

CHILDREN'S LEADER

SPRING 2004

A NEWSLETTER FOR THOSE WHO LEAD CHILDREN IN THE CONGREGATION.

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Kelly's Story: A Case Study

Kelly (not her real name) feels shut out from God and sees no meaning in her life; she just wants to die. "Where was God when I was seven?" she wonders. In an effort to escape the overwhelming guilt and pain that define her existence, Kelly has tried seven times to commit suicide.

Nearly fifteen years ago, Kelly's uncle, a seemingly pious Christian, first sexually abused her. "Uncle George (also not his real name) would counsel me from the Bible," she recalls. "He quoted texts to prove that I should submit to him as my elder. He talked about how Christians should love one another. Then he told me I was a dirty girl and no one would believe me because he was so religious."

George succeeded in projecting onto Kelly the guilt that was rightfully his. She is presently hospitalized with no desire to live. It was not until George was recently accused of molesting his own daughter that Kelly came forward, blaming herself for her cousin's abuse.

Kelly's story is not unique. Like most offenders, George has impacted the lives of many little girls, while claiming complete innocence. (Experts figure that in the course of a lifetime, the typical abuser assaults as many as 200 children.) Also typically, George has moved from church to church and state to state as his indiscretions catch up with him. As a result of Kelly's testimony a court of law found him guilty on two counts of first degree sexual assault of a minor, and finally put him behind bars.

What can we do? As leaders in children's ministries, we have a God-given mandate to do everything in our power to keep people like George away from the children in our churches. Our first line of defense is to screen all those who work with children at church. We also need to insist that staff members observe the six month and two-person rules: Nobody who has been a church member or in attendance for fewer than six months may teach children, and no teacher should be alone with children. (Teaching with the door open so deacons and parents can check in from time to time can fulfill this second requirement.)

For more information about the screening process, visit
<http://childmin.com/Resources>.

(continued on page 2)

News & Notes

Coming Events

Looking for a training event in your area? Ask your conference Children's Ministries director what they have planned; let them know if there's a specific need in your church, or if you're interested in completing Children's Ministries certification.

Details for these events available online at <http://childmin.com/Events>.

◆ **September 23-26, 2004**—Reston, VA. This North American Division-sponsored convention will include tracks not just for Children's Ministries, but also for a number of other church ministries.

◆ **November 18-21, 2004**—Training convention in South Bend, IN (Lake Union)

Pastor's DVD

Each quarter, your pastor receives something called the "Pastor's Digital Vitality Disc." The current issue, Volume 5, contains a special feature on Vacation Bible School—as well as past issues of the Children's Leader newsletter. Borrow the DVD from your pastor; check out the newsletters and share the special VBS feature with your staff!

Bible Treasures

People often contact our office looking for materials to use with children during adult evangelistic meetings. Now Pacific Press has created a series of ten take-home magazines for children, each focusing on a major Bible truth. When parents learn about the Great Controversy, salvation, the Second Coming, the Sabbath, etc., their children can follow along with age-appropriate stories. Every eight-page issue includes Bible-times and modern stories, thought questions, and a puzzle. As parents read the magazine with their children, the study concepts are further reinforced.

Each issue is available in packs of 25. To order Bible Treasures, visit www.adventist-bookcenter.com, or call 800-765-6955.

Spanish VBS Manuals

A Spanish edition of the station leader manuals for Lava Lava Island is available from your local Adventist Book Center. To order, call 800-765-6955, or visit <http://adventistbookcenter.com>. (Director manual not available.)

Why the Numbers Matter

Statistics such as those at left are published from time to time in the national media. But how often do we pay attention to such reports? How often do we pray for hurting children or give to a charity for survivors? Or do we even wonder how many of those cases have an Adventist connection?

We should remember that the church mirrors society. If we assume the rate cited, in a church of 12 million members, nearly 150,000 people are likely to have been victims of child maltreatment.

Audray Johnson states several reasons why many people have trouble acknowledging the abuse that occurs within the church. First, we may have a perfectionistic outlook ("Couldn't happen here!"), or see God as a Santa Claus who will magically fix anything, including the consequences and scars of abuse. Second, perpetrators commonly have convinced themselves that they're doing nothing wrong—or even worse, doing a child a favor. (Contrary to what some leaders have actually taught, abused children are **much more likely** than their peers to become promiscuous.) Third, we may have a misunderstanding of forgiveness, or "dirty linen" syndrome: it's easier to ignore it than to experience the pain. Finally, many adults may have experienced abuse themselves and fear confronting their own feelings.

The time has come for action. We cannot afford to let this evil stay hidden and continue to destroy the lives and faith of children like Kelly. We must screen volunteers in order to prevent repeat offenders from working with children. We must set standards for supervision. And we must give our children the tools they need to stay safe.

Recommended reading for adults:

Hagans: *When Your Child Has Been Molested*.
Lexington/MacMillan,
ISBN 0669-17981-7

Books for adults to read with children:

Cosgrove, Steven: *Squeakers*. Price Stern
Sloan, 1995. ISBN 0843-13925-0

Drake, Bobby: *Friends: Good, Bad, Secret*
AdventSource, 1995 Cat #021643
(see coupon on page 3)

Hindman, Jan: *A Very Touching Book*.
Alexandria Assoc, 1983. ISBN 0961-
10341-8

According to the 2001 statistics from the **National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System**...

