

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 1, 2009

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May Is National Foster Care Month

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services is joining Governor Strickland in recognizing May as National Foster Care Month and urging all Ohioans to do something positive to make a difference for children and youth in foster care.

The national theme for Foster Care Month 2009 is “You Can Change a Lifetime.” There are many ways to make a positive difference in the lives of children in foster care – as foster parents, volunteers, mentors, employers or in other ways. These and other suggestions are available at www.fostercaremonth.org:

- Wear a blue ribbon in support of National Foster Care Month.
- Send a care package to foster care alumni attending college, through the Orphan Foundation of America (www.orphan.org).
- Donate goods such as suitcases, books, games, computers, sports equipment, musical instruments, clothing and school supplies to young people in foster care, through the National Foster Parent Association (www.nfpainc.org).
- Volunteer to help a local foster care program. To find programs near you, go to www.cwla.org/members/members.htm.

Ohio has approximately 13,000 children in foster care and more than 6,000 licensed foster homes. In addition, many children live with grandparents or other relatives when their parents cannot care for them. This kinship care increases stability for children by keeping them closer to their siblings, extended families, neighborhoods and schools.

“National Foster Care Month gives us an opportunity to thank Ohio’s foster parents and kinship caregivers for the compassion, support and love they give to children whose parents temporarily are unable to care for them,” said ODJFS Director Douglas Lumpkin. “We would also like to use this time to encourage more people to consider becoming foster parents, not only to provide temporary shelter for children, but to make a lifelong, positive change in their lives.”

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services develops rules and guidelines to aid counties in implementing programs for children who cannot safely remain in their own homes. For more information, visit <http://jfs.ohio.gov/factsheets/FosterCare.pdf>. For more information about kinship care, go to <http://jfs.ohio.gov/factsheets/KinshipCare.pdf>.