



Washington County
 Department of Social Services
 Commitment to Community



Partners in Press

Volume VI / Issue 3

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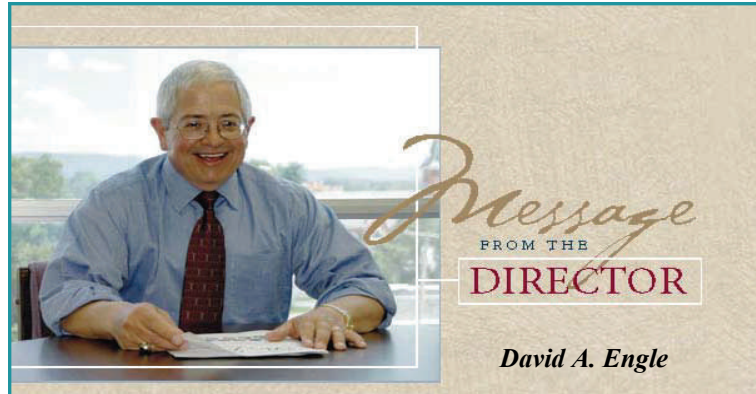
Fall 2011

We serve people,
 promote self-reliance,
 and provide safety by delivering
 quality services and developing
 community partnerships.

-WCDSS Mission Statement

“Those who bring
 sunshine to the lives
 of others cannot
 keep it from
 themselves.”

~ James M. Barrie



DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Thanksgiving Blessings

As the Thanksgiving and holiday seasons approach it is appropriate to take time to count our many blessings. The Great Recession has had such a devastating and sustained impact on so many of our families, friends, and neighbors, that certainly those of us who have good jobs should feel especially fortunate. The “calling” that each of us has answered to work in the human service field is in itself a blessing. Although we see firsthand the anxiety, fear, and depression that many abused, neglected and un/underemployed are experiencing, we are in a position to provide them hope for a better tomorrow.

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2011-2012 WASHINGTON COUNTY DSS ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

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- Bonnie Elgin, Secretary
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- Evelyn Williams
- Terry Baker, County Commissioner, ex-officio

Board meetings are held the fourth Monday of the month (September-June) at 5:30 pm in the Washington County DSS Board Room.

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The Safe Place — Child Advocacy Center
24 N. Walnut Street, Hagerstown, MD 21740
Phone: 240-420-4300 Fax: 240-420-4339

The Family Center & Sunshine Center
221 McRand Court
Hagerstown, MD 21740
Phone: 301-790-4002 Fax: 301-790-4007

Martin O'Malley, Governor
Anthony Brown, Lt. Governor
Theodore Dallas, Secretary



Director's Corner Continued

I'm thankful for each one of you and the part you play to help people cope and persevere.

The challenges we face today are extraordinary. Our worker to client ratio has never been higher. Our numbers of administration and clerical staff have been dramatically reduced at a time when they face so many competing demands. As you have done so many times in the past, once again WCDSS staff have risen to the occasion. Not only have you met the challenge, but in fact you have distinguished yourselves by achieving record setting child support collections, and FI compliance rates. Social Services staff are reorganizing internal operations and strengthening referrals to other community resources in order to serve more complicated and difficult child welfare and adult services cases.

