



**CHILDREN'S
HOME SOCIETY**
OF MISSOURI

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*Improving the Quality of Life for
Children in Need*

WWW.CHSMO.ORG

In Honor of National Adoption Month

Please join with several local social service agencies for a

Profile Party

to learn more about *specific* children in need of adoptive families

November 8, 2008 1pm thru 4pm

Location:
Children's Home Society of Missouri
9445 Litzsinger
Saint Louis, MO 63144

Contact Jennifer Lester at (314) 426-8358
with any questions



*To the World You May be One Person, but to One Person,
You May be the World*



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LifeLines

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A Message from the Crew

For any of you who have visited Children's Home lately, you know this is a very busy place at times. We had a great summer—we offered several discussion group series for parents that offered children's groups at the same time. The comments we heard from the attendees, especially the children, remind us of how important the experience of being together can be. We hope you were able to attend at least one group. Whether you have come to CHS recently or have never visited us, please look at the calendar included in this newsletter for upcoming classes. They offer a great opportunity to learn new information as well as share with other parents.

Also, remember we offer a support group for parents of children with attachment and other adoption related issues on Tuesday evenings. If you would like to come, please call Rachel or Sarah for specifics.



*We hope you and your family
had a peaceful and enjoyable
summer.*

**We are accepting new
clients in our counseling
program if you feel your
family would benefit.**

Communicating with Young Children

It is a real challenge to communicate effectively with young children. Learning a few new skills can make things go much more smoothly at home. Children will also benefit in many ways from learning these skills as you model them. Here are some guidelines for making communication with your young child more effective and more fun. Remember, all of these might not be appropriate for all children and all families.

- Don't try to trick children
- Avoid confusing contradictions or mixed messages
- Don't give too many instructions at once
- Make eye contact
- Notice your body language
- Make every effort to keep promises
- Use a gentle touch
- Speak with firmness, not anger, pleading, or whining

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www.chsmo.org

School Matters

School is an important place for all kinds of learning. It provides an academic setting with education professionals to help children grow their minds for thinking and learning and to develop the cognitive tools they need for life. It is also a complex system of educators, administrators, parents, children, and anyone else who plays a role in this social, relational environment. And, everyday, the variables in this environment change. For example, a teacher is out, a classmate is out, the weather changes, a classmate comes to school sick, there's a school play tonight, the principal is out of the building at a meeting, a child, parent, and/or teacher experiences violence at home, today is a "hat" day, there is a fire drill with a loud bell, there's an assembly in the gym, the carpool was early, a parent or spouse is leaving on an out-of-town trip, and the list goes on. These daily experiences in our lives impact children and adults — how we handle or prepare ourselves for these transitions, how we become attuned to ourselves and our children, and how we work together to create predictability, consistency, and strong relationships are essential to the learning process.

The individual needs of every child (and adult) in a school differ. Many children and adults are extremely flexible and can easily adapt to changing situations with little or no fear or anxiety. However, for some individuals (especially those with histories of trauma, abuse and neglect) changes in the daily routine can arouse fears which inhibit the brain for learning. Below are some simple community-building strategies for helping calm everyone's brain. You may wish to talk about these ideas with your child's teacher when the opportunity arises.

- Keep kids and adults informed. For instance, when a teacher knows that he or she is going to be out, students can benefit from being advised the day before. It's a way to help them understand that they are part of a group, that they are important to the teacher, and that when someone is out, including the teacher, that he or she is missed. When the teacher comes back, it's helpful to reconnect with the class, to let them know that they are important, and ask if there is anything to discuss before getting on with plans for the day.
- Create buddies. Another strategy, particularly for children who have difficulty with transitions or are fearful or anxious in their environment, is to pair children with a buddy or teacher, depending on the specific need, for activities such as assemblies, field days, field trips, and other activities out of the daily routine. This helps children feel grounded and less disoriented in large groups of people moving about the building, and it helps children learn how to help each other. This can be planned several days ahead and reviewed with children.
- Plan transitions. Transition times at the beginning and at the end of the class help everyone prepare to learn and then prepare for the next class or scheduled activity. Each person has his or her own need to settle in for learning and instruction and bringing the class to a close.

Spending a few minutes on both the beginning and ending of class can help more learning take place in the middle!

- Know yourself. As adults, being attuned to our own stressors, our emotions, and to things that calm us is essential in regulating ourselves. Much of our ability (or inability) to regulate ourselves is unconscious and finds its origins in our early caregiver relationships and experiences. The ability to regulate ourselves is an ongoing process, and children depend on adults to help them contain and manage their emotions and affect when overwhelmed.

As adults, being aware of our emotions and the "hot buttons" we bring to our relationships, can help us respond rather than react, a skill we hope to help children develop through modeling, empathy, and being attuned. Behavior is a form of communication, and through behaviors like crying, yelling, or hitting, children are attempting to communicate. How we listen and respond to the feelings behind the behaviors is what is important.

The following is a list of more resources for educators, parents, and children.

- www.scholastic.com (look for articles by Bruce Perry, M.D.)
- Forbes, H., & Post, B. 2006. Beyond consequences, logic and control: a love-based approach to helping children with severe behaviors. Beyond Consequences Institute: Orlando, FL. (e-newsletter, trainings, audio conferences)
- Koplow, L. 2002. Creating schools that heal. Teachers College Press: New York, NY.
- Penn, A. 1993. The kissing hand. CWLA Press: Washington, D.C.

Parenting support groups are a great way to help yourself cope with the stresses of parenting. Meetings are the first and third Tuesday of every month.

Call 968-2350, ext. 235 for more details.

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.