

**December 2005  
Happy Holidays!**

## **You're Invited to the IL Statewide Meeting**

**The Independent Living/SWAN Winter Statewide Meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 24, and Wednesday, January 25, 2006 at the Penn Stater Conference Center and Hotel** in State College. During the two day meeting, you will be able to gather information to help you in your work and have the opportunity to network with your IL and SWAN colleagues from around the state. Some sessions of note include:

"Thirty years and counting: Reflections on facilitating permanency for youth in foster care" is the opening keynote session. Dr. Gerald Mallon, Executive Director of the National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning at Hunter College will offer his expertise and suggestions for making permanent connections to help youth in transition. Dr. Mallon will also present a workshop later that afternoon.

Eleanor Bush, Legal Services training specialist for the SWAN prime contract, and Anne Marie Lancour, director of state programs for the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, will present a workshop on "Kinship Care – Legal Foundation and Implications." They will help the audience explore how kinship care options fit within the legal hierarchy of permanency planning goals, identify strategies to ensure that kinship care resources are identified, located and considered at the earliest possible opportunity, as well as explore applicable laws that may affect initial dependency hearings and permanency hearings.

Another highlight for IL workers is a panel which addresses educational supports for IL youth in high school and college. "Education Connections for Older Youth" will feature: Janet Stocco, a staff attorney and Skadden Fellow from the Educational Law Center in Philadelphia; Don Shade, north-central regional director at the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA); , Paula Plageman, assistant director of the ACT 101 program at Kutztown University; Joan Kester, statewide transition specialist at the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation; and Christine Miranda, IL youth and a junior at Kutztown University. Steve Eidson from the IL Project at the University of Pittsburgh and the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program will be the moderator.

Registration and meeting information is available from [www.diakon-swan.org](http://www.diakon-swan.org).

We hope that you will plan to attend. See you in January!

## **Seeking Youth Interns**

The Independent Living Project at the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program is currently seeking two college-age youth who are or were in substitute care to serve as part-time consultants to our organization. The purpose of CWTP offering student internship positions is to incorporate a youth perspective into the training and technical assistance we provide to local children and youth agencies. We are excited about this youth engagement effort, and how these interns can further youth advocacy efforts in Pennsylvania. Please view the intern position posting and refer youth who may be interested in such an opportunity and who live or study in the Harrisburg or surrounding areas. <http://www.ilp.pitt.edu/trainingefforts.htm>



## IL Spotlight: Independence 101 Housing Program

### Montgomery County – Independence 101 Housing Program

On November 15, 2005, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Montgomery County honored the founding partners of the Independence 101 Housing Program with Dream Maker Awards for their leadership and commitment to foster care youth as a part of a broad-based community partnership. The following agencies received Dream Maker Awards: Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Development; Montgomery County Office of Behavioral Health; Montgomery County Office of Children and Youth; Montgomery County Housing Authority; Montgomery County Office of Aging and Adult Services; Montgomery County Office of Human Services and Montgomery County Office of Economic and Workforce Development. Jenny Pokempner, staff attorney at the Juvenile Law Center and Sandie Ritter, the IL coordinator at Montgomery County CYS also received awards.

In order to prevent homelessness among foster care youth and provide them the support services and housing necessary to become self-sufficient adults, Big Brothers Big Sisters created the Independence 101 Housing Program in partnership with the Dream Maker Award recipients. The Independence 101 Housing Program is an innovative program designed to prevent homelessness and provide housing options for youth “aging out” of foster care. All of the young adults ages 18-24 that participate in the program receive individual case management services and are eligible to be matched with mentors from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Montgomery County. Program participants also receive tenant based rental assistance from the Montgomery County Housing Authority, which subsidizes a substantial portion of their housing costs. Each young adult signs his/her lease and finds an apartment that meets his/her needs in Montgomery County. Security deposits and start-up costs are covered by the program. Program participants also receive case management, mentoring and workshops to help them through the process of finding an apartment, understanding a lease, learning daily living skills, budgeting, and everything that is needed to manage a household.