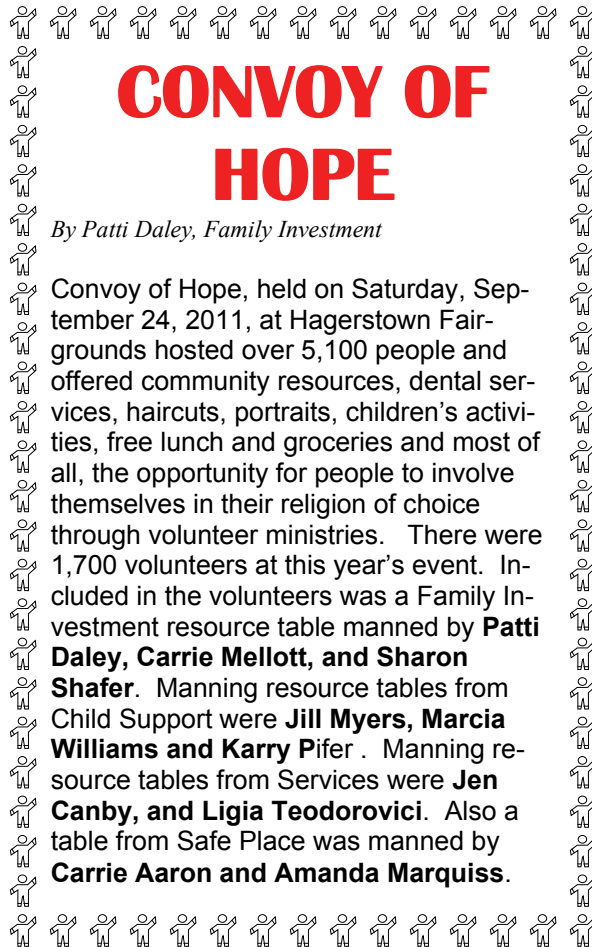
In the weeks leading up to the New Year, I hope you will take time to thank your co-workers for the many favors they do for each of us daily and the small miracles they perform for our clients regularly. Don't forget to thank our partner agencies who join us in providing the safety net for vulnerable children, families and adults in our community. A great way to do this is to contribute to the Maryland Charities Campaign and designate your gift to a local United Way agency. Please also thank our elected officials who helped us relocate the Family Center, and create the Sunshine Center. Please let them know the appropriations they approve enable us to meet our clients' basic needs and to keep them safe. Finally, I hope you will take time to enjoy the holidays with your families and friends who provide us with the support system we need to continue pursuit of our mission.

AFTER HURRICANE IRENE



After Hurricane Irene on 8/28/11, Anne Arundel County DSS lost power. Hundreds of Food Supplement (FS) recipients lost their food supply due to spoilage. The local DSS office also was without power and unable to process benefits, but the requests for FS restorations began to pour in by the hundreds during the next days. FEMA had sent out public service announcements and the local media advised residents to report to their DSS for emergency food replacement benefits. On 9/1/11, the Director of Anne Arundel County reached out for our help by contacting our Director, David Engle. Several staff stepped up and volunteered to complete FS replacements for Anne Arundel Co but needed to have clearance and system access in order to process their cases. Through the combined efforts of DHR Central and Anne Arundel staff, system access was quickly granted and replacement documentation was forwarded to Washington

County. Friday, 9/2/11 was a service reduction day, however, the following staff from Washington County reported to work and processed hundreds of replacement food supplement benefits in order to lend a helping hand to Anne Arundel staff as well as aiding their residents with the ability to feed themselves and their families: **Lynda Matheny, Ruth Fuller, Chaurice Capps, Star Blickenstaff, Patti Daley, Kristi Wallace and Sharon Shafer.**



CONVOY OF HOPE

By Patti Daley, Family Investment

Convoy of Hope, held on Saturday, September 24, 2011, at Hagerstown Fairgrounds hosted over 5,100 people and offered community resources, dental services, haircuts, portraits, children's activities, free lunch and groceries and most of all, the opportunity for people to involve themselves in their religion of choice through volunteer ministries. There were 1,700 volunteers at this year's event. Included in the volunteers was a Family Investment resource table manned by **Patti Daley, Carrie Mellott, and Sharon Shafer.** Manning resource tables from Child Support were **Jill Myers, Marcia Williams and Karry Pifer.** Manning resource tables from Services were **Jen Canby, and Ligia Teodorovici.** Also a table from Safe Place was manned by **Carrie Aaron and Amanda Marquiss.**

Quality Council Update

By Joshua Bond, Family Investment

The Quality Council hosted a very successful Strategic Planning Retreat on September 20, 2011 at Robinwood/Meritus Medical Center. The Quality Council would like to once again thank all the participants who helped to make the event a great success.

The event facilitator, Beth Greenland, kept everyone involved and led the group to come up with many exciting ideas and strategies that will have a positive effect on WCDSS in the future. Participants used information gathered from the 2011 Employee, Stakeholder and Customer surveys to focus on certain areas that needed improvement.

