

**Caring for Kids Advisory Council
January 11, 2016 3:00 pm
CCDJFS Community Room**

Present: John Hersh, Cathy Hofmeister, Jami Bates, Lorie Colian, Jen Colella, Heather Kane, Judy Fannin, Eileen Dray-Bardon, Carol Harvey, Rachel Ketterman, Danielle Dillon, Ann Weigle, Tim Weigle

Rachel welcomed members and thanked them for coming.

Reports/Updates

Treasurer's Report / Financial Updates

Carol reported a current balance in the Caring for Kids account of \$178,478.98. There were no expenses in December. The **"Cookies for a Cause" event in November brought in** receipts of \$14,908.00. Expenses were \$5,975.87 for **a net profit of \$8,932.13.**

Child Activity Report

Rachel reported numbers for October, November, and December. The agency received custody of 3 infants due to the drug use of the parents; 1 infant due to the baby's medical needs; a 10-year-old boy for behavior issues which could not be handled in the home; a teenage boy for medical and delinquency issues; and a teenage sibling group due to a custody dispute. Children who left custody included 2 of the infants who were placed with relatives; a boy who was 1 month away from his 18th birthday who was adopted; a teenage girl who was reunified with her family; a teenage girl who emancipated; and a teenage boy who passed away in December.

Birthday Gift Allowance Report

There were only 2 birthdays in the 3 months. One of those birthdays was in November, but the boy was in and out of detention in several counties and will be getting his birthday presents and party sometime in January. The other November birthday was a child who turned 1 who received a dune buggy and a train.

Rachel reported that there were so many gifts donated at Christmas time that every child received presents. Donations came from businesses, individuals, and even people from Mahoning County.

Child-Specific Needs Update

Rachel reported that **beds, dressers, storage bins, and cleaning supplies are the main needs.**

Old Business

Family Footprints Mentoring Program Update

Rachel reported that the program currently has 5 open cases. One of those cases is with a newborn with low-functioning parents. They placed a family mentor in the home who is a mother herself and has been working closely with the parents to teach them the basics of how to care for their baby. That is going very well.

2 families with 8 children have successfully completed the program. The agency saved \$697.00 for each day that these children were kept out of foster care and with their families.

One case was closed due to the mother being involved in a bad accident.

The families who have been participating in the program have been doing well. **Early intervention is the key to success for these families.**

The mentoring program grant will last until the end of June. It is uncertain at this time how the program will be sustained at the end of the grant period but Rachel, Carol, and Eileen are looking at numbers and some possible ideas to keep it going.

New Business

Fall Fundraising Event Update

Carol reported that the fundraising committee met in December to discuss the event – positives and things that may need improved. It was agreed that **more mystery boxes and wine bottle donations would be needed as these 2 activities sold out within the first hour of the event.**

Carol met with Debbie and the chef at The Links at Firestone in Columbiana. They were very helpful and had some good food ideas. We can have the wine bottle raffle, and The Links will sell the alcohol – the free drinks – at the event.

It will be a very nice location for next year's event and will be less expensive (rent and food), but space for raffle tables is a concern. **The committee voted to have it there and to work on space-saving ideas for the various raffle tables (perhaps shelves for the raffle items, tiered cookie trays on the cookie tables, and a board to pin up all of the gift certificates).**

Carol signed a contract and sent in a \$600.00 deposit to The Links to hold it for Saturday, November 12, 2016. She suggested perhaps taking committee members to look at the facility at some point during the planning.

Carol reported that she sent out thank-you notes and programs to everyone who donated to the event. There was a small follow-up article with a couple of pictures in The Morning Journal after the event. **Larry from the Morning Journal has offered to once again be the Media Sponsor for the 2016 event.**

The fundraising committee will be meeting again this Thursday to begin to form sub-committees to handle all of the various planning duties.

