



### **A Message from OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice – November 1, 2013**

If you're like me, you probably could use more time. Time to get all your work done, get your house in order, run errands, get to the gym, read a book and, of course, more time to spend with family and friends. I especially was thinking about the concept of time after I had the opportunity to attend the October meeting of the Ohio Youth Advisory Board (OYAB). Each quarter, youth who are or have been in agency custody gather from across the state to establish connections, discuss their experiences and brainstorm solutions to the problems they share. Thank you to the adult supporters who transport these youth and participate in concurrent independent living program discussions. I know this is a significant time commitment, and I am sure the youth in your care appreciate that you have made their participation a priority.

To conclude OYAB meetings, each youth recounts something "new" and something "good" as a reminder to keep moving forward, because their lives have great potential. At last month's meeting, an older teen wanted everyone to know that she was being adopted and would not have to leave her foster family when she turned 18. Another teen announced that he soon would turn 18 and become independent. He was both excited and scared about being on his own, and he hoped he could manage to stay in high school. Other youth described their new part-time jobs, their baby's birthday, and accomplishments in such extracurriculars as band and sports. It never fails that I walk away from these meetings incredibly impressed by these young people but also aware that, for those still in care, we must ensure that they leave with the permanent connections they need to be productive adults.

This First Friday celebrates November as National Adoption Month and highlights the work of OFC's Substitute Care and Permanency Section. I began my child welfare work in 1996 as a combined protective services and adoption worker, eventually supervising adoptions in Tampa, Florida, and an 11-county district in central Florida. Adoption is one of my passions, and I am proud of the work we are doing: 1,293 children – with an average age of just over 5 – were adopted in 2012. That is fantastic, and I hope our numbers grow in 2013. As I write this, 2,611 children in Ohio are available for adoption; 1,005 of those children are 12 or older.

We have to feel the pressure – the urgency – for those children who continue to wait, even if they don't recognize adoption as an option. Our work with the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption will focus on these older youth and youth who are in planned permanent living arrangements. I'm hoping that the success story below is only one of many that we are able to share as the work of the Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiters takes hold.

Our work with the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption would not have been possible without former ODJFS Director Michael Colbert's passion for ensuring that all youth, no matter what age, have a permanent family. I wish him the very best as he moves on to new endeavors, and I know that the kids who have found forever families because of Wendy's Wonderful Kids wish him well, too.

The new ODJFS director, Cynthia C. Dungey, also has a passion for child welfare. In fact, she once interned as a child welfare caseworker before getting her law degree and then joining the state. Please read on to learn more about Director Dungey.

## **OFC Welcomes ODJFS Director Dungey**

OFC extends a warm welcome to new ODJFS Director Cynthia C. Dungey, who was appointed by Gov. Kasich on Oct. 18. Director Dungey has held leadership positions throughout state government for the past decade. No stranger to ODJFS, she served as assistant deputy director of the Office of Ohio Health Plans from 2007 through June 2013, where she managed the daily operations of Ohio's Medicaid Program, including the efforts to identify and reduce Medicaid fraud.

In July 2013, she transitioned to the newly formed Ohio Department of Medicaid, where she was responsible for the development and implementation of procedures and policies to ensure that the state's Medicaid operations and support systems functioned properly and efficiently.

Prior to her service with ODJFS and the Department of Medicaid, Director Dungey served as director of the Fraud and Investigative Audit Group within the Ohio Auditor of State's Office. There, she managed a team of auditors responsible for uncovering misuse of public funds, including abuse within the Medicaid system. Prior to her tenure with the Auditor of State, she served in the Health Care Fraud and Crime Victim Services sections of the Ohio Attorney General's Office.



Director Cynthia C. Dungey

Director Dungey has a bachelor's degree in political science and sociology from DePauw University and a juris doctorate from the Ohio Northern University College of Law. She is a past-president and vice president of the John Mercer Langston Bar Association, serves as a bar examination reader for the Supreme Court of Ohio, and was a 1998 recipient of the Ohio Attorney General Professionalism Award.

Director Dungey believes that children are our greatest investment.

"The services we provide — foster care, adoption and protective services — help children and young people build a bridge to successful adulthood," she says. "The return on investment for individuals, families and the state as a whole is immeasurable."

