



Cuyahoga County  
Department of Children and Family Services

# Annual Report 2008



## Executive Summary

The Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) continues to move in the right direction because of the work of dedicated staff, committed foster parents, and strong community partners. The agency's important mission of assuring that the county's abused and neglected children are protected and nurtured within a family and with support from the community is honorable and worthy of our best efforts. Over the years, DCFS has faced the same problems that plague most public children services agencies—high caseloads, children languishing in foster care for years, poor staff morale and children falling through the cracks.



*Deborah Forkas*

Thanks to the County Commissioners, and with their support, things are different today. Adoptions have increased, staff turnover is down, and the media has shown increased sensitivity to the reporting of our work. Our partnerships with the community have been established, and we have better coordination of resources with the Systems of Care Initiative. DCFS is now an Anchor Site for the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Family-to-Family Program (a national model) for child-centered, family focused neighborhood-driven social work practice. We also became an accredited agency by the Council on Accreditation (COA) in 2008.

I am very proud of what we've achieved. Your support of our work has enabled us to help improve and safeguard the quality of life of vulnerable children in this county. Read on in this report for examples of that work.

This report has three sections: the Context, the Strategy, and the Results. The Context section provides an explanation of the environment in which our work occurs. The Strategy section was our 2008 planned approach to addressing issues of critical concern, and the Results section is a reporting of the strides we have made.

### DEBORAH FORKAS

Director

Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services

## **The Mission**

To assure that children at risk of abuse and neglect are protected and nurtured within a family and with the support of the community.

### **Imperatives**

- Children who cannot be protected within their own home must be removed.
- We must reduce the number of children who come into custody unnecessarily.
- Children must be placed in the most family-like setting which meets their needs.
- All children must have a time-limited permanency plan.

## **The Strategy**

### **Effective Teaming**

Strengthening communication and collaboration to ensure that services provided to children and their families are timely and well coordinated. Increase the consistency of agency policies, internal teamwork and collaboration. Strengthen external partnerships.

### **Racial Equity**

Identify and address the disproportional representation of certain ethnic, racial, age, socio-economic status or gender groups within the Department of Children and Family Services while engaging other county systems and our neighborhood partners.

### **Safety and Permanency**

Ensure that all children have a safe, stable and permanent family through services and programs that reflect best practices, are consistent with agency policies, and are timely and well coordinated.

### **Teens**

To raise awareness, promote education, increase communication, and share resources throughout the agency and the community in order to empower teens towards success in achieving their life goals. This can be achieved through the collaboration and support between the teen, the agency, and its partners.



## The Children and Families of Cuyahoga County

The dynamic work of protecting at risk children from abuse and neglect takes place within a specific context depending on where one may live. Factors within communities, beyond the nuclear family system, contribute to the occurrence as well as the redress of child maltreatment. Social pressures including, but not limited to joblessness, alcoholism and drug addiction, poverty, graduation rates, and limited access to affordable housing, contribute to family instability and instances of abuse and neglect. Communities like Cuyahoga County have, over time, developed resources and strategies to aid struggling families.

The work undertaken in 2008 by the Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services is a continuation of a proud tradition of serving the most vulnerable members of our community, our children. It was also another good year for producing real results that created public value.

It has been understood by social work professionals that child abuse and neglect are more likely to occur in a family suffering from the scourges of poverty and substance abuse. Given this likelihood, what are the social conditions that the children and families of Cuyahoga County faced in recent times?

The U.S. Census Bureau announced in 2004 that the city of Cleveland was the poorest city in the United States with a population of 250,000 or more. When the results of the latest survey, those for the year 2004, were announced in August 2005, Cleveland was able to shed this shameful label and was now ranked as the twelfth poorest city. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, Cleveland's poverty rate dropped from the 2003 high of 31% to 23% in 2004. This translates into meaning some 36,000 Clevelanders rose above poverty in the span of a year. On the surface this would appear reason to rejoice for Cleveland families, yet with the national poverty rate rising for the fourth straight year and with little or no economic growth in Northeast Ohio, local demographic experts are quick to question the accuracy of these findings.

