



May 2008

To empower families raising children with mood, behavior and emotional disorders, by providing support, training and advocacy skills and collaborating with community partners to improve the system of care for children.



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### MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

Quick, count three great things that are happening right now for your child. It's time to celebrate children's mental health!

Several events are taking place in May to promote mental health.

First, come join the fun at the Kalamazoo Wraps 3<sup>rd</sup> annual, National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day Carnival on May 8, at the Kalamazoo County Fairgrounds from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. The event is completely free including free food, games, entertainment, and prizes. There will also be a clown, "bouncy castles," face

painting, and information booths. This is a time to concentrate on what is going right and things that contribute to mental wellness. Plan on a fun time!

May 2 is the Annual Mental Health Breakfast sponsored by Kalamazoo Community Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services. This event will be held 9:30 to 11 a.m. at the Radisson in Kalamazoo. The event is open to all. Typically, youth, parents, persons with developmental disabilities and/or mental illness, service providers and others present inspirational speeches. A delicious breakfast is also served. Please call 553-8000 to register.

The "Walk a Mile in My Shoes" Mental Health Rally will take place May 14 at 1:30 at the State Capitol Building in Lansing. People who wish to ride together should call Pam Bitson at 553-8066. Plan to leave from the Nazareth Campus at 11 a.m.

There are lots of other ways to celebrate too:

- Have a picnic in the sun
- Fingerprint together
- Dance in the kitchen

It doesn't matter what you do—just have fun showing your children you love them the way they are!



### TRAININGS WITH SCHOOL, MENTAL HEALTH PARTNERS

Advocacy Services for Kids is holding two trainings with education partners this month.

First, the **Positive Behavior and Literacy Supports** model will be explained in an overview on **May 15** from 8:30 to 11:00 a.m. at the Wile Auditorium at Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (KRESA), 1819 East Milham Road.

Positive Behavior and Literacy Supports is a model being used in many local schools. The model is for all kids, and youth with higher needs have more to

gain from it.

Presenters from KRESA and ASK will describe what the Positive Behavior and Literacy Supports model is, as well as a family's experience in a school using the model.

Later in the month, partners are joining to present **Services for Students with Disabilities**. Kalamazoo Public Schools, Kalamazoo Community Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services and ASK are teaming up to host the training on Saturday, **May 31** at the West Main Pro-

fessional Building. This training will include eight different sessions, including an overview of Qualifying for 504s, Individual Education Plans, and Health Care Plans; Positive Behavior and Literacy Supports; Secondary Education Reform; Collaborating with School Staff; and much more! Lunch and child care will be provided.

Registration starts at 8:30, and the event runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. If you would like more information, please contact Rebecca Clore at 553-8110.

## RESTORATIVE JUSTICE HELPS YOUTH SOLVE PROBLEMS

By Gisela Lawson

Jessica\*, an eighth grader in Kalamazoo Public Schools was regularly getting angry with her classmate Mark\*. Even though she wanted to resort to violence, she had another option: peer mediation through her school.

To start the process, Jessica completed a request form. She wrote, “[He] keeps making me so mad, instead of hitting him in the mouth I want to solve this through peer mediation.”

The mediation program supervisor approached Mark regarding Jessica’s request. Mark agreed to mediation, so the supervisor scheduled a time when the students could meet to engage in mediation. The meeting consisted of Jessica, Mark, two peer mediators and the supervisor.

During the mediation, Jessica and Mark had the opportunity to discuss the issues they had with each other and how this affected them. They decided that the best way to address their issues

was to avoid each other as much as possible. If they were in a situation that made this difficult, Mark would tone down his behavior, Jessica would control her anger and frustration, and they would seek out an adult if those attempts failed.

This plan was put in writing by the mediator and signed by Jessica, Mark and the mediators. Since this contract was signed, there have been no more incidents between Jessica and Mark.

