



# ACHIEVING HARMONY

## What can you do to help prevent child abuse?

Fall 2015



### Be the Change: Empower Your Family!

By Lisa Musilli, MSW, LSW

It's hard to believe but fall is here already! As the weather cools and children are drawn indoors, let's take advantage of the long evenings to come up with something new. Family Game Night can be a common practice in some households, but a slight change in activities can prove to be a helpful. One word can make all the difference...Family Safety Night. Think of how powerful that conversation can be!

When you talk to your children about safety, you set the tone - make it fun! I know Halloween is approaching, but this does not have to be a scary time for your children. Gather the family, order in some food, and focus on the information—not the preparation. Some topics to include are the following:

**Home Safety:** Ask some basic questions about how to keep your home safe. Make a game of it by asking questions like, "Who can find the First Aid Kit?" and "Where would we meet if there is severe weather?"

**Online Safety:** It's important to talk to children about their online footprint. Make a list of rules for online use and cell phone expectations. Check out [www.netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org) for some sample family internet safety plans.

### REPORTING HOTLINES

Child Protective Services

WEST VIRGINIA

1-800-352-6513

BELMONT COUNTY

740-633-5627

or call your local law enforcement

**Personal Safety:** This is a good time to discuss everything from seat belts to bike helmets to body safety. Children should be aware of the "uh-oh" feeling, which is that gut feeling that everyone has. Play some "What if" games asking questions like "What if we get separated in a store?" and "What if someone asked you to keep a secret from your parents?" This encourages problem solving in a non-threatening way.

**Give Me Five:** Talk with your children about the importance of having an emergency contact list. This should include five trusted adults that they can call in case of an emergency or just to talk about a problem. The children can call and ask their five adults if they would be willing to participate. Make sure to post their phone numbers next to the phone and place somewhere safe in their backpack.

These tips come from the National Child Protection Training Center ([www.jwrc.org](http://www.jwrc.org)). Remember, these are just some ideas. Be creative and more importantly, involved. The more involved and fun parents can make it, the more lasting effect it can have on the children. You can "Be the Change" by empowering your family to be in charge of their safety!

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Walker Polivka, Connie Mickerson and Shirley Blosser (pictured right) are three "angels" who collected stuffed animals for us to give to children when they leave Harmony House after a forensic interview.



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# Belmont County News



## 4<sup>th</sup> Annual MONSTER MASH BASH

October 24<sup>th</sup> 7-10pm

St. Clairsville Rec. Center

Food, beer & dancing

Prizes for costumes

Chance auction

Tickets \$25 pp or \$30

at the door

Call 740-695-0812 or go

to Eventbrite.com



Thank you to Belmont Hills Country Club, The Golf Pro Shop, for having a fund raiser for Harmony House in June. We also wish to thank StingRay and Gulfport for choosing to support Harmony House at their golf tournament at Belmont Hills in August.



### **An invitation to join our Belmont County Auxiliary**

At the moment our Belmont County Auxiliary consists of a small group of dedicated people who need more help! Their main task is to put together the annual Monster Mash Bash every October. Meetings are usually every 1-3 months (but more frequently close to the event) on a Monday evening at 6 p.m. Please contact Scott 740-695-0812 for more information.

## Marshall County News



A special thank you to the Brosky family and the Rumlbers Car Club for recognizing the work of Children's Advocacy Centers, to the children attending the First Church of God, McMechen - Vacation Bible School, for donating money to Harmony House, and to Moundsville Economic Development Council - Dungeon of Horrors for their donation.



September 2015

And, of course, a big thanks goes to the Brothers of the Wheel for their continued support .

## Ohio County News



### **Mountaineer Brewfest**

Just a few of many volunteers at this year's Mountaineer Brewfest. Thank you to Jeff Hayes and his committee for choosing Harmony House to be the recipients for the 2015 event. The Harmony House WV Auxiliary provided many of the volunteers as well as the Circus, Saints & Sinners, who manned a beer garden for the whole time period and donated their tips !



**2016 "Hope for Spring" Fling will be on April 23rd at Camp Russell**



## A message from the Executive Director - Leslie Vassilaros

As Fall approaches, Harmony House is busy preparing for its 2015 Annual Appeal. Harmony House is all about our local children - those who haven't been abused and those who have been abused. We want to keep all children safe by preventing child abuse while providing essential services for healing to those who had their childhood shattered by child abuse and violence.

