



THE
CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER
OF NIAGARA

FALL 2010

Working Hand in Hand for Children



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Message from the Executive Director

I have sat down to write this “introductory” message from the Executive Director about 50 times, wanting of course, to have the perfect inspiring message. I realize that it has been just over 4 months since I have taken over as the Executive Director of the Child Advocacy Center of Niagara. My first day, on May 11, it was warm and humid. Kids everywhere were getting sick of being in school and looking forward to summer. Today, now September, it is cool and windy. The children are grabbing their backpacks and boarding busses or walking to school. Time has flown.

I have been working in the field of social work for close to 20 years now. When I first finished my Master’s Degree in 1997, I began working with heroin addicts. Within 2 years, I grew frustrated with that job. Not because I didn’t love what I did or who I was working with. Many of my clients were extremely inspiring and I was honored to touch their lives and try to help them with their struggles. I was more impacted by the chronic nature of their difficulties and realized that at the time, we in the substance abuse treatment world, were missing something fundamental. Over 98% of the women I worked with had been sexually and/or physically abused as children. They witnessed violence and turmoil. Substance abuse was a severe problem for my women, but their troubles were rooted in their childhood angst.

My professional passion became work with abused and neglected children to promote their healing at a young age, so as to prevent the lifelong struggles that were likely without treatment. I have been providing therapy for and managing programs that worked with children who had mental health problems (anxiety, depression, trauma, ADHD) since 1999.

The statistics regarding child sexual abuse are very sobering. One in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys are likely to be sexually abused prior to their 18th birthday. Sometimes it is easy to dismiss numbers, stating, that this impacts “those

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Message from the Executive Director (continued)

people over there". Sexual abuse does not heed social, economic, geographic, racial, gender, or other boundaries. This means that in your typical high school senior math class which has 24 students, if we assume 12 girls and 12 boys, 3 of the girls and 2 of the boys have been sexually abused. One of my doubting friends got into an argument with me about these statistics, not wanting to believe their validity. He stated that the numbers must be closer to 1 in 10. My response? What if it were only 1 in 10? And, what if that 1 in 10 were *your* son or daughter?

The Child Advocacy Center of Niagara has helped over 3,050 children and families affected by child sexual abuse, physical abuse, and neglect since 1995. I am in awe of the tireless dedication and team work exhibited by the members of our multidisciplinary team, including law enforcement, child protective services workers, victim advocates, and district attorneys. I am honored to be a part of this effort.

Laura Kelemen, LCSW-R

Laura Kelemen
Executive Director

News and Events

Please welcome the CAC's new case coordinator, **Cara Morse**. Cara comes to the CAC from New Directions Youth and Family Services in Lockport and has several years experience working with children and families at risk. Stop by and welcome her to the team.

Presti Karate Centers donated \$4,000 to the Child Advocacy Center of Niagara which represented a portion of the proceeds from their 10th annual Chun Kuk Do Kid's Tournament and Kick-A-Thon fundraiser. The event was held Saturday, March 27 at Niagara Catholic High School. Other recipients of the proceeds include the Chuck Norris KickStart Program and Community Missions of Niagara Frontier, Inc., Onesimus House. Shown: Philip D'Angelo, Kick-A-Thon top fundraiser; Annie Baker, Senior Case Coordinator, Child Advocacy Center of Niagara; John Presti; Ariel Mzygut, top kicker.



Order of the Eastern Star District Lecturer Steven Pawlak, left, and Deputy Grand Matron Marion Pawlak, center, present teddy bears donated by the OES to Executive Director Laura Kelemen of the Child Advocacy Center of Niagara. A service of Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center, the Child Advocacy Center works with law enforcement, social services, prosecution, medical and mental health personnel in a child-friendly facility to assist in the response to allegations of child abuse. Stuffed animals are given to the children to comfort them during their visits.

The National Children's Alliance has approved the reaccreditation of the Child Advocacy Center of Niagara. A professional membership organization, the National Children's Alliance equips local child advocacy centers, multidisciplinary teams and child abuse professionals with the training, support and technical assistance needed to respond appropriately and effectively to allegations of child abuse or neglect. CACs that have met national accreditation standards are recognized as having achieved a level of multidisciplinary collaboration and coordinated service delivery that significantly improves the experience and well being of children who are subject to child abuse intervention.

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News and Events (continued)



The CAC co-sponsored an event with the Niagara County Sheriff's Office during Crime Victims week. On April 22, a tree was dedicated at the Niagara County Court House honoring all victims of crime in Niagara County. Shown are Niagara County Victim Advocates Jenny Drake, Kelly Bird and Sarah Ackerman.

YWCA of Niagara's Rape Crisis Services displayed their Clothesline Project in the lobby of Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center. The Clothesline Project (CLP) is a program started on Cape Cod, MA, in 1990 to address the issue of violence against women. It is a vehicle for women affected by violence to express their emotions by decorating a shirt. They then hang the shirt on a clothesline to be viewed by others as testimony to the problem of violence against women. The shirts are color coded to show the form of abuse and whether the victim survived the abuse they experienced.

