



Warren - Forest Counties

Economic Opportunity Council

Your Community Action Agency

Summer 2007
NEWSLETTER
Volume III, Issue II

Warren–Forest Counties
Economic Opportunity Council
1209 Pennsylvania Avenue West
PO Box 547
Warren, PA 16365
(814) 726-2400
FAX (814) 723-0510
(800) 231-1797
www.wfcaa.org

In this issue:

CCIS: Help for Working Parents	1
A Note from Our Executive Director	
CCIS News	2
Tips for a Great Summer	3
Program Notes/Staff Notes	4

“All of my staff are working parents, so we all have experienced child care issues.”

Tish

Montgomery,
CCIS Director

CCIS: HELP FOR WORKING PARENTS

You’re a struggling parent with young children, trying to support your family. What is the biggest barrier you face? If you’re like most parents in Warren and Forest Counties, child care—especially affordable and quality child care—is bound to come up.

“All of my staff are working parents, so we all have experienced child care issues,” says **Tish Montgomery**, Director of EOC’s Child Care Information Services (CCIS). “In addition, we all have background in child care or early childhood education, so we really understand the resources that are out there, whether you are a parent or a child care provider.”

Since 1991, CCIS has served as a resource and referral program for all questions, issues, and concerns about child care in Warren and Forest counties. Some of the specific services that CCIS provides include referrals and information for all licensed and registered child care facilities, consumer education materials on how to recognize quality child care, assistance to providers and those interested in becoming providers with information on legal and training requirements, and subsidized assistance for income-eligible families needing assistance with child care costs.

But that’s only part of it. “Parents really call us about everything,” Tish explains. “We let the community know about all the resources that are out there, not just for child care, but for whatever you need.”

One thing many parents don’t realize is how many of them are eligible for child care assistance. “Our income requirements are a lot higher than a lot of other EOC programs,” Tish elaborates, “so that even if you aren’t eligible somewhere else, you might be eligible here.”

Tish has been with EOC for almost 18 years. Other persons on her staff include **Lynn Carlberg** (almost 10 years), **Cheryl White** (almost 18 years), and **Brenda Bortz** (1 year).

In addition to their direct work with parents and child care providers, Tish and her staff are actively involved with the Early Care & Education Coalition. (The Coalition’s Project Director is EOC staffer **Beth Fantaskey**.) “One thing we’re really committed to is school readiness,” Tish says.

“We want to make sure that kids in child care are ready and eager to learn when they get to Kindergarten. So we meet regularly with early care providers and folks from the public school system and to make sure that happens.”

For more information, contact the CCIS office at (814) 726-1361.



A Note From Our Executive Director

Welcome to our Warren-Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council Newsletter.

As usual, we have a lot of things happening. One exciting new development: EOC, with funding support from the Community Foundation of Warren County, will be conducting a social service needs assessment for Warren County. Where are the overlaps, where can services be streamlined? Alternately, where are the gaps—the populations that are underserved or not served appropriately? That's what we're hoping to find out. We're also working with the Local Housing Option Team (L-HOT) of Warren and Forest Counties in a survey of area mental health consumers. What we're interested in finding out is more about the current housing situations of mental health consumers, and where there may be additional unmet needs for supportive housing. As part of that process, we are looking into the feasibility of a Fair Weather Lodge somewhere within the county. In other housing news, our transitional housing project for domestic violence survivors is finally moving into the design and rehabilitation stage. On the non-housing front, the Community Foundation of Warren County has provided financial assistance for the development of a revolving loan program for local microenterprises. EOC's Strategic Plan was approved by our Board on June 11. We're thrilled that our Regional Main Street program will be receiving funding soon, and we're eagerly looking forward to moving on that project as soon as we can. Last but not least, our thanks to Highmark for their generous donation of new computer equipment.

ROBERT RAIBLE

This Newsletter was financed by a grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.

Child Care Information Services (CCIS) News

The CCIS staff have undertaken a new project effective May 1, 2007. The Office of Child Development and Early Learning, in conjunction with the Office of Income Maintenance, decided to transfer the responsibility of reimbursing child care providers exclusively to the CCIS.



Shelly Teska's Head Start class visits the Brokenstraw Airport in May

The County Assistance Office will continue to determine the eligibility of families to receive assistance for child care costs. Once that is established, the family will work with the CCIS for referral services and payments to the providers.

Training for staff was extensive over a three month period. Communication between the two offices was critical to make this a successful venture. As with any new project, there were a few minor situations to overcome, but each week seems to get easier.

The enrollments for subsidized and CAO child care payments have increased on a regular basis this year. There have been 527 children funded with 133 providers in the two counties. In addition to funding, the staff have assisted 180 families with referrals and situations relating to child care.

TIPS FOR A GREAT SUMMER

KEEPING COOL... WITHOUT COSTLY AIR CONDITIONING



From About.com:

Keeping cool during the hot summer months doesn't always require dropping the air conditioner down to 70 degrees. There are ways you can keep yourself cool without having to increase your energy use.

Drink plenty of fluids - Keeping yourself hydrated is the body's natural way of keeping itself cool. Choose your drinks wisely by sticking with water, fruit juices, vegetable juices, and sports drinks. Caffeinated beverages and alcohol contribute to dehydration.

Eat small meals - The Red Cross states that eating smaller meals more frequently can help lower the heat from your body's metabolism. They also advocate avoiding high amounts of protein can help as well, as protein increases this effect.

Dress appropriately - Wear light-colored, loosely-woven clothing. Cotton is the best fabric for absorbing moisture and keeping the body cool. Also, wear a hat to shade your head.

