

*The OEC is a statewide Coalition of low-income people who work to bring about economic and social justice through public policy. The OEC provides information, education and training. The OEC organizes to make the State of Ohio a better place for all Ohioans.*

## **Kinship Care Bill in Ohio House November 2009, H.B. 197**

H.B. 197 includes the following policies that Contact Center and Ohio Empowerment Coalition are advocating for to improve kinship care and foster care policies in Ohio:

- Requires all County Children Services to notify grandparents and other adult relatives if a child is being placed in foster care within 30 days of child's removal from parents
- Encourages placement of siblings together if in foster care
- Extends Kinship Permanency Incentive (KPI) payments (special kinship care cash assistance program) in Ohio from 3 years eligibility to 5 years.

· In addition HB 197 requires Ohio Department of Job & Family Services to study feasibility of paying kinship caregivers same income payments as foster care providers. ODJFS will be required to complete study by Dec. 31, 2010.

***Ohio Empowerment Coalition's position is that kinship caregivers should receive the same amount as foster care providers.***

**For more information call the Ohio Empowerment Coalition at 1-877-862-5179 or 513/381-4242**

# 15 Facts on Kinship Care

1. Kinship care is a situation where a relative, usually a grandparent, or a close family friend provides temporary or permanent care because the parent is unable to do so.
2. Nationally more than 6 million children are living in households headed by grandparents.
3. In Ohio 95,909 grandparents are primary caregivers for their grandchildren.
4. Kinship care often allows a child to maintain bonds and relationships with family.
5. Oftentimes, kinship care allows a child to stay in the same community and school.
6. Studies are showing that children in kinship care, as opposed to foster care, have more stability in their placement, better school attendance, higher academic achievement, and fewer disciplinary problems.
7. 60% of kinship caregivers in Ohio are women.
8. The average age of a kinship caregiver in Ohio is 55 years old.
9. 39% of Ohio's kinship caregivers have had the children for 5 or more years.
10. 39% of Ohio children living with grandparents are on some form of public assistance.
11. 31% of Ohio children living with grandparents are living below the poverty level.
12. More than half of Ohio's Ohio Works First caseload are child-only cases, with a majority in kinship care households. Exceptions include mothers on SSI.
13. Ohio Works First benefit checks (child only) are \$259 per month for the first child, \$96 for the second child and \$79 for a third child.
14. In Ohio, the number of children under age 18 in foster care at any time hovers around 29,000. If all of the children in kinship care were moved to foster care, with its average benefit amount of \$600 per child per month, the foster care system would be fiscally overwhelmed.

***15. The need to do kinship care could happen to just about everyone, as most people have families or close friends who might need them in a crisis.***

(Sources): Children's Defense Fund-Ohio, Cincinnati Enquirer)

***For information on Contact Center/ Ohio Empowerment Coalition's "Safe & Stable Families Campaign for Kinship Care and an Economic Safety Net" call 513/381-4242.***

## VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD

On November 5th at the Contact Center's Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, Rekeil Lewis was named "Volunteer of the Year" for his valuable volunteer contribution to the Contact Center.

Rekeil states, " I am Rekeil Lewis who volunteers to help myself and other poor people like me. I came to know the Contact Center from being a humble and poor man and looking for provisions to be helped. The Contact Center has rendered material assistance to me and good gifts that have been a blessing in my life. Helping the poor is what the Contact Center is about. For you see, God defends the just cause of helping the poor."

Rekeil goes on to say, "The Contact Center is a great place to volunteer! If you have compassion for the poor, why don't you join us?

We can use more volunteers. Remember that the wealthy have many friends, but the friends of the poor man desert him. He who has compassion on the poor lends to the Lord. And the Lord will repay us for our good deeds. The memory



*Rekeil with his partner, Memory*

of the Just will be blessed and may God bless the Contact Center! United all of us working together can make a serious, determined effort to get justice & compassion for the Poor!"