The Independence 101 Housing Program recognizes the importance of education and employment as critical pieces of any transition to adulthood and self-sufficiency. Program participants are enrolled in educational classes – whether they are seeking their GED or looking at college or a trade school. The case manager also provides support in finding employment, interviewing, resume preparation and maintaining a job. Through a great working relationship with the Office of Mental Health Mental Retardation, program participants also receive counseling services in order to help them through their transition.

Two young adults enrolled in the Independence 101 Housing Program, Nicole Childs of Willow Grove, and Tykeia Pew of Pottstown shared their life stories and the positive impacts and influences they received as members of the Independence 101 Housing Program.

Nicole Childs is eighteen years old and currently a freshman at Montgomery County Community College where she also works in the Admissions Office. She transitioned from Big Brothers Big Sisters’ regular Independent Living Program in June and entered the Independence 101 Housing Program. Nicole was in foster care since she was twelve years old and stressed the importance of a long lasting relationship, “My OCY worker has done a great deal for me. I was blessed with a worker who stayed with me for six and one half years...” The Montgomery County Office of Children and Youth was able to extend Nicole’s placement in foster care past eighteen in order to provide stability for her until signing the lease and entering her first apartment in November 2005. Since entering the Independence 101 Housing Program, Nicole has learned many necessary skills and received the opportunity to practice those skills in real life. Nicole cites an example of this realization of the skills needed in the real world, “With being a full time student, working at least twenty hours a week, having to take a two hour bus ride to and from school, and

appointments with my case manager, I realized quickly how organized I needed to be with not only my time but with myself.”

Tykeia Pew is twenty years old and will be starting her sophomore year at Montgomery County Community College in the spring. She currently works full time as a receptionist for a local company. Tykeia was placed in foster care at seventeen when her mother passed away. She explains her feelings at the time, “My mom was my best friend and sister. When she left I was lost.” Tykeia signed herself out of care at eighteen and started receiving Aftercare Independent Living Services from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Montgomery County. After bouncing around between different friends’ houses and members of her church, Tykeia enrolled in the Independence 101 Housing Program and moved into her own apartment in May 2005. Since moving in her apartment and working with her case manager, Tykeia has learned the valuable skill of budgeting. “I never realized how hard budgeting could be. At times it seems like basic training in the Army would be easier. You never know how much money you throw away until you document all of your transactions.”

For more information about the Independence 101 Housing Program please contact Justin Lee at 610-277-2200 or [jlee@bbbsmontcopa.org](mailto:jlee@bbbsmontcopa.org).



Nicole and Tykeia  
Independence 101 Housing Program Participants

## Youth Advisory Board Activities

### Youth Present at the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program (CWTP)

Four Youth Advisory Board (YAB) members and two IL county staff were part of a workshop on Monday, 5 December 2005 at the CWTP offices in Mechanicsburg. Michael Rascoe and Brent Snyder from York County were joined by Alyshea Santos and Jamie Shutz, youth from Adams County, as well as Leasia Ayers-Caswell and Teresa Polvinale from Adams County CYS/IL to help Todd Lloyd work with the CWTP staff and lead small group discussions in how CWTP staff can use youth in developing projects and evaluating products for the Child Welfare Training Program.

## **Regional and Statewide Youth Advisory Board Contacts:**

If you would like information about Youth Advisory Board activities and events in your area, please contact the regional coordinator below:

North East—Elaine Altoe (570) 826.8710  
North East—Lori Habermehl (610) 317.0721  
South East—Jodi Doyle (215) 348.4071  
South East—Allison Moore (215) 574.9194  
North Central—Kate Dotts (814) 234.2632  
South Central—Leasia Ayers Caswell (717) 337.1127  
North West—Candy Walter-Bowser (814) 226.9280  
South West—Regina Dennis-Walker (412) 243.2900  
State—Valley Youth House (610) 317.0721

## **Should Foster Youth Have Rights?**

Should foster youth have rights that are legislated? This was the question posed at a recent public hearing at the State Capitol on House Bill 511. State Representative Phyllis Mundy, an author and advocate of the bill, spoke strongly at the hearing about the needs of foster youth and how more must be done to ensure that youth in care receive equitable treatment, quality services and necessary supports.