### **Spotlight on OFC's Guiding Principles: Celebrating National Adoption Month**

Throughout November, groups across the country celebrate National Adoption Month. In Ohio, Gov. Kasich proclaimed this to be Adoption Recruitment and Recognition Month. We ask our partner agencies to post the attached resolution, to help raise awareness of the need for adoptive families and foster parents.

This month's First Friday highlights OFC's Substitute Care and Permanency Section as exemplifying the guiding principle "There is urgency and importance to our work." Finding foster and adoptive placements for Ohio's youth in care is indeed an urgent and important task. Staff from the Substitute Care and Permanency Section will join community organizations throughout Ohio in various programs, events and activities this month, to share positive adoption stories, challenge adoption and foster care myths, and draw attention to the thousands of children in care who are waiting for their "forever families."

Read on to learn more about this section's activities and the staff who drive this work.

### **Supporting Kinship Caregivers**

When feasible, kinship care is considered the best option for children who are not able to live with their birth parents. It has been estimated that as many as 200,000 Ohio children, or at about 7 percent, are being raised by their grandparents or other kinship caregivers. Because kinship caregivers often need financial support to establish and maintain placement stability, Ohio's current biennial budget includes an increase in the Kinship Permanency Incentive Program (KPIP), which provides time-limited financial support to kinship caregivers with legal custody of children. For more information about KPIP, the Ohio Kinship Advisory Board or the Ohio Grandparent Kinship Coalition, email [Rebekah.Murray@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Rebekah.Murray@jfs.ohio.gov).

### **Seeking Child Feedback**

October's First Friday described the new exit interview process for children 5 and older when they leave a foster care placement. OFC placed the Exit Interview Form into clearance for two weeks in October to give users the opportunity to comment on it. Some suggested wording changes; others recommended adding questions related to independent life skills, contact with guardians ad litem and participation in court proceedings. The updated form will be available by mid-November. For more information about exit interviews, email [Jennifer.Kobel@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Kobel@jfs.ohio.gov).

### **Establishing Statewide Standards**

Revisions to Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) rules from chapters 5101:2-9 (regarding residential facilities) and 5101:2-7 (regarding foster caregivers) have entered the promulgation stage of the rule review process. Some are scheduled to become effective by the end of 2013. (See the February 2013 edition of First Friday for a description of the eight-step rule review process.) These revisions are expected to both increase efficiency and improve services to children in placement.

Some private child placing agencies will benefit from the audit changes found in OAC rule 5101:2-5-04 and legislated in House Bill 153. These changes, which revise the required audit requirements from general accepted government auditing standards to generally accepted auditing standards, is significantly more cost-effective. ODJFS will continue to review audit reports as part of each agency's recertification, though the agency will adjust the process for agencies deemed "not financially sound." Previously, agencies found to be not financially sound would be automatically denied for renewal or recertification. Now, ODJFS will recommend a fiscal watch period for agencies needing financial guidance. For more information, email [David.Beck@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:David.Beck@jfs.ohio.gov).

### **Ensuring Safety across State Borders**

The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) program area processes placement requests, monitors compliance and provides technical assistance when children are placed across state lines. During OFC's comprehensive rule review, changes were made to ICPC rules to reflect recent regulatory changes and to clarify procedures. Proposed changes completed the clearance comment period Oct. 29. For more information, email [Heather.Spencer@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Heather.Spencer@jfs.ohio.gov) or [Rebekah.Murray@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Rebekah.Murray@jfs.ohio.gov).

### **Serving Emancipated Youth**

Thanks to the efforts of the Ohio Youth Advisory Board, the Ohio Independent Living Association and the many caseworkers throughout the state, Ohio met the 2013 survey completion standards for the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). The NYTD stores information from a series of surveys given to randomly selected youth who have received independent living services. Youth chosen to participate receive the first survey when they are 17. They are asked to complete follow-up surveys at ages 19 and 21. The surveys help us better understand the long-term needs of the young people we serve so we can continue to improve services. We needed a 90 percent return rate for 19-year-olds still in agency custody and a 60 percent return rate for youth no longer in custody, and we achieved that. NYTD functions on a three-year cycle, meaning that staff now are focusing on forming a new baseline group of 17-year-olds in custody. For more information, email [Elaine.Hall@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Elaine.Hall@jfs.ohio.gov).

