

# Connection

The newsletter of Integrated Services

Winter 2009



INTEGRATED SERVICES  
OF APPALACHIAN OHIO

## Greetings

Woops! It appears that we've missed an issue or two of our newsletter. Sorry, it's just that we've been very busy. We'll try to do better in the future. As we look toward a new year, I'd like to mention just a few milestones that have marked the year of 2008.

Services to people, youth and families throughout our region continue but with a new name, Integrated Services of Appalachian Ohio. We opened a service support center in Athens and completely automated our operations to create a true "virtual office." Increasingly, we are thinking of the needs of families with respect to issues related to homelessness and affordable housing. We are collaborating with the Coalitions of Athens and Hocking Counties to demonstrate a new support for people who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. Also, we have become active with the Continuum of Care for both Ross and Vinton Counties. The Roweton School in Ross County has expanded to include the Roweton Employment Center for youth transitioning into adulthood; but our core remains dedication to family preservation and employment for people with a wide variety of serious challenges.

As the communities, people and families of Appalachian Ohio face uncertainty, we remain vigilant and in close collaboration with community partners. During these changing times, we look forward to a hopeful new year of challenges and opportunities. May the new year bring you all the best.

**Regards,**



Kevin Gillespie  
*Executive Director*

## Stay Connected

The easiest way to communicate with any Integrated Services staff is to start with the Athens office. Please feel free to give us a call or email. We will put you in touch with the appropriate person.

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# Greetings from Jackson County

*by Ken Murray, Program Director,  
Jackson County*

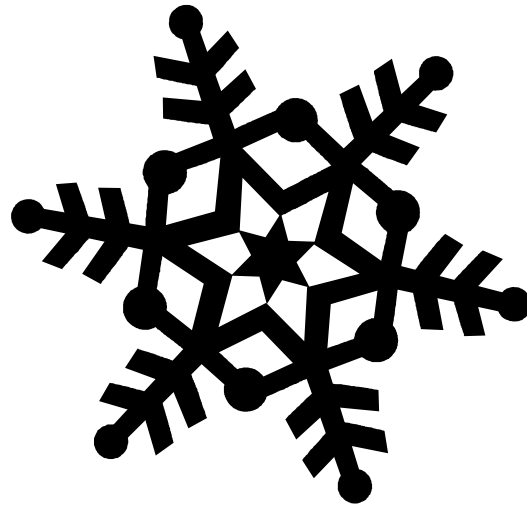
Greetings from Jackson! We just wanted to let the rest of Integrated Services know what we are up to here. We continue, of course, with our family preservation services through the JFS and Juvenile Court. We also continue our Hybrid Program with JFS. We enjoy having Penni Al Zayer now as a full-time worker here in Jackson.

Along with the overall changes in Integrated Services as a whole, we have some unique developments.

We are happy to welcome two new employees here in Jackson County. One has been an intern for us for the past six months. Her name is Tara Meredith and she graduated with her M.Ed. from the Counselor Education Program at Ohio University in June of this year. We were glad to hire her as a full-time counselor as she finished her internship. Tara is from the Jackson area and has made a smooth transition from intern to full-time employee.

Our other new employee is Jeff McKinney. He has been hired as a Behavioral Health Specialist. Jeff will be helping us start up a new avenue here in Jackson County. He will be working with a special program of the Jackson City Schools called the Center for Student Achievement. This program is aimed to help students who might otherwise drop out of school. Students in the program continue their education through a mix of school-

based and home-based curriculums. Adding our home-based Community Psychiatric Support Services will help students (and their families) be more successful in the program. Jeff is excited to be with us, and we are happy to have him.



## Bigger and Better in Vinton County

*by Maureen Muth, Program Director, Vinton County*

All is going well at Integrated Services in Vinton County. Our team has really grown in the past couple of years, and we look forward to continuing this trend. We are still focused on the youth in the juvenile justice system, while maintaining a strong caseload of families referred by Children Services. We are finding that the economy woes that have been hurting the rest of the country have certainly put our already at-risk families into even greater need. We have served many families who have been homeless or near homeless. Many families who have housing are living in substandard conditions. We pride ourselves here in this part of the world as people who are able to think “outside of the box,” as we must be flexible and creative to get basic needs met for the people that we serve.

Our team includes Beth Strassman, who came onboard for our Hybrid program in October of 2006. Although the TANF funding has ended for the time being, she is still working with families who are Medicaid eligible, and she has demonstrated a high rate of success with transitioning adults into employment or establishing Social Security Disability in order to maintain their self-sufficiency. She has increasingly also been working with families that are involved with CPS.

Richard Pleise left a position as our Juvenile Court Counselor to come

onboard with Integrated Services as a school-based worker this past January. His experience and connections in this community have been an asset, and we are happy to have a presence at Vinton County High School.

Our team members based out of VCDJFS are Mistie Pancake, Koty Yates, and Brian Ross. Mistie has been with us for almost a year, and Koty and Brian started this past summer. These folks are covering a wide range of referrals, which include child and adult mental and emotional diagnoses and poverty issues that impact all areas of individual and family life. Our home-based approach allows us to really connect with clients, and promotes our ability to work with them toward new and better futures for children and families.

