



Links

linking kinship caregivers

Vol. 6 Iss. 1 - Winter 2004



nice pair of shoes. A coat is something I had not had for a long time. The children knew we did not have a lot of money. They were shocked that they had received so many presents. Words cannot explain the joy you helped to bring this family on Christmas.

Montgomery County Kinship Navigator Brings Cheer to Forty Families This Christmas

Bonnie Grooms, Kinship Navigator, was determined to seek out as many holiday sponsors she could find for families this Christmas. Bonnie began calling organizations in October to find out which agencies would provide Christmas assistance. Some agencies were not providing holiday assistance due to budget restrictions this year. In spite of that, Bonnie was able to find assistance for every one of our clients who requested it.

We would like to thank the following agencies for sponsoring our kinship families:

- American Legion Post #776
- Hannah's Treasure Chest (Angel Gift Program)
- Legal Aide Society of Dayton
- Catholic Social Services
- Christ United Methodist Church - United Methodist Women
- Dixon United Methodist Church

A Kinship Caregiver writes:

There are not words to thank you for the most wonderful Christmas ever. The kids were overjoyed. The VCR, videotapes, toys, clothes, and shoes were all wonderful. The kids opened and opened presents. I now have a coat and a



Kinship Kloset Update

The Kinship Kloset has expanded to provide services in two locations. The East Third Street Baptist Church has provided space for the Kloset for several years. The second Kinship Kloset is now open at First Baptist Church on 111 West Monument Avenue.

We are looking for volunteers to help organize, fill requests and assist caregivers at the Kloset. If you or someone you know would like to volunteer 2-3 hours a week at the Kloset, please feel free to contact Dionne Henderson at (937) 775-1116.

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New Kinship Navigator Serving Montgomery County

Crystal Wirts joined the Grandparent/Grandchildren

Initiative as a Kinship Navigator in January. Crystal brings a great wealth of knowledge to the position. She formerly worked with Senior Resource

Connection where she provided clients with resources in the community. She is also a part-time student at Sinclair Community College pursuing a degree in Mental Health Technology. Crystal states she enjoys working to help families find resources in their time of need. You can reach her by calling (937) 775-1144. Crystal office hours are: Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 8:30AM-5:00PM; Monday, 8:30AM-10:30AM; and Wednesday 8:30-10:30AM and 3:00-5:00 PM.



- ◆ A grant program for intergenerational housing for grandparents and other relatives raising children, modeled after the Grandfamilies Program in Massachusetts and similar special housing in New York and other states.
- ◆ Training for staff of the Department of Housing and Urban Development about grandparents and other relatives raising children.
- ◆ A national study of the housing needs of grandparents and other relatives raising children.

This would not have happened without your help and important leadership from members of Congress, especially Representatives Michael Capuano (MA) and Jack Quinn (NY) in the House and Senators Debbie Stabenow (MI), Mike DeWine (OH), Mary Landrieu (LA), and Hillary Clinton (NY) in the Senate. A thank you message from you to the legislators from your state would be very helpful and appreciated.

Please send Senator Mike DeWine a letter, telephone call or e-mail thanking him for his support of the Legacy Bill.

E-Mail: <http://congress.org/congressorg/home/>

LEGACY Bill Provisions Become Law

Living Equitably: Grandparents Aiding Children and Youth Act of 2003 commonly known as the LEGACY Act of 2003

First, some wonderful news. Your visit to Washington, D.C. and your calls and e-mails made a difference.

President Bush signed pieces of the LEGACY Act as part of the American Dream Downpayment Act. You may remember that the LEGACY pieces had been added to that Act the day of the Grand Rally. They then went to the full Senate, the House of Representatives, and on to the President. The LEGACY Act includes three provisions to help with the housing needs of grandparents and other relatives raising children:



Xenia, Ohio Office

100 West Main Street, 2nd Floor
Xenia, OH 45385
Phone: (937) 376-3080
Fax: (937) 376-3387

Columbus, Ohio Office

37 West Broad Street, Suite 300
Columbus, OH 43215
Phone: (614) 469-5186
Fax: (614) 469-2982

Washington, D.C. Office

140 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-3503
Phone: (202) 224-2315
Fax: (202) 224-6519



Community Action Partnership

Contributed by Jessica Westgerdes

Community Action Partnership, formerly SCOPE, was incorporated in 1964. Since its inception, Community Action Partnership has implemented an array of programs targeting individuals and families living in poverty, with offices in Darke, Greene, Miami, Montgomery, Preble and Warren Counties.

