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# Allegheny County Establishes Department of Children Initiatives

In May, Allegheny County Executive **Rich Fitzgerald** announced the creation of the Department of Children Initiatives, developed out of the findings of a 26-member working group he formed in 2019, and he appointed **Rebecca “Becky” Mercatoris** as the department’s founding director.

“I welcome this new opportunity to serve our county’s children, families, childcare and out-of-school time providers as we move forward to a childcare and out-of-school time that

really works for everyone in our county,” she comments.

Ms. Mercatoris, who previously worked for the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning as well as the Child Care State Capacity Building Center, holds a master’s degree in public policy and management from the University of Pittsburgh.

The Department of Children Initiatives will begin working on the issue of helping young children become prepared

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## Inkwel Global Marketing Donates 300 Frisbees

Just in time for summer, Inkwel Global Marketing, a New York-based promotional products company, has donated 300 frisbees to the Foundation for distribution to 12 partner organizations.

Inkwel Business Manager **Gary Brill**, who has previously supported the work of the Foundation, explains, “The pandemic has been difficult on everyone, especially kids, so I want kids to have something fun to play with this summer to reduce some of the stress they may be experiencing.” ■



## Foundation Accepting Grant Applications

Nonprofit organizations addressing the needs of families with children experiencing homelessness are invited to apply for a grant from the Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation.

PCGF is interested in supporting programs that:

- Prevent families from becoming homeless;
- Implement intervention strategies that make homelessness brief and non-reoccurring;
- Bring greater stabilities to the lives of these families.

**Submit your application by Friday, October 15, 2021.**  
**Download a grant application at**  
[pittsburghchildguidancefoundation.org/grants](http://pittsburghchildguidancefoundation.org/grants)

#### PITTSBURGH CHILD GUIDANCE FOUNDATION 2021 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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## Children Initiatives

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for school and learning. According to Mr. Fitzgerald, "I'm so excited that we have so much economic growth and economic development happening in this region right now, but unless these kids are ready to avail themselves to those opportunities, it's almost like they're in a different world and not connected to it."

Ms. Mercatoris states, "It is my vision that this new department will serve as a model for how local government can collaborate with organizations to support early learning and out-of-school time programs, workforce development, and most importantly the families who use those services." ■

## Summer Intern Joins PCGF

PCGF welcomes summer intern **Alyssa Rizzo**, a Bowling Green State University student majoring in Human Development and Family Studies with



a minor in Child Development and Child Life. Following graduation in August, she hopes to become a victim advocate to enhance the coping and social emotional

skills of children who are victims of sexual abuse.

"My experience at the Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation has been amazing so far and I cannot wait to see what else this has in store for me," she explains. "I appreciate having the opportunity to gain practical experience by working on so many projects." ■



## Expert Shares Tips for Supporting Children During the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably altered every aspect of society, but its most profound legacy — and the impact that will be the hardest to recover from — will be its long-term effects on the lives of an entire generation of children who may never catch up.



**Lisa Fox**, Chief Executive Officer of The Bradley Center, which specializes in trauma-informed care, offers insight and practical advice in a thoughtful piece recently published by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

Ms. Fox believes that hope for at-risk children starts with each of us, and she suggests these four action items:

- 1** Be aware that your attention, care and instincts can truly make a difference.
- 2** Understand that stress, trauma and depression often present differently in children than they do in adults.
- 3** Rather than assuming that a seemingly troubled child is okay

or will eventually work through their problems on their own, take the time to talk to them.

- 4** Be sure to spend quality time with the children in your life and include them in activities and experiences that will expand their capabilities, self-confidence and social skills.

**Click here to read the full story.**

## Kudos

Congratulations to **Julius Boatwright**, LMSW, Founder and CEO of Steel Smiling, who recently received the Albert B. Craig Award by the Staunton Farm Foundation. Steel Smiling is a local nonprofit that seeks to destigmatize mental health and increase access for Black people. Implementing



a community-based approach, Mr. Boatwright recruited and then trained 23 people in Mental Health First Aid.

