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Our Family at Family & Community Services, Inc.

Holiday Donations Needed

Every year, **Kent Social Services** and the **Center of Hope** pack more than 1,200 Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner packages for families and individuals throughout Portage County. We are asking for donations of food and toys, as well as monetary donations, to help serve the growing numbers of those who need us.

What we need:

- Unwrapped new gifts for kids, such as toys, books, puzzles, crafts, movies, stuffed animals, dolls and gift cards
- Groceries: turkeys, canned fruits and vegetables, canned sweet potatoes and yams, canned pumpkin, potatoes, applesauce, cranberry sauce, muffin mix, soup, cake mix, Jell-O
- Gift cards to area grocery stores and department stores
- Tax-deductible monetary donations



2016 holiday volunteers wait for children at their toy station.

Thanksgiving boxes will be distributed on November 15 and 16. Christmas boxes will be distributed on December 13 and 14. Drop off toys, groceries and other donations at:

Kent Social Services, 1066 S. Water St., Kent, OH 44240 • **Center of Hope**, 1034 W. Main St., Ravenna, OH 44266

Family & Community Services, 705 Oakwood St., Ste #221, Ravenna, OH 44266

49th Annual Brunch Bunch

Join us on Thanksgiving morning, November 23, from 8 a.m. to noon for the **49th annual Brunch Bunch** at the Kent State University Hotel and Conference Center, 215 S. DePeyster St. in downtown Kent. The charity auction raises funds for Kent Social Services, the Center of Hope, Coleman Professional Services and the Ben Curtis Family Foundation. For a \$3 donation, attendees can enjoy endless coffee, cider and doughnuts while browsing items available for purchase. Free parking will be available at the Kent Central Gateway parking deck.

Monetary donations or items for the auction can be dropped off at:

Hall-Green Agency, 146 N. DePeyster St. in Kent

Portage Community Bank locations at 1311 E. Main St., Ravenna or 1532 S. Water St., Kent.

For more information, contact Michelle Hartman at 330-815-4315 or mhartman43@aol.com.



In Memoriam: Jim Aylward & Celeste Ziarko

We recently lost two members of our F&CS family: Jim Aylward and Celeste Ziarko.

We take this time to remember their lives and their impact on our community.



Jim, who practiced law in Ravenna and was Chief Magistrate of the Portage County Juvenile and Probate Courts for more than 20 years, joined F&CS as a volunteer and board member for more than two decades. He most recently served as president of the F&CS board, a position he held for many years.

Jim was drawn to F&CS because of the range and volume of services it provides to the community and was especially proud of the dedication of its staff members. A firm believer in giving back to his community, he shared his time and talents with a number of other local non-profits and service organizations. “He was a great friend, both personally and to our agency,” said Mark Frisone, executive director of F&CS.

Celeste was a staple in the F&CS family, spending 17 years as the Billing Coordinator and Office Manager of Family & Community Services, Inc. and Valley Counseling Services. She loved her family and husband of 20 years, Joe. She loved sewing, gardening, dogs and horses. Celeste was even a champion rider at the national level.

She will be remembered for her sense of humor and great strength. “She was one of those people that took her work quite seriously, but did so with a smile and a grace that few can match,” remembers Frisone.



The Impact of a Volunteer

Over 400 people work at the **Phyllis Zumkehr County Clothing Center** in Ravenna each month, a program overseen by one paid employee. “The volunteers are essential to the Clothing Center. We could not run it without so many dedicated volunteers!” explains Program Manager Candy Pollard. “The place would fold up and die without them.”

Candy relies on her faithful volunteers to sort donated items, maintain the center and welcome shoppers. Volunteer Fran Blair loves helping with the Special Shop and says, “The look on parents’ faces when they see the girls in their dresses is priceless. This is the only job I ever had that I look forward to coming in for.” Longtime volunteer Elsie Teets adds that “I enjoy every minute I am here.”

One person who has been blessed by the volunteers at the County Clothing Center is Tracy. She recently left an abusive relationship and has been living in a domestic violence shelter for about three months. She left with only the clothes on her back. She comes to the center at least once a week and is grateful that the volunteers allow her to choose whatever she needs. “I come here for clothing, dishes, pots and pans, whatever I need. It’s wonderful here.”

All of our programs rely on volunteers. If you’re interested in volunteering at the County Clothing Center or at any of our other programs, please call 330-297-7027 for more information.



