



To Protect

The Office of Victim Assistance and Safe Environment
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www.archsa.org

This quarterly publication is for VASE Coordinators information and updates

Reminders:

- Coordinators order your blue ribbon pins today!
- Safe Environment Training required for all those who minister to children/vulnerable populations

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APRIL: Child Abuse Prevention Month

Child abuse and neglect affects children and families of all ages, races and incomes. According to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Data Book, in 2007 6,733 children in Bexar County were confirmed victims of abuse.

The impact of child abuse is far greater than its immediate, visible effects. Abused and neglected children do poorly in school, are more likely to become teen parents and abuse alcohol and drugs. They are more likely to become criminals as adults and suffer chronic health problems. Most children who are abused bear psychological

scars forever.

April has been designated as Child Abuse Prevention Month. Many utilize a blue ribbon to symbolize the battered, bruised bodies of abused children. It also is a reminder that each one of us can save a child's life! The blue ribbon signifies that each one of us can act by reporting and getting involved no matter how hard it may seem, to protect our children.

As individuals and community members, you have the power to prevent child abuse and keep kids safe and families strong.

Take a blue ribbon pin and place it above the heart of a

child and recognize them for how they have made a difference in your life.



If you or someone you love is abused seek medical attention, pastoral care and most important report to authorities.

Texas Child Abuse Hotline

1-800-252-5400

2007 Child Abuse Reports

In 2007, thirteen child abuse and neglect related fatalities were reported in Bexar County (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services 2007 Data Book). These children were killed by their caregivers and loved ones. This is what is most troubling for our community to understand and accept.

Texas as a state had a total of over 163,000 completed CPS investigations. Out of those investigations, an estimated 71,000 victims were confirmed.

Locally and across the state acts of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse were also reported.

Child abuse can affect survivors for months sometimes years after the abuse has ended. Long term effects of child abuse include fear, anxiety, anger, depression, hostility, inappropriate sexual behavior, low self esteem, substance abuse, and difficulty with close relationships (International Child Abuse Network, 2008).

Educating our children and parents are a key to reducing the number of victims. Reporting abuse must continue as well. Children can not speak out many times because of fear, guilt and shame. Therefore, it is up to the adults in their lives to speak out for them and report abuse even if it is an accusation against a relative and or loved one.

We must continue to hope and give children a safe environment.

OVASE Coordinator of the Quarter Recognized



Mary Louise Hernandez has been chosen as the Office of Victim Assistance & Safe Environment coordinator of the quarter. She has done an extraordinary job as OVASE coordinator at Sacred Heart Church in San Antonio. For the past two years Mary Louise has committed her time towards training staff, church volunteers, parents and children. She believes strongly in the importance of a strong religious foundation and remembers the great sense of satisfaction and accomplishment by touching the

lives of teens that needed and desired direction.

She also serves as Youth Minister at her parish. "Teaching children and youth anti-victimization skills and empowering them is our common goal and I personally am committed to this initiative. If there is one child that can benefit from this program, this initiative is a success", (Hernandez, 2005).

We recognize Mary Louise with this award as a small token of gratitude for making our community a safe environment for our children.

Parish Leaders Support Safe Environment Efforts

The Office of Victim Assistance & Safe Environment has been working hard to attend all Deanery meetings through out the Archdiocese of San Antonio. They have traveled from Del Rio, to Pleasanton to Kerrville and many other places in order to educate all clergy about the safe environment efforts occurring in their parishes. Every deanery has been very welcoming and is giving their support towards the program. Many questions were asked in regards to how each parish can ensure that they are in compliance of *The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

The Charter states a deep commitment to creating a safe environment within the Church for children and youth. Therefore, each parish is providing a safe environment program that consists of training parents and children as well as those who minister to children in order to prevent harm to all young people.

While the cases of sexual abuse of minors by clergy have been reduced over the past decade there are still efforts being made to provide healing to both victims and dioceses. This effort also empowers all to restore trust and harmony in our faith communities. The charter includes seventeen articles

that cover the following key ideas:

- Promote healing and reconciliation with victims/survivors of sexual abuse of minors
- Guarantee an effective response to allegations of sexual abuse of minors
- Ensure the accountability of our procedures
- Protect the faithful

Great job parishes keep up the great work!

