



## Caregivers Corner

## Holiday Help for Kinship Caregivers

### Kinship Day Camp Planned for 2005

**W**e are currently planning the Third Annual Kinship Camp. This year the kinship day camp will be offered at two locations: Dakota Center and Five Rivers MetroParks Adventure Central. The Dakota Center will provide twenty scholarships to children who are being raised by relatives. The scholarships will be available on a first come first serve basis. The Adventure Central will only offer the kinship camp to children who are currently enrolled in their ongoing programs.

Look to our spring edition of *Links* for additional information.

**C**an you pass the debt test? If you answered no, help is available.



Lutheran Social Services, Consumer Credit Counseling Service of the Miami Valley has been around since 1980. CCCS is a local, non-profit credit-counseling agency that has helped thousands of Miami Valley residents solve their credit and debt problems. They are certified credit counselors that are willing to show you how to take control of your money and achieve your financial goals. CCCS has one on one sessions as well as classroom setting available for kinship caregivers. If you are interested in the class or an one on one session please contact Bonnie Grooms, Kinship Navigator, at 937-775-1145.



*Gay Robinson, a grandmother with 4 grandchildren in her home, appreciated the Christmas help from L.M. Berry & Company.*



*Florence Brown, a grandmother with 3 grandchildren in her home, appreciated the Christmas help from Catholic Social Services.*

*A special thanks to the following organizations for their support during the holidays:*

- American Legion Auxiliary 776
- Catholic Social Services
- Christ United Methodist Church
- Dayton Public Schools
- Dillard Stone Family
- Fifth Third Bank
- Hannah's Treasure Chest
- Jeremiah's Letter
- L & M Berry Inc.
- Legal Aid of Western Ohio
- PACE
- UAW Local
- United Dixon Methodist Church



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# Legal Talk



## HB 130 Task Force on the Move

**O**hio HB 130, the Grandparent Affidavit, passed July 20, 2004. The Grandparent Affidavit has established two new ways to grant caregivers legal authority to obtain educational and medical services for the children in their residential care, as an alternative to intrusive children services intervention or expensive legal processes. There are two ways grandparents can obtain these authorities 1) Power of Attorney and 2) Caretaker Authorization Affidavit. The Power of Attorney can be obtained when the parent, guardian or legal custodian is temporarily unable to care for the child. The Caretaker Authorization Affidavit is to be used in situations where a caretaker has made reasonable attempts to locate and contact both of the child's parents but is unable to do so. This provision allows the grandparent to exercise care and control of the child.

The Ohio Grandparent Kinship Coalition worked for many years to pass this law while there was significant opposition from the judicial and school communities. The Public Children Services Association of Ohio was a tremendous driving force in the passing of this law. PCSAO had

disseminated information on the Grandparent Affidavit throughout the state. The information provided from PCSAO was general for the state of Ohio and not county specific. Shortly after July 20<sup>th</sup>, the phones were beginning to ring at Montgomery County Children Services and grandparents were interested in how to begin the process. Robert Gruhl (Mandated Services, MCCS) and Dionne Henderson (KCC Program Director) met to begin talking about how to address the issue in Montgomery County. Mr. Gruhl and Ms. Henderson felt the project was bigger than both agencies and they would need to partner with other agencies that would have a strong interest in the process.

The HB 130 Task Force was convened to educate the public, disseminate information, and implement protocol. The task force includes members from the following agencies: Legal Aid of Western Ohio, Montgomery County Children Services, Montgomery County Juvenile Courts, Dayton Public Schools, Huber Heights Schools, Trotwood Madison Schools, and Northmont Schools. The task force decided that the KCC would chair the task force. The

KCC was also designated as the "one stop shop" for grandparents who needed assistance filling out the forms to file the affidavits. The task force has been successful in modifying the affidavits to meet MCJC requirements, developed instructions on how to file the affidavits, and provided several community presentations to educate the public on the Grandparent Affidavit.

In 2004 there were 51 Power of Attorneys, and 31 Caretaker Authorization Affidavits filed in Montgomery County. The task force is committed to educating the public on the Grandparent Affidavit and monitoring the use of the affidavits.

If you have any questions about the Grandparent Affidavit, contact Legal Aid of Western Ohio at 1-888-534-1432.

## Links

is a quarterly publication of the Kinship Caregiver Coalition (KCC), an initiative of the Center for Healthy Communities.

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

# Give Your Paycheck a Boost!

Claim All of Your Tax Credits by Commissioner Dean Lovelace



## You could be eligible!

**Did you work in 2004?** You may be eligible for the **Earned Income Tax Credit**. If so, you'll owe less in taxes and you could get cash back. Even if you don't owe income tax, you can get the EITC!

- **Are you raising one child in your home?** In 2004 did your family earn less than \$30,338 (or less than \$31,338 for married workers)? You can get an **EITC up to \$2,604**.
- **Are you raising two or more children in your home?** In 2004 did your family earn less than \$34,458 (or less than \$35,458 for married workers)? You can get an **EITC up to \$4,300**.
- If you aren't raising a child, did you earn less than \$11,490 (or less than \$12,490 for married workers) in 2004? Are you between the ages 25 and 64? You can get an **EITC up to \$390**.
- **Extra Credit** for families raising children! Many families now also qualify for the **Child Tax Credit**—up to **\$1,000** for each dependent child age 16 and under!

