



Achieving Harmony

A Harmony House Newsletter

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Dear Friends of Harmony House,

On a Sunday I was driving around just enjoying the day. Everything looked so joyful and alive – green grass, blue skies, and flowers in bloom. I took a few minutes just to enjoy the moment and the beauty of the world and life. I took a few minutes to rejuvenate my spirit.

Sometimes at Harmony House, the staff get so overwhelmed with the ugliness of child abuse that it sometimes feels like that big black cloud is over us and we can't shake it. Sometimes we want to scream how many times can a child's trust be broken by someone who should love and protect the child. Sometimes we have to swallow hard so that the anger, disbelief, and sadness we feel doesn't destroy us. Sometimes we just have to cry.

So it is a blessing when light and hope can peek through the darkness of child abuse. The Harmony House staff tries not to get lost in this bleakness but to seek out hope. Harmony House is the place where hope has a home. Here we focus on each child's well-being making sure she or he has the tools and the resources to become whole again – physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. With the help of the community we can offer each child and non-offending family members the unique, specialized services of a Children's Advocacy Center.

I want to take this time to thank each of you for caring about the children Harmony House so humbly serves. We could not exist without your help. Our Harmony House, our Children's Advocacy Center, is truly a gift from our community to its children.

We have some wonderful news to share with everyone. Now we not only serve Ohio and Marshall Counties, WV at the Wheeling center but we also serve Belmont County at our center outside of St. Clairsville, OH. In only eight years we (all of us) have achieved a near miracle in hard economic times and now we can reach out to help more children than ever.

You are invited to attend our Harmony House Belmont County open house on August 25th from 3pm to 5pm. The ribbon cutting ceremony will be between 3:15 and 3:30. The center is located off Route 40 going to Ohio University Eastern. Follow the sign to the Carnes Center on Pogue Road. Harmony House BC is on the right. At this ceremony you can bring a new stuffed animal that will be given to the kids of Harmony House. We extend a special thank you to the Belmont County Commissioners, the Belmont County Job and Family Services, and the Belmont County Board of Developmental Disabilities for their on-going support. We hope to see you there!

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, WV call (304) 794-4153

Belmont County, Ohio call (740) 695-3813

National Domestic Violence Hotline 1.800.799.SAFE YWCA Family Violence Prevention, Wheeling (24 hour hotline)

Hear the cries. See the pain. End the abuse

Coordinators report - Joanna Merriman



Harmony House staff were very busy in April, Child Abuse Prevention & Awareness Month. Kate Monroe, community education, went into many of our local schools and provided our "Secrets" presentation to each class. Staff also spoke to community groups about child abuse prevention and awareness.

Our wonderful auxiliary held their 3rd Annual "Hope for Spring" Fling and with the help of a major sponsor (Christian Fellowship Foundation) they were able to raise a significant amount of money. We released balloons to honor all the children who had attended Harmony House in 2010. It was as usual for me, and many others, an emotional moment to see so many balloons and the children they represented. Thank You to everyone who attended and truly got into the spirit of giving. This event was attended by over 200 people and sold out within a month. Next years date is April 14th 2012

We are now ready to create an auxiliary group dedicated to Marshall and Belmont Counties. If you are interested of would like more information please call 304-230-2205 and speak to Joanna.

As Leslie mentioned our center in Belmont County is up and running. I hope that some of you will be able to attend our open house on August 25th. I had no idea until this month how close the center is the Jamboree in the Hills, this will make giving directions so much easier! Enjoy the rest of the summer. JM

Coping with back to School Stress.

The end of August will be here before we know it and we all know what that means.....back to school. Going back to school can be stressful for both parents and their children. Children may have lots of emotions about going back to school-excitement, nervousness, sadness and even anger. Parents may also share some of these emotions along with many other ones. There are ways to help this be a little less stressful for everyone involved.

- Calmly approach the coming year and start to prepare a little early.
- Getting the shopping done a little earlier will help relieve some stress.
- Talk with your child about how they are feeling and help them through the entire transition.
- Make some rules for the upcoming year and be consistent with them.

For example set a time for homework each night, try to eat dinner at a regular time, start to wind down in the evening at a reasonable time to help prepare for the morning routine, etc. One very important thing is that parents take a few moments of "me time" every day to maintain their sanity. This will be good for both you and your child throughout the year.



Good Luck and enjoy the 2011- 2012 year.
Christa Wensel.

Where do our referrals come from?

Harmony House receives referrals from two primary sources; child protective service agencies such as CPS in WV or CS in Ohio & law enforcement. CPS & CS are the governmental agencies tasked with ensuring children remain safe in their homes. While these organizations are operated slightly differently due to the laws and policies of their states, both agencies work hard to ensure child safety. Often times these agencies are vilified and condemned in their portrayal. As a community committed to keeping the children of the Ohio Valley safe it is important for us to remember that their ultimate goal is to maintain the child in their home and strengthen the families. We should also realize that these agencies can only act in accordance with the policies, procedures, and laws of their jurisdictions and know that they can only investigate suspected child maltreatment that has been reported.

