



BEHIND THE SCENES

PROJECT AGAINST VIOLENT ENCOUNTERS

Bennington County Domestic And Sexual Violence Services

June 2008 — Nancy Feinberg, Editor

FAIRY TALES

Joan M. Sakalas, Ph.D., Executive Director

When my daughters were children, I remember that they loved the Hans Christian Anderson stories. Many of us remember “The Princess and the Pea,” or “The Snow Queen” or “The Ugly Duckling.” Often the stories had a sad edge to them and things didn’t always work out the way we might expect but that was a part of their beauty. As a child I remember a favorite book of mine, “Beautiful Joe,” told a very tragic story of a dog. I read it over and it helped me understand that “beauty” transcended success and happiness.

Over the years I’ve developed a “Happiness Meter.” I think it grows out of these experiences with stories that pay attention to the sadness and tragedy that is a real part of life. In fact, my “meter” functions as a social diagnostic tool. For instance, I truly grew to dislike Disney movies when I was young because animals were **too cute** – I knew that these frolicking little chipmunks were nothing like the real ones I saw in the park. I knew from my own experience that everything does not end sweetly and fairly. But I also knew that I preferred to look directly at reality rather than pretend that it was something different.

As a diagnostic tool then my “Happiness Meter” works this way. The greater the gap between the real situation (warts and all) and the claimed situation, the greater the illness. Often this manifests itself in an insistence on “nice, nice” behavior or avoidance of awkward and uncomfortable subjects rather than truth telling.

By truth telling I do not mean saying cruel things to

people just to hurt their feelings. I’m referring to something more complex. Let me give an example. We often see women who “check in” with their husband or boyfriend many times during the day. He may even show up at work “to see how she’s doing.” This often is interpreted as “caring” or called “jealousy” with some sense of pride. In fact, this kind of “checking” infantilizes the woman and amounts to a threat. “If I can’t find you, what does that mean you are doing?”

So what may seem like attentiveness and caring is actually threatening behavior.

There is a disconnect between interpretation and reality.

What would happen if the woman said, “You know your calls make me feel like you don’t trust me.” Or if she

asked, “Why do you need to call me so much?”

A question I was taught by a wise professor years ago is useful in this situation. **WHOM DOES THIS SERVE?** I’m convinced that we need to ask that question more often. If someone claims that they are doing something to protect you but their actions don’t feel protective, then we need to ask - Whom does this serve?

We don’t do anyone a favor when we reduce complex issues to simple stories with “compulsory happy endings.” Any of us who have lived more than 5 years know that life is not always happy. So let’s look critically at the fairy tales we accept. Let’s ask what lesson they offer. If that lesson distorts reality, we need to look at why it’s being promoted.

I guess that what I am suggesting is that we need to develop a healthy skepticism and a habit of critical thought. Think of what we could accomplish if we accepted the challenges that face us. At that point we actually might be able to think of solutions. □

So what may seem like attentiveness and caring is actually threatening behavior. There is a disconnect between interpretation and reality.

24-hour Hotline: (802) 442-2111

P.O. Box 227, Bennington, VT 05201
Office: (802) 442-2370 — FAX: (802) 442-6162
Email: pave@pavebennington.com



“CIRCLE OF PARENTS”

Christine Williams

Family Time Program Director

Family Time has some exciting news to share. First, we want to

acknowledge and thank The Reverend Jerrod Huguenot and the First Baptist Church of Bennington for offering to host a reunion for all former participants (parents and children) of our Nurturing Parenting classes. It will be a night of food, fun and games. In addition, we will check in with parents and do a follow-up survey to determine how the classes benefited their family since time has passed. We'll have resources available to hand out and make appropriate referrals as needed. Also at this time, we will inform parents of a new opportunity that *Family Time* will be offering, a “Circle of Parents” group. I am excited to announce that *Family Time* is collaborating once again with Prevent Child Abuse Vermont in order to provide this group.

Frequently parents and children upon completion of the 10 week Nurturing Parenting sessions express their dismay that the classes that they find so valuable are ending. Some parents request to take the class again. Children as well ask if we have anything similar in which they can participate. It may surprise you that even parents that have been referred, court ordered, mandated, or highly recommended to attend the classes request additional classes or support.

