



IDAHO FEDERATION OF
Families
FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

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Welcome to the Family!

The Federation would like to welcome our new additions around the state:

Lynne Whiting - **Key Family Contact**
Raylene French - **Assistant Youth Coordinator**
Marilyn Delgado - **Board Member**
Becky Carson - **Family Support Specialist
- Region IV**
Cyndi Blue - **Family Support Specialist
- Region IV**

Save the Date:

*Idaho Partnerships Conference on Human Services
Spirit of Community*

A Conference for Professionals, Employers,
Self Advocates, Parents and Community
Members

October 17th-20th

Boise Convention Center
Boise, ID



SPRING

www.idahofederation.org 2007

Mental Health Month 2007: MIND Your Health

'For more than fifty years, our country has celebrated May as Mental Health Month to raise awareness about mental illnesses and the importance of mental wellness for all.' The Idaho Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health invites you to join us in this important observance.

Mental Health Month is an annual monthly observance sponsored by both the National Mental Health Association (NMHA) and the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare (NCCBH). It was officially recognized by Congress in 1949 and is 'designed to increase awareness about mental health and mental illness.' This is a great time for families to focus on mental health needs in Idaho and take advantage of this occasion to help educate and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues.

The following events will be taking place throughout the month of May (as well as June and July), which will give you the opportunity to discuss, gain knowledge, and network with fellow parents, professionals, and others involved in Idaho's mental health system.

APRIL 30TH-MAY 1ST - 2007 SYSTEM OF CARE CONFERENCE

2007 System of Care Conference: Making it Happen Effective Systems of Care; April 30th & May 1, 2007 Location: Boise State University Student Union Building. For more info contact ICWRTC 1(800)745-1186 ext.225 Email: zeffa@dhw.idaho.gov

MAY 4TH - HEROES IN THE FIGHT

Boise, Idaho. Contact the Idaho Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health at 1.800.905.3436 for more information.

MAY 5 - MATCH 3RD ANNUAL PEDIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

May 5, at St. Luke's Boise Regional Medical Center. Keynote presentation by Dr. Gerald Erenberg, Pediatric Neurologist, and Director of the Tourette Syndrome Clinic at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation

ART FROM THE HEART: WORLD THROUGH OUR EYES POETRY PROJECT

Regions I & II: June 18th-22nd; Regions III, IV, & V: July 9th-13th; Regions VI & VII: July 23rd-25th. Each Region should expect to schedule their workshop dates in their prearranged regional block. Please call the Federation for more details at 1-800-905-3436.

YOUTH PROGRAM EVOLVING

As always several things have changed since the last newsletter and through these changes our youth program has only gotten stronger. Of these changes, we are very proud of both the development of the Idaho Youth Council and the hiring of Raylene French our new Assistant Youth Coordinator.

The Idaho Youth Council is in its beginning stages and has great potential to be an amazing asset to the state of Idaho. These youth, united with determination, want to share their experiences with their peers, providers, and others around the state; with the goal is influencing change through voice of experience. Made up of 20 youth from across the state, the Idaho Youth Council hopes to create change and give praise where such affirmation and recourse is needed. Armed with the varying experience in different state programs such as: juvenile justice and corrections, mental health institutions, the foster care system, and others these youth have exactly the sort of knowledge needed to supply youth perspective in the various social services. I encourage all of you reading this letter to think about where youth voice might be beneficial in the programs that you encounter daily. Then follow your thought with a phone call to the Idaho Federation of Families to inquire about having one of these council members provide you with youth voice.

We are very happy to announce our newest staff addition, Raylene French. Raylene came to us as a recent graduate from the University of Idaho with a bachelor's degree in communications. She has a strong desire to help youth and is well-equipped with the abilities needed to become a great youth coordinator. Over the past few weeks she has become more acquainted with the youth program of the Idaho Federation of Families and has been a large asset to the development and training of the Idaho Youth Council.

Next on our horizon is the May 2007 System of Care Conference where Raylene and I will be hosting two separate tracks for the youth in attendance. The first will be a youth leadership track where participants will interact with other youth from around the state, while being challenged through sessions that range from introspection to creative marketing. The second is an advanced youth leadership track in which participants will be challenged to look introspectively as well as reflect on the needs of their communities. A strong emphasis in the advanced youth track will be on self and community advocacy.

