



OhioGuidestone

SOLUTIONS FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES
& COMMUNITIES

SEEDS

of Hope

Agency Newsletter
March 2016

Why the Early Years Matter

By Rebekah L. Dorman, PhD, Director of the Cuyahoga County Office of Early Childhood and Invest in Children

A child is born full of potential, but what determines whether that potential is fulfilled? Is it a person's genetic makeup or environment that shapes their destiny? Philosophers and psychologists have pondered this issue for centuries, in an ongoing argument dubbed the "nature versus nurture" debate.

Very recently, advances in brain research have demonstrated that "nature" and "nurture" are closely intertwined in a manner never before imagined. As such, the early years of a child's life are a crucial time in their

development. New research shows that "nurture," or the world around the developing child, actually shapes "nature," in the form of the young child's developing brain.

We now know that during the early years of life there is amazing growth within the brain: 700 new neural connections are formed every second! These connections in the brain are being shaped by the infant and young child's interactions with the world that surrounds her. While genetics provides the basic blueprint, how our brains are ultimately wired comes from interactions with our environment. The single most important environmental influence on the brain's architecture is the adults that interact with and care for an individual when they are an infant and a young child.

When children are cared for by parents or other caregivers in a manner both stimulating and sensitive to their needs, brain architecture is created that prepares them for lives of learning, productivity, and positive relationships with others. When children do not receive that type of developmentally supportive care, the impact is apparent very early on. Depression and attachment

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OhioGuidestone serves over 23,000 children and families every year, but we can't do it without your help. Support OhioGuidestone today by calling 440.234.2006, 800.639.4974 or visiting www.OhioGuidestone.org.

President's Message



Richard R. Frank
President and CEO

The first years of children's lives are crucial to their futures. Surrounded by the people and things that will ultimately help shape their world, it is vital that they receive the nurturing and education they will need to grow and learn throughout their lives. However, for many of the families we serve, it is difficult to devote attention and guidance when they are already struggling. Inundated by new emotional, environmental and financial needs, many new parents feel overwhelmed by their changing roles and uncertain how to best support the small individuals who are now in their care. In this issue, you will learn how OhioGuidestone is providing parents with the tools they need to strengthen their families while giving new generations the opportunity to succeed and thrive. We are proud of our ever-growing continuum of services that focus on the youngest people in our communities, and those who help fund these important initiatives. As you'll see in the pages that follow, your support of our children during their earliest years can lead us all towards a brighter future.

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disorders can be observed even during infancy. By three years of age, children with college educated parents or caregivers have vocabularies two to three times greater than children whose parents did not complete high school.

Understanding brain development explains why programs that focus on the early years have documented such significant impact extending into adulthood. Helping parents interact with their children in a sensitive, yet stimulating

manner, and participation in high quality early childhood education programs are literally building better brain connections. Investing in these programs is an investment in developing brains: and what better investment can one find?

About the Author



Dr. Rebekah Dorman is a Cornell University-trained developmental psychologist. She has spent her career helping children and families in the academic, nonprofit and philanthropic sectors. She is currently the *Director of the Cuyahoga County Office of Early Childhood* and *Invest in Children*, the public/

private partnership that focuses services, resources and advocacy on the early childhood period. Dr. Dorman is the author of two books published by the Child Welfare League of America, and numerous articles. She serves on Ohio's Early Childhood Advisory Council and is a member of the Steering Committee for groundWork, Ohio's nonpartisan advocacy group focused on early childhood.

Impacting Children in the Early Years: Providing a Continuum of Care

Having a child is a life-changing event that can bring many joys, but also many challenges. For families who are already struggling, having a child can add a financial burden that forces them below the poverty line. Recognizing that many of the individuals we serve are facing multiple barriers to raising their children, including poverty, OhioGuidestone has developed a continuum of care to help overwhelmed, impoverished families support their children. By providing assistance and interventions during the early years, we put children on a better trajectory towards a successful future.

