



THE PREVENTION & INTERVENTION NEWS

“PIN...Stick With It”

www.valleyyouthhouse.org

The *mission* of Valley Youth House is to provide prevention and intervention services, counseling, life skills and behavioral health services to abused, neglected, and homeless youth and their families. Our programs foster positive growth enabling at risk youth and their families to become healthy, productive, responsible members of the community.

Seventh Annual S.A.D.D. Leadership Awards Honor 12 Local High School Students

Twelve students from 8 Lehigh Valley high schools were honored for their commitment to the principles of Students Against Destructive Decisions (S.A.D.D.), at the Seventh Annual S.A.D.D. Leadership Award Reception, held on May 4, 2009 at Lehigh Valley Hospital - Muhlenberg.

The following students were recognized:

Bangor HS	Katherine DeCrescenzo & Rachael Patti
Catasauqua HS	Ashley Hertzog & Mary Sofish
Freedom HS	Alaysha Suggs (not pictured)
Liberty HS	Taryn Lushinsky
Notre Dame HS	Sierra Bodisch (not pictured) & Curtis Brinker
Northampton HS	Alex Bartholomew & Megan Yezzo
Pen Argyl HS	Courtney Palmer
Southern Lehigh HS	Vanessa Rodriguez

The S.A.D.D. Leadership Awards were developed to recognize the valuable contributions these students make in promoting positive choices with their peers. The students' S.A.D.D. faculty advisors present the awards at a reception attended by the students, their parents and school administration. The following groups collaborated to organize this event: ALERT Partnership, Lehigh Valley DUI Highway Safety Task Force, and Valley Youth House. Funding was provided by the Iron Pigs Charities and the Northampton County Office of Drug and Alcohol.





Club Ophelia at Northampton Area Middle School: An Update

Club Ophelia ended in March 2009 at Northampton Area Middle School and was a big success! Twelve female students along with eight trained female mentors participated in this 15-week group. The students learned about relational aggression (RA), a form of female bullying. The students were educated on RA, asked to relate the information to their own lives, and then integrated what they have learned and to think about how they could help another girl who is a bully or victim.

A survey was given to the participants, at the end of the group to determine their perceptions. The 12 students reported that: 100% strongly agreed or agreed that the mentors were helpful, 100% strongly agreed or agreed that they learned new ways to deal with relational aggression, 64% would participate in Club Ophelia again and 64% would recommend Club Ophelia to a friend.

Overall, the students remarked that the program was “too short,” that they enjoyed making the “crafts and making new friends,” and how they “talked about feelings and all the projects.”

Club Ophelia will be offered during the 2009 – 2010 school year at Northampton Area Middle School. If your school is interested in having the Club Ophelia program, please contact Ann Adams, Youth Education Program Coordinator, at 610-954-9561 ext. 39 or at aadams@valleyyouthhouse.org.

Student Assistance Program (SAP) Consortium was Held



The Northampton County Spring 2009 SAP Consortium took place on Wednesday, April, 15 at Northampton Community College and was a great success! The topic was *Emergency and Crisis Management*. Guest speaker Thomas G. Barnowski, Director of Corporate and Public Safety Education, discussed the myths and realities of emergency incidents, violence interventions for positive outcomes, and the importance of the first ten minutes of a crisis among other topics. Mr. Barnowski offered a wealth of significant information for all in attendance.



If you are interested in more information about crisis management, please contact:

Thomas G. Barnowski
 Director - Corporate & Public Safety Education
 511 East Third Street , Fowler 510
 Bethlehem PA 18015
 Phone: 610-861-5467
 Fax: 610-332-6556
 e-mail: tbarnowski@northampton.edu

The Family Intervention Program: An Update



2009 is proving to be a busy year! The Functional Family Therapy (FFT) component of the program has grown tremendously, in large part, due to our partnerships with the local schools and community agencies. Many of the families referred to FIP and FFT have experienced success, particularly in the areas of improved parenting, reduced family conflict, reduced substance usage and reduced acting out or delinquent behaviors on the part of the youth. **In 2008, 78 percent of the caregivers and adolescents receiving FIP services reduced or eliminated their substance abuse. In both FIP and FFT, 80 percent of parents improved their parenting skills, and 89 percent of children did not have truancy issues during services.**

