



Achieving Harmony

A Harmony House Newsletter

Fall 2014

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A message from Executive Director Leslie Vassilaros



Hello! Harmony House, Children's Advocacy Center, is excited to give you a wonderful update about how busy we and those who support us have been this year. In April we started Harmony House's 12th year of service to our local communities.

I feel truly humbled when I think of how marvelous our journey has been and continues to be. When I was hired as the first director in 2003 our annual budget was approximately \$30,000 and I was the only employee. Now our annual budget is about \$368,000; we have a staff of five (four full-time and one part-time); and we have two full service centers – one serving Ohio and Marshall Counties, WV and the other serving Belmont County, OH.

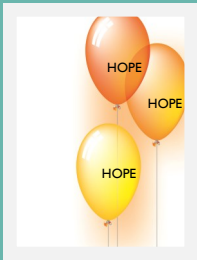
Harmony House served 43 clients our first year of operations and last year we helped 858 children and family members. Last year we completed 289 specialized child forensic interviews compared to 18 in 2003. For many years we didn't even track medical and mental health referrals because the emphasis was on forensic interviews. In the past years, the Children's Advocacy Center model has recognized the importance of treatment and we have focused on these services, as well as forensic interviewing, as vital to the child's well-being and recovery process. In 2013 Harmony House made 171 mental health referrals both on-site and off-site. In addition, 53 medical assessments were coordinated with 92 medical exams completed.

Harmony House does not charge for its services and is dependent on grants, donations, and special events to ensure services are available now and in the future. We cannot thank our supporters within our communities for their overwhelming encouragement and donations. Since special events is crucial to our funding mix I want to thank all those who donated or attended the "Hope for Spring Fling/Hope Soars;" the "Toast of the Vineyard;" and the "Monster Mash Bash." While we are grateful to all I would like to acknowledge a few that have been outstanding with continuous support of either sponsoring events or putting on their own event for us – Christian Fellowship Foundation, the Brothers of the Wheel, Belmont Hills Country Club, and the C.A. House Music. In-kind space is provided by Ohio Valley Medical Center and Belmont County Board of Developmental Disabilities. I am also thankful for our auxiliaries for both centers. As I am writing this so many individuals, businesses, grants, foundations, and trusts (too numerous to mention here) are coming to mind. Harmony House is grateful to each and everyone who helps us to help the children we so humbly serve.

We continue to plan for the present while also preparing for Harmony House's future. Your support is vital to our agency's ability to carry out its mission to reduce the effects of abuse on all children, as well as individuals with developmental disabilities, their families, and the community by serving as a community resource to facilitate identification, intervention, and prevention of abuse. Please remember us when you plan your giving. Every child deserves a safe world. Holding hands with you, Harmony House will work hard to ensure that our communities address child abuse and provide the best practices when providing services.

Have a truly grateful Thanksgiving,

Leslie



Fundraising

This year we have held three successful fundraisers. We would like to thank all our sponsors, donors of auction items, and everyone who bought a ticket to support an event(s).



"Hope for Spring" Fling



Title Sponsor
Christian Fellowship Foundation
Patron of Children Sponsors
Bordas & Bordas
Fitzsimmons Foundation



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Christian Fellowship Foundation
Advanced Family Practice, PLLC
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THANK YOU
to our
WV & Ohio Auxiliary
for help with these events

Children are often the silent victims of drug abuse and domestic violence. Please seek help if you and your children are living in this kind of situation.



The Brothers of the Wheel presenting Harmony House with \$15,500. Since 2006 they have raised over \$102,000

Neighborhood Investment Program

(NIP) was established in West Virginia in 1996 to increase charitable giving to local nonprofits. This program allows for certain agencies to give tax credit vouchers to businesses and individuals who donate \$500 or more allowing that donor to receive 50% of the donation back in their WV taxes. Harmony House has some of these credit vouchers.

SMART PHONE SAFETY.....Smart or Scary?



The risks
Cyberbullying Geolocation
Inappropriate Content Sexting Viruses & Malware

5 ways to be SMARTER than the SMARTPHONE!

Be a parent and a resource: establish clear guidelines, including time limits and consequences for inappropriate behavior, but be open so your child will come to you with problems.