The Quality Council will now use the information generated at the retreat to create a final strategic plan that will be implemented over the next four years. The Strategic Plan will focus on five goals: Employee Development, Community Partners, Quality, Public Relations and Customer Service.

The Quality Council meets the 3rd Monday of each month at 10:00 a.m. Staff are encouraged to participate in the Open Mic at the beginning of each session when staff can bring concerns before the Quality Council. Suggestions can also be placed in the suggestion box on the 3rd floor.

SUNSHINE CENTER HISTORY

In 2007, the idea of a specialized facility specifically dedicated to reuniting children removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect had been gaining prominence nationwide. During this same time frame a former church parsonage was made available to the Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services. From this donation the first Maryland family visiting center was created and named Harmony House. Shortly after the Anne Arundel County facility opened, Board Members from the Washington County Department of Social Services (WCDSS) accompanied by Senator Don Munson, made a visit to the Anne Arundel County facility with the intention of replicating the program in Washington County. DSS Staff and Board Members were convinced that the family setting of Harmony House offered many more possibilities for family reunification efforts than the simple visiting rooms which were being used within WCDSS.

“On July 11, 2011, the Sunshine Center opened its doors to assist in the healing process for families and children in our community.”

In December 2008, the Board of Social Services submitted a grant request to the Alice V. and David W. Fletcher Foundation seeking funds to secure rental property for a Washington County center. Agency staff began looking for a suitable facility to accomplish the objectives. The Board of Social Services received regular reports on the site search and continued to apply for foundation funding.



In 2009, staff initiated a parallel search for office space to relocate the Washington County Family Center. After 15 years in its location at 920 West Washington Street, the Family Center had outgrown that facility, and with the lease expiring in June of 2010, a search for additional space began. The Department enjoyed outstanding assistance in this effort from the Washington County Commissioners, County Administrator and County Attorney. In the summer of 2010, the multiple searches for building space converged into available property at 221 McRand Court. Space at that facility would allow the Family Center relocation and a Washington County family visiting center to be co-located. In January 2011, a lease was signed and construction began. Thanks to outstanding partnerships with the Maryland Family Network, the Washington County Commissioners, our County Administrator and County Attorney, the Washington County Board of Social Services, the Washington County Community Partnership for Families and Children, the Washington County Community Action Council, the Fletcher Foundation, the Maryland Department of Human Resources, the Pauline Anderson Foundation, the Einbinder Foundation, the Washington County Public Schools and numerous generous citizens, on July 11, 2011, the Sunshine Center opened its doors to assist in the healing process for families and children in our community.

~ By David A. Engle, Director



FAYE STAUCH RECEIVES DHR 2011 CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE AWARD

Wearing many hats, Faye excels in our in-house JobReady Center as a Job Coach assisting Work Eligible as well as volunteer and NPEP customers find employment and/or work activity placements that will lead to employment. These efforts are key to our success with our Work Participation Rate and Universal Engagement goals. Faye conducts daily workshops in groups and one-on-one that include resume writing, interviewing skills, employment application completion, workplace etiquette, appropriate workplace attire and behavior. During her customer interactions, she completes in-depth assessments to help identify the best placement avenues to explore. Faye is an extremely reliable and dedicated worker not only to our agency, but to our customers and community partners. She strengthens our alliance with the community in general as well as stakeholders. She is in constant contact with County Commuter in order for the Job Opportunity Bus Shuttle (JOBS) program to run well, CASA's Work Central Hotline staff, Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation staff, Services to Families with Children (TCA) program staff members, Child Support Staff for the Non-Custodial Parent Employment Program; is a key go to person for Work Experience and Intern participants and is integral to the success of the monthly Work It Out program for employed TCA customers.



