



Our mission is to empower families raising children with mood, behavioral and emotional challenges, by providing support, training and advocacy skills and collaborating with community partners to improve the system of care for children.



ASK Board of Directors

- Val Dalton, President
Sue Chartier, Vice President
Shellee Seymour, Secretary
Jerri Robinson
Kelly Williston



ASK Staff

- Dianne Shaffer, Executive Director
Shellie Bosma, Operations Manager
Gisela Lawson, Program Manager
Kate Gross, Administrative Coordinator
Christine Eckrich, Family Support Partner
Kathy Howard, Family Support Partner
Mary Beth Mapes, Family Support Partner
Ginger Skidmore, Family Support Partner

Passionate about Youth Empowerment? ASK is seeking a full-time Youth Involvement Coordinator. Visit www.askforkids.org for full position details

NOTHING IS ILLUMINATED

Christine Eckrich, with collaborative assistance from Annie Eckrich

The winter months crept in on us like a cold. The rosy-fingered sunshine of summer extended well into October and November--the snow, rain, and cold only teased us. But in the depths of December, it is clear: there is no going back. We must endure another violent Michigan winter of pristine white grounds blending into sunless grey skies and the promise of icy roads and car accidents.

Seasonal Affective Disorder, also known as the 'Winter Blues,' is a form of depression that occurs only during the winter. Diagnostic criteria include depressive symptoms in a particular season for at least two consecutive seasons; these depressive episodes ended when the season ended; and there are no other

explanations for the changes in behavior. People with Seasonal Affective Disorder have normal mental health throughout the remainder of the year, but when winter comes, they demonstrate symptoms of depression--social withdrawal, hopelessness, loss of energy, oversleeping, appetite changes, and loss of interest in activities. Researchers suggest that Seasonal Affective Disorder is rooted in lack of melatonin, serotonin and a disturbance in circadian rhythms.

How can you remedy Seasonal Affective Disorder? The first and most important thing is to consult a medical professional. Whether this person is a doctor, therapist or psychologist, they will be able to point you in the right direction. Some doctors prescribe antidepressants, such as Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors, or melatonin, a hormone supplement. Some doctors may refer you to a cognitive-

behavioral therapist. One of the more famous treatments of Seasonal Affective Disorder is light therapy. Light therapy involves sitting in front of a bright light intended to mimic the sun for 30-60 minutes a day. The light releases a biochemical into the brain, which lifts your mood. Lights are typically between \$200 and \$500 and can be purchased over-the-counter. Some insurance carriers do cover light therapy.

If you think you may have Seasonal Affective Disorder, consult a physician with your concerns. In the meantime, curl up with some hot cocoa, sit on the couch, turn on all the bright lights in your house and enjoy the winter to the best of your ability!



FREE TRAINING OPPORTUNITY!!!
Parent Advisory Group & Kalamazoo Wraps Training Workgroup Present:
Becoming a Voice for your Cause
by Michelle Corey, Michigan's Children
Tuesday, February 3rd, 2009
5:00 pm to 8:30pm
Free dinner is provided,
Free childcare is available!
Space is limited-please reserve your place with
Rebecca Clore (269-553-8110)
by January 27th!

- Common SAD Symptoms:
- Depression; feeling low, (irritability in children & adolescents)
- Loss of interest in activities
- Feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness & excessive guilt
- Fatigue, energy loss, slowing of psychological activity
- Excessive sleeping
- Notable changes in appetite/weight
- Difficulty concentrating & making decisions
- Suicidal thoughts and feelings

The Most Wonderful Time of the Year

By Mary Beth Mapes, Family Support Partner



If you are like me, you rejoice when fall approaches, with cooler weather and yes, LESS sunshine. Unlike our counterparts who suffer from SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) winter depression, we suffer from too much sun and heat.

Since our newsletter is highlighting SAD this month, I thought we should give equal time to those of us who are thrilled to have winter here, with clouds and snow and cold. Granted, there aren't many of us. Summer Depression, as it is called is a rare variant of SAD. It begins in the spring and ends with the close of summer. Our symp-

toms are quite similar in nature, if sometimes opposite to those of winter sufferers.

According to suite101.com, an estimated 5% of us suffer from this disorder. Unfortunately, there is no clear cause for our depression although some studies suggest the increased heat may be responsible.