This mediation process is part of Kalamazoo’s approach to restorative justice principles. Restorative justice is a theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused or revealed by criminal behavior. Proponents suggest this is best accomplished through cooperative processes that include all stakeholders.

About eight years ago, a group of nearly 35 people from the community convened to discuss using

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## DEVELOPMENTAL BUILDING BLOCKS IN YOUTH

By Sandy Roethler

Wouldn’t it be great if you knew whether your child was going to “be okay” when they grew up?

While there’s no crystal ball, researchers have identified forty key building blocks called Developmental Assets they found young people need in order to grow up to be caring, competent, and productive adults.

Some of these are External Assets, which are what we adults surround young people with. The role of adults in External Assets is to create external circumstances that support the child. An example would be family support or a caring school environment.

Other building blocks are Internal Assets, which make up the inner life of the young person. The role of the adult is to influence the internal beliefs of the youth. Examples would be integrity or self-esteem.

Researchers found that the forty Developmental Assets are powerful. If a child has 0-10 of the assets, he is far less likely to succeed in school, value diversity, maintain good health or delay gratification than even a child with 21-30 assets. A child with 31-40 assets seems unstoppable in comparison!

The assets can also protect young people. For example, a child with 31-40 of the assets is far less likely to engage in risky behaviors such as alcohol or illicit drug use, sexual activity or violence, compared to a youth with even 21-30 assets. The child with 0-10 assets seems to have very little protection from these activities in comparison.

Sadly, a study from 2001 showed only 9% of all youth have 31-40 assets, whereas 35% have 21-30 assets, 41% have only 11-20 assets, and 15% have 0-10 assets.

Families can do a lot to increase assets! Support your children and help them feel loved. Surround them with other loving people and growth experiences.

Have clear rules and be consistent in enforcing them. Expect good things from your children and praise them when they succeed. Play and read together.

Learn more about how you can encourage the 40 assets in your child at [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org).

### EXTERNAL ASSETS

- Family support
- Positive family communications
- Other adult relationships
- Caring neighborhood
- Parent involvement in schooling
- Caring school climate
- Community values youth
- Youth as resources
- Service to others
- Safety
- Family Boundaries
- School boundaries
- Neighborhood boundaries
- Adult role models
- Positive peer influences
- High expectations
- Creative activities
- Youth programs
- Religious community
- Time at home

### INTERNAL ASSETS

- Achievement motivation
- School engagement
- Does their homework
- Bonding to school
- Reading for pleasure
- Caring
- Equality and social justice
- Integrity
- Honesty
- Responsibility
- Restraint
- Planning and decision-making
- Interpersonal competence
- Cultural competence
- Peaceful conflict resolution
- Resistance skills
- Personal power
- Sense of purpose
- Self-esteem
- Positive view of personal future

## Restorative Justice

(Continued from page 2)

a restorative justice approach in addressing behavioral issues with youth in the juvenile justice system and in schools.

Kalamazoo began incorporating restorative justice principles with various grants and support from agencies such as Gryphon Place, which offers dispute resolution services,

Dispute resolution services are offered in three formats – peer mediation, conferencing or circles – to any children’s service providers who are open to taking on this approach to resolving problems and educating children in conflict resolution.

Peer mediation, which consists of effective preventative and positive behavior support, is most popular in the schools. It involves specially trained students who help other students solve conflicts. The involved parties discuss the issue that brought them together, the effects the issue has on each party and how they think the issue could be resolved. When a consensus is reached, the mediator will draft a contract, which details the resolution and both parties review and sign.

Circles, which can be used for classroom management, involve larger groups where a talking piece is used in order to provide all participants a chance to voice their concerns without interruption.

Conferencing is used for more complex cases, such as high-level offenses, expulsions, suspensions, detention or diversion. Conferencing involves face-to-face encounters with a written

plan to repair the harm.

Gryphon Place provides hands-on training in any of these forms for resolving conflict through mediation and listening. The training consists of active listening, the dynamics of the cycle of violence, identifying resolution based on the parties’ level on the cycle, using opening statements, rephrasing, setting ground rules and creating reachable goals.

