

KENT COUNTY FRIEND OF THE COURT OFFERS PROGRAMS, AMNESTY TO ADDRESS BENCH WARRANTS FOR CHILD SUPPORT

Kent County Circuit Court issues about 3,500 bench warrants every year for parents who fail to stay up-to-date on child support and refuse to appear in court to discuss the matter. These warrants reflect more than 6,000 children who are not receiving the financial support needed to feed and care for them. Kent County Friend of the Court (FOC) believes that there can be better support for these children, offering parents several opportunities to review their cases and put them in a better place to care for their children.

Amnesty: Kent County FOC has partnered with Strong Fathers and Lifequest to offer an amnesty event in the community. The event will be held at **Lifequest, 1050 Fisk Rd SE, GR (between Kalamazoo and Fuller, just north of Hall) on Friday, August 12 from 9:30am – 3:30pm**. Payers with a Kent County FOC bench warrant will meet with a case manager to resolve the warrant with some kind of payment and a plan for future payments, **without fear of arrest**. Employment agencies and other organizations will also be present. In addition to this event, case managers will also be available Tuesdays from 8-11:30 and Thursdays from 1-4 throughout the month of August at the FOC office to resolve bench warrants.

Responsible Parents Program (RPP): Payers may be referred for this new program, focused on job placement and building trust between the FOC and the community. “We are assigning staff to help payers who work closely with us to address barriers and become better informed of their options,” said Dan Fojtik, Kent County Friend of the Court Director. “Our caseworkers will work with qualified payers who want to resolve their warrant without arrest through diligence in obtaining employment and following their court order for support.” The program will also provide

(continued below)

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 3

In this issue:

| | |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Amnesty and RPP | 1 |
| AccessKent | 2 |
| What doesn't the FOC do? | 2 |
| Double Up Food Bucks | 2 |

SUMMER 2016

Helpful reminders:

Check out www.grkids.com for summer activities for your family.

The court works through written orders. Keep a copy of your own court order handy.

A payer of support is generally automatically submitted for tax offset if he or she owes more than \$150.

(continued)

information about parenting time and support modification, and include partnership with Lifequest and Strong Fathers.

Kent County Sheriff Deputies: Beginning late this summer, the FOC will utilize two deputies for bench warrant enforcement. Many counties across the state have similar programs with warrant officers, including Muskegon and Ottawa. “Enforcement is and will remain focused mostly on those parents who owe support, are earning enough to pay, but refuse to follow the order of the court,” said Undersheriff Michelle Young. “Our goal is to safeguard the children of Kent County and ensure they are getting the support they need from parents who can pay. Even a partial payment is far better to us than putting parents in the correctional facility, where they are unable to earn money to apply towards support.”



KENT COUNTY FRIEND OF THE COURT



*Our mission:
To assist the Family
Division of the Circuit
Court in facilitating the
resolution of domestic
relations matters so
that children's best
interests are
protected.*



82 Ionia NW, Ste. 200
PO Box 351
Grand Rapids, MI
49501-0351

E-mail us at:
foc.mail@kentcountymi.gov

Or visit Kent County's
[website](#) for employment
opportunities with
Kent County and the FOC.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FOC? TRY WWW.ACCESSKENT.COM

Have you visited the [Access Kent website?](#) Under the courts tab you will find the link to [Friend of the Court](#). Here you will have access to information about services offered through FOC as well as forms and other publications that may be useful to you. The site will provide you with overviews of primary FOC services such as, case management, income review, custody and parenting time, and healthcare. You will have access to information regarding enforcement in these areas as well as details explaining types of enforcement and compliance. AccessKent also provides useful links for making payments, checking balances, and finding legal assistance; all this without the necessity of calling! Sometime this fall, we will be updating our automated phone system. You can find information about this and other changes in future editions of this newsletter.

BUT WHAT DOES THE FOC NOT DO?

There is often a great deal of confusion regarding what the Friend of the Court can and cannot do. Given the wealth of information available on the internet, court paperwork, fliers, friends, relatives, and attorneys, it is understandable why people become confused. This article will address some of the non-FOC issues that are often raised in family support and divorce cases. This list does not cover everything. Be sure to contact the Friend of the Court if you have any questions about what our office can or cannot enforce.

LEGAL CUSTODY: Legal custody is a parent's right to participate in certain decisions about a child's health, education, and welfare. Joint legal custody orders are fairly common. A [motion](#) must be filed in circuit court to address any issue regarding legal custody.

PROPERTY: The Friend of the Court cannot address any issues involving property division. This includes tax filings, personal property (things), or real property (home and/or land). This includes property that was intended to be used in lieu of child support. A motion must be filed in circuit court to address any issue regarding property.

CHANGE OF RESIDENCE: Many court orders place limitations on the distance parties may move, especially if there are parenting time orders or joint physical custody orders in place. A [motion](#) must be filed in circuit court to address any issues regarding a change in residence.

AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE PARTIES: The Friend of the Court is only able to enforce written orders that are signed by a judge. A written agreement submitted to the Friend of the Court is unenforceable, even if it is signed by both parties. It is recommended that the parties request Friend of the Court [mediation services](#) or [file a motion](#) in circuit court to have any out-of-court agreements entered as an order.

MODIFICATION OF SPOUSAL SUPPORT: Unlike child support, spousal support does not have any formula to determine what a payer's obligation should be. The court makes a determination of what a payer should pay based on several different factors. A motion must be filed in circuit court if a party wishes to modify spousal support.

Double Up Food Bucks

From June 1st – October 31st (2016)
bring your Bridge Card to a
participating farmers market, purchase
Michigan grown fruits and vegetables
and get the same amount FREE (up to
\$20) that day or on another visit. Visit

www.DoubleUpFoodBucks.org or call
866-586-2796 for a complete list of
locations and how to how
to get your Double Up
Food Bucks today!