Until now we have been unable to offer anything more

or in addition to the parenting classes, and I am left with this sense of not being able to adequately support parents who finally feel comfortable enough to share, express and ask questions regarding parenting issues within this group. We explain within the class that parents need to take time to take care of themselves as well as their children. I am unsure if they would feel comfortable to seek support outside of this group.

I believe that the “Circle of Parents” group will be a wonderful opportunity for families to finally get the continued support and education that they want and need. Let's acknowledge that we cannot *teach* in 10 weeks “How to Parent” and expect to *graduate* a class of “Parenting Experts.” We know that children and parents change and grow, and new challenges arise with every new day. This “Circle of Parents” group will offer a forum to acquire additional skills and support as needed in their parenting venture.

We are pleased and proud to be a part of this journey. “Circle of Parents” will be a wonderful addition to services that *Family Time* provides for our community. We know full well through our own individual parenting experiences and our association with Supervised Visitation the challenges, concerns and lack of skills many parents have. It is hoped that continued education, support, and attention to the needs of parents and children will diminish or prevent violence and abuse within our homes and community. □

A POSITIVE PROGRAM

Tara Parks. *Family Time* Assistant

After a few months of settling in and learning the ropes at *Family Time* I was asked to coordinate the Come Draw With Me Program (CDWM). CDWM is a weekly program conducted as an after school or extra curricular activity in local elementary schools. CDWM is a ten week program designed to reach young people, ages four to eight, who have difficulty expressing their emotions and relating appropriately to others. Group participants are referred through their school teacher and / or their school counselors and the group size is limited to 8 children in order to allow for individual attention.

The main goal of Come Draw with Me is to provide a forum where children can express their thoughts and feelings through storytelling and creative art projects. Co-facilitators and I discuss important, although sometimes difficult, topics

with the children, including separation, personal boundaries, friendship, families, and feelings, just to name a few. Each child involved with CDWM has a unique personality. Consequently, even though we try to plan our sessions ahead, often times we need to address within the group individual issues that arise. With better communication and coping skills these children are more apt to be successful and experience greater self-esteem.

I often use the phrase, “It only takes one person to make a difference in a child's life.” However, I still questioned its validity in regards to these children. I wondered how I could possibly connect with a child, let alone a group, within such a short amount of time. I would see them in the CDWM group only once a week for an hour. In the beginning, this made me feel somewhat insignificant. Nonetheless, in the last couple of months, as the CDWM session came to an end, I realized

(Continued on page 3)

that I never should have doubted the influence that positive adult attention has on a child. Soon enough, it became apparent that the children looked forward to us coming. They would consistently ask if we could stay longer and if their friends could come too.

Of course, I still wondered how the program would be reflected not only in the children's eyes, but in their parents' and teachers' eyes as well. Fortunately during one of the last sessions of CDWM I was able to see exactly how much of an impression we had made. The response to our evaluations from students, teachers and parents was positive.

Most of the children reported that they liked the program because of the stories we read and the projects we did. However, they did express that they would have liked more time for the group to spend together doing other things. Many of the parents stated that their children really enjoyed

the program and that they would like to see them participate again. All of the teachers felt that CDWM was a valuable asset to their classroom and wished that more children could have been involved. Even though it was gratifying to hear the positive comments, two quotes stood out above the rest to make me realize just why I want to continue to invest in this program:

I think this has helped him become more social, despite all that he has been through. Gerard loves this program.

~Grandparent

Being with others helped her see and understand that other children have the same feelings about things, and it's not just her. I think it has also helped her understand some things she is thinking about and doesn't always talk about, good or bad.

~Father □

WHEN DO WE CROSS THE LINE?

Hilary Batchelor, Education Department

Or should it be, when we do cross their line? Everyone has a different perception of what constitutes flirting or harassment. So how do we know if the enticing comments we make are considered flirting or harassment by the person we are interacting with? No matter what the intention of the comment, how do we know if others welcome our behavior or find it offensive? Whose responsibility is it to check the intention? Who determines whether an act is flirting or harassing?