Powerful testimony was given at the hearing by the Pennsylvania State Youth Advisory Board. It was clear that the members of the Children and Youth house committee were very interested in what the three youth advisory board members had to share. The house committee members continued to refer back to the testimony of the youth throughout the two and a half hour hearing. It was clear the testimony of the youth was respected, and it provided further justification for the areas addressed in the proposed bill.

When one reads house bill 511 as it currently stands they may come away with the impression that the content of the bill should not need to be made law. The rights that it suggests are those basic living allowances that we would expect to be part of any good home. The right to good care, education, healthcare...the right to a trained and qualified foster parent, to remain in care while continuing education, family visitation, etc. However, few would deny that there are some foster homes and substitute care settings where these standards of care are not upheld.

Some of the other groups who provided testimony at the hearing included the Department of Public Welfare, Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators, Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth and Family Services, Pennsylvania State Foster Parent Association, and the Juvenile Law Center of Philadelphia. Everyone who provided testimony supported the bill in some form, and all pledged themselves in refining the bill in hopes of its passing.

This public hearing was a positive example of our government in action. It was exciting to see private institutions, community members, those who would be helped by this legislation and government in the same forum. The discussion that resulted invoked a sense of hope that more could and would be done to improve foster care, and those around the table all seemed committed to that end.

The foster youth of the State Youth Advisory Board did an excellent job in testifying at the hearing. It was a tremendous opportunity for the board to take its message to a level where sweeping change is possible. The Youth Advisory Board will continue to be involved, along with other groups, over the next several months as this proposed bill is further refined.

## Statewide YAB Meeting

The next meeting of the Statewide YAB is Friday, February 10, 2006 at the CWTP in Mechanicsburg. The time of the meeting is from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. For more information, please contact Bill Motsavage at [billmots@valleyyouthhouse.org](mailto:billmots@valleyyouthhouse.org).

## Destination Future:

In late August, Candy Walter-Bowser, the IL coordinator in Clarion County and one of the county's IL youth went to Destination Future 2005 in New Mexico. Here is the impression from the youth who attended.

### **“CREATING POSSIBILITIES: *Now and Tomorrow*” Destination Future 2005 in Glorieta, New Mexico** -- by Kenny Wurster, Youth Leader, Clarion County Independent Living Program

On August 25, 2005, we headed for New Mexico as representatives from Pennsylvania at the national youth leadership conference better known as Destination Future. Unsure of what lay before us, my coordinator and I traveled by car and airplane to a center far from home. Some of the representatives arrived on Thursday and more came on Friday to show support and interest in what possibilities were available for youth in our great country.

We discovered that those from big and small states were extremely similar. Issues affecting youth in Clarion, PA are not too different from new acquaintances from Honolulu. There were staff and youth from 25 states represented at Destination Future and the four-day conference was a great opportunity to meet and hear from some dynamic individuals.

One of the highlights for me was hearing from former foster youth from across the country, who are better known as Foster Club All-Stars. Ranging in age from 18 to 24, these youth were selected by application and shared their expertise in multiple areas to demonstrate that there are success stories in foster care.

During the conference sessions, one project I found to be exciting was *Project Pinwheel*. During their presentation, the group explained how they enlightened their community about the number of children in the foster care system and how the community could help make better homes with permanency as a goal for youth. “Awareness and accurate information can make all the difference in a project of this magnitude” according to one of the presenters. When I talked about their presentation during Independent Living (IL) group, the idea has sparked interest for us to do a similar program or demonstration in Clarion County.