In an August 13, 2002 New York Times article, Sarah Ivory quoted a Northern California designer as saying, "I actually feel kind of attacked by the sun. I feel like it's piercing into me, and I start to feel more and more desperate to escape it. I have a hard time organizing and

managing daily life. By August, I'm barely able to function and don't really recover until autumn. October is reliably a good month. I'm waking up, and I feel like I'm being released from my summer, what I would call, jail cell."

The best thing for us "cold blooded" people to do during the summer is to eat well-balanced meals, exercise daily, and talk. Talk to family, talk to your friends, or a counselor or physician. If none of these things help call your doctor, he may prescribe an anti-depressant for you.

Feel free to enjoy the cloudy, cold days, after all "It's the most wonderful time of the year"!

Common Summer-Depression Symptoms

- **Depression; feeling low, (irritability in children & adolescents)**
- **Loss of interest in activities**
- **Insomnia**
- **Anxiety & Agitation**
- **Poor Appetite**
- **Increased Libido**
- **Suicidal thoughts or feelings**

As adapted by suite101.com from the DSM-IV-TR

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call:

**Gryphon Place HelpLine
dial 211 or 381-HELP**

**National Hopeline
1-800-784-2433**

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

By Dianne Shaffer



Happy New Year!!! I hope you all enjoyed the holidays and were able to spend time with friends and family. The New Year is always a wonderful time to look ahead and start fresh on new (or old) goals for ourselves. Here at ASK we are doing just that!

At the beginning of December 2008, we had two new Family Support Partners join our team. Christine Eckrich is the mother of two children – Annie who is 17 years old and David who is 15 years old. She has lived in the Kalamazoo area her whole life and has utilized many of the resources in Kalamazoo County for her own family. She looks forward to sharing her knowledge and experience with families. Christine

will be primarily working out of the ASK office at Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Children and Families location. Mary Beth Mapes comes to us from Grand Rapids and is so excited to be a part of ASK that she is willing to commute an hour! Mary Beth has five daughters ranging in age from 13 to 31 years old. Mary Beth is a certified sign language interpreter and also has a great deal of experience with mental health services, juvenile justice, and the education system. Mary Beth will spend her time between 9th Circuit Court – Family Division and Goodwill Industries. Welcome Christine and Mary Beth!

I am sad to report that we are also losing two wonderful employees. Emily Curtis resigned on December 5, 2008 to take a position with Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services as a Peer Support Specialist. Jacalyn Paulding, Youth Involvement Coordinator has resigned in order to continue her education. Jacalyn is pursuing dual master's degrees in Rehab Teaching/Rehab Counseling. Jacalyn has assured us that she will help to make a smooth transition for the youth involved in our advisory group, Calling All Youth. We will miss them both greatly and wish them the best of luck!

One of our long-standing Board members, Phyllis Music

resigned in November and we are sad to see her go. Phyllis not only served on the Board since the inception of ASK in 2004, she served on the Board prior when the agency was part of the Michigan Association for Children with Emotional Disorders. We appreciate Phyllis' years of dedication and hard work on the Board of Directors and we will miss her.

ASK is looking forward to a fantastic 2009 with our new staff joining us! We want to increase attendance at our support groups (see schedule) as well as serve families through our individual Family Support Partners. Please tell anyone who could benefit from a little extra support about us. Remember, raising kids can be tough. If you need help, just ASK!



ASK Parent Support Group
Focused on supporting families receiving Community Mental Health services
 at **First Presbyterian Church**
 321 W. South Street, Kalamazoo
 Meets the **3rd Thursday of each month**
 from 6:30 to 7:30pm
 Free childcare and refreshments provided doors open @ 6:15!

Thursday, January 15th:
 Allison Hammond; Community Participation Initiative

Thursday, February 19th:
 April Goodwin, KRESA; Positive Behavior & Literacy Supports

Thursday, March 19th:
 Rebecca Clore, KCMHSAS; CAFAS-Child & Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale

Kalamazoo Wraps Parent Advisory Group
 Join us & share your passion to improve the system of care for children!

& Kalamazoo Wraps Calling All Youth
 for youth ages 11-17 who want to improve the children's mental health system.

