



# COUNTY OF ANOKA

## HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION

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#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **WINGS conference to offer tips for transitioning youth to independent living**

Family, or mentors, of youth with mental health challenges are invited to a free conference Feb. 25 on how to help youth, ages 14-21, transition to independent living. The conference, called Welcoming Independence and New Growth with Support (WINGS), is hosted by the Anoka County Children and Family Council and Anoka County. WINGS will be held at Anoka Ramsey Community College, in the Legacy Room (SC270), from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Youth, ages 14-21, are welcome to attend with their family.

Keynote speaker Marsha VanDenburgh, mother of nine children, says she's proud to wear the title of advocate mom.

"My children would not have the services they have without constant research and advocacy from me," VanDenburgh said.

VanDenburgh will share tips for parents. Conference participants also will pick from a menu of eight breakout sessions covering finances, housing and healthy living topics. A resource fair will feature services in the area. Lunch will be provided.

Youth with The Open Up Theater will present Fidgety Tales, featuring familiar fairy tales with mental health twists. The theater is supported by the Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health. They performed for more than 10,000 people last year alone.

If you live or work with youth who have mental health challenges, you're encouraged to attend this informative event, according to Anoka County Commissioner Dan Erhart, co-chair of the Anoka County Children and Family Council.

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## **WINGS conference to offer tips for transitioning youth to independent living – Add 1**

“The whole community benefits when our youth are successful during their transition to independent living,” Commissioner Erhart said. “For youth with mental health challenges, the difference between success and failure may be found in the tools you’ll learn about at the WINGS conference.”

There is no cost to attend, but registration is required. Registration can be done by phone, email or online at [www.AnokaCounty.us/WINGS](http://www.AnokaCounty.us/WINGS). For more information, contact Gena Rademacher, phone 763-712-2703, or email [gena.rademacher@co.anoka.mn.us](mailto:gena.rademacher@co.anoka.mn.us).

The Anoka County Children and Family Council is made up of representatives from Anoka County, Anoka County Community Action Program, community agencies, and the school districts of St. Francis, Anoka-Hennepin, Forest Lake, Centennial, Spring Lake Park, Fridley, and Columbia Heights. The Council’s mission is to nurture collaborative efforts by building bridges and networks between people and agencies who share a vision of a healthier community for children and families.