

Family FOCUS

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A Quarterly Publication from Parental Stress Center

PSC Earned Income Tax Credit Program – Money in the Pocket for Low Income Families

With confusing paperwork, money owed to the government, and the looming deadline in April, tax season can cause anxiety and frustration.

Help is available through Parental Stress Center's Economic Empowerment Initiative (EEI). Parental Stress Center is an IRS-certified Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site that offers a free income tax preparation service to working families and individuals who are eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

Through this tax credit, working people can get back some or all of the federal income taxes that are taken out of their pay during the year. They may even be eligible to receive extra cash from the IRS.

Unlike private preparers who charge a fee and encourage taxpayers to take out "rapid advance loans" on their expected tax refunds, Parental Stress Center offers tax preparation services free of charge. This year, the service put \$509,000 in federal and state

income tax refunds in the pockets of low-income taxpayers in the Pittsburgh area. Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) payments made up 48% of these total tax refunds.

The PSC tax preparation program runs from late January to April 15th each tax season. It is supported by a committed group of staff, as well as a wonderful group of volunteer tax preparers: Kokou Agbodoh, Kristi Johnson, Dan Keebler, Emily Keebler, Raymond Lader, Chris Lisieski, Camille

Reed, Luke Rininger, Troy Spence, Katrina Struloeff. Staff for the program were: Craig Stevens, VITA site administrator; Barbara Rogers and Cher Moser, Tax Preparers and Reviewers; Darnika Williams and Shirley Borner, Scheduling and Greeting.

For more information on PSC's tax program and the Economic Empowerment Initiative (EEI), call Craig Stevens, EEI Coordinator, or Gwen Williams, EEI Educator/Advocate at 412-361-4800.



Gwen Williams, Educator/Advocate; Craig Stevens, EEI Coordinator; Darnika Williams, Scheduler and Greeter upon receiving recognition by the IRS (in the form of a clock) for the high quality of PSC's volunteer return preparation program



Parental Stress Center

www.pscfamily.net

In the Field: A story of struggle and success from one of our in-home family counselors

I was referred to the family because the mother and her 10 year-old son were getting into physical altercations. There are five children in the home ranging from four to 10 years of age who all have mental health diagnoses, including post-traumatic stress disorder and moderate autism. The mother has bipolar disorder and a history of drug use. She was sexually abused growing up and has been physically abused by boyfriends. She has admitted to being physically and verbally abusive to the children when her stress levels rise beyond her control. She also expressed that she loves her children very much and has an intense willingness to be the best mother possible. She once lost custody of them for two years. Since regaining custody, she has vowed to do everything she can to keep them with her. That is the motivation for all she does.

The children have developed a lack of trust in their mother because of her past abuse toward them. The three boys in the home have violent and destructive behaviors that are not easily redirected. In the past, their mother has had to call the police in order to deal with them.

I worked with the mother on decreasing the children's negative behaviors and increasing positive interactions and structure in the home. The importance of having a schedule and expectations for the children was clear. Their mother developed a system in which the children could earn tickets for good behavior that

could be turned in for rewards. The children would also lose tickets for inappropriate behavior. The goal was to decrease the need for the mother to resort to potentially abusive punishments.

The mother met with her children to present the rewards system. Together they developed a Chores, Rules, and Rewards list as well as a Family Schedule. The mother made sure to include herself in the system and implemented consequences for her most common inappropriate behavior, swearing. There is now a jar in which she must deposit tickets

when she uses inappropriate language around the children. I have helped her to work out the kinks in the system so that it runs as smoothly as possible. The children have bought into the system and the police have not had to be called since. Thanks to the mother's diligence and willingness to follow through, the children are regaining trust in her, and the order that is being developed in the home is helping all of them have less difficulty with their mental health challenges.

Trust takes a long time to rebuild, but the family is finally on the right track to a better future.