One of the keynote speakers we enjoyed was involved in IL in the state of New York and during her presentation, she talked about all that she did to utilize the resources offered to her by the IL program. Her name is Daniella Rin Hover. She was part of a documentary which was done by PBS called *Aging Out*, in it she shared some life experiences and how the IL piece in her support network has driven her to give back to the system. She is presently continuing her college education and working with public policy groups in Washington, DC.

We were entertained and inspired by a group of youth from San Diego better known as *Elevate*. This dance group is made up of youth ages 14 to 18 who have an interest in dance and peer education. After the initial performance, we attended a small group presentation and spoke with the group. When given the opportunity to speak with others in this state, I have a DVD of the group's performances to share.

Destination Future was definitely a worthwhile life experience that we as participants will not soon forget. Thank you for selecting us to attend and giving us the chance to represent Pennsylvania.



**Kenny Wurster and Candy Walter-Bowser at Destination Future 2005.**

## **Requesting Your Help**

### **Independent Living Project Website**

We are continually updating our website to make its contents useful for IL staff across Pennsylvania. However, it is time that we gave our site an overall face lift, and provide additional resources on the site for your use. One example of what we hope to develop is a page dedicated to best practices among IL programs ~ so if you are interested in program development in the area of transitional housing, mentoring, etc., you can view examples of programs in Pennsylvania that excel in those areas. This resource page will provide an opportunity to share with everyone the best practices that we encounter through the county independent living program review process. Over the next several months we will be developing these new web resources, but in the meantime continue to utilize our current website. We also want to note that you can feel free to send us resources that you believe might be useful to profile on the website.

### **Juvenile Law Center Resource Project**

The IL Project is assisting the Juvenile Law Center (JLC) in collecting resource information from each county. The JLC will take your information and add it to information that they are writing for foster youth manuals. The hope is to have a published resource manual or foster youth handbook available to older youth in care that has specific information regarding the region of the state in which they reside.

You may have sent resource information to us as part of the grant application process. However, we'd encourage you to send us your most recent resource information that would be important for youth in your county to have as they transition from care. We're looking for your county or regional directory that includes: employment, health, dental, mental health, education, prevention, housing, mentoring, parenting, childcare, government offices, food assistance, insurance programs, legal assistance, etc. Please send directory information to Ann Molsky at the IL Project by mail or by e-mail ([akm9@pitt.edu](mailto:akm9@pitt.edu).) Thanks for your help with this project to serve youth.

## Working with Youth in Transition

### SAT and College Application Fee Waiver Requests

The Independent Living Project provides fee waivers for the SAT for juniors and seniors as well as fee waiver requests for college admission applications. Youth must be registered in PILOTS to qualify for the waivers. Forms are available from Ann Molsky at the Independent Living Project. Contact her at [akm9@pitt.edu](mailto:akm9@pitt.edu) or 717.795.9048, ext. 231.

### Pennsylvania Chafee Education and Training Grants

If you have youth who are starting college in January 2006 or who plan to enroll in college or post-secondary training prior to next fall, they should be directed to the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency website. ([www.pheaa.org](http://www.pheaa.org)) Students are encouraged to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the Chafee Education and Training Grant (ETG) applications found at the website. FAFSA and ETG applications are considered all year long; there are no cut-off dates. Youth should only apply once per academic year.

### IL Services Guidelines Bulletin

The D-R-A-F-T of the Independent Living (IL) Services Guidelines bulletin is now available to the IL community. If you did not receive a draft bulletin or comment form and you would like to receive a copy, please contact Ann Molsky at [akm9@pitt.edu](mailto:akm9@pitt.edu).

The purpose of this bulletin is to transmit guidelines and requirements for the successful development and implementation of IL services through children and youth social service agencies. This bulletin is meant to work in conjunction with the annual funding bulletin, which allows counties the opportunity to apply for Chafee Independent Living Grant Funds. This bulletin does not make the current 05-06 IL Grant Application Guidelines obsolete.