Still many, such as Claudia Coulton, co-director of the Center on urban Poverty and Social Change at Case Western Reserve University, believes that this is a reflection of an improved situation for many Clevelanders. This is tempered, by the fact that poverty within Cuyahoga County, but outside of Cleveland, is growing, as well as in the region in general. Cuyahoga County,

excluding Cleveland, saw an increase in poverty from the 2003 rate of 7.4% to 8.3% in 2004. Similarly, Northeast Ohio saw an increase from 9% to 2003 to 10.6% in 2004. Anecdotal evidence from the hunger centers in Cuyahoga County Department of Employment and Family Services reports that demands on the social services safety net have continued to rise. The number of home foreclosures in the suburbs has hit a five year high. No suburb has escaped foreclosures, even those suburbs previously perceived as untouchable by hard times.

Furthermore, the state of Ohio has seen a huge increase in poverty. In a six year span from 1998 to 2004, the number of Ohioans living in poverty has increased from 12.1% to 17.1% nearly 2 million people. As grim as this news is, it is worse for the children of Ohio who experienced an increase over the same period from 14.2% to 21%.

While we may indeed have a reason to rejoice in the somewhat better state of the families of Cleveland, it is small comfort as the plight of the families of Cuyahoga County has only worsened, as it has for so many other Ohio families.

In regard to substance abuse, the latest indicators show that substance abuse of all kinds continues unabated despite the best efforts of law enforcement and social services. Cocaine remains readily available in the city of Cleveland and all of Cuyahoga County. A steady decrease in the cost of rock cocaine has made it more available than ever. The availability of heroin in land is increasing, and there is an emergency population of new, young users. Methamphetamine abuse appears to be in the beginning stages of Northern Ohio, although it does not appear to be a very popular drug in the Cleveland area. That said, the emergency of any new drug that is growing in popularity is cause of concern. "Club drugs," specifically MDMA, have remained at steady levels in Cleveland with use by all races and ethnicities. The abuse of prescription drugs such as Vicodin, Percocet, OxyContin, Ultram, and others is increasing. This abuse is viewed as "across the board" being seen in the cities and the inner and outer suburbs of northern Ohio. This pill abuse is often viewed by users as somehow less "distasteful" than other drug use leading to experimentation and often eventual addiction.

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In other social indicators, Cleveland has seen a dramatic increase in violent crime, with homicides up 35% in the first nine months of 2005. Of the 84 homicides during this time period, 13 were the result of domestic violence. A 15% increase in the number of robbers have resulted in an overall increase in violent crime of 9.7%. Clearly, Cleveland is a more dangerous environment in which to try to live and raise a family than previously.

Another report that bears looking at is from the Cleveland Health Department. In the most recent data available, those for the year 2003, infections of gonorrhea and chlamydia were found to be rampant, with 9300 cases in Cleveland alone among teens and young adults. Between the ages of 15 – 19, one in 37 Cleveland teen boys has chlamydia and one in nine Cleveland teen girls is similarly infected. Gonorrhea infections for the same groups are similarly alarming at one in 35 for Cleveland teen boys and one in 22 Cleveland teen girls.

This is the environment that DCFS social workers find themselves working as they try to protect children and strengthen families. While Cleveland is no longer “poverty city of the nation,” the general situation in Cleveland and the whole of Cuyahoga County is as challenging as ever.

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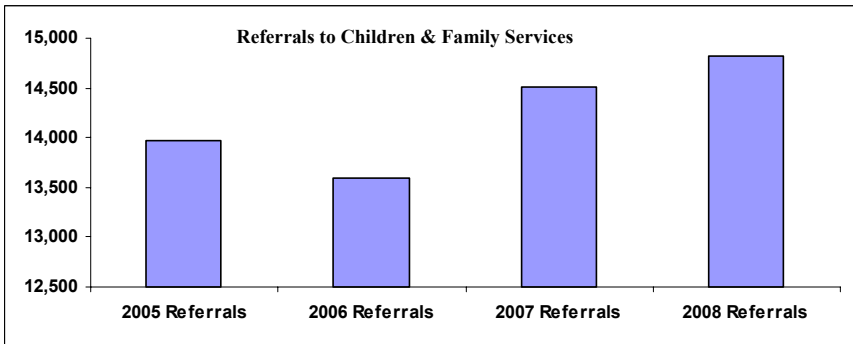
# 2008 Actual YTD Expenditures by Category