Our Motto: Helping People. Changing Lives.

Our Mission: to work with local communities to eliminate the causes and conditions of poverty and to promote individual self-sufficiency and independence.

Our Promise: Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

Community Action Partnership
- Montgomery County
719 South Main Street
Dayton, OH 45402
Ph: (937) 341-5000
Fax: (937) 341-5002

Community Action Partnership Gears Up for Winter Crisis

Community Action Partnership is gearing up for the cold season with the Winter Crisis Program. The emergency program, which began November 1,

2003, supports low-income individuals affected by a rise in utility bills. Funds may be used to provide up to \$175 to income eligible customers experiencing energy emergencies.

Winter Crisis Program funds are used to 1) keep utility service connected if threatened with disconnection, 2) reinstate utility service that has already been disconnected, or 3) transfer service or pay for reconnect fees or security deposits.

Customers who are threatened with disconnection of both gas and electric in their home can split their payment between DP&L and Vectren. The program runs through March 31, 2004 or until funds are exhausted.

To be eligible for assistance customers must meet the following conditions:

- 1) Household income must be below 150% of the federal poverty level;
- 2) Utility service must be disconnected or in disconnect status;
- 3) Customer must be enrolled in Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP). The PIPP Program requires regulated utility companies to accept payment in winter months based on a percentage of the household monthly income. (In the summer months, customers must pay the current monthly bill or PIPP amount, whichever is greater.) Vectren allows PIPP payments all year long; and
- 4) Households using bulk fuel as their primary heating source must have less than a ten-day supply of bulk fuel. They can receive up to \$250 for oil or propane. Homes using wood for heat can receive up to \$175.

All customers who have gas and electric must bring account numbers from DP&L and Vectren to receive assistance. Customers will typically be seen by appointment, but there are a limited number of walk-in and evening appointments available.

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Legal Talk

Helpful Tax Hints for Grandparent Caregivers

Submitted by Attorney Brantford D. Brown

Often times, when a child comes to live with his or her grandparents or other relatives, there is a strain on the household financially. There are additional mouths to feed and bodies to clothe without adequate additional resources. Many grandparent caregivers are unaware of potential benefits under current tax laws that might assist them in making ends meet. Grandparent caregivers (who have income from work and qualifying children) may be eligible for:

- Earned Income Tax Credit (EIC)
- Child and Dependent Care Credit
- Child Tax Credit

This article is intended to introduce eligible kinship caregivers to each of the above referenced tax options. **Please consult with your tax preparer and/or accountant to get a more detailed explanation.**

EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT

The Earned Income Credit (EIC) is money the IRS gives to people with variable incomes. You can get this credit whether or not you pay federal income tax.

You may be eligible for EIC if you meet all of the following conditions:

1. you worked last year; and
2. you filed federal taxes last year; and
3. you were not a child listed as a dependent on a tax return; and
4. you were not a married person filing a separate tax return.

If you meet these conditions and you had one child, foster child or a disabled dependent living with you last year and your income was under \$29,666, you can receive up to \$2,547. If you had two or more children and your earned income was less than \$33,692, you can receive up to \$4,204.

Qualifying children must be under age 19 or a full-time student under 24. Totally and permanently disabled children of any age may qualify. "Children" may be children, grandchildren, stepchildren and adopted children as long as they have lived with you for more than six months. Foster children can only qualify if they have lived with you all year.

