



RECLAIMING FUTURES

Communities helping teens overcome drugs, alcohol and crime

# Futures NOW!

the official newsletter of

RECLAIMING FUTURES-MONTGOMERY COUNTY, OHIO

A national program of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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### *In Their Own Words: Judges Discuss Importance of Reclaiming Futures*



Judge Kuntz



Judge Capizzi

Montgomery County's two juvenile court judges—The Honorable “Nick” Kuntz and The Honorable Anthony Capizzi—recently discussed their perceptions of and goals for juvenile justice and Reclaiming Futures. Following are excerpts from their interviews.

#### ***Why are you so dedicated to helping young people?***

**NK:** What I wanted out of the practice of law...was to practice advocacy as well as find ways to help people. And as it turns out, young people are the ones that we have the biggest opportunity to help.

**AC:** The challenges in today's society are so great, and there are so many families that are broken. We as judges have to work better with the community to bring more people together to meet the needs of our kids who don't have the mentors they used to have.

#### ***What are the trends in juvenile justice?***

**AC:** Kids used to be 15 and 16 before the court; more and more are now 12 and 13. I don't think young people

realize the seriousness of the crimes they're committing. Young people believe having a handgun or a weapon is really a sign of power. I wonder if they realize that if someone is killed on a Wednesday night, that they don't really exist on Thursday

**NK:** I think we are addressing the kids' and families' needs earlier, so we tend to see the kids earlier, and therefore people tend to think that kids are younger. But I don't know that the problems are starting younger. The earlier we intervene, the better off we are.

#### ***Why do our young people face so many challenges?***

**AC:** So often, we blame the children because they commit crimes. But in reality, so many of our young people are in a position they didn't get themselves into. Many have don't know any other way to live. How can we expect a five-year-old to learn to go to school when their parent doesn't take them to school? How can we expect an eight-year-old not to shoplift if they see their parent shoplifting?

**NK:** We have large numbers of children who are economically deprived, who are emotionally deprived, who don't have good value systems, who don't have good support systems. We're trying to reclaim those children and let them have a future that is successful

and productive as a part of our society.

**AC:** We have citizens in our community who are fearful of youth, justifiably so. It's not in east Dayton or west Dayton, it's not north or south, it's not a city problem, it's a county problem. We have to be like a village, protecting our own. And we need to come together as a community to do that.

***Natural Helpers ... aren't they a key to the success of Reclaiming Futures?***

**NK:** Natural Helpers are listeners, people who can just encourage someone to do the right thing, to get the services they need, to get the education they need. They don't have to be presidents of corporations, just relatively successful people who are willing to invest time and effort and understanding until somebody has that vision of success for themselves.

**AC:** The Natural Helper's role isn't only to help the child. It's to help the parents too. Help the family dynamics. We have to ot on the child, but on the family, as we try to fix the child's issues, deal with the drug issues, the family issues, focus on the whole family.

***What lies ahead?***

**AC:** Drug court has been a good initial experiment for Reclaiming Futures. But conceptually it has to grow. In drug court, I have about 100 young people. But we have over 2000 young people in our community who need help. I can show the success of Reclaiming Futures in drug court, so we know it works. But we have to find a way for Reclaiming Futures to touch more children.

**NK:** Dayton can become a model for the nation if we can be successful in

## ***Facts At A Glance***

**The number of youth arrested for drug abuse violations jumped 59% from 1993 to 2002.**

SOURCE: FBI, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS 2004

**While 2.3 million teens in the U.S. need drug and alcohol treatment, just 8.6% receive any treatment.**

SOURCE: US SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE ADMINISTRATION, 2003 NATIONAL SURVEY OF DRUG USE AND HEALTH

**Fewer than half (42%) of U.S. juvenile justice residential facilities report they provide on-site substance abuse treatment.**

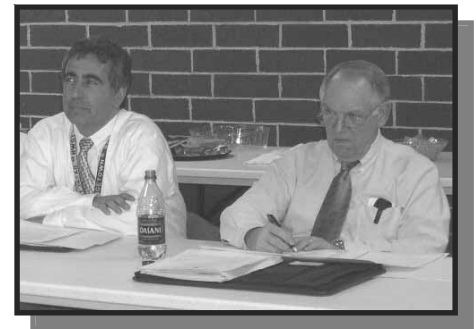
SOURCE: JUVENILE RESIDENTIAL FACILITY 2000 CENSUS, US OFFICE OF JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION

**In 2001, half of the teens admitted to substance abuse treatment were referred through juvenile justice systems.**

SOURCE: CASA 2004

## ***About The Judges...***

**The Honorable "Nick" Kuntz** has been a Montgomery County Juvenile Court Judge for a decade, and has been involved with juvenile justice since beginning his career as an assistant county prosecutor in 1973. He's involved locally and nationally in juvenile and criminal justice councils and policy boards, is former chairman of the Dayton Schools Drug Advisory Council, volunteers with local organizations including The American Heart Association and Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and is an instructional speaker at area schools and universities.