James Sawyer,
Youth Coordinator



From the Director

The dictionary defines partnership as “the state of being a partner” or “a business organization owned by two or more persons who agree to share the profits and usually are liable individually for losses.” On March 15th and 16th the Federation partnered with Idaho Parents Unlimited to bring the Empowering Families conference to Boise. IPUL traditionally hosts the conference every two years. This year a great partnership was formed as both organizations participated in the planning and promotion of the conference. As a result, the conference attendee numbers increased, there were sessions specific to children's mental health, and most importantly, parents of children with mental and physical disabilities came together in one place, at one time, with one mission- to make life challenges easier for our children. As a pre-conference activity, a parent summit meeting was held. The meeting focused on how we, as non-profit organizations serving children, can better serve Idaho families as a whole. This was the first step in a long term plan to unite child-serving agencies and the parents statewide. We are honored to have been part of the IPUL conference and thank Evelyn Mason, the IPUL Board of Directors, and staff for allowing us to be involved as partners. We hope to do it again in 2009.

Paul Carroll retired in March from the Department of Juvenile Corrections. He served the state for over 30 years. The Federation of Families honored Paul as an advocate for parent and youth involvement. His presence in working toward a system of care will be missed. We wish him the best on his new adventures and thank him for all he accomplished to help families and youth in our state.

On behalf of the staff and board of the Federation, we thank you for your continued support of the Idaho Federation of Families.

Enjoy!

Courtney

One Person Can Make a Difference

There was once a man vacationing on the coast of Mexico. One evening he decided to take a midnight stroll down the deserted beach. There was a full moon and down the beach he could make out what appeared to be a boy who would scurry around, pick something up and throw it back into the ocean.

As the man drew closer to the boy, he could see that the beach was littered with starfish. As he reached the boy he asked what he was doing. The boy explained that with each full moon the high tide would wash the starfish so far up on the beach that they were destined to die the next day in the sun.

The man responded that there must be thousands of miles of beach and millions of stranded starfish. How much difference did this one boy make? The boy pondered the question for a moment, looked back at the starfish in his hand, tossed it as hard as he could back into the life-giving sea, and answered, “It made a difference to that one.”



New Suicide Prevention Training for Communities

In 2003, 15.9% of Idaho's youth seriously considered suicide, and 14.5% planned a suicide attempt. Timely intervention is needed to save our youth. The Idaho Youth Suicide Prevention Intervention Project (YSP) is implementing a new suicide prevention training program for communities. Parents, teachers, counselors, and others who interact with youth are a first line of defense in preventing suicide and are encouraged to participate.

Suicide prevention training is intended to help adults understand that suicides can be prevented by learning how to recognize the signs and symptoms in youth who may be considering suicide. The program is designed for any adult who has frequent interaction with youth ages 10-24. Participants of the YSP training learn about the prevalence of suicide in our communities, who is most affected by suicide, and how to identify risk factors and warning signs that may indicate a youth at risk. In addition, participants receive education about what resources are available.

The YSP Suicide Prevention Training is being conducted as a part of a grant from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The goal of the Idaho Youth Suicide Prevention Intervention Project is to partner with other Idaho suicide prevention groups to reduce suicide attempts and completions among Idaho youth aged 10-24.

The following activities are underway at YSP:

A statewide advisory group of community and suicide prevention leaders is being created to build partnerships and coordinate a comprehensive suicide prevention awareness campaign.

YSP is encouraging and supporting the use of the *TeenScreen* depression identification program by schools and medical practices throughout the state.

Culturally competent best practices for suicide prevention will be compiled and made available early 2007.

Suicide prevention training specifically geared toward helping communities to recognize the signs and symptoms of suicide in youth ages 10-24 will become available statewide in January.

For more information on the YSP Suicide Prevention Training please contact Idaho State University at (208) 373-1799 or email preventsuicide@isu.edu.

Visit our website at http://www.isu.edu/departments/irh/suicide_prevention



THANK YOU

for supporting our 1st Annual Fire Fighter Benefit Bachelor Auction

Our 1st Annual Fire Fighter Benefit Bachelor Auction was a great success! We'd like to thank all of the organizations that made donations towards the bachelors' attire, dinners, lunches, entertainment, and door prizes for our auction. We encourage each of you to bring your business to places such as these that give their support to such worthy causes. We sincerely thank each contributor for all of their support!

