



SAVE OUR CHILDREN COALITION



NEWSLETTER

Catherine Parkins, Editor

SOCC's Summer Web Development Course for CIAO Youth

October, 2009

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This past August, young adults had the opportunity to learn about web-site design as a career through a collaboration with SOCC and CIAO, supported by The United Way.

The six session course—led by Dean Duncan Jones from Trademark Productions—gave an overview to the various aspects of web design: graphic design, coding, database programming and internet marketing. There was an opportunity for participants to build their first website from the material Dean was teaching. Each partici-

pant also received a flash drive with software in order to continue building their websites.

As the course was held at the University of Michigan-Dearborn's Mardigian Library, representatives from UM-Dearborn's Admissions and Financial Aid Offices volunteered their time to present to the CIAO participants. Christopher Tremblay (Admissions) and Sally Foster (Financial Aid) spoke on the feasibility of going to college as an aging-out foster youth, presenting valuable information on how

to apply and afford college.

The participants also had a session at the Environmental Interpretive Center on the UM-Dearborn campus with Dorothy McLeer, Interpretive Naturalist, to take an active look at nature in SE Michigan.

The sessions were concluded with a pizza party and graduation ceremony for the eleven young adults who completed the program.

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Save Our Children Coalition

(SOCC) is a coordinating body which encourages collaboration among established and emerging community groups for Michigan's children in foster care.

Save Our Children Coalition seeks to determine strengths in the foster care system, and supports the development of programs that fill gaps and correct problems.



Faculty and students celebrate graduation in the SOCC/CIAO Summer Web Development Course (above).

Nicholas and Joknieka learning the ins & outs of Search Engine Optimization (below).



Perspectives... with Dwight Wilson

Editor's Note: Dwight Wilson, former Headmaster of Friends School, is working with SOCC. We offer Dwight's "Perspectives" in this newsletter edition.

When we consider foster care prevention, it is necessary to share responsibilities within families. As a part of my understanding of the world, I look back to one evening while I was in high school. My father was completing a form and asked my mother, "How many children do we have?" She replied, "You don't know?" He said, "They're always Mama's baby and Papa's maybe."

She jumped up from the sofa and bit him in the leg. Although he was teasing, she was not. I believe that when it is all said and done, behind a child's birth is the question, "To whom does this child belong?" I also believe that the first line of defense has two branches, one female and one male. The modern move to place all of the responsibility on the mother is both short-sighted and anti tradition. This is especially true among most African-American and Native American peoples who prior to enslavement in Africa and invasion in the Ameri-

cas placed major child rearing responsibilities on the mother's brothers. Thus all men were reared with the understanding that child rearing was something done by both women and men. Shared gender responsibility should be the first line of defense against children entering the foster care system.

"How many children do we have?"

She replied, "You don't know?"

"They're always Mama's baby and Papa's maybe."

I have tried to personally practice my responsibility by being present from the beginning with all four of my sons, and before them, my three brothers. For each of these seven I changed diapers, made formulas, taught to read, visited teachers, gave extra-curricular assignments and disciplined. After my mother died at 44, as her first born, I took in two of my brothers. As my own sons matured, I told them one by one, "If you get someone pregnant and are not prepared to marry, before you even think about giving a child away or stopping a birth, remember that I am

prepared to rear a child until you and the mother are in position to do it yourself and then you can have the child back." Years later, when a nephew and niece found themselves in college and expecting unplanned babies, I told them, "Don't drop out. I am prepared to rear the child as an Uncle until you're ready to rear her or him as a Parent." Knowing I had their back may have helped six of the seven youth mentioned in this paragraph to complete their college degrees. Neither of my parents were able to graduate from high school.

I was not trying to be a hero, only to make it clear that my children, nephews and nieces carry similar amounts of my DNA. They also deserve to have me as a part of their safety net. I grew up with two uncles joining three aunts in making major contributions toward my nurturing. Before his death, one of these uncles served as the primary daytime caregiver for several nephews and nieces, and the other continues as primary caregiver for an orphaned nephew. It is clear in my experience that the world is a better place when men join women in rearing our children.

