

Local courts, The Children's Home increase partnerships to preserve familial bonds

by Steven Wilson, Ed.D.



“I wanted to tell you how much I appreciated you through the last few months,” said Bonnie D., a parent using services provided by the Family Visitation Center at The Children's Home. “It takes a special person to see the situations you do and be as passionate and kind as you are. My babies were always at ease when we came for visits and that is all thanks to you.”

These words came from a mother after her children's first supervised visit with their father at the Family Visitation Center (FVC) at The Children's Home. Parents can use the FVC when a judge or magistrate from the court orders supervised parenting time.

“Children need both parents,” says Randal S. Bloch, attorney at Wagner & Bloch, LLC in Cincinnati and an instrumental partner in establishing the FVC in 2018. “Unfortunately, there are times when parents may need assistance in seeing their children. As safety is a primary concern for parents, the Family Visitation Center at The Children's Home meets this need.”

The FVC by The Children's Home has steadily increased its number of partnering courts and amount of families served. A facility able to provide supervised visitation in a dignified manner can be critical for families who need help.

Activities that take place at the FVC are as varied as the clients who use the space, said Karen McCann, family visitation supervisor at The Children's Home.

"After several weeks of visits by a family, a young boy offered his arts and crafts project to his dad to take home," she said. "It's the first time he'd ever offered anything to [his] dad. Dad could not stop smiling.



"Over the last few months the FVC has hosted several birthday celebrations, pizza parties, parents learning to play 'Uno' for the first time, puppet shows, painting rocks in the sensory garden, dunking contests on the basketball court and watching deer graze on

The Children's Home's property," said McCann. The impact the FVC has is often instant and tangible. "We had a mom assigned last October for a few visits with her son," McCann said. "She told us at the completion of her visits, she felt very welcomed and supported from the first time she entered our building."

The Children's Home has made a deliberate effort to ensure the facility is conducive to parents and children.

"[The FVC] is a warm, safe, secure and nurturing environment where moms, dads and their children can be together and share the best of themselves," Bloch said.

“They play, they talk, and they ‘break bread ‘ - just like any family.”

“We opened the FVC after seeing a gap in the community for these kinds of services,” said John Banchy, president and CEO of The Children’s Home. “Kids are often forced to endure the collateral damage of being separated from one, or both parents, when courts get involved in adult matters. The FVC helps mitigate those circumstances.”

Once a court order and payment, if necessary, are received through the appropriate partner court channels visits through the FVC will be scheduled.

“The child/parent relationship is crucial for the optimal development



in a young person,” said Dr. Joe Rieman, medical director of The Children’s Home.

“Children who have healthy, strong ties to parents are overwhelmingly better positioned to become successful students, and eventual adults, who are able

to secure healthy and productive social bonds with others.”

During visits, the FVC staff will be available to refer families, as needed, to community mental and behavioral health resources.

“[The FVC] made such a difficult time for the three of us so much easier,” said Bonnie D., speaking of her experience and that of her two young children. “The way my babies lit up when they knew we were coming to see you and the way they squealed when you walked up to the car made it so much easier on me as a mother and them during this time of transition. Thank you for who you are, your passion for all of these kids, and your kindness. We will never forget you.”