

**November 2004
HAPPY THANKSGIVING!**

Independent Living Regional Meeting Wrap-up

State College and King of Prussia were the sites of the last two regional meetings held in October for Independent Living workers. As with the first two meetings held earlier in the month in Mars and Hazelton, the regional meetings featured colleague to colleague dialogue and sharing as well as an update from **Angelo Santore**, the IL state grant coordinator, about the Department of Public Welfare's Office of Children Youth and Families.

In State College, **Jennifer Pokempner** from the Juvenile Law Center continued the dialogue about transitional living housing for IL youth. Presenting with her on this topic were **Jennifer Hitz** from Stepping Stone in State College, **Billyann Bollock** and **Juliane Mendonca** from Tioga County and **Catherine Monk** from the Christian Home of Johnstown. **Jeff Holter**, the transition council coordinator from Intermediate Unit 10, and **Michelle Finn**, the IL caseworker from Lycoming County talked about the role of the Local Transition Coordinating Council (LTCC) and its benefits for independent living and transitional youth. **Candy Walter-Bowser**, the IL coordinator from Clarion County, led the service delivery segment by demonstrating how she uses games in teaching about the role of IL. Also speaking about service delivery were **Leon Kaple**, the IL coordinator from Potter County, who talked about cross-systems programs and **Stacy Rishel**, the therapeutic recreation manager at Cen-Clear Child Services, who spoke about using recreation in teaching life skills.

In King of Prussia, **Todd Lloyd**, the IL supervisor from York County, **Justin Lee**, the program manager from Big Brothers and Big Sisters in Montgomery County and **Bill Motsavage**, the director of Valley Youth House joined Jennifer Pokempner for a panel discussion about housing programs. **Janice Mazzitti** from the OVR office in York and Lancaster and **Linda Andrusis**, the transition coordinator from Chester County spoke about the Local Transition Coordinating Councils and their importance to securing proper services for youth in transition. Concluding the afternoon in King of Prussia were service delivery options and ideas from Todd Lloyd, Justin Lee, **Cleopatra Anderson-Wright** from DHS in Philadelphia and **Betsy Berger** from Chester County IL.

In all, nearly 150 Independent Living professional attended the four regional meetings. Thank you to all who presented and attended!

Destination Future 2004 Conference: Two Perspectives

In August 2004, two people from Mifflin County, **Shannon Knisely**, the IL coordinator and **Gina Moore**, an IL youth, attended the Destination Future Conference, which was held at the National 4-H Conference Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland through scholarships from the Independent Living Project. Here are their impressions:

Gina: "Overall, the conference was pretty cool. I really enjoyed the sight seeing in Washington, D.C. and the small group sessions, which gave us a chance to get to know some of the other youth and to make friends. The conference also made me realize that it is possible for youth to have some say in their case plans. I realize that communicating with your caseworker, foster parents, etc., is extremely important if you want to see some changes. I'd also give a huge thumbs up to the motivational speakers. They were very inspiring and helped me realize that even those who look perfect from the outside may be torn on the inside. It felt great to be able to connect with other foster youth. It was comforting to hear other youth's stories and the things they've been through. I'm thankful for my mother's support and what I have in life."



Shannon: "I recently assumed the position as Independent Living Coordinator for Mifflin County Children and Youth Services in Lewistown and had the opportunity to participate in the Destination Future 2004 Conference in Chevy Chase, MD from August 20-22. I had the pleasure of accompanying one youth from our county who is in the process of transitioning out of foster care. Overall, the conference was excellent! It was interesting to meet other chaperones and youth from across the country and to hear their stories. The motivational speakers and testimonials were very moving. I think they sent a message to the youth, making them realize that there are others out there who have been through just as much, if not more, growing up and that they are not alone. I was also impressed with the focus on youth advocacy throughout the conference. It gave the youth a chance to voice their opinions and concerns to a panel of experts directly involved with the child welfare system. I think this empowered the youth to believe they can make a difference and make changes in the system. There was a strong message to the youth be active participants in their case plans and IL programs when they are in foster care as well as when they transition out of care. I have to say that the entertainment was great too! The bus trip to Washington, D.C. was definitely a learning experience as well. It was the first time the youth that I chaperoned or I had used the Metro as a means of transportation. This was definitely a change, coming from a small county that is mostly rural and has no public transportation. This is definitely something I'm looking forward to attending in the future!"

Working with Youth in Transition

SAT and College Application Fee Waiver Requests for 2004-2005

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

Moving Youth from Risk to Opportunity

With the support of their families and communities, most young people make a safe passage to adulthood. But for several million young people -- especially those in public care -- the road to responsible adulthood is full of pitfalls. Resources like quality alternative schools, job training, counseling and financial assistance can give teens a fair shot at becoming good parents, good neighbors and good workers. The Kids Count project has put together a resource of promising programs and information on youth at risk. <http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/databook/guide.htm>

Puberty and the Onset of Substance Use and Abuse

Puberty seems to be an important factor in substance use, independent of age or grade level, researchers report. The odds of substance abuse are higher in mid-puberty and late puberty, and youngsters who mature early tend to have higher levels of substance use. Authors note the findings support prevention strategies and policies that focus on the early teens.

