



Protecting Geauga County's Children

Geauga County Children's Services

A Division of Geauga County Job & Family Services

Volume 9, Issue 2

Protecting Children ... Preserving Families

Second Quarter 2010

Children's Services Levy



In July the Board of County Commissioners will be considering a request by Job and Family Services and the county's Family Services Planning Committee to put a replacement levy for Children's Services on the ballot at the general election this November. The existing seven-tenths (.7) mil levy was approved by Geauga voters in 2003 and first collected in 2005. This levy generates approximately 2 million dollars per year which represents 60% of the annual revenues for child protective services in Geauga County. Children's Services has greatly benefited from the community's support of a local levy dedicated to child protective services as far back as the mid 1980's. Without this local support, needed protection and services for children and families would simply not be available.

The current seven-tenths mil levy is in its sixth year of collection and expires at the end of 2011. Allocations from the state for children's services were significantly cut in 2009 and additional cuts are expected next year. While the proposal before the Commissioners will not entirely make up for the revenue lost last year, careful stewardship and good planning will enable the agency to operate at needed levels into the foreseeable future.

Based on estimates from the County Auditor's office, the replacement levy will cost the homeowner an additional two dollars and thirty cents (\$2.30) per year for each one hundred thousand dollars of assessed value. While this may not be a large increase, with the current economy many county residents are struggling and Children's Services, like all governmental agencies, needs to be conservative with any levy request it submits to the community for approval.

Tim Taylor
Executive Director

Many times the most appropriate way for us to begin to help parents and their children is to listen to them, discuss the family's situation, find solutions, and access the resources that will meet their needs.

"Alternative Response" is a new approach being used in 25 of Ohio's county child welfare agencies to help families access the services, supports and other help that will resolve their concerns. Instead of the traditional response that focuses on the investigation of specific allegations, Alternative Response focuses on the questions, "What caused this family to experience the issues it is experiencing?" and "How can we work together to address this concern?"

Alternative Response was designed to help Ohio's child welfare agencies meet the needs of children and families. It is based on the belief that families can stay together if they receive the assistance they need when concerns occur. Alternative Response creates a partnership between families, caseworkers and community agencies. It is designed to ensure child safety and well-being by addressing the family's issues as early as possible. With Alternative Response, children are safer sooner and families are strengthened. This approach allows caseworkers to work with families to identify and use their strengths to solve their concerns and to make certain that they and their children are, and can remain, safe.

Although Geauga County is not part of the Alternative Response pilot project, we see the value of this approach and plan to start implementing some of the practices of Alternative Response now. We will employ practices which recognize that families are the experts of their own experiences. We will gather information from conversations with families, because the more we can engage a family, the closer we move to prevention. We will partner with families to identify their needs and find resolutions.

Geauga County Job and Family Services understands that there are different levels of concern when it comes to families and that each family requires a different level of response.

Therefore, we are taking a new approach to making our community safer for children and families - an "Alternative Response" approach.



Alternative Response for Families

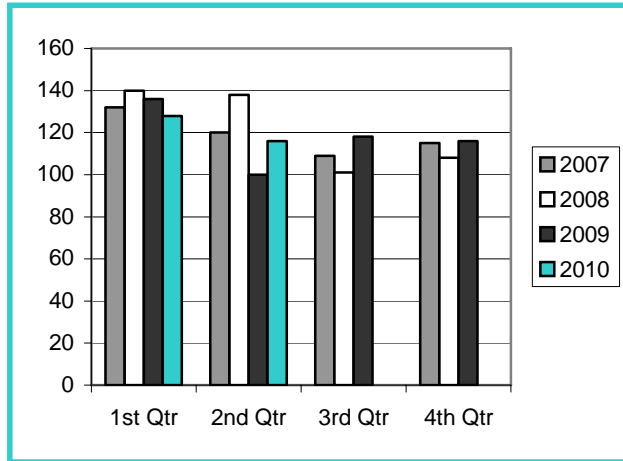


Our job at Geauga County Job and Family Services is to help parents keep their children safe and secure. We know that all families are not the same and that the concerns one family faces are different from those of their neighbors, their friends and other families across Ohio.

