



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

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If you're interested in supporting ASK through Board Membership, please call Dianne Shaffer at 343-5896



ASK Staff

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Kate Gross, Administrative Coordinator
Emily Curtis, Family Support Partner
Kathy Howard, Family Support Partner
Ginger Skidmore, Family Support Partner
Jacalyn Paulding, Youth Involvement Coordinator

FAMILY SUPPORT PARTNERS



Is it almost Winter Vacation already? The school year has been in full swing for some time now and it would seem that patterns for the year have been set. Experience tells us however, that sometimes it takes just this long for problems to present themselves and there is certainly time to turn around what may be feeling like a frustrating year.

Here is how we can help:

- We can listen
We can give you techniques to help you transform your frustration and anger into understanding and passion ~ invaluable tools in advocating for your child
With empathy capable only of someone who's 'been there', we can talk through challenges with you and help you determine next steps, if any
We can connect you with community resources, trainings

- and supports, all designed to help you and your child succeed
We can assist you in navigating the various meetings, plans, and supports that you may find yourself utilizing
We can help you recognize YOUR goals as an advocate for your child
Through Support Groups, we can connect you with other parents who have struggled, who are happy to share their strategies and successes, and will assure you that you are NOT alone in your journey
We can share

You are your child's best advocate. We know this because we have lived it, we have been there, we understand.

For more information or to speak with a Family Support Partner, please call 269-343-5896. You can also access our website at www.askforkids.org.

What is a Family Support Partner (FSP)?

A Family Support Partner is a parent or caregiver of a child with mood, behavioral, or emotional challenges. They faced and overcame many barriers while trying to access services for their children. As a result, Family Support Partners are stronger and in a position to assist parents in similar situations in navigating the system of care for their children. They provide support based on firsthand experience. ASK's Family Support Partners are currently accessible to families from several community agencies including Kalamazoo Community Mental Health, Goodwill Industries, Portage Community Education Center, and the 9th Judicial Circuit Court.

Are you feeling the winter blues as your kids jump for glee?

While two weeks of no school is a winter fantasy for kids, it can feel more like cabin fever for Mom and Dad. Here are a few activities to help ...

Indoor Camping-Set up a tent (or make one out of blankets) in your front room, make indoor s'mores in the microwave, Turn off all the lights and enjoy telling ghost stories in the comfort of your own home....

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FREE TRAINING OPPORTUNITY!!!

Parent Advisory Group & Kalamazoo Wraps Training Workgroup Present:

Conflict Resolution Skills & Training by Barry Burnside & Wanda Joseph

Tuesday, December 2nd, 2008

5:30 pm to 8:30pm

Free dinner is provided from 5-5:30pm,

Free childcare is available!

Space is limited-please reserve your place with

Gisela Lawson (269-343-5896)

by November 25th!

ASK QUESTIONS, WE CAN HELP!

Question: *My child is violent and non-compliant in our home. Every night we dread what we will have to face. If I call the police, will they take him to the juvenile home?*

Answer: It depends on the situation and what you hope to accomplish. If the child is violent or on probation, there is a likelihood that by calling the police, the child will be placed in detention. Such a decision is based on the responding officer's discretion factoring in the severity of the violence or violation and whether or not there is space available in the juvenile home at the time.

Rest assured that Kalamazoo County has taken measures to ensure it's officers are ready and capable to handle such situations. Recently 34 officers from Kalamazoo county's public safety

departments and one district court judge participated in 40 hours of *Crisis Intervention Training (CIT)* through Kalamazoo County Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Robert Butkiewicz of KCCMH explains, "CIT provides law enforcement-based crisis intervention training for assisting those individuals with a mental illness, and improves the safety of patrol officers, consumers, family members, and citizens within the community."

The program aims to expand it's training to ensure 24/7 availability of a CIT officer. Always ask if a CIT Officer is available to handle your call.

If you're looking for immediate relief from a tense situation, Kalamazoo County offers these resources: ➔

Mobile Crisis Response offers trained counselors who will work with you to de-escalate the situation. A counselor may even make a trip to your home if resolution cannot be reached through the telephone consultation. Mobile Crisis Response is accessed by calling Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Access Center 24/7 at **373-6000** or **1-888-373-6200**. Visit www.fcsource.org for more information & resources.

The ARK houses youth ages 10-17 who are willing to come for short term periods; there the child can get a break from the home and be in a safe environment with people who really care – giving parents the much needed opportunity to determine next steps. 24/7 crisis line **1-800-873-TEEN**. To learn more about the ARK's programs & services, Visit www.catholicfamilyservices.org

We welcome you to call **Advocacy Services for Kids** to discuss your particular struggle and get the help you need.

member for many years prior to that, has stepped down. We appreciate the many years he volunteered and all of the time and support he has given to ASK. Thank you, Gary.

We recently concluded another year of service to families in Kalamazoo County. I am thrilled to say that we have touched the lives of 400 families through 1066 contacts with our Family Support Partners. This is the most families ASK has ever served. Thank you to our staff and all of our partners, we couldn't do it without you!

With changes in place and the goal of bringing on a new Family Support Partner very soon, we are looking forward to a wonderful year and to serving even more families in Kalamazoo County!



Feeling the Economic Pinch?

5 Easy Ways Families can SAVE \$\$\$

1. *Cut Spending & Excess*-from gas, to food, to clothing purchases, *plan ahead* to nix last minute spending whims.
2. *Cancel Subscriptions*-your local Library has FREE movies, books, magazines & more.
3. *COUPONS*-are great for what you would *normally* buy, skip the tempting marketing traps!
4. *Go Generic!*-wherever it's offered-why pay extra for a fancy label?
5. *Replace Credit w/ Layaway*-re-learn how to save-up for big purchases.

