates and county lapel pins were presented at the ceremony to 89 JFS employees reaching 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 years service.

Activities commemorate Child Support Month

Continued from page 1

Support Enforcement Agency seeks to ensure that children have the financial support of both their parents, to foster responsible behavior towards children, to emphasize that children need to have both parents involved in their lives and to reduce welfare costs by providing services that focus on ensuring children receive the financial and medical support they are legally entitled to and deserve, and. . .the Portage County CSEA hopes the attention that Child Support Awareness Month brings will enable more families to contact the agency to use the resources and assistance the staff can provide to help ensure that children grow up safe, healthy, out of poverty and ready to succeed in life. . ."

A banner will be hung on the courthouse stating "Kids Count, Make Sure They Can Count On You" - August is Child Support Awareness Month", which will also be on a billboard in Ravenna. CSEA staff will be at the county fair August 21-26 with brochures, fact sheets and notepads. Also in commemoration, a public information spot is playing on cable TV and ads will also run in the Record Courier with the CSEA phone number.

The new driver's license reinstatement program, for parents delinquent in support, permitting them to make a payment, attend the Portage Workforce Connection programs, and have their license reinstated, is detailed in our page one cover story.

Food Stamps reach 90.91 % of eligible families with children

According to the performance management rate report from ODJFS, for this quarter, Portage County has established food stamp benefits for 90.91% of eligible families with children. This is an excellent measurement to reach for our Public Assistance Direct Services staff.

A wide variety of public relations and outreach activities and projects are also on-going with the goal of providing the public and our clients with accurate, clear, concise information and direction. Added to the hard work of the staff, this has shown evidence of increasing participation in the Food Stamp Program.

We also continue to have collaborative and positive relationships with local social services agencies as we seek to reach food stamp eligible clients and families.

950 job seekers attend third successful job fair with 80 employers

"This is a Job Fair!" exclaimed a participant at the third annual Job Fair held by the Portage Workforce Connection, and that opinion was shared by many. Nearly 950 job seekers filled the Brown Middle School gym to gather information, speak with the 80 companies and educational institutions there, and apply for jobs.

"It was an excellent turnout. People had a genuine interest. We feel we got some qualified applicants and hopefully they will apply online and join the KSU family," said Tom Wilson, from Human Resources at Kent State University. "We're very pleased with what we got today," he said.



Becky Porcase, Manager of the Portage Workforce Connection One Stop said 447 people were extended job offers according to employer surveys the staff collected after the Job Fair. "From our count after we ran out of the 800 programs, we topped 950 job seekers alone," Becky said.

Alice Moore, Ronda Burdine, and Christine Woodson of our Daycare Eligibility staff, also gave out 51 daycare providers applications. They also gave out applications to people wanting to receive daycare assistance and applications to employers to let them know we can offer daycare assistance to their employees. Child Health Services had an informational table and Public Assistance staff had information on benefits programs.

"We have given out a lot of our hire-line cards with information on how to apply over the phone. I have already set up interviews for tomorrow," Jacob Dierkins, from Giant Eagle said.

Workshops on resume writing, applications and interviewing were conducted at the Workforce Connection in the month before the job fair.

"People had better resume layouts and are asking good questions about the company and asking for my business card to follow up. I was impressed," Loren Noel, of the Smurfit Stone company said.

Project Daymaker, a customized van with hair styling stations that travels to assist individuals getting into the workforce was on hand. Local beauticians from Cuttin' Loose Salon provided the free workplace haircuts. The Ravenna Lions Club grilled hot dogs for the crowd.

Clothes were also available to those who needed a more professional look for interviews and work. They were provided by the County Clothing Center and were modeled by volunteers in a fashion show during the fair.



Workforce Connection staff planned for months to ensure those looking for jobs were given a great number of opportunities. In the photo at left, Lucille Reedy, Employment Services Counselor, checks on materials as an employer speaks to a prospective applicant. In the photo at right, One Stop/Day Care Manager Becky Porcase talks with an employer.

In addition to those looking for work or to change careers, those interested in information from training schools, colleges and universities and organizations such as the Carpenters Union and military were able to speak with representatives about how to participate in their programs.

Terry Gerberry, ODJFS Customer Service Representative, explained One Stop services to employers who might not be aware of what is available to them. He discussed the Labor Market Information seminars he holds quarterly at the Workforce Connection to assist employers including the SCOTI (Sharing Career Opportunities and Training Information) system.



Director Herington presents a certificate of appreciation to Sandy Brothers, owner of Cuttin' Loose Salon. One of the applicants who received a trim donated her hair to the Locks of Love program.





Portage County Job and Family Services

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Child & Adult Protective Services 330-296-2273
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"Dress down days" provide school supplies

The HEROS committee has purchased school supplies for children in the foster care program and children in the custody of our Children Services division. Staff donated funds for the right to wear jeans on Fridays. New officers elected for HEROS are: President: Gennifer Woodworth, Vice President: Tari Addison, Secretary: Sue Miller, Treasurers: Cindy Moore and Barb Morse, Sunshine Person: Alice Moore.



Children Services staff look over the donated supplies. From left: Dee Heinl, Shannon Weiss, Pete Snyder, Susan Allman and Shannell Blanton.



Child Health Services staff set up games for children and information on Well Child Clinic, bike safety and the Help Me Grow program at the Family Fun Carnival on the courthouse lawn sponsored by the Portage Council for Prevention of Violence. Above, Kari Sansone, Family and Community's HMG Service Coordinator, right and Heather Pavlich, Child Health Administrator (center) meet families.

Mother-daughter lead "Get up and Get Going"

Marie Minard, Income Maintenance Worker 2 in Public Assistance, and her daughter Grayce, earned the highest total points by county employees in the Get Up Get Going contest. Get Up Get Going is an incentive based exercise program that is an event in the Fitness Challenge. Points are scored for the amount of time they spend exercising.

The Grand Finale events for the Fitness Challenge will be held August 11. A random drawing of all finishing participants will take place and 20 individuals will win \$50 each. Child supervision is provided during the race by trained staff for children ages 3-13 that wish to participate in the Children's 1-mile fun run instead of a 2-10k. All children receive an award. Ten lucky participants will receive a \$50 gift certificate to SportXpress.

The 2-10K begins at 9 a.m. in Ravenna Park, the 1-mile fun run begins at 11a.m. Those interested in participating in the 2-10K and/or the Children's 1-mile fun run or volunteering to help, email: Michelle Ripley at mripley@portageco.com.

Moving In, Moving Up

New Hires:

Pamela Huzvar - Income Maintenance Worker 3

Shannon Cassi - CSEA Case Manager

LeChelle Earl - CSEA Case Manager

Promotions:

Becky Rufener - from Income Maintenance Aide 2 to Income Maintenance Worker 3

Pamela Maffei from Income Maintenance Aide 2 to Income Maintenance Worker 3

4 of 5 cases of elder abuse go unreported.

Report Elder Abuse
330-296-2273

