

Spring, 2009

## Permanency Realized for Brother and Sister

By Joann Patterson, Designated Family Program Recruiter & Trainer

**[Editor's Note - Over the last 15 years, 83 children, many of them with special needs, have been adopted by Circle C foster families. For more information on becoming a foster parent contact Joann, our Recruiter/Trainer, at 412-937-1650, Ext. 238 or via email at [jpatterson@circlec.net](mailto:jpatterson@circlec.net)]**

Wendy and Robert Hall had two daughters of their own (ages 17 and 11), before making the decision to become foster parents. They were aware of the need for loving, stable homes to care for children who might eventually be reunited with their birth families. Wendy had done in-home day care in the past, and Rob was very active in the youth sports programs in their community -- so they were familiar



The new Hall family. Rob and Wendy Hall with Aleeia (Left), and Judge Bigley with brother Damien (right).

with the needs and challenges that some children and families face.

After much deliberation, discussions with family members and other families who were fostering, they decided it was a role they were willing and able to accept. The Halls

understood that each child comes from different circumstances, some of which may include abuse, neglect, abandonment, and/or physical or mental illness of a natural parent. They knew that being a good listener and withholding judgment would be essential skills for foster parenting.

Late one afternoon in March of 2004, not long after the Halls had become fully licensed, a Circle C Case Manager called to ask if they would consider fostering a brother and sister sibling group - both with special needs. Without batting an eye, the Halls opened their hearts and their home to Aleeia (who was 6 at the time) and her younger brother Damien (who was 7 months old).

(See "Brother and Sister" on page 5)

## "R U Ready?" Kids Go to Washington

For several, it was their very first trip outside of the Pittsburgh area — for others, it was the most meaningful and exciting journey they had ever taken. All of the youth had registered to vote, had participated in the election, and had talked relentlessly about making the trip to see this historic event.

By the time January 18th had arrived, the "R U Ready?" kids were, indeed, ready to make the journey to Washington D.C. to experience first-hand, the inauguration of the 44th



President of the United States. The group stayed in Maryland, just an hour outside of the capital, and enjoyed some sight seeing the day before the inauguration.

On the big day, waking up at 4 a.m. to go out in freezing, glacial-like weather (only to be stuck behind about 700,000 other early birds) didn't dampen spirits a bit! The young group of spectators managed to position themselves in the middle of the crowd, halfway from the podium. All of the  
 (See "R U Ready? to Washington Page 5)

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## Notes from the Ether

By Bob Luczak, Director of MIS

Let me introduce myself. I'm Bob Luczak and I am Circle C's MIS Director (*MIS stands for Management of Information Systems*). I'm hoping this will be a regular part of this newsletter, with the purpose of keeping you up to date on what has been happening on the computer/tech side here at Circle C, as well as providing tips that may help you with your home computing.

The most recent major development has been the installation of a very modern computer lab in the training room at our administrative office. Four computers, along with stations and printers were purchased with a grant from **PA Department of Economic and Community Development**, for use by residents and staff alike.

Staff have already used the computers to take their online driving test and to access information on the internet during training sessions. Group home residents, foster families, and "R U Ready?" youth have also used the lab to compose and print out resumes, execute job searches, apply for college, and even check their grades. The lab will also lend itself to



April H. from the "R U Ready?" Program in the lab, checking out Circle C's homepage.

computer training (*both individual and group*) for all who want or need it. We are grateful to Representative Wayne Fontana for his assistance with the grant application process.

**Tips for this issue are focused on computer security, since it is being sent to press right at the height of the "Conficker" security scare. The following are some very simple things you can do to keep your computer(s) relatively safe from the bad guys:**

- Have an antivirus program installed and keep it up to date. This can catch

*much of the so-called malware" (viruses, Trojans, worms, etc.) that are out there. The key is to keep the definitions up to date, because new threats come out every day.*

- Never use TWO antivirus programs on the same computer. Like drug interactions, one can interfere with the effectiveness of the other.
- Never open an email attachment unless you are expecting it. Even if it is sent from a familiar email address, it can be malware. Check with the sender to see if they really sent it. Many a computer has been crashed by an attachment that was sent from a virus that took over someone's address book and sent itself to everyone in it.
- As with antivirus software, keep your computer up-to-date. Either run "Windows Update" on a regular basis, or set your computer to automatically update by right clicking on the "my computer" icon, choosing "properties," going to the "automatic updates" tab and checking "Automatic."

