



**Media Contact:**  
Rick W. Wurth, CEO  
859.292.4177 (o)  
859.468.5418 (c)  
rwurth@chnk.org

**For Immediate Release:**

**CHNK Invites Tri-State to Do the Duffle Shuffle**  
*Region-wide campaign is designed to raise awareness and support for adolescent survivors of abuse and neglect*

*Covington, KY (April 17, 2017)* – In an effort to start the conversation about child abuse and neglect, Children's Home of Northern Kentucky invites you to dance. Shuffle, more specifically, and with a duffle bag in hand. And yes, CHNK is very serious about this.

As of April 2, the number of youth in out-of-home care across the Commonwealth of Kentucky hit an all-time high – 8,188 youth, to be exact. These are youth who were removed from their own homes by the Department for Community-Based Services (DCBS) due to substantiated reports of abuse and/or neglect. The sad irony is that April marks National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month.

“Child abuse and neglect aren’t easy topics to discuss,” reflected Rick Wurth, CHNK Chief Executive Officer. “They can be easy to ignore simply because the conversation can quickly become uncomfortable and overwhelming. Our goal was to find a way to show the wider community that even though one person can’t do everything to impact the issue, he or she can do *something*.”

Enter CHNK Board of Trustees member and Barking Squirrel Media President David Bray, who along with Wurth, CHNK Development Manager Anne Sturgis, and Untold Content CEO Katie Trauth Taylor, brainstormed creative ways to promote a duffle bag drive. From there, the Duffle Shuffle was born.

But why duffle bags? Children in out-of-home care spend, on average, one-third of their lives transitioning from one place to another – from their original home to a group residential treatment facility like CHNK, or from a group residential facility to a foster home, or simply from foster home to foster home. These transitions can happen quickly and unexpectedly; often, there is no option other than placing a child’s belongings into trash bags in lieu of suitcases or duffle bags. CHNK wants to change that.

“DCBS Commissioner Adria Johnson spoke recently about provision of needs, as they relate to these thousands of Kentucky children in out-of-home care and the foster families and organizations like CHNK who are willing and able to help them,” Wurth shared. “The commissioner remarked that the least we can do is give these children some dignity, starting with a duffle bag instead of a trash bag. This drive is CHNK’s response to Commissioner Johnson’s plea.”

The Duffle Shuffle campaign launches on Monday, April 17 and officially runs through June 30. Individuals, families, workplaces, classrooms, faith communities, and neighborhoods are encouraged to record themselves doing the “Duffle Shuffle” after purchasing a duffle bag for youth in out-of-home care. Participants are then asked to share their videos online using the hashtag #DUFFLESHUFFLE and challenge someone else to do their own version of the Duffle Shuffle. The



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final step is to do the Duffle Drop – bringing the duffle bag(s) to CHNK's Devou Park campus or to an official Duffle Drop location in the tri-state area.

CHNK will first and foremost make certain that the youth in their care each receives a new duffle; the remaining duffles will be shared with other nonprofits who serve youth in out-of-home care in the Northern Kentucky/Greater Cincinnati area, as well as Kentucky's Department for Community-Based Services and Ohio's Department of Job and Family Services.

Monetary donations are also welcome; financial gifts will support CHNK's behavioral health and substance use treatment programs for youth who have experienced abuse, neglect, addiction, or other trauma.

More information about the Duffle Shuffle, as well as the official video of community partners who wanted to assist CHNK in officially announcing the drive, can be found at [www.dufflesuffle.org](http://www.dufflesuffle.org). Over 30 individuals and groups participated, including the Cincinnati Zoo, Thomas More College, city mayors from across Kenton County, former Bengal Ickey Woods along with the Ben-Gal cheerleaders, and Jeff Thomas from Q102's Jeff & Jenn Morning Show. CHNK also invited three other child welfare providers in the area to participate; DCCH Center for Children and Families, Holly Hill Children's Services, and St. Joseph Orphanage will be working with their constituents in order to maximize community impact for the campaign.

"On any given day at CHNK, our young clients are participating in therapeutic recreation as part of their treatment plan – basically, playing with purpose," Sturgis said. "Now it's time for the wider community to do the same. Our hope is that the Duffle Shuffle becomes the first step in communities talking openly and creatively about what they can do to have direct, immediate impact on youth who are survivors of abuse and neglect."

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Children's Home of Northern Kentucky takes a family-centered, holistic approach to behavioral health and substance use treatment for youth experiencing abuse, neglect, addiction, or other trauma. CHNK's menu of services includes community-based services, intensive outpatient services, and residential treatment; CHNK's team of 120 healthcare professionals operates the region's most sophisticated and robust integrated physical and behavioral healthcare service model. Accredited by the national Council on Accreditation, CHNK has served the Northern Kentucky community and Commonwealth of Kentucky for over 135 years.

For more information about Children's Home of Northern Kentucky, please visit [www.chnk.org](http://www.chnk.org) or contact Rick W. Wurth, Chief Executive Officer, at 859.292.4177 or 859.468.5418.