Flirting is about equality. One defining aspect about flirting is it should be **welcomed and comfortable** for both giver and receiver. It should feel good, be consensual, and whatever is said should be accepted and understood by both parties.

Harassment is more about power. Harassment is **not welcome and is uncomfortable**. It does not feel good, is embarrassing, degrading and can even be illegal.

How did we flirt when we were young? Did you pull ponytails, make up cute names, write notes, and did you make some physical contact? Has behavior changed in the last 40 years (giving away my age)? When I walk the halls in the schools, behaviors seem so much more personal. I have heard "hey bitch" said in a so-called affectionate way to friends. I have seen young people grab breasts and butts and accept the behavior, at least in the moment. When I ask young people "how it feels," their answer is, "That's just what we do." When I say, "how does it FEEL?" they say, "it

depends who it is doing it."

When I ask if they ever cross the line from flirting to cruel, they say, "sure" or "maybe." When I ask them how they think it made the other person feel they say, "Probably pretty bad." As a follow-up often I ask them to imagine how the harassed person might feel when they go home after school. Is it enough to make them stop their behavior? Many students express empathy towards the person that was harassed but they do not stop the behavior especially when they are in a large group of their peers.

Behaviors are getting more precarious. In the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of 8th – 12th graders in Bennington County, 11% of students said they were touched inappropriately. Did they stand up to their harasser or passively call it flirting? Are young people more compliant or are they pressured and more apprehensive and reluctant to say something about the unacceptable actions?

Try to observe your own reactions to uncomfortable situations. Are you equipped to say or do something? When people are self-confident and assertive there seem to be clear lines between flirting and harassment. However, lines can be obscured when we are not self-confident. How do we teach our children or students about acceptable behaviors? Parents and schools need to set a tone and young people need to learn how to speak up when something offends them.

Families and schools need to set standards that they enforce. We must educate and model for our children how to be sensitive to others' feelings. Then when someone behaves in an offensive manner, we have to say STOP, THAT'S WRONG. □

IN THE EYES OF A VICTIM

Debby Stanlewicz, Transitional Housing Advocate

Why do people think it's easy to leave? They pretend to know my life. They assume that if they were treated in such a manner there is no way they would stay with him. Their children would not have to hear the insults that are made about themselves and their mother.

Everyday when I wake I wonder how the day will begin. If he is still sleeping I will try not to wake him. It's hard not to since I sleep between him and the wall. I have to carefully climb over him. Today I am lucky; he does not grab me as I carefully move my leg over his body. I quickly use the bathroom before he wakes and needs it.

I start the coffee and hope I am not making it too strong today. I quietly wake the children. They wake up quickly and ask, "Is Dad awake yet?" They have learned how their day will start when he is awake first.

The older quickly showers so the cold water is not turned on while he is in there. His father thinks it's funny to get him out so he can get in. The younger quickly changes into his clothes and heads in to brush his teeth. They are dressed and ready to go in twenty minutes. I bring the older one to the bus with the little one in tow because they still don't want to wake him. They look forward to school so they are out of the house and will stay there as long as they are able to. I kiss the older one good-bye. I will see him after work.

Meanwhile, my smaller child and I head back to the house slowly, knowing that by now he is awake. When we come in we hear the shower going. My child sits with coat, shoes and his backpack on waiting by the door for the school bus even though it does not arrive for another 45 minutes. His father gets out and starts hollering for his clothes and where is his coffee. He complains there are no clean towels even though I just put some in there. He knows I am "no good—what the hell is wrong with me?" I apologize and get him his coffee and clothes just so he will stop yelling. He throws the coffee cup with the coffee in it and states, "It sucks as usual, but what should I expect from a stupid, fat, slut anyway?" I ignore him and bring our child out to wait for the bus to get him away from his dad. "Where do you think you are going without saying good-bye to me," we hear from the doorway. He waits for his hug good-bye from his child.

This is a good day. There was no screaming or holes punched in the doors and walls today.

Once the children are off to school, I have to bring him to town with me. He complains the whole way. I then head off to work with my radio loud to get my mind in a different direction—like the kids I enjoy going to work. It gets me out of the house and to a place where I feel appreciated. He calls a couple of times during the day to make sure I am at work and is angry if he cannot talk to me. It doesn't matter if I am in a meeting or not. I try to cover up the phone calls from my co-workers.