FFT also continues to receive referrals from Northampton County Office of Juvenile Probation under the current Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency grant, which is directed at working with youth returning home from a short or long-term placement. We have noted outstanding outcomes in our work with families with adolescents who have juvenile probation involvement. **In 2008, 90 percent of youth served in FFT did not get referred or re-referred to juvenile probation. Below is a therapist's account of a recently completed case in which the adolescent was involved with the juvenile justice system.**

This adolescent came to services with a multi-generational history of drug and alcohol abuse. His mother was just recently in recovery, the client's father was crack-addicted and the client was also engaged in serious drug use. His mother indicated wanting to pass on what she has learned through her recent treatment, but was unable to do this without agitating him. She described having much guilt over her son's use and hopes to not lose him to drug abuse.

Shortly after the referral, the client was detained and placed on probation. Upon returning home, FFT services began and worked to engage each family member, and to tackle the long-standing patterns of dysfunction that had hindered this family's success. The client's father's participation, although he was an active drug user, proved to be critically important. Through therapy, it was discovered that the client's chronic acting out behaviors were linked to his desire to pull his father into the family's interactions. Additionally, by pulling his father into each crisis, the client essentially reduced his father's ability to use drugs further.

Through the final two phases of FFT, the therapist assisted the client's mother in finding other ways to influence and connect with her son. She and her son began attending Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings together and the therapist helped them set up clearer boundaries about when and how to talk about their recovery outside of those meetings (i.e. taking his mother out of a counseling role with him and putting her in more of a supportive one). The therapist also worked with the family on communication and conflict management. In order to increase their support systems, the therapist connected the client with an adolescent AA group and provided his father with a number of resources for continued sobriety and treatment facilities.

The change in this family's functioning was profound. Because the underlying fears were explored and tied to their present-day behaviors in a strength-based way, each person was able to see their part in the problem, as well as have their pain in it acknowledged. Their relationships are tremendously improved and their risk factors are significantly reduced. Furthermore, their perception of therapy has been positively changed due to their experience with FFT. They were not judged or forced to make changes in their lives that did not feel authentic.

FFT provides a framework with which to do the toughest part of counseling: Engage families and motivate them to make the necessary changes to improve their lives. One specific technique utilized in FFT to shift a family's negative and unhealthy view of themselves to one that is more strength-based and relational (i.e. it's not just about the identified person and he/she is not all "bad") is reframing. It not only changes the meaning of a negative behavior, but also connects other family members through the suggestion of a noble intent. For example, the client's behavior noted in the case example (acting out, violence, drug use) was viewed by the therapist as risky and unhealthy, and this was acknowledged in the family therapy session. Additionally, the therapist noted that this risky behavior may also be a way to express fear and concern about everything going on in the family. If reframing is implemented in a way that matches to the family's language and culture, it can be very impactful. The child (or parent, sibling) is no longer viewed as manipulative or "out of control." This is just one of many methods of intervention utilized in FFT to help families begin to see themselves as worthy of positive experiences and motivated to see changes through to the finish.

If you have any questions about these services, or if you would like to make a referral, please contact May Ambrogio at 610-954-9561, or refer to the agency website, valleyyouthhouse.org.



Project Child Launches *Making Parenting a Pleasure*

As Project Child enters its eighteenth year of service to the community, the ongoing mission remains the prevention of child abuse and neglect. The promotion of positive parenting has been a foundation of Project Child's work and hundreds of parents throughout the Lehigh Valley have attended their ongoing parenting education classes. In March, Project Child transitioned its parenting program to an evidence-based program, *Make Parenting a Pleasure*. This program is unique within the realm of parenting programs, inasmuch as it has been designed to promote the protective factors, which prevent child abuse.

Prevention programs have long focused on reducing particular risk factors, or conditions that have been found through research to be associated with child abuse and neglect in families. Increasingly, research now also recognizes the importance of promoting protective factors, conditions in families and communities that research has shown to increase the health and well being of children and families. These factors help parents who might otherwise be at risk of abusing or neglecting their children to find resources, supports, or coping strategies that allow them to parent effectively, even under stress. *Make Parenting a Pleasure* reinforces these protective factors.

