

# Caring Times

A publication of Caring About Kids, Inc.

Nov. 2008



## Calling all Foster Parents, Kinship Parents and Caseworkers... DO YOU KNOW A SPECIAL FOSTER CHILD?

In years past, Caring About Kids has given foster children unable to live with their biological parents some fun memories. Whether it was a week at Camp Care-A-Lot with their siblings, an outing at Michigan Adventure or a trip to Cedar Point with their foster or kinship family, we have tried to make a difference in their lives. Now, we need your help!

Do you know a child who would like to do something special next summer? Would a weekend at Great Wolf Lodge with his/her foster or kinship family be something he/she would like to do? Do you know someone who could benefit from a 10 speed bike or a cell phone? Tell us why you think this child deserves something special. Give us as much information as you can: name of child, name of foster or kinship family, age, and contact information.

To nominate your foster child, email us at [caring-aboutkidsinc.org](mailto:caring-aboutkidsinc.org) or call (517) 485-2646.

The Board of Directors of Caring About Kids, Inc.

(The names of foster children and their families will not be used in any public manner. Confidentiality will apply to your nomination.)

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## Newsletter update....

We have changed to a quarterly format for our newsletter and hope to bring you more direct information about how our resources have helped foster children. We also plan to put our newsletter on our website and to establish an email list to electronically communicate our good news to you. If you would like a copy of the newsletter by email, please visit our website: [www.caringaboutkidsinc.org](http://www.caringaboutkidsinc.org) and send us an email indicating that you would like to have the next edition emailed. We will continue to publish hard copies of our newsletter because we understand that not everyone's life revolves around a computer!

### Article Contributors:

Donald Allen Jr., President; Sandy Cain, Website and Newsletter Committee; Wendy Campau, member of the Board of Directors; Jean Hoffman, Golf Committee Chair and Member of the Board of Directors; Rose Houk, Newsletter/Publicity Committee Chair and member of the Board of Directors; Karen Smith, Newsletter/Publicity Committee; Melissa Threadgould, Vice President and Adventures Committee, Chair.

## A League of Their Own

They've trained...for years. They've checked their equipment, they've done their stretches. They're positioned at the starting line. They're ready to deliver...Christmas gifts for Ingham County foster children.

Who is this team? Are they champions? The answers are: The Junior League of Lansing and yes. They are the champions of children who will never know what the League has done to bring smiles to their faces and warmth to their hearts at Holiday time. This civic group of 120 plus members has played a key role in putting the "Merry" in Christmas for our 360+ Ingham County foster care children under the supervision of the state for more years than the current chairs of the League's "Shop 'til You Drop" committee can remember.

No one seems to remember, for certain, how long they've been flexing their collective shopping muscles...but "Shop 'til You Drop" is now clearly a fundamental part of their community service game plan.

Armed with \$15,000.00 provided by Caring About Kids, the League-ers hit the stores in search of items, and bargains, to fulfill the needs and desires of foster children who are identified by their caseworkers and their foster parents. They shop for gifts requested by the children themselves. This is a real team effort between two great groups, CAK and the Junior League. With teams like that at bat for them, how could the kids not score?

The 60 League committee members not only shop for six children each, they are renowned for adding their own reserves to augment their team's efforts, and they negotiate the best terms they can with retailers who want to be part of the team. Then, as if the score were not high enough, they wrap it all up by decorating their holiday loot in festive paper and ribbon and deliver it to the Ingham County Department of Human Services. It is truly a site to see...multiple vans just brimming with holiday cheer. If you want to see the final inning this year, drop by the Ingham County office in the afternoon of November 26 and gaze at the enormous pile of good will and holiday cheer just waiting to go home to the children.

When asked how the League knows that their efforts were successful, Committee co-chair Rosalie Bellingar said, "When every child on our list who needs a gift gets one!" That is a true sign of a team player.

