



Healing, Learning & Growing Newsletter

From the Office of Assistance Ministry



June, 2010

Volume 1, Issue 4

Archdiocese of Chicago

Summer: The Season to Experience a Renewal of Growth

Welcome to our newsletter, which is intended to provide victims-survivors of sexual abuse and their supporters with updates on services and office initiatives.

Upcoming Support Groups

These free, professionally led support groups welcome adults who have been sexually abused as minors by a family member, friend, stranger, priest or anyone else. We invite you to consider attending a therapy group, or ask a family member to join the family group.

Men's group

Where: Downtown location with easy access to public transportation.

When: First Session, Tuesday, June 8th
12 Tuesdays 6:30-8:00 PM

Women's group

Where: Either Northside or Southwest Suburban Location, depending on need.

When: First session will be in early Fall.

Family group - Educational group for family members of those who have been sexually abused as minors.

Where: Downtown location with easy access to public transportation.

First Session: June 25th.

*Subsequent dates to be determined by the group.

All Saturdays, 10:00-11:30 AM

The Office of Assistance Ministry sponsors the groups. The mission of the Office of Assistance Ministry is to provide pastoral care, support, and resources to victim-survivors and their loved ones in their efforts to achieve psychological, emotional, and spiritual healing. The purpose of the groups is to provide participants with a positive and supportive environment that allows each individual to use experiences and personal support systems to take control of their journey toward healing.

Ideally, we are hoping to have 8 to 10 people for each group.

Should you have questions regarding the group structure and /or process, please contact Matt Hunnicutt at 312-534-8267 or mhunnicutt@archchicago.org, or Kathleen Leggdas, at 312-534-5258, or kleggdas@archchicago.org.

Mission Statement

The Archdiocesan Office of Assistance Ministry's mission is to provide pastoral care, support, and resources to victims-survivors of sexual abuse and their loved ones in their efforts to achieve psychological, emotional and spiritual healing. For more information about the Office of Assistance Ministry, visit the office's page on the Archdiocesan web site at www.archchicago.org.

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Introducing.....Ruth Robinson

My name is Ruth Robinson and I am the new Assistant Director in the Office of Assistance Ministry at the Archdiocese of Chicago. I began this new adventure in February.

I am a Catholic and was born and raised in Milwaukee, WI. I settled in Chicago many years ago after being married and I have three adult children.

I come from a strong background in Social Work, especially in the area of case management services. For over 18 years I was employed at Catholic Charities. My first position lasted for over ten years. I was a Child Welfare Specialist and I worked to ensure that children were safe in the home of parents who had active cases with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Families were referred to services in order to address any problems that the families were experiencing.

My second position was held in the Community Casework and Counseling Department. In this program case management services were issued to members of various populations ranging from families, children, individuals and the elderly in order for them to address all of the underlying issues that caused problems in their lives.

Both of these positions allowed me to have direct contact with so many people who were experiencing difficulties in their lives. I was able to advocate on behalf of my clients and I was able to make a positive difference in so many lives.

When offered the position of Assistant Director in the Office of Assistance Ministry, I must be honest when I speak about this experience. It took many hours of prayer and reflection before I realized that this was a position like none that I had known. In making my decision to accept this position, I knew that it would be more like a ministry or calling rather than a job. I was impressed with the mission statements of the various programs of the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth and how each program interacted with the other in addressing this major crisis in the church.

I am pleased that I have come to this program in spite of the many challenges that I face. This is a very complex position consisting of a wide range of duties. There is so much for me to learn in the area of cleric sexual abuse. But, the opportunity to assist so many victims-survivors to achieve psychological, emotional, and spiritual healing is well worth the effort. This is the most rewarding part of the duties that I have been asked to perform.

Please feel free to contact me at 312-534-8256 or at rurobinson@archchicago.org.

Peace.

Ruth Robinson

Support Groups:

We sponsor support groups throughout the year at different locations throughout the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Family Groups:

These educational groups are designed to provide support to family members (parents, spouses, significant others, siblings) as they support their loved ones through the difficulties associated with sexual abuse trauma.

Day of Reflection:

This is an opportunity for victims-survivors to meet with office staff in dialogue and discussion.

Healing Garden:

This is an initiative sponsored by the Archdiocese through the Office of Assistance Ministry with a committee comprised of various survivors

For more information on any of these services:

Call or email

**Ruth Robinson at
312/534-8256**

rurobinson@archchicago.org

or

**Matt Hunnicutt at
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mhunnicutt@archchicago.org

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Nine Steps for Sexual Abuse Victims

A recent article found on the Web was written by a sexual abuse survivor named Kimberly. She discussed some of the struggles that victims-survivors face on a daily basis. Kimberly's article highlighted the following steps in hopes that others may gain an understanding of what many victims-survivors go through on their healing journey.

Step 1: I recognize that I am powerless to heal the damaged emotions resulting from my sexual abuse, and I look to God for the power to make me whole.

Step 2: I acknowledge that God's plan for my life includes victory over the experience of sexual abuse.

Step 3: The person who abused me is responsible for the sexual acts committed against me. I will not accept the guilt and shame resulting from those sexual acts.

Step 4: I am looking to God and His Word to find my identity as a worthwhile and loved human being.

Step 5: I am honestly sharing my feelings with God and with at least one other person to help me identify those areas needing cleansing and healing.

Step 6: I am accepting responsibility for my responses to being sexually abused.

Step 7: I am willing to accept God's help in the decision and the process of forgiving myself and those who have offended me.

Step 8: I am willing to mature in my relationship with God and others.

Step 9: I am willing to be used by God as an instrument of healing and restoration in the lives of others.

Excerpted from Virtus Online Victim Awareness, Part Two,
by Paul J. Ashton, Psy.D., D.Min.

“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*

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Family Member Educational/Support Program

By Kathleen Leggdas, L.C.S.W.

Last year, I was privileged to be able to conduct a four-week family group made up of parents, spouses, and relatives of survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Each person brought a personal perspective to the challenges of knowing how to support a family member on his or her journey toward healing.

The educational component included defining sexual abuse; intimacy; and identifying family needs. During the last session the group discussed ways to help the family and survivor re-establish communication, trust and ultimately, hope.

Participants were open and they engaged freely in dialogue with each other. They found comfort and encouragement in hearing the ways others had successfully worked toward supporting their family members. I was personally inspired by the group's motivation to "be there" for their loved ones without being intrusive.

When asked to evaluate their experiences, members wrote the following:

"Meeting other mothers whose sons were abused was the greatest help."

"Thank you for the opportunity to have a safe place and people with whom I could talk. For the most part, this has remained an 'undiscussed' topic."

Based on such comments and my own experience in the group, I would encourage those of you who are family members of loved ones sexually abused as children, to consider participating in the next Family Group that will be offered in late June.

For further information, contact Kathleen Leggdas, Clinical Specialist, at 312-534-5268 or kleggdas@archchicago.org.

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



Office for the Protection of Children and Youth



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: emailyoureditor@yahoo.com.

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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 Ruth Robinson at

rurobinson@archchicago.org