

Mahoning Kids Matter



Mahoning County
Children Services

THE EXCLUSIVE PUBLICATION FOR STAFF, STAKEHOLDERS, DONORS & FRIENDS

SPRING 2021



**Report Child Abuse
Because Kids Can't**

Protecting Children, Preserving Families

Mahoning County
Children Services **REPORT LINE 24/7
330.941.8888**

INSIDE THIS EDITION

ABOUT US

Community Spotlight Award Winners Announced	2
Child Abuse Prevention Month Events.	3
Agency Names Diversity Inclusion Officer	4
Agency Staff Changes.	7

OUR COMMUNITY

Thank You Easter Bunny Donors	8
Former Youngstown Local Pens Book About Life in Foster Care. . .	9
Christmas Gifts for Kids Campaign	10

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[Website: Mahoningkids.com](http://Mahoningkids.com)



[Mahoning County Children Services @MahoningKids](https://www.facebook.com/MahoningKids)



[@MC Children Services @MahoningKids](https://twitter.com/MCChildrenServices)



Instagram: [mahoningkidz](https://www.instagram.com/mahoningkidz)

April is National Child Abuse PREVENTION Month

National Child Abuse Prevention Month raises awareness nationally and encourages families and communities to work together to learn how to prevent child abuse and neglect and why a vigilant community is the best defense to prevent and report suspected child abuse or neglect.

Child Abuse is a **national epidemic** in the United States. Approximately **1 in 7** children have experienced child abuse or neglect in the last year. Nationally, a child abuse report is made every **10** seconds. In Ohio, a child is abused and every **30** minutes.

It is important for the community to know the **Warning Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect** to better understand how to prevent it, what to do and how and where to report child abuse when observed or suspected.

[Click Here to Learn Warning Signs:](#)

Child Abuse Warning Signs

Do You
KNOW The
Signs??



2021 Community Spotlight Award Winners Announced

Each year, Mahoning County Children Services and the Child Advocacy Center at Akron Children's Hospital, Boardman, award a community organization(s) or individual(s) with the Community Spotlight Award at their annual "Pinwheels for Child Abuse Prevention" community/public event.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions on in-person events, the public event has been cancelled. However, the **Annual Community Spotlight Award** Recipients have been selected.

The **Annual Community Spotlight Award** recognizes community organizations or individuals who demonstrate generosity, commitment, and on-going community service to the Children of Mahoning County. Each organization is awarded with a signature "Blue Award." Blue is significant as it is the official color for Child Abuse PREVENTION.

Mahoning County Children Services and Akron Children's Hospital proudly announce **2021 Community Spotlight Award** is presented to:

Boardman High School Jazz Ensemble 2

Boardman High School Jazz Ensemble 2 has entertained audiences at the "Pinwheels for Prevention Community Event" nine out of the 14 years consecutive years. "We are so honored to be able to showcase and recognize the highly talented students from Boardman High School and their Music Director Tom Ruggieri," states Andrea Mistovich, Akron Children's Hospital. Mr. Ruggieri shows up hours before the event to set up the equipment and prepare for the students' arrival. The students play 3 to 4 times thought-out the event entertaining all those in attendance. We have always received numerous positive and comments raving about the Jazz Ensemble and their awesome and energetic performances. We are so grateful for the Jazz Ensemble, Mr. Ruggieri and Boardman High School Administration for allowing them to join us for the Pinwheels for Prevention Events.



Wanda Marland

"Wanda Marland is a cherished Donor and Friend to Mahoning County Children Services, states Jennifer T. Kollar, Mahoning County Children Services. "Since 2018, every month throughout the year, Wanda ensures that each child in Mahoning County Children Services Foster /Kinship Care Program receives a specially created Birthday Gift Bag on their birthday." Each Birthday Gift Bag is filled with a comfort blanket and other age-appropriate items or toys. The children and teens range in age from infant to 18 years of old. These are our County's most vulnerable and at-risk children who are in the Agency's protective custody due to child abuse and neglect. Wanda has created Birthday Gift Bags for hundreds of Mahoning County Children. As the number of children and families we serve on our caseloads continues to grow, so does the number of birthdays each month. In order for Wanda's Birthday Bag Program to continue to be successful and to keep up with increased demand, she needs to find others to help. A majority of Wanda's tremendous hard work, rather--labor of love—is done 'behind-the-scenes.' Wanda successfully obtains donors and donations, purchases items/materials/supplies, coordinates other interested donors, and ultimately creates and delivers the beautiful gift bags created with love!





