

Healing, Learning & Growing Newsletter

More about the Healing Garden.....

I consider my involvement with this Healing Garden project an on-going act of recovery from childhood sexual abuse. As I struggle with and try to manage my own anxiety, mild depression, feelings of being overwhelmed and out of control, I find the process of working with other sexual abuse survivors, priests and staff from the Archdiocese of Chicago to create the Healing Garden, to be a process filled with hope and reconciliation. It is my hope that the Healing Garden will draw attention to the tragic consequences of childhood sexual abuse, not only within the Catholic Church, but in all of society.

As an adult survivor of childhood sexual abuse, I am trying now to understand and reconcile in my life, the traumatic loss that I experienced at the hands of my abuser, and how those painful memories affect me today. To me, the Healing Garden represents a good, decent attempt to create a beautiful space for reconciliation and contemplation. Information regarding church efforts to protect children and youth will be made available, along with crisis abuse center resources and other appropriate information that may help a victim/survivor or a family member or loved one begin healing from their tragic loss.

I am pleased that Cardinal George has been personally engaged in the planning committee process from the very beginning. This fact gives me great hope that as a church we can heal from the stain of clergy sexual abuse. We can learn from mistakes that were made which caused real pain for too many children and their families; so that we can grow together to be better people, filled with compassion, love and understanding.

Michael Hoffman
Chairman, Healing Garden planning committee

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL GROUP



Something to think about to start out the New Year:

Are you the spouse, parent, sibling, adult child, or close friend of someone who was sexually abused as a child? Are you looking for ways to support that loved one and let him/her know that you care? Are you struggling with your personal need to come to terms with what the victimization of your loved one means for you, your family, or for your relationship with him/her?

If any of these questions ring true to your own experience, we at the Office of Assistance Ministry would like to offer you an opportunity to pursue your own healing journey that might parallel that of the victim-survivor. Last year we sponsored an educational group for people who are facing these challenges.

Continued on next page, column 2.....

“Together in this healing space, may we find within ourselves a place to feel free: free from fear, free from shame and free from judgment.”



*Healing,
Learning
& Growing*

Healing, Learning & Growing Newsletter

What is the grooming process?

Many times when we meet with family members of victims of sexual abuse or the victims/survivors themselves we hear statements like this: "I never suspected this person could do such a thing." "Why didn't we see the signs?" He (the perpetrator) was always so nice to our family." **GROOMING** is a one word answer to these questions. Today, in 2010, we know more about preventing childhood sexual abuse than we ever have before.

There are three types of grooming to consider when observing adult behavior with a child:

Psychological Grooming: The focus is on establishing a positive relationship between the child and the adult so that the adult can engage in more sexually explicit behaviors.

What to watch for: When an adult gives gifts to the child without the parents' knowledge – particularly gifts that the parent/guardian would not provide. A cell phone is a good example because it allows the child and the adult to have unlimited contact and strengthen the bond between them. The adult fosters a special relationship with the child that does not include others.

Physical Grooming: The focus is on teaching the child to accept more frequent physical contact with the adult.

What to watch for: Any adult who is always touching children. This would be someone in a non-parental role that touches, tickles, pinches, and/or wrestles with the child. The adult may be testing the limits with the child and getting him or her to be comfortable with physical contact before engaging in more sexualized touching.

Community Grooming: The focus is on making the family comfortable with the adult. You would not let your child be unsupervised with someone you do not know or trust.

Continued.....

The adult predator knows this and wants you to trust him or her so he or she can have time alone with your child to engage in the more sexually explicit behaviors.

What to watch for: Any adult who tries too hard to be a friend of the family. An adult who initially takes children out in groups and then begins to single out one child with whom to be alone. The adult who has children at his or her house all the time without the presence of other adults.

Fortunately, in recent years, we have learned many ways to make our children safer. Knowledge and awareness of grooming techniques used by predators is one way to protect the children in our lives.

Kathleen Leggdas, M.Ed., LCSW
Clinical Specialist



Continued from page 2.....

The group is lead by a licensed clinical social worker with years of experience working with victims -survivors and their families. The meetings are held at the Quigley Pastoral Center in Chicago on four consecutive Saturdays from 10:00-11:30. There is no charge for participation.

We anticipate starting another group in the spring of 2010 and encourage you to consider whether this opportunity would be beneficial for you. If so, or if you have questions regarding the content or format of the group, please call Kathleen Leggdas, Clinical Specialist at 312-534-5268 or email your questions to kleggdas@archchicago.org

Call sooner, rather than later, so that you can put these dates on your calendar and make a commitment to meet and talk with others who share your experiences.

Healing, Learning & Growing Newsletter

Feedback from the Day of Reflection

The Office of Assistance Ministry held its first Day of Reflection at Techny Towers on Saturday, October 3, 2009.

The purpose of this gathering was for the OAM staff to meet with victims-survivors and their families in order to reflect on their needs, and how the office can respond more effectively to aid in people's journey to wholeness and healing.

EVALUATION COMMENTS

The most important thing I learned today was...

- ◆ These events are nice for me. It's a pleasure to meet and speak with other survivors. I learned about myself and other survivors.
- ◆ Definitely insightful to hear more from the family/loved ones of survivors.
- ◆ Continue programs like this - more brainstorming - is good.
- ◆ It takes time for healing.
- ◆ Getting more information on people that abuse children.
- ◆ There can be healing when people share with each other in an honest and open atmosphere.
- ◆ Moving forward is still possible!
- ◆ There are many avenues of assistance to get to the remaining healing.
- ◆ I'm not alone.
- ◆ There are so many people that want to help.
- ◆ Church is willing to constructively listen to victims.

Care, support and resources for victims-survivors of sexual abuse by church personnel of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Looking Ahead.....

Support Groups Spring 2010

Healing Weekend Fall 2010



On-Going for Kids
Office for the Protection of Children & Youth

**Office for the
Protection of Children**

***Merry Christmas from all of us at the Office of
Assistance Ministry at the Archdiocese of Chicago***

Have a topic you want to know more about or an idea for an article?
Ideas, suggestions and feedback are greatly encouraged. Send an email to:
emaiyoureditor@yahoo.com.

Archdiocese of Chicago Office for Assistance Ministry

Post Office Box 1979
Chicago, IL 60690-1979

Phone: 312.534.8267

Fax: 312.751.8307

Email: assistmin@archchicago.org

You are welcomed to visit our website:

<http://www.archdiocese-chgo.org/ProtectingChildren.htm>

If you wish to receive this newsletter via e-mail, please provide your email address to Mayra Flores at mflores@archchicago.org