



Futures NOW!

The Quarterly Newsletter of Montgomery County Juvenile Court and Reclaiming Futures

Daquita: “My Future Has Been Reclaimed” Thanks To Juvenile Court, Natural Helper



Daquita Williams

When visitors from Reclaiming Futures’ National Program Office came to Dayton in November, they were

greeted by a young woman who proudly proclaimed that her future has been reclaimed thanks to Montgomery County Juvenile Court and Reclaiming Futures’ Natural Helper program.

Daquita Williams, now 18, had her first involvement with the court when she was only 11, and started down a path that eventually led to truancy, delinquency and drugs. Today, Daquita’s future is

bright thanks to her own determination, guidance from Reclaiming Futures and the dedication of her Natural Helper, LaJuana Henderson (see below).

Daquita was a featured speaker during Natural Helper graduation in November, and here—in her own words—is her moving story.

“There was a time when I only thought inside the box only because I was too scared to look out. I didn’t want to leave my comfort zone so I just turned down the tone and tried to keep a low profile. By doing that I only found hurt, pain, and sorrow. I cried daily and drank constantly. I hurt my family and destroyed my life.

At the young age of 16 I was sure it was too late and that I had dug a hole and was so deep in that hole that it would be impossible to turn my life around. It was then that God put positive people in my life to help me, but silly me I turned their help down. At that time God showed me all about tough love and how it worked. He took me to a place that opened my eyes and allowed me to wake up from my deep sleep, a place called CAS. There I realized the value of help and that we all need it. I was introduced to a new beginning which meant a fresh start.

Today I have that fresh start and I have a good grip on it and won’t let no drugs, alcohol, or drama take it away. With the help of my grandmother – Carrie Melson who has never left my side; my Natural Helper – LaJuana Henderson, who is always there to talk to; the entire Drug Court Team, which stays on my back along with Judge Capizzi, and all the staff at the Center for Adolescent Services who kept faith in me, along with the motivation from my son, Dacodis who needs me, I know I can make it.”

Natural Helpers Make A Difference In Lives Of County Youth

LaJuana Henderson, a graduate of Reclaiming Futures—Montgomery County’s first class of Natural Helpers, has built a professional career around a very personal interest: helping young people. Her work with Project Impact, the Day RISE (Raising Internal Self Esteem) Treatment Program, Trotwood Alternative School, and On Eagle’s Wings House Of Hope are evidence of her dedication to youth in need.

LaJuana recently talked about her experiences as Daquita Williams’ Natural Helper, and her story can be found on page two of this edition of Futures NOW!

By The Numbers:

- 5,933 young people were referred to Montgomery County Juvenile Court for criminal acts in 2004.
- Of these teens, more than half were in need of substance abuse and/or mental health treatment.
- 2,231 were girls.
- 42% were under age 15; 3% were age ten and under.

RECLAIMING FUTURES—
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
Communities helping teens
overcome drugs, alcohol
and crime.

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LaJuana Henderson, a graduate of Reclaiming Futures first Natural Helper class, was linked with 18-year-old Daquita in 2005.

Spotlight: LaJuana Henderson, Natural Helper

Each edition of "Futures NOW!" focuses on real-life experiences of Natural Helpers, the volunteer corps of local citizens who mentor at-risk children with Juvenile Court histories. To learn more about how you can reclaim a child's life by becoming a Natural Helper, please call Melissa Sanders at 496-6877.

Why is helping young people—especially young girls—such a personal and professional passion of yours?

In many families today, young people lack guidance. For a variety of reasons, their parents aren't able to give them the encouragement or support that they need in order to succeed in school, to get along with other young people, and to stay out of harm's way. Unless they have someone who is willing to be there for them—a mentor, a teacher, a pastor—they risk falling into

bad habits and making poor decisions.

You became a Natural Helper and were matched with Daquita. Tell us a little bit about her.

