



Achieving Harmony

A Harmony House Newsletter

FALL 2011

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Dear Friends of Harmony House,

I found a quote by Helen Keller that I want to share with all of you – “Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of overcoming it.” This quote made me think of all the brave children Harmony House serves.

Children who are victims of child abuse suffer one of the world’s greatest anguish – betrayal by another person – loss of trust. A child’s world should be one of protection, learning, and happiness. Child abuse often results in trauma that affects the physical, emotional, spiritual, and overall well-being of a child.

Sometimes at Harmony House the staff is overwhelmed with the suffering of the children we serve. Sometimes it seems like the suffering of these children surround us like fog threatening to obscure the good of the world. Helen Keller’s quote reminds me that sometimes we can’t control the means from which we suffer but with strength, determination, and resources most of the time we can overcome the suffering.

So far during the first nine months of this year, 180 children have bravely come to Harmony House and told their life stories to a stranger while sitting in a tiny room with a camera recording every word and action. Sometimes their stories detailed child abuse, sometimes their stories resulted in no disclosure of abuse, and sometimes enough communication couldn’t be established to get an understanding of the child’s world and needs. Regardless of the outcome, each child presented with courage.

When a disclosure exists, the resources for overcoming the suffering come into place. In most cases, the child needs to be ensured safety, to receive a medical assessment, to have available therapeutic interventions, and to have other vital resources available to recover the child’s body, mind, and soul from the trauma and consequences of child abuse. The Harmony House staff and children’s advocacy center services are a vital part of the “overcoming it” process.

In a few days you will be receiving Harmony House’s annual appeal letter. Please help us help these children in need to overcome the devastation and suffering caused by child abuse. Harmony House’s two centers- one in Wheeling, WV serving Ohio and Marshall Counties and the other in St. Clairsville, OH serving Belmont County – are in essence gifts to our children from YOU, the community. Harmony House would not be able to exist without the support of our local donors (individuals, clubs, organizations, and businesses) and foundations.

Harmony House is grateful for each of you. We wish you a blessed Thanksgiving and peaceful holidays to come!

NO CHILD SHOULD LIVE IN FEAR

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

Marshall County, WV call (304) 843-4120

To report abuse in Brooke/Hancock County, call (304) 794-4153

Belmont County, Ohio call (740) 695-3813

National Domestic Violence Hotline 1.800.799.SAFE

Hear the cries. See the pain. End the abuse

First Day of School — anon

She started school this morning,
And she seemed so very small.
As I walked there beside her
In the Kindergarten hall.
And as she took her place beside
the others in the class,
I realized how all too soon
Those first few years can pass.
Remembering, I saw her as
She first learned how to walk.
The words that we alone made out
When she began to talk.
This little girl so much absorbed
In learning how to write. It seems as
though she must have grown
To girlhood overnight.
My eyes were blurred hastily
I brushed the tears away
Lest by some word or sign of mine
I mar her first big day.
Oh how I longed to stay with her
And keep her by the hand
To lead her through the places
That she couldn't understand.
And something closely kin to fear
Was mingled with my pride.
I knew she would no longer be
A baby by my side.
But she must have her chance to live,
To work her problems out,
The privilege to grow and learn
What life is all about.
And I must share my little girl
With friends and work and play;
She's not a baby anymore --
She's in Kindergarten today.

Children are often the silent victims of drug abuse and domestic violence.

The Effects of Child Sexual Abuse

At times it feels as if we in the Ohio Valley are sheltered from many of the negative social problems experienced throughout the country. However, we only need to read the words of the Honorable Judge Arthur Recht to realize that there are some crimes and circumstances which the valley is no stranger to. Judge Recht was recently quoted in the Wheeling News Register from remarks he made during a recent trial.

"We have more evil people lately in this courtroom," Recht said. "Most of the time it deals with sexual abuse of women. More often than others, unfortunately, it's sexual abuse of children. I don't know what's happening, and I'm not going to be up here trying to understand the cause of the epidemic that we have before us."

Child sexual abuse is an epidemic and there seems to be no shortage of this crime locally. Recently there have been several high profile cases of sexual abuse in our area that have been successfully prosecuted. It is important to remember that the arrest, prosecution, and conviction of the offender is only the first step in a long road to recovery for the victim. Child sexual abuse has many long lasting effects on the victim.

According to the American Psychological Association (2011), the impact of sexual abuse can range from no apparent effects to very severe ones. Typically, children who experience the most serious types of abuse—abuse involving family members and high degrees of physical force—exhibit behavior problems ranging from separation anxiety to posttraumatic stress disorder. However, children who are the victims of sexual abuse are also often exposed to a variety of other stressors and difficult circumstances in their lives, including parental substance abuse. The sexual abuse and its aftermath may be only part of the child's negative experiences and subsequent behaviors.

Fortunately, children can be very resilient psychologically and physically. Children are able to overcome the effects of this abuse and go on to lead productive, successful lives. Support from parents, family, and peers goes a long way to aid in the recovery for these children. Research also suggests that children that take part in counseling and other support services may be able to work through the trauma easier. As a community I feel that it is important that we keep in mind the victims of child sexual abuse whenever we come into contact with media reports of an abusers conviction. Often times the legal fight has ended however the child's return to normalcy may be just beginning. Michael Kuhn

What to do when a child or adult discloses suspected child abuse or neglect.

1. Find a private place to talk with the person.
2. Reassure the person making the disclosure ("I believe you")
3. Listen openly and calmly, with minimal interruptions.
4. Write down the facts and words as the person has stated them.
5. Do not promise not to tell, but respect the person's confidentiality by not telling others who do not need to know.
6. Tell the truth.
7. Be specific. Let the child know what is going to happen.
8. Assess the child's immediate safety.
9. Be supportive.
10. Report the disclosure immediately to CPS or law enforcement.

DON'T ask "why" questions (why didn't you stop him or her, why are you telling me this?)

DON'T say "Are you sure?" "Are you telling the truth?"

DON'T say "Let me know if it happens again"

Avoid asking leading questions.

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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:

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| • Advocate of children | \$50 - \$299 | Name: _____ |
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| • Guardian of children | \$500 - \$999 | Name: _____ |
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| • Champion of children | \$5,000 or more | _____ |

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This donation is in memory of: _____

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