Mahoning County
Children Services

April 2021

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

April 1-30th | All Month | Boardman Park
Visit Our Outdoor Pinwheel "Garden" Display



Each year, Pinwheel Garden Displays are planted in communities across the nation. The Pinwheel is the symbol of Child Abuse Prevention and represent individuals who advocated and took action on behalf of a child.

Wednesday | April 14th
Ohio Wears BLUE DAY |

Wear Blue is a statewide awareness campaign that takes place on the second Wednesday of every April for Child Abuse Prevention Month. Ohioans are encouraged to wear blue that day – to work, to school, to a community event to show support for preventing child abuse and neglect.



★ **Take a photo of yourself and your family, coworkers, friends, neighbors, fellow students, and others wearing Blue. Share the photo via email with us so we can post to our Facebook Page:**

[Jennifer.Kollar@jfs.ohio.gov/](mailto:Jennifer.Kollar@jfs.ohio.gov)



Mahoning County
Children Services

330-941-8888 www.mahoningkids.com

**Month-Long Awareness
Child Abuse PREVENTION
Campaign Launched**

In lieu of our Annual 'in-person' Community/Public "Pinwheels for Child Abuse Prevention" luncheon, Mahoning County Children Services and The Child Advocacy Center at Akron

Children's Hospital, Boardman have partnered with WKBN and WYTV to launch a Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Campaign. Tune to **WKBN/WYTV** and visit **WKBN.COM** through the month of April to learn more about "Child Abuse Warning Signs," "How to Report Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect" along with links to information and resources. <https://www.mahoningkids.com/news-media/>



Community Spotlight Award Winners

The Annual *Community Spotlight Award* recognizes community organizations or individuals who demonstrate generosity, commitment, and distinguished on-going community service to the Children of Mahoning County.

[Click Here for the Award Recipients.](#)

**Report Child Abuse
24-Hour REPORT LINE:**

Mahoning County:

330.941.8888

Ohio Report Line:

855-OH-CHILD

(855.642.4453)

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About Us

Mahoning Kids Matter | SPRING 2021



Walker-McCain Selected as Agency Diversity Equity & Inclusion Officer

Mahoning County Children Services proudly announces the selection of Nancy Walker-McCain as the Agency's first-ever Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer.

"The Agency has been planning for this position for over two years. This new position is key to implementing the Agency's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan which serves as the Agency's guide to how we view, assess, promote, measure and advance diversity, equity, and inclusion into virtually every aspect of our work," explains Randall B. Muth, J.D., Executive Director, Mahoning County Children Services.



The Diversity Equity & Inclusion (DE&I) position was created especially to further demonstrate Mahoning County Children Services' deep-rooted commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice issues.

"This new position reflects Mahoning County Children Services Board's on-going commitment to seamlessly implement diversity, equality, and inclusion into every area of the organization. This position will serve as the catalyst ensuring advancements in diversity, equity and inclusion are made as well as quantifiable and visible outcomes are attained," states Dr. Joseph L. Mosca, Chairman, Mahoning County Children Services Board.

In her new role, Walker-McCain will proactively lead the development and implementation of internal and external initiatives contained in the Agency's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan. See "Over-Arching Goals" below.