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<http://www.caringaboutkidsinc.org>



## THE SEASON OF GIVING



Economic calamities dominate the headlines and threaten not only the prosperity of individuals and families, but even our individual sense of financial security. Nowhere is the feeling of insecurity more acute than in those areas that rely on the publicly funded system of social support for many of our children. Caring About Kids (CAK) mission is to provide for children that have been placed in foster care through no fault of their own.

The State can not afford to provide items that your generosity can help to supply.

Children in foster care have often suffered unimaginable abuse and heart wrenching neglect. This time of the year contains holidays which celebrate those gifts that we have received and frequently encourages us to shower our charges with gifts. At CAK, we endeavor to provide Ingham County's children with tokens of joy to make their time in foster placement more bearable. We can not do this, however, without your help. Please consider making a donation to CAK so that foster children know that there are people in their community who care. If you already routinely contribute to CAK, please consider increasing your contribution in this season of giving. Regardless of how often or how much you give, please accept our heartfelt thanks on behalf of all the foster children in Ingham County.



Don Allen, Jr., President, CAK

### *Welcome to the Board Room!*

In the next several editions of Caring Times we will profile members of the Board of Directors for Caring About Kids, Inc. In this column, you will meet each of the members of the Board and its officers, the people behind Caring About Kids, Inc.

#### **Donald L. Allen, Jr.**



Donald L. Allen has been a member of our Board since 1996. He has been President since 2001. Mr. Allen is an attorney and since June 5, 2006, has been Director of Office of Drug Control Policy (ODCP), a gubernatorial appointment. Prior to that, he was a member of Governor Granholm's legal staff with responsibilities for emergency management, homeland security, civil rights and criminal justice. As Director of ODCP, his primary focus is the reduction and prevention of underage drinking and alcohol-related vehicle crashes. Mr. Allen graduated from Wayne State University Law School in 1983 and in 1988 became a member of the Michigan Attorney General's staff where he served until 2005 when he joined the Governor's legal staff. Mr. Allen and his wife, Deborah and two sons, Charles and Donald III, live in Lansing.

When asked why he joined the Board of CAK, Mr. Allen indicated he joined CAK because of the desire to give back to young people in the manner his community had given to him. Mr. Allen's most memorable moments with CAK are being on the bus with the siblings during that first trip to camp in 2001 and

#### **Melissa Threadgould**

Melissa Threadgould is the vice-president of Caring About Kids and one of the organization's most ardent supporters. She is a graduate of Michigan State University where she earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and a Master's degree in Social Work. Melissa and her husband Phil have two children and live in Holt. Ms. Threadgould is employed as a family therapist at Clinton, Eaton, Ingham Community Mental Health where she works with families that have children ages 3-6. Half of her case load consists of foster children.



Ms. Threadgould admits that it is her work with foster children and a tear jerker story from Margaret Grost, at a National Association of Social Workers meeting, that led to her involvement with Caring About Kids. She has a soft spot for children and hates to see them have to do without the things that make childhood special, just because the state doesn't have the financial resources to provide them. Since she became involved with Caring About Kids, Ms. Threadgould has been actively involved with Share the Music and Camp Care-a-Lot, and is currently the chair of the Adventures Committee.

#### **If your address has changed:**

Please keep CAK informed of any address changes. We like to keep our mailing list up to date and will appreciate a call at (517) 485-2646 if your mailing information changes. Thank you.

<http://www.caringaboutkidsinc.org>



**New CAK Website Coming Soon!**

The CAK Board approved funding for the development of a new and improved CAK website in May, 2008. The Cyber-Built Company has been working with members of CAK to put together a comprehensive site. The new site will provide the public with information and ease in making contributions. It will also assist Ingham County and CAK volunteers with online input of data, management of data and workflow, and provide a mechanism for timely reporting and thanking our donors. No longer will we have to depend solely on snail mail and faxes to pass information.