OhioGuidestone's continuum assists families with a wide range of concerns. Our Early Childhood Mental Health services work with children who are struggling with their emotions and behaviors. By providing counseling and developmental assistance, we are able to help them improve their actions, understand their feelings and strengthen their relationships with others. During our last fiscal year, we helped more than 1,400 children learn coping mechanisms, develop social skills and adjust to changes and challenges in their lives.

OhioGuidestone also offers programs that provide

supportive services to help get children off to a healthy start. Our Help Me

In the last year, MomsFirst provided over 685 health screenings to families in our communities and helped 89 pregnant women successfully plan for and deliver healthy babies.

Grow and MomsFirst programs provide education on how parents can help their children learn and grow. By providing developmental screenings, positive parenting education, and connections to community resources, these programs allow parents to provide a healthy start for their children. In the last year alone, MomsFirst provided over 685 health screenings to families in our communities and helped 89 pregnant women successfully plan for and deliver healthy babies. Additionally, parents involved in our Help Me Grow program showed a statistically significant improvement understanding parent-child family

roles, leading to a reduced risk for abusive and negligent behaviors in the home. By

helping parents understand their child's needs, we are helping them work towards stable, consistent, loving environments for their families.

As children grow, OhioGuidestone grows with them. Critical components of development, including family support and educational growth opportunities, provide the next steps on the path out of poverty. By providing this 360° continuum of support, OhioGuidestone continues to help individuals grow and thrive.

To learn more about our early childhood services, visit us at www.OhioGuidestone.org

or call Holli Ritzenthaler, *Director of Community Counseling*, at 440.260.8543. To make a charitable gift, call Cindy Naegele, *Vice President of Advancement*, at 440.260.8341.



Defying the Odds: A Superhero Story

Lashone watched as her 5-year-old-son, DaQuan, played with superhero figures in the family's living room. What really makes a superhero? She thought. Most of the stories she knew were about ordinary people who had pushed through adversity to accomplish extraordinary things. And in the end, they had persevered. In a way, DaQuan's story matched that of the legends surrounding the small toys. The path that had led to DaQuan's success had certainly not been easy.

Lashone thought back to six years ago, when it all began. During her pregnancy, Lashone had learned her baby had a brain disorder and likely wouldn't survive. She spent nights pacing, worrying about his future. One night, Lashone was scouring information, searching for anything that could give her hope. The words Help Me Grow



DaQuan practicing his transitional skills.

jumped out from a colorful flyer and caught her eye. She had called for information the very next day.

Lashone smiled as she opened the door for Megan, DaQuan's home visitor from Help Me Grow. Megan had been working with Lashone since her pregnancy, helping her understand how she could best support her son's development. At first, it had been hard when DaQuan was not able to talk the way other children did at his age. But Megan showed Lashone ways to help build up DaQuan's verbal skills, and he was slowly getting better at communicating. Now, as Megan smiled back she asked "Who's got you?" to the small boy. "Mama!" DaQuan exclaimed

happily. Lashone beamed. She was still thrilled every time her son said her name.

As time went on, DaQuan continued to develop and soon was able to start preschool. There, he worked with OhioGuidestone's classroom intervention program to learn how to interact with other children. When it was time for DaQuan to go to kindergarten, Lashone was proud of how far he had come. But she also knew DaQuan still needed help learning how to transition in a new school. Because OhioGuidestone had been a cornerstone in DaQuan's life since birth, it was only natural that the agency would continue to help him.

Lashone beamed. She was still thrilled every time her son said her name.

"What kind of game are we playing today?" Lashone asked when she visited DaQuan's kindergarten classroom. "Memory! I'm winning!" DaQuan said. Lashone laughed and looked at Erin, Daquan's therapist from OhioGuidestone's Early Childhood Mental Health Program. Just weeks

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DaQuan and his therapist, Erin.

Supporting the Early Years: Mayfield United Methodist Church

Children in the early years of their lives rely on the support of others to help them thrive. As a member of OhioGuidestone's Auxiliary Board, Mary Sue Eilrich understood the importance of early childhood programming and was dedicated to making an impact. Connected to the auxiliary through her congregation, Mayfield United Methodist Church, Mary Sue appreciated that OhioGuidestone was a faith-based agency and was committed to advocating for young children.