Meet the 1st & 3rd Tuesday of each month
 from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm
 at Bronson Gilmore Education Center,
 7 Healthcare Plaza, Kalamazoo
 Free childcare and refreshments provided.

Tuesday, February 3rd:
 Free Training
5:30-8:30pm-see cover page for details!

ASK Questions, WE CAN HELP!!!

Question: During the holidays with the kids at home, my house can fall apart! Extra toys, clothes and just plain junk clutters my already full house. How can I get my kids to help out get my home into a more livable space?

Answer: Try making it into a game! Have each person take two boxes (or garbage bags) with them to each room. Have one big box for trash only. Look at everything that isn't in its rightful place and decide if it is trash, needed, or ready to recycle. Place each item into one of the boxes. Immediately after taking care of each room throw out the trash, put away the needed items and put the recyclable items into a bag to take to Goodwill or Salvation Army. Put on some snappy music and go to work in each room. When you are done with this chore, take a break. If you had it on your mind to go and see a movie why not do it now and drop off the recyclables on your way! Everyone wins in this game and best of all the room is ready to be vacuumed and you can go back to your regular activities knowing that the monster mess is taken care of without tears!

Answer submitted by
 Ginger Skidmore

ASK Parent Support Group
at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
 1747 W Milham Rd, Portage
 meets on the **1st Monday of each month**
 from 6:30 to 7:30pm
 Free childcare and refreshments provided
 Doors open @ 6:15!

Monday, January 5th:
 Andrea Helder, ROI; respite opportunities for parents

Monday, February 2nd:
 Open Discussion

Monday, March 2nd:
 Rebecca Wilson; Wraparound Services

ASK Parent Support Group
at the Douglas Community Association
 100 Patterson St, Kalamazoo
 meets on the **2nd Wednesday of each month**
 from 1:00 to 2:00pm
 Free childcare and refreshments provided!
 Please register with Kathy @ 343-5896

What is PBS?
Positive Behavior Supports workshop
For parents, hosted by KRESA
Monday, January 26th @ 6:30pm
 New Genesis
 1340 Cobb Ave
 Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Do you know a young person, between the ages of 12 and 17, who could benefit from a part time work experience?

Advocacy services for Kids is currently looking for 2 young people to work as Mentees, with the Youth Involvement Coordinator, for approximately 2 hours per week. The ideal young person will have a desire to gain leadership skills while also having a great experience in a professional work environment. The successful candidate will receive a stipend for his/her time.

For more information please call 269-343-5896

CALLING ALL YOUTH!

Are you a young person who feels like life is happening around you? Calling All Youth is your chance to speak up and be heard by adults, teachers, government, therapists, counselors, juvenile justice, schools and all of the other authority figures in your life.

IT'S TIME YOU HAD A VOICE!

For more Information, contact ASK's Youth Involvement Coordinator
At 343-5896.

Funding by Greater Kalamazoo United Way, Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and contributions from members and friends.

Do you have a specific question about the Juvenile Justice System we could answer in our next newsletter? Email us at mail@askforkids.org

Your submission will remain anonymous!



advocacy services for kids
 414 East Michigan Avenue
 Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Email Address _____

- \$10 Student
- \$25 Regular
- \$50 Family
- \$50 Contributing
- \$100 Sponsoring
- \$250 Donor
- \$500 Corporate
- \$_____ Other

Would you like to be placed on our mailing list? You may cancel at any time

- Yes, via my postal address
- Yes, via email
- No thank you

We like to acknowledge our Donors in our newsletter and/or website. Would you prefer to remain anonymous? Yes

BECOME AN ASK MEMBER

Please consider becoming a member of Advocacy Services for Kids.

Membership entitles you to voting rights at the annual meeting, and the fellowship of others who advocate for children’s mental health.

Membership dues help fund parent support groups, newsletter costs, and one-to-one support for families.

Joining is easy.

- 1) Fill out the form
- 2) Make checks payable to: Advocacy Services for Kids
- 3) Mail to the address shown.

COMING SOON!!! ASK’s website will be updated to include an **Opt-In** feature for our electronic mailing list and a **Paypal** feature for Credit Card donations ~ visit www.askforkids.org



advocacy services for kids
 414 East Michigan Avenue
 Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007
 PH (269) 343-5896 ~ FX (269) 978-0287
mail@askforkids.org