

LifeLines

Volume 2, Issue 1

January 1, 2009



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*Improving the Quality of Life for
Children in Need*

WWW.CHSMO.ORG

Beyond Consequences Live Returning to Saint Louis

In April 2008, *Beyond Consequences Live* was held at the Brentwood Community Center and attended by over 150 parents, grandparents, clinicians, educators, and others involved in the care of children. It was a great day and many parents let us know how helpful it was to them.

On March 7, 2009, *Beyond Consequences Live* will return to St. Louis, again sponsored by Children's Home Society and its new partner Churchill Center and School for Learning Disabilities. The program will be held at Churchill Center and School, located at Highway 270 and Clayton Road. We believe this will be an excellent opportunity for those who attended last year to gain new information as well as for anyone who did not attend but is looking for guidance and support in caring for a child affected by past abuse and neglect.

Beyond Consequences Live, conducted by Heather Talbert Forbes, LCSW, co-author of *Beyond Consequences, Logic and Control*, is a love-based, dynamic approach with its foundation in attachment theory, neuroscience, and neurobiology. It provides attendees with tools, role play, laughter, and real-life examples for creating a healing environment for children with severe behaviors stemming from abuse, neglect, trauma, loss, or other insults to a child's development. Admission to the training is free with purchase of *Beyond Consequences, Logic, and Control* Volume 1 or Volume 2.

For more information, please contact Rachel Neukirch at 314-968-2350-ext 223 or racheln@chsmo.org. You may also learn more about the Beyond Consequences Institute or register at www.beyondconsequences.com.

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A Message from the Crew

Another year has passed! It is amazing how quickly time flies—there never seems to be enough time in the day to get to all the things we intend. From all of us at CHS, we hope that your year was full of joy and peace.

We know for some of you though, life with your children continues to be a daily struggle. Sometimes it is hard to see any change in their attitudes, their behaviors, or their ability to relate to you or the rest of the family. Sometimes the wear and tear they inflict on the family can overwhelm any accomplishments they have had. We hope that you know that we are available to help in whatever capacity works best for you—support groups, classes, or family therapy. It is important to reach out for support and help — for yourself and for your children.

We are in the midst of planning new services as well as working to improve our existing ones. You will notice the class schedule inside lists several new offerings—we hope you will find time to come and join in the discussions as we all work together to find the best ways to support each other. We are adding an additional youth group specifically for children who were adopted from the foster care system. If you would like more information or would like to see about registering your child, please contact us at (314) 968-2350, ext. 223.

Finally, thank you for your words of encouragement to us over the last year and your willingness to trust us with the needs of your children and your families. We are truly inspired by your courage and strength!

Coming Soon: Training for Respite Providers

Children who have extreme emotional and behavioral issues can exhaust the coping abilities of even the most skilled parents. Sometimes the best solution for the family is to have a brief but safe time apart. In order to accomplish this, the family must have access to other adults equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of these children.

Children's Home has partnered with the Daughters of Charity Foundation to develop an educational opportunity for individuals interested in providing respite for children who have been adopted. Participants can be interested in helping a specific child (grandparents, neighbors, friends) or in helping families that may not have enough personal supports. This training will provide a basic education in the same areas provided to parents, namely the effects of abuse and neglect on child development and providing structure and discipline in loving and consistent ways. Look for details in future newsletters.

A New Year, A New Minute...

The New Year is often awaited with much anticipation for things to come. There is hope for health, happiness, prosperity, and peace. Hope helps keep us going.

Hope is a very important and complex emotion that involves having goals, longing to be connected, and the need for survival. Hope is a theme throughout history. For example, hope is found in the Greek mythology of Pandora's box, in the offerings of religions throughout the world, in the contemplative writings of philosophers such as Marcel, and in Erikson's developmental theory of life stages. Erikson describes hope as being the first virtue of infancy. In this stage, an infant's belief that his or her caregivers are reliable is essential in the development of trust that is at the core of this virtue. Scioli, a contemporary psychologist, takes the next step to describe a theory of hope by suggesting that love and attachments are crucial for the development of hope. The idea here is that our bonds with others serve as both a basis for general hopefulness and the footing for specific hopes and dreams.

Children who have suffered abuse, neglect, or the lack of permanence as a result of many temporary living arrangements, need our unconditional love, our consistent caregiving, our reliability, and our empathy to foster hope in their lives. Whether our roles are as parents, foster parents, grandparents, guardians, teachers, daycare providers, doctors, therapists, family-friends, or neighbors, we need to embrace the fact that children need adults to be consistent in their lives and to understand their developmental needs. We have the ability to add layer upon layer of empathic experience that slowly builds trust and hope.

In this light, we don't need to put off until the New Year what we can do today to build hope. We can have hope in each minute we spend with children that our relationships will nurture trust. As Anne Frank wrote, "No one need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."

We can help children have hope, starting today.

Children are not the people of tomorrow, but are people of today. They have a right to be taken seriously, and to be treated with tenderness and respect. They should be allowed to grow into whomever they were meant to be—the unknown person inside each of them is our hope for the future.

Janusz Korczak

Over the last year Children's Home Society has offered a support group for adopted youth, as well as a concurrent parent support group. We have heard from many of you these groups have been helpful in giving your children a chance to be around others who have similar stories. We encourage any families that feel that their children would benefit from adoption-sensitive activities to call us for more information.

As we continue to grow, we have come to believe that a stronger sense of continuity and structure would be beneficial to the children, parents and staff of CHS. With this in mind, we are implementing the following guidelines:

1. The current group that meets on the first and third Tuesday of each month will be for children ages **10 to 15 years old**. Children outside of this range who have been attending may continue to do so until groups specific for their ages are established. We will be establishing a group for children ages 6 to 12 years in the near future. We are open to beginning a support group for young adults 16 to 21 who are adopted if there is an interest—please let us know if you or your child would like to participate.
2. New children will be welcomed to join the group at specific sessions only. This will allow the staff to plan activities that build on previous sessions and will allow a greater sense of continuity for the children in the group. **Families who wish to enroll their children for the first time are encouraged to call Rachel or Sarah at (314)968-2350 to discuss the next available session.**
3. In order to appropriately plan the discussion and activities for the group, families are asked to **inform us of a child's attendance by the Monday before a session**. You may call (314) 968-2350, ext. 235 or email to sarahb@chsmo.org.
4. This group is intended to provide a positive social support activity for children who may struggle in typical peer groups as well as expose adopted children to others who have similar backgrounds. It is not intended as a substitute for therapy—either individual or family. We encourage anyone struggling with their child's emotional or behavioral issues to participate in therapy services with our agency or another provider.

It is our desire to provide any help we can for children and families affected by adoption. We do not want to put anything into effect that make it difficult to access our services—rather we are aiming to provide the best we can in ways that are safe and constructive for everyone involved. As always, we welcome your questions, comments and suggestions.

We believe:

- all children are able to grow to their fullest potential as members of loving and supportive families.
- all children deserve a family that is able to meet their emotional, developmental and physical needs.
- children who have been abused, neglected or otherwise traumatized will bring with them to their new adoptive families their feelings of hurt and anger, as well as the negative behaviors they use to express those feelings.
- families formed through the adoption process are equal to families created by birth in their love for and commitment to their children.
- families formed through the adoption process face challenges unique to adoptive families.
- the challenges and issues faced by adoptive families require specialized skills on the part of the adoptive parents as well as the professionals serving the family.
- it is essential that the systems and professionals involved in the process of forming families through adoption be available at all stages of the family's life – prior to, during and after the adoption is completed.