Through her work with the auxiliary, Mary Sue learned more and more about the ways that children are affected by poverty. She became particularly interested in OhioGuidestone's Help Me Grow program, which focuses primarily on providing support for infants and new mothers. Inspired by the program, Mary Sue helped plan a baby shower where attendees brought gifts in the form of basic essentials such as diapers, wipes and toiletry items to help moms in need.

As time went on, Mary Sue continued her commitment to the OhioGuidestone mission despite facing her own health

issues. She requested that, upon her passing, individuals would give to OhioGuidestone's early childhood programs. Wanting to pay tribute to her memory and continue to support her philanthropy, Mayfield United Methodist Church gave a charitable gift to OhioGuidestone's Help Me Grow program in her name. Through this gift, the church has supported Help Me Grow home visitors as they continue to bring help directly to parents and children. Thanks to Mayfield United Methodist, Mary Sue Eilrich's support lives on.

At OhioGuidestone, we are grateful for the many ways congregations and individuals continue to help provide hope to the youngest members of our communities. In-kind donations provide tangible, needed items to individuals who otherwise

go without. Interested in organizing a baby shower for one of our early childhood programs? Contact Arian May, *Communications Assistant*, at 440.260.8212. Memorial giving can also provide support to children and families in need of critical services. Learn more about memorial giving by contacting Cindy Naegele, *Vice President of Advancement*, at 440.260.8341.



Help Me Grow staff thank donors for generous baby shower gifts for their clients.

Defying the Odds: A Superhero Story, Continued from page 4

ago, DaQuan was barely interacting with her during these sessions. Now, he was talking and laughing not only with Erin, but with his teachers and classmates. "I can't believe it," Lashone said. "After everything he's been through,

he's just like a typical five year old boy." Erin smiled. "I think he has a long, successful future ahead of him," she said.

Lashone's eyes began to water at the memories as she continued to watch

her son play with his action figures. My little superhero, she thought. She knew that DaQuan would have different needs as he grew up. But she also knew that OhioGuidestone would be there to help every step of the way.

OhioGuidestone: Treating, Supporting, Growing

OhioGuidestone is a community solutions organization. We offer a unique blend of behavioral health treatment services, skill building programs and prevention opportunities for children and families. At OhioGuidestone, many of our clients struggle with a lack of education and life skills, and don't know how to access personal or community resources to help them improve their situations. We not only help resolve problems that already exist, but teach skills to help individuals become self-sufficient, and prevent future obstacles to success. Each of our locations work on a continuum of these three important services to help the communities they serve.

Growing Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Across the State

This winter, OhioGuidestone and PFCS were both approved by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to expand our Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) consultation services. Thanks to the "Whole Child Matters" initiative, ECMH services in Cuyahoga, Lorain, Summit and Tuscarawas Counties will add mental health consultants who will work with children, families and teachers to promote healthy social and emotional development and school readiness.

Summit County: Supporting the Road to Recovery

OhioGuidestone's Summit County office has expanded our recovery efforts to include Recovery Coaching services for adults who are recovering from addiction and/or mental health concerns. Providing peer support, this program helps participants develop a wellness plan and improve their futures.

Franklin County: Treating the Whole Family while Addressing Sobriety



As part of Franklin County's Recovery 360°, programming has been developed to help support the whole family while parents work towards maintaining sobriety. Monthly sobriety activities have been held for clients and their families, including a sober New Year's Eve party, a chili cook-off and a family night at COSI. In addition, Franklin County has started offering an Early Childhood Mental Health group during the same time as Sober Support Group meetings. By running these programs concurrently, parents who are working to stay sober can also help their children focus on their feelings and social skills.

Lorain County: Supporting Adopted Youth in Lorain County

Last summer, OhioGuidestone worked to develop Adoption Support Groups for parents in Lorain County. This winter, a new series of adoption support groups has been implemented called Connections for Kids. These groups work hand in hand with our adult groups, and allow adopted children to meet other youth with similar backgrounds and find support for the specific challenges they face.

