

Street Team Program Offers New Connections

Circle C is thrilled to announce that it is the sole recipient of a contract with the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) for a new program designed to assist transition-aged youth get plugged into the resources and information they need to improve their quality of life. The new program is called "R U Connected?" -- reflecting its close association to "R U Ready?" - Circle C's existing independent living program for teens (16-18) still in foster care, and young adults (18-21) who have already "aged out" of the residential child care system. The name also underscores that the thrust of the program will be to better connect transition-aged youth with the many resources available to them in Allegheny County.

"R U Ready?" staff have been innovative in their methods of engaging teens and young adults - in building relationships, and in keeping them involved with activities designed to build their self-sufficiency. Since 2007, the program has helped more than 125 participants with issues of all sorts, providing many with education as-

sistance, job readiness, and employment searches, etc. Many of the participants struggle with basic life skills, lack family and social supports, and have very little faith in their abilities to succeed academically or vocationally. Often they have great difficulty connecting with resources they need to live with any degree of comfort and security.

"R U Connected" will extend this same spirit of innovation through the operation of "Street Teams" geared to attract transition-aged young people, and to introduce them to the resources that exist within the county. The program will employ one full-time Team Leader who will be pivotal in the recruitment and training of 10 Street Team members. Street Team members will be current or former foster youth who are chosen because of their own demonstrated efforts for self-improvement, and for their abilities to relate well to the teens and



young adults in the target population. They will be able to say "Been there, done that!" pointing out how they may both be able to use the resources they're learning about to build a foundation for a better future.

Other creative approaches will include providing potential participants with a colorful computer flash drive, loaded with a comprehensive list of the services and programs available in Allegheny County. The flash drive (*attached to a lanyard for safe-keeping*) can be plugged into a USB port of any available computer accessed at a library, community center, or school.

Participants will also receive instructions about how to access a specially-designed Facebook group for everyone associated with the "R U Connected?" program. The group will provide a forum for peer-to-peer contact, and will feature a calendar of activities sponsored by both the "R U Connected?" and the "R U Ready?" programs. Circle C's Director of Treatment Services, Jeanne Rieber, states "We're excited about extending the reach of our life skills services."

"R U Ready?" Kids - Staying Focused

By Becki Shucosky, "R U Ready?" Transition Specialist

Summer brought warm weather and plenty of opportunities for the youth of the "R U Ready?" Program. Not only have they continued to engage in monthly meetings to enhance life skills and attend summer group activities - including cookouts and an eventful day at Kennywood - but they have also worked part-time summer jobs funded through a generous federal grant. Youth had the chance to work with law firms, Phipps Conservatory, and on several landscaping projects in their communities. Several youth also attended the Allegheny County Retreat to New York City. There, they visited the Statue of Liberty, attended



Student re-finishing a chair at the IL Retreat at the University of Pittsburgh-Johnsontown campus.

a showing of the Lion King, appeared on TV with BET's 106 and Park, and also spent a day at Six Flags Great Adventure.

The Independent Living (IL) State Retreat to the University of Pittsburgh Johnstown campus allowed youth to meet peers from across the state. They participated in team building activities and also refinished their own piece of furniture to take home.

The R U Ready? family continues to grow with new referrals and is often recognized as having the most participation at county events. Staff and youth are excited to continue the momentum through the new school year.

This fall, a number of youth will continue their high school careers, while 17 others are furthering their education through either a vocational school or college. Their peers and "R U Ready?" staff applaud their efforts!

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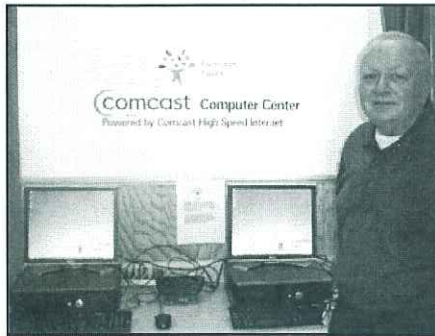
Notes from the Ether

By Bob Luczak, Director of MIS

You've seen those COMCAST trucks around the area, I'm sure. Well, over the last few months, some of those trucks have been sighted at our four group homes. Through a very generous donation from Comcast, our kids have been set up with a mini computer lab in each group home consisting of two computers, flat screen monitors and a wireless internet connection. Needless to say, the kids love it! Many thanks to Mike Upchurch (Comcast's Regional Telecom Manager) for selecting Circle C for this project and gathering his crews to make it all work.

This issue's tips will focus on computer maintenance. Even the newest, fastest computer will tend to slow down over time. Under normal usage, the electronic "signals" that fly back and forth inside the "box" tend to get cluttered and cause your computer to slow down. When you notice this, there are a few things you can do:

Your internet browser can be cleaned of what are called "cache" files - temporary



Bob Luczak, Circle C's "go to" guy for all things technical, with new computer lab at Patak House.

files that are stored on your computer to load faster the next time. These files take up space and slow down internet browsing as they accumulate. Each internet browser (*Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, and others*) have a means to purge these files. You can find out how to do this on the "help" or "tools" menus. Also, as you open and close files, the computer stores them in a

random manor on the hard drive, not "where they were before" but in "fragments" depending on the free space on the drive. This has another slowing effect, as the system tries to find and piece together the fragments. You should "defragment" the hard drive regularly by going to "start", "all programs", "accessories", "system tools", "disk defragmenter" and running the program. In addition, other types of junk files, registry entries, and "malware" can cause slowdowns. Another "system tool" is the Disk Cleanup.