### **Facilitating Adoption**

Finding permanent homes for children in foster care is a top OFC priority. In Ohio counties where at least 20 children between the ages of 9 and 17 are available for adoption, OFC expanded its partnership with the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption and provided funding so that 50 recruiters could be hired and trained in the Wendy's Wonderful Kids model. Children in this program are up to three times more likely to be adopted. For more information, see the article below or email [Gail.Thomas@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Gail.Thomas@jfs.ohio.gov).

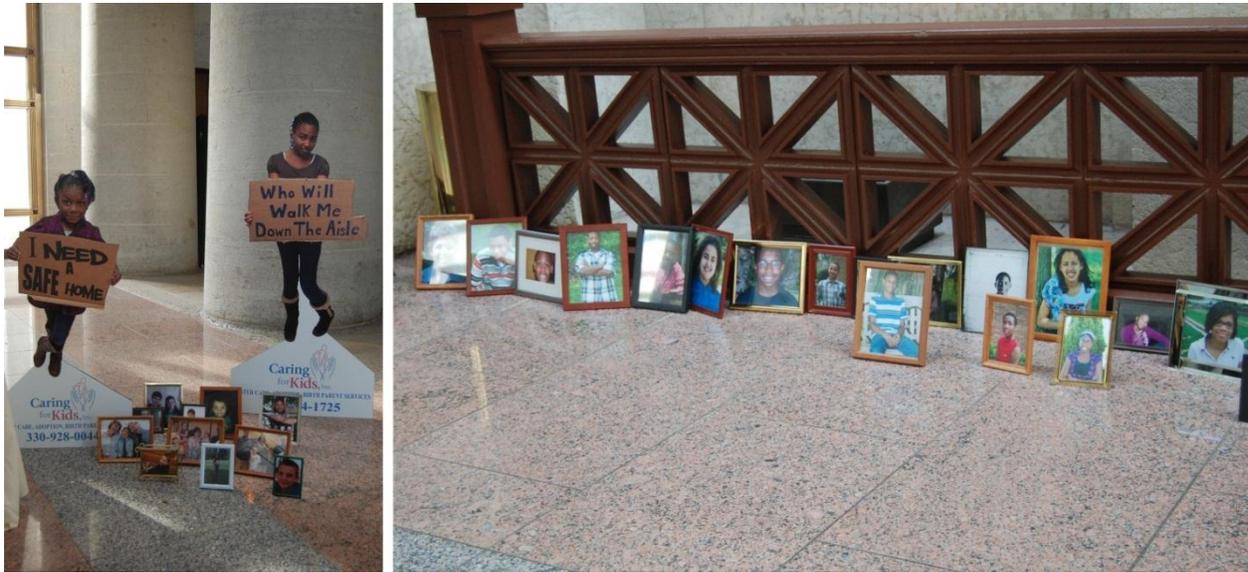
For more information about the OFC Substitute Care and Permanency Section, email Section Chief Amy Eaton at [Amy.Eaton@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Amy.Eaton@jfs.ohio.gov).

### **Filling Family Portraits**

Mark November 13 on your calendar as a day to join youth, families and adoption advocates from across Ohio in raising awareness about adoption and the importance of lifelong connections for youth and families. This year's event, to be held in the atrium of the Ohio Statehouse in downtown Columbus, will mark the fifth annual Adoption Advocacy Day celebrated by the Ohio Adoption Planning Group (OAPG). An

hour-long program titled “Filling Family Portraits” will feature remarks from children, young adults, adoptive parents and adoption leaders. In keeping with the theme, the atrium will be decorated with framed photos of adoptive families and youth awaiting adoption.

OAPG is a statewide organization of birth and adoptive parents and adoption professionals from more than 50 agencies. It was formed in 1981 to address adoption and child welfare issues in Ohio. To learn more, visit OAPG’s Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/OhioAdoption>.



Scenes from the 2012 Ohio Adoption Planning Group’s Adoption Advocacy day event.