I hope this is helpful. Until next time, Happy Computing :-)



## Kudos for Kids

is our heart-felt way of sharing successes with you! Whether they are still in placement or just staying in touch as they journey towards adulthood — it makes our day when the kids we serve take positive steps forward.

★ **LANDRY** graduated from Quaker Valley High School in June of 2007. Shortly afterwards, he came to Circle C's Euclid house where he attended the CCAC for two semesters. He's transferred to Indiana University, and is pursuing a degree in Hospitality.

★ **DENE** came to Circle C in May of 2008. She attended our Summer School Program and enrolled with much trepidation in Oliver High School for her junior year. Despite experiencing the stress of living in a group home, Dene earned honor grades, with an A in Chemistry; and as a result was asked to tutor other students. After many years of separation, Dene and her mother were joyfully reunified in January of this year. Dene plans to attend a

local university to stay near to her mom.

★ **KHALIL** came to Circle C in the Spring of 2007. He began classes at CCAC that Fall, and is working on an Associates Degree. He plans to transfer to the University of Pittsburgh to finish his Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. Kahlil is working for a security company and manages a local Rap music group.

★ **MIESHA** came to Circle C in August 2006. She developed her vocal talent at CAPA High School, where she graduated in June 2007. She is currently studying Surgical Technology at the Pittsburgh Technical Institute. Miesha auditioned for American Idol in 2007 and is going to give it another shot this year. She lives independently in her own

apartment and works part time at the PTI bookstore.

★ **JULIUS** is a soon-to-be graduate of Northgate High School. He's been accepted at the Pittsburgh Technical Institute for the Fall 2009 term, and plans to study electronic technology. While attending high school, he's played football and worked two jobs - all while pursuing a budding art career.

★ **JESSICA**, of the Designated Family Program, was one of 10 students selected to receive the 2009 American Legion Award given to recognize a strong work ethic, concern for others and good decision making skills. Students will be honored at a dinner in mid-May.

## Development Update

By Scott Jones, Director of Development

Over the past six months it has been a whirlwind of events for our development department! Last September, our annual music benefit, **“Help Kids Lose the Blues”** was held at the Rhythm House Café in Bridgeville. We were thrilled to have **Steve Rohan** of BOB 96.9 FM join us again as master of ceremonies. Our guests were treated to some of the best blues Pittsburgh has to offer! **Shari Richards** and **Norm Nardini** performed for nearly 200 guests who not only enjoyed an evening of extraordinary music, but had the chance to win some exceptional auction items as well.

Two of our Circle C residents also had the courage to share their stories with our guests, and were very warmly received. We’re pleased to announce that the event netted over \$20,000 for our programs for Pittsburgh area kids! Special thanks to our presenting sponsor, **Koppers, Inc.**, and to all of our blues sponsors whom are listed below.

**Holiday Hopes and Dreams** preparations began in early September, contacting over 25 wonderful groups who provided Christmas gifts for over 100 kids in Circle C programs. The appeal resulted in over 900 gifts and \$4,600 in cash contributions.

February’s short cold days brought out the **“Pitts-burrrrrrh” Drowned Hogs** running for their annual plunge



*“R U Ready?” Transition Specialists, Becki Shucosky and Andrae King by the river’s edge on Ground Hog’s Day.*

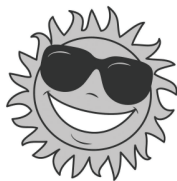


*Terri Petras of Mullen, jumping for joy over gifts collected for Circle C’s Holiday Hopes & Dreams project.*

into the chilly Mon. On February 2nd, two dozen “loveable knuckleheads” braved water temperatures in the low 30’s, cheered on by a healthy crowd (for a Monday after the Super Bowl win!) Their efforts raised over \$4,200. Big thanks go to Penny and Tony Folino for hosting the After Plunge Party, Citiparks for helping to set the “stage” for our swimmers, and Fire House 24, River Rescue and the Department of Public Works for making sure everyone was as safe as could be.