Use cool water - Dampen a cool towel and wrap it around your neck. Applying a cool towel or ice to where you have a pulse point will also help cool you down. Lastly, you can mist yourself with cool water to lower your temperature and keep cool.

Putting these tips to use can help save energy when the temperature rises. By making yourself naturally more comfortable in your environment, it becomes easier to set the air conditioner to that magical number of 78 degrees.

Getting kids to eat right can always be a challenge. Here's an easy and nutritious summer recipe from Penn State Cooperative Extension and Outreach. Bonus: Your kids will have fun making it with you!

Watermelon Pops

Ingredients:

1/2 seedless watermelon

Equipment:

Baking sheet

Wax paper

Knife

About 20 wooden sticks with rounded ends

Plastic wrap or aluminum foil

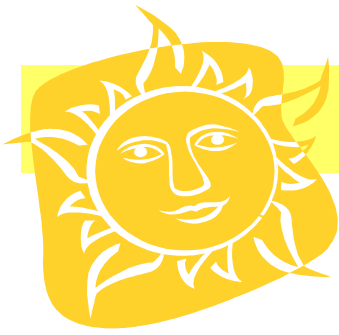
Zip-top bags

Directions:

1. Cover baking sheet with wax paper
2. Cut the watermelon into triangular wedges approximately 1-1/2 inches thick.
3. Make a cut in the center of each wedge of melon rind about the size of a wooden stick end.
4. Insert a wooden stick into the rind of each wedge.
5. Place wedges on the baking sheet lined with wax paper.
6. Place in the freezer for 2 hours or until the watermelon is firm.
7. When frozen, wrap each wedge in plastic wrap or aluminum foil and place in a zip-top bag.
8. Store in freezer.

Nutritional facts: Each serving has just 45 calories, and 25% of your daily vitamin C!





Program Notes - Staff Notes

Staff Changes

Crystal Branstrom, a Family Resource Assistant (FRA) with the EOC Head Start program and EOC employee for over 20 years,

has left for a new position with the County Assistance Office. Best of luck to you, Crystal, and we'll miss you!

EOC also welcomes two new employees: **Chad Ressler** and **Melissa Brooks**. Chad will be working as a case manager/job developer for EOC's employment and training programs. Melissa will be working as a job readiness/workshop coordinator and Community Services case manager.

Enrollment Now Open For Family Savings Account (FSA) Program

The Family Savings Account (FSA) Program helps people with moderate to low income build assets. Participants earn one dollar for every dollar they put away, as long as its for an approved goal. Approved goals include, but are not necessarily limited to, homeownership, home improvement/repair, post-secondary education, self-employment, a car purchase, or inmate reentry initiative expenses. Goals are designed to help clients gain self-sufficiency and asset development, and encourage regular savings. Clients must save a minimum of \$10 a week for one year and one day in an approved FSA account. Please contact EOC Community Services at 726-2400 for more information and assistance.

Are You Behind on a Mortgage Payment?

Having a home is a dream for many people. But when times are tough and you fall behind on your mortgage payment, your dream can become a nightmare. You are faced with a financial crisis. Which bills do I pay first...mortgage, gas, electric, water, phone? Your decision could put you into foreclosure, causing you to lose your home.

EOC Community Services may be able to help you before you get to foreclosure. We can help you prioritize your finances. We are here to help support you through this crisis.

If you unfortunately have received your Act 91 foreclosure notice, EOC Community Services can assist you in completing a HEMAP (Homeowner Emergency Mortgage Assistance

Program) application. The program is sponsored by Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency and may provide you with a loan to assist you through your time of crisis. The application temporarily stops the foreclosure process while you file your application with PHFA.

Please contact EOC Community Services at 726-2400 for more information and assistance.

Opportunity! Opportunity! Opportunity!

Be a Paid Work Experience Site

What is Paid Work Experience?

TANF clients who are receiving cash assistance from the Department of Public Welfare need to meet a 20-30 hour per week work requirement. Paid Work Experience involves a TANF client working for a government agency or non-profit agency to meet this work requirement. Beginning July 1, for-profit agencies will also be eligible sites. Wages are paid by the EOC Employment and Training Program.

What type of job would be good Paid Work Experience?

Janitorial, custodial, clerical, and kitchen work all provide excellent skills needed by clients to secure unsubsidized employment.

How many hours can a Paid Work Experience client work?

Paid Work Experience clients work a minimum of 5 hours a week to a maximum of 20 hours per week.

What is the goal of Paid Work Experience?

The goal of Paid Work is to allow the client to meet their 20-30 hour per week work requirement and gain some experience and possibly a reference. While involved in the Paid Work Experience, clients will also be required to do job searching. With the assistance of their case manager, the client's goal is to secure 20-30 hours per week unsubsidized employment as soon as possible.

Do you think Paid Work Experience could work for your organization? If so, contact EOC Community Services at 726-2400 for more information and assistance.

Recent Donations and Funding Awards

- \$10,000 from the Community Foundation of Warren County for the Grow a New Enterprise (GANE) revolving loan program.
- \$12,000 from the Community Foundation of Warren County for a social services needs assessment for Warren County.
- \$42,350 from the DCED Community Revitalization Program for the Warren County Regional Main Street Program (our thanks to Senator Mary Jo White!). In addition, \$50,000 in a verbal commitment from the DCED New Communities-Main Street Program.
- Seven computers from Highmark for EOC's Employment and Training Computer Labs. Thank you for your generosity!