Welcome to the Youth Advocacy Task Force’s first ever newsletter! The Youth Advocacy Task Force (YATF), which is coordinated by the Vermont Network Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, is a statewide coalition of Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocates who focus primarily on providing domestic and sexual violence advocacy services and prevention education programs to children and youth in Vermont. As part of our mission, we are committed to acknowledging the specific injustices experienced by young people and to holding their integrity and human rights as paramount in our work to end domestic and sexual violence. We meet regularly to share resources, design children and youth related materials, and support one another in carrying on this important and challenging work.

The idea to produce a newsletter grew out of a desire to share our work and other youth related resources with a wider audience. In each issue, YATF members will have the opportunity to highlight new and innovative happenings in their children and youth programs as well as bring you special focus topics and special program spotlights.

Enjoy!

Special Focus - Book Review

When Dad Hurts Mom:
Healing the Wounds of Children Who Witness Verbal or Physical Abuse
by Lundy Bancroft
Written by: Donna Walter, Children’s Advocate
Women Helping Battered Women

I had the good fortune of reading an advance copy of Lundy Bancroft’s new book When Dad Hurts Mom. The book was released on March 25, 2004 and is currently available. This book takes many of the ideas described in his past two books Why Does He Do That? (2002) and The Batterer as Parent (2002) and puts them into an instructional manual for mothers of children that have been exposed to batterers. Many of the ideas in The Batterer as Parent are described in a straightforward, easy-to-read manner. In this book, Bancroft adds concrete suggestions to help mothers deal with the damaging effects that exposure to battering may have had on their children. There are chapters dealing with both pre- and post-separation issues. Bancroft offers are far from a one size fits all approach. There are suggestions for almost every conceivable situation— from protecting your child’s boundaries to dealing with child protective services. Most importantly, Bancroft continually acknowledges that mothers know their partners best and supports mothers to trust their instincts in all areas including leaving the relationship, arranging visitation and interacting with their children. The book also contains resources and does an excellent job of strengthening their relationships with their children that are relevant whether in the relationship or separated. Bancroft focuses on parenting strategies and offers support to women negotiating the court system.

Throughout the book, Bancroft gives case examples to illustrate his points. Many of these stories will be familiar to anyone who has worked with battered women and their children. Bancroft's examples cover a range of batterers that use various tactics of abuse as well as many different reactions from children. The strategies for supporting children that Bancroft offers are far from a one-size-fits-all approach. There are suggestions for almost every conceivable situation—from protecting your child's boundaries to dealing with child protective services. Most importantly, Bancroft continually acknowledges that mothers know their partners best and supports mothers to trust their instincts in all areas including leaving the relationship, arranging visitation and interacting with their children. The book also contains resources and does an excellent job of strengthening their relationships with their children that are relevant whether in the relationship or separated. Bancroft focuses on parenting strategies and offers support to women negotiating the court system.
Program Highlights from some YATF members...

Women Helping Batter Women
Donna M. Walter, MA

Things are busy as usual here in Burlington. In the past few months we have had mostly single woman in shelter, but have been working with families in safe homes and also in the community. Our housing and shelter program is offering office hours at both PATH and Burlington Housing. This allows clients to meet with an advocate in the community and also allows us to advocate for current service users while working with these agencies. Training of Burlington Housing and PATH staff and increased sensitivity is also a goal of this endeavor.

The Education program has also been very busy. Consultant Lori Hayes is working with staff and volunteers on making the most of their presentation skills as the newly founded speakers bureau gets off the ground. Many presentations are happening at different places including the local parent child centers, COTS (Committee on Temporary Shelter) family shelters, local high schools, colleges and other community locations. Staff members from all programs have been participating in these presentations.

The Children and Youth services program is currently offering 6 groups for children who have exposed to batterers. The preschool groups run all year long and are available until children enter first grade. Groups for school-aged children are held in the schools that the children attend for eight-week sessions; one of these groups is for middle school girls and has been running continuously through the school year. This year the children’s program has two interns, both from the Social work department at UVM. Our interns hosted a party for mothers and their children in a community location as a thank you to the families with which they worked. As the end of the semester quickly approaches we will be losing many wonderful interns and volunteers.

Battered Women’s Services and Shelter
Jessica & Meg

Happy warm weather everyone. We have transitioned into our “semi-new” positions as youth and outreach coordinators quite smoothly. Our shelter is also going through a transition at the moment, due to the many renovations which will be beginning within the next month and lasting until the end of August. With the many constructional changes will come a handicap accessible bedroom, additional bedroom space, therefore providing more privacy for women, a separate children’s playroom, and more conference and office space for staff.

We recently attended a wonderful training entitled “A New Vision for Teen Sexuality,” put on by Planned Parenthood of New England. Judy Cyprian, our group facilitator, gave us many useful pieces of information including concrete activities to facilitate with teens in the classroom. She also addressed the importance of being up to date with the recent media influences facing youth including music, movies, and printed materials. Overall, Judy’s workshop left us feeling more comfortable when talking about sexuality with teens, and therefore making future conversations in the classroom even more accessible.