- ◆ 903,000 children were verified victims of child maltreatment—12.4 out of every 1000 (up from 12.2 in 2000)
- ◆ 2.6 million reports of possible child maltreatment were filed
- ◆ 1300 deaths were attributed to child abuse

(Kelly's Story, continued from page 1)

We often overlook a second important line of defense: preparing children to rebuff predators. What can we do to prepare children to resist lies like those George used to manipulate Kelly, to protect others from the terrible pain and lifelong scars?

An Ounce of Prevention

It's time for pastors, leaders, parents—and every Christian—to take a stand. We need to warn children against secret touch. Here's what children need to know:

- ◆ Secret touch is when someone who is bigger or older looks at or touches your private parts. They may ask you not to tell anyone, to keep it your secret.
- ◆ Secret friends are not friends at all.
- ◆ Secret touch may even feel good, but it leaves you confused and feeling bad.
- ◆ Even if secret friends say that no one will believe you or that it is your fault, **TELL!** It is **NEVER** your fault.
- ◆ If secret touching happens to you, even if it is someone you love very much, **TELL!** Tell a teacher, a parent, a pastor, a friend.
- ◆ Keeping secrets about secret touch is not OK. It hurts kids when they keep those secrets. Don't keep the secret. **TELL, TELL, TELL!**

This list was adapted from Bobby Drake's inexpensive book, *Friends: Good, Bad, Secret* (AdventSource, 1995). Purchase several for your church and check them out to families, asking them to read it with their children. A teacher can read it with children who have not had it read to them, staying alert to children who may want to talk about it after class.

Additional age-appropriate materials such as the *Personal Protection Empowerment Program* for elementary school age children are available from organizations like S.A.F.E. Network (www.safenetwork.org).

VBS Reporting

It's that time again! Whether you do a Lava Lava Island Vacation Bible School or plan a different program, we'd like to hear from you.

Look for a purple VBS report form that's been mailed to your church, or report on-line at www.childmin.com, and watch the totals grow!

Thanks for helping to make last year's VBS reporting the most accurate yet.

Remember to check out the new year-end report forms, also on our website. The reporting format for 2004 is changing; we're requesting slightly less—and more specific—information this year.



Snapshots from the Ohio ABC's special display for TV Turnoff Week 2004, which was the biggest yet—with 7.63 million participants and nearly 20,000 organizers.



Children's Ministries Overview: A Three-Year Comparison

| | <u>2003</u> | <u>2002</u> | <u>2001</u> |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Conference year-end reports | 13 (22%)* | 23 (40%) | 21 (36%) |
| Conferences reporting VBS | 56 (97%)* | 26 (45%) | 26 (45%) |
| Vacation Bible Schools reported | 691 | 446 | 365 |
| VBS Enrollment | 32,202 | 22,181 | 18,225 |
| Percent non-Adventist children | 43% | 44% | 42% |
| Branch Sabbath Schools | 144 | 155 | 93 |
| Leadership training meetings | 38 | 122 | 84 |
| Participants in training events | 2,087 | 3,631 | 2,091 |
| Baptisms resulting from children's outreach | 499 | 511 | 300 |
| On-going Bible study classes | 289 | 260 | 155 |
| Children witnessing | 2,938 | 2,902 | 2,597 |
| Congregations with other weekly programs for children | 151 | 223 | 201 |
| Congregations with children involved in church responsibilities | 235 | 459 | 582 |

* Conferences were asked only to report training events, and to encourage churches to submit their year-end and VBS reports directly. These numbers indicate the conferences from which two or more local church reports were received.

Letters from the Front

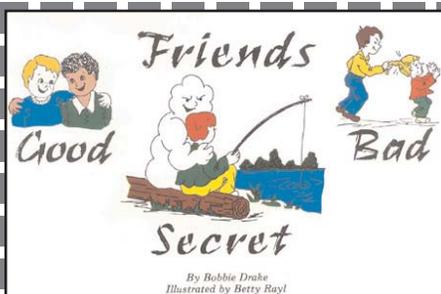
My name is Trish Thompson. I am the child of an extraordinary woman named Karen Reed. When I was a child, my family lived in a tiny community in northwestern Missouri. Our church included few families; most of the people in the pews each Sabbath were on Social Security.

One year, my mom decided to have a Vacation Bible School. It was the only outreach program that the church would support. She worked overtime to make Vacation Bible School a success that first summer. Of the forty or so kids who attended, only three of us were Adventist. I was in fifth grade at the time.

Over the years, Mom's Vacation Bible Schools have continued. And her church is no longer an "old people's congregation." When I visit her, she has a Sabbath School full of kids of all ages.

I share my mom's experience as encouragement to those who live in rural areas with small churches. It is possible to reach the people around us; we have to meet them where they are. Vacation Bible School is a great way to do just that.

~Trish Thompson
Indiana Conference



SAVE \$0.50 when you purchase

**Friends: Good,
Bad, & Secret**

Regular price US\$6.95

This coupon may be redeemed by phoning 800-328-0525, or by visiting www.adventsource.org.

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