*(See Development Update Page 5)*

### Thanks... for Helping Kids Lose the Blues!



#### \$5,000 – Blues Immortal Presenting Sponsor

Koppers, Inc.

#### \$3,000 – Blues Legend Sponsors

Highmark  
Triad Management

#### \$1,000 – Blues Hall of Fame Sponsors

KDL Freight Management  
Reed Smith, LLC

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#### \$100 – Blues Buddies

G. T. Logistics  
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### Thank You Holiday Donors...



American Eagle Outfitters  
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Church of the Assumption  
Citizens Bank  
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Communication Workers of  
America - Local #13550  
Duquesne Light Company  
Duquesne University  
Volunteers

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Rehabilitation Center  
Guardian Angels Parish  
Human Services Center  
Corporation  
Koppers, Inc.  
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Mullen - Pittsburgh  
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Pittsburgh Area Airport Area  
Chamber of Commerce  
St. Benedict the  
Moor Church  
St. Germaine Parish  
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## Monday May 18 — Golf Marathon

Circle C just needs a few more **“GOLF NUTS!!!”** Do you know a caring golf knucklehead who would golf to raise money for kids??? Space is available in the 16th Annual Circle C Golf Marathon at the beautiful Green Oaks Country Club - a great Donald Ross-designed course overlooking the Fox Chapel Yacht Club on the Allegheny River!

### Prizes awarded for...

- Most Money Raised
- Longest Putt & Drive
- Most Holes
- Low Round
- Closest to the Pin



### Players also receive...

- Incentives to offer their sponsors
- Continental breakfast & buffet lunch
- High quality golf shirt, golf balls & tees
- Premiums for meeting fundraising goals
- Great stories to tell your golf buddies!

**A good time. A great cause. A challenge you'll love!**  
**This is a one-of a kind opportunity for good-hearted golfers to play as many holes as they want from sunrise to sunset!**

For more info contact Scott Jones at 412-937-1650 x224 OR [sjones@circlec.net](mailto:sjones@circlec.net)

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## Saturday May 30th — Heinz Field

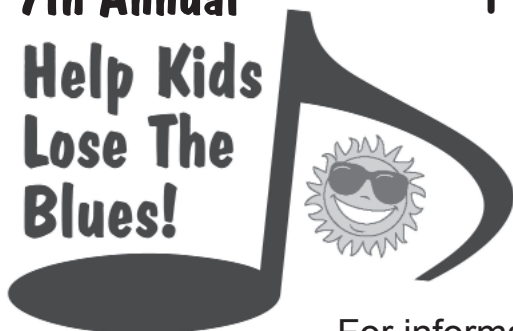
For more information go to [www.walkforahealthycommunity.com](http://www.walkforahealthycommunity.com)



Help Circle C to recruit 100 walkers to raise \$100 each to reach our goal of \$10,000 - with no costs to the agency!

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**7th Annual  
Help Kids  
Lose The  
Blues!**



**Friday September 25th**

The Inn at Greentree

**MAHAJIBEE**

Blues Band

[www.mahajibeeblues.com](http://www.mahajibeeblues.com)

For information on tickets or how to become a sponsor contact Barb Ginsburg at 412-937-1650 x227 OR [baginsburg@circlec.net](mailto:baginsburg@circlec.net)



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## “R U Ready?” Goes to Washington *(Continued from Page 1)*

kids teared-up, and were obviously touched by President Obama’s hope-filled speech. Maurice M. shared:

*“It was a great experience. I never thought that I would be at the White House, witnessing history! Even though it was like 5°, it felt like 50° because my adreneline was pumping when President Obama spoke.”*



The subway ride back to the hotel was also a “bigger than life” experience. Crowds were chanting the President’s name, and our teens were able to experience an astonishing sense of unity, with no pushing, no violence, no incidents. The greatest part of the whole experience was the wide variety of people encountered; and the realization that their participation can make a difference.

