

**February 2006
Think Spring!**

Independent Living/SWAN Statewide

The Independent Living/SWAN Winter Statewide Meeting was 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, more than 400 participants were able to network with colleagues and attend some dynamic sessions.

“Thirty years and counting: Reflections on facilitating permanency for youth in foster care” was the opening keynote session. Dr. Gerald Mallon, Executive Director of the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at Hunter College in New York City offered his expertise and suggestions for making permanent connections to help youth in transition. Dr. Mallon urged attendees to advocate for all youth, whether in foster care, kinship care, preparing for adoption or at home, to receive Independent Living skills to foster self-sufficiency and prepare for adulthood. He also reiterated his belief that all youth also need permanency and life connections with at least one adult who is committed to them. During his presentation, he offered ways for IL staff and others present to help youth explore pathways to make a successful transition out of care and into adult life.

Tuesday afternoon, Dr. Mallon spoke on the subject of developing “A Framework and Measures for Youth Permanency.” In this session, he outlined steps that programs should take to make sure that youth get connected with adults and agencies which can help them make a successful transition to adult life. For more information about Dr. Mallon and the work that National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning does, you can access: www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp.

Another highlight for IL workers was a Wednesday morning panel which presented educational support options for IL and older youth in high school and college. “Education Connections for Older Youth” addressed ways that IL programs can access information and support systems for youth and featured: 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; Ryan Hyde, rehabilitation specialist at the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation; and Christina Miranda, IL youth and a junior at Kutztown University. Steve Eidson from the IL Project at the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work and the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program was the moderator.

Dr. Mallon (below); Christina Miranda and Paula Plageman



Youth Intern Joins IL Project

The Independent Living Project is pleased to bring the first of our student interns on board at the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program. Alyshea Santos from Adams County is currently a freshman at Harrisburg Area Community College. She will be working with IL Project staff and the various departments of the training program to improve the training and technical assistance efforts provided to county child welfare agencies and private providers of youth services.

Engaging youth is a critical component of ongoing Independent Living Program assessment and planning. In an effort to collect youth feedback from across the Commonwealth, the Independent Living Project staff will work in partnership with the student interns to interview youth who are or were involved in an Independent Living Program. These youth interviews will be conducted primarily through the county Independent Living Program review process. Such youth interviewing has occurred in some counties in the past, however, we have never utilized youth to collect this feedback. We hope to gain enhanced and relatively unbiased feedback from youth as we utilize older foster youth to interview other youth in care.

In addition to directly assisting the Independent Living Project, the student interns will also be involved with various local and statewide initiatives that are underway to better serve youth in transition. Another focus for the interns will be the statewide Youth Advisory Board, regional Youth Advisory Boards and the Pennsylvania IL Youth Retreat.

Please welcome Alyshea when you see her!

2006 IL Youth Retreat

The 2006 Pennsylvania IL Youth Retreat will be held from August 7th to August 11th at Penn State's Mont Alto campus. This year's theme is the "Eye of the Storm" and classroom sessions will focus on helping youth make successful transitions through training, preparation and planning.

In addition to the classroom sessions, activity sessions will feature a number of topics for participants. Kim Logan from Somerset County will once again offer "Fun Furniture;" Pete Exum is scheduled to teach his popular stained glass making workshop and Edwin Rivera is slated to return to teach his art class. Other activity session topics will be announced with registration materials.

John Foppe will return to the IL Retreat in 2006 as the banquet keynote speaker. John's inspirational and motivational message should captivate the audience.

Registration materials and staff/youth training information will be available later in the spring. Classroom facilitator and co-facilitator training on the retreat curriculum will be held at the CWTP in July. An informational training for staff will be held at the IL Summer Statewide Meeting in July. If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact Bill Motsavage, the retreat chair, at billmots@valleyyouthhouse.org.

Please **reserve August 7th-August 11th** and plan to attend the IL Retreat with your youth.

Youth Advisory Board Activities

Statewide Youth Advisory Board

The statewide Youth Advisory Board met at the Child Welfare Training Program offices in Mechanicsburg on Friday, February 10th.

Youth Advisory Board members talked about projects at the state and regional levels that are currently being developed such as the foster youth handbook and the website for foster youth in the state.

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

Requesting Your Help

Independent Living Project Website

We are continually updating our website www.ilp.pitt.edu 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 send us resources that you believe might be useful to profile on the website. Please send your resource ideas to Ann Molsky at akm9@pitt.edu.

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. We're seeking: 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.) 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 or 717.795.9048, ext. 231.

Pennsylvania Chafee Education and Training Grants

If you have youth who are starting college next fall, they should be directed to the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency website. (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. Information on the Chafee ETG can also be found on the Youth Advisory Board website at www.independentlivingpa.org or on the Independent Living Project website at www.ilp.pitt.edu Chafee ETG applications for 2006-2007 will be available April 1st.