## **CONTACT CENTER'S HOLIDAY TOY SALE**

**Nov. 23 - Dec. 23**



### **Needed:**

**New and gently used toys,  
items for all ages, household goods.**

Toy Sale benefits the organizing work of Contact Center:  
for a stronger economic safety net, health care reform,  
kinship care and improved neighborhood school!!

**Call 513/381-4242**

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## **Benefit Rights Advocacy Group (BRAG) Meetings**

Thursday, Dec. 3  
12:00 Noon Potluck at Contact Center

# CONTACT CENTER MEMBERSHIP

The Contact Center is a non-profit community based organization of low and moderate income persons, based in Over-the-Rhine. We believe that justice that begins in neighborhoods can challenge the conscience of the whole city. Located in one of Cincinnati's poorest neighborhoods, the Contact Center has a forty-one year history of organizing on neighborhood issues of housing, improving neighborhood schools, and an economic safety net, both local and statewide. Our vision is for a better life for all low-income persons in our city, our state and nationally.

Your contribution will support our ongoing educational programs, community outreach, and social action work. Members receive updates on legislation and action alerts. Hamilton County residents are eligible for a Holiday Food basket drawing each year.

## Membership

**Join today and become a member of an organization  
that will change the system.  
Your support is important and needed.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$5.00 low-income

\_\_\_\_\_ \$15.00 non low-income

\_\_\_\_\_ \$15.00 Grassroots organization

\_\_\_\_\_ \$50.00 Non-Profit organization

\_\_\_\_\_ Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank You for Your Support!!!*

## **National Conference to Create Living Wage Jobs**

*by William "Will" Wallace*

I recently attended a two-day forum entitled the National Conference to Create Living Wage Jobs. It was held November 13-14, 2009 at the Interchurch Center in New York City. I must say at the outset I thought this conference would be a "yawner." However, I was pleasantly surprised. First of all it was a two-part conference. That immediately made it more interesting. The first day was spent at the Interchurch Center listening to people who teach. The second day, the conference held a meeting at a nearby union hall called District 37, AFSCME, AFL-CIO where we welcomed union officials and organizers. I'll first say a little about the first part of the forum.

One of the speakers was a Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. His name was Robert Pollen and he believes the way you meet human needs in this country is simple: Eliminate investment in fossil fuels because it's bad for the environment . Also discontinue investment in the military because , in his view and in the view of many, military spending is part of the reason we're in this severe economic downturn.

At the same time Mr. Pollen believes increased investment in social programs such as healthcare, child care, education (the same three issues Contact Center champions everyday !!!) and "clean energy" would help employers in America be an important source in new job creation. ....

**.....Living Wage Conference, continued page 7**

.....**Living Wage Conference**, *from page 6*

(He believes) that public investment in job creation is more stable than private investment. A good example of public investment in job creation was CETA, also known as the Comprehensive Employment Training Act . This was a Public Works Project enacted in the 1970's by then President Jimmy Carter. I was hired under CETA and worked for five years as a laborer for the city of Cincinnati Park Area Maintenance Dept. Some of our areas of responsibility were the West End and Over-the Rhine. It was a good-paying job and a job I liked for what it's worth.

There were several other speakers who shared job creation proposals distinguishing which ones worked in the past and what may work in the future in terms of quality living-wage jobs.

The second part of the conference dealt with Trade Unions and Community Organizers as it relates to job creation. Here you heard commentary from a panel of labor and community activist as well as union officials. One of the community activist who is on Contact Center staff held a seat on the panel. Her name is Cassandra Barham. Cassandra is the Contact Center office manager, is a parent, grandparent and great grandparent and was very outspoken about her work in welfare rights and her continued fight on behalf of low and moderate-income people and in getting them the help they need. She talked about kinship care which involves grandparents taking care of grandkids. Many of these grandparents are forced to go back to work and supplement their income to help care for their children's children because the allowance from the state is so meager. Our organization continues to join the fight with Cassandra in this effort.

The conference turned out to be informative with lively debate and discourse and people expressing differences of opinion.