The good news is that there is a quick, one step fix to all of the above issues, in the form of a free piece of software called "Advanced SystemCare" which can be downloaded and installed from www.iobit.com. After you install (*unchecking all of the options for "extras"*) you just hit "Care" and it does an amazing job cleaning up your computer, including registry errors. I run it once a week or whenever things slow down. Try it, you'll like it. I hope this is helpful. Until next time - *Happy Computing!*

Development Update

By Scott Jones, Director of Development

With the 7th Annual "Help Kids Lose the Blues!" benefit now in the rearview mirror, it's a pleasure to report that Circle C's biggest annual benefit netted over \$24,000 for our programs. On October 2, nearly 200 guests were treated to an unforgettable performance by the awesome **Mahajibee Blues** at the Ramada Hotel and Conference Center in Greentree.

Veteran master of ceremonies, Steve "the man" Rohan kept things rolling, as guests enjoyed bidding on the largest collection of "Chinese" and silent auction baskets in the event's seven year history (*over \$13,000 in goods in services*). Featured items included sets of airline tickets from both Southwest Airlines and AirTran Airways, an abundance of Pittsburgh pennants merchandise and tickets, a signed Billie Jean King tennis racket, an opportunity to drive a race car, and a "Murder Mystery Weekend."

We extend our sincere thanks to the individuals, businesses and cultural organizations who supported this year's event. Special thanks to our major sponsors,

Koppers, Highmark, WYEP - 91.3FM, BOB-FM, UPMC Health Plan, KDL Freight Management, and Comcast.

Those in attendance also heard heartfelt remarks from three young adults who shared how Circle C has made a positive difference in their lives. One of the young men, **John Ray**, currently works for the Allegheny County Department of Human Services. John was recently elected to Circle C's Board of Directors. Executive Director, Rich Knouff, states "*We are thrilled for John to share his insight and passion for service at the board level.*"



The United Way Day of Caring on October 9 included our good friends from **Koppers** who have "adopted" our Patak House as their annual volunteer project. Fourteen pairs of hands made quick work of landscaping chores, painting two porches and the basement floor! Their accomplishments, teamwork and enthusiasm are much appreciated. Thanks again!



Mahajibee Blues - Lonny "Lick" Holbdy, Patrick Tevis, Brent "Junior" McConnell, and "Big Tim" Ambrass.

This year's **Holiday Hopes and Dreams** preparations began just before the blues benefit, in late September. Things really got rolling in early October as wishes from over 130 kids were collected and plans were made to reconnect with over 25 groups who donate hundreds of gifts for the kids and young adults in Circle C's programs. Office elves are looking forward to gathering and distributing nearly 1,000 gifts! Financial support is still very much needed, however, to provide special holiday meals and activities.

(See Development Update Page 4)

2009 HOLIDAY HOPES & DREAMS



Circle C has cared for thousands at-risk kids throughout Western Pennsylvania for over 40 years. For most of them, the holidays have not looked like what they've seen on TV, in the movies or magazines. Often, they have been a reminder of how bad things were for their family, or how tough things had become for them. Our holiday project offers you an opportunity to contribute towards a meaningful holiday season for the 130+ children in one of our group homes, foster homes, or transition program program. Please join us in creating cheerful holiday memories for the kids in our care!

Name _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Please accept my donation of \$ _____ Check # _____ OR

Credit Card # _____ MC Visa Discover Exp. Date: ___/___/___ Security code: _____

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SAVE THE DATE • NOON SATURDAY • JANUARY 30, 2010

18th Street Boat Ramp, South Side

Join the "Pitts-Burrgrh Drowned Hogs" and take a plunge in the Mon River to help local kids and assist Punxsutawney Phil predict when spring is to arrive! It's a *great* opportunity to challenge your co-workers! NOT SO SURE about the plunge? Then be a "designated dryer" and have a Starbucks on us! After Plunge Party - live music and refreshments on Carson Street.



- I'LL DO IT!** Have my T-shirt ready (\$10) Size _____ **YOU'RE NUTS** - But put me on the mailing list!
- I'M UNABLE TO SWIM**, but please accept my donation of \$ _____ to support Circle C's programs for Pittsburgh area kids!

Name: _____ AM Phone: _____ or E-Mail: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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WDUQ-FM
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Mission Statement

Building on a long standing tradition, Circle C Youth and Family Services provides a safe environment and therapeutic relationships for children and families at risk. With a focus on strengths, we are committed to assisting children and their families in building solid foundations and supports within their own family and the community. Our goal is to instill personal growth and positive values and achieve permanency for each child.

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A copy of the official registration and financial information of Circle C Youth & Family Services can be obtained from the PA Dept. of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Development Update *(Continued from Page 2)*

Since our last newsletter, Circle C gratefully received over \$100,000 in foundation grants. We are thankful to the following foundations who approved grants over the past six months:

The Estelle S. Campbell Foundation, Anne and George Clapp Charitable and Educational Trust, Constantin Imhoff Fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation, Grable Foundation, Earl J. Knudsen Foundation, Matthews

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