Growing Up in the Care of Strangers

Several Michiganders and members of the Save Our Children Coalition are featured in *Growing Up in the Care of Strangers: The Experiences, Insights and Recommendations of Eleven Former Foster Kids*, by Waln K. Brown and John R. Seita.

The book features individual's personal experiences and perspec-

tives having been raised in the foster care system.

The book is available for purchase through SOCC Advisory Committee Member (and contributing author) Danita Echols for \$25. She'll also autograph the copy if purchased through her. Danita is able to be reached by e-mail at

Dechols837@aol.com.



Coming Events!

What's going on in the realm of foster care in Southeastern Michigan? Want to learn more, or get involved and you're not sure where to start? Check out these coming events for youth, parents and concerned citizens alike. For even more events taking place, check out our continuously updated website at www.SaveOurChildrenCoalition.org!

October 10th, 2009

Families On The Move, Inc. and Youth Ville's **Youth Summit**

Saturday October 10, 2009
12:30 pm- 5 pm

Raphael B. Johnson
Motivational Speaker

Youth Ville
7375 Woodward Ave.
Detroit, MI.

Invited Speakers:

- * Detroit Health & Wellness Prevention
- * Wayne County Community Health
- * Various Youth Organizations



November 20, 2009

Child's Hope presents **Right to Thrive: Mothers & Infants Promoting Action for a Healthy Start Summit 2009**

Ensuring healthy lives for mothers and babies, the 2009 Summit will address infant mortality reduction. An increasing number of risk factors for our babies demands a comprehensive plan of action. Mark your calendars and plan to share your ideas.

Friday, November 20, 2009 • 8:30 A.M.- 3:30 P.M.

The University of Michigan - Dearborn
19000 Hubbard Drive, Fairlane Center- North, Dearborn, MI 48126
313-583-6401

\$20 per person: Includes all sessions, continental breakfast & lunch

Through December 3, 2009

The Guidance Center presents a new parent support group for parents involved with Child Protective Services:

- * Be guided and supported by parents who went through the same struggles you are going through.
- * Learn and share useful resources and information to navigate the child welfare/foster care systems.
- * Have your questions answered in a safe, supportive and confidential environment.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO RSVP CONTACT QUIENTAE BAKER AT 734-785-7705, EXT. 7267

Note: This group is open to all parents involved with Protective Services (or reunified) in Wayne County, living outside of the City of Detroit. Other groups are available for parents within Detroit. Call for more information.

SOCC Advisory Committee

The SOCC Advisory Committee, representing the many perspectives and “voices” of those who care about the welfare of Michigan’s children in foster care, utilizes the special expertise of many of our supporters in moving the Coalition forward.

The Advisory Committee is composed of the following members:

Gail Bagale, SOCC Interim Director/Volunteer

Brenda Baker-Mbacké, Michigan Foster Care Review Board

David Benjamins, Detroit Institute for Children

Lacea Curtis, The Guidance Center

Paul Duford, Shared Youth Vision Project

Danita Echols, Wayne County Department of Human Services

Rosalind Folman, Developmental Psychologist

Jonnie Hill, CIAO Project

Robert B. Holmes, University of Michigan

Nicole Hoshock, Michigan Department of Human Services

Cameron D. Hosner, Vista Maria

Annette Howard, Faith Communities for Families

Gilda Jacobs, Senator, State of Michigan

Viola King, Legal Aid and Defender Association

Jack Kresnak, Michigan’s Children

Shirley Mann-Gray, Children’s Hospital of Michigan

Mona Perdue, Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative

Kelly Ramsey, 3rd Judicial Circuit Court of Michigan

Trisha Stein, Child’s Hope

Deborah Strong, Great Start Collaborative Wayne

Cynthia Swift, Plymouth-Canton Community Schools

Veda D. Thompkins, Families on the Move

Kate Thoresen, Faith Communities Coalition on Foster Care

Mary Trepanier-Street, University of Michigan-Dearborn

Annemarie Valdez, Child’s Hope

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If you would like to be removed from the Save Our Children Coalition mailing list, please e-mail SOCCProject@umd.umich.edu or call the office at 313.593.5052.