

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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More than 500 Participate in Empowerment Day Resource & Job Fair

The goal of Franklin County's annual Empowerment Day & Resource Fair is to connect parents served by Franklin County's Child Support Enforcement Agency to job opportunities, education and training, parenting assistance and community resources to help them and their children succeed.

More than 500 residents participated in this year's event held on Wednesday at Columbus State Community College's Conference Center. Empowerment Day provides legal guidance on issues of custody and visitation, as well as referrals, financial counseling, work training, and a job fair. This is the 9th year of the event and included several local hiring employers (like AEP, Columbus Castings, JCPenny, UPS, and the Columbus Zoo & Aquarium) as well as dozens of community partners who provided attendees with information on resources available to families and offered child support and legal assistance.

"Empowerment Day is a great tool to help parents help themselves and their families," said Commission President Marilyn Brown. "I want to thank and encourage all of the parents who attended the Empowerment Day activities. Just by being there, they made a difference in their lives, the lives of their children, and the life of our community. Thanks also to our community partners, the employers in attendance and especially our CSEA staff for making this an outstanding event and providing a great service to our residents and families."

Fifty-seven non-custodial parents met with Franklin County Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) staff to withdraw Capias warrants, 24 met to have driver license reinstatement with six licenses being reinstated onsite, and nearly \$1000 in child support payments was collected.

"I visited CSCC and saw great hope in the eyes of the individuals who were there to help themselves, and their families!" said Commissioner Paula Brooks. "From legal volunteers, to county staff, to the great employers there, everyone wanted to help. Strengthening our families is a critical mission for securing our future prosperity. Empowerment Day hit it out of the ballpark."

"Events like Empowerment Day are great ways to access community resources, address barriers that may be keeping you from seeing your kids, and/or getting a job to support them," said Commissioner John O'Grady. "Thanks to our CSEA team for putting together another great event, and to all of our community partners and employers for their participation."

"While our agency mission is to establish and enforce child support orders, my goal in leading the agency has been to identify and remove barriers parents may be facing that are keeping them from being able to pay their child support," said Susan A. Brown, CSEA Director. "This less punitive approach, embodied by Empowerment Day, has proved to be more beneficial for the parents and more importantly their children. This new way of administering the work of the CSEA is not possible without the great support of our

county commissioners, the cooperation of our community partners and last, but certainly not least, the outstanding CSEA staff that I am fortunate enough to work with and that inspires me every day.”

Columbus State Community College and Action for Children were cosponsors for this year’s event. Planning partners included Battelle, OhioMeansJobs Columbus-Franklin County, Franklin County Domestic Relations and Juvenile Court, Franklin County Veterans Service Commission, Legal Aid Society of Columbus, and Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles. Social service agencies onsite included Godman Guild, Goodwill Columbus, Jewish Family Services, Columbus Urban League, OSU Extension, The Center for Family Safety & Healing and many more.

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