

Family Services **NEWS**

A Newsletter of The Family Services Agency, Inc.

Growing Up Strong

As we think back to our yesteryears, growing up attending the local school, playing sports, having fun with friends, our lives looked very bright and full of energy. While that is still the case for many children, in the U.S. today, one in five children and adolescents suffer from mental health problems at any given time, according to the Mental Health Association. It is not as uncommon as you might think for a child to have a mental health problem. Babies, children, adolescents, and adults can have a mental illness. Mental illnesses can happen

to anyone. In fact, mental illness can be found in all races, all nationalities, and all economic levels.

When a child is mentally healthy he or she can think clearly, develop, form healthy relationships, and learn new skills, all of which leads to a good self-esteem and a healthy emotional outlook on life. But for others navigating the ups and downs of growing up—struggling with stressful peer, school, and family issues or weighing tough choices about friends, drugs, and dating—can be extremely difficult.



The causes of mental health illness in children can be as varied as children are. In some cases a chemical imbalance or damage to the brain or nervous system is the

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Family Fun on the Run



Last year more than 2,800 children participated in the Halloween Young Run. Come out and cheer on all the children who will be out running on November 6th.

Lace up your sneakers and prepare to hit the road on November 6 for the Montgomery County Road Runners Halloween Young Run. As in past years, FSAI's Healthy Families Montgomery program is one of the benefiting charities.

Not only will you have the chance to support a worthy cause, this is a great opportunity for you and your family to spend some time together enjoying a healthy activity. Last year 2,800 children 12 years old and under signed up to run the one-quarter, one-half, or one-mile course in this noncompetitive event. The race is designed so that every kid is a winner and so every family can recognize they can be spend time together enjoying a healthy activity.

If you are interested in participating, please visit, www.mcrrc.org and click on Halloween Young Run.

FSAI Launches New Website

To meet the growing and changing needs of the community you have to have open and accessible two-way communication. At Family Services we recognize this and that is why we are so excited to announce the launch of our brand new website, www.familyservice-agency.org. Not only does the website have a completely redesigned look and feel, but it is now an interactive site, which will enable us to develop stronger relationships with donors, volunteers, and those we serve.

"The need to communicate has increased dramatically," says Thomas E. Harr, FSAI Executive Director. "We recognized that our community requires up-to-date, accurate information and that the volume of that information has increased with the diversity of the programs we offer."

Not only do we want to give you the opportunity to learn more about Family Services, we want to know what your interests are as well to better serve you. "We understand that gaining a better understanding of our neighbors will enable us to provide them with improved services," said Thomas E. Harr. "Now we're better equipped to do this, and

we look forward to using our new Internet capabilities to reach out to our community through email updates, e-newsletters, and other online communications to build valuable, lasting relationships."

When you visit the FSAI website, you will be able to register to receive email updates, indicate your interests, view personalized website content, and donate with a few mouse clicks and keyboard strokes. When you register you also will receive free access to our e-cards to send family and friends. If you don't want to register, you will still be able to view a calendar of upcoming events as well as learn more about the organization's breadth of services, programs, and successes.

By using this tool to develop stronger relationships with you—our donors, volunteers, and those we serve—we will gain a better understanding of your needs and, in turn, have more robust, year-round participation with the organization.

Please visit us at www.familyservicesagency.org, and send us an email to let us know what you think of the new website and our additional capability to serve you.

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cause. In other cases exposure to violence, the loss of someone important in a child's life, or the stress of chronic poverty can cause a mental illness. Often a child's problem is tied to normal family transitions. Perhaps a child's parents are getting divorced. Perhaps one parent has recently lost a job. Perhaps everyone in the family is feeling the stress of trying to make ends meet. Perhaps there has been child abuse and neglect in the family. Whatever the underlying cause, children are often impacted and frequently don't have the necessary coping skills.

Mental illness in children is complex and never due to a single factor, and any one of these situations or hundreds of others can lead to emotional and/or behavioral problems in children. What is important is that the child and his or her family seek treatment. An untreated mental health issue in a young person can lead to failure in school, dropping out of school, substance abuse, loss of self esteem, stress, and suicide.

While it is unfortunate that childhood offers no protection against mental illness, for children and adolescents and their parents in our community who are experiencing depression, anxiety, social phobias, interpersonal problems, and stress related to moves, divorce, or school, there is the Family Services Outpatient Mental Health Clinic. The Outpatient Mental Health Clinic represents one element of Family Services commitment to providing the necessary resources to support strong and healthy families in our community. Services include evaluation and treatment of emotional, behavioral, psychiatric, and school problems. No matter the problem, the family is always centrally involved in the child or adolescent's therapy so that everyone plays a role in creating a positive, nurturing family environment.