<u>BUDGET CATEGORY</u>	Actual as of 12/31/08	% of Total
Salaries	\$47,624,651	28.2%
Fringe Benefits	\$18,988,367	11.2%
Commodities	\$648,168	0.4%
Contracts/Prof. Svc	\$10,594,187	6.3%
Controlled Charges	\$6,160,266	3.6%
<b>Client Services:</b>		
<b>Supportive Svcs - 301</b>		
CFFS Contracts	\$1,887,020	
Parenting Contracts	\$577,963	
Other/ adopt netwk & TANF	\$881,447	
<b>Total 301 Client Svcs</b>	<b>\$3,346,430</b>	<b>2.0%</b>
<b>Supportive Svcs - 303</b>		
Emergency Services	\$1,543,312	
Contracts	\$1,005,667	
Other-Educ/College Bound	\$523,946	
<b>Total 303 Client Svcs</b>	<b>\$3,072,925</b>	<b>1.8%</b>
<b>Adoption Svcs</b>		
Sams/AA	\$9,527,381	
PASSS	\$612,567	
Special Needs	\$196,869	
Other-Contr & Misc	\$1,481,105	
<b>Total Adoption Svcs</b>	<b>\$11,817,922</b>	<b>7.0%</b>
<b>Agency Foster Care Svcs</b>		
Board & Care	\$4,638,326	
Daycare	\$232,173	
Other Misc.	\$48,869	
<b>Total Agency FC</b>	<b>\$4,919,368</b>	<b>2.9%</b>
<b>Contracted Placemts</b>		
Board & Care	\$55,935,064	
Kinship Incentive	\$859,000	
Other Contracts & Misc.	\$1,201,787	
<b>Total Contr. Placements</b>	<b>\$57,995,851</b>	<b>34.3%</b>
<b>Other Operating</b>		
Duty Related Travel	\$1,207,667	
Seminars/Conferences	\$202,904	
Tuition Reimbursemt	\$261,001	
Other Operational	\$1,922,073	
<b><u>BUDGET CATEGORY</u></b>		
<b>Total Other Operating</b>	<b>\$3,593,645</b>	<b>2.1%</b>
<b>Capital Outlay</b>		
ERIP Cost	\$100,484	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$168,862,264</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Total FTE's</b>	<b>1,069</b>	
<b># of Employees @ 12/31/08</b>	<b>1,037</b>	