By the Numbers...

Keeping Kids Safe - Second Quarter 2010

Number of Child Protective Investigations per Quarter



Number of Referrals per quarter per School District

School District	Second Quarter 2010
Berkshire	10
Cardinal	21
Chardon	40
Kenston	12
Ledgemont	7
Newbury	13
West Geauga	5
Other *	8
TOTAL	116

*Includes private schools and the Metzenbaum Center

Quarterly Expenditures Statistics

	Second Quarter 2010
Assessment & Intake	3744 hours
Family Preservation	3072 hours
Foster Care & Adoptive Services	3072 hours
Number of children in Protective Supervision (avg./mo.)	30 children
Number of children in Temporary or Permanent Custody (avg./mo.)	35 children
Total days of children in Foster Care	2335 days
Traditional Foster Care	1637 days
Average Daily cost	\$28.49/day
Therapeutic Foster Care	698 days
Average Daily cost	\$72.18/day
Total days of children in Residential Placements	515 days
Average Daily cost	\$192.71/day
Adopted children w/ special needs receiving Services & Support	138 children

New Staff Member



Jessica Sawyer joined the staff of Geauga County Job and Family Services on June 3rd as a Social Worker-II. A graduate of Baldwin-Wallace College with a B.S. in Psychology, Jessica is currently enrolled in a Master's program at Akron University for Marriage and Family Therapy. Prior to joining Geauga County JFS, Jessica was employed by Children's Advantage and Coleman Behavioral Health where she did case management with mentally ill adults, as well as with children and families. Jessica states that she is excited to be working at GCJFS because she values the family system and feels it is important to provide services to families in need. Welcome Jessica!



Hot Dog Picnic Supports Levy Fund

The annual Hot Dog Picnic, proceeds from which support the Children's Services Levy fund, was held on June 3rd at The Rookery in Chesterland. The turnout for this year's festivities was bigger than ever despite the early threat of rain. The food was good and plentiful, and no one went away hungry. Children enjoyed having their faces painted and watching magic tricks, and Banjo the Clown was on hand to create balloon creatures. A beautiful handmade afghan was up for bids in a silent auction, and there were door prizes galore. Serena, the donkey, charmed everyone with her festive hat and sunglasses and patiently accepted petting from young and old. Midge, Geauga County's smallest police dog, was there with Geauga County Sheriff Dan McClelland spreading cheer and good will.

We extend our sincere thanks to Sheriff McClelland for joining in the fun; to Kim Mullet, GCJFS fiscal officer, for bringing Serena; and special thanks to GCJFS employee Stephanie Istvanic, who donated the afghan. This is Stephanie's sixth year of crocheting afghans to support the levy fundraiser. There were many others who contributed in making the picnic a success, and each one deserves a round of applause!



Sara's Community Corner

Sara Shininger, Community Support and Volunteer Coordinator at Geauga County Job & Family Services, shares news about volunteer opportunities at GCJFS.

Summer Camp 2010

The Summer Camp program is in full swing. We have already been able to assist more than 80 children attend a camp or summer activity, but requests for help continue to come in.



Thanks to the generosity of individuals and organizations throughout Geauga County, these children are enjoying a summer experience that would otherwise not have been possible. Some of the activities that have been sponsored this year include day camp, overnight camp, art lessons, swimming lessons, sports camp, school field trips, gymnastics, and theater camp.

While this kind of experience can be priceless for a child, the actual cost to participate may be several hundred dollars. No tax dollars are used for this program; it is funded solely through donations. If you would like to help a child attend a summer camp activity, please make your check payable to "Special Services", write "Summer Camp" on the memo line, and mail to Geauga County Job and Family Services, PO Box 309, Chardon, Ohio 44024.