Background: Ms. Walker-McCain is currently pursuing a Doctorate. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Religious Studies from John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio, and two Master's Degrees in Business Administration from Point Park University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Community Counseling from Malone University, Canton, Ohio. Ms. Walker-McCain has extensive experience teaching Cultural Diversity, Gender Diversity, Women's Studies, Human Development, Case Management and Crisis Management. She has counseling experience and specializations with LGBTIQ+, Military/Veterans, State of Ohio Offenders and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Offenders, Developmentally Challenged Individuals, Child and Adolescents, Community Mental Health, Trauma Victims, Substance Abuse and

Marriage and Family. She has Organizational Development and Management with Local and State Government. She was a former Park and Recreation Commissioner for the City of Youngstown. She has also been involved with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She was one of the founding Board Members for the State of Ohio Multiethnic Advocates for Cultural Competence (MACC) Board and a represented Board Member for Northeast Ohio serving 2 terms with Ohio's National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Ms. Walker-McCain has been a Lecturer and Adjunct Professor since 2005. She has instructed future case managers, case workers, and social workers attending Eastern Gateway Community College, Youngstown State University, Kent State University, and Penn State University. She has been a resident of Mahoning County for over 27 years.

Over-Arching Goals for the Diversity & Inclusion Office

- Demonstrate the Agency's commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion both internally and externally;
- Develop and maintain a diverse workforce that is aligned with the racial and cultural composition of the population we serve by implementing a robust minority recruitment program and ensuring adherence to culturally competent practices in all aspects of hiring, promotion, labor relations, and employee evaluation processes;
- Ensure non-discriminatory practices by embedding diversity and inclusion protocols across all aspects of our policies, practices, organizational philosophy, data collection and evaluation mechanisms;
- Build and sustain a pathway for all persons to feel empowered, valued and respected;
- Improve the outcomes for all Mahoning County families by improving the Agency's ability to serve communities of color;
- MONITOR to ensure compliance with Civil Rights Act, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Programs and Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA)



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Q. How long have you been at the Agency?

VALERIE: 30 years and 4 months

Q. What is your degree in?

VALERIE: BA in Social Work

Q. Why did you want to become a 'social/caseworker?'

VALERIE: I always wanted to help children. I started my career at YSU as a teacher.

Q. What departments or roles have you served while at the Agency?

VALERIE: I was an Ongoing Worker in our Family Services Department for 18 years before transferring to Foster Care/Placement/Resource Dept in 2007 to 2017. I worked in the capacity as a licensing worker and a Lead Foster Care Worker. I always loved working with Foster Caregivers and saw myself working in that department in my later years. From 2017 to present, I am currently an Inquiry Caseworker and Foster Parent Liaison. My duties include completing the inquiry process of applicants through vetting process. After vetting, then applicants are invited to pre-service foster classes to become licensed through a 4-6 month process. I also work with recruiting events to recruit applicants to educate what it means and the qualifications to become a Foster Parent. I recruit [Foster Parents] everywhere I go. I hope to eventually go to the area churches especially Black Churches to recruit.

Q. What is the best part about working at Children Services?

VALERIE: My colleagues, the community and especially the children we serve and protect. I love meeting people and explaining in detail how to become a Foster Caregiver for our Agency. I love our Foster Caregivers. It is very difficult to foster and nurture children all to know they will be reunified. Research shows that children love their family no matter what. We do our best to reunify with family as much as possible. I also enjoy the adoption part to see a child get the family that every child deserves in this world.

Q. What's is the most challenging aspect working at Children Services?

VALERIE: Reunification is the goal! Infertile Parents. I would love to see more African American Recruitment and more African American Foster Caregivers. The division in the world is so intense it is hard to recruit but I never give up because all children deserve a home!!

Q. Is there a historical or current person you admire and why?

VALERIE: There are many! Harriet Tubman. She never lost a Passenger and she never gave up saving slaves and her family! Over 300 freed Slaves to the North including her family!

CELEBRATING today and everyday BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Staff Salute To:
VALERIE JOHNSON
CASEWORKER



Mahoning County
Children Services



Q. Is there a particular quote/movie/poem/ that motivates you?

VALERIE: "Love Covers A Multitude of Things!"

Q. When you're not working what do you do for fun?

VALERIE: I love to cook and I am enjoying my new home!!

Q. Family members?

VALERIE: I am married to my wonderful husband, James Johnson Jr. I have two sons, Aaron and Isaiah. Two grandsons, Alexander and Isaiah Jr.