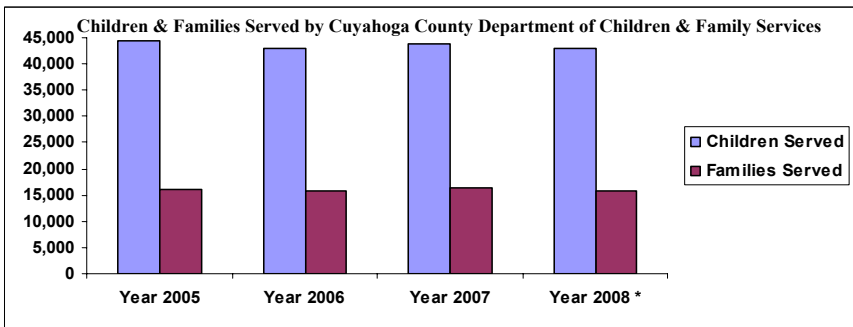


**DCFS FACT:** Over the last few years referrals to the agency have increased slightly.



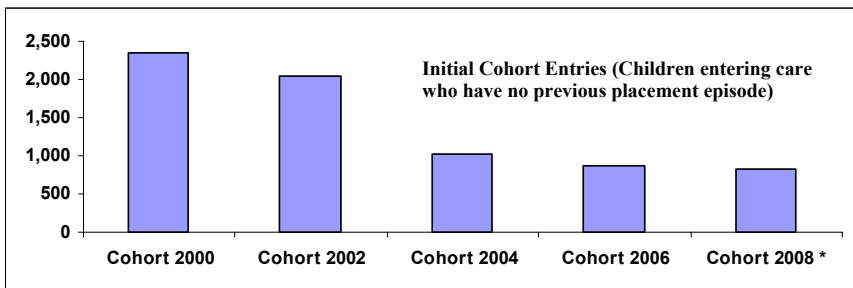
\* Source: SACWIS 04/09/2009

**DCFS FACT:** The number of families and children served by DCFS has remained relatively constant.



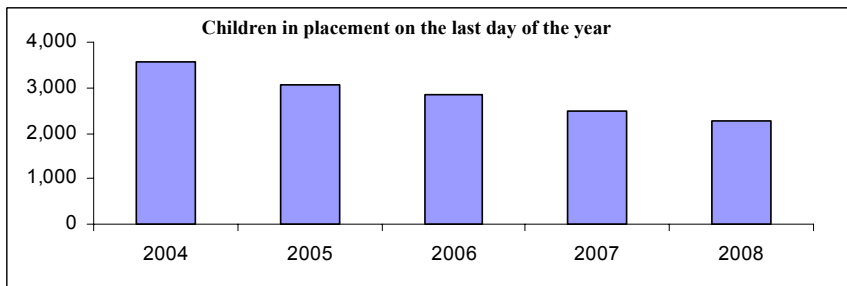
\* Source: DCFS Monthly Statistical Report

**DCFS FACT:** The number of children entering out-of-home care for the very first time has decreased by nearly 65% over the last 8 years.



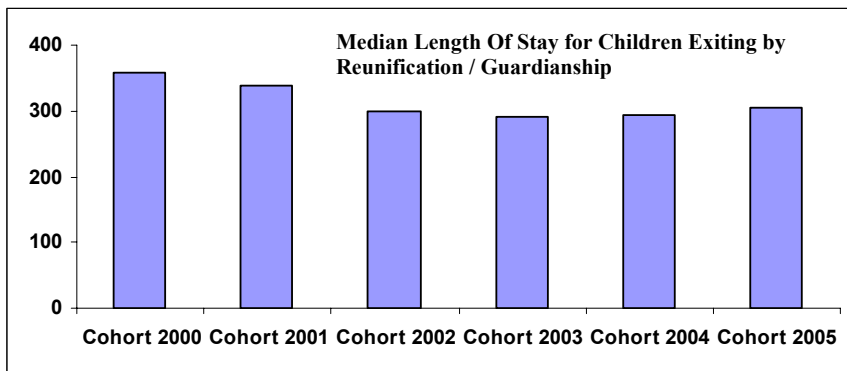
\* Source: DCFS Family-to-Family Outcomes report July 2008 (2008 data estimated based on January through June entries)

**DCFS FACT:** The total number of children in out-of-home care at any point-in-time (initial entries and children having repeat episodes) has decreased.



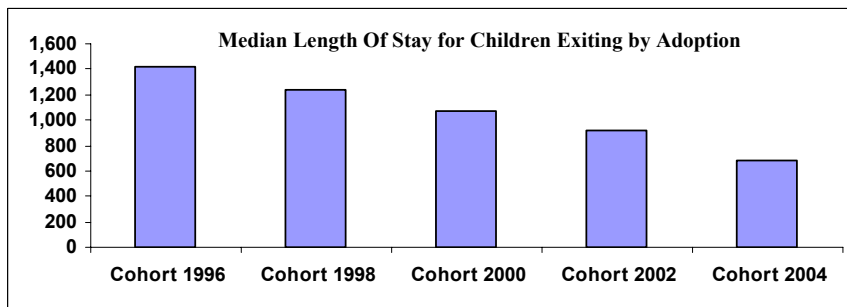
\* Source: DCFS Weekly Flash Reports

**DCFS FACT:** The median length of stay for children exiting care via reunification with birth family, relative or by guardianship has decreased from 357 to 306 days.