In the schools, when the students are having issues with each other that do not rise to the level of school safety intervention, they have the option to get together and attempt to resolve these issues through some form of dispute resolution. The request forms for mediation are located in an area where the students have access, and the students are encouraged to utilize this positive approach.

The restorative justice approach has been very successful. In the 2005-06 academic year, two Kalamazoo schools completed the Gryphon Place training and implemented the program: *Lincoln International Studies School (Elementary)* and *Loy Norrix (High School)*. The schools completed a total of 148 mediations (127 *Lincoln*, 21 *Loy Norrix*). Of these mediations, 135 (91%) resulted in an agreement. Of these, 129 (95%) kept to the agreement.

In 2006-07, two Kalamazoo schools completed the Gryphon Place training and implemented the program: *Kalamazoo Advantage (K-8)* and *Lincoln*. The schools completed a total of 205 mediations, all of which resulted in agreements. About 85% of the agreements were kept.

Gryphon Place offers trainings to

schools at no cost at this time.

They will train staff and assist in implementation. For 2007-08, Gryphon Place is working with Parchment Middle School, Kalamazoo Advantage and Kalamazoo Central High School. In the first four months, they had 85% compliance for mediations that resulted in agreements.

By offering restorative justice principles to our children we can help them to cultivate social and emotional skills that will have long-lasting advantages to their well being and success in life. Through restorative justice children learn to take responsibilities for their actions, help to repair the harm caused and learn valuable lessons from their mistakes. If a child can face the one he offended and contribute in implementing justice for all parties involved, he is less likely to re-offend.

Through his voice he gains ownership, and ownership helps to shape his culture. Culture is the quality, behavior and belief of a person. If we tap into cultivating that culture by utilizing the culture as our main tool, we are likely to have positive outcomes that can have lasting benefits into the future.

As Janet Jones of the Balanced and Restorative Justice Network stated, “Restorative justice is a hybrid of everything that is part of a culture.”

*Special thanks to Barry Burnside, Executive Director Dispute Resolution Services, and Janet Jones, Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) Network, for providing information for this article.*

\*This is a true account, but the names have been changed to protect student identity.

## ASK EVENTS

### ASK Parent Support Group May 5, 6:15 to 7:30 p.m.

Please join us to meet new friends and learn more about children’s mental health and community resources. Please call to reserve free childcare, (269) 343-5896. Meetings are held the first Monday of the month at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 1747 W. Milham Road, Portage. Kelly Williston will present, “A View from Both Sides: A Parent and a Teacher.”

### Kalamazoo Wraps Parent Advisory Group May 20, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

If you are ready to work positively to break down system barriers, join us at PAG! We need passionate parents who want to improve the system of care for children’s mental health. Please call to reserve free childcare, (269) 343-5896. We meet first and third Tuesdays of the month at the Bronson Gilmore Education Center, 7 Healthcare Plaza, Kalamazoo.

### Kalamazoo Wraps Calling All Youth May 20, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

If your children ages 7-17 are ready to provide their input to improve the system of care for children’s mental health, please call Jacalyn at (269) 343-5896. CAY meets first and third Tuesdays of the month at the Bronson Gilmore Education Center, 7 Healthcare Plaza, Kalamazoo. Leadership-building experiences are provided!



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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Amount paid \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Membership \_\_\_\_\_

I would prefer to receive the newsletter by email

Please send the newsletter by postal mail

## BECOME AN ASK MEMBER

Please consider becoming a member of Advocacy Services for Kids.

Membership entitles you to our free monthly newsletter, 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.

Annual Membership Dues:	
Student .....	\$10
Regular.....	\$25
Family.....	\$50
Contributing.....	\$50
Sponsoring.....	\$100
Donor.....	\$250
Corporate.....	\$500



advocacy services for kids

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