

Richland County Children Services



2010 Annual Report

Safe Children Today Build Strong Families Tomorrow



Randy J. Parker, Executive Director

2010: Year of service to community

The vast majority of the work done by Richland County Children Services on behalf of local families and children in 2010 didn't make flashy newspaper headlines or lead the morning broadcast news reports.

Frankly, that's just fine with us. Our job is to protect children and strengthen families, not generate media coverage. Our social workers, supervisors and administrators focused this past year on the daily hard work involved in making Richland County families stronger and keeping children safer.

In short, we focused once again on service to the community in 2010.

It's not just the fact we investigated a record 2,900 reports of alleged child abuse, neglect and dependency. It's not just the fact we worked on an ongoing daily basis with more than 650 local families and 1,500 local children. It's not just the fact we worked hard to find ways to keep children in their own homes or with kin and significant others, keeping our average foster child count again below 50.

And it's not just the fact agency attorneys prepared and filed 3,846 documents in Richland County Juvenile Court in 2010, a 25 percent increase over 2009. Our attorneys made a combined 1,424 appearances in that court in 2010.

By any federal, state or local objective measurement, it was another productive and successful year by your 127-year-old child protective services agency. Many of the things we accomplished came through working with a variety of community partners.

Here are just some of the highlights:

- We executed a highly successful "Choose Your Partner Carefully" campaign in February, working with the Domestic Violence Shelter in Mansfield and utilizing a grant from the Richland County Foundation Women's Fund. We worked with various schools and also Community Action for Capable Youth to spread the word.
- We saw a record 140 local children sign up to participate in a free tennis clinic in February, partnering with the Lakewood Racquet Club and pro Ron Schaub in Lexington. Each child received a new tennis racquet, pizza and a t-shirt for participating.
- When it became apparent there would be a week break from the end of the school year to the start of the free summer breakfast/lunches in Mansfield, we partnered in June with Panera Bread and Jones Chips to distribute 250 free lunches per day for children who otherwise may not have eaten.
- At Thanksgiving and again at Christmas, we partnered with Bob Evans Restaurant in Ontario to provide "Farmhouse Feasts" for many of our client families and their children. We hooked up with Donley Ford in Shelby on a "Coats for Kids" campaign that provided dozens of coats, gloves and scarves for children.
- At Christmas, we worked with the Richland County Children's Auxiliary, the Fran & Warren Rupp Foundation and other organizations to ensure gifts to almost 500 local children who otherwise would have received no gifts. A single church, LifePoint Community Church in Shiloh, donated \$1,000 to our efforts.

We also spent more than \$500,000 with local agencies and providers on behalf of the children and families we serve. That total includes \$143,000 with the Mansfield Police Department and Richland County Sheriff's Department to investigate alleged crimes against children and to provide security in our lobby; \$126,000 on Kinship Navigator services, assisting adults caring for family members; \$40,000 for a fulltime domestic violence advocate through The Domestic Violence Shelter; and \$80,000 to help provide multi-systemic therapy services.

We face many of the same issues as a community that we all wrestled with in 2010. But we are prepared to meet those challenges and fulfill our mission of protecting children and making families stronger.

Randy J. Parker
Executive Director, RCCS

Our Mission

Protect children at risk of abuse, neglect or dependency;

Provide children the opportunity to live in a safe, nurturing, permanent family;

Strengthen and support families in meeting the needs of their children;

Join with the community to provide culturally sensitive services necessary to protect children; strengthen families; and promote well-being.

2010 Board Members

- Nancy Joyce, Chair
- Carol Payton, Vice Chair
- Jon Bell, Secretary
- Joe Palmer, Treasurer
- Ivy L. Amos
- Connie Hoffman, MSW
- Colleen J. McKinney, M.D.
- Dean Wells

2010 Administrative Staff

- Randy J. Parker, Executive Director
- Nikki Harless, MSW, LSW, Director of Operations
- Marsha Coleman, MSW, LISW-S, Clinical Director
- Kevin Goshe, MBA, Director of Finance
- Tim Harless, MSW, Program Dir. External Affairs
- Elayna Rizar, JD, HR Director/Legal Counsel
- Kevin Wharton, MSCJ, Program Supervisor Intake
- Scott Basilone, BS, Program Supervisor Ongoing
- Lori Feeney, MSW, Program Supervisor Placement
- Carl Hunnell, BS, Communications Supervisor
- Edith Gilliland, JD, Attorney
- Kristi Schultz, JD, Attorney

Agency foregoes \$1 million in taxes

Unprecedented decision means county residents will pay less in 2011

The Richland County Children Services Board made a financial decision in 2010 that will benefit local residents throughout 2011.