\* Source: DCFS Family-to-Family Outcomes report July 2008 & Data Analysis Unit Length of Stay Report (2008)

**DCFS FACT:** Between 1996 and 2004 the median length of stay for children exiting care via adoption decreased from between 4 to 4.5 years to between 2.5 to 3 years



\* Source: DCFS Family-to-Family Outcomes report July 2008 & Data Analysis Unit Length of Stay Report (2008)

# 2008 Performance Management Plan

**Mission Statement:** The purpose of the Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services (CFS) is to assure that children at risk of abuse or neglect are protected and nurtured within a family and with the support of the community.

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## 2008 Goals & Objectives

### Goal 1: **Reduce the number of children placed coming into out of home care**

- Increase the number of siblings placed together by 2% over 2006 achievement of 22.71 (Entry cohort siblings - first placement the cohort child experienced placement)

Achieved - 22.71 as of 2006

### Goal 2: **Improve the agency's performance on achieving permanency**

- Maintain 85.4% or increase the stability of children to have 2 or fewer Substitute Care Placements.  
(Based on 6C - CPOE – 1/2007 – benchmark 86.70% or above)

Achieved – 87.6% as of 8/2007

### Goal 3: **Children who were abused while in Substitute Care - Incidence of CA/N in Substitute Care**

- Maintain .24% or decrease the current percentage of children abused while in substitute care.  
(Based on 4C - CPOE measure – 1/2007 – benchmark 0.57% or below)

Achieved – 0% as of 8/2007

### Goal 4: **Achieve caseload sizes that are in line with nationally recommended standards:**

	National	Current (as of 8/07)	Agency Goal
Intake	12	12	12
Family Services	17	15.7	14
Foster Care	12-15	19	19
Adoption	12-15	18	18

## Key Performance Measures

	<i>Measure</i>	<i>2007 Actual</i>	<i>2008 Target</i>	<i>2008 Actual</i>
a)	Reduce the number of children placed outside Cuyahoga county by 3%- 5% of year end total	277	295	257
b)	Improve the agency's performance: 1) Children who were adopted within 30 months of removal. (Based on C2-1-13B - CPOE measure within 24 months – 1/2007 – benchmark 36.6% or above - used prior to 2006)	29% (83/285) 24.3% (CPOE)	32%	41% (30mo.) 25.1% (CPOE – 24 mos.) 27% (CFS - 24 mos.)
	2) Number of children who were reunified within 15 months of removal (Based on C1-113A - CPOE measure within 12 months -1/2007 – benchmark 75.20% or above - used prior to 2006)	63% (486/754)** 57.6% (CPOE)	60%	71% (15mo.) 49.1% (CPOE – 12 mos.) 60% (CFS - 12 mos.)
c)	Reduce the number of older children 12- 19 in permanent custody without a permanent family by 8% of the year end total (2008 year end total 378)  (2007* performance based on 850 children during 2004-2007 adopted)	56% 280	8%	7%
d)	Decrease foster care re-entries (Based on 7B - CPOE -1/2007 – benchmark 9.99% or lower)	5.9%	6.0%	8.4%
e)	Decrease the recurrence of maltreatment (Based on 2D -- CPOE – 1/2007 – benchmark 94.6% or higher for Ohio)***	91.4% Ohio	92.7% Ohio	92.7% Ohio

CPOE – Child Protection Oversight and Evaluation - The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) commenced a systematic process for monitoring and oversight of public children services agencies compliance with the Ohio Revised Code and Ohio Administrative Code rules process, called CPOE occurs at least every 18 months for each agency and are conducted by ODJFS staff.

CPOE On-site review activities consists of: Data validation; identifying systemic, policy or practice areas of strength, weakness, and concern for each core indicator along with jointly develop strategies that affect positive improvement of the outcome indicators. A review of case records for rule compliance occurs and quality improvement plans are prepared for areas needing improvement. Benchmarks based on national standards found in the Federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), are used to determine compliance.

\* adoptions – represents % of placements

\*\* reunification includes : Custody to other relative, Guardianship to 3rd party & Reunification

\*\*\* measure revised to indicate % of no recurrence and not abused

## **2008 Accomplishments**

### **Accreditation**

On July 24, 2008, the agency received notification that accredited status had been successfully achieved through 2012.

### **Adoptions**

The Adoptions Department facilitated 223 adoptive placements and 286 adoption finalizations. Over 60% of the children were adopted by their foster caregiver.