If you or any of your friends or family needs our services, please feel free to call the Outpatient Mental Health Clinic at 301-840-3200 Monday through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. and on Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



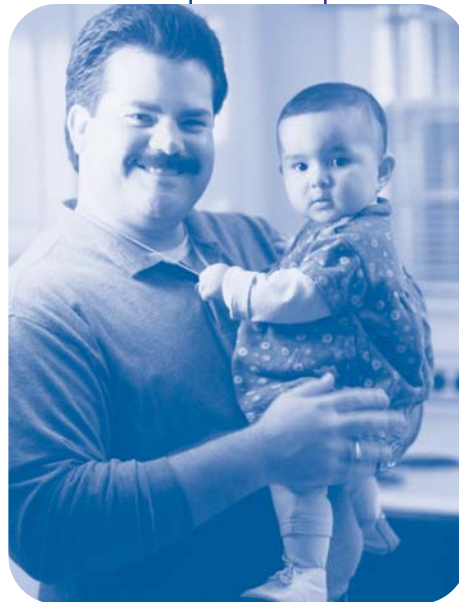
A Special Man in a Child's Life

A father's involvement in the life of a child is important, so important that it is stressed in the Family Services Agency Early Head Start program. From home visits to having input in the program itself, we have made it a priority to include the men in the life of the Early Head Start children as active participants in the range of services we deliver.

In fact, the role of a father figure is so important in a child's life that it should be celebrated, which is exactly what the staff of the Early Head Start program did when they arranged a dinner for eight important men to some special children: seven fathers and a one grandfather.

So many times the focus is on the mother and the child that we felt a dinner to celebrate fatherhood and treat the men to a special night where they could feel comfortable with other men who have young children in their lives was in order. Some arrived alone, others came with their children, some drove, and others came on bus but in the end everyone ate together, made new friends, and had a great time.

For some of the men it was the first time they had participated in an Early Head Start-sponsored activity. That didn't stop all of them from expressing their gratitude at having their children enrolled in a program that seeks to meet the needs of both parents. During the event staff took time with each man to discuss some of their goals and vision for their involvement. The message was consistent—they each want to be more involved, see more activities geared toward dads, and are willing to attend events in the evening and/or weekend. We heard then and are responding with a second activity planned for the fall.



Un hombre Especial en la vida de un Niño

El que un padre se involucre en la vida de su hijo es muy importante. Es tan importante que se extendió en la Agencia de Servicios Familiares con el programa de Early Head Start. Desde participar en las visitas hasta su opinión en la coordinación del programa. Una de nuestras prioridades es incluir a los padres de los niños de Early Head Start como participantes activos en los servicios que nosotros ofrecemos.

De hecho, el papel de la figura paterna es tan importante que se debe celebrar. Y esto fue lo que el personal de Early Head Start hizo, cuando celebró una cena para ocho hombres importantes en la vida de unos niños de este programa, siete padres y un abuelo.

La mayoría de las veces nuestro enfoque es en las madres y los niños que dejamos a los padres por el lado. Por esto hicimos una cena para celebrarlo. Fue una noche especial para que ellos se sintieran bien con otros hombres que tienen hijos pequeños. Algunos vinieron solos, otros vinieron con sus hijos, alguno manejo y otros vinieron en bus, pero al final todos comieron juntos, hicieron nuevos amigos y la pasaron muy bien.

Para algunos hombres esta fue la primera vez que participaban en una actividad de Early Head Start. Pero esto no impidió que ellos expresaran su agradecimiento de que sus hijos esten participando en un programa que se enfoca en las necesidades de los dos padres. Durante el evento el personal tomo tiempo con cada uno de los ellos y se enfocaron en sus metas y su participación en el programa. El mensaje fue consistente- cada uno de ellos quieren estar más involucrados y tener más actividades para padres y están dispuestos a participar en actividades por la noches ó en los fines de semana. Nosotros les escuchamos y les correspondemos con una segunda actividad para el Otoño.-



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Please consider designating The Family Services Agency when you give to the United Way, Combined Federal Campaign, and the Maryland Charity Campaign. Your gift will help to build stronger, healthier families in our community.

When you complete your United Way or Combined Federal form, write the # **8098** as your designation choice.

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