Q. If you were stranded on a deserted island, what 2 things are a must have?

VALERIE: Well that is hard to answer. Potato chips would be one and my husband. I know he would figure a way to save us!

Q. What is one thing no one knows about you that you would like to share?

VALERIE: I have many stories to tell. If I can make you smile or laugh then that is good enough for me! I got married on my lunch hour in college-- impulsive would you say?!!

Q. Where do you see yourself in the next 3-5 years?

VALERIE: Retiring all to come back to work part-time in the capacity of training set up and inquiries.

Q. Anything else you would like to share?

VALERIE: This is really a loaded question. Each day strive to do what you can and accept things you cannot that are beyond your control. You at least tried and nothing beats a failure but a try. Lastly make sure your heart and mind are on one accord. Strive to make a difference in someone's life!!!

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About Us

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2020/2021 Executive Staff, Board, Advisory & Commissioners

ADMINISTRATIVE EXECUTIVE STAFF

Executive Director

Randall B. Muth, J.D.

Assistant Director

Rona Curtis

Intake Services Department

Bradley Smith, Program Administrator

Family Services Department

Julie Rudolph, Program Administrator

Placement Services Department

Anthony Paris, Program Administrator

Fiscal Officer

Denise Barnes-Carper

Human Resources Department

Susan Babinec, Manager

Information Technology Department

Joshua Cayson, Manager

Public Information Department

Jennifer T. Kollar, Public Information Officer

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Samuel Moffie

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Yvonne Wilson

MAHONING COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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Carol Rimedio Righetti

Anthony Traficanti



Agency HEALTH & SAFETY Committee News

New Staff Members Selected to Serve on Agency Health & Safety Committee

The Health & Safety Committee is announcing the selection of three new members:

Brittany Averhart, Lisa Carlini and Gwen O'Halloran. The new members replace **David Workley** and **Meghan Tarantino.**

Mahoning County Children Services Health and Safety Committee is dedicated to maintaining the safety and well-being of all Mahoning County Children Services Board (MCCSB) employees. The Committee has been focusing on COVID-19 Safety and plans for "Return to a Traditional Work Environment."

The Committee meets monthly to discuss and make recommendations to help improve the overall safety of staff, as well as the work environment of the Agency. If staff have a question or concern, contact a committee member:

Brittany Averhart

Cynthia Berend

Lisa Carlini

Rona Curtis

Marisa Litch

Gwen O'Halloran

Christine Powell

Kimberly Wilson

**Thank You David Workley & Meghan Tarantino
for serving on the Committee!**



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Current and previous Newsletter editions can be found on our website: <http://www.mahoningkids.com/news-media/>

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APRIL IS NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH



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About Us

Mahoning Kids Matter | SPRING 2021



Staff Changes & New Roles

Paula Libbey, Casework Supervisor transferred laterally from Intake Services to Family Services Supervisor.

Margaret Starghill, Caseworker and **Cailynn Campana** transferred under Paula Libbey, who assumed the Supervisory of the Family Visitation Department.

Elizabeth Schmid transferred from Family Services to serving as Training Officer.

Nicole Mrofchak, Caseworker and **Tina Cvetkovich, Family Peer Mentor, START Program** transferred under Elizabeth Schmid who will remain the Supervisor over the START (Sobriety, Treatment and Reducing Trauma Program).

Meghan Tarantino transferred from Training Officer to Independent Youth Living Services to Kinship Supervisor

Jeff Phillips transferred from the Independent Youth Living Services/Kinship Supervisor to an Intake Department Supervisor.

Terry Swadener, Caseworker Intake Department transferred to the Supervision of Jeff Phillips.