Set up password protection

Update the operating system: newer versions often contain security fixes

Approve apps before they are downloaded

Understand location services

WISH LIST

- Juice boxes
- Snacks
- CDs for teenagers to listen to while waiting for their appointment
- New stuffed animals/toys
- Hand held (DS) computer games for older children

NEW REPORTING PROCEDURE FOR CHILD ABUSE IN WEST VIRGINIA

This year the system for making a report of child abuse to Child Protective Services (Department of Health & Human Resources) is changing.

There will now be a centralized reporting center in West Virginia.

In Marshall, Wetzel & Tyler Counties this began on October 1st, 2014, and in Ohio, Brooke & Hancock Counties it will start on: January 1st, 2015.

**The centralized child abuse reporting number is
800-352-6153**

The system for reporting to law enforcement remains the same.

To report abuse in Ohio County, WV , call (304) 232-4411

To report abuse in Brooke/Hancock County, call (304) 794-3060

Belmont County, Ohio call (740) 633-5627

WHAT IS SEXTING?

Sexting is sending explicit photos or messages of a sexual nature via cellphones, computers or any other device. Once digital photos are out there, they leave a digital footprint, especially online.

Sexting is currently illegal under federal law. It falls under the creation, distribution and possession of child porn and is a felony offense.

TIPS to prevent SEXTING for Teens

Think about the consequences of taking, sending or forwarding a sexual picture of someone else, even if it's of you. You could get kicked off sports teams, face humiliation, lose educational opportunities, and even face police investigation.

Never take images of yourself that you wouldn't want everyone (classmates, teachers, parents, employer) to see.

Before hitting send remember that you can't control where this image may travel.

If you forward a sexual picture of someone else without their consent you are violating their trust and exposing them to ridicule.

If anyone pressures you to send a sexual picture, don't give in and talk to an adult you trust. Remember anyone who tries to get you to do something you are uncomfortable with is probably not trustworthy.

WHAT TO ASK YOUR CHILD...

“What could happen if you send or forward a naked picture with your cellphone?”

“Have you ever received a naked picture on your cell ?”

“Has anyone ever asked you to send a nude or sexual picture ?”

THE IMPACT OF SEXTING

51% of teen girls cite pressure from guys as a reason to send explicit messages while only 18% of boys say so.

CASE #1 Jessica, 18, was a high school senior in Cincinnati who forwarded nude images of herself to her boyfriend at his request. After they broke up, the boyfriend forwarded the photos to others. The images spread through her high school. Jessica tried to tackle the issue head on, going on a TV news program and urging other teens not to repeat her mistake. She found it harder to endure the humiliation of walking the halls at school, where other students called her a “porn queen”, dumped drinks on her and threw her out of graduation parties. Two months later her mother found her hanging in her bedroom.

CASE #2 Hope was a 14yr old girl who sent a picture of her breasts to a boy she liked. Another girl saw the picture of her on his phone and forwarded it to other students. The boy deleted it, but by then it had gone viral. She was called names and according to a friend the atmosphere in school was “brutal”. She killed herself.

At Harmony House we tend to see more cases where a parent has found inappropriate text messages or images on their own child's phone that have been sent by, to, or from an adult or older child. In these cases we applaud the parents who have checked their child's phone and reported it to law enforcement. If you find these kind of texts or images it is important to remove the phone from the child so that they can't delete anything. If it is deleted it may be possible for law enforcement to get the information off the phone or computer.

How can Harmony House help to combat sexting?

Harmony House has developed a program for students and adults that can be presented in schools or clubs.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DOES AFFECT CHILDREN!
Making the Connection



Please visit our newly designed website :

harmonyhousecacwv.org
and “like” us on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/harmonyhousecac>

“No child should live in fear”

Have you, your friends and family “Liked” us on Facebook yet?



Please share our page and help us spread the word about our work.

Info for sexting & smartphone courtesy of Netsmartz.org

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If you would like to be taken off our mailing list please email: 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 my contribution of:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| • Friend of children | \$10 - \$49 | Individual |
| • Advocate of children | \$50 - \$299 | Name: _____ |
| • Protector of children | \$300 - \$499 | Business: _____ |
| • Guardian of children | \$500 - \$999 | Name: _____ |
| • Patron of children | \$1,000 - \$2,999 | Address: _____ |
| • Benefactor of children | \$3,000 - \$4,999 | _____ |
| • Champion of children | \$5,000 or more | _____ |

I would like to take advantage of the NIP credits (contributions of \$500 or more) Please call 304-230-2205 to see 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