At the end of the day, I pick up the children and we all head home. The older asks if I have spoken with Dad over the day. What mood is he in? Is he already home or do we have to get him? We pull in the driveway, none of us knowing what we are going to walk into. Was his day good? We walk in and he's there yelling for something to

eat. The older does not eat again. He goes directly to his room to avoid any confrontation and gets on the phone or puts his earphones on and listens to

his music. He will come back out once his father falls asleep.

The smaller child heads right outside to play. Meanwhile, I am left with hearing about how everything I do is wrong and he is still waiting for his supper and it better be good. It goes on from there.... This is a good day. There was no screaming or holes punched in the doors and walls today. He didn't tear up the yard with spinning tires. He didn't put the older into tears with mean remarks.

Why don't I leave? I can't afford to stay here without his income. I know there is help out there but it's not long-term help. He has threatened to destroy everything including me. It's actually safer to deal with what I know and have a roof over our heads and not have bill collectors call. He can be sweet and does love his children in his way. These are not excuses although they probably sound like it to those of you who have not had to live it. Maybe one day he will be gone...but part of me doesn't want him to go. I do love him and maybe there will be a balance of finances where I can feel secure enough to leave.

Each victim has a personal story but this one was willing to share hers. She is not at the stage where she feels safe to leave, and since he has not hit her or the children she also feels no one will believe her—a case that happens one too many times. By telling her story, maybe it will help readers understand some of the complexities of family violence. □

COLLABORATION WORKS

Linda Campbell, Assistant Director

Victims of domestic violence often have many needs; One agency can seldom meet all of those needs. Collaboration is a necessary tool that agencies use to meet the needs of their clients. Knowledge of what services/ programs other organizations offer can make all the difference in the lives of those in need. The case below clearly demonstrates the importance of collaboration and the impact it can have on peoples' lives.

A few months ago, a student speaking in broken English disclosed to his teacher that things were not good at his house and that he and his mom needed a new place to live. The student also said that his mom spoke French and could not speak or understand a lot of English. The teacher immediately contacted the guidance counselor in the school.

After speaking with the child, they learned that his mother had no idea that he had disclosed what was going on at home. The outreach worker for the school was contacted and they decided to contact the mom and set up a meeting to discuss how her son was doing in school and then ask about what was happening in the home.

The outreach worker contacted PAVE and asked if I could be at the meeting. They also enlisted an interpreter to help mom understand what was being said. When we sat down together it was clear that she understood English better than we had anticipated, but she was thankful to have an interpreter and became comfortable very quickly. The meeting began with the teacher talking about the

progress her son had made, the goals they had identified for the weeks ahead, and how she could help her son accomplish those goals.

Then she was asked how things were at home. The mother looked at her son and knew that he had spoken to someone at the table about what was going on. She slowly began to talk about the situation and said that they needed to move. After asking some pertinent questions about her family, finances, and safety, it was clear that she qualified for PAVE's Transitional Housing program. She had already looked at an apartment, so I agreed to meet with her and the landlord the next day to make sure she understood the lease and find out when she could move in. She then came back to PAVE to meet with our Transitional Housing Advocate to create a budget to make sure she could afford the apartment.

We then explored other needs the family had. They lacked furniture, and coincidentally a family had contacted us just days earlier wanting to donate furniture, but couldn't deliver it to us. I contacted the Department of Corrections' work crew supervisor and arranged for him and his crew to pick up the furniture. I then spoke to the landlord who agreed to let the family move the furniture into the apartment early to accommodate the Department of Corrections' schedule. Within a week the family was in their new home.

Cases rarely come together this quickly even with the best of collaborative efforts. That being said, without it agencies are doing a disservice to the people they are trying to help. Collaboration works! ☐

I want to help make this a safer community.

I have enclosed a tax-deductible check payable to PAVE. Please charge a donation to my credit card:

VISA Mastercard Exp. Date _____

Card # _____ \$25 \$50 \$100 \$500 Other

Name _____ Day Phone _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Contact PAVE to discuss volunteer opportunities. Thank you. Mail to: PAVE, P.O. Box 227, Bennington VT 05201

We are grateful to the volunteers of R.S.V.P. who help assemble this newsletter.