Providing New Classroom Interventions to Support First Graders

This year, OhioGuidestone therapists in Lorain County introduced an initiative to help first graders in Lorain County schools. PAX, an evidence-based classroom intervention program, uses games to promote self-regulation during normal school activities and helps children increase positive behaviors in the classroom. Currently, PAX is used in 12 schools throughout Lorain County.

Cuyahoga County: Supporting Families with the Tapestry System of Care

OhioGuidestone is proud to have recently been awarded a contract as part of the Tapestry System of Care in Cuyahoga County. Tapestry is a wraparound service model intended to help families and children by connecting them to community resources in their neighborhoods. As part of the Tapestry System, OhioGuidestone care coordinators and family advocates will work to help keep children living safely in their homes.

Growing Knowledge about Toxic Stress in Early Childhood



Dr. Ben Kearney, *Executive Vice President and Chief Clinical Officer*, will give the Keynote Address this spring at the Ohio Head Start Association of Social Work Conference. The conference, titled “Head Start Family Engagement: Keys to Positive Relationships” will take place on March 14, at the DoubleTree Worthington, in Columbus, Ohio. Dr. Kearney will speak about “Understanding Toxic Stress”, and discuss how toxic stress negatively impacts the development of children.

Go green!

Want to keep up with important news at OhioGuidestone and be environmentally friendly? Consider signing up for our newsletter electronically! By having Seeds of Hope delivered to your inbox instead of your mailbox, you'll help the environment as well as the children and families we serve. To switch your Seeds of Hope subscription to an e-mail account, contact Arian May at 440.260.8212 or Arian.May@OhioGuidestone.org.

LICENSES AND CERTIFICATIONS

Ohio Dept. of Job & Family Services | Ohio Dept. of Mental Health | Ohio Dept. of Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities



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OhioGuidestone

SOLUTIONS FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES
& COMMUNITIES

Our Vision

Future generations are educated, self reliant and contributing members of strong communities.

Our Mission

To provide pathways for growth, achievement and lifelong success.

OhioGuidestone

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SAVE THE DATE: Join Us for These Upcoming Events

Pack the Q

Wed., March 23, 2016
Quicken Loans Arena



Cheer on the Cleveland Cavaliers and support Stepstone Academy! We're selling discounted tickets for this exciting game against the Milwaukee Bucks, a portion of which will go to our school. Don't miss the fun, buy your tickets today!

**2nd Annual Comedy Club Night
featuring Mike Polk Jr.
Friday, April 15, 2016 | 7:30pm
Music Box Supper Club**

Join us for laughs and philanthropy when the OhioGuidestone Advocacy Committee sponsors a Comedy Club Night, benefitting OhioGuidestone's Residential Treatment Program. Many comedians, including Mike Polk, will perform.

**OhioGuidestone Promise Run
Saturday, May 21, 2016 | 9:00am
Wallace Lake, Berea, OH**



Take a step today for stronger communities tomorrow! Join us for a 10K run, 5K run or zumba session to help children and families in crisis. The run benefits our emergency fund, which provides meals, emergency shelter, clothing, and other necessities for our clients.

**4th Annual Stepstone
Academy Golf Classic
Monday, June 13, 2016
Red Tail Golf Course**



2016 GOLF CLASSIC

Join us for a day of golf and an evening dinner and auction to raise funds for Stepstone Academy. Sponsorships and tickets are available.

**OhioGuidestone Golf & Club Classic
Monday, September 12, 2016
Columbia Hills Country Club**

2016 GOLF &
CLUB CLASSIC

Join lead sponsor, Blue Technologies, for a day of golf and an exciting live auction to benefit the children and families served by OhioGuidestone. Sponsorship and tickets for the evening festivities are available.

**Want to be a part of these
exciting events?**

Visit www.OhioGuidestone.org/ events, or contact Kelley Likes, *Annual Giving Coordinator*, at 440.260.8231