



THE HUCK HOUSE VOICE

Teen Parents Learn to Play, Nurture From New Parenting Mentor and PIPE Curriculum

The Transitional Living Program is a lifeline for homeless teens in Franklin County. It is even more important for 60% of the teens who come to us with babies and children of their own.

Tracy Banner, the new Parenting Mentor for the Transitional Living Program, works exclusively with teen parents and their children.

Banner uses the PIPE (Partners In Parenting Education) Program Curriculum. PIPE, created by the nonprofit organization How To Read Your Baby,

builds emotional connectedness between parent and child. This curriculum for parents focuses on three areas: “Listen, Love and Play.”

In group and individual meetings with teen parents, Banner uses the PIPE Curriculum to teach hands-on activities and ways to play. In some cases, they practice care-giving skills with a baby doll.

With Banner, teen parents learn about positive parent-child interaction, and practice showing affection to their babies. “This may seem like

something that would come naturally to a mother, but some of the parents have not experienced this behavior in their lives”, says Banner. “It is new to them.”

Banner teaches parents about all aspects of helping their babies develop; for example, by limiting baby talk and emphasizing adult speech to help develop the babies’ communication skills. They sing nursery rhymes and read books to their babies, strengthening the mother-child bond and building vocabulary. [continued on next page]



Tracy Banner, Parenting Mentor with a teen parent, and her son from the Transitional Living Program.

SUMMER 2009

Inside this issue:

- ◆ PIPE Program and Parenting Mentor
- ◆ New Safe Place Sites
- ◆ Help For Parents of Teen Parents
- ◆ Kroger Community Rewards for Huck House

Support From The Columbus Foundation

In February, The Columbus Foundation's had a Critical Need Alert. Huckleberry House is very proud to have been included with 19 other central Ohio organizations during this difficult economic time. We are pleased to report that we received **\$20,526.14**. These funds support our Crisis Shelter and Street Outreach. Both programs work to keep Columbus children safe and off the streets.

We also received a grant through The Columbus Foundation to support a new Parenting Mentor for the Transitional Living Program. The Parenting Mentor will work exclusively with teens in the program who are parents. Teens in this program learn parenting skills and get assistance with specific needs they have as parents. For more information about the Parenting Mentor and the work being done please see the front page article.

[Continued from front page, Parenting Mentor article]

"I've done this work for a long time, informally in my community," Banner explains. "I invited young mothers to my home to talk about their struggles. It's always been my passion to help these girls realize that just because you have a baby at a young age, that doesn't mean your life stops."

Banner feels her greatest challenge is to undo what the teen parents have grown up with and how they were raised through generations. "[They're still] learning... the difference between discipline and punishment...how discipline and play both have an effect on their babies development and how important it is. But when it works, after going in their homes and modeling the curriculum with the babies, it is really

something to see-when the parents get it and see it work with their child."

Banner shared a story about one young mother learning how best to discipline her toddler. "When she realized that hitting her daughter wasn't as effective as redirection, she saw her daughter's behavior change. She talks about it all the time, and said she's teaching her aunt how to use redirection with her children rather than hitting them. She's passing it on

In addition to the PIPE Curriculum, Banner helps the parents with figuring out day to day parent responsibilities. As the Parenting Mentor, Banner will accompany the parents on doctor visits. "Sometimes the teens are intimidated by doctors and nurses. I will advocate for them and help talk to the doctor about the babies ill-

ness or well baby visit," says Banner.

She teaches them how to access any community resources they might need. Some resources are: Title XX for child care, Firstlink for formula or diapers, churches, WIC or The Ohio Department of Job & Family Services. These are all things they need to know before they leave the program and are completely on their own.

It is a comfort to know that the teen parents in the Transitional Living Program love their babies and really try hard to do what is best for their family. Huckleberry House is there to help them so when they are on their own and exit the program, they can be confident and successful parents.

Volunteers Fill Our Needs With Hard Work and Donations

I would like to thank The McGraw-Hill Company, State Farm and The Brickman Landscape Group (for the second year in a row) for their much needed volunteering and support.

This year, McGraw-Hill took on work at the Transitional Living Assessment Apartment office. The office was in need of paint and renovation for more efficient, organized work. Thanks also to Ellen Limes from Organ-

ized by L for donating her time to organize the office.

