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INSIDERS' SCOOP

Volume V | Issue III | FALL 2021

Inside: Foster,
Kinship, and
Reunification
Stories of
Impact and
Hope





New President & CEO Laura Mitchell with BAPC client Aunt Suzie and staff members Tom Curran and Melissa Hadley at Laura's Welcome Reception on September 23rd.

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The Future Is Calling

Hello friends,

This autumn issue of *Insiders' Scoop* officially ushers in a new season in so many ways.

We are still navigating through a global pandemic. With the start of a new school year, our families and clients have entered yet another phase of what a "new normal" looks like as we continue to face new challenges and uncertainties. How we address these challenges and uncertainties will define the future and legacy of Beech Acres Parenting Center.

Change is what we face together today. Change in seasons, circumstances, how we do business and how we serve purpose in the world. Change can be scary. But change can also bring new opportunities. I think of a quote from Helen Keller at this moment:

"A bend in the road is not the end of the road unless you fail to make the turn."

So where are we going? What is on the other side of THIS moment? Our future.

In some respects, we can't afford NOT to change; **we can't afford to stop at the bend in the road.** If we stop, we will become irrelevant, putting at risk 172 years of essential programs when our families and clients need us the most. **And this work is essential and necessary, and we cannot do it without you.**

So how do we stay on the road, on the right path? With **a strategic plan informed by our passionate and extraordinary servant leaders, all our staff, and you, our supporters.** Our planning conversations will begin with a **focus on Strategic Growth, Social Enterprise, and Quality Standards.** We will explore innovative approaches, allowing us to continue serving children and families in the community and find ways to serve even more.

I have spent my entire career working with families, parents, caregivers who find themselves in vulnerable situations, and children who need a village to support those caring adults. Sadly, the work is still necessary, and so is your support.

The future is calling. It is a privilege to be in this moment, and I am grateful for the opportunity to lead this organization into the future. **Together,** we will acknowledge the past and the present and decide **what to take with us into the future as we build the new Beech Acres Parenting Center.**

Gratefully yours,

Laura Mitchell
President & CEO

P.S. A survey asking for your input on our future will arrive soon - if you have not received it already. Thank you for taking the time to provide your feedback!

Foster Mom Changes the Narrative for Teen

When we initially started talking about getting involved in foster care, we didn't have a specific age that we were interested in taking in. As we grew our biological family, we quickly realized that young children were great in many ways but also very challenging in others. When we became licensed, we knew we wanted to fill whatever need was out there.

As a social worker, I know how difficult it is to place teens because of the stigma that follows them. What we have found is that teens and toddlers do, in fact, mix. They are very different but also very similar in ways we didn't expect to see. Teens in care are just bigger versions of the little kids families take in. They need love, support, guidance, and opportunities to laugh and play.

*We have loved coming alongside our foster daughter and supporting her goals. When she first came into care, she asked us why we took her in. She knew the stigma that followed her as an older foster child. We had the unique opportunity to knock down labels she had been given over the past years and show her who she really was. She wasn't a label, a stigma, or a problem. **She was beautifully and wonderfully made and her goals and hopes and dreams mattered.***

-Emily, Foster Mom

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Love Abounds! Foster Child Reunites with Birth Family While Maintaining Ties with Foster Family



Shana and Max's children stay in touch with their foster sibling

Shana and Max's Foster Journey began with a desire to help other children and families

As Shana and Max's biological children grew, they sensed a need to help other children and families in their community. This feeling led them to consider foster care through Beech Acres Parenting Center. "We saw how things like the opioid epidemic and poverty impacted families throughout our region and decided we were ready to actively try to make a positive impact ourselves. When we made this decision, our biological children were approximately 3, 6, and 9 years old. **We felt that our family had the ability, the room, and the love to help children during a difficult time in their family's journey,**" Shana said. "**Beech Acres Parenting Center is a wonderful support,**" Shana said.

Why Reunification is Important

While many people consider adoption as the ultimate resolution to foster care, the truth is, whenever possible, reunification with a child's biological family is usually best - if it's in the child's best interest. Shana and Max recognized this with the children they fostered and worked toward reunification. "There is a sense of belonging and connectedness that I'm sure we all crave, young children included," Shana said. "We were able to develop connections with siblings of children that were in our home, and it was truly amazing to see how much they all loved being together and how they cared for each other." **All of the children that have been in our care have ended up either with a biological sibling in an adoptive home or in kinship care with family members** (one soon to be adopted by an aunt and uncle).