The new site will provide our supporters and others interested in helping foster children in Ingham County with:

- information about us,
- how to contact CAK,
- a list of the board members,
- an explanation of the programs we are involved in,
- success stories,
- mechanisms for making donations (on-line donations with PayPal, address for mailing a check, appropriate forms, etc.),
- a calendar of current events, and
- newsletters from 1999 through the present



We are looking forward to the new look and feel of our website coming online in December, 2008. We will still be at <http://www.caringaboutkidsinc.org> so be sure to check us out!

**The Times They Are A Changing**

As our founder, Margaret Grost is well known for reminding us, "our greatest strength is that CAK is all volunteer and our greatest weakness is that we are all volunteer".

As an all volunteer group, we have many skills and talents at our ready disposal. And while those talents are great and diverse, they do not necessarily include marketing ourselves and our commitment to the needs of foster children to those who can help us achieve our goals. As a result, our Publicity Committee, chaired by Rose Houk, has embraced our weaknesses and is in hot pursuit of assistance from previously untapped "volunteer" resources. We hope you will begin to see the fruits of our labor as we update through face lifts to our website and publications...and much, much more.

**...and speaking of changes...**

The annual fall auction at the DHS State Offices in the Grand Tower has been rescheduled to Spring 2009, which gives us plenty of time to find new committee members to take on this wonderful event. We are looking for volunteers in the following committees: Bake Sale; Lunch; Donations; Raffle; Logistics; Set up and tear down; Publicity; and Accounting.

We would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank Julie Horn Alexander and Nancy Ridley for all their hard work and faithful shepherding of this historic fundraiser for children for many years past.

In closing, we hope to never rest on our laurels alone when there are so many new challenges and opportunities that await us. 'The times they are a changing'... and so is Caring About Kids. Stay tuned for how in future issues!

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### Outreach...

We will reach out more to our local media and to community groups to share our mission and our children's stories. We will also seek more groups/businesses and organizations to partner with us on behalf of our foster children.

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### Say Hello to H.E.L.O.

The H.E.L.O. club (Haslett, East Lansing and Okemos) is a civic-minded women's group founded in 1961. It helps newcomers to the area and retirees become involved in civic, service and social activities throughout the greater Lansing area. Each year the members select a charity for their Community Service outreach.

Last spring, H.E.L.O. club member Patricia J. Cleland, nominated Caring About Kids, Inc. for consideration as the charity for 2008-2009. In May, CAK was notified they had been selected to receive the proceeds of the club's fundraising activities for the whole year.

CAK Board member Jean Hoffman was the guest speaker at the H.E.L.O. club's welcome back luncheon on September 16, 2008. With 80 club members present, she was able to share the commitment and mission of CAK. During this meeting \$146.50 was donated to CAK. Additional donations are expected throughout the year.

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### Strike Up The Band!

We have instruments! All kinds of instruments are available free for foster children. Do you know a foster child who wants to take music lessons but doesn't have an instrument?

Through the generous donation of instruments from you, our caring community, and the generous services of Marshall Music we have them to give away.

Marshall Music receives the instrument and repairs or revitalizes it for us and we store it until a foster child needs one. If you have an instrument that you would like to donate, take it to the basement of Marshall Music and tell them you want to donate it to CARING ABOUT KIDS.

Call 517-485-2646 or go to our website at [www.caringaboutkidsinc.org](http://www.caringaboutkidsinc.org) to find out how to get that instrument for your foster child today! It's simple to do.

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### To contact CAK:

You can call us at **517-485-2646**. We have a voice mailbox system that we check twice weekly and a board member will return your call. Our web site at [caringaboutkidsinc.org](http://caringaboutkidsinc.org) has e-mail capability. Feel free to leave us a message, and we will return your call or answer your e-mail as soon as possible.



### Whitmer Foundation Gives Generously Again Meijer Corporation Adds to Gift

Caring About Kids, Inc has found a truly generous alliance with Lansing's own Whitmer family. Dick Whitmer and his children, Richard Whitmer and Senator Gretchen Whitmer, have once again provided Caring About Kids with \$25,000 to use for clothing for our foster children who are in placements where funding for clothing allowances is not available. These children live primarily in Kinship Care. The Meijer Corporation has helped us to stretch those dollars even farther!