A Lively Chef Catering
The Ram
The Rose Room
Kesslers
Kate McGwire
The Boise Co-Op
Auctioneer Rod Elson of Corbett Auctions
The Egyptian Theater
Andrade's
Forever Blooms
The Funny Bone
Mr. Formal
The Flicks
Tuxedo Wearhouse
ComedySportz
Men's Wearhouse
Miss Molly
Leku Ona
JuJu
Gino's Italian Ristorante
Discovery Center
Boondocks
Blue Sky Bagels
Boise Contemporary Theatre
Zeppole
Directly Driven Sound Productions
- by Adam E
Jo 's Traveling Bar
Muggsy's
World Center for Birds of Prey
La Vie En Rose
Executive Gourmet Catering
Flatbread Community Oven

**Great things are not done by impulse but by
a series of small things brought together.
-Vincent van Gogh**

Art from the Heart

World through Our Eyes:

Poetry Project

This poetry-focused 'Art from the Heart' program is to be held in communities throughout each region in Idaho beginning in June through the end of July. Many of you will remember two years ago when we first began bringing the 'Art from the Heart' workshops around the state of Idaho. Throughout these workshops, youth had the chance to take their experiences and thoughts and "express in pictures and words their feelings about themselves, their loved ones, and the world around them." Our participants became even more excited when the opportunity was presented that each child might donate their artwork towards helping create an anti-stigma display. The goal of this display was to 'share their personal impressions to foster better understanding of mental disorders, which in turn will promote greater compassion and assistance for children and families in Idaho.' It focused on sharing the child's individual abilities, not concentrating on their diagnosis. This display has since been traveling the state and has been everywhere from the state capital to local libraries and universities.

While the program's focus has stayed similar, our craft has changed. From our previous projects in painting and sculpting to our new direction of creative writing and poetry, we expect grand things from this round of 'Art from the Heart.' The Federation has sent out 'save the date' cards indicating what time we will be in each region. It is the responsibility of all councils, both local and regional, to contact the Federation and schedule their dates. For more information about these exciting workshops, please contact our office at 1-800-905-3436.

Each region should expect to schedule their workshops dates in their prearranged regional block:

Regions I & II **June 18th-22nd**

Regions III, IV, & V **July 9th-13th**

Regions VI & VII **July 23rd-25th**



Sonnen works with mental health issues

HOPES TO REMOVE ASSOCIATED STIGMA:

By Lorie Palmer of the Idaho County Free Press

FAMILY SUPPORT SPECIALIST HOPES TO ALLEVIATE STIGMA

GREENCREEK -"I know what it's like to need someone to talk to, someone to help you out," Elaine Sonnen emphasized. "I have lived it 24-7."

Sonnen is one of two Region II Family Support Specialists for the Idaho Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health. The Sonnens were thrown into the world of children's mental health quite unexpectedly almost 13 years ago when, after five years of marriage, they adopted a five-year-old boy from Bulgaria.

"He had been abused and neglected, having lived in an orphanage from birth," Sonnen said. "We had no idea to what extent he was suffering."

Richard soon showed signs of reactive attachment disorder and the Sonnens were forced to gain help through Idaho's mental health system.

"It has been a roller coaster ride," Sonnen said.

The Sonnens were introduced to "an awesome caseworker" in Kathy Workman, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, who "has been a tremendous amount of help and support for us."

"Kathy has literally put herself on the line to network and get help for us," Sonnen said.

Richard did have to go into residential care for behavioral health issues, however, he is now out, has graduated and is attending Lewis-Clark State College.

"He still needs help, but we see such improvement, a light," Sonnen smiled.

Through the traumas the family has encountered, Sonnen was often times shocked at the responses from seemingly well-informed people.

"I had a man say 'can't you just send him back?'" she recalled. "It would be like giving up my left arm. He's my son, no matter what."

The Sonnens adopted a daughter in Idaho about eight years ago. Tiffany is a second grader at Prairie Elementary School.

"She's a joy," smiled Sonnen. "She too, has had to deal with situations concerning her brother, but she loves him."

Sonnen said the fact that she and Tom had a solid foundation and had been married for five years before having any children helped their relationship.

"We always, no matter what, back each other up," she stated. "Even if we don't always agree with each other - we can talk about that later. We present a united front to the children."