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/114/3/e300>

Well-Being in Early Adulthood: The Importance of Education

A new Child Trends research summary shows a strong connection between education and all aspects of success -- from employment and earnings to health, family formation and civic involvement. Moreover, the critical link between a college education and future economic success has actually grown in the last several decades

<http://www.childtrendsdatabankorg/PDF/Young%20Adults%20Brief.pdf>

Ending “Culture of Detachment” in Schools

Research shows that 40 to 60 percent of all U.S. students are chronically disengaged from school -- and these figures don't include those who've already dropped out. Research indicates that feeling connected, especially to caring adults, coupled with high academic standards and consistent policies can help keep teens on track and out of danger. In the September issue of the Journal of School Health, leaders in education and public health policy call for schools to strengthen connections to students. <http://www.jhsph.edu/wingspread>

Immigrant Youth: Special Needs and Opportunities

The number of children in immigrant families has grown rapidly in nearly every state across the country. According to the 2000 Census, 1 of every 5 children in the United States is an immigrant, or a child of immigrant parents. Children of immigrants often need special help to compensate for difficulties adjusting to American culture, parental education levels, lack of access to supports and programs due their families' citizenship status, and most importantly, inadequate English language skills. To ensure a brighter future not just for the children of immigrants themselves, but for our entire nation, we must provide the education and supports they need today to become America's productive, engaged citizens of tomorrow. Resources include:

"Children of Immigrant Families" journal: <http://www.futureofchildren.org/pubs>.

Información y Recursos en Español. The Education Trust offers information and resources for parents in Spanish. <http://www2.edtrust.org/EdTrust/spanish.html>.

Don't Touch That Dial...

How can you give illiterate or limited-English parents the information they need on children's health and development? Julieta Santana reports on how local radio fills a critical informational need in immigrant communities. This article originally appeared in the May-June 2004 issue of the Children's Advocate, published by Action Alliance for Children. <http://www.connectforkids.org>

People in the News

Chris Warner has accepted a new position and is no longer at BBBS of Montgomery County. His duties will be handled by **Christopher “Kit” Ramsdell**. Best wishes to Chris and Kit!

Lenore and **Trevor Wyant** became the proud parents of a baby boy, Foster Seton, on Tuesday, October 19th. Congratulations to the proud parents!

Deb Kissell from Bedford County is expecting and her baby is due on January 28, 2005. She is expecting a little boy - George Henry Kissell the 2nd. She will also finish her M.Ed. in May. Deb and her family have much to be thankful for in 2005!

Renee Kresge is the new IL coordinator at Youth Advocate Programs in Allentown. Welcome!

Billyann Bollock, the IL coordinator in Tioga County, has accepted a position at PENNDOT. Her last day was 12 November. Best wishes, Billyann!

Tina Semon in Indiana County is back on the job after medical leave. Glad that you're back!

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

Professional Development Opportunities



FOSTER PRIDE/ADOPT PRIDE

Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE is a competency-based, 14-step program for the recruitment, preparation, assessment and selection of prospective foster parents and adoptive parents. This special training opportunity will focus on: 1) the content and process of implementing the nine-session, 27-hour pre-service training program for prospective foster parents and adoptive parents (Part I); and 2) the process, techniques and work tools needed to complete mutual family assessments (Part II). The trainers will be Michael Polowy, M.Ed. (Part I), and Joanne Mathews, M.S.W. (Part II). This five-day training will be held on the following dates: December 8, 9 and 10, 2004, Conducting the PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE Group Preparation Program for Foster Parents and Adoptive Parents and December 13 and 14, 2004, Part II, Completing Mutual Family Assessments. Both workshops will be held at the Holiday Inn on the Hill at 415 New Jersey Avenue, N.W. in Washington, DC 20001. 202-638-1616. CWLA contacts: Naomi Goldman, at 617-769-4003, for registration information; and Maureen Leighton, at 617-769-4006, for content information. Registration deadline is November 24th.

2005 Child Welfare League of America Conferences: contact CWLA for more information.

January 5-7 -- Scottsdale, AZ, 2005 National Girls Initiative/Florence Crittenton Roundtable.
March 6-8 -- Arlington, VA, 2005 BACW National Conference: A New Covenant: Reengineering Systems of Care for African American Children
March 9-11 -- Washington, DC, CWLA National Conference: Crossing the Cultural Divide
May 2-4 -- New Orleans, 2005 Finding Better Ways Conference: Addressing the Mental Health Needs of Children, Youth, and Families
June 1-3 -- Miami, FL 2005 Juvenile Justice National Symposium: Joining Forces for Better Outcomes

"Youth Suicide Prevention: The Columbia TeenScreen® and Signs of Suicide (SOS) Programs" will be offered in four locations the week of November 29. This training is an introduction to these two programs in youth suicide prevention. For complete program information and a printable registration form: <http://pacassp.psych.psu.edu/docs/suicidebrochure.html>.

2005 Pennsylvania Independent Living Statewide Meeting, Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center, April 27-29.

2005 Pennsylvania Statewide Youth Retreat, Penn State Mont Alto, July 11-15.

2005 Communities of Practice Transition Conference, Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center, July 20-22.

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH IL PROJECT

2 MARKET PLAZA WAY; SUITE 102
MECHANICSBURG, PA 17055
717.795.9048

LENORE WYANT, IL Project Coordinator
IDOTRESS JOSEPH, IL Specialist (East)
STEPHEN EIDSON, IL Specialist (West)
ANN MOLSKY, IL Administrative Assistant

Ext: 207 E-mail: ldmoton@pitt.edu
Ext: 218 E-mail: irj2@pitt.edu
814.598.2747 E-mail: see13@pitt.edu
Ext: 231 E-mail: akm9@pitt.edu



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