Remembering Isaac Hayes (1942–2008)

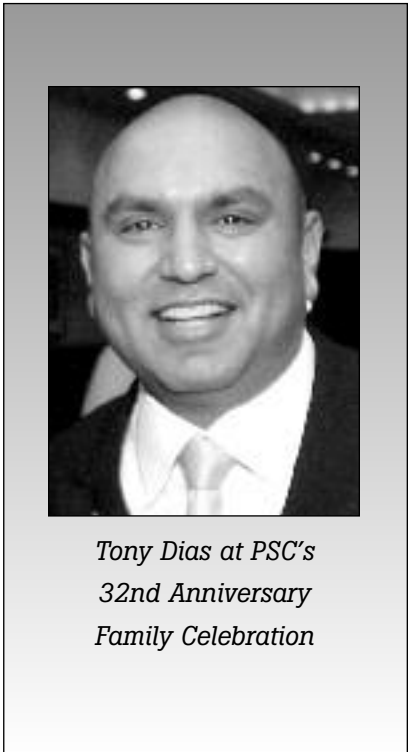


Pictured here with Honorary Chairs Mr. & Mrs. Ron and Lynn Davenport, Jr. after the 2008 Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra Community Partners Concert on June 26. Ticket proceeds benefited local non-profit organizations, including Parental Stress Center. Hayes passed away less than two months after the concert. PSC staff, board members and friends were honored to be at one of his last performances.

33rd Anniversary Family Celebration

This year's Friend of the Family is Parental Stress Center's past Board President, Antonio F. Dias, Esq. Affectionately known as "Tony" at PSC, Mr. Dias has been on the Board of Directors since 1998.

Tony will be receiving the award at Parental Stress Center's 33rd Anniversary Family Celebration, which will be held on Saturday, November 15, 2008 at the LeMont Restaurant. The event will begin at 6pm with cocktails and a silent auction. Guests will also enjoy live music and a sit-down dinner.



The Friend of the Family Award was first introduced at Parental Stress Center's 25th Anniversary Family Celebration in 2000.

The Friend of the Family Award was first introduced at Parental Stress Center's 25th Anniversary Family Celebration in 2000. It was created to acknowledge community leaders who demonstrate a passion for preventing child abuse and neglect through their careers, volunteer efforts and/or financial contributions. In 2003, the award was renamed the Frieda G. Shapira Friend of the Family Award to memorialize Ms. Shapira's life-long commitment to helping families living in poverty.

Tony has and continues to serve in leadership positions with a number of national and local organizations promoting better public policy, community development, and the health and well-being of children and families.

As a Partner in the international law firm Jones Day, Tony is legal counsel to industry leading companies in the US and around the world. He represents clients in matters involving the United States Congress, federal departments and agencies, state Attorneys General, and Mayors from many of America's leading cities.

Jones Day will be the Signature Sponsor for the Family Celebration this year. With more than 2,300 lawyers, it ranks among the world's largest law firms.

For ticket and sponsorship information, please contact Wendy Scott at 412.361.4800 ext. 247.



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For additional information
or to offer suggestions
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or visit our web site at

www.pscfamily.net

Calendar of Events

November 15, 2008

33rd Anniversary Family Celebration,
LeMont 6pm

November 20, 2008

Thanksgiving Dinner,
PSC Family Center

November 22, 2008

Community Leadership Initiative (CLI)
Community Forum

December 2008

Let's Celebrate
Family Giving Tree Program



**Parental
Stress
Center**

5877 Commerce Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Parental Stress Center Programs

Family Unification Services (FUS)

Intensive in-home counseling, support, and resource referral to prevent child abuse and neglect. Referrals of families to PSC are made through child welfare agencies in Allegheny and Westmoreland counties.

Visitation Services

Professional supervision of parent/caregiver visits with child(ren) who are in placement outside the home or who have not visited with the non-custodial parent due to custody-related issues.

Youth Services

Out-of-school activities for older youth (ages 14 to 19) including performing arts programs, culinary arts classes, mentoring/athletics, and community service projects. A summer day camp program is also offered for younger children.

Economic Empowerment Initiative (EEI)

Financial literacy classes for families and older youth, individual financial assessments and resource referral, income tax preparation assistance, and leadership training for low income individuals.

Fundraising

Parental Stress Center is selling Entertainment books for \$20 each. All proceeds from the book sales will be used to fund the Thanksgiving Dinner, an annual PSC event for the families we serve.

To purchase a book, please contact Wendy Scott or Dianne Durringer at 412-361-4800.

SPECIAL THANKS

MASSolutions, Inc. launched PSC's marketing campaign and designed this newsletter.

Kennywood donated 75 tickets to Summer Fest, PSC's summer day camp program.

Tickets for Kids also donated 222 tickets to Summer Fest for field trips.

The Homeless Children's Education Fund donated 250 backpacks to Parental Stress Center. The "Back to School" backpacks have been distributed to the children and youth served through PSC programs.