You may receive up to \$382.00 from federal income tax and qualify for EIC even if you don't have children living with you if:

1. You are between 25-64 years of age; and
2. Your household earned under \$11,230.

In order to receive the EIC, you must file a federal tax return form 1040A or 1040 and Schedule EIC. If you were not raising children, you can file any tax form, including the 1040EZ. If you want the IRS to figure out your credit for you, fill out the front half of Schedule EIC.

Earned income credit will be "refunded" to you in one of two ways:

- (1) If you owe taxes, the credit will be subtracted from the amount you owe.
- (2) If you owe no taxes, the IRS will send you a check for the credit.

Please note that if you are currently receiving public assistance funds, EIC payments do not count as income or resources for public assistance purposes. For food stamps, EIC

payments do not count as income, but can count as a resource. (Resources include cash on hand, money in banks or investments, personal or real property, and vehicles.) Generally, EIC payments will not count as a resource the month you get the check or the following month. If you do not want your EIC to count as a resource, spend it within two months of receiving it. You may need to prove that you spent the money. Please keep all of your receipts.

CHILD AND DEPENDENT CARE CREDIT

The child and dependent care credit assists families who must pay for child care in order to work or look for work. The credit can get you up to \$2,100 for a family with two or more children, and up to \$1,050 for a family with one child. Children who qualify to be claimed for this credit must be dependents and must have been under 13 when the care was provided. This credit may be available for a disabled spouse as well. Generally, a person can be claimed if they are physically or mentally incapable of self-care (certain rules apply with regard to income). For example, a taxpayer's spouse may be claimed if the spouse is physically or mentally incapable of self-care.

Workers who wish to claim the credit must meet the following requirements:

1. The taxpayers must have earned income and have paid more than half of the cost of maintaining a household for him/herself and the qualifying individual for the year; and
2. Payments must have been necessary to enable the taxpayer to go to search for work; and
3. The person providing the care must be 19 years of age or older and CANNOT be the taxpayer's dependent.

CHILD TAX CREDIT

The Child Tax Credit reduces the federal income tax but, like the Child and Dependent Care Credit, does not provide refunds over the

amount of income tax paid. A family making too much money to receive the Earned Income Tax Credit may still qualify for a Child Tax Credit of up to \$1,000 per child. The qualifying child must be under age 17, a U.S. citizen or resident alien, and must have been claimed as a dependent on the previous year's federal income tax return.



The bottom line is that grandparents and other kinship caregivers raising children may qualify for income tax credits that lower the amount of taxes they owe. Caregivers should explore all of their options at tax time.

For additional information, the Internal Revenue Service provides a free program to help low-income workers fill out their tax forms. You can get information on the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, by dialing 1-800-TAX-1049 or checking on-line at : www.irs.gov

VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Sites ***most sites require an appointment***

Community Action Partnership
Dayton Urban League
DMHA/Sankofa (DMHA & Sec. 8 Clients)
East End Community Services Corp.
Ellison Center

To schedule an appointment or request information, please call the toll free automated telephone service line at 1-866-504-7379. Individuals can schedule an appointment 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, or hear important program information guidelines.

Heating Bills Increase This Winter

Vectren Corporation has predicted gas bills would be as high if not higher than last year's due to higher natural gas costs. To ensure no one is without heat, however, the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) ordered Ohio's natural gas and electric utility companies to reconnect or maintain winter heating service to customers who have been disconnected or threatened with disconnection due to nonpayment of a utility bill. Under the plan, customers whose service has been or may be disconnected can have their service restored or maintained this winter if they pay the amount in default or \$175, whichever is less, plus a service reconnection fee of no more than \$20.

Customers who had their service disconnected or are at risk of being disconnected may use the plan to have their service reconnected one time only from now through April 15, 2004. There is no income eligibility requirement to use this order. Participants must also enroll in a payment plan for past-due balances on their utility bills.

For more information or to make suggestions, please contact Dionne Henderson, Program Director, Grandparent/Grandchildren Initiative, at the Center for Healthy Communities, 140 E. Monument Avenue, Room 315, Dayton, Ohio 45402; (937) 775-1116.

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