We have also recently finished up a three part all girls’ group at Crossett Brook Middle School in Waterbury. The group consisted of 10 wonderful 7th and 8th graders who were full of creative energy and had plenty to say. Throughout our three sessions together, we discussed healthy and unhealthy relationships, gender stereotypes, and the differences between flirting and hurting. We hope to continue this group and others by meeting once a week for an indefinite period of time.

Finally, we are continuing to co-facilitate education programs with Jason Patrissi, a parole officer and educator at the Department of Corrections in Barre, Jason, a former educator at Clarina Howard Nichols Center, has accompanied us on a few school programs already, and is scheduled for indefinite period of time.

Over the last year, the Youth Advocacy Task Force has focused much of its time strategizing about how to better involve Youth in our work to end domestic and sexual violence. We started this work by designing and disseminating a survey to youth which asked questions about issues that concern them, how they access support and information, and how they see themselves being or becoming involved in their communities. In our next newsletter, we will share the inspiring results of our survey as well as some of the planning that we have started as a result.

Thank You’s...

A huge thanks goes out to Sandy Hart, Children’s DV/SV Specialist at Umbrella for putting so much time and energy into the design and layout of this newsletter.

A special thanks to Amy Torohla, Child Advocacy Coordinator at the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Assault, for all of her editing skills and creativity that helped to make this newsletter possible.

Thanks to Meredith Needham for providing incredible original artwork from which we determined our YATF logo and cool dancing letterhead.

Thanks to Donna Walter for always being willing to pitch in and assist with the two spotlight articles for our first issue.

And, thanks to all of the YATF members who provided program highlights, design feedback, and energy toward this project.
Creating a new curriculum for the group. Our next round of groups will begin in the fall. Much of our energy will be spent attempting to establish allowing more children in the inclusion creating a mentoring program at VAV and establishing a pool of qualified volunteers to provide childcare for our residents on an.

I've done a lot of classes on bullying and harassment, healthy relationships, dating violence, anger, emotions, and personal safety. I will continue. I've been co-facilitating our children's support groups with and many more. We are extremely lucky to have Jason and his creativity and expertise present with us in the middle and high-school classrooms. We have many exciting school and community presentations planned the summer and upcoming school year.

Voices Against Violence/ Laurie's House

Emily Allard

Hi! My name is Emily Allard and I'm the Children's Services Coordinator at Voices Against Violence/Laurie's House in St. Albans. I've spent my first several months making contacts at our local schools and working on the children's program in our shelter. I've been very busy doing prevention education in the schools, and reached several hundred children so far.

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I've been co-facilitating our children's support groups with the Coordinator of the Children's Upstream Services (CUPS) program in Franklin & Grand Isle Counties. She told me about the majority of the responsibility for the groups. Our current round of groups is ending this month. We will be spending the summer searching for or creating a new curriculum for the group. Our next round of groups will begin in the fall. Much of our energy will be spent attempting to establish groups in the Enosburg/Richford area and in Grand Isle County. This will hopefully allow more children in the rural parts of our service area to attend the support groups.

Other upcoming projects include creating a mentoring program at VAV and establishing a pool of qualified volunteers to provide child care for our residents on an as-needed basis.

YATF Happenings

Amy Torchia

As Children's Advocacy Coordinator at the Network Office in Montpelier, I am privileged to spend much of my time supporting the work of the Youth Advocacy Task Force. In addition to producing this newsletter, the YATF is in the process of updating a directory of children and youth related domestic and sexual violence services in Vermont. We are also revising and having re-printed (thanks to a printing donation from National Life Insurance in Montpelier) the third edition of Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships: What You Need To Know. This very popular outreach booklet for teens and young adults contains accessible information about teen dating and sexual violence, consent, date rape drugs, and ways to support survivors and hold perpetrators accountable. The booklet has teen specific resource section in the back broken down by area.

On the statewide front, a collaborative group including Law Enforcement, SRS, and The Network has completed work on a nationally pioneering protocol for enhanced police response to children at the scene of domestic violence incidents. The protocol is currently being distributed to law enforcement agencies throughout Vermont. For a copy of the document or for further information, please contact: amy@vtnetwork.org or 802-223-1302.

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**Voices Against Violence/ Laurie's House**

**Dianne Vock**

My name is Dianne Vock and I work at Voices Against Violence in St. Albans as an advocate/educator. Besides supporting and advocating for victims and survivors of domestic and sexual abuse, I will also be doing outreach to Franklin County and Grand Isle County teenagers. My primary focus will be on teenage dating violence. However, I will also be presenting issues regarding emotional, physical, and verbal abuse, personal boundaries, respect, bullying, harassment, intimidation, gender issues, date rape, the effects of substance abuse, and healthy vs. abusive relationships. At this time, I am asking for input that might help me best meet the needs of teens in Franklin/Grand Isle Counties. My email is dvock@cvoeo.org or you could reach me at 802-524-8538.

**WISE**

**Amanda Cochran**

We at Women’s Information Service (WISE) have been working hard to incorporate more children’s programming as well as trying to create innovation in our current youth and community outreach programs.