### **Wendy’s Wonderful Kids: How Does it Work?**

In Ohio, more than 2,600 children and young adults are waiting to be adopted; of those, more than 1,000 are 12 or older. For many older youth in care, finding a “forever family” before reaching age 18 is a dream, not an expectation. To change that, ODJFS partnered with the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. We asked Carrie Boerio, senior director of programs at the foundation, a few questions to help us learn more about how its Wendy’s Wonderful Kids model works.

#### ***How does Wendy’s Wonderful Kids select which groups of youth to target?***

Wendy’s Wonderful Kids recruiters focus on children and youth who are without goals of reunification or adoption, or who are placed in planned permanent living arrangements (PPLAs). Often, these youth are associated with a misconception that adoption simply isn’t feasible. Recruiters using the Wendy’s Wonderful Kids model work to disprove this assumption and find permanent families for these children. This reduces child welfare caseloads, reduces the number of youth aging out of care, increases adoptions and improves outcomes for youth.

#### ***How does the Wendy’s Wonderful Kids program work?***

The foundation provides a grant to a local public or private foster care or adoption agency to hire one or more adoption professionals, called “recruiters.” A recruiter serves a small caseload of the most difficult-to-place children using an intensive, child-focused model. For each child, this model requires a thorough review of the case file, a face-to-face relationship with the child, collaboration with all adults in the child’s life, an aggressive recruitment plan, assurance of adoption preparation and a diligent search for potential adoptive families. The recruiter works in collaboration with the child’s caseworker.

#### ***Which PPLA youth might be good candidates for this program?***

Any child whose circumstances have changed since the PPLA ruling, for whom aging out is not the best outcome, or who is in PPLA status because he or she expressed opposition to adoption is an ideal candidate. This model allows the recruiter to spend time developing a relationship with the child, exploring the reasons

for the child's opposition to adoption, and explaining what adoption means. A five-year, independent, national evaluation showed that older youth are up to three times more likely to be adopted when served by a Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiter.

### **How can the PPLA status be changed?**

Any member of the child's team (caseworker, guardian ad litem, recruiter, etc.) may begin a conversation about the concerns of aging out of care and the benefits of permanency. The custodial agency or county prosecutor may file a motion with the court to modify the child's custodial status or bring the child's issues to light at the mandated annual review hearings. If and when a court date is set to review the child's status, the child's entire team should decide who can best explain to the court how the youth's status has changed and why adoption is in the child's best interest. A youth in custody may be opposed to adoption, even when it is in his or her best interest, for fear of losing connections with the biological family. Although Ohio has no statutory provision for open adoptions, a youth who is adamant about maintaining contact with stable biological family members can discuss these wishes with the adoptive family. If it's deemed appropriate, the youth and his or her biological family can enter into a voluntary post-adoption contact agreement.

ODJFS funding makes it possible for Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiters to serve Ohio's longest-waiting children. To learn more, contact [carrie\\_boerio@davethomasfoundation.org](mailto:carrie_boerio@davethomasfoundation.org) or (614) 764-6740.



### **Wendy's Wonderful Kids: A Success Story**

When she was referred to the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption's Wendy's Wonderful Kids program, Sarah had already experienced 10 years in foster care, a failed adoption and a disrupted pre-adoptive placement. Diagnosed with Reactive Attachment Disorder, Sarah was struggling in school and was adamantly opposed to adoption. Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiter Maggie Foulk (Clark County) developed a relationship with Sarah as part of the program's child-focused recruitment model and learned more about her resistance to adoption.

Sarah was concerned about whether or not her birth mother was okay and did not want to leave her foster home. To address Sarah's concerns, Foulk first began searching for Sarah's birth mother. She found her within days, and her status was shared with Sarah during a therapy session. Foulk then approached Sarah's foster parents to talk about adoption, taking the time to uncover their concerns per the recruitment model. The foster parents hated the thought of Sarah leaving their care and did not want her to age out of the system, but felt they might be too old to adopt.