“I CARE ABOUT HIM”

Sandy Kelly, *PAVE Advocate, Department of Corrections*

Low self-esteem hits many of us from time to time. If we were abused or traumatized when we were children, low self-esteem may be a part of our everyday self. People who have hurt us or hurt those we love around us create this way of being. Many of us have been told that we are worthless, that we are a bad person, ugly, fat or that we could never do anything right. The bar is set so low and still we wonder, “Can I even get to that?” We hear repeatedly “how stupid can you be” and that whatever we get we have created it and deserve it.

These messages might have carried into our adult lives. In our heart and soul we know they are and were wrong. But the choices we make at times reflect what was said to us as a child: “You’ll never do anything right.”

In our society women are often blamed and made to feel guilty for the bad things that have happened to them. Again this lowers our self-esteem and perpetuates the cycle of abuse.

Abuse is so complex. There are many contributing factors and lasting consequences. Low self-esteem, fear, financial concerns and constraints, housing issues, custody of children, status in the community, denial—all play a role. Below are some quotes from women who have lived or still live in very tough situations:

- I care about him. He betrayed me. I thought he was my soul mate. I am lonely for him.
- My family doesn't understand how hard it is. If I leave, where will I live?
- I feel so guilty.
- What am I to do with four kids? Jail is an easy place for him.
- Why bother reporting it to the police; he'll get away with it again anyway.
- I have to keep my phone on speaker all the time so he can

listen to my calls.

- When he goes into these rages I have to remain quiet or leave.
- It was good. Then it was all bad.
- He is a good father, but it is hard on the kids. He is always going back to jail.
- He asks me if we could just talk, and being my dumb self I let him in.
- For my birthday, he bought me a bouquet of roses and then he threw them to the floor and stomped on them.
- My girls mean everything to me. I'll do whatever it takes.
- He knows he can control me even if he doesn't hit me. He yells and threatens to take my son. I don't feel safe.
- I am afraid. If he gets real angry he'll take my son.
- He took a golf stick and hit me in the back. He said I was cheating on him. I went to the doctor and I was afraid to tell the truth. If I did, what would happen then? I do love him.
- If I leave she just tears the house up.
- This is my third phone. He keeps breaking them—thinks I am talking to other guys.
- The one reason I haven't been able to leave is because he is so violent. I am afraid of him.
- I have no phone. The pieces are on the front lawn.
- I never knew when I got home what I would find broken. I am afraid to go into my house for fear he will get out a gun. Things have gone too far. The police just need to talk to him.
- Even from jail he is after me. He says that because of me he is in jail and if I love him I would change what I said at court. I need it all to go back to normal.

The complexities of domestic violence are real. Any person that has begun this long, hard process of changing their life should be encouraged and congratulated for however little or big the steps are that they've taken. □

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Mission Statement

To end domestic and sexual violence and to provide supportive and educational services to individuals, families and the community.

“SO, WHAT DO YOU DO?”