Attention: Safe Environment Coordinators

Please return all borrowed materials including all tapes, videos, or other training curricula to OVASE as soon as possible so that we may have them available for the next coordinator who needs them.

Thank you.

Child Abuse Prevention/Blue Ribbon Month April 2008.

In the spring of 1989, Bonnie Finney of Norfolk, Virginia, was informed that her sixteen old month grandson was murdered; his name was Michael Wayne "Bubba" Dickenson. Bubba was murdered not by some stranger who took him off the streets as we usually read. Bubba was murdered by someone who we would think would defend this innocent child.

The taking of the innocent life of Bubba lead his grandmother to fight for victimized children who stand alone and defenseless in the powerful grip of their abusers (and sadly from the very hands of those who naturally should defend their children). Bubba's death could have been prevented, but those who oversaw the abusiveness in his family simply turned a blind eye. In the end, Bonnie received a phone call informing her that her grandson's body was found in a tool box and was dumped in the Great Dismal Swamp on the border of North Carolina and Virginia.

In her aguish, Ms. Finney was determined to make the public aware of child abuse. She decided to tie a blue ribbon on the antenna of her vehicle so that the public could become aware of child abuse and take a stand. Ms. Finney's determination in making the public aware of child abuse began to take root in Norfolk, Virginia and become nation wide. When asked why the color blue, Ms. Finney replied; "I never intend to forget the battered, bruised bodies of my grandchildren. Bruises are black, then eventually blue. Therefore, blue serves as a constant reminder to me to fight for our children."

April is Child Abuse Awareness Month. Too many children go to bed with broken hearts from pain and suffering from being abused or neglected. Our children are our prized possessions and it is our responsibility to take care of them and give them the love and attention that they rightly deserve.

Together we can make a difference in our neighborhoods by taking action in protecting our children. Please place a blue ribbon on your cars or around a tree in memory of those innocent children like Bubba who have suffered and died under the hands of those who abused them. Also, get involved in your children's lives. Too many children are growing up with a television or video games as their parents. This is no way for a child to go through their childhood. They are starving for morals and values to be instilled in their lives. If we want a society that will respect life and value morals, then we must set the example by teaching and instilling values in our children. We can only do this by fostering a healthy environment in which our children will be able to live a happy life.

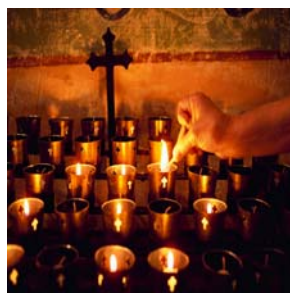
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Interpersonal Violence Prevention Collaborative



There has been a new collaborative established with a vision of the future. The Interpersonal Violence Prevention Collaborative (IVPC) has established a vision to see Texas free from sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking. IVPC was formed through a grant funded in 2003 from the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention by key stakeholders that play a role in preventing sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking.

Later in 2004, IVPC established a coalition founded by individuals representing diverse agencies that joined forces in a statewide initiative to develop a strategic plan to end interpersonal violence in Texas. Since then the IVPC has worked to bring its mission to the attention of those committed to creating safer, healthier communities through preventing interpersonal violence. Their strong mission has established a public health priority in Texas to prevent sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking. Based on current research and promising practices in violence prevention, IVPC partners identified three key areas of focus:

- Access to and effective use of resources, research and data to design and implement the most effective prevention strategies

- Changes in systems and practices to shift to a society that does not tolerate interpersonal violence
- Multiple public awareness strategies to help Texans understand interpersonal violence as a public health crisis

IVPC is seeking prevention partners who come from state agencies, state non-profit membership organizations, universities, foundations, community rape crisis and domestic violence centers, faith-based organizations, businesses, and other community-based groups. They currently include the Archdiocese of San Antonio: Office of Victim Assistance and Safe Environment, Arte-Sana, The Generations Center of Dallas, the Governor's Commission of Women, the Men's Resource Center of South Texas, the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault, the Texas Council of Family Violence, Texas Health Resources, the Texas Municipal Police Association, and the UT Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

If you or your organization supports the IVPC vision, then you can be a valuable part of its prevention network. Please call Linda Hunter at (512) 474-7190 or email lhunter@taasa.org for more information.