Children and Family Services was one of nine sites awarded the Adoptions Opportunities – Diligent Recruitment Grant. The five year grant is administered by the Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Children and Families. Grantees are to develop and support multi-faced diligent recruitment programs for a range of resource families for children in foster care.

### **Children in Residential Care –Reducing Length of Stay**

Successfully transitioned youth with behavioral issues out of residential care back into less restrictive placements in the community.

### **Community Partnership**

At least ten of our community partners were trained on the Ohio Benefits Bank System. This system assists families right in their neighborhood. The system gives families program eligibility requirements, streamlines the application process, and links families to the appropriate county agency.

### **Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)**

The CQI Department was established in 2006 and includes Quality Assurance (QA) and Self Evaluation (SE) activities. In 2008, QA activities expanded to additional program areas, specifically Hotline and Foster Homes. Conducted special targeted review of services provided to the teen population which links to a SE goal of doing a more focused analysis of data related to outcomes for teens.

### **IV-E Penetration Rate**

Achieved a penetration rate of 86.27% (number of children in placement vs. the number IV-E eligible).

### **Placement Services**

35% of children needed placement were placed in their “neighborhood” of relevance.

### **Recruitment/Development and Support**

Recruitment media campaign resulted in a high number of foster care/adoption inquiry calls. The number of calls represented an increase of approximately 25%.

The Foster Care Department licensed/approved 60% of the foster/adoptive applicants under home study. The national average is approximately 35-40%.

### **Successful Implementation Statewide Automated Child Information System (SACWIS)**

The last 88 counties in Ohio to convert to the Statewide Automated Child Information System (SACWIS).

### **Trackit**

Enhance Trackit to install software that will automate the tracking of Continuous Quality Improvement requests.

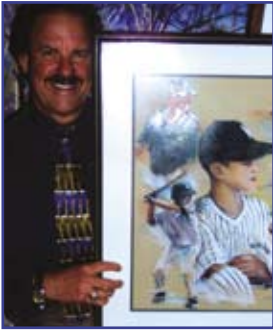
### **Training**

Presented University Partnership Program (UPP) experience in Cuyahoga County at the PCSAO conference. The UPP is a unique partnership between Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS), the public schools of Social Work in Ohio, the Institute for Human Services, Public Child Service Association of Ohio (PCSAO), and the Public Children Services Agencies (PCSA). U.S. and international students in bachelor of social work (BSW) and master degree of social work (MSW) programs take special child welfare courses, complete a field placement in a PCSA, and receive partial tuition reimbursement after accepting a casework position after graduation.

### **Youth Work**

Provided youth aging out of the foster care system job shadowing opportunities with local businesses which resulted in some of the youth receiving permanent employment.

## About the Artist



The paintings featured in this annual report were created by Mark Erdelyi, a program officer at DCFS in the Department of Contracts and Travel. Most of the scenes of children just being children were taken from neighborhoods in and around the Jane Edna Hunter Building (3955 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio) DCFS main building, including Old League Park (the site of the historic baseball park where many Hall of Fame greats played).