After dealing within the mental health system and reading, researching and attending conferences for 13 years, Sonnen was asked to apply for the Family Support Specialist position.

"My main goal is to support families - to help find respite care, guide them through the system - whatever they need and I can network to do," she said. "Maybe it's just someone to talk to who has been there and agonized and wondered if things would ever get any better."

Sonnen hopes to help people get over the stigma of being involved in the mental health system.

"If you had cancer and needed help, you wouldn't be afraid to get the help," she said. "You shouldn't be any more afraid with a mental health issue and yet I realize it has a sort of shame attached to it on many levels."

Sonnens main goal is to help people.

"I don't want anyone to have to go through what we did, but if they have to go through some of the same struggles, then I want them to have support," she said.

And Richard?

"Well, he has some big goals," Sonnen smiled. "He wants to be a social worker eventually and use drama therapy in helping his clients. I'm really proud of the strides he has made."

To contact family support specialist Elaine Sonnen call 208-816-3974 or 208-433-8845 or toll free 1-800-905-3436 or e-mail ngeye@idahofederation.org. Log onto www.idahofederation.org for details on Idaho Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health.

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Families Ask

My ten year old son was recently fighting on a park playground with another boy. The police came and grabbed my son by the collar and lifted him off the ground. He began cursing the officers and trying to get away. They placed him in their car and took him to detention where he was charged with being delinquent. What they don't know is that my son had been visiting with his dad the week before and that his dad refuses to provide him with his medication for his bipolar disorder. I'm afraid of what might happen when he goes to court. What should I do???

To begin with, the unfortunate truth is that not all police officers, teachers, clergy, or other adults have the same understanding or ability to deal with children. Some view the behavior of children as meaningful and having causes. Those adults try to understand the signals that are being sent and attempt to work with them without escalating problems. Others view all children as being alike, needing discipline that they're probably not getting at home, and needing to be dealt with as quickly and as sternly as possible. Often, this is only a factor of the adult's lack of training, fatigue, or a true inability to deal with children as people. They're doing their job as they see it needing to be done, but unfortunately, it doesn't often help matters much, as it tends to escalate the child rather than quiet and calm him.

While your child may have been taken to detention from where you were called, and where the police officer may have referred to your son's behavior as a delinquent act, please understand that the probabilities of a judge, magistrate, or anyone else wanting to see your son enter into the juvenile justice system is slim to none. I am sure that if you are able to contact your son's therapist and ask him to provide you with a letter describing your son's medical condition, and the effect of his being deprived of his medication, the delinquency charges will have little or no effect on him. The judge may however, require you and your son to report to a probation officer for a period in order to insure that he continues to act in a manner that conforms with the expectations of society. That is the Judge's job. It would appear from what you say, is not your son's issues, but those of his father who, though sharing custody, refuses to provide your son with the medication, prescribed by the child's physician, which will help him manage his bipolar disorder. As the state of medicine is currently such that your son will most likely need to remain on this medication for the foreseeable future, Depriving him of it not only degrades his ability to function in the immediate future but also teaches him that it is perfectly acceptable to declare his own "medication holidays" whenever he so chooses. This undermines his understanding of what he needs to do to maintain himself as well as to foster doubt in the wisdom and capability of those who are responsible for his care.

If dad can't be brought around to comply with your son's medication regimen, the problem is serious one and needs to be dealt with as quickly as possible. While the effects of the issue are medical, its roots are legal. While it would be much more amicable and less expensive on both parties' parts to settle the issue without resorting to the courts, it may be that advice from an attorney will inform you that to refuse to provide a child with prescribed medication for an ongoing condition constitutes child neglect. As such, a modification in your husband's visitations with your son may be the least of the consequences which he may face. This however, needs to be the issue which you need to investigate immediately with an attorney who can advise you of the best course to take at this time. If this action can be taken prior to your son's hearing, you will be able to demonstrate to the court that you are aware of the problem and that you are taking action to resolve it. This will help the judge in making a ruling that will help your son achieve the consistency in treatment that he needs in order to manage his behavior.