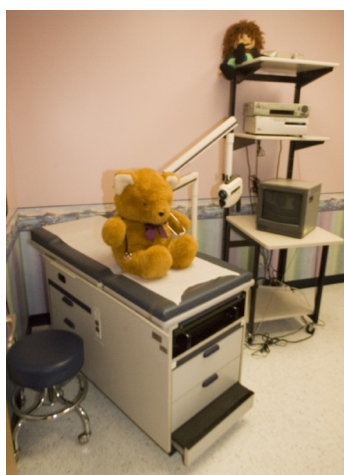


Why a Child Advocacy Center?

Child Advocacy Centers who meet **ten standards** can be accredited by the National Children's Alliance. The standards are designed to ensure effective, efficient and consistent delivery of services to child victims and their families. Similar standards are utilized by the New York State Office of Child and Family Services to support and review child advocacy centers in New York. The Child Advocacy Center of Niagara is an accredited member of the National Children's Alliance and a Tier One Child Advocacy Center in the state of New York. These designations indicate that the Child Advocacy Center of Niagara meets all standards on both national and state levels.

In each issue we will explore a CAC standard and its importance to the operation of the CAC.

Medical Evaluation: Specialized medical evaluation and treatment services are routinely made available to all Center clients and are coordinated with the multidisciplinary team response. (National Children's Alliance)



Child Advocacy Centers come in many shapes and sizes, but they must meet certain requirements. A medical evaluation holds an important place in the multidisciplinary assessment of child abuse. Children often view nurses and doctors as helpful. In addition, children will often be willing to ask nurses and doctors questions about their bodies that they wouldn't ask others. Because of this, children may disclose information to medical personnel that they might not share with investigators. A specialized medical exam has multiple purposes, including: to help ensure the health, safety, and well-being of the child; to diagnose, document and address medical conditions resulting from abuse; to reassure and educate the child and family; and to differentiate medical findings that may be from abuse and those that may be explained by other medical conditions.

Some CAC's employ medical personnel while others contract for those services. Medical personnel who conduct specialized medical exams are required to have both pediatric experience and child abuse expertise. They are also required to have ongoing training and supervisions. All Centers are required to ensure that medical evaluations are available to children regardless of their ability to pay. This ensures that this essential service is available to all.

PREVENTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IS A JOB FOR ADULTS



PROTECT THEIR ONLY CHILDHOOD

Darkness to Light® is a national nonprofit founded in response to staggering statistics:

**1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys
will be sexually abused before the age of 18.**

We are committed to protecting our children by empowering adults to prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse with our *Stewards of Children* sexual abuse prevention training. Go online to darkness2light.org for the online training or contact the number below to attend an instructor led training in your area.

darkness to light

Confronting child sexual
abuse with courage.



Through the generosity of the Martha H. Beeman Foundation, we are able to provide *Stewards of Children*, FREE of charge.

Organizations that would like to schedule an in-person training, should contact Lisa Lannon at the Child Advocacy Center at 285-0045.

Training

- **Save the Date!** The thirteenth annual Family Violence Intervention Project's *Safe at Home: Seeking Solutions for Adult & Child Victims of Violence* conference will be held Tuesday, May 10, 2011. The preconference dinner will be held Monday, May 9 (venue TBA).
- Join us at our next Family Violence Intervention Project (FVIP) meeting on December 9 at 9:00 am in Auditorium A at Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center. At each quarterly meeting, we will have a speaker discuss a topic relevant to current issues in Niagara County. December's topic is **elder abuse**. More information to follow.
- *Enhancing Investigative Techniques: A Multidisciplinary Team Approach to Child Abuse Investigations* was conducted by Anne Lynn from the Northeast Regional Child Advocacy Center. The Team engaged in many interactive activities that demonstrated the value of each discipline and participant.
- The Twelfth Annual Family Violence Intervention Project Safe at Home Conference attracted more than 200 participants. *Jacqueline Campbell, Ph.D., RN, FAAN*. A professor at Johns Hopkins University, was the keynote speaker. Dr. Campbell is a national leader in research and advocacy in the field of domestic and intimate partner violence (IPV), including the assessment of dangerousness and lethality.
- The Child Abuse Intervention Project (CAIP) held a training and team recognition lunch on April 23 at Antonio's Banquet and Conference Center. Jackie Collard presented information regarding the importance of conducting medicals exams. An overview of the CAIP Rapid Response was presented.
- Local mental health clinicians and their supervisors attended two days of training on *Clinical Assessment and Intervention for Children Exposed to Violence and Other Trauma* conducted by **Betsy McAlister Groves and Dr. Maxine Weinreb** from the Child Witness to Violence Project at Boston Medical Center. Participants are able to participate in ongoing conference calls with the trainers regarding current cases. This training was made possible by the Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation and is part of a three-year initiative to promote therapeutic services for children affected by violence.

WE'RE ON THE
WEB!
CACOFNIAGARA.ORG



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