The board voted unanimously in September not to collect \$1 million in local property tax revenue in 2011, allowing taxpayers to keep more of their own money during tough economic times.

“We recognized the current painful local economic situation and the impact it has had on local residents,” Children Services Board President Nancy Joyce said.

“Our agency leaders came to the board with the plan. We thought it prudent and we unanimously endorsed it,” Joyce said.

It’s an unprecedented step in the 127-year history of the agency, which depends on a mixture of federal, state and local tax dollars to fund its child protective operations.

The agency ended 2010 with a \$6.1 million surplus, the result of disciplined financial practices dating back several years. In 2002, the agency was in a precarious financial situation. Since then, annual agency expenditures have never exceeded revenues.

“We have not had significant new revenue streams in many years,” said agency executive director Randy Parker, who took over as agency director in 2002.

“We made tough decisions then and we continue to make them today,” Parker said. “That is why we are in a position to assist taxpayers this year.”

Financial experts have told the RCCS board the agency should maintain 51 percent of its estimated \$8.3 million annual operating budget in a cash reserve. The agency can forego the \$1 million in tax collections this year, meet its responsibilities under state law and still maintain



Richland County Children Services Board President Nancy Joyce and agency Executive Director Randy Parker meet with commissioners to discuss tax collections.

sufficient reserve, Parker said.

Larry Morrison, a CPA with Kleshinski, Morrison and Morris, LLP, in Mansfield, reviewed the agency’s financial picture in September and said RCCS could afford the one-year tax rollback. In a letter to the agency, Morrison cautioned against those who believe the agency’s financial picture is overly bright.

“...the amount of the (reserve) should not be deemed excessive or inappropriate in light of current economic conditions, proposed tax policies, and near-term forecasts of economic growth,” Morrison wrote.

RCCS has two 10-year, voter-approved one-mill local tax levies, which generate a combined \$3.2 million annually. One of these was first approved in 1958, was replaced in 1984 and has been renewed twice in 1994 and 2004. The other was first approved in 1989 and was replaced in 1999. It was renewed in 2008.

After making its decision, the Children Services board asked Richland County commissioners to request the county budget commission not to collect the \$1 million in 2011. The commissioners approved the request and the budget commission did

the same.

All three county commissioners – Ed Olson, Gary Utt and Tim Wert – praised the agency’s decision.

“It speaks to one word -- accountability. This move raises the creditability of the board and the administrators --- exponentially. ... During a time of economic distress, you are drawing down on your own reserves to help others,” Olson said.

Richland County Auditor Pat Dropsey said the reduction will reduce the property tax bill on a \$100,00 home by about \$16 in 2011.

Children Services made the decision to dial back the tax collection despite another year of record activity in terms of investigations into alleged child abuse and neglect. RCCS finished 2010 with 2,900 investigations, a 5.5 percent increase over 2009’s record-setting year.

The agency also continued to see an increase in the numbers of ongoing cases it maintains with local families. The agency works with about 650 families on an ongoing basis, assisting about 1,500 local children in an average month.

ProtectOHIO waiver extension good news for children, families

Fewer Richland County children enter the child welfare system, spend less time away from home and are safely reunited quicker with their own families thanks to ProtectOHIO.

Children taken from their homes are also more likely to be placed with relatives, rather than foster families. Those ultimately adopted have a shorter wait for a permanent home.

These positive outcomes are just part of the remarkable accomplishments during the last 12 years of ProtectOHIO, the federal, budget neutral Title IV-E waiver demonstration project that has changed the nature of child welfare work in participating counties such as Richland.

The current waiver expired July 31, 2010, but has been continued on an interim basis. Another five-year extension seems likely.

ProtectOHIO is used in 18 counties in the Buckeye state, covering one-third of the children and youth involved in child welfare cases. Richland County Children Services Executive Director Randy Parker serves as the co-chair of the ProtectOHIO consortium of counties.

The waiver has made a huge difference for Richland County Children Services in terms of keeping children in their own homes or with relatives. In 2002, the agency had 250 children in custody. That number was down to 44 at the end of 2010.

