



Susan B. Anthony Project

Safety • Healing • Growth

Newsletter - Spring 2004

Talking to Children About Touching

Agency Responds to Community Requests

In recent months, Susan B. Anthony Project has received requests from child daycare and early childhood education programs to speak to parents and educators regarding discussion of safe touch with their children. In responding to these requests, the agency has provided some background information about childhood sexual abuse and some tips for talking to children from a curriculum titled, "Talking to Children About Touching." While the agency is able to provide safety tips for adults to be shared with their children, it is vital that perpetrators be held accountable for their abusive behaviors. Children are **never** at fault when they have been abused.

The unfortunate reality is that sexual abuse of children occurs in every class, race, religion, neighborhood, and cultural and ethnic group. When an older person (who is either an adult or adolescent) coerces a child for sexual gratification, it is child sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse can include behaviors ranging from verbal, non-physical abuse to forcible touching and can also range from a single encounter to occasional fondling by an acquaintance, to years of ongoing abuse or rape by a relative or family member.

Children are often warned to beware the "stranger" who may attempt

to coerce them. **A stranger rarely commits child sexual abuse.** Clinical studies (Elliott & Briere, 1994) indicate that about one-third of all offenders are parent figures and that all relatives constitute about half of all offenders. Most often, the abuse begins at a young age with touching of the child's genitals and is not a one-time event. Exploitation may eventually escalate to penetration.

It is difficult for children to tell about sexual abuse and often they do not tell because they may not know how to tell. When it first occurs, a child may be uncertain that the touching is inappropriate. As it continues, the abuser may have frightened the child into keeping a secret with threats of harming the child or a member of the child's family. The abuser will often make the child feel responsible for the abuse and for the consequences to their families if they tell about the abuse.

While we want to protect our children from sexual abuse, it is critically important to recognize that **the perpetrator, not the child, is responsible for the deviant behavior.**

Understanding the dynamics of child sexual abuse, identifying abusive behaviors and holding abusers accountable will aid in our attempts toward prevention of sexual abuse. Next, we can help to establish a safe environment. We can teach our children rules for their personal safety and talk to them about touching safety. Importantly, as adults, we must learn how to most effectively respond to disclosure.

In establishing a safe environment for children, we may check refer-

Continued on Page 3...

Agency News & Notes

The Board of Directors welcomes new members Debra Kenneson who is a CPA with Petrovitz, Patrick, Smith and Company, LLC and Gayle Carr an attorney from Litchfield.

John Donovan has joined the Susan B. Anthony Project Advisory Board. John recently left the Board of Directors where he served for three years.

Susan B. Anthony is participating in the Feinstein Foundation's Challenge Grant. All donations to the agency during the months of March and April will be partially matched by the Foundation. The Feinstein Foundation will help us provide emergency food to those in need. By joining forces with the Foundation, we are a part of the most successful grassroots drive fighting hunger in this country.

We're proud to announce the recently received grants from: TJX Foundation, Inc. for shelter and crisis services; Benas Memorial Fund for advocacy services for residents of the Town of Litchfield and the Marion Isabell Coe Fund for shelter and crisis services.

A portion of the funding for services to victims of sexual assault is provided by the Office of Victim Services, Superior Court Operations Division, State of Connecticut Judicial Branch, Victims of Crime Act Victim Assistance Act Grant Program.

IN THIS ISSUE

COVER STORY:

Talking to Children About Touching

Agency News & Notes *Cover*

SA Awareness Activities *2*

Susan B. Anthony Project

Purchases Building *2*

Sexual Assault Awareness Activities

During April, the month designated as Sexual Assault Awareness Month, a number of activities were planned to honor victims and survivors of Sexual Assault. The Clothesline Project, a display of t-shirts made by survivors and based upon the national project, was hung outside of the agency for the entire month. A portion of the display was also hung at the Torrington UCONN branch along with a presentation of powerful artwork and poetry by one young survivor. Presentations at local schools and informational tables were set up in libraries.

Local area churches participated in a bell ringing at Noon on April 1st and on April 8th, a presentation at Northwestern Connecticut Community College from Noon - 1:00 p.m. entitled, "Sexual Assault, Myths and Realities" was presented by the agency's Community Educator, Tanya Hague.

The 5th annual Creative Writing and Poetry Workshop to aid in healing was again planned for April 6, 13, 20, 27, and May 4th. Participants could attend one or more sessions. The agency would like to thank facilitator and poet, Sandra Bishop Ebner for her support of this project for the past five years!