Daquita is so bright and so creative. She's outspoken and very intelligent. But because of some family issues she was forced to grow up fast and take care of herself. She had her first involvement with the court when she was only 11, and started down a path that eventually led to truancy, delinquency and drugs. We were matched early this year, but because Daquita

was often on the run, we didn't actually meet each other until last summer when she was at the Center for Adolescent Services.

At first, she was anxious and afraid, and didn't know how she was going to deal with things. I think being in CAS was a good thing for her, because it slowed her down and gave her a chance to think.

And how is she doing now?

She's doing really good. She's taking GED classes at the Job Center and wants to find a job in catering and banquets. But even though she's doing good, now may be the scariest time because while she's on the right path, the temptations are always out there. I'm dead set on making sure we don't lose her in any way.

What would you tell someone who is thinking about becoming a Natural Helper?

It's work. You have to be committed and stick with it. The training was extensive and helped prepare me for what I'm doing and gave me an idea of what to expect. But I'm finding it's really benefiting me as much as I think it is benefiting Daquita. I remember one day I went to visit her, and I wasn't feeling the best and almost didn't go. But I went anyway, and just sat and talked with Daquita and another young woman, and they presented me with a card, and that little bitty thing just made my day.

**Reclaiming Futures—
Montgomery County
Creating positive
futures with
court-involved youth
and families by
building community
solutions.**

Project Connect Takes RF Message To Capitol Hill

Reclaiming Futures Project Director Charlotte McGuire traveled to Washington, DC in September with Judge Anthony Capizzi and Beverly Jones, Director of the Montgomery County Alcohol, Drug and Mental

Health Services Board. It was all part of Project Connect, an effort by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation communications office to help grantees build and strengthen their relationships with members of Congress.

During meetings with legislative staff in the offices of Representative Mike Turner and Senator Mike DeWine, the Dayton delegation provided an update on the local and national health challenges facing youth and their families and show how Reclaiming Futures' partners and constituents are tackling those problems.

"Our meetings were an

important way to educate our legislators and their staffs on the Reclaiming Futures project in general and how Montgomery County has become a national leader with the success of our Natural Helper program," said Judge Capizzi. "The meetings were successful in securing our legislators' support as we search for alternative funding sources to sustain the program in Montgomery County," he added.

Both Rep. Turner and Sen. DeWine agreed to provide an "evergreen" letter to encourage funding and policy change in support of the Reclaiming Futures initiative.



Project Connect participants take their message to Capitol Hill. Shown here (left to right) are Mac Prichard, Communications Director for Reclaiming Futures National Program Office; Beverly Jones, Director of Montgomery County Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Services Board; Charlotte McGuire, RF-MCO Project Director; Judge Anthony Capizzi; and Karla Carpenter, Chief Legal Counsel for Senator DeWine.

Thirteen Natural Helpers Graduate In November

Thirteen dedicated volunteers—all ready to provide support and encouragement to area youth and families—joined the ranks of Natural Helper graduates on November 10.

Graduation marked the conclusion of five weeks of orientation and training focused on probation, treatment, diversity, and the role of a Natural Helper in the Juvenile Court's seamless system of care.

The fourth Natural Helper graduating class included Johnetta Bailey-Ivory, Marilyn Barrett, Jane Beach, LaShae Brown, Jessica Fink, Michelle Franklin, Debra Harris, Carl McDonald, E. Jean Smith, Stephanie Spears, Michael Stone, Robert Walker and Julianne Williams. These volunteers are now prepared to help court-involved youth and

their families bring about positive life changes.

The graduation ceremony featured keynote remarks by Sean L. Walton, Sr., Youth Project Coordinator for Community Action Partnership of the Greater Dayton Area. Walton has had a long career in youth-serving agencies, and currently oversees vital youth programs including the Juvenile Mentoring Program (JuMP). Walton believes that change comes easiest through truth, compassion and strength of relationship, and his remarks were encouraging and inspiring to everyone in attendance.

