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Comment: We do not want to lose another Zachary or another Robert

Roger Sherman, Executive Director

Lately we've been bombarded by high profile child abuse and neglect cases in Idaho. In May, 14 year old Zachary Nagle killed his father in Nampa allegedly because of abuse he and his siblings had received. This last month 8 year old Robert Manwill's body was found in a canal after a 10 day search. His mother and her boyfriend were charged with first degree murder and are currently in jail. An Amber Alert was issued after the kidnapping of 7 year old Luca Principali. He was returned by his mother, physically unharmed, to his father in what appears to be a custody battle where the child is a pawn. Another mother in the Treasure Valley will likely be on probation for 10 years after repeatedly leaving her 4 kids unattended.

These are just the cases that have come to light this summer in one small corner of the state. You probably know of others that have reached the media's view and many more that never will. And still there are more children and families suffering in silence and we don't know what they are facing.

Our work is prevention. We don't want to lose another Zachary Neagle or another Robert Manwill. They are too precious and too young to cope with the abuse they were faced with.

But really, it's not about them. It's about the other children in our neighborhoods, in our programs and in our schools who deserve a healthy and happy childhood. Too often the children we hear about on the news are already lost. We live in caring communities where 2300 people will come out to search for a little boy most of them did not know. With the death of Robert Manwill, we are at a particular moment in Idaho where people are mobilized to take some action but there needs to be leadership to make something happen. We need a cultural shift that increases the sharing neighbor to neighbor, where asking for help is not a weakness but a strength. There are a lot of resources in our communities but they are not really part of a continuum that can wrap around a family.

There are models in other communities. Geoffrey Canada with the Harlem Children's Zone, has taken the idea that providing a few services is not enough and that instead we really need to adopt a 'whatever it takes' attitude to making sure that children and families live in an environment that allows them to thrive. In Portland, Oregon, the citizens voted to tax themselves in order to create the Portland Children's Investment Fund, which now provides \$14 million each year to prevent child abuse, fund early childhood and after school programs. A similar fund exists in Miami, Florida and was described by former Miami Herald editor, David Lawrence, in speeches in Coeur d'Alene and Spokane this April. These are all major commitments to those communities' children.

Even so, programs are not sufficient to dealing with all of the problems facing children and families in our communities. It still comes down to each one of us. It may sound simplistic but we need to start by reaching out. Anything you do to support kids and parents can help reduce the stress that often leads to abuse and neglect.

While we cannot bring back Zachary Neagle's father or Robert Manwill, we can prevent the next act by taking steps to build a community that strengthens families and protects children.

It's not up to anybody else; it's up to each one of us. We can do no less.

Here are some things you can do:

Be a friend to a parent you know. Ask how their children are doing. Draw on your own experiences to provide reassurance and support. If a parent seems to be struggling, offer to baby-sit or run errands, or just lend a friendly ear. Show you understand.

Be a friend to a child you know. Remember their names. Smile when you talk with them. Ask them about their day at school. Send them a card in the mail. Show you care.

Talk to your neighbors about looking out for one another's children. Encourage a supportive spirit among parents on your block. Show that you are involved.

What's News in Idaho?



Child Care Programs Share Leadership with Parents

In April, ICTF and Idaho AEYC provided a 2-day training on Parent Leadership Development and the Community Café to teams from 5 Child Care Programs that are participating in program improvement grants

Caption: Club Kid @ Wings in Boise set up colorful bulletin boards and a lending library (below) where parents can get information on child development and community resources.

and training. Each team was made up of a parent and a provider and was given the opportunity to share their successes and challenges in parent involvement and also to learn new ways to develop leadership in the families that they serve. With an emphasis on shared leadership between parents and providers, participants discussed the benefits to both program and families of everyone working together. The Community Café' was introduced as a way to begin these discussions. Each team left the training with a plan of action that included many new ways to involve parents in their program and a plan for a series of 6 community café's.

To date, many amazing changes have been taking place in these centers. Staff has been trained and are excited with the idea of shared leadership. All of the centers have made efforts to let parents know that they are interested in collaborating with them for the success of the children. They are putting out newsletters, displaying colorful information boards for parents and sharing valuable parenting resources with families. All of the centers have started their Café' series' and have reported great enthusiasm, participation and conversation. Little Luke's Early Learning Center in Boise had a whopping 18 parents on the *planning* committee for their café's!

"It helps to know that other parents are experiencing the same challenges as our children advance, and sometimes "regress" through the early development process," commented Lisa Shultz whose son, Griffy , attends Little Luke's and who has participated in two community cafes there. "Coping and remaining patient, especially during the "toddler" stage, is not easy; sharing stories and anecdotes, not only helps you feel supported, it provides you with new and creative ideas for getting through it with less stress."

All have reported an increase in parent involvement and leadership in their programs and have been pleased with the response from families. The Eagle Early Learning program had to move unexpectedly and staff was overwhelmed by the support and help that they received from their families. What could have been a crisis turned into a great experience in shared leadership!



Back to School Tips: Parents Should Get Ready, Too!