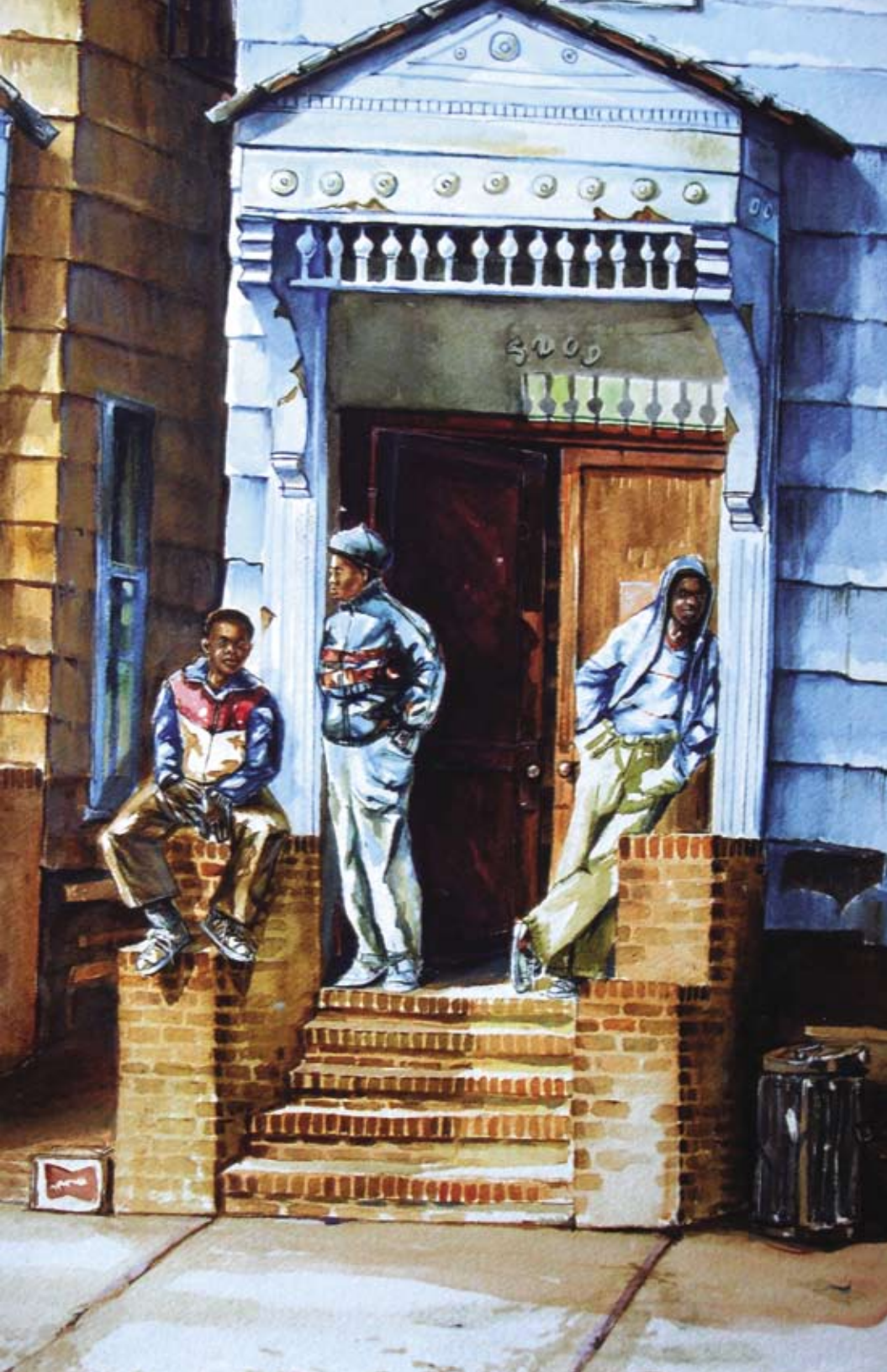
Mark has a Fine and Professional Arts Degree from Kent State University, and is a licensed Recreational Therapist. Mark has been employed as a Recreational and Art Therapist at the Community Action Against Addiction agency, Metro-Health Medical Center, and the Cuyahoga County Youth Development Center. He has also taught art classes at Cuyahoga Community College.

As an artist Mark has won state and national awards for his works. His art has been featured in newspapers, books, and magazines. Mark states, "I especially enjoy doing oil portraits of people and animals, although I have done pictures of houses and still life as well. I have given away many of my pieces to friends, family, and charitable causes. To see joy in the recipient's eyes is an indescribable feeling." Mark's work has been shown in several galleries and hangs permanently in two Halls of Fame.

Mark says, "My biggest accomplishment in life has been bringing joy, self-awareness, and self-esteem back to literally hundreds of people who were really down in life through my ability to use recreation and art therapies. It has been my life's mission. Many of the kids I painted here are similar to the ones in the families I have strived to help through various therapies and programs." Mark is an example of the multi-gifted and talented DCFS staff.

Mark and his wife Noralee are the proud parents of Kristy and Jason. Jason is the baseball player in the picture held by Mark.







**COMMISSIONERS**  
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