Helping Kids Learn



School presents a variety of challenges and opportunities for children to learn, but regardless of a child's interest and ability, an education can be utterly impossible to achieve if they don't have the necessary tools for learning. Through its "Help Me Learn Day" program, Geauga County Job and Family Services will once again be helping to make sure that children of low-income families in our community have what they need in the way of school supplies. While the kids are currently enjoying their summer vacations, GCJFS has already begun planning this year's giveaway.

Help Me Learn Day is made possible because of the generosity of the Geauga County community. All of the supplies distributed come exclusively from donations. Last year we were able to help over 575 children from every school district in the county, and we anticipate the need to be just as great this year. The supplies that are distributed include such items as crayons, pencils, notebook paper, pocket folders, binders and backpacks, to name just a few.

This year's Help Me Learn Day will actually take place on two separate dates. Distribution at the GCJFS agency will be held on August 9th. A second Help Me Learn Day for families in the Chagrin Falls area will be held at Chagrin Falls Park Community Center on August 17th. Registered children and their parents will be invited to come to one of these locations where volunteers will help kids "shop" for their school supplies. Borders Bookstore in Solon has once again generously donated books to be distributed to the children as well.

School supplies, backpacks and calculators are desperately needed. Monetary donations are used to purchase school supplies. If the

funds allow, monies donated to Help Me Learn Day also assist families with fees to participate in after-school activities. Limited funds and failed school levies have forced many schools to institute a "pay to participate" policy. Fees can range from around \$50 to as much as \$400 per activity and, for many families who struggle every day to make ends meet, this is an expense that they simply cannot afford.

Anyone wishing to donate supplies for Help Me Learn Day can drop them off at Geauga County Job and Family Services. Financial donations can be made by check, payable to "Special Services" and mailed to PO Box 309, Chardon, OH 44024. Please include "Help Me Learn" on the memo line of the check. Volunteers are also needed to assist with setting up and distribution of supplies during these events. For more information, contact Sara Shininger.

Sara Shininger may be reached by calling (440) 285-9141, or toll free at 1-800-209-7590.

CASA Recognizes Outstanding Advocates and Volunteers

Geauga County's Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program utilizes approximately 60 volunteers who are appointed by judges to serve as guardian ad litem for abused and neglected children that land in the juvenile court system. A CASA's primary role is to advocate for the children and report back to the court with their independent findings. Last year alone, our CASAs volunteered over 5,000 hours, which equaled approximately \$110,000 in donated services!

The Geauga County CASA program held its annual appreciation event on May 6th at Bass Lake Tavern in Chardon. CASA Director Chris Steigerwald, Commissioner Mary Samide and Judge Charles Henry were on hand as many of the volunteer advocates were recognized for their selfless contributions throughout 2009. The "CASA of the Year" award was shared among Steven and Sandra Thompson, and Janet Rice, all of whom demonstrated outstanding dedication to the program last year.

In addition to celebrating the CASA volunteers, there is typically one outstanding advocate from the general community that is honored as well. This year it was strongly felt that two individuals were equally deserving of this award. As a result, both Jillian Barath and Greg Iacofano were selected as recipients of this year's "Community Advocate of the Year" award. Jill and Greg are both employed by Geauga County Job and Family Services as social service workers. These two outstanding employees are truly deserving of their awards, and we are very fortunate to have them working at our agency.



Jillian Barath (left) accepts award



Greg Iacofano receives CASA award

Please join us in extending thanks and congratulations to Jill and Greg and all of the dedicated CASA volunteers who work so hard to insure the safety of all Geauga County children.



Children's Services Newsletter now available via e-mail

If you would prefer to receive this newsletter through e-mail, please send an email to: **socialserv@geaugajfs.org** with subject line: "e-newsletter."



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DEPARTMENT OF JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES
12480 Ravenwood Drive, Chardon, Ohio 44024

Tim Taylor
Director

"Protecting Geauga County's Children" is a publication of Geauga County Job & Family Services, and is printed quarterly for the purpose of providing information and education about issues involving children.

Geauga County Job & Family Services
Children's Services Division
P.O. Box 309
Chardon, OH 44024



Standard Mail
Presort
Permit 315
Chesterland
Ohio 44026