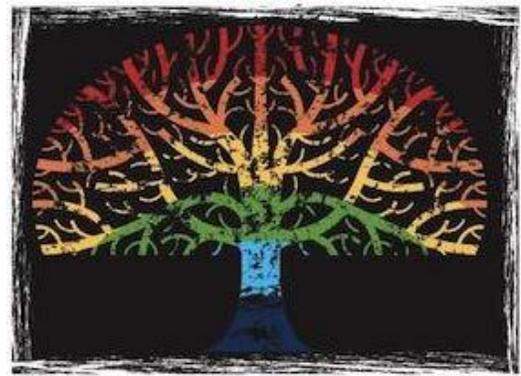
Foulk helped them develop a backup plan in case something should happen to either of them, and discussed how becoming Sarah's adoptive parents would not dramatically change circumstances, other than giving Sara a family to call her own forever. Finally, Sarah shared that she was interested in being adopted by her foster parents. When her adoption was finalized, Sarah said, "This is the happiest day of my life. I get to be adopted and my mom is safe. I can sleep now."

To learn more about the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program and find a recruiter in your area, please visit <http://www.davethomasfoundation.org/what-we-do/wendys-wonderful-kids/>.

### Three Early Thanksgivings

For the past six years, many current and former foster youth in Ohio have celebrated Thanksgiving together, as brothers and sisters with much in common. The events have been successful and appreciated by all who attended. The Ohio chapter of Foster Care Alumni of America has scheduled three early Thanksgivings for this year. Youth ages 15 and up in foster care, former foster youth ages 18 and up, and their guests are invited to join the celebrations nearest to them. The events are free; see the attached flyer for location and registration information.

- Southwest Ohio Thanksgiving: Saturday, Nov. 16 in Cincinnati
- Northeast Ohio Thanksgiving: Saturday, Nov. 16 in Cleveland
- Central Ohio Thanksgiving: Sunday, Nov. 24 in Columbus



**TOGETHER 2013**  
**ALUMNI FAMILY REUNION**

#### National Adoption Month Website

National Adoption Month draws attention to the urgent need for permanent adoptive families for the more than 100,000 children and youth in foster care. This year's National Adoption Month theme, "Partnering for Permanency," emphasizes the partnerships necessary to create permanent connections for children and youth in care. To help everyone join forces to create these connections, the National Adoption Month website (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/nam/>) offers a variety of audience-specific resources.

- [Professionals](#) can learn how to engage local media outlets and build partnerships to recruit and retain families using the power of social media.
- [Adoptive parents](#) can find information on what permanency means and adopting from foster care, as well as powerful videos from youth and other adoptive families.
- [Youth](#) can discover ways to get involved in their permanency plans, stay connected with adults and other teens through social media, and the benefits of being safe online.

### Human Trafficking Awareness Efforts

To help spread the word about efforts to combat human trafficking in Ohio, the ODJFS Office of Communications organized three media events last month. The events— held at child advocacy centers in Fairborn, Cincinnati and Chillicothe— spotlighted efforts to create a network of first responders to recognize the signs of human trafficking and help possible victims.

Through a partnership with the Ohio Network of Children's Advocacy Centers, ODJFS is providing funding so staff at the state's 26 child advocacy centers can receive training, help educate their communities and build local resources.

"Human trafficking is an insidious problem," said Kristen Rost, executive director of the Ohio Children's Trust Fund. "There is no more urgent or important task before us than that of protecting our children."

Other speakers at the events included John Born, director of the Ohio Department of Public Safety; Elizabeth Ranade Janis, Ohio's anti-trafficking coordinator; and representatives from Michael's House in Fairborn, the Mayerson Center in Cincinnati and the Child Protection Center of Ross County in Chillicothe.

Reporters from the Dayton Daily News, the Fairborn Daily Herald and the Chillicothe Gazette attended, as well as representatives from the radio stations WYSO, WNKU, WYXU, WBEX, WTVN and other Clear Channel stations, and the TV stations WCPO, WLWT, WKRC, WHIO and WDTN.

“Human trafficking is not a simple issue, and it will not have a simple solution,” Rost cautioned. “But we believe we have tools in place to better help youth who are victims of human trafficking, and to prevent more young people from getting caught up in it.”

It’s estimated that more than 1,000 Ohio children are victims of human trafficking each year, and that at least 3,000 more are at risk.