Known as the “go to” person for resources and answers about budgeting, resumes, filling in applications and who to contact for support services, Faye is always seeking opportunities from any sources to enhance the success of our customers and JobReady Center staff. She has networked with National Guard staff who come into the community to teach about job and training opportunities as well as good Samaritan citizens who offer down to earth information about going “green” by making cleaning products to save money as well as food and dollar budgeting. Faye is quick to share this information with staff members. Faye works so closely with DLLR staff that they do not hesitate to request that she provide office coverage and help with their Resource area while they participate in regional Staff Development programs and other staff trainings. Faye regularly shares information and communicates with the many case managers and service providers that work with our JobReady Center participants. In addition to working daily with customers in a classroom setting and maintaining multiple reporting databases, Faye regularly meets customers to help them shop for appropriate interview and work clothing. She consistently goes above and beyond the call of duty by always being willing, ready, and available, whether it is for customers, co-workers, community partners or employers. Faye is knowledgeable, professional and friendly in all of her encounters and truly exemplifies excellent customer service.

Faye has taken an active part in ensuring JobReady participants succeed in their mandatory hours of participation and offers multiple retention resources including referrals to community partner agencies. She works closely with Child Support staff and helps ensure the success of collections through the Non-Custodial Employment Program. Representative agencies include CASA, Western Maryland Consortium, DLLR, DORS, CAC, Goodwill, Health Department, United Way and their affiliates. Faye is keenly aware that these services can enhance our target candidates to reach the goals of Maryland RISE (Reaching Independence and Stability through Employment) by identifying through combined resources the basic literary needs to help transform and transition our work eligible customers into successful careers. By combining her own participant assessments with those of our partner agencies, Faye is able to identify and target the best possible paths to success for individual participants. Since Faye has worked directly with our customers for many years, she can offer insight to the biggest challenges that participants face.

CONGRATULATIONS TO FAYE FOR A JOB WELL DONE!

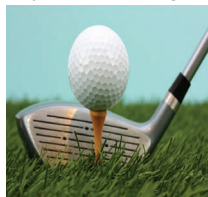
NEWS FROM SAFE PLACE

It is hard to believe that Thanksgiving is nipping at our toes. Of course, the Christmas decorations are already up in the stores! So, as we get ready for the holiday season and a new year, I'd like to fill you in on what's been going on around Safe Place.

In October, Safe Place hosted a Child Abuse and Family Violence Summit. The summit was attended by over 150 child advocates from as far away as Baltimore. The summit focused on Child Exploitation Investigations, Physical Child Abuse Identification, Bite-mark Recognition, Investigating Child Sex Crimes, Interviewing Children with Disabilities and Documentation Caveats. The summit was the brain child of Safe Place Forensic Nurse Joyce Williams, who worked tirelessly to ensure the success of the summit. Thanks Joyce!

In August, Safe Place volunteers manned a booth at the National Night Out at the Hagerstown Fairgrounds. At the Convoy of Hope celebration, so many people came by the booth that we ran out of everything! Safe Place was also at the Hagerstown Hispanic Festival and the Teens Have Choice event at the Mall. A big ole thanks to everyone who helped at each event. Very special thanks to Carrie Aaron for helping during the Convoy of Hope. Carrie tied so many balloons that day – well let's just say she hasn't been able to look at another balloon since!

Safe Place benefited from a marathon golf tournament at Fountainhead Country Club. The golf pros there played till they dropped – raising over \$3K for Safe Place. During Greencastle Days, Incognito Tattoo Studios raised \$161.00 for us. If you see the golf pros over at Fountainhead or happen to be in Incognito, please don't forget to thank them for their generosity to Safe Place.



On behalf of the staff and team of Safe Place, I want to wish everyone a Happy Turkey Day. Be safe, and enjoy the time with family and friends.

~ By "Mooch" Mutchler
Program Manager, Safe Place



2011 ANNUAL REPORT

CONTINUED PROGRESS IN **our**
commitment
TO **community**
WASHINGTON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Watch for our FY'11 Annual Report to be released in November and posted on our website and Intranet.