In October through December 2002, the agency had 13,568 "paid placement days," i.e. children in foster homes or residential settings while in agency custody. That number has steadily declined and was at 3,742 in the first quarter of 2010, a 45 percent decline in eight years.

Traditional child welfare funding in the



United States offers old-fashioned funding formulas tied directly to removing children with deprivation factors from their homes and families. Experts recognize taking children away from even dysfunctional homes is a traumatic experience for the youth.

Unshackled by artificial restrictions, ProtectOHIO's flexible funding has allowed local child protective service agencies to invest in a wide array of services to keep children safe by helping and strengthening families in need.

It has allowed child welfare experts in each county to customize efforts for the individual family, rather than the one-size-fits-all approach found in the traditional funding that often limits an agency's ability to produce successful outcomes.

In short, it has allowed ProtectOHIO participants to better meet guidelines and requirements found in the federal government's own Child and Family Services Reviews:

Keep children safe at home where pos-

sible. When not possible, find the least restrictive environment possible, especially with other relatives. When a child has to be placed into foster care, work should be done to return him to his own home as quickly as possible.

ProtectOHIO counties have fewer paid foster care placement days and at a lower average daily cost. Since 2002, for example, demonstration counties have reduced the number of days of paid care by almost 40 percent. At the same time, they have increased investment to safely maintain children in their own homes.

The ProtectOHIO demonstration and evaluation also shows safety is not compromised when counties are allowed to invest federal funds in a full continuum of prevention and diversion services, along with placement and adoption services.

The ProtectOHIO waiver counties have a proven track record of success and are ready and willing to continue looking for additional techniques and strategies that will keep children safe at a cost the American taxpayer can afford to pay.

More children being raised by own 'kin'

Youngsters fare better in familiar settings with people they know, love

It comes as no shock that children who cannot live in their own homes with birth parents fare better when living in a familiar setting with people who know and love them.

That's why the Kinship Navigator program, offered through Richland County Children Services since 2003, is a key to successful outcomes for children and families being assisted by the agency.

"The goal is to allow families to take care of themselves and one another," said Tim Harless, agency director of external affairs.

Kinship caregivers could include grandparents, aunts and uncles, adult cousins and even adult siblings, among others.

"There are times when they may need resources to help along the way, but the ultimate goal is keeping children with people with whom they have established relationships," Harless said.

Harless said Kinship has become part of the culture at the agency, an effort now being assisted through a Fostering Connections federal grant.

Children Services contracts with the City of Mansfield Department of Community Advancement and the Urban Minority Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Outreach Program to administer local kinship services.

"Research proves that children do better overall in a kinship family home as a best option to protect and nurture when parents are not able to do so themselves," said Sherry Jones, director of the city's community advancement program.

"The child welfare agencies and the legal system encourages placement with kinship families versus foster care for the child," she said.



Harless said, "The focus is on seeking community resources for these non-traditional families who often struggle on a fixed income," Harless said.

For example, Kinship staff workers with the two contracted agencies work with the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services to ensure the families obtain all possible benefits, including a medical card for the child, day care eligibility, Ohio Works First and the Early Learning Initiative.

Families are also assisted with legal needs in such areas as legal custody, Power of Attorney, or other more general legal questions.

Evidence suggests children living with kin have more stable living conditions than those in non-kin foster care placement. They are less likely to experience more than one placement.

"Children in Kinship care are usually familiar with their caregivers and are therefore less traumatized by leaving their own homes. They often express feeling loved," Harless said.

At the end of 2010, there were 122 Kinship cases in Richland County, totaling 127 children being cared for by their own family members. For more information on Kinship services, contact Tim Harless at 419-774-6909.



Our community involvement

Richland County Children Services believes in community involvement, from community festivals and parades to ethnic and educational events.

“We think festivals, parades and other events are a great way to help out in the communities we serve and also a great opportunity for our agency to communicate our messages on child abuse and neglect prevention,” said Carl Hunnell, communications supervisor for RCCS.