Heather Kane will begin e-mailing organizations soliciting donations for the Silent Auction and the raffles. Carol will give Heather a letter this week to use when requesting the donations.

The Annual Caring for Kids Dinner will still be held in April and will be at the Career Center. More information will come out about that event later. There will be no envelope drive this year.

Jen Colella reported that **Leadership Columbiana County has chosen Caring for Kids as its fundraiser this year. They will be sponsoring a poker run on April 30th, and the raffle proceeds from that will go to Caring for Kids. The event will be held at the Columbiana American Legion.**

Proposal for Expanding the "Birthday Gift" Policy

Rachel reported that she, Carol, and Eileen have been discussing expanding the birthday gift program. Currently they have been paying for birthday gifts/parties only for the kids who are in permanent custody of the agency (20 kids - \$250 per child). However the 50 kids who are in the agency's temporary custody do not get to celebrate with their families either, so they would like to expand the program to include them and the 5 kids who are in PPLAs (over 16 but cannot live in a family setting so are in a Planned Permanent Living Arrangement).

They also discussed including the 13 kids who are part of the COP cases (Court-ordered Protective cases) and the 109 kids who are in Voluntary cases which are open with the agency (122 total kids) but only allowing \$150 per child for the kids in these 2 groups. COP cases can last about 4-5 years, and Voluntary cases are generally shorter – 1-2 years. Some of the poorest kids are included in the Voluntary cases.

The total cost for the permanent, temporary, and PPLA kids would be \$18,750 per year – 75 kids total at \$250 per child. The total cost for the COP and Voluntary kids would be \$18,300 per year – 122 kids at \$150 per child.

They wanted to bring this proposal to the council to get members' input. Carol stated that they want to be careful and responsible with the money but with \$178,000 in the account, they also want to put it to good use for the kids. They don't want to continue to raise money and not spend it on the kids. She also explained that a large portion of the \$250 spent on the kids in permanent custody is reimbursable if the items purchased are educational, so they do get reimbursements from different pots of money. Carol does track the costs and the reimbursements.

Suggestions and concerns from council members included:

- Judy suggested doing a couple of **major news features about the kids in custody**. Commissioner Weigle suggested placing **feature articles in the Lifestyles section of the Sunday edition of The Journal for broader exposure**. Jen suggested **monthly or quarterly articles to keep the issue out in front of the public**.
- John suggested **reading letters at the Annual Dinner written by the kids telling what foster care has meant for them**.
- Judy suggested **explaining to the public how the agency makes the most of the money it raises for the kids – the different funding streams, matches, and reimbursements available**.

Members also discussed kinship cases or relative placements (cases where kids are placed with other family members when their parents cannot or will not care for them) and the challenges and financial hardships these relative caregivers go through.

After a lengthy discussion and a consensus of members, Commissioner Weigle made a motion to expand the birthday program to include kids who are in permanent custody; kids who are in temporary custody; kids who are in PPLAs; and kids who are in relative placements. COP and Voluntary kids will not be added at this time. Judy seconded the motion. A vote was taken. Motion carried.

Lori announced that the **Family and Children First Council and the CASH Coalition will be sponsoring an "Ohio's School and Community Mental Health Resource Forum" on Wednesday, January 27th, from 10:30 am – noon at The Counseling Center in Lisbon**. Every school district in the county has been invited, and WFMJ will be sending someone to cover the forum. Presenters will be Ohio Mental Health Network for School Success Director, Kathy Oberlin, and Annie Stephens, the Ohio Organizer for Sandy Hook Promise. Topics will include 4 no-cost prevention programs; mental health issues; and school violence (shootings, bullying, and sexting). **Teachers, people who work with youth, and community members who are interested in getting involved are welcome to attend.**

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned shortly after 4 pm.

The next Caring for Kids Advisory Council Meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 22nd, at 3:00 pm in the CCDJFS Community Room. The rest of the 2016 meetings will be held on the 4th Tuesday of every other month.