Natural Helper graduate Stephanie Spears introduced Walton, and other speakers included Daquita Wagner, a youth succeeding in Drug Court; and Debra Harris, another Natural Helper

graduate.

"These Natural Helpers play a critical role in the important process of reclaiming the futures of our youth," said Charlotte McGuire, Project Director. "We're eager to now match them with youth so that their positive influences can be put to good use."

To date, Reclaiming Futures—Montgomery County has trained 53 Natural Helpers, with 30 currently actively matched with court-involved youth.



Keynote speaker Sean Walton is shown here with Natural Helper Coordinator Melissa Sanders, Project Director Charlotte McGuire, and Judge Nick Kuntz.



Natural Helper graduate Pastor Carl McDonald, poses with Judge Nick Kuntz (left) and Judge Tony Capizzi (right).



Natural Helper graduates, Juvenile Court judges and Reclaiming Futures staff gather following graduation ceremonies in November. Shown (left to right) are Johnetta Ivory; Jane Beach; Marilyn Barrett; Melissa Sanders, Natural Helper Coordinator; Tanya Martin, RF Administrative Assistant; Debbie Harris; Julianne Williams; Judge Nick Kuntz; Michael Stone; Judge Anthony Capizzi; Pastor Carl McDonald (hidden); Stephanie Spears; and RF Project Director Charlotte McGuire.

Local Representatives Attend National Sessions, Workshops

Judicial Fellow Judge Anthony Capizzi, Justice Fellow Eric Shafer and Treatment Fellow John Goris joined their peers from all ten Reclaiming Futures sites around the country at fall working and networking sessions.

Judicial Fellows authored a white paper detailing the objectives, procedures for success and goals reached for the project. They plan to issue a call to action for judges around the county to

follow the lessons learned during Reclaiming Futures, and will prepare a syllabus for juvenile court judges who want to have their court participate in the Reclaiming Futures model.

Treatment Fellows discussed the standardized tools being used for screening and assessment and discussed the challenge of tracking youth as they progress through the system.

Help Us Get The Word Out

If you belong to a professional or social organization, congregation or neighborhood group or club that is in need of a speaker and would be interested in learning more about Reclaiming Futures, please contact Charlotte McGuire by phone at (937) 496-6884 or by e-mail at mcguirec@mcOhio.org.

New CADAS Initiatives Help Reclaim Futures

A treatment improvement grant awarded earlier this year by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation enabled Montgomery County's Center for Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Services (CADAS) to create a liaison position to help ensure that court-involved kids who need treatment are actually getting it.

Judi Bechtolt, LSW and LICDC, has been working as liaison between CADAS and Montgomery County Juvenile Court since June.

"Historically, families have experienced many barriers to getting help for their kids," said Jerry Newport, Manager of Adolescent Services for CADAS. "There may be

transportation problems, limited or no access to information or education about drug abuse, or the parent may be struggling with his/her own recovery from substances." Judi is able to work closely with the court, probation officers and kids' families to make sure they do, in fact, get enrolled for treatment, and she's implementing the Family Support Network Program, an outreach program which is already beginning to show positive results.

CADAS is eagerly anticipating the 2006 opening of a 15-bed adolescent residential treatment unit at Elizabeth Place. Currently, the closest residential treatment facility for young

people is 135 miles away in Athens, Ohio.

:This new center will offer huge advantages in terms of treatment coordination, and will allow us to keep these children close to their

families and circles of support while they're in treatment," said Newport. Typical length of stay will be 30 days, with the possibility for a weeklong extension for kids who medically need it.

Reclaiming Futures In The News!

The City of Dayton TV Network's special presentation about Reclaiming Futures aired daily for a month this fall and could be watched on-line at the city's website. Charlotte McGuire, Judge Kuntz, Judge Capizzi, two Natural Helpers and two drug court kids participated in the broadcast.



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