All comments, suggested changes, additions or deletions should be recorded on the attached comment form and should include the section heading and page number. Copies of the form can be made as necessary to record all comments. When filling out this form electronically, add additional pages as needed. Please submit the comment form only. Do not submit the bulletin with changes. Written comments are due Tuesday, January 17, 2006.

The Office of Children, Youth and Families also invites you to participate in a meeting on Friday, January 27, 2006, 10AM to 2PM to discuss the DRAFT IL Services Guidelines Bulletin and major content areas. This meeting will be held at the Child Welfare Training Program office in Mechanicsburg.

Please submit the comment form to Angelo Santore by close of business, Tuesday, January 17, 2006. Information on where to send the comment form can be found on the top of the first page of the comment form.

Please submit your RSVP for the meeting by January 23, 2006. RSVP information may be emailed to Susan Miller at [smiller@state.pa.us](mailto:smiller@state.pa.us).

### College Goal Sunday

Many states are participating in College Goal Sunday to help low-income and underrepresented minority students apply for financial aid. College Goal Sunday brings together financial aid administrators and other professionals who work in college access programs with students and families at sites around the country to complete the FAFSA form, line by line. Get the info for Pennsylvania at <http://www.collegegoalsundayusa.org>.

## People in the News

**Matt Wood** is the new IL Coordinator in Lycoming County.

**Lisa Buratty-Kaltenbaugh** in Somerset County had a baby boy on August 18. His name is Cayden Stephen and Mom, Dad and baby are doing well.

**Marianne Lillibridge** is the new IL coordinator at Cray Youth and Family Services in Lawrence County. She replaces **Allisyn Slopek** who is a training coordinator for the Bair Foundation.

**Kerry Ostergard** joined the staff at Warren County Human Services this fall as the IL coordinator and **Toni Williams** is the new IL supervisor.

**Sandra Benko-Pernell** is back with Somerset County IL and works as the education specialist.

**Sara Sichi** left IL at Try-Again to work in the YAIL program in Washington County.

**Andrea Caulfield**, the aftercare coordinator for Schuylkill County Children and Youth, accepted a position as a licensed social worker at a local school district, Mahanoy Area, and is working with youth in grades K-12.

**Sarah Sherwood** and **Phil Newcomb** from the IL program in York County have recently taken new positions. Sarah is going to PA Mentor and Phil is on staff at the Milton Hershey School

**Patricia Novicke-Schwoebel** is the new trainer for Trehab in Susquehanna, Wayne and Wyoming counties.

**Patrick Doherty** and **Ashley Jones** have joined the IL staff at Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Montgomery County.

**CONGRATULATIONS and BEST WISHES, EVERYONE!**

If you have news to share, please e-mail Steve Eidson for inclusion in the next UPDATE.

## IL Project Library: Materials that you can use

**“Aging Out”, a documentary...a tool for independent living programs**

Directed by Roger Weisberg and Vanessa Roth, [Aging Out](#) is a production of Public Policy Productions, and was nationally broadcasted on PBS this past May. This production was developed in partnership with the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Casey Family Programs. (Go to [www.pbs.org/wnet/agingout](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/agingout) for clips of the film.)

The film follows young people as they exit foster care and become parents, battle drug addiction, face homelessness, and even end up in jail. Despite their struggles, the film also shows these teenagers using the resiliency they developed during their years "in the system" to take control of their lives. It also forces us to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the public systems that serve these youth, as well as the roles that private citizens and organizations can play.

The Independent Living Project has purchased this documentary for educational purposes. It is available to agencies as a resource in our library. Please call Ann Molsky at 717.795.9048 if you'd like to borrow a copy for use with your youth.

In addition, you can listen to the stories of one of the youth profiled in the film through National Public Radio at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4662990>

## Professional Development Opportunities

### **New IL Worker Training: Under Construction.**

The IL Project at the Child Welfare Training Program has received approval to offer new IL worker training and orientation. The curriculum is currently under development and should be rolled out in spring 2006. If you would find this useful for yourself or colleagues, please let us know at the IL Project so that you can receive information.