Renee Mayberry, Clerical Unit, transferred under the Supervision of **Denise Douglass, Casework Supervisor, Intake Department**

Morgan Earns Social Work Degree



Chantel Morgan began her career as a child advocate and working with children in 1999 as a behavior coach at Lincoln Place Residential Center. She worked as a

Team Leader, as well an Assistant Staff Trainer. She also worked at the Swanson Receiving (Group Homes). Chantel began her career at Mahoning County Children Services in 2004 serving as a Youth Leader at the Girls Child Care Center as a Unit Aide in the Family Service Department, and Intake Department. After working at the Agency for 16 years, she decided to go to school to work towards earning a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work. When the Agency decided to close the Group Homes, Chantel knew she still wanted to work for Children Services in the future and applied at YSU to major in Social Work so that I could become an asset to the Agency as well as the community that we serve. *Congratulations Chantel!*

CHILD PROTECTIVE/CHILDREN
SERVICES WORKERS

EVERYDAY HEROES

We Salute YOU!

Thank You for the tireless work you do EVERY DAY
PROTECTING CHILDREN & PRESERVING FAMILIES.



REPORT
Child
Abuse



OUR COMMUNITY

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Thank You Easter Bunnies!



Shepherd of the Valley Boardman



Emily Fagert

Special Thank You to All of Our
Easter Bunny Donors Who Helped
Make the Easter Holiday Brighter
for the Many Children We Serve!

Delta Kappa Gamma

Emily Fagert

Wanda Marland

Linda Romisher

Shepherd of the Valley Boardman

Daniel Wakefield



Delta Kappa Gamma

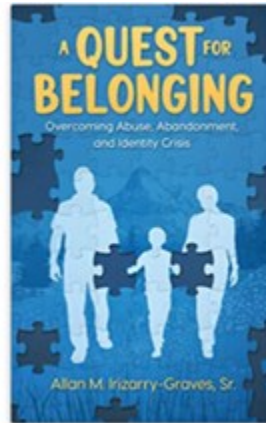


Author With Local Connections Debuts Book About Life in Foster Care

Have you ever felt out of place or that you didn't belong? If so, you're not alone? "We all have been there. I know I have," states Allan Irizarry Graves.

Irizarry Graves, a former Youngstown, Ohio native, was placed in Foster Care in Mahoning County at age 5 and remained in foster care until he was adopted at age 9.

His experience living in foster care was the reason why he wrote "A Quest for Belonging-Overcoming Abuse, Abandonment and Identity Crisis." Irizarry Graves' main objective when writing his book is to encourage other kids who are in the foster care system.



The book recently debuted on Amazon.com. It chronicles the author's journey of "figuring out who he is and where he belongs in life while battling and overcoming the long-term ramifications of drug-addicted parents, foster care, abuse, and identity. crisis. By the end of "A Quest for Belonging," readers will understand the power of knowing who you are and the importance of embracing the journey that got you to where you are in life."

Irizarry Graves currently resides in Little Rock, Arkansas. He is a Youth & College Pastor. He graduated from Youngstown Early College and Youngstown State University.

The 83-page book is available for purchase on amazon.com.

WE ARE THE FUTURE. WE NEED YOU NOW!

Become A Foster/Adoptive Parent



Mahoning County
Children Services
330-941-8888 www.mahoningkids.com



COVID Couldn't Stop Agency Gifts for Kids Holiday Campaign

Thank You!

A global pandemic didn't stop Mahoning County Children Services from making the Holidays a little brighter and joyous for hundreds of Mahoning County children thanks to the numerous and generous spirit of individuals, organizations, businesses and corporations who sponsor children, donate toys, new winter apparel, clothing and provide financial gifts. The gifts collected are given to children—including infants to 18-years-old—who receive case management services from Mahoning County Children Services. Often, the gifts donated by our generous donors are the **ONLY** gifts the children receive for the Holiday.



1



2



3



4



5

1. Over 150 coats were donated by **Lindsey Villanueva** and her team of Donors. Lindsey donates new coats every year for the Gifts for Kids Holiday Campaign.
2. Members of **Delta Kappa Gamma** retired teachers have been annual donors for the Gifts for Kids Holiday Campaign.
3. **Carol Geiss** poses with Finley the Fox. Carol donates Avon Signature Plush Animals every year.
4. **Reign Bruno & Jeffrey Martin** stopped by to drop off Christmas Gifts for Kids.
5. The Pop Up Christmas Room at the Agency showcases all of the donations of toys for the Gifts for Kids Holiday Campaign.