



# SAVE OUR CHILDREN COALITION



## NEWSLETTER

Catherine Parkins, Editor

### Kirk in the Hills' Women of the Kirk addresses foster care at Winter Gathering

*From the Faith Communities Coalition on Foster Care:*

The beautiful Kirk in the Hills Church in Bloomfield Hills was the site of the Winter Gathering hosted by the Women of the Kirk on February 11, 2010. The event included over 75 women from congregations throughout the area. "Better Together", the theme for the evening, addressed foster care, the group's focus for 2010.

Supreme Court Justice Maura Corrigan, a dedicated advocate for children in foster care, was the keynote speaker for the evening. Justice Corrigan, while recognizing that some progress is being made in improving the foster care system in Michigan, stated that there is much yet to be done. For example, while the State of Michigan has made a commitment and is working towards finding stable, permanent living arrangements for children in foster care in a timely fashion, there are thousands of children waiting for permanent placements. On another

front, she encouraged the group to support the passage of state legislation to support youth transitioning from foster care into adulthood (see page 4).

Justice Corrigan encouraged all those in attendance to find a way to help children in foster care. She herself is a mentor to a young girl, and shared her own joy when she asked her if she could be her mentor for the next thousand years!

Also speaking during the evening was Kelly Ruffing, the head of Dream, a mentoring program for a dozen 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders in foster care which is housed on the campus of the Vista Maria organization in Dearborn Heights.

Kelly talked of the benefits to the youths and the rewarding experiences for the volunteer mentors in this program.

Both Justice Corrigan and Ms. Ruffing were inspiring, and the energy and enthusiasm as the women learned about foster care from them

and others in the audience filled the air on this evening. Thank you, Women of the Kirk, for this wonderful program that raised awareness and built momentum in addressing the issues facing our children in foster care!

This recent gathering at the Kirk offers a valuable model for other congregations. Invite members of other congregations to come. Consider hosting a dinner with presentations by some of the speakers from SOCC's Speakers bureau. You'll discover an electrifying evening that unites people of all walks of life to join together on behalf of our most vulnerable and voiceless children.

The goal of the Faith Communities Coalition on Foster Care is to involve 200 congregations by 2012.

Share your ideas with FCCFC Coordinator, Rev. Kate Thoresen at [thoresen@aol.com](mailto:thoresen@aol.com) or (248) 643-8373. or call the SOCC office at (313) 593-5052.

March 2010

VOL 3, Edition 2

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*Save Our Children Coalition* is a broad-based coalition that mobilizes and fosters change in communities to meet the needs of children and families who are in, or in danger of entering, foster care in Southeast Michigan.

# SOCC granted \$60k from The Community Foundation

The Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan has granted Save Our Children Coalition \$60,000 over the next two years to support our work in addressing issues affecting children in foster care. In awarding this grant, the efforts of the many community volunteers (both individuals and organizations) who have carried forward the work of SOCC were recognized and valued. Thank you all, and thank you, Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan!

This grant enables SOCC to hire a paid director for the first time. The position, which will be in the University of Michigan-Dearborn School of Education, will be posted in the next week at [umjobs.org](http://umjobs.org). Interested persons should apply through the [umjobs.org](http://umjobs.org) website.

the future of southeast Michigan. The Foundation works to improve the region's quality of life by connecting those who care with causes that matter.

The Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan is a permanent community endowment built by gifts from thousands of individuals and organizations committed to

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Search the web with GoodSearch.com and shop online with GoodShop.com and you can support the Save Our Children Coalition!

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How can I make a donation to SOCC for **free**?

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Above: Introduced by Stephanie Ranney, Michigan Supreme Court Justice Maura Corrigan speaks at the Women of the Kirk Winter Gathering. Left: Rev. Kate Thoresen (on left) of the Faith Communities Coalition on Foster Care inspires faith groups to be proactive about foster care.

# Perspectives: Words of Wisdom to Ponder

**Editor's Note:** This month, SOCC's Interim Director - Gail Bagale -challenges us with a series of thought-provoking quotations. Enjoy!