With this funding, Caring About Kids was able to secure 10% off coupons for apparel items and an additional 5% discount on the purchase of gift cards from the Meijer Corporation. Ultimately, over \$26,000 of gift cards were purchased with the Whitmer donation. These cards and coupons are now being distributed to foster children in care who do not have access to state or federal funds for clothing. Words cannot express our sincere gratitude to the Whitmer family and the Meijer Corporation for their commitment to this need and their generosity to the foster children of our community.

### What is Kinship Care?

Children who do not qualify for state and federal funding for clothing are in what is called Kinship placements. The children live with family members rather than in a foster home. Kinship, or relative placements, are not licensed foster homes and are not eligible for foster care payments or assistance with the care of their children. Many of these children live with Grandparents or older siblings who can provide the basics, but cannot afford any extras for them. CAK is committed to work to provide the basic necessities for these children as well as those in actual licensed foster care.

## Your Donations are Appreciated!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to be used as indicated below:

General Donation                      In Honor of: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Holiday Gift                                      In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

**I would like to donate \$100 a year for the next 10 years. My first year (2008) donation is enclosed.**                      Notify: \_\_\_\_\_

Make Checks Payable to: Caring About Kids, Inc.                      Mail to: CAK, PO Box 27014, Lansing, MI 48909-7014



## 2008 Golf Event

The 2008 CAK golf outing held at the Wheatfield Valley Golf Course in Williamston on August 1, raised **\$8,623.24** for our communities' foster children! Thank you to all of our golf sponsors/donors, prize donors, golfers, volunteers and the golf committee for your contributions and helping us make this a memorable day for everyone involved with the event. A special thanks goes to Trey Herrington at Wheatfield Valley Golf Course for being an excellent host for the annual golf outing.

On-the-course events included; closest to the pin, longest drive (for men and women) and best team score for men, women and mixed teams. During dinner, the door prizes and gift baskets were awarded and 50/50 raffle drawings were held. The 50/50 winner, Norm Charles, received \$320.00. Norm generously donated his winnings to CAK. Thanks, Norm. And many thanks to **Allegiant Air** who donated two round trip tickets to Orlando for our travel basket.

Special recognition goes out to our top corporate sponsors: **Compuware Corporation, Accident Fund Insurance Company of America and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan**. Our special thanks to David Muhleck of **Allegra Print & Imaging in Okemos** for donating the design, layout and printing of the golf registration brochures.

The golf committee members were: Bruce Augenstein, Dave Buck, Norm Charles, Tom Fruechtenicht, Jean & Chuck Hoffman and Peggy Thodis.

Volunteers on the day of the outing were: Wendy Campau, Susan & Sam Mallory, Melissa Threadgould, Karen Conroy, Dave Russell, John Waugh and Kathy Costas. The success of the event depends on excellent volunteers who gave their time and energy to ensure the day ran smoothly.

## THANK YOU

to the following individuals and businesses for donating prizes for this year's event:

### ALLEGIANT AIR

Bruce Augenstein  
 Dave Buck  
 Norm Charles  
 The Cigar Connoisseur  
 Douglas J  
 Hawk Hollow Golf Properties  
 Tish Heath  
 Jennifer Hodges  
 Jean & Chuck Hoffman  
 Rose Houk  
 Tootie Johnson  
 Lansing Country Club  
 Sue London  
 Lansing Lugnuts  
 Michigan Hospital Association  
 MSU Federal Credit Union  
 National City Bank  
 NCG Theater  
 Karen Nichols  
 Physicians Health Plan  
 Brian Posey, The Ticket Machine  
 Riverwalk Theater  
 Tastefully Simple, Darshann Stevenson  
 Video-To-Go  
 Wheatfield Valley Golf Course

### Restaurants:

Bennigan's  
 Blue Gill Grill  
 Carrabba's  
 Coral Gables  
 Dusty's  
 Finley's  
 Gilbert & Blake's  
 Mitchell's Fish Market  
 Outback  
 R-Club  
 Red Robin  
 T.G.I. Friday's  
 Smokey Bones

<http://www.caringaboutkidsinc.org>



### We get letters....

Caring About Kids, Inc received the following thank you card from a family that was able to go Cedar Point with their three foster sons thanks to our efforts.

