



**Washtenaw Area
Council for Children**
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(734) 434-4215 or
info@washtenawchildren.org

Washtenaw Area Council for Children is

Keeping in Touch

December 2007

Dear Friend,

Imagine a community in which every child is safe and cherished.

This has been a busy and productive year for the Washtenaw Area Council for Children. In addition to adding two new prevention programs (see articles about our new Safe Sleep Initiative and Internet Safety Program), we continued our Shaken Baby Syndrome and Baby Calming Techniques trainings for caregivers and parents; updated and distributed our Parent Resource Guide; provided professional development for social workers and health care professionals regarding emerging challenges and the latest techniques for dealing with children and families at risk; and distributed over 2000 Newborn Packets to new parents in Washtenaw County.

Since 1975, we have been working to prevent child abuse and neglect, strengthen families, and to improve the welfare of children in our county. The Washtenaw Area Council for Children is the primary agency responsible for preventing child abuse and neglect in Washtenaw County. In this role, we regularly work with other organizations to bring about the best possible programs for children and families. And we are uniquely positioned to respond to emerging safety concerns facing families, such as teaching youth how to avoid dangers on the Internet. With your generous support we can continue to educate children, parents, professionals, and community members about how to keep our children safe.

Each year, over 2500 allegations of child abuse and neglect are investigated in Washtenaw County. In 2006, 226 Washtenaw County children were removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect. This holiday season, won't you consider making a contribution to support our ongoing efforts to end child abuse and neglect in our community – and join me in saying "one victim of child abuse is one too many."

Best wishes to you and your loved ones for a happy holiday season.

Deborah Shaw, President

**If you would like to help us prevent child abuse and neglect in our community, please visit the Donation page of our website for ways to donate: <http://www.washtenawchildren.org/donations.htm>
THANK YOU!!**

Autumn Delights Delighted!

Approximately 80 attendees and volunteers basked in the glow of the autumn sunshine at WACC's 2nd Annual Autumn Delights Chocolate and Wine Tasting with Silent Auction on Saturday, October 20, 2007, from 3-6 PM. And we continue to bask in the glow of the \$10,500 raised at this year's event!

Many thanks to our generous corporate sponsors, donors of silent auction items, business partners, and attendees as well as our staff, volunteers, and board members, contributing to the day's success. It's amazing how much human capital goes into the planning, implementation, and aftermath of such an event. It is all well worth it in the spirit of strengthening the work that WACC does throughout Washtenaw County on a day-to-day, week-to-week, and month-to-month basis to further strengthen its mission...to promote child safety and well-being and to prevent child maltreatment, abuse, and neglect through educational services and programs to children, parents, community members, and youth-serving professionals throughout Washtenaw County.

With the close of the 2007 event brings scheming for 2008! We welcome your feedback, interest in sponsorship, and/or participation in the planning of next year's event by contacting us at 734-434-4215 or via email at info@washtenawchildren.org.

Warmest regards 'til Autumn Delights again,

Kate Fox, Board Secretary

THANK YOU...

**to the Major Corporate Sponsors of
this year's Autumn Delights!**



THANK YOU!

Devin Baker
Benard & Barbara Banet
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Donna White
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Honorarium

Gail Ackermann in honor of **Bob & Kara Turner**
Gene & Becky Belknap in honor of **David Mastie**

Todd's Services Give Back to Community

Steve Davis
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United Way Designations

Deborah Shaw
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Grants

Ann Arbor Rotary Club

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Kiwanis Club of Ann Arbor

Autumn Delights Chocolate and Wine Tasting Event

Major Corporate Sponsors

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Dedicated Volunteers

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Silent Auction Donors

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Attendees

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Heather Ward
John & Diane Watt
Geraldine, Hillary & Geraine Whiteside

SAFER SLEEP for INFANTS UPDATE

In the past year, we have distributed 7196 brochures, posters, and handouts in English, Spanish, and Arabic; 448 people attended 27 Safe Sleep presentations; and at least 30 training binders and 79 DVDs have been distributed to professionals for their use in teaching Safe Sleep practices with their own clients/patients throughout Washtenaw County, the state of Michigan, and even in New Jersey and New Zealand!

Our Safer Sleep for Infants DVD will be available in English, Spanish, and Chinese after the first of the year. If you have already received the English only version, you will be receiving the new one soon. If you haven't already received a DVD and would like one, please contact our office or e-mail marcia@washtenawchildren.org We will be filling Washtenaw orders first. For more information about Safer Sleep for Infants, please visit our website.