Make Parenting A Pleasure begins by recognizing the importance of parents as individuals. The curriculum focuses first on the need for self-care and personal empowerment, and moves from an adult/adult focus to a parent/child/family emphasis. The style is positive, encouraging, and, at times, humorous. The curriculum is interactive and uses discussion and experiential activities. Some of the topics include stress reduction, anger management, communication, child development and discipline. Additionally, Project Child has added a specially designed session to this curriculum, "Modeling a Healthy Lifestyle/Protecting Your Child from Sexual Abuse." This session reinforces the importance a variety of positive lifestyle choices that strengthen families, such as nutrition, exercise and safety issues as well as information to help parents protect their children from sexual abuse.

This nine class series meets every Wednesday from 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at 531 Main Street in Bethlehem. The cost for all nine sessions is \$52.00 and free child-care is provided. Parents can call Project Child at 610-954-9561 to register.

Third Annual *Have a Heart for Children* Fundraiser Benefits Project Child



Supporters of Project Child enjoyed an evening of food and music, dancing to the beat of the Philadelphia Funk Authority. This festive night, held at Hotel Bethlehem, has become a much anticipated annual event.

Project Child Presents Its Sixteenth Annual Conference

Project Child has held an annual conference every April for the last sixteen years. This event, which coincides with Child Abuse Prevention Month, provides area professionals the opportunity to hear a nationally known speaker. This year, Cordelia Anderson, who is on the board of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children presented: *The Sexually Toxic Society: Impact and Strategies for Preventing Child Sexual Exploitation and Violence*. This timely topic drew rave reviews from those in attendance. Ms. Anderson detailed a shocking array of media, which bombard children and youth with pornified images and explained how normalized society has become to this sexually exploitative environment and ended with strategies that could be used as protective factors to counter these toxic messages.



Hazing: Harmful or a Rite of Passage?

Fifteen-year-old Sean Butkus sees hazing as a pretty normal part of team sports. “Hazing is a way of initiating a kid and seeing if they are determined enough” he says. “Just like, it is like a test to see if you know they are gonna be there for you.”

As a freshman, Sean joined his older brother’s soccer team this fall. So he knew what to expect from hearing about his brother’s experience. “He got his head shaved” says Sean. “And I knew maybe that would happen to me. I actually got a Mohawk.”

Psychologist John Lochridge makes the point that not all of these ‘rites of passage’ are damaging. They were originally meant to bring a group closer together through some sort of hardship, but within certain boundaries. “I think that hazing by nature is not necessarily a bad thing,” Lochridge says. “It is when it gets humiliating or cruel or overly anxiety-provoking and it becomes a traumatic event, we have to get rid of that.”

A new survey finds that 45 percent of high school kids have been hazed: one in four was sleep deprived and 8 percent of the kids had to drink so much they either got sick or passed out. “There are just not enough supervisors to see what is happening in every room – what is happening in the bathroom, the locker room – there are just so many places where so many things can happen,” Sean says.

Experts say the key is for the adults in charge to be proactive, to be alert, to ask questions and to make boundaries clear at the beginning of the year or the start of the season. “There needs to be no sexuality involved and no abuse, no nudity, no humiliation – those kinds of things are above and beyond,” says Lochridge. And coaches in particular can make sure they pick the right kids to be the team leaders. It helps to have captains who are approachable, who are mature enough to listen to the new kids, Lochridge states.

“You want a relationship somewhere between the kids where the ones who are being hazed can go to the older ones and say, look, this is enough,” he adds. “It has gone over the line. It is getting inappropriate. And hopefully, the older ones have the wisdom to respond to that.”

Sean was lucky. His team captains were responsible and his experience was all in good fun. “I mean, we still laugh about it,” he says. “I liked it.”



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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.valleyyouthhouse.org

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Upcoming Events

May 25, 2009

Eleventh Annual Kiwanis Tortoise and Hare 5K Run and Walk at Windgap Memorial Park

Proceeds benefit Project Child.

Check www.tortoiseharerace.org for details.

June 12, 2009

Project Child Forum- *Choice Theory/Reality Therapy: Creating Partnerships for Change*

9:00 am-11:30 am

For more information and to register, please contact:

Project Child, 610-954-9561, 531 Main Street, Bethlehem, PA 18018, email: projectchildlv@aol.com

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