*Every child needs at least one adult who is irrationally crazy about him or her.*  
Urie Bronfenbrenner

*Long before the child develops his inner resources for overcoming danger, he is dependent on his parents to satisfy his needs, to relieve him of tension, to anticipate danger, and to remove the source of a disturbance.*  
Selma Fraiberg, *The Magic Years*

*Children are born with a generous disposition. The need to give is just as vital as the need to receive. If a child senses that his or her gifts are being rejected, the child feels bad and unlovable.*  
—Ian Suttie, *The Origins of Love and Hate*

*Maladjustments in children should be considered merely as stages in the process of learning to be mature.*  
John J.B. Morgan, *The Psychology of the Unadjusted School Child*

*Delinquent children have a greater spirit of adventure.*  
Jane Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*

*The task of the educator lies in seeing that the child does not confound good with immobility and evil with activity.*  
Maria Montessori

*Our central task relates to the restoration and enhancement of this old and value-laden concept, dignity---or the unique value of each person.*  
Gisela Konopka, *Dignity Spells Mental Health*

*Youngsters looking for guidance and help find few adults who treat them as equals...the more they need help and guidance, the more they are pushed around, punished, discriminated against, and made to feel worthless.*  
Rudolf Dreikurs, *Social Equality*

*Children are not future citizens. They are citizens in embryo.*  
Janusz Krocak, *The Child's Right to Respect*

## Photos and YouTube and Facebook, oh my!

The SOCC website, [SaveOurChildrenCoalition.org](http://SaveOurChildrenCoalition.org), has added new features recently!

Be sure to visit our new Photo Gallery with photos from past SOCC initiatives and activities like our 2009 Summer Web Development Course for youth from CIAO and photos from past SOCC conferences.

SOCC also has its very own YouTube Channel (accessible from the website) currently featuring video footage from the Women of the Kirk foster care meeting.

Check out SOCC's new Facebook page and become a fan!

Finally, in the coming weeks, the Faith Communities Coalition on

Foster Care will have its own dedicated space on the SOCC website! The Faith Communities section will include information about participating groups, coming events, photos and minutes from Faith Communities Coalition on Foster Care gatherings.

# Make an Immediate Impact!

Contact Representative Dudley Spade, Chair, and members of the Michigan House of Representatives Department of Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee concerning the proposed \$7 Million in the state budget to obtain federal matching funds for foster care youth to age 20. Members of the Subcommittee are:

Rep. Dudley Spade, Chair, DHS Appropriations Subcommittee) (D-Franklin Township)  
Rep. Rashida Tlaib, (Majority Vice Chair, DHS Appropriations Subcommittee) (D-Detroit)  
Rep. Vincent Gregory (D-Southfield)  
Rep. Fred Miller (D-Mt. Clemens)  
Rep. Alma Wheeler Smith (D-Salem Township)  
Rep. Dave Agema, Minority Vice Chair, DHS Appropriations Subcommittee) (RGrandville)  
Rep. John Proos (R-St. Joseph)

A letter can be mailed to all of the Representatives at:

P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

(The House of Representatives mail service will sort the letters for the Reps)

## **SAMPLE LETTER**

Representative Dudley Spade, Chairman  
Michigan Department of Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee  
P.O. Box 20014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Representative Spade:

As (identify yourself---your position, your community/professional role, affiliations, etc.), I am writing to you to express my growing concern for the welfare of the foster care children in the State of Michigan. The Save Our Children Coalition is a growing grass roots movement, which includes the Faith Communities Coalition on Foster Care, based in the University of Michigan-Dearborn's School of Education. This movement includes the congregations of a number of churches, business, medical, human service and legal professionals, organizations, and many community volunteers. The purpose of this group is to educate and motivate communities to respond to the pressing needs of foster children, youth and families.

I view the needs of foster care children as critical at this particular time in our state's history. Our DHS service agencies are informing us that there are 4,000 children waiting to be adopted in Michigan and every year there are 400 children that "age out" of the system. In other words, children with limited ability to fend for themselves are turned out on the street with no means of support. We must take a stand to do better for these children not only for their sake but for our communities and our state.

The critical needs have been identified and many are willing to volunteer with time, professional expertise and money to assist these children, but the massive needs cannot be addressed without your assistance. It is crucial that we work together to make the system work for these children in partnership with you, DHS, our faith communities and private organizations.

I applaud you and all the members of the House DHS Appropriations Subcommittee for including funding in your DHS Budget bill, HB 5882 for \$7 million to obtain matching Federal Matching Funds to extend foster care and guardianship subsidy and services to age 20. On behalf of the children who have no voice, I want to thank you for your support and offer my support in helping to keep this bill on the table and retain it throughout the appropriations process.

Please keep me informed as to hearings and public meetings in regard to this bill so that we may lend our voices to this vital legislation.

Sincerely,

*(Our thanks to Kate Thoresen and Yvonne Rundell for spearheading this initiative).*

## 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**, Workforce Programs Manager: Youth, Southeast Michigan Community Alliance

**Danita Echols**, Wayne County Department of Human Services

**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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