

# Joyful Connections Newsletter

## Message from... Karen Demangos, Executive Director

January 2010 marks the beginning of the second full year of operations for Joyful Connections. We opened our doors at the end of October 2008, and have been growing ever since that time.

Joyful Connections is the only supervised visitation agency in Ottawa County. We offer supervised visitations between children and parents or other parties in a safe, comfortable, neutral, home-like setting. We also offer supervised exchanges, the "drop-off and pick up" of children being exchanged between two estranged parties for the protection, comfort and ease of all involved.

In November and December 2008, Joyful Connections provided services to five families. Since that time we have served 50 families, which include 49 parents, six grandparents and 67 children. We schedule at least 19 visits per week. We receive our referrals from the Ottawa County courts, the Ottawa County Department of Job and Family Services (OCDJFS), and self referrals. We have also received referrals from the Sandusky County DJFS and the Lorain County Children Services Board. In addition to Ottawa County Residents, we have parents visiting from

Fremont, Sandusky and Michigan.

As we continue to grow, we continue to plan for the future of Joyful Connections. We hope to add services such as parenting education, and perhaps add one or two satellite offices to better serve the west and the east ends of the county.

We believe that children's lives are enhanced if they are able to maintain a relationship with both of their parents, even if that can only be done safely during supervised visitation. As you can see, we believe that children are the main focus. We are thankful that so many of the residents of Ottawa County share our belief.

## From the desk of... Corrine Creeden, Board Chair

The idea for Joyful Connections was conceived by Judge Bruce Winters in 2006 and brought to the forefront by the Leadership Ottawa County class of 2006 and 2007. The Board of Directors was established in July 2007, and the Executive Director was hired in July 2008. As a board, we have grown and developed, completing needed policies as well as a strategic plan.

In the beginning, the Board was able to acquire start-up and operational funding as a new agency from

grants offered through local and regional sources. We have also had overwhelming support from local churches, social organizations, businesses and individuals through donations of volunteer services, in-kind donations of toys, furniture, diapers, paper products, office supplies, etc, and monetary donations.

However, that is not where our story ends. After initial start-up and operational costs, many grant sources only wish to fund special projects for non-profit agencies

like Joyful Connections. Operational funding for rent, utilities, wages, insurance and various supplies is very difficult (or almost impossible) to obtain through traditional grant sources.

Our Annual Appeal is one way we can obtain funds for Joyful Connections that can be used for operational expenses; and therefore, help provide our ongoing services.

We believe our services are important for children and their families. We are forever in your debt, the citizens of Ottawa County, for all the support we



Volume 1, Issue 1

March 1, 2010

### Joyful Connections Mission Statement

\*\*\*\*\*

Joyful Connections provides a healthy, safe, and home-like environment where children can interact with family members in a non-judgmental setting.

#### Board Members:

Corrine Creeden, Chair  
Ron Nisch, Vice Chair  
Lori Opfer, Secretary  
Virginia Carr, Treasurer  
Wayne Biggert  
Steve Fish  
Sharon Hess  
Stephanie Kowal  
Steve Levorchick

#### Ex-Officio Members:

Judge Bruce Winters  
Judge Kathleen Giesler  
Commissioner James Sass

\*\*\*\*\*

receive from you. Please consider giving a gift, no matter how much!

Sincerely,  
Corrine Creeden, Chairperson of the Board

## ∞ ∞ Meet the Staff of Joyful Connections ∞ ∞

**Karen Demangos** was hired as the Executive Director for Joyful Connections in August of 2008. She has a Masters of Science in Social Administration and is a licensed independent social worker with over 30 combined years of experience with the state and local departments of Job and Family Services. As Executive Director, Karen is responsible for running the organization and ensures that quality services are provided to the clients of Joyful Connections.

Karen enjoys working with both the parents and the children. She says, "My greatest moments at Joyful Connections are when I see a child's face light up when they first see their father or mother come through the door for visitation."

"I enjoy working for Joyful Connections because I love interacting with all of the children and their families."

"My greatest moments at Joyful Connections are when I see a child's face light up when they first see their father or mother come through the door for visitation."

**Sheila Powell** joined Karen at Joyful Connections in June of 2009 as a Supervised Visitation Monitor. She was recently named Fiscal Operations Manager. As such, Sheila helps with fiscal duties, as well as monitoring exchanges and visitations. Sheila has over 20 years experience in the financial field.

Sheila states, "Joyful Connections is all about keeping the children safe, so they can see mom and dad. Most of the time, the children do not understand the issues that brought them to Joyful Connections. They just want to see mom and dad, and I love working for Joyful Connections because it allows the children to do just that."



Sheila, Karen and Amanda

**Amanda Clymer** was hired as a Supervised Visitation Monitor. She joined Joyful Connections in August of 2009. Prior to coming to Joyful Connections, Amanda was a STNA at Riverview Healthcare Campus. Being a mother herself, Amanda thoroughly enjoys playing with the children. She says, "I enjoy working for Joyful Connections because I love interacting with all of the children and their families."

\*\*\*\*\*

Staff members strive to make the children and the families it serves comfortable and welcome while visiting at Joyful Connections. They pride themselves on maintaining a non-judgmental and safe environment for the best interest of the children.

"Joyful Connections is all about keeping the children safe, so they can see mom and dad. Most of the time, the children do not understand the issues that brought them to Joyful Connections. They just want to see mom and dad, and I love working for Joyful Connections because it allows the children to do just that."

## We Are Looking for A Few Good Volunteers

One of the wonderful things that we have learned at Joyful Connections is how giving are the people of Ottawa County. At the present time, we have six dedicated volunteers who help keep our agency running.

Our volunteers monitor visitations and record their observations. Volunteers are not asked to intervene with families at anytime. At least two people, volunteers/staff members, are always present in the facility for all

visitations.

Each volunteer has an orientation/training before their first service at Joyful Connections. Then they "shadow" a staff member or a more experienced volunteer before they supervise a visitation on their own.

Joyful Connections is enormously blessed to have the extraordinary volunteers we have currently. They offer what a non-profit agency needs, their time and their commitment.

Moreover, they offer their love and compassion to the parents and children who need Joyful Connections.

If you would like to volunteer, please call Karen Demangos at 567-262-3181. We need you here!

**We need your help!**

**Please call Karen today!**

**567-262-3181**