## Development Update *(Continued from Page 3)*

Right around the corner, upcoming events include “**Comcast Cares Day**” on April 25th, the 16th Annual **Circle C Golf Marathon** on Monday May 18th, and the **Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community** on Saturday, May 30th. Please see our special announcements in this issue.

And while all this is happening, local and state financial partners continue their generosity. Our sincere thanks goes to: **Citizens Bank Foundation, Westinghouse Charitable Giving Program, Estelle Campbell Foundation, Child Health Association of Sewickley, Matthews Educational and Charitable Trust,**

**The Pittsburgh Foundation, Grable Foundation, McKinney Foundation, Knudsen Foundation, Weisbrod Foundation, The Forbes Funds, PNC Charitable Trust, and the PA Dept of Community and Economic Development** for assistance with the operation and renovations of our residential programs.

## Brother and Sister *(Continued from Page 1)*

Aleeia had been diagnosed as mentally retarded and has mild Spina Bifida. She was largely non-verbal, not potty trained, had poor social skills and was not attending school or receiving therapy.

Damien was developmentally delayed and required two years of developmental therapy with *Alliance for Infants*, so that he might “catch up” to his age group. The love, support and stimulation received in his foster home has made a huge difference in his ability to close his developmental gap.

Aleeia made great progress as well, with the appropriate services and a loving, structured home. She was fully

potty-trained in six months. With physical, occupational and speech therapies and regular school attendance, she was able to play softball for two years on an

instructional team, and was exposed to many “normal” social activities, like swimming and birthday parties.

In August of 2008, both Aleeia and her younger brother, Damien, were adopted by the Halls in the court room of Judge Kelly E. Bigley. Damien is now 5 years old, will be starting kindergarten in the Fall, and is playing baseball for the first time. Aleeia will be twelve in June, and is in an Intermediate School, still in the Life Skills Classroom, and her social interactions continue to improve.

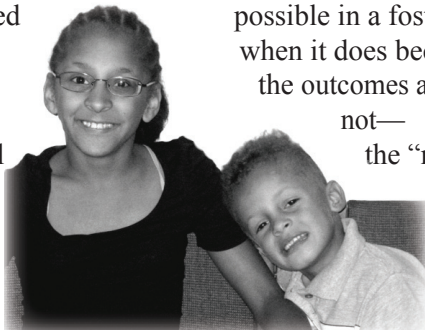
Although adoption is not always possible in a foster care situation, when it does become an option, the outcomes are more often than not— tremendous. Just ask the “new” Hall family!

Circle C continues to recruit families who are willing to offer the time, attention and love necessary

to meet the needs of the children we serve. Families receive training, and compensation. Support, casework and after-care services are provided to both children and families, with 24-hour, seven day-a-week access.

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*The Designated Family Program (DFP) was established in 1979 to provide foster care services to children and families in Allegheny County. It’s name derives from the the sport of baseball — where a “designated hitter” allows the pitcher to remain in the game by batting in their place. Through this cooperative effort, the team is made stronger. DFP staff offer a combined 47 years of experience with the foster care system in Allegheny County. For more information about our program, contact Recruiter/Trainer, Joann Patterson, at 412-937-1650, Ext. 238 or [jpatterson@circlec.net](mailto:jpatterson@circlec.net).*



## 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.

*For 41 years, Circle C has cared for "at-risk" children and families in the Pittsburgh area. Through the operation of three group homes, a supervised independent living program and a network of foster families Circle C provides 24-hour residential care and treatment to children and adolescents who have a histories of abuse, neglect, or involvement with the juvenile justice sytem. We also provide non-residential supportive services, education assistance, life skills instruction, and ongoing encouragement to 16-18 year olds in foster care, and to 18-21 year olds who have already "aged" out of the child care system.*

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