The problem that you describe is one that many children of divorced parents face. Quite often, while one parent is fully aware of the issues involved in the behavioral health disorder of the child, the other, for whatever reason, is not. This may be a result of a failure of recognition of mental illness as a valid concept, a refusal to believe that his or her child is experiencing a mental health issue, or a refusal to submit to the judgment of the parent who is responsible for the treatment in which the child is placed. However the actions are founded, and whatever is needed in order to change the outlook of the parent who is causing the treatment disruption, the first order of business that must be accomplished immediately is the blocking of that disruption. This can only be accomplished through legal means. To attempt this on your own by withholding visitation of the other parent without proceeding through the court would be to invite legal action against yourself by that parent. Seek representation by a lawyer now.

Membership Information

The Idaho Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health exists in order to provide education, advocacy, and support for families of children with emotional, behavioral or mental health needs. We provide these services throughout the state to all families who request them. Fees are never charged nor sought. The organization exists solely on grant funds, donations, agency services, and memberships. Your membership makes it possible for us to provide these services and to continue our work. We seek your help by becoming a member today. Please help us continue to advocate for children's mental health services in Idaho.

With a membership, families will receive the Federation newsletter, invitations to conferences, opportunities to attend national conferences, updates on policy and legislative activities, and much more.

(CHECK ONE)

- Individual Membership** - \$10
- Youth Membership** - free
- Family Membership** - \$ 20
- Non-profit Agency Membership** - \$75
- Business Membership** - \$150
- Unable to pay (family members only)**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Telephone _____

E-Mail _____

I would like to be placed on your email list-serve

Non-Membership tax deductible contribution _____

I would like to sponsor a family membership _____

MAIL TO: The Idaho Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, 1509 S. Robert St. Suite 101, Boise, ID 83705

E-mail - info@idahofederation.org • **Phone -** 208-433-8845 • **Toll Free -** 1-800-905-3436 • **Fax -** 208-433-8337



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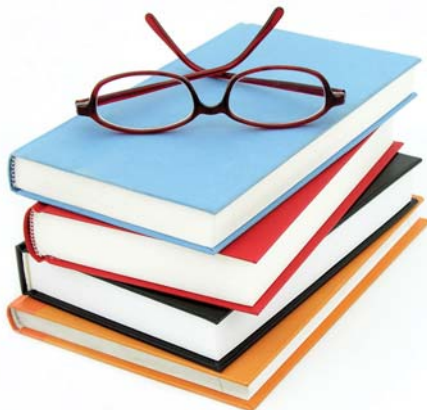
www.idahofederation.org

address correction requested

Did you know

the Federation has a resource library available? We lend books, pamphlets, videos, and other information for parents. These resources are free of charge to families and we are always willing to help research additional resources if we do not have what you need. Our website also offers an extensive list of resources available both statewide and locally.

www.idahofederation.org



Boredom Busters

Finding quick and easy ways to entertain your children is sometimes more difficult than you'd expect. This is especially true when you decide against using the common solution of movies or video games. One way to be prepared for the boredom blues your child will most surely present you is to use previously prepared ideas. By starting an 'idea box' you are able to create a number of creative thoughts that will keep your child busy all day. It's also important to produce ideas that can be accomplished independently.

First find a tissue or shoe box that your child can decorate. Then when you think or read about an idea, write it on a slip of paper and place it in the box. It's not long before you will be able to send them running to the 'idea box' when they say they are bored.

Beginner Cures for the Boredom Blues:

REVERSE WRITING

Challenge your older child with a pencil and paper! Can they write a sentence backwards, without looking in the mirror? Sounds easy enough for the letters O, A, and M, but what about J, F, and R? Can they write you a secret message?

added enjoyment, you can suggest this activity when a friend is visiting. After all, it is more fun to be a secret spy with a partner! They may choose to share the code with only a few people. Maybe they will give you the honor. It can be your own secret language to send notes for fun and encouragement.

LOOK AT ME!

Have your child observe you for a minute. Leave the room. Return to the room, having changed a small detail in your appearance. Remove an earring, put on some lipstick or change your hair. Can they guess?

MAGIC BUBBLES RECIPE

Makes long lasting strong bubbles.
You'll need:
1/4 cup of liquid dishwashing soap (Joy works best)
1/2 cup of water
3 tsp. Glycerin
Combine the glycerin and water. Pour in the dishwashing soap.
Store in covered jars.

IT'S A SECRET...CODE

You'll need: *pencil and paper*
Ask your child to take the challenge of creating a symbol or number code for each letter in the alphabet and write it down. For

Idea's Source:
<http://www.amazingmoms.com>