



## MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

Frank A. Barnitz  
16<sup>th</sup> Senate District

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**For Immediate Release:  
August 18, 2008**

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### **Residents of the 16<sup>th</sup> District Working to Help Young Adults in Foster Care System**

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JEFFERSON CITY – Sen. Frank Barnitz, D-Lake Spring, today applauded the efforts of two 16<sup>th</sup> district residents that were recently appointed to the newly formed blue-ribbon task force on young adults leaving the foster care system. Judge Mary Sheffield of Rolla and Vincent Hillyer of St. James are two of the 17 recently appointed members.

“I am pleased that members of our community will be participants in this important task force,” said Sen. Barnitz. “I look forward to reviewing the recommendations of the panel, and working with them to help teens who are aging out of the foster care system.”

The goal of the Missouri Aging Out Task Force is to find ways to support those in foster care who are approaching 18 or have already aged out. The members will focus on finding resources to help foster children with life skills and continuing education once they are over the age of 17. Many Missouri foster children lack assistance when transitioning out of the foster care system and into adulthood. The panel has been asked to develop a three year plan for those aging out of foster care which could include legislative priorities.

During the 2008 legislative session, Sen. Barnitz sponsored Senate Bill 1242. The legislation contained several provisions that would have improved adoption and foster care in the state. In addition to his legislative efforts to improve the system, Sen. Barnitz encouraged and offered support for the efforts of the two 16<sup>th</sup> district residents on the panel.

Judge Mary Sheffield is the presiding judge for the 25<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit and serves as Circuit Judge for Division II. The 25<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit’s family court utilizes a mentoring program for juveniles, which serves as a model in other Missouri courts that do not have similar programs.

Vincent Hillyer is the executive director of the Boys and Girls Town of Missouri. The organization works to improve the lives of children with emotional and behavioral problems by focusing on improving self esteem and encouraging children’s talents and strengths.

“The children in Missouri’s foster care system are the silent victims of family strife and often enter the system under unthinkable circumstances,” said Sen. Barnitz. “I remain committed to working to improve the foster care system for these kids.”

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