As well, he has raised more than \$100,000 that was used to provide 250+ hours of free mental health support to those in need.

Now in its 11th year, the Albert B. Craig Award recognizes people who challenge society to think in fresh ways about problems and solutions regarding behavioral health. ■

# PA Office of Advocacy and Reform Plan Available Online

In July 2019, **Governor Tom Wolf** signed an executive order to create the Office of Advocacy and Reform (OAR) to better protect and serve vulnerable Pennsylvanians.

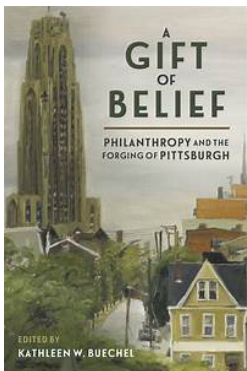
The Office consists of an executive director, a child advocate and a long-term care ombudsman.

Using principles of trauma-informed practices and public health strategies, OAR seeks to reduce trauma to vulnerable populations through a focus on prevention wherever possible. This approach requires identifying and eliminating core causes of problems, not just indefinitely treating its symptoms.

View the plan to guide the Commonwealth and service providers statewide on what it means to be trauma-informed and healing-centered in Pennsylvania:

**Trauma-Informed PA: A Plan to Make Pennsylvania a Trauma-Informed, Healing-Centered State**

## Books by Local Foundation Leaders



### ***A Gift of Belief: Philanthropy and the Forging of Pittsburgh***

Edited by **Kathleen W. Buechel**, Executive Director of The Benter Foundation

*A Gift of Belief* reveals how Pittsburghers from every strata, creed and circumstance organized their private resources for the public good. The industrialists and their foundations are here but stand alongside lesser-known philanthropists equally involved in institution building, civic reform and community empowerment.

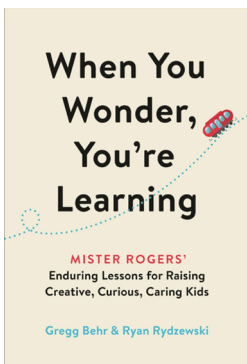


### ***Foundation in Seeding Transformation: Meeting Essential Needs Through 20 Years of Grantmaking***

Written by **Scott D. Izzo**, retired Director of the Richard King Mellon Foundation

*Foundation in Seeding Transformation* focuses on the Richard King Mellon Foundation's work in its four funding priorities: conservation, education, human

services and regional economic development.



### ***When You Wonder, You're Learning***

Written by **Gregg Behr**, Executive Director of The Grable Foundation, and **Ryan Rydzewski**, an award-winning author/reporter/speechwriter

*When You Wonder, You're Learning* introduces a new generation of families to the lessons of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood. By exploring the science behind the iconic television program, the book reveals what Fred Rogers called the "tools for learning," skills and mindsets that scientists now consider essential. These

tools — curiosity, creativity, collaboration and more — have been shown to boost everything from academic learning to children's well-being, and they benefit kids of every background and age.

## Housing Alliance Seeks AmeriCorps Members

The Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania seeks two highly motivated, self-starter individuals to join its Housing Capacity AmeriCorps VISTA team, working on affordable housing, homelessness, eviction and blight issues across Pennsylvania.



**Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania**

One AmeriCorps member will be based out of the Housing Alliance's Pittsburgh office while the other will be based in Philadelphia. VISTAs serve full time for one year, beginning August 30, 2021.

**Click here to learn more and apply.**

## Mark Your Calendars

We ask Trustees to make every effort to attend:

*All meetings will be held at the Foundation Office.*

**Board Meeting:** Tuesday, Sept. 21  
4 – 5:30 p.m.

**Board Meeting/  
Annual Meeting:  
Meeting:** Tuesday, Nov. 9  
4 – 5:30 p.m.

**Deadline to apply  
for PCGF grants:** Friday, Oct. 15