**The Honorable Anthony Capizzi** was sworn in as Juvenile Court Judge in November 2004. His 25-year legal career has focused on juvenile law, family law and litigation. He served as a Dayton City Commissioner for 12 years, was instrumental in bringing minor league baseball to the city of Dayton, and is active in many civic and professional associations.

# Reclaiming Futures Spotlight

## Natural Helper Spotlight...

Natural Helper Sharon Bently was upset that Margo had to spend a day in detention for skipping school. It seemed as though Margo had too much free time on her hands and was not making appropriate choices—choosing drug use and truancy over her education.

As they talked about options, Margo told Sharon she'd like to be able to get a job. Sharon immediately got on the phone and spoke with a regional manager for a nearby McDonald's, who agreed to meet her at the local restaurant. Margo went along, and filled out a job application while Sharon and the Regional Manager (RM) talked. Sharon told the RM about being a Natural Helper and how she was trying to help Margo, and asked if McDonald's might be willing to give Margo a chance.

The RM agreed to help and offered to interview Margo for a job. Before the interview, Sharon reminded Margo to be professional in her conversation, remembering to say, "Yes ma'am" and "No ma'am", and to leave all street language in the street.

Sharon was even allowed to sit in on the interview. Margo's interview was successful, and she was offered the job.

Thanks to Sharon's dedication—including following up after the interview to be sure Margo had a pre-employment physical and took the paperwork to McDonald's—Margo recently started work as one of McDonald's newest employees.

Margo's Probation Officer

thinks "this is a wonderful experience. They seem to work well together and Margo seems to like and respect her Natural Helper a lot."

Way to go Natural Helper, Sharon Bently!

## Natural Helpers

### Testimonials from new graduates:

*"My childhood wasn't easy ... I experimented with alcohol and drugs, and even ran away from home. I wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for the support of my family and a very special mentor—someone to whom helping came naturally. Now I've become a Natural Helper, and I strongly encourage anyone with the desire to help to do the same thing. You can make a difference in the life of a child. You can help reclaim a future."*

**- Tracy Swanson, Law Clerk to Judge Michael Murphy**

*"I've been wanting to give back to the community for some time, and I was looking for the right opportunity to work with troubled youth. A friend told me about Reclaiming Futures, and the name immediately captured me: Reclaiming Futures. That's what it's all about—helping our youth, especially our troubled youth. It's something I'm proud to be a part of, and I hope our efforts will become a model for other communities."*

**- Melvin Turner, Site Supervisor, Wackenhut Security**

*Anyone interested in learning more about the Natural Helper program is encouraged to call Catherine Allen at 937-496-6877.*

*If you would like to submit events to the newsletter, please call Reclaiming Futures at 775-3854 or e-mail [mcoho@reclaimingfutures.org](mailto:mcoho@reclaimingfutures.org). We look forward to hearing of new events and public forums.*

## **The Reason Why...**

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### **Where We've Been... Where We're Going 2005 A Busy Year For Reclaiming Futures**

#### **2005 A Busy Year For Reclaiming Futures**

##### **February**

*Reclaiming Futures Project Directors Meeting - New Orleans, Louisiana*

*Center for Coaching and Development Closing Meeting - New Orleans, Louisiana*

A final meeting for the eight projects in three southeastern states that have been implementing parts of the Reclaiming Futures model by using the same ideas and techniques projects like RF-MCO have pioneered.

*Family Support Network Training Dayton, OH*

*Natural Helper Training Kick-Off Dayton, OH*

##### **March**

*Strengths-Based Case Management*

#### **Dayton, OH**

*Best Practice: Travis County Probation Department Austin, Texas*

#### **May**

*Reclaiming Futures Leadership Institute Anchorage, Alaska*

The theme "Engaging Community and Institutionalizing Change" will bring together the 10 local community teams to exchange ideas, to learn from each other and to share principles developed at last fall's fellowship meeting that clarify how local teams can help implement the RF model.

*Project Connect - Washington, DC*

RF Grantees will travel to the nation's capital to share the challenges we face and the lessons we've learned with our representatives in government.

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If you would like to receive our newsletter, please contact Reclaiming Futures-Montgomery County, Ohio at (937) 496-6884 or e-mail us at [mcoho@reclaimingfutures.org](mailto:mcoho@reclaimingfutures.org). Please contact our office if your address has changed recently.

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