The White Ribbon Project, to increase awareness and set the stage for men to make a commitment to end violence against women will take place again this year. As we did last year, we will be asking the men in our community to make a public pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women.

Agency Programs & Services

H.E.A.R.T. GROUP: (Help End Abusive Relationship Tendencies) An on-going, peer support group for women who have experienced any form of family violence meets Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

TRAUMA SURVIVORS GROUP: An on-going group for women survivors of trauma with a focus on coping skills for those dealing with past trauma meets Thursday evenings from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

SELF-ESTEEM GROUP: A list is forming for an upcoming self-esteem group. Call and ask to be added to the list if you are interested in attending.

For more information about exact dates, times and to pre-register, call 489-3798 and reference the title of the program of interest.

Susan B. Anthony Project Purchases Historic, Downtown Building

The Susan B. Anthony Project recently purchased the historic Coe Brass Building (c.1881) at 179 Water Street, in downtown Torrington. This building will serve as the future Counseling and Advocacy Center. This bold, first step in the agency's long range plan will improve the services the agency provides to women and children who are victims of domestic and sexual violence in Litchfield County.

Other steps in the plan will include the renovation of this historic property and the enhancement of existing services and edu-

cational programs. Right now, the agency is planning for the revitalization of the new building and is developing leadership that will help make these plans a reality.

When completed, the Center will allow the agency to better accommodate the hundreds of families who need the services of Susan B. Anthony Project. You are invited to get involved in this bold initiative. For more information call 860-489-3798 or visit rebuildinglives@sbaproject.org.



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ences of adults who are involved in the care of our children. Additionally, we can observe the behaviors of adults around our children. Does it seem as though the adults are more focused on child relationships than adult ones or singling out certain children for attention?

We teach our children safety rules each day. We can introduce family touching rules along with other rules we teach. When we talk to children about touching we can employ the "clean and healthy rule." We could say, "No one should touch your private parts unless it is to keep you clean and healthy. If someone does, you could say, 'No,' run away and tell an

adult." Talk about these rules often and practice together.

Responding to disclosure is critical. It can be very traumatizing to learn that a child in our lives has been sexually assaulted. It is important to remain calm in an effort to reassure the child that telling is appropriate; that there is no blame assigned to the child, and that as adults we will be there for the child.

Seeking help is a way of responding to children. We can utilize the services of law enforcement, child protective services, supportive friends and relatives and counselors. Susan B. Anthony Project offers a 24 hour crisis line at 482-7133, has crisis coun-

selors offering peer response for both children and adults and is a member of the C.A.I.T. (Child Abuse Investigative Team), a multi-disciplinary team responding to child sexual abuse in northwest Connecticut and offers a non-offending Parents Support Group. In addition, the agency offers comprehensive prevention education to children in schools. Work with your child's school to request these services. All of the services of the agency are free and confidential.

Jeanne Fusco
Associate Director

Susan B. Anthony Project 2002-2003 Services

Last year, Susan B. Anthony Project staff

- * Responded to 1,034 crisis calls
- * Sheltered 54 women and 68 children
- * Provided counseling, advocacy and support groups for 1780 women, men and children
- * Offered case management and job readiness to 1057 individuals
- * Provided educational programs for 7,231 students and individuals



**24-HOUR
CRISIS LINE:
860-482-7133**

Statewide Toll Free Hotlines:

**Domestic Violence:
1-888-774-2900**

**Sexual Assault:
1-888-999-5545**

**En Espanol:
1-888-568-8332**

Polly's Dream Thrift Shop

To benefit Susan B. Anthony Project, Inc.
Hours: Tuesday-Saturday,
10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Thursday evenings until 6 p.m.

Donations accepted during business hours only.
Furniture donations: please call for an appointment.
Volunteers are always needed.
Please call if you are interested.

**114 Water Street Torrington, CT 06790
860-489-2808**

Welcome Spring!

**15% OFF
PURCHASES**

Present this coupon at
Polly's Dream
to receive 15% off
your total purchase.

Note: one coupon discount offer per customer



SINCE 1983

Susan B. Anthony Project

SAFETY • HEALING • GROWTH

works to promote the autonomy
of women
and the safety of
all victims of domestic
abuse/sexual assault
in northwest Connecticut
as well as to promote
community action
toward ending
domestic violence
and sexual abuse.

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