Communication and Love Lead to Reunification

A few years ago, Shana and Max welcomed a foster child into their home. While the child's parents worked through some struggles in their personal lives, Shana and Max and their biological children loved this child as their own while supporting and encouraging the biological parents. "**We made sure to support and encourage weekly visits. We tried to communicate as openly as possible and plan and pack to make the weekly visits as fun and stress-free as possible.** We were able to set up email communication for updates and photos and to have open lines of communication with his mom regarding his health, growth, and development. We were able to connect with his siblings and meet up with them on occasion as well. And, ultimately, when the potential for kinship placement began to look like a reality, we

were able to openly communicate with his aunt and uncle to plan visits and help prepare him (and them) for the transition," Shana recalled.

After about 14 months, the child was reunified with his family

Thanks to strong communication, support, and love, Shana, Max and their kids could maintain a relationship with the family and continue to love and support them. "Although he is nearly 1,000 miles away, through the marvels of modern technology, we are still able to stay in touch."

PEP: Helping Parents Succeed

Whenever possible, reuniting children with their biological parents is a top priority. Reunification requires hard work, perseverance, and love from everyone involved; the parents, the professionals working with the families, and the children themselves to keep families together. **The Parent Enrichment Program (PEP) aims to strengthen parents and empower them with the tools to succeed.** PEP helps parents build social connections, improve knowledge of parent-child development, and is committed to family preservation, reunification, and stabilization. PEP provides comprehensive support for the "whole" parent to improve family well-being, through a variety of proven and evidenced-based methodology to help parents reach their goals.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: FOSTER FAMILY GROWS THROUGH ADOPTION AND GIVES BACK



This August, Beech Acre's Foster parents Andy Holzhauser and Janice Liebenberg expanded their family when they finalized the adoption of their foster children, Isabella and Damion. They celebrated with their friends and family at a festive party on The Porch in Washington Park. In lieu of gifts, Andy and Janice suggested their friends and family consider a donation to Beech Acres.

"We are grateful for Beech Acres' support of our foster care and adoption experience. The commitment of Beech Acres staff is extraordinary, and the network of selfless foster parents we met committed to changing children's lives created a community we are proud to be a part of. **We are thankful to our friends and family for joining us in a fundraising effort to help more families on the same life-changing journey."**

Over \$5,200 was raised to help recruit and train other loving foster families in our community! **Thank you Holzhauser family for opening your hearts and home to Isabella and Damion and for serving as amazing Beech Acres Foster Care advocates.**

Kinship Connections Helps Families Thrive



Beech Acres was able to help one aunt support her grand-niece through high school and beyond!

"My grand-niece has graduated from high school and is now a student at the University of Cincinnati! We are both grateful for all the assistance and helpful information this agency has provided to us over the last two years. We want to say THANK YOU. As my grand-niece transitions into her adult life, she has grown with the kindness and help we have received from workshops and staff from your agency. Continue the great work. It is needed by many."



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**Thank you to first-time partner
Ohio National Financial Services
Foundation for their generous
support of Kinship Connections!**

Ohio National provided an amazing grant of \$15,000 in critical funding that allowed Beech Acres to continue providing Kinship Connections programming without disruption while state funding was delayed. Thank you Ohio National for all you have done to support kin families in our region!

Kinship Connections, Beech Acres Parenting Center's program for supporting grandparents and other caregivers caring for a loved one's child, was recently designated a "Promising Practice" by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Nearly 200,000 kids in Ohio are being cared for by their grandparents or another caregiver. Through Kinship Connections Beech Acres Parenting Center helps caregivers find financial resources, navigate complex paperwork, and connect them with other families. We do this through the evidence-based Triple P parent education program and Natural Strength Parenting™, our unique approach to parenting. We know any change in a family situation can be traumatic for kids, so we also provide behavioral health support to these families.

Kinship Connections

Kinship Connections
Designated "Promising
Practice" by the Centers For
Disease Control and
Prevention.



Jim Mason Champion for Children Fund Continues to Grow

We are grateful to the following donors who
contributed as of July 1, 2021:

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Total funds raised as of 10/26/21:

Cash \$242,212

Planned Gift \$460,000

TOTAL \$702,212

**Thank you
for your
generous
support!**