McGraw-Hill donated money to the project which Huck House will use for materials. We were also part of their Go Green Grant which will give us money to purchase a Pro-use water heater for the crisis shelter. This will be more efficient and save money for many years to come.

The Brickman Landscape

Group donated plants, bushes, and labor for the Assessment Apt. front and back yard. This created a very private, serene space for the teens and their babies.

State Farm came out and did more painting in the crisis shelter. They have been a huge help in keeping the shelter looking fresh for our teens.

Thanks again to all the groups who help us.

Donations Needed

In kind donations can go a long way in helping with the Huck House budget. There are certain items that we can use for our teens, but have to be last when we have more pressing needs. If you think of Huck House, when you are out at the movies, or doing your regular shopping, please consider purchasing and extra ticket or item that would be greatly appreciated by our teens.

Gift Cards and Activities

- ◆ Grocery Stores-Kroger, Meijer, Walmart, Giant Eagle
- ◆ Target
- ◆ Restaurants- Bob Evans, McDonalds, Wendys , Burger King, Taco Bell, Pizza, KFC, Dairy Queen

- ◆ Movie Tickets, Bowling, Roller Skating and Ice Skating, Miniature Golf
- ◆ The Columbus Zoo and Zoombezi Bay

New Items Needed

- ◆ Socks, Underwear, and T-Shirts
- ◆ Toiletries
- ◆ Diapers

Gently Used Items Needed

- ◆ Cribs and Play Yards
- ◆ Vacuums
- ◆ Household Items



WE NEED YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS!!!

Please send your email to Sherri at sfinelli@huck-house.org for an online version of the newsletter and other mailings. This will help save on mailing and printing costs in this tough economy. Or if you would like to be taken off of the mailing list for any future mailings, email us. Thank you!

Teen Finds A Safe Place At The Canal Winchester Fire Station



On Saturday, August 1, Huckleberry House will be hosting a community event at the Canal Winchester YMCA located at 6767 Refugee Rd. The event is being held to raise awareness in the community about Huckleberry House and Safe Place.

A few months ago, a teen in crisis walked into a fire station in Canal Winchester. They knew about fire stations being Safe Place sites. Luckily, even though the Canal Winchester fire stations were not official Safe Place sites, they were able to contact Huckleberry House and get the teen the safety and get them the help they needed.

Safe Place provides access to immediate help and supportive resources for all young

people in crisis through a network of sites sustained by qualified agencies, trained volunteers and businesses. Huckleberry House is the local agency in Franklin County and surrounding areas. The Safe Place Sites are Columbus Fire Stations, 24-hour Kroger stores, White Castles, Dublin Fire Stations and now Canal Winchester Fire Stations.

When the teen came into the station, the firefighters knew how to help, but wanted to learn how to be more involved and an official place where teens can get help. Since that night, the fire sta-

tions at Firehouse Lane and Gender Road have completed the Safe Place training and are official Safe Place Sites. When driving by the fire stations, you can see the Safe Place sign.

The event is to raise awareness in the Canal Winchester area about Huckleberry House and teen runaways. We want to let them know that there is somewhere they can go to get help if they need it and to be safe. There will be games with prizes, raffle drawings and refreshments from 1-4 p.m. on August 1st at the YMCA.



(Pictured from left to right) Training Officer, Kent Cheek, Madison Twp. Firefighter, Chief Clifford Mason, Madison Twp. Firefighter holding the Safe Place sign in front of the Fire Station at Firehouse Lane in Canal Winchester.



Shop at Kroger and Support Huckleberry House!

Kroger is giving up to \$5,000,000 to non profit organizations to help our community. All you have to do is enroll your Kroger plus card in the Community Rewards program and select Huckleberry House as the recipient by putting in our organization number, **84228!** Every time you shop at Kroger and use your plus card Huck House receives a rebate.

Go to: www.krogercommunityrewards.com!

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white, lowercase, sans-serif font, centered within a blue rectangular background.

Want to become an official fan of Huckleberry House?

Join us on Huck House Facebook fan page and invite your friends to join for updates and to support Huck House.

The Myspace logo, consisting of the text "myspace.com" in white, lowercase, sans-serif font, centered within a blue rectangular background.