Looking at the Larger Picture

Child abuse and neglect does not happen in a vacuum. The larger world around children puts many of them at risk for abuse. A recent Associated Press article reported how cohabitation of children with males who are not their biological fathers creates a marked increase in a dynamic that is ripe for child maltreatment. Citing a study of Missouri data published in the American Academy of Pediatrics journal, children living in households with unrelated adults are nearly 50 times as likely to die of inflicted injuries as children living with two biological parents. Children living in stepfamilies or with single parents are at higher risk of physical or sexual assault than children living with two biological or adoptive parents, according to several studies co-authored by David Finkelhor, director of the University of New Hampshire's Crimes Against Children Research Center. But these studies only show part of the picture. Other factors in children's lives make them more vulnerable for abuse and neglect.

Examining the larger picture of issues surrounding child abuse is the theme of this year's Luncheon Lecture series. In October and November we heard presentations on children growing up in homes of substance abusers and the impact of domestic violence on children.

Internet Safety Program

The Internet has become a new tool for sexual predators to approach vulnerable teenagers, preying on their lack the awareness, knowledge, and savvy necessary to stay safe. In June, 2007, with generous funding by the Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan and the James A. and Faith Knight Foundation, the Washtenaw Area Council for Children completed a successful Internet Safety Mentoring pilot program in partnership with Dexter Community Schools.

Seventeen female senior students at Dexter High School were recruited through recommendations from teachers, Principal Kit Moran, and School Resource Officer Deputy Paul Mobbs to become Internet Safety Mentors. Following training, the mentors led fifth and eighth grade class discussions regarding safe Internet practices, reaching an additional 344 teens, pre-teens, and children. Mentors were accompanied at presentations by the council staff and ISMP Coordinator, Rachel Akiva, and School Resource Officer, Deputy Paul Mobbs.

The results of this pilot project were phenomenal. Mentors were enthusiastic about their experiences with the program, all strongly agreeing that they would

The series will resume on February 13, 2008 when we present "Why Me? Children's Responses to Their Parents' Mental Health Issues," with Terri MacKenzie, LMSW, followed by the "Normalization of Sexual Harm," with Michele Bowersox of the Washtenaw Child Advocacy Center on March 11. All of the Luncheon Lectures take place from noon to 2 PM at the Washtenaw Intermediate School District, 1819 S. Wagner, Ann Arbor. Cost is only \$15 each (\$10 for students) and includes a buffet lunch catered by Angel Food Catering. To reserve a spot, visit our website for a downloadable brochure or call the Council office, (734)434-4215.

Feeling Good About Doing Your Taxes



While few people enjoy preparing or paying their taxes, there is a way to feel a little better about doing them. Public Act 160 of 2005 has amended the Income Tax Act to reinstate the income tax check-off that allows taxpayers to contribute money to the Michigan Children's Trust Fund. This in turn allows you to contribute to the prevention of child abuse right on your income tax form. At the end of the form, simply indicate how much you'd like to contribute – it's that simple. You can contribute as little as \$5.00 and there is no upper limit. Every dollar you contribute goes to preventing child abuse here in Michigan, and a portion of the money is returned to WACC in the form of operating grants and additional services. The tax check-off might not make preparing your taxes easier, but it can make you feel good by helping children in our state and community!

recommend this program to their peers. The mentors enjoyed teaching the material to other youth, learning the material themselves, and working with the other mentors. They rated the quality of instruction and guidance provided by the ISMP Coordinator and Resource Officer high. The elementary and middle school students who received the presentations by the mentors overwhelmingly (99.4%) rated the programming favorably.

Based upon the experience, knowledge, and skills developed through this pilot project, the Washtenaw Area Council for Children was awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to expand our Internet safety program to reach more children and to teach parents and youth-serving professionals about effective monitoring of youth's internet usage and methods to encourage safe practices by youth. (Visit - <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/funding/cpdprograms.html>) Look for more information about these opportunities in the coming months!

Our Parenting Resource Directory is soon to be launched online!

Thanks to Nike Griffin of Washtenaw Success by Six for updating our PRD and making it ready to put online. Please check our website in the coming weeks.



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'Tis the Season...

to keep kids SAFE. This time of year, which focuses on the happiness of children, can unfortunately be a time when they are also most unsafe.

With the cold weather, we must be even more diligent in keeping our infants safe. Do not let them sleep in overheated environments or become overheated by layering them in too many clothes and blankets. They need the same temperature and amount of clothing that is comfortable for adults. Also, this is the season for colds and other respiratory illnesses. Babies' immature breathing abilities can be further compromised by these illnesses making it even more important that they sleep on their backs with nothing to impede their breathing.

The excitement of the holiday season can turn wrong for many children when overstressed parents are faced with the reality of mounting bills, lack of child-care when school is not in session, and dealing with cooped up children. Be alert to the needs of neighbors and friends with children and be prepared to offer respite when needed. Be also mindful of children who don't seem adequately clothed for the cold weather.

Many preteens and teens will have new technology on their wish lists and with it comes potential danger. They will also have more free time during the school break, often unsupervised, to try out their new found independence. Be sure they understand the rules for safe usage of computers, cell phones and other social networking devices.