### **Dan Shook Recognized at PCSAO Conference**

Dan Shook, chief of the OFC Bureau of Fiscal Accountability, was honored at the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual PCSAO Conference on Oct. 24 in Worthington. Shook received the PCSAO Dan Schneider Leadership and Training Award, for making difference in how child welfare staff and caregivers are trained. The award is named after the late PCSAO founder and director Dan Schneider.

“All of us at OFC were super proud to see our colleague honored by PCSAO, and I can’t think of anyone who deserves the award more than Dan,” OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice said. “He exemplifies everything that we are striving for in our partnerships: He is helpful, responsive and always is willing to go the extra mile to find a way to make things work, even if it requires some creative thinking. I am especially excited that this is a leadership award. Part of being a leader is modeling the behavior that you hope to see in all your staff.”

Shook acknowledged Justice and Michael McCreight, ODJFS assistant director of Health and Human Services, for their leadership, and he thanked his colleagues for their support.

“We all work very hard in child welfare to educate ourselves to be the best that we can be for Ohio’s children and families,” Shook said. “We all want what’s best for them. We all know that a family connection is what provides a child with the future that they will have. It’s family where we learn our core values, it’s where we learn that hard work gets results, it’s where you learn that passion for what you believe in is the right thing, and it’s also where you know that family will always have your back.”



OFC Deputy Director Jennifer Justice, Bureau Chief Dan Shook and ODJFS Assistant Director Michael McCreight at the conference.

### **Join the Independent Living/Transitional Youth Regional Meetings**

It’s time for the second series of independent living/transitional youth regional meetings. Hosted by transitional youth coordinators Susan Halter and Laurie Valentine, these meetings provide a forum for state and local staff who work with foster youth to learn about program developments and share thoughts about programs that work well or that need attention. The agendas are filled with “hot topics” and discussion

points about independent living, emancipation, and partnerships such as the Ohio Benefit Bank, Connecting the Dots and Ohio Reach.

If you work with foster youth ages 16 and older, your knowledge and experiences are important to the discussion. The meetings will be held in each of OFC's new technical assistance regions throughout the months of November and December. They will run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., with a break for lunch. The meeting dates and locations are as follows:

Northwest Region: Nov. 2  
Wood County JFS, 1928 E. Gypsy Lane Rd.  
Bowling Green, Ohio 43402

Northeast Region: Nov. 5  
Cuyahoga County PCSA, 3955 Euclid Ave.  
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

Central Region: Nov. 12  
Franklin County Children Services  
855 W. Mound St.  
Columbus, Ohio 43223

Southeast Region: Dec. 10  
Southeast Ohio Regional Training Center  
2099 E. State St., Ste. A  
Athens, Ohio 45701

Southwest Region: Dec. 16  
Montgomery County Children Services  
3304 N. Main St.  
Dayton, Ohio 45404

Registration is requested to ensure adequate space and materials. To register or learn more, contact Susan at [Susan.Halter@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Susan.Halter@jfs.ohio.gov) or (614) 752-0088, or Laurie at [Laurie.Valentine@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Laurie.Valentine@jfs.ohio.gov) or (614) 752-1122.

### **Article of Interest: Organizational Culture**

As part of our Partners for Ohio's Families (PFOF) initiative, OFC staff have focused considerable effort on improving our organizational culture. A recent article on this topic caught our eye, and we thought others might be interested.

The research publication Child Abuse and Neglect: The International Journal reported that long-term outcomes for maltreated children were significantly more positive if they were served by agencies with more engaged organizational climates. Those interested can read the article at <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/01452134/35/8>.

### **October 2013 Global Emails**

The following emails were sent in October from Jennifer Justice to PCSA directors and/or private agency directors. They are organized below by mailing date and key word.

10/8/13 - Three Regional Early Thanksgiving Dinners for Foster Care Teens and Alumni

**PRINCIPLE OF THE MONTH:** There is urgency and importance to our work.

If you want to subscribe to First Friday, have comments or ideas about content, or wish to be removed from the mailing list, please send an email to [First\\_Friday@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:First_Friday@jfs.ohio.gov). For additions to or removals from the list, be sure to include your name, organization and email address.



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