IDEAS TO MELT THE WINTER BLUES AWAY

Continued from previous page...

Play outside- Research shows that kids who play outside, on a regular basis, are more emotionally and physically healthy. Bundle the kids up in adequate clothing and let them play outside. Be sure to check the weather forecast. If it says that the temperature is at least 10 degrees (including wind-chill) then it is safe to let them play for short periods of time. This can be great exercise. It will also ease the cabin fever for the whole family.

Family Tree- use large pieces of cardboard or paper and draw a tree on it. Have your child start with your immediate family and try to list family members as far up the tree as they can. (Hint: Children will love to hear stories from your childhood, they are your biggest fans.)

Cinnamon Ornaments- These smell great and are very easy to make. Combine ¾ to 1 cup apple-sauce and 1 (4.12 oz.) bottle of Ground cinnamon. Mix together to form stiff dough. Roll out ¼ inch thickness. Cut with favorite cookie cutters. Make hole with straw for ribbon for hanging. Allow to dry for several days, turning occasionally. Makes 12 ornaments.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

By Dianne Shaffer

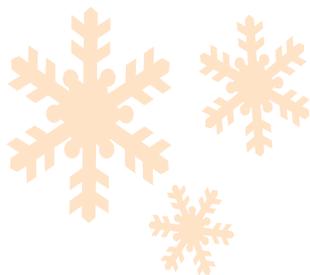
I hope you are all enjoying the beautiful weather we have been experiencing this fall. Autumn is my favorite time of year to be outside enjoying fresh air, sunshine, and the gorgeous colors of the leaves! I hope you are back into the swing of things with school and activities with your children! I want to take a minute to tell you about some of the things happening at ASK.

After an extensive, diligent search by ASK's Board of Directors, I am proud to say that I was offered the Executive Director position vacated by Sandy Rotherl this past July. As a social worker who's worked directly with children and families for the last 10 years before signing on as ASK's Assistant Director 2 ½ years ago, I am comfortable stepping into leading an agency I know so well and excited to move forward with our mission of serving families. We are all

grateful for Sandy's diligent work these past 3 years, she is missed!

There have been additional staffing changes recently at ASK; Family Support Partner Gisela R, Lawson was promoted to Program Manager. Family Support Partner Ginger Skidmore has stepped in to be our primary intake person. Emily Curtis, who used to serve in that capacity, is now working with families at Goodwill and the 9th Circuit Court, as well as facilitating two support groups. Kathy Howard has transitioned to working with specialty schools including Valley Center, Portage Community High School, and Kalamazoo Public Schools' Alternative Learning Program at Chime.

ASK's Annual Meeting and Board Election was held on September 18th. Gary Johnson, who served as Board President for the past two years and as a Board



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!

Kalamazoo Wraps Parent Advisory Group
 Meets 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.
 Join us & share your passion to improve the system of
 care for children!
Tuesday, December 2nd:
 Conflict Resolution Training,
 5:30-8:30pm-see cover page for details!

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, December 1st:
 Our Annual Holiday Celebration
 Join us for a relaxed yet festive meeting
 Please call Kathy @ 343-5896 to reserve your space!



Kalamazoo Wraps Calling All Youth
 meets on the 1st & 3rd Tuesday of each month
 from 6 to 7:30pm
 at Bronson Gilmore Education Center
 7 Healthcare Plaza, Kalamazoo
 parallel to the Parent Advisory Group
 for youth ages 11-17
 who want to improve the children's mental health system.

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

'08 ~ '09 Transition Round Table Series:
November 20th:
Making the Move from High School to Post-Secondary Education,
Lois Baldwin, KVCC/Beth denHartigh, WMU
December 18th:
ASD and the College Experience
Lois Baldwin, KVCC/Julie Wilson & Rob Rostar, KRESA/Student Panel
 Kalamazoo RESA Service Center
 1819 E. Milham (between Lover's Lane & Portage Rd)
 Thursdays ~ 7:00 to 8:00pm

What are we up to? Glad you ASKed!

10/23/08 Emily & Kate participated in the KVCC Volunteer & Community Services fair, recruiting talented childcare workers for support group meetings was a definite success!

10/25/08 ASK participated in Child Care Resources' Annual Conference at the Radisson Plaza Hotel in downtown Kalamazoo

10/25/08 Kathy braved the elements to support our community and promote our mission by passing out candy at the Annual Riverwalk Trunk or Treat ~ Thank you Kathy!

10/30/08 Gisela & Emily attended the Community Advocate Inclusion Conference which focuses on including persons with disabilities in the community

11/10/08 Kathy will be a presenter at the Boys & Girls Club Parent Workshop

11/14/08 Jacalyn & Kathy will be panelists during the Action Friday meeting targeting youth serving organizations on including youth with SEDs.

11/20 ~ 11/23/08 Dianne, Gisela, Jacalyn & a parent/youth team will travel to the Federation of Families/Community Mental Health conference in Atlanta where Dianne and Gisela will be presenting on the Family Support Model; we appreciate this important work!!!

11/27-11/28 & 12/24-12/25 ASK Closed



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.



advocacy services for kids
414 East Michigan Avenue
Kalamazoo, Michigan 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 contact Jacalyn at: 269-343-5896



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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 Jacalyn at: (269) 343-5896.