Be the voice of the voiceless, if you witness or suspect abuse please report these concerns immediately to the appropriate agencies. Michael Kuhn

Michael Kuhn is the newest member of the Harmony House team. He most recently worked as CPS supervisor in Brooke and Hancock Counties and is a student in the Master of Social Work program at WVU.

Even as kids reach adolescence, they need more than ever for us to watch over them. Adolescence is not about letting go. It's about hanging on during a very bumpy ride.

Statistics January - June 2011

114 new children referred to Harmony House : 43 boys, 71 girls

Types of abuse reported: Sexual 89, Physical 16, Witness to violence 11, Drug Endangered 5, Neglect 2

Forensic Interviews: 111

Medical referrals: 34

37 cases with a conviction or plea: 15

NO CHILD SHOULD LIVE IN FEAR

Community Education Programs: 79

Mental Health referrals: 67

Playing with your child offers an important opportunity for every parent to bond with their child, as well as learn about them. Playing with your child helps you learn how your child communicates and



also allows your child to communicate with you in an uninhibited manner. I have personally found that playing with my child has helped to teach me the language that my child uses to communicate.

Even spending time with your child watching the TV shows they watch can be beneficial. This can often teach a parent an enormous amount about their child's references in language. My child for instance is a huge fan of

SPONGEBOB, and if I didn't watch it with him I wouldn't understand why he makes the references that he does. By watching the shows my son watches I have a common base of reference that both he and I understand. This shared experience allows us to play and incorporate shared language and experience.

Play, especially free-play offers an amazing opportunity to build on what knowledge you have about your child just by spending time with them. Play is essential to development because it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of all children. Play can be the only time that parents and children are fully engaged with one another. Please take time to experience the wonder of play with your child!

Robert Scott Steele, MSW

PLAY

Play is essential to development because it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children and youth. Play also offers an ideal opportunity for parents to engage fully with their children.



"Your children need your presence more than they need your presents" - Jessie Jackson

Who are you trusting to look after your children?

It is the summer and back to school season once again! A time of year when youth serving organizations become an even bigger part of many of our routines. Parents hope to choose activities that will educate their children as well as something they will really enjoy. There are a whole list of summer camps and school activities covering just about any interest that one could imagine. It is equally as important to recognize that inquiring about child protection policies makes such a difference in taking steps to keeping our community safe, healthy and happy. Ask what a particular organizations child protection policies are. How are their volunteers and employees screened? If they are hired how are they trained and supervised? Do they incorporate supervision strategies known as "Two Deep Leadership" or "Rule of 3". this refers to avoiding a child being alone with a staff member without another staff member present. How are they trained to be role models around youth? Is there a code of conduct for staff members and youth to follow? Have there been any trainings on recognizing child abuse and

"Molesters Do Not Wear an Ugly Mask. They Wear a Shield of Trust." - Patty Rase Hopson

neglect for staff? Is all this information clearly understood by staff members, youth and their parents or guardians? One way to do this is the organization can provide awareness activities for youth and parents and be aware of the safety risks associated with technology pertaining to internet usage and cell phones that take photos and have available text messaging. Policies on these issues as well as topics of bullying and peer abuse are a number of ways parents, youth serving organizations and the community can take positive steps to helping to do their part to secure a fun and safe summer for young people everywhere. Information for this article gathered with help from Safe-Wise Consulting, LLC

7th Annual "Toast of the Vineyard" - September 17th Stratford Springs - West W

We hope you can help support Harmony House by raising your glass to our worthy cause and attend our 7th Annual Toast of the Vineyard event on September 17th. from 7-10pm. Tickets are \$50 each (\$60 after September 1st) and will open the door to a wonderful evening of fine wines, tasty beers, good friends, great entertainment, and scrumptious tidbits of food. Please bring your cash or checkbooks to bid on some great silent auction items!! Music will be provided by catch Blues Band. We are very excited to be using the new West Wing at Stratford Springs. This is located close to a sports bar for those people looking for football updates!



For more information or to purchase tickets please call 304-230-2205

Working together we do make a difference in the lives of one of our most vulnerable population.

Thank you to John Rothwell and Wine & Beverage Merchants of West Virginia for sponsoring this event.

Harmony House
2000 Eoff Street
Wheeling, WV 26003
WV : 304-230-2205
Fax 304-234-8479

Ohio : 740-695-0812
Fax 740-695-0781

harmonyhousecac@yahoo.com
harmonyhousecacwv.org



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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:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| • 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 | _____ |

This donation is to honor: _____

This donation is in memory of: _____

I would like to purchase _____ tickets for "Toast of the Vineyard" @ \$50 each

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