Meetings and Conferences

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

IL/SWAN Spring Meetings

The IL/SWAN Spring Meeting schedule is now available. Registration materials and more information will be available soon on the www.diakon-swan.org website. Regional meetings will be held on:

- Thursday, March 30th at the Best Western East Mountain in Wilkes-Barre
- Thursday, April 6th at the Holiday Inn Harrisburg East
- Tuesday, April 11th at the Clarion Holiday Inn
- Wednesday, April 12th at the Radisson Hotel in Monroeville
- Wednesday, April 26th at the Fort Washington Holiday Inn
- Thursday, April 27th at the Embassy Suites Hotel Philadelphia Airport

Pathways to Adulthood 2006 Conference

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 and registration information.

Programs in the News: Achieving Independence Center

Mentoring at the AIC: by Cheryl Ransom-Garner who is commissioner of the Philadelphia Department of Human Services. From the Philadelphia Daily News (January 25, 2006)

Sometimes, all that confused and troubled young people want and need is someone who will listen to them and care about their problems. Traditionally, this important role is filled by parents, but in a world in which single-parent households are all too common and children are sometimes forced by economic and societal pressures to grow up too fast, young people are often left in need of positive adult influences in their lives.

It is for that reason that mentoring is so important and why so many more volunteers are needed. Common sense would indicate that a positive adult influence in a young person's life can have a considerable impact on helping children and youth choose the right paths. Recent scientific research supports what common sense has always told us. A recent research brief published by Child Trends and titled "Mentoring: A Promising Strategy for Youth Development," supports the notion that youth who participate in mentoring relationships experience many positive benefits, including:

- **Educational Achievement:** Mentored youth have better attendance; a better chance of going on to higher education; and better attitudes towards school
- **Health and Safety:** Mentoring appears to help prevent substance abuse and reduce some negative youth behaviors
- **Social and Emotional Development:** Mentoring promotes positive social attitudes and relationships. Mentored youth tend to trust their parents more and communicate better with them.

The AI Center is a resource for young men and women in foster care who are aging out of the system. For many of these young people, there is no family or support network awaiting them. The AI Center enables these young men and women to acquire basic life skills, employment training, job opportunities, and even a place to live. It provides them with guidance and a helping hand as they transition from adolescence to adulthood and a life of self-sufficiency. The staff members of the AI Center are caring and committed professionals who take great pride in helping young adults achieve independence and marketable career skills, but there is always a need for more help.

These young people are worthy of an investment of people's time and compassion. The rewards for mentoring are significantly more valuable and lasting than a paycheck. Mentors change lives.

AIC and PHEAA Partner for College-bound Youth

More than 100 Philadelphia youth aging out of foster care will be able to tour college campuses, as a result of a grant to the Achieving Independence Center (AIC) from the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA). The grant for \$4,400 will provide five trips, each for thirty students and their chaperones, to a number of local colleges including West Chester, Cheney, Lincoln, Lock Haven, Kutztown, Penn State, Millersville, Franklin Marshall and Thaddeus Stevens.

According to Evelyn Busby, Director of the AIC, the funding will be used to provide trips to college campuses for both foster youth who are graduating high school as well as those currently enrolled in community college. "Having the opportunity to tour college campuses and learn more about what colleges offer helps motivate students to continue their education.

IL-Related Resources

The Juvenile Law Center (JLC) recently published a new edition of its manual **Consent to Treatment and Confidentiality Provisions Affecting Minors in Pennsylvania**. If you would like a copy, please contact the JLC at www.jlc.org.

FYI3.com - Foster Youth Involved, Informed, Independent

Fyi3.com provides foster youth between ages 14 and 23 opportunities to become involved, informed and independent in their transitioning journey towards adulthood. The website is a partnership project between FosterClub.com and the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative.

As part of its National Teen Dating Violence Prevention Initiative, the American Bar Association (ABA) has developed an educational toolkit with funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). Key elements of the ABA toolkit may be downloaded at <http://www.abanet.org/unmet/toolkitmaterials.html>.

Making a Difference in the Lives of Youth

This new compendium from the National Collaboration for Youth identifies the types of high-quality youth programs being offered throughout the country and spells out the ways that these initiatives lead to positive outcomes for youth.

www.nassembly.org/nydic/programming/newideas/MakingADifferenceintheLivesofYouth.htm

Health Literacy Community Youth Mapping Video

Teams of youth in Pinellas County, Florida and Harlem, New York were trained as health literacy "mappers" to identify places and institutions within their community where citizens, educators and health professionals can go to get help with their health literacy needs. Learn more about this Institute of Medicine and Academy for Educational Development Community Youth Mapping project online. <http://www.iom.edu/CMS/28312/30065.aspx>

The **Children's Behavior Health Task Force** has identified a resource for education and mental health on the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) web site <http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/sma05-4068/EXSUM.asp>

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH IL PROJECT

Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program
403 East Winding Hill Road
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055
717.795.9048

TODD LLOYD , IL Unit Lead	Ext. 207 E-mail: tel11@pitt.edu
IDOTRESS JOSEPH , IL Specialist (East)	Ext. 218 E-mail: irj2@pitt.edu
STEPHEN EIDSON , IL Specialist (West)	814.598.2747 E-mail: see13@pitt.edu
ANN MOLSKY , IL Administrative Assistant	Ext. 231 E-mail: akm9@pitt.edu



ANGELO SANTORE, State IL Grant Coordinator asantore@state.pa.us
or 717.772.7012