Nancy Feinberg, Volunteer Coordinator

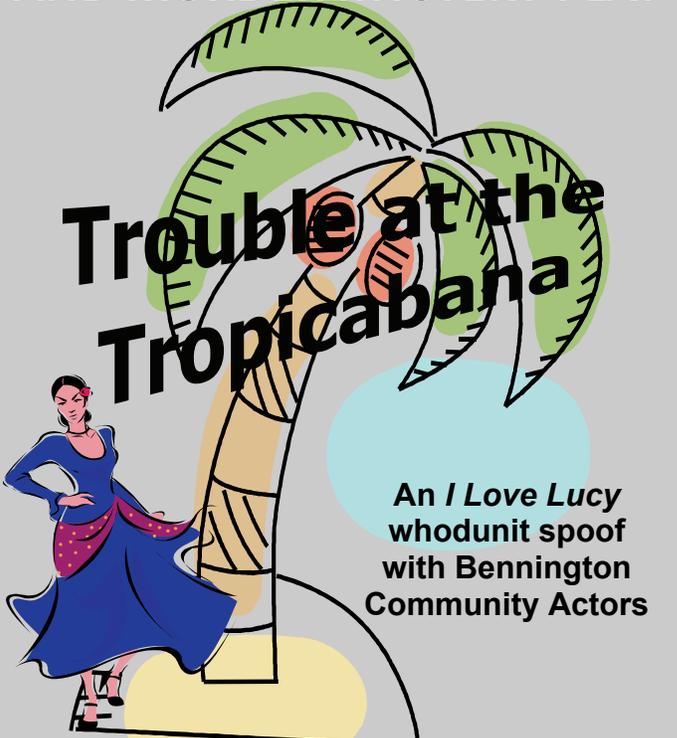
If someone were to have asked me, “So, what do you do,” I might have answered, “I’m the Volunteer Coordinator at PAVE.” That is until I browsed the website, *Energize, Inc.* This website challenges us to rise above the “ho-hum,” stock answers we provide when we define ourselves by our title and to describe our roles in ways that “startle, surprise, and educate those that do not really understand.” The next time I am asked, “So what do you do,” I might answer:

- ✓ I provide people with the opportunity to:
 - Showcase their talents.
 - Work for no money and discover that volunteerism is its own reward.
 - Give back and reinvest in their community.
 - Learn about social issues and apply what they have learned.
 - Broaden their knowledge about community resources.
 - Feel good about themselves.
- ✓ I harness people power.
- ✓ I look for diversity as a way to enhance understanding and acceptance among people.
- ✓ I match community resources with organizational needs.
- ✓ I bring people together to:
 - Trust build.
 - Deconstruct barriers.
 - Help empower life-changing decisions.
 - Champion a cause they care about deeply.
 - Advocate for victims of crime and social injustice.
 - Transform their community, one person at a time.
 - Inspire others with their “can do” and “aspire to be” attitudes.
 - Be proactive bystanders.
 - Re-humanize an often-disfranchised group of people.
- ✓ I challenge people to:
 - Understand domestic and sexual violence in a cultural and historical context.
 - Share a vision and build a movement to make it happen.

- Be agents of change for social justice, gender and economic equality, and civil and human rights.
- Be leaders and models of respectful behaviors.
- Believe in the hope that when we work together we can end domestic and sexual violence.

A volunteer coordinator does more than organize schedules and fill out time slots, and a volunteer is much more than about committing to a block of time. Both our roles encompass giving support, restoration, and a prospect of a better future. Our roles have meaning, value, and purpose, and taking into account all of the above, we do make a difference. This is what I do. Please join me. □

ANNUAL PAVE BENEFIT CHOCOLATE FESTIVAL AND MURDER MYSTERY PLAY



Trouble at the
Tropicabana

An *I Love Lucy*
whodunit spoof
with Bennington
Community Actors

June 7th 7:00 p.m.—The First Baptist Church
Main Street, Bennington
Adults \$25 Children under 12 \$10
Tickets Available At PAVE Office
Accepts MC/VISA
Call 802-442-2370

What do we live for, if it
is not to make life less
difficult for each other?
~ George Eliot

Upcoming Services

FARMERS' MARKET

Coupons can be used at your local farmers' markets throughout the summer. Coupons are available 3rd week in June.

- WIC participants go through Health Dept. (447-3531).
- Everyone else should go through BROCC (447-7515).

FOOD STAMPS

Considering the high cost of food, you may want to apply for food stamps. They are always available.

- To see if you qualify, go on-line at www.vermontfoodhelp.com.
- To apply directly go to your local Economic Service Office or call them at 442-8541.

SEASONAL FUEL ASSISTANCE

Applications are available after July 15th. If you have applied before you already receive one in the mail. Otherwise call BROCC for application (447-7515).

SUMMER PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

The **Recreation Center** as well as several **sports** and **art camps** are available for your children this summer. Many offer scholarship programs if you apply now. Please look at your local bulletin boards for news about these programs or call your child's school (in case papers don't make it home).

SUMMER FOOD PROGRAMS

Each summer Molly Stark School offers a summer lunch program. To find out more contact the school.