Our Women and Children’s support groups are running right now with 10 children participating. We have welcomed three new volunteers to co-facilitate the children’s groups. Recently, the children created colorful Mother’s Day cards that helped them to express all that their moms do for them every day. We had a lot of fun presenting them to their moms!

Our Youth Outreach program that presents five different workshops at Upper Valley middle and high schools, has enjoyed some new twists. At Hartland Middle School, I, as the youth educator teamed up with a male volunteer to do six classes of our “Power in Relationships” presentation. We are going to try continue this type of male/female partnering in the classroom in the future.

The Children’s Hospital at Dartmouth recently held a health and safety fair and we sure had a great time creating our “WISE says, hands are for holding” banner that was filled with the finger-painted hands of children passing by our booth. It was hard not to get the message when you walked by, “hands are NOT for hitting!”

Finally, we have been continuing our efforts to educate our community about the effects of domestic violence on children. Last month we took part in a presentation with Ellie BrentMaier from the DV Unit in SRS and Betsey McAlister-Groves, Director of the Child Witness To Violence Project at Boston Medical Center. The training was for all child-care providers in the Upper Valley and was focused on the impact of domestic violence on children. WISE has also been able to present to mental-health providers as well as school-based professionals on this important subject.

**SAFE**

**Amy Hornblas**

SAFE has completed its “TV Detectives” program with two after-school groups at local elementary schools. This is part of our multi-pronged media literacy efforts and went very well.

The prevention-based SAFE Teen Group had a fabulous time at our annual slumber party at the Craftsbury Outdoor Center. The teens all stretched themselves a good deal through activities led by two Sterling College students.

Our “Safe and Strong” program for students with special needs received some press coverage last month and the classes themselves continue to go very well at two area high schools.

Lots of adult education happening as well, including a Teen Dating Violence training for the Police Academy and “Rediscovering Your Tiger” workshop at the SV Survivors’ Conference.

Busy and fun, always!

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**Rutland County Women’s Network and Shelter**

**Liz O’Neill**

The kids’ group run by Liz O’Neill, at RCWN is in its 11th year running, having provided guidance, support and self-esteem to over 100 kids. That may not sound like a very large number, but many of these kids have attended for many years in a row. Several began when they were 6 and are now 13, some when they were 10 and are now 16. They say they want to stay when they’re in college! Liz’s hope for the group is that it be a place that most of us were never afforded, where kids can have experience to which they are unaccustomed. In her group, kids are listened to with respectful silence. Liz orchestrates this as well as possible with the “talking father” concept. Some group members have gotten so involved with what they’re saying that a feather has been found to be too fragile. So, the kids have begun to use a “talking bear” instead. The rules are quite simple: whoever has the “talking bear” has the attention and respect of everyone else. No one is allowed to laugh at, argue with, put down, swear at, or strike any one. Recently the group of 10-13 year olds grew to 16 members, so Liz had to split the group. The kids say they’re going to go out and find more kids for their new group. And that’s the way it’s been for 11 years.

**Vermont Network Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, PO Box 405, Montpelier, VT 05601; Phone (802) 223-1302, Fax (802) 223-6943; TTY (802) 223-1115; Contact: amy@vtnetwork.org**

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**Sexual Assault Crisis Team of Washington County**

SACT continues to serve youth in Washington County on sexual violence issues. SACT offers programs to schools, including all grades from K-12, and includes programs dealing in bullying, healthy sexuality, dating violence, date rape drugs, etc. SACT facilitates groups for youth, offers individual counseling, assists with peer support, and other support groups. SACT’s legal project offers assistance to victims of sexual violence crimes, providing advocacy at the hospital, at the police station, and in the court room. SACT also has an attorney on staff who can provide legal assistance to victims and their non-offending parents. SACT works in collaboration with other community resources in providing a total package of support to victims and survivors of sexual violence.

SACT has a new project, the SACT MOBILE, a mobile information unit to provide information and awareness to the communities in Washington County. SACT just began this project and has attended a couple of schools in Washington County and the reception has been great! The SACT MOBILE contains information and resources from many organizations in Washington County. Videos are available to watch in the SACT MOBILE. There has been a tremendous response to the video, “Gonna Make it” produced by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape. Teachers have incorporated the SACT MOBILE into their class curriculum and used it as a mini “fieldtrip.”

The SACT MOBILE greets guests with our very own bubble machine! This is a big hit with kids and adults alike. The staff likes it too! Music, videos, questionnaires, printed information and displays are all part of this new project.

Unfortunately, we have been seeing a large number of teen victims of sexual violence. Staff has been busy answering these calls and supporting these victims through the criminal justice system.

**Clara Howard Nichols Center**

**Sandra Brauer**

The 2003/2004 school year has come to a close and my thoughts are already focused on next year’s curriculum. I spent this past year researching and trying out new activities related to developing healthy relationships. I expect next year to be exciting and challenging on a number of levels. I am anticipating more requests for our services, with the passing of the bullying prevention law. Five