You can be part of a child's journey with Harmony House by making a donation. Your donation will help provide crucial help such as specialized forensic interviews, medical coordination, mental health referrals and treatment; victim advocacy and support; and community outreach for awareness and prevention. There are two ways to donate to the 2015 Annual Appeal: 1) use the form on this newsletter, or 2) respond to the Annual Appeal letter you will receive in November.

Harmony House, a United Way agency, currently has limited WV Neighborhood Investment Program (NIP) credits available. Individuals and businesses residing in West Virginia can make a donation of \$500 or more and receive NIP credits of 50 percent of their donation as a WV state tax credit. If your donation is based upon NIP credit availability, please call the office at 304-230-2205 to ensure credits are available before sending your donation.

The children served by Harmony House need our help. Our local children need your help. Working together we are making a difference in the lives of one of our most vulnerable population - children - especially children who have been tragically affected by abuse.

*Leslie*



### Children with a disability have a higher risk of abuse



One in three children with an identified disability for which they receive special education services are victims of some type of maltreatment (i.e., either neglect, physical abuse, or sexual abuse) whereas one in 10 nondisabled children experience abuse. Children with any type of disability are 3.44 times more likely to be a victim of some type of abuse compared to children without disabilities. (Sullivan & Knutson, 2000).

Looking specifically at individuals with intellectual disabilities, they are 4 to 10 more times as likely to be victims of crime than others without disabilities (Sobsey, et al., 1995). One study found that children with intellectual disabilities were at twice the risk of physical and sexual abuse compared to children without disabilities (Crosse et. al., 1993).

#### ***How can I tell if a child with disabilities is being abused?***

Children with and without disabilities share similar indicators of abuse. Along with physical signs (bruises, broken bones, head injuries, or other outward marks) two primary indicators are reports from the child that abuse has occurred and changes in the child's behavior. Children with disabilities face greater risk of abuse going unnoticed, if their behavior change is attributed to their disability instead of the abuse. Also, children with intellectual disabilities may be viewed as easily suggestible or untrustworthy, especially when the report involves abuse that seems improbable. Any time abuse is suspected, it is the adult's responsibility to carefully monitor the child's behavior, ask the child about his or her safety and follow through by reporting any suspected abuse.

#### ***How can I help prevent abuse of children with intellectual disabilities?***

Children with disabilities need early education about the risks of abuse and how to avoid it in a way that they can understand. Parents can get to know all persons working with their child and observe interactions closely for any signs of abuse. Parents and other caregivers may be the abusers, so other adults in the child's life should also be able to identify possible abuse and know how to go about reporting the abuse.

Parents of children with disabilities and the organizations they are a part of (local chapters of The Arc or state Developmental Disability Councils) can form relationships with local victim assistance or child abuse agencies, share each other's expertise and partner together in serving children with disabilities in their local communities. Obtaining (or advocating for the funding of) family support programs, such as respite care, that have a direct impact on families with disabilities can help prevent abuse by giving families breaks from day-to-day caregiver responsibilities that can seem overwhelming.

#### ***To report abuse***

Contact your local child protection or law enforcement agency if you suspect a child is being abused. If you need assistance with reporting or have questions about reporting, contact Harmony House 304-230-2205 or 740-695-0812.



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If you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please email [harmonyhousecac@aol.com](mailto:harmonyhousecac@aol.com) or call 304-230-2205

# Invest in the lives of children by supporting Harmony House, Children's Advocacy Center

I commit to supporting abused children in my community with a donation of:

- |                          |                  |                 |
|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| * Friend of children     | \$10 - \$49      | Individual      |
| * Advocate of Children   | \$50 - \$299     | Name: _____     |
| * Protector of Children  | \$300 - \$499    |                 |
| * Guardian of Children   | \$500 - \$999    | Business: _____ |
| * Patron of Children     | \$1000 - \$2,999 | Address: _____  |
| * Benefactor of Children | \$3000 - \$4,999 | _____           |
| * Champion of Children   | \$5,000 or more  | _____           |

I would like to take advantage of NIP credits (contributions of \$500 or more) if they are still available.

This donation is to honor: \_\_\_\_\_

This donation is in memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send check to Harmony House, 2000 Eoff Street, Wheeling, WV 26003