REACTIVE ATTACHMENT DISORDER

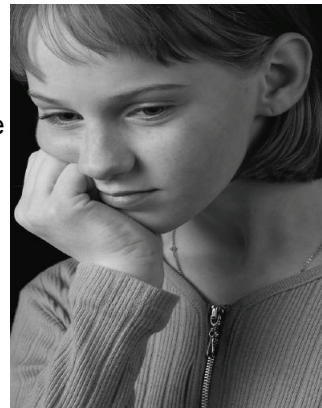
On September 30th and October 1st, the Foster Care Unit and the Washington County League of Foster and Adoptive Families hosted a training on Reactive Attachment Disorder at Hagerstown Community College. Jane E. Ryan, an adoptive mother of two children with Reactive Attachment Disorder, a therapist and author and screen writer, presented an interactive workshop where she shared her personal experience and knowledge of attachment issues in children. A total of 120 people attended. We were pleased with a large turnout of foster and adoptive parents, as well as attendees from the Department of Social Services (Washington and Frederick County), Board of Education (Washington and Frederick County), Head Start, Early Intervention, Department of Juvenile Services, Brook Lane, Stonebridge, The Mental Health Center, Cedar Ridge, as well as mental health providers in private practice. Jane Ryan has published two books; *The Boarder* and *Broken Spirits Lost Souls*. The movie, *The Boarder*, is in post production and is expected to be released in the next year.



Child Abuse and Family Violence Summit

On October 14, Safe Place, Washington County Child Advocacy Center sponsored the Child Abuse and Family Violence Summit at Hagerstown Community College (HCC). Over 140 people were expected to attend.

The summit topics included Child Exploitation Investigations, Physical Child Abuse Identification, Bite-mark Recognition, Investigating Child Sex Crimes, Interviewing Children with Disabilities, and Documentation Caveats. "We tried to have a summit that covered a really diverse range of child abuse maltreatment topics, and I think we accomplished that," said Safe Place Forensic Nurse Joyce Williams who also helped coordinate the summit. "You can never have enough training. It was really exciting to bring in such knowledgeable speakers. We were very fortunate" Safe Place Director James Mutchler said. Speakers included, Dr. Tanya Hinds, a specialist in pediatric medicine in Washington, DC; FBI Special Agent Mark Hilts, an expert in providing assistance to law enforcement agencies involved in the investigation of crimes against children; Dr. David Williams, who responded to the terrorist attack of United Flight 93 in Shanksville, PA on 9/11 and is an expert on bite mark identification; Dr. Susan Patton, who has done extensive research on developmental pediatrics and injury/violence prevention; Christine Carlson, Homeland Security Special Agent in Charge in Baltimore; and Alberta Cosner, a recognized leader in the field of forensic nursing.



Williams said bringing together so many people in the community that are on the frontlines of child maltreatment was a key component when she and Mutchler decided to plan the summit. "It was really a labor of love, getting the summit organized, and HCC was so supportive." Of course, the more training we have, the more prepared the professionals working in the field will be. "

Safe Place Child Advocacy Center serves the child victim and the non-offending family or care giver. The Center has served over 6,500 children in Washington County since its inception in 2001. "Child abuse can be prevented. However, it takes effort, knowledge, and the ability to recognize the signs that abuse can cause," Mutchler said. "Unfortunately, child abuse can happen in any home and we are always trying to do outreach so that families understand the telltale signs and seek help." "We are going to continue to do our best to better serve child victims of abuse. Getting different professionals together in one place to talk about our mission is one way we can continue to do that." Williams said.

The Safe Place, a multi-agency task force, provides a child-friendly environment committed to reducing the trauma to children who have been abused. Law enforcement officers, prosecutors, social workers, mental health and medical professionals collaborate to provide timely investigations and therapeutic interventions.

Family Investment New Intake Process

The "New Intake Process," more commonly known as NIP to the Family Investment Division, has been in effect since August 1, 2011. The revised intake process was created as an attempt to better manage the increasing number of applications and limited staffing. In August, 640 households applying for the food supplement program and temporary disability assistance program were interviewed. In September 637 were seen. The majority of customers were seen the same day they applied.