Fran Blair and Elsie Teets, faithful volunteers at the County Clothing Center.

Combating Veteran Homelessness

F&CS is proud to serve those who have served us. As the largest veteran housing agency in Northeast Ohio, our programs reach over 500 people annually in Kent, Ravenna, Lorain, Youngstown, Akron and Warren.

Our newest project, **Operation Restoration**, opened in February. The project restored a historical house in Ravenna that was built in 1871 by a Civil War veteran. The house now has four apartments that local veterans will be able to live in with their rent covered.

Restoring this house is a project that brought the local community together. Over 120 volunteers donated over 800 hours of labor, and several local companies made in-kind donations. Ravenna American Legion Post 331 sponsored a majority of the work and local families sponsored each apartment in honor of a service member.

F&CS welcomed a new veteran program this year! **Summit County Veteran Family Services**, funded by the Department of Job and Family Services of Summit County, connects veteran families with housing and financial resources. Fifty veterans and their families were able to stay in their homes this year thanks to this program.

In 2011, mental and physical health problems brought local veteran Walter to **Freedom House**. “They were able to help guide me in the right direction to obtain stable housing and a regimen of proper medication,” says Walter. He is back on his feet and now even volunteers with Freedom House as an After Care Liaison. “It has been a true blessing in my life to serve my community and my fellow veterans.”



Student volunteers helping to restore the new house on West Riddle Avenue in Ravenna.

New Building, New Services

Family & Community Services is proud to partner with **AxessPointe**, the primary tenant of our expanded facility in downtown Kent. The full-service medical facility recently relocated to the Gougler Avenue site, following the completion of a \$3 million addition that tripled the size of the building. F&CS has owned the site since 2003 and continues to operate several programs there.

AxessPointe provides medical care and dental care and a pharmacy for medically underserved clients. “We have worked closely with AxessPointe as partners since their inception in Portage County,” said Mark Frisone, executive director of F&CS. “Many of those served by AxessPointe also benefit from our programs so working with them is a natural fit.”

The new facility opened in September, with a ribbon-cutting sponsored by the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to the Gougler Avenue expansion, two other F&CS programs have moved into new locations: **Mobile Meals** in Akron and **Valley Counseling**.



Mark Frisone, executive director of Family & Community Services, congratulates Chris Richardson, CEO of AxessPointe Community Health Centers, during a ribbon cutting at the downtown Kent facility. With them are Mayor Jerry Fiala, who presented a proclamation on behalf of the City of Kent, and Lori Wemhoff, executive director of the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce.

Learning the Basics through Basic Beginnings

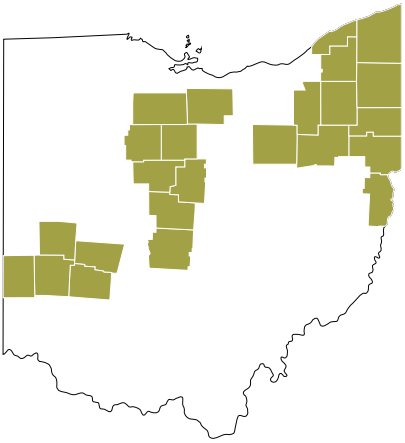
Everyone at **Skeels-Mathews Community Center** in Ravenna believes that it’s never too early to start learning. Through the new Basic Beginnings program, children ages three through five meet to complete fun activities in the five focus areas: group play, arts & crafts, handwriting, music & movement and storytime adventures. The kids grow their communications skills through these physical activities and begin to develop their reading and writing skills.

“This takes the pressure off the parents and makes sure that the kids are ready for the classroom.” explains Brittany Williams, the teacher for the program.



From left to right: Braxton, Mia, Brittany, Paige and Paiton

National Programs with a Local Impact



F&CS is now reaching even more people through our **Americorps** and **Senior Corps** programs! Through Americorps, volunteers partner with an area nonprofit to manage behind-the-scenes work. Through Senior Corps, adults aged 55 or better can help homebound adults through the Senior Companion Program, mentor children in schools through the Foster Grandparent program or support community needs through the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

This year, we received grants totaling \$344,686 to expand services to nine more counties. We now reach a total of 24 counties, and our expansion will allow us to reach tens of thousands more clients. Thank you to our community partners whose donations make it possible for us to go forth and do good!