Chances are good you saw our agency at one or more community events during 2010, including:

January through March:

- Choose Your Partner Carefully campaign
- Black History Month celebration
- Rally for the Kids tennis event
- Breakfast with the Easter Bunny

April through June

- Minority Health Fair
- 24-hour Swim/Bike/Run
- Pinwheels for Prevention
- Miss Ohio Parade
- Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner
- Future Stars Golf Program





July through September

- Shelby Summerfest
- Richland County Fair
- Lexington Blueberry Festival
- Bellville Street Fair
- Fore Our Kids Golf Classic

October through December

- 5-K Run for the Kids
- Mansfield Halloween Parade
- Mansfield Holiday Parade
- Staff Enrichment Pasta Dinner
- Foster Parent Assoc. Holiday Dinner

We also attended and spoke at more than a dozen city and village council and township trustee meetings.



Our Vision

Every child has a permanent family which provides a safe loving environment that is emotionally and economically stable;

All children develop their full potential by having all physical, emotional, educational, cultural, spiritual, developmental, and special needs met;

All families have the skills and resources to maintain their integrity, function to the best of their ability and be responsible to their family members;

A community that invests in the future of its children by providing services to empower families;

A community whose members respect diversity and support the strengths of the racial, cultural and ethnic heritage of families and neighborhoods.



Foster parent: Toughest job you will ever love

Anyone who thinks foster parents are in it for the money needs to talk to Lori Feeney.

“That’s probably the biggest public misconception about foster parents,” said Feeney, placement program supervisor for Richland County Children Services. “In actuality, foster parents make about \$1 per hour. How many people do you know who would do this kind of a tough job for \$1 per hour?”

The agency, which currently has 73 licensed foster homes, salutes its foster parents each May with an appreciation banquet.

In 2010, this included the longest-running foster homes: Pat and Genevieve Hatheway (33 years), Roger and Martha Lloyd (31 years), Ellen Hursh (20 years), Larry and Cindy Finley (17 years), Dave and Deanna Livingston (16 years), Pat and Penny Browning (15 years), and David and Kathy Rose (14 years).

Pat Browning served as the local Foster Parent Association president during 2010.

Feeney said the pool of Richland County foster homes remains steady, but needs constant replenishment.

“The number of homes we have is consistent from year to year,” she said. “What we find is that once some foster homes adopt a child or children, they no longer have room to continue as a foster home,” she said.

Adults interested in becoming a licensed foster home must undergo a training process that takes four to six months.

“After the adult(s) contact us and express an interest, they must complete 36 hours of preservice training, covering such topics as team building, child abuse/neglect and sexual abuse issues, attachment and separation issues, discipline, preventing and de-escalating crisis and cultural issues,” Feeney said.

Once training is complete, an agency staff member completes a home study, which consists of a number of in-depth home visits and interviews with all members of the prospective foster family.

For more information on foster care and adoption, please visit our agency Web site at www.richlandcountychildrenservices.org or call the agency at 419-774-4100.

Local foster parent set longevity record

Richland County Children Services lost its longest-running foster parent at the end of 2010.

Elnathan Stewart “Pat” Hatheway, 87, died on Dec. 28 after a long illness. He and his wife, Genevieve, whom he wed in 1948, had the longest service record of any foster parents in Richland County, starting on Dec. 31, 1978.

His wife told the agency she plans to continue accepting foster children and said she hopes to end with 35 years of service.

The Hatheways have had 45 placements and numerous respite and direct parental placements throughout their

service to RCCS.

“The Hatheways were very supportive of their neighborhood, community, church and Children Services,” said Lori Feeney, placement program supervisor.



She said the Hatheways worked with children from ages 1 to 18 and “excelled” at fostering teenagers.

Hatheway also served as past president of the local Foster Parent Association. Their life as foster parents was just a part of their community service, Feeney said.

New agency Web site attracting a crowd

Numbers of users, page views and other activity on the rise

If you build it -- and keep it updated and fresh -- they will come.

That's the lesson learned about the new Web site launched by Richland County Children Services in April 2010.

Months in the planning, the new Web site immediately experienced increased user activity of the site in all measurable areas.

"We wanted to create a site that is user friendly and easy to navigate," said Carl Hunnell, communications supervisor.

"People may come to your Web site -- but if there is nothing new, or they find it hard to locate the information they seek, odds are good they won't be back.

"At the same time, we wanted a site that is easily updated and also gives us the flexibility down the road to add new forms of content," Hunnell said.

The Web site, located at www.richland-countychildrenservices.org, demonstrated across-the-board improvement during its first nine months of operation, compared to the same nine months in 2009.