### **Online Tutorial with Free CEUs for Child Welfare Professionals**

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) offers "Understanding Substance Use Disorders, Treatment and Family Recovery: A Guide for Child Welfare Professionals." The course is approved by the National Association of Social Workers for four Continuing Education Units (CEUs). <http://www.ncsacw.samhsa.gov/tutorials/>

## Meetings and Conferences

### **OJJDP Videoconference Focuses on Youth Gangs**

On January 11, 2006, at 11 a.m. ET, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) will air the 2-hour videoconference "Communities Respond to Youth Gangs in America."

The videoconference program, which may be viewed via satellite downlink or on the Internet, will feature community programs and strategies that effectively address the problem of youth gangs. It will explore strategies to leverage resources, provide examples of partnerships across disciplines, highlight innovative strategies, and share information on faith-based responses and neighborhood efforts. To access further information and register online, visit <http://www.trc.eku.edu/jj>.

### **Symposium on Law and Adolescence**

Co-Sponsored by the Law Review of the Temple University Beasley School of Law and Juvenile Law Center, March 17-18, 2006 in honor of the Juvenile Law Center's 30th anniversary, the symposium will examine society's treatment of state-involved adolescent youth (i.e., youth involved in the child welfare, juvenile or criminal justice systems). More information is available at [www.jlc.org](http://www.jlc.org)

### **Celebrating Our Legacy**

The Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth and Family Services (PCCYFS) will hold its annual Spring Conference on March 28-30, 2006 at the Wyndham Harrisburg-Hershey Hotel. The theme for this event is *Celebrating Our Legacy*, which reflects the commitment and influence of children's services delivered through the private provider community in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the target audience includes clinical and program staff, supervisory/middle management, fiscal, human resource, marketing and development personnel and executive leadership. [http://www.pccyfs.org/2006\\_Spring\\_Conf.html](http://www.pccyfs.org/2006_Spring_Conf.html) -

## **Pathways to Adulthood 2006 Conference**

Don't miss the opportunity to network with your colleagues and find out what is new in the field of Independent and Transitional Living. The *Pathways to Adulthood* conference is scheduled for May 17-19, 2006 in Portland, OR. Participants at the conference will learn from stimulating keynote speakers, select from 55 workshops and hear the latest information from federal officials on IL/TL initiatives programs. Check: <http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/conferences.shtml> for updates.

## **Curricular Resources**

### **Toolkit for Parents on Early Development**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities have produced a toolkit to help parents learn about the milestones in their children's growth, from birth to age 5 years, as well as developmental delays and other disabilities. The "Learn the Signs. Act Early" campaign and toolkit are designed to help parents recognize any delays so that their children can be screened and receive early treatment, if necessary. Available in both English and Spanish, the toolkit includes an informational card on developmental milestones, a growth chart, and a series of fact sheets on milestones and developmental and behavioral delays. These materials can be downloaded from the website or ordered in bulk. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/actearly/>

### **It's My Life: Housing**

This book from Casey Family Programs provides useful information for child welfare professionals and others who work with youth transitioning to adulthood and independent living. It provides an abundance of Web links to online resources, practical strategies to help young people find, get, and keep housing, and developmentally appropriate strategies for adolescents to young adults. <http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/ItsMyLifeHousing.htm>

### **Supporting Foster Youth to Achieve Employment and Economic Self-Sufficiency**

This paper highlights the unique characteristics of the young people who age out of the foster care system each year. The framework for examining this population is being done within the context of Guideposts for Success, developed by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). These Guideposts identify a range of opportunities, supports, and services that all foster youth, including those with disabilities, need in order to transition from adolescence to productive adulthood and citizenship. <http://www.pccyfs.org/resources.htm#Foster%20Care>

### **Resiliency-Based Research and Adolescent Health Behaviors**

This paper from The Prevention Researcher discusses research on protective factors and resiliency that can lead youth to choose positive health behaviors and reduce their risk for negative outcomes. <http://www.tpronline.org/printerfriendly.cfm?articleID=150>