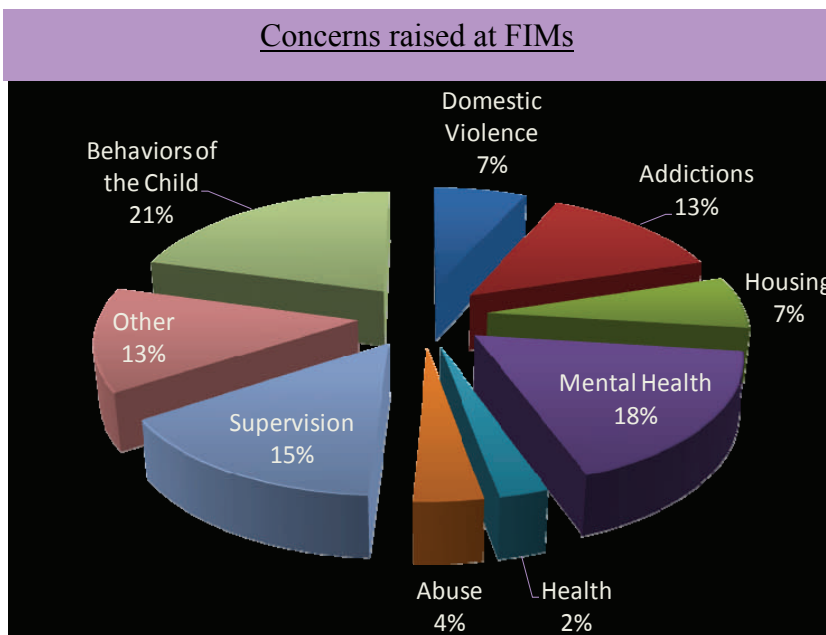
1,056 FIMS REGARDING 1,684 CHILDREN

On September 14, 2011, the Washington County Department of Social Services celebrated the success of Family Involvement Meetings since the implementation in July 2007. Between July 2007 and the end of June 2011, there were 1,056 FIMs regarding the safety, permanency and well-being of 1,684 children in Washington County. Persons who have been critical to the success of the program including staff, community partners, and foster parents were invited to celebrate the remarkable results.

During the celebration, several guest speakers addressed what FIMs have meant to them personally and to the professional benefits that they have witnessed. Melissa Bartles from the Washington County Health Department who attended the first FIM and continues to be a valuable team members, spoke of her belief in the process. She said that “it was an opportunity for everyone to come together and provide intervention to the family from the very beginning. Everyone at the table goes above and beyond to engage services for the family.”

David Bonebrake, from the court appointed Special Advocates and Mobile Crisis Program, described the role of the facilitator to that of “an air traffic controller” and “ring master.” Truly the ability to facilitate a quality meeting which allows for all participants to have input while keeping a summary page up-to-date takes a skill which few possess.

The last guest speaker was a current foster care youth. She stated that the Youth Transitional FIMs are her favorite because it is “all about her”. These FIMs are about the teen and planning for the teen. She spoke about the good and the bad, such as when her parent left the room. For this youth, it is important to her that people are listening to her and what she wants for her life.



It is true that without the contributions of our community partners, DSS leadership support of the program, and the case managers commitment to the process that the success of the program would be marginal. It is with gratitude that we salute the important contributions of every person who has attended a FIM. *by Tiffany Lowe*

Washington County Family Center and Sunshine Center Holds Open House

The Washington County Family Center and the Sunshine Center held an open house at their new locations at 221 McRand Court, Hagerstown, MD on Tuesday, October 4th. Present for the open house were Washington County Commissioners, members of the Washington County Board of Social Services, and representatives from many community partner agencies. Administered by WCDSS, the Washington County Family Center is an inter-agency program that helps young parents complete their education and find employment, while learning parenting skills. During their training, participants provide personal care for their children, newborns through age 4.