**Keep Your Entire EITC and Child Tax Credit Refund!** In most cases, **quick refund loans are a waste of your hard-earned money**. Use our community's **free**, IRS-approved tax preparation services instead.

What if I don't know how to file a tax return?

**Get Free Help!!!** Trained volunteers are available to help EITC-eligible workers fill out their tax forms for free. Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites are open in the Dayton area from late January through April 15. **VITA sites have free electronic filing for faster refunds.** The following IRS-approved sites are members of Dayton's EITC Coalition and are located in the City of Dayton. Call ahead to schedule an appointment.

- ◆ Community Action Partnership 341-5000
- ◆ Dayton Urban League 220-6650
- ◆ DMHA / Sankofa (DMHA & Sec. 8 Residents only) 222-8381
- ◆ East End @ Linden Ave. Baptist Church 259-1898
- ◆ Ellison Senior Center 333-6606
- ◆ The Job Center 333-2700 (Call M-F from 10:00AM-4:00PM for appt.)
- ◆ OIKOS CDC (IDA & OIKOS Clients only) 222-7815
- ◆ Sinclair College (Sinclair Students & Staff only) 512-3964
- ◆ Wesley Center 263-3556

*For information about other VITA sites in the Dayton area, call the IRS @ 1-800-829-1040*

What information must I bring with me to the tax preparation site?

- Your photo ID
- All W-2 Forms for wages earned in 2004
- Social Security (S.S.) cards or Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITIN) for you and all persons in your family included on your tax return
- Any correspondence you received from the IRS in 2004
- If you had Child Care expenses in 2004, bring the Provider's S.S. # or Employer ID Number (EIN) and address. Also bring payment documentation for the total amount you paid to the Provider, and the amount you paid for each child.
- 1098 & 1099 forms (if any)

I work and get public benefits. If I get these credits, will I lose my other benefits?

The EITC does not count as income in determining eligibility for Food Stamps, SSI, Medicaid, cash assistance or public housing. The Child Tax Credit does not count as income for any federally funded benefit program.

*For more information, call United Way's HelpLink EITC Line 937-913-2000*

# Community Action Partnership

Contributed by Ivy Williams

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT



### WINTER CRISIS PROGRAM WELL UNDER WAY CAP assists more than 4,000 customers with utility bills

**D**ayton, OH- January 26, 2005 — As the temperature drops and heating rates continue to rise, it's nice to know that relief is nearby. Through Community Action Partnership's Winter Crisis Program, income-eligible families and individuals can still receive assistance with their heating bills. The program began on November 1, 2004, and will run until March 31, 2005 or until all funds have been depleted.

Community Action Partnership has served more than 4,000 customers and has used over 65 percent of funding since the start of the Winter Crisis Program Season. "Customers have been steadily calling the appointment number since before the program even began," said Joyce E. Price, CAP's Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. "It is evident that Community Action Partnership is meeting a need in this community. We are proud to serve in such a meaningful way," she continued.

The Winter Crisis program can provide up to \$175.00 to income eligible customers to cover gas and electric costs. Customers who have both gas and electric in their home will split their payment between DP&L and Vectren.

Households using bulk fuel as their primary heating source can receive up to \$325.00 for oil or propane; homes using wood for heat can receive up to \$250.00. To be eligible for the Winter Crisis Program, a household must be: 1) At or below 150% of the poverty level (income guidelines are available on the automated phone line); 2) Threatened with utility disconnection; 3) Enrolled in the Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP). Households using bulk fuel as their primary heating source must have less than a ten-day supply of bulk fuel. Individuals in need of this emergency service should call Community Action Partnership's automated line immediately to make an appointment. The number is 1-866-504-7379.

#### Energy Savings Tips from Community Action Partnership

The winter season can be one of the most expensive times of the year. Not only do we experience an increase in spending during the holidays, but we are also plagued with a rise in heating bills.

**Below you will find a few tips on how to keep heating costs down this winter season:**

1. Make sure your furnace is free of dirt and debris. Have a professional clean and tune your furnace regularly.
2. Be sure to change your air filter once every month. If you have pets, you should change it twice a month. Your furnace needs clean air just like you to function properly. The cleaner the air, the warmer the heat will be that is produced. There is no need to purchase expensive filters as long as you keep changing them regularly. However, not changing filters regularly could result in having to purchase a new furnace.
3. Keep all interior doors open to ensure proper heating throughout the house. Closing off rooms that seem colder than others actually causes the furnace to shut on and off more quickly, which makes the house heat unevenly. On the coldest days of the year, the furnace should seem like it never shuts off. This is a good thing; it does not waste energy as you may think.

## **Farewell to Crystal Wirts (Kinship Navigator)**

4. Don't use your fireplace. Believe it or not, the fireplace is one of the most inefficient ways to heat your home. A roaring fire can exhaust as much as 24,000 cubic feet of air per hour to the outside, which must be replaced by cold air coming into the house from the outside. Your heating system must warm up this air, which is then exhausted through your chimney.

Following these few tips will help keep costs down as you heat up your house. For more tips on energy efficiency, or to have your home weatherized, contact the HWAP department at 937-341-5000.



**C**rystal's last day with the Center for Healthy Communities was January 20, 2005. Crystal started with the center one year ago. Crystal has accepted a position with the Miami Valley Health Improvement Council as a "County Champion." We wish Crystal well in her new position as County Champion.

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