PSA For “Speak Up, Be A Voice Not An Echo”

Be sure to check out the PSA for “Speak Up, Be A Voice Not An Echo” on myspace.com. You may have also seen it on local cable TV stations.

From Our House to Yours

Help for Parents of Teen Parents



Being the parent of a teenager can be tough, and being the parent of a teen with a baby of his or her own can be even tougher. Everyone involved has a new role and new responsibilities to get used to, and that can take time. Along the way, old issues may resurface too. We work with many parenting teens and their families, and we have some suggestions to help.

Try to separate your feelings about your child's choices from your attitude as a grandparent. You may not have wanted your child to become a parent this soon. Feeling angry and disappointed is natural and OK. Try to make sure, though, that those feelings do not spill over into blame or withdrawal from your child and grandchild when they may need you most.

Help your child to understand what's "normal". Teens, like all new parents, sometimes become very frustrated by baby behavior. Crying, fussing, getting into messes, saying "No!" and other perfectly normal acts can look like defiance or

problem behavior to an inexperienced parent. Use your experience to help your child set reasonable expectations and distinguish between "bad behavior" and normal baby-and-toddler development.

Get the facts. Sometime parents worry that their parenting teen will not be able to care adequately for a baby. We've encountered families in which parents have planned to sue for custody even before a baby was born! While there are some special situations, statistics show that teens that are supported by the adults around them are no more likely to be abusive or neglectful parents than older adults.

Take into account your child's maturity level. Teens still need help growing up themselves. You may still need to help your teen look ahead at consequences, stick to a plan, or make more mature decisions for themselves and their child. And, just like before, they may not always listen. Above all, it helps to think about the challenges you faced. Remember how nerv-

ous you were? Teen parents are too. You made mistakes. They will too. Try to be patient. Babies have a way of making the grownups around them grow up.

Help, don't gate-keep. Your child needs your experience and support right now. It can be easy to take that role too far, "protecting" the baby from a clumsy diaper-changer, for example, or offering advice on everything and anything. Of course, be sure to step in if you see real problems that could result in harm to the baby. You may also be the best resource to give your child a break when parenting becomes overwhelming.

Stay out of baby-daddy/baby-mama drama. Teen parents are still teens, and that means that relationship problems may be in store. As much as possible, try to stay neutral in fights between the baby's parents, and in quarrels with extended families, no matter how tempting it may be to take sides or step in. You'll be a much-needed oasis of calm support to your child.

Get help and support for yourself. With the demands of school and work, or the challenges your teen may be struggling with on his or her own, you may find yourself playing a major role in caring for your teen's child. Many grandparents find themselves washing bottles and lugging baby carriers at a time in their lives when they expected to be free of child-rearing responsibilities. If this is the case for you, remember to take time to rest, get support and take care of yourself. If you feel you and your teen are overwhelmed, consider reaching out for community help or resources.

Remember, grand-parenting can be joyful and rewarding. Enjoy it!



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The State of Huck House

During these rough and tumble times, I am frequently asked, "How is Huck House doing?" Like many agencies, we have been knocked around with budget cuts and increased demands for our services. For the first time in our collective memory, our Youth Outreach Team has more requests for services than we can provide. We have a record number of kids going to our Safe Places (Fire Stations, Kroger Stores and White Castles), and our Transitional Living Program struggles to help our community's most disenfranchised teens.

Despite these difficulties, the Huck House staff remains committed to providing the best services we can. Because of their hard work we are seeing results for our teens and their families. This year we had a record number of TLP kids (10) who graduated from high school or got their GED's. That diploma is one step closer to self-sufficiency for teens who were homeless. Our Crisis Program saw a 6% increase in the number of family sessions this year. No matter how angry teens and

their parents are when a young person comes into the shelter, we know that getting everyone in the same room to resolve problems is the most important step toward family reconciliation.

That's what we are doing during these difficult times: we're working harder for our teens. Our question to you is, "Will you help us?" If you can write a check, we need your gift now more than ever. The next time you are in the grocery, buy a package of diapers for us. While you are buying school clothes for your children, throw in a package of socks or underwear for our kids in shelter. Ask your church to paint a room in the shelter. For more ideas on how you can help, call or email Sherri Finelli at 294-8097 or sfinelli@huck-house.org.

Thank you for all your support. Together we will work for the success of our children and families.

Becky Westerfelt

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