From the 3 boys:

Thanks so much for the money to go to Cedar Point and the YMCA membership. We had a great time. JM

Thanks for the money we had a great time. DM

Thank U 4 the money for Cedar Point, it was fun. CJ

And from the parents:

We just wanted to add our thanks too. When we were leaving Cedar Point, D said it was the best day of his life. It really felt good to be a part of something that made the boys feel so happy. We can't thank you enough for your part in it. Caring About Kids is a very special organization that helps foster children find some joy and normalcy in their lives. Thanks again. C and B M.

### Fun in the Sun with the Adventures Committee

On August 26th, 2008, a group of 98 people converged upon the East Lansing Family Aquatic Center for another fun event sponsored by Caring About Kids. These individuals were foster children, relative caregivers, licensed foster parents and siblings (both biological and foster) who came to the water park for a relaxing day of fun and support. It was a sunny day with few clouds in the sky...perfect for a lazy afternoon near the water.



The Adventures Committee heard many touching stories of strength and perseverance that day. We saw families of 10, grandparents raising their very young grandchildren and families of children with special needs blended together with love and hopefulness for the future. It was the birthday of a 6 year old child celebrated with a special cupcake brought just for her. The Caring About Kids Board of Directors and the Adventures Committee hoped to show this birthday girl and the foster children of Ingham County that there are things to look forward to that are meant just for them. We also wanted to express our gratitude to the caregivers of these children for stepping into the vital roles of shaping the adults of the future.

The Adventures Committee (as we lovingly dubbed the volunteers that continue to plan and put these activities together) include: **Montrelle Baldwin, Julie Burgess, Wendy Campau, Kelly Gluszewski, Rose Houk, Stephanie Hirschert-Walton, Kristin Sesti, Heidi Schaffer and Melissa Threadgould.** **Therese Brinson** from the Ingham County Dept. of Human Services deserves our gratitude for accepting and forwarding the RSVPs of these great families. This committee was committed to ironing out the details to make the event enjoyable for all who attended. Buying the bracelets, compiling the lists, taking the photos, buying the snacks, bringing the coolers, and scheduling the activity are just a few of the little things they did to make this day a splash!

### A surprise for one family made a BIG splash!

At the water park event, one family was chosen, because of their special circumstances, to receive a family gift of their choosing. The family chose a weekend retreat for which Caring About Kids paid all expenses. These retired Grandparents, along with their 3 grandchildren, greatly enjoyed their "vacation for the year". This is just one small way of letting the children and caregivers know just how special we think they are!

<http://www.caringaboutkidsinc.org>



### We Are Here Because ...

Currently there are more than 700 children in foster care in Ingham County - more than the population of 2 elementary schools. They are in foster care because they have been neglected, abused or both.

Our mission is to provide foster children with meaningful gifts that are unique to the individual needs of each child by working in partnership with caregivers and case managers, who identify the specific needs of a child; to educate the community about the plight of foster children; and to raise the monies to support these needs by scheduling fundraisers and obtaining donations from the community.

### Caring About Kids, Inc. 2008 Board of Directors

Donald Allen, Jr. (President)  
Melissa Threadgould (Vice-President)  
David Russell (Treasurer)  
John Waugh (Secretary)  
Wendy Campau  
Margaret Grost  
Norm Charles  
Jean Hoffman  
Kristen Sesti  
Rose Houk  
Sue London  
Susan Mallory  
Montrelle Baldwin

Ingham County foster kids need YOUR help!  
Use the form on page five and send your tax-deductible donation to  
CAK, P.O. Box 27014, Lansing, MI 48909-7014



P.O. Box 27014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7014  
Phone: 517-485-2646

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