Amid the shopping trips for sharpened #2 pencils, crisp notebooks and new shoes, parents should start thinking about what they can do to become the best possible support system for their child this school year. The beginning of the new academic season is often the most important, as it sets the tone for a meaningful and successful year. Research shows that students are more equipped to thrive academically and socially when parents are actively involved in their child's education.

Carl Shaw of the **New Jersey Parent Information and Resource Center** encourages families to be partners in their students' learning with the following tips:

Visit the School Early and Introduce Yourself to Staff

Parents should try to attend the first day of school with their elementary or middle schooler depending on their child's comfort level. Your child may be filled with anxiety and apprehension during the first few days of school, and your presence alone may make a difference in their confidence. If your child would rather attend the first day independently, or if your schedule does not permit you to be there, you'll want to call or email your child's teacher to introduce yourself. It may also be a good idea to inquire about the teaching style of the instructor and what is to be expected of your child this year.

Get Actively Involved with School Activities

This is probably the most important thing you can do for your child's education! Do your best to attend school and school district meetings, events, parent/teacher conferences, activity fairs and any other opportunities to become more involved in supporting your child this school year. You will become a familiar face in the school, which may lead to more resources and opportunities for you and your child. It's a known fact that children go further in their education, make wiser decisions and have better career options when their parents are involved!

These are just a few tips you can use to prepare your child for a great year. But keep in mind, the most essential things you can offer are love, encouragement and understanding. Our growing children face many challenges, so it's important to make sure they have the best educational resources and opportunities available to them. They will be forever grateful for your support, and you'll feel good about yourself in the process. Remember: When Parents Believe... Students Achieve!

Check out our new monthly parenting feature by child development expert, Carolyn Keifer, who is the director of the Idaho Head Start Collaborative on the Trust Fund website www.idahochildrenstrustfund.idaho.gov.

Grantees in Focus

11 Community Based Programs Receive Annual Grants from the Children's Trust Fund

Five of the programs recently awarded grants are focused on providing childhood sexual abuse prevention education. The Trust Fund will be working with this cluster of organizations to coordinate a more robust approach to prevention of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) in Idaho. All of these programs, in Coeur d'Alene, Boise, Pocatello and Driggs, will be using the curriculum developed by Darkness to Light called Stewards of Children. See our June-July newsletter for more information about what we are doing to build a CSA prevention movement. http://idahochildrenstrustfund.idaho.gov/july09_newsletter.asp

- The **ICARE** program of St. Vincent DePaul in Coeur d'Alene, will be providing Stewards training to adults in youth serving organizations in the community.
- **Bright Tomorrows** in Pocatello and the **Family Safety Network** in Driggs are teaming up to train 20 new facilitators to work with groups throughout the state. This is an investment in the long term future of the movement and most importantly our children.
- **Friends of Family and Children Head Start** in Ada and Elmore Counties is training Head Start staff and parents to collaborate to end child sexual abuse.
- **Easter Seals-Goodwill** invested in training two Stewards of Children facilitators from its staff who will be working with women coming out of the correctional facility south of Boise.

Developing parenting skills is always an important component of the work we do and we are funding 7 projects that have a component working to improve the capacity of parents to raise their children in the most nurturing environments possible.

- The **Benewah Co. Community Coalition** is providing parenting classes for parents involved in divorce, custody or paternity related issues.
- **Advocates Against Family Violence** in Nampa provides parent classes at high schools for teenagers who are parents or soon to be parents.
- Nurturing Parenting, an evidence based parenting and child abuse prevention curriculum, is being used by the **Bannock Youth Foundation** in Pocatello and by **Easter Seals-Goodwill**.
- At the **Baby Haven** in Caldwell they are using an incentives based program to help parents make healthy decisions.
- **Familias Saludables** in Hailey, a project of St. Luke's Community Health, provides free parenting classes as well as a health fair and other services to the Latino community in the Wood River Valley.
- **The Family Services Alliance** in Pocatello is working with teen parents using the Parents As Teachers curriculum in in-home visits.

In addition to the Annual Grantees, the Trust Fund is funding five organizations who are in the third year of a multi-year cycle. The Multi-year Grantees are the **Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children, the Shoshone -Bannock Tribes, Mercy Medical Center in Nampa, ICARE in Coeur d'Alene and Easter Seals-Goodwill**. Each of those organizations will present workshops at the annual Strengthening Families Training institute to be held March 16 and 17 in Boise.

All of the newly funded projects begin October 1st.

Family Day

September 28, 2009, is Family Day—A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children. More than a decade of research by The Center on Substance Abuse (CASA) at consistently found that the more families, the less likely they are to more information on this initiative <http://casafamilyday.org/familyday/>.



National Center on Addiction Columbia University has often kids eat dinner with their smoke, drink or use drugs. For visit

Save the Date



Celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Idaho Children's Trust Fund at the 2010 Strengthening Families Training Institute to be held March 16 and 17 in Boise. In addition to great keynote speakers and workshops, we are planning some festivities to celebrate 25 years of work to prevent child abuse and neglect.