Unique visitors were up 56 percent (5,506 compared to 3,526).

Overall visits were up 54 percent (8,745 to 5,694).

Page views had the strongest improvement, finishing the year 91 percent ahead of the same time period in 2009. (39,867 to 20,820).

Pages viewed per visit were up 24 percent (4.56 to 3.66) and average time on site was up 11 percent (2:28 to 2:13).

"So why is all this important? The simple fact is our agency Web site is the best communications vehicle we have in getting out the messages we want to put

before the public without filtering through local media outlets," Hunnell said.

"We use our site to educate and inform the public about child safety, to promote and highlight agency events and to share any other sorts of news we choose," he said.

"The more people we attract to our Web site, the more pages we get them to look at, the more time we get them to spend reading our content -- it's all part of an overall successful communications program. We will continue to look for ways to better utilize our agency Web site in 2011," Hunnell said.

Many services found in one agency

People are often surprised when they learn about all of the many services provided by Richland County Children Services.

Investigation of alleged child abuse and neglect, while a significant and important portion of what the agency does with its intake department, is just one part of a myriad of services provided by RCCSB.

For example, the agency's ongoing services department works on a daily basis with more than 650 local families, encompassing around 1,500 children.

The ongoing department sends social workers into the field every day to meet with parents, guardians and children to provide support, guidance and assistance needed to keep children in their homes as much as possible and link the families to other available services in the community.

"The last thing we want to do is remove a child from his or her own home," said Scott Basilone, ongoing services department program supervisor.

"Our goal is to work with the families and strengthen them so the children can remain at home, or return them home as quickly as possible if they are removed," Basilone said.

Social workers coordinate and provide a variety of services such as: casework management, mental and behavioral health services, drug abuse treatment, parenting training, and coordination of family team meetings.

Part of the ongoing services department includes school based social workers, court liaison social workers and a special recidivism team which works with some of the most challenging family situations.

The school based workers are in local schools every day, working with youngsters involved with the agency and assisting local teachers and administrators.

The court liaison team works with families which have children involved in Richland County Juvenile Court, helping to solve behavioral problems and prevent others from occurring.



Children Services social workers Cate VanRiper and Tiffany Sommers hand out free lunches to children and families in June 2010.

In addition to intake and ongoing, Richland County Children Services also operates its own foster care and adoption department.

When a child must leave his or her own home, the agency's first goal is to place the child with a relative or other familiar adult. When that is not possible, the agency selects from more than 70 local foster families to provide temporary, safe and loving homes.

While the goal is to return the child home, there are times when that simply is not possible. The agency's adoption program recruits, screens, trains and supports prospective adoptive families while matching them with a child in need of a safe, nurturing and permanent home.

For information about the agency's services, visit the agency Web site at www.richlandcountychildrenservices.org.



Richland County Children Services participates in a variety of public events each year, promoting child safety and also educating the public about the many services the agency provides to assist children and families.

16 agency employees reach milestones

Richland County Children Services ended 2010 with 109 employees, three below its authorized staffing level of 112. The employees include 67 social workers involved in intake/investigations, ongoing services and placement.

Other employees are involved in administrative roles, including operations, legal, communications, human resources, finance, clinical and support.

Sixteen of these workers experienced career milestones with the agency in 2010. We also would like to recognize our quarterly H.E.R.O.E.S. (Honoring Employees by Recognizing Outstanding and Exemplary Service). Those workers are:

- Lori Feeney, program supervisor 1, 25 years
- Noah Fraley, case aide supervisor, 25 years
- Sharon Gray, social worker 4, 20 years
- Terrie Sgro, supervisor 1, 20 years
- Sandy Watrous, social worker 3, 20 years
- Tim Harless, dir. of external affairs, 15 years
- Gina Bandy, case aide 2, 10 years
- Teresa Coll, social worker 3, 10 years
- Jen Hissom, social worker 3, 10 years
- Paul Pfeifer, social worker 3, 10 years
- Scott Basilone, program supervisor 1, 5 years
- Charity Hamler, supervisor 1, 5 years
- Holly Hartman, supervisor 1, 5 years
- Brianne Kindinger, vol. coordinator 1, 5 years
- Jen Lovra, social worker 3, 5 years
- Pam Varnes, MIS manager, 5 years

1st Quarter:

- La'Shaun Reuer, social worker
- Rhonda Marsh, support staff
- Holly Hartman, supervisor

2nd Quarter:

- Teresa Coll, social worker
- Amanda Belford, support staff
- Angie Poth, supervisor

3rd Quarter:

- Shannon Wiseley, social worker
- Sarah Bradley, support staff
- Holly Hartman, supervisor

4th Quarter:

- Carol Baxter, social worker
- Rhonda Marsh, support staff
- Courtney Dunlap-Knoll, supervisor

Stop child abuse: Here's how you can help

You can help heal the hurt: Here's how.