The Ultimate Betrayal of a Mother: When Children speak of abuse and no one listens

What would you do if your child came home one day and disclosed that they were abused by an adult? What if the abuser turned out to be your partner? The person whom you love and trust has harmed your child, what would you do? Do you believe your child or do you believe the adult?

These questions are very scary yet, very real. It is a proven fact that most children will suffer abuse by the hand of their loved ones. Sure children tell stories and can exaggerate situations, however children do not lie about abuse. Children are very aware of the negative

consequences of breaking the silence of abuse.



Many children are afraid of their abusers, therefore speaking out is courageous. The outcry person must take action in order to protect the child. Regardless of who is being accused it is crucial to listen and believe your child. If the abuser lives within the home,

you must take immediate steps to ensure that the abuse does not continue. Too many children are put back in to the care of the abusers. Many mothers will protect their partners rather than their own child.

Many adults who told their moms as children about being abused were either silenced or ignored and were continued to be violated. Today, we understand that the long term affects of this betrayal are too great. We must break the silence of abuse of our loved ones by our partners by taking actions to protect our children.

A PARENT'S PRAYER

because... April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

The Word of God is powerful and effective when we pray. (Isaiah 55:11)

Place your child's name in these Scriptures, knowing with certainty you are praying God's will.

Relationship with God:

Merciful Lord, I ask that _____ will love You with all his/her heart and with all his/her soul and with all his/her mind.

Purity of Heart:

Dear Father, I pray that _____ would flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteous, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Protection from the Evil One:

Almighty God, You are faithful. I pray that You would strengthen and protect _____ from the Evil One.

Eternal Love:

Loving Father, I pray that _____ would know that you love her with an everlasting love. (Jeremiah 31:3)

Relationship with friends:

Dear Lord, I pray that _____ would choose godly friends, who will build them up in You, and be kept from harmful friendships that will lead them astray. (Ecclesiastes 4:10, Proverbs 1:10)

Plans for future:

"For I know the plans I have for _____," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper _____ and not to harm _____, plans to give _____ hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11)
-MOMS in Touch International



We are enclosing a poster along with this newsletter to be displayed in your parish or school for child abuse awareness month.

If you are in need of more than one please call our office to pickup another one or we can mail it to you.

Thank you.

Office Of Victim Assistance And Safe Environment

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We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.archdiosa.org
under child protection...

Call to the Community...

The Office of Victim Assistance and Safe Environment offers immediate pastoral care for those who have been abused by clergy. We also provide education on prevention of child abuse to Archdiocesan staff, clergy, volunteers, parents and children who attend any Catholic school or

parish in our Archdiocese. If you or someone you know has been abused by clergy, please call our office at 210-734-7786 or 1-877-700-1888. All calls are confidential.

It is our promise that you will be treated with dignity, respect and we will listen and believe you.

If you would like information on child abuse or neglect, you may also call our office and we will be glad to send you some information on this issue our community faces.

Support to all Safe Environment Coordinators

The Office of Victim Assistance is here for you to support you in your role as a coordinator. If you are struggling with your training or need assistance, please don't hesitate to call. Steve or Tracie will be glad to

assist you in anyway possible. They are there for you, just as you are there for your parish and for the children. Keep those reports coming! Training should be conducted from October through April.



Call for ideas!

We are in need of your ideas! This newsletter will be published quarterly. If you have anything that you would like to be published in it, please send it in to our office.

We are looking for success stories, events, trainings, or kudos to those who should be recognized in helping make your parish or school a Safe

Environment. Please email your ideas to OVASE@archdiosa.org by **July 15th**. In subject line, please put Newsletter.

Coordinators: We need your help...before April 10th

We will be distributing **blue ribbon pins** for every child in Catholic School and Religious Education Programs (CCD). Please call us, email us, or fax us with the following information:

Coordinator: _____ Contact # _____

Parish: _____ School: _____

Number of blue ribbon pins needed: _____

Will you pick up? _____ or do you want them mailed? _____

Where do you want them mailed to? _____