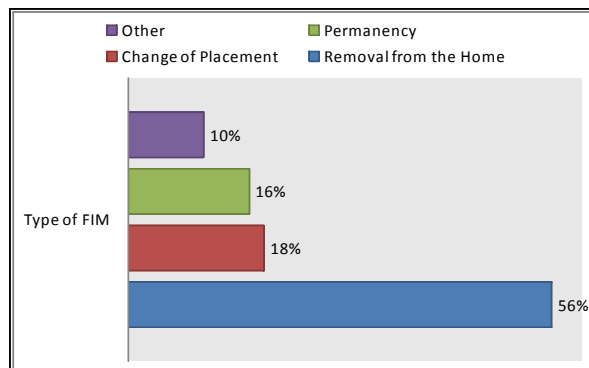
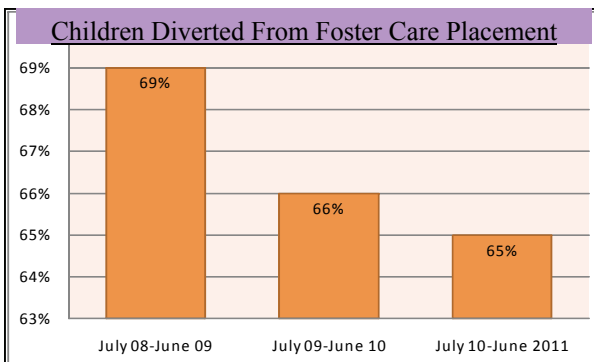
The Washington County Family Center is one of 22 Family Support centers located through the State of Maryland, sponsored by the Maryland Family Network. The Family center is a “one-stop shop” where participants receive services from the Washington County Public Schools, Health department, Hagerstown Community College, Department of Social Services, Community Action Council and many more. The new Center provides expanded, custom designed space that better accommodates program needs and client flow.

As part of the Family Center relocation, the Department initiated a creative new family visiting facility, the

Sunshine Center, to provide immediate, frequent, supervised visitations to families whose children are in the care and custody of the Department.

The Sunshine Center provides a supportive atmosphere to bring families together in a more traditional home-like setting. The Center is staffed with a visitation coach who helps parents develop specific visitation plans to address their children’s particular needs. The Department currently supervises 120 visits per month. It is anticipated that half of these will receive services at the Sunshine Center.

~ by Bruce Massey



Bester Community Cares Helps Overcome Obstacles in Families' Evening Routines

By Ligia Teodorovici , Kinship Navigator

After a rather short summer break, the students and families of Bester school district were happy to come together for another educational evening this past September. The Bester Community Cares (BCC) community group's theme was based on feedback received from families, who attended previous events and asked for help with various topics including homework organization, family chores and healthy eating. Transportation was once again provided through the Family Center. The evening began with a nutritious dinner that was served by the community partners and Bester staff. While 33 families dined, they heard about the upcoming plans for the new Bester school from the architect, and saw pictures of the school design. Kristi Bachtell, principal, had some other housekeeping tasks to get to before introducing the BCC program, which involved families moving through three pre-picked stations (they had 6 to choose from) and learning about ways to manage stress, keeping their teeth and bodies clean and healthy, and understanding ADHD. Community partners were also available to guide families through the hallways between the 20-minute station rotations.



Afterward, over 100 participants came back together in the cafeteria to share some of the things they learned throughout the night. Examples given from the participants were "you can get cavities from kissing", "carrots are roots", "and you can help clean your own

room when you're 5." Extra door prize tickets were given to all who shared something newly learned and there were several generous prizes given out to families, including board games from Kool Smiles, bright t-shirts from the Washington County Free Library, and a family pass to Family Recreation from Maryland Coalition for Families among others. We had wonderful participation from our community partners who shared in facilitating the six stations, serving families dinner and being available to the families throughout the evening.

Community partners who actively participated in this event were from WCDSS, Wash. Co. Community Action Council, Potomac Case Management, Kool Smiles, Wash. Co. Free Library, MD Coalition for Families, C-Safe, Neighborhoods First, Citicorp Family Services, Latina Comunidad, The Judy Center, The Safe Place, The Family Center, University of Maryland Extension, NAPA (Nutrition and Physical Activity Coalition), and of course many staff from Bester Elementary School. If you are interested in joining the community collaboration, please contact **Ligia Teodorovici at 240-420-2128** or lteodor@dhr.state.md.us for more information about how you can help serve the Bester families at our next community event.