The emotional and physical scars of child abuse and neglect can last a lifetime. Fortunately, all members of our community can play an active and vital role in stopping these tragic events and in helping Richland County Children Services start the healing process.

Report abuse or neglect when you suspect it – even if you're not certain.

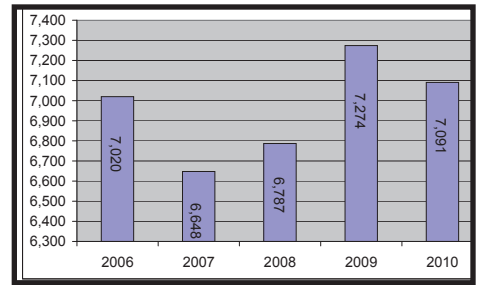
Be the eyes, ears and conscience of our community. If you see any of the following signs of abuse or neglect, call us 24/7 at 419-774-4100. There is no need to wait until the next day or until the weekend is over – we are always here for your call.

Call us if a child:

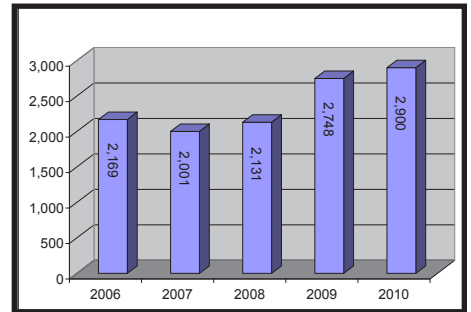
- Shows sudden changes in behavior or extremes in behavior.
- Has unexplained absences from school or a sudden change in school performance.
- Has unexplained physical injuries such as burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, black eyes, etc.
- Has frequent yeast or urinary infections.
- Has unusual and age-inappropriate interest in sex.
- Experiences nightmares and bedwetting.
- Is not receiving needed medical or dental care.
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor.
- Has height and weight significantly below age level.
- Lacks adult supervision appropriate for their age.

2010: By the numbers

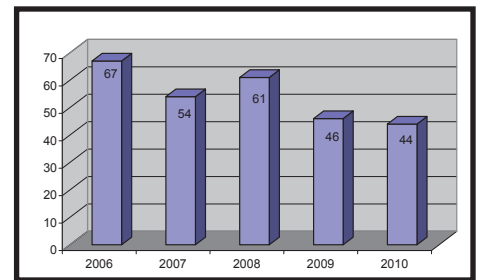
Calls Answered



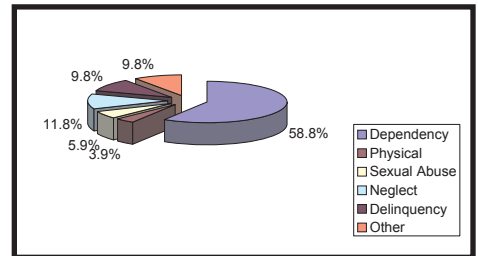
Number of Investigations



End-of-Year Placements



Reasons for Placement



Expenses

Personnel.....	\$5,922,523
Placement.....	\$1,029,520
Adoption.....	\$310,702
Purchased Services.....	\$523,179
Administration.....	\$596,670
Total Expenses.....	\$8,283,594

Revenue

Federal.....	\$4,625,858
State.....	\$822,587
Income from Levies.....	\$3,229,813
Parental Support.....	\$8,964
Other Revenue.....	\$135,515
Total Revenue.....	\$8,822,736
End-of-Year Balance.....	\$6,131,457



Richland County Children Services Board
 731 Scholl Road — Mansfield, Ohio 44907
 24/7 Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline 419-774-4100
 Fax: 419-774-4114
www.richlandcountychildrenservices.org



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Visit us on the Web at www.RichlandCountyChildrenServices.org.