

Healthy Brains for Children

December 2009 Newsletter

From the Director

The river was the lifeblood of the village. All day the villagers expended their energy making a living from the river. One day, a villager saw a baby floating down the river. She pulled the baby out of the river.



More and more babies appeared floating down the river. The villagers were spending more energy saving and raising babies from the river than they were making a living from the river. More and more village people were jumping in to help pull the children out of the river. A villager was standing on the river bank. "Help us," the villagers screamed. "No," the villager said, "I am going to go up stream to find out why the babies are being thrown into the river and stop it from happening."

(Thanks to Kari Fletcher)

I tell this story to people when I describe the mission of Healthy Brains for Children. We are like the villager on the river bank. We have been up the river and have seen why so many of our children are struggling in our society, and what we have seen is the epidemic of prenatal exposure to alcohol. Because we are aware of this epidemic, we are singularly focused on stopping prenatal exposure to alcohol.

Success Story

If you do not read any other section of the newsletter, please read this story. This is what we are all about, our first success story.

A Dime?

It all started on a little road trip with my mother. She began to tell me about this book she was reading...I was already not interested. Then she handed me a dime and told me to look at President Roosevelt's ear. I took the dime in my hand and rotated it to see this ever-so-magnificent ear my mother wanted me to see. With that sincere and ever so caring motherly tone, she explained that the size of that ear is the same size as a three week old fetus. This got my attention, unknowing to her at the time. I was shocked and realized that at that point, at three weeks, most women don't know they are even pregnant. For me, physically seeing the size of that ear, and knowing that a baby is that size just three weeks after being conceived...it really hit me.

At that moment, I realized that I, myself, was living the "college life" and drinking alcohol. I was dating a wonderful man, but having a child was not in my planner for the near future. With the image of the dime in mind, I decided to cut back on my drinking, especially until I got settled with this new birth control I was on to help control my ever growing endometriosis.

My mother didn't realize the impact that the book and dime had on me until just over two months after our little road trip. I told her that she was expecting her first grandchild. Knowing that I abstained from alcohol, I am relieved that my child is not and will not be prenatally exposed to alcohol. I see that I have already been making decisions that will affect the rest of my child's life. I have my mother to thank for opening my eyes to not just the dangers of drinking alcohol and all the usual "parental talks" that come up with the choice to drink alcohol but also for taking the extra step that I believe everyone should take and address prenatal exposure to alcohol and the affects it has on everyone.

(The young lady who wrote this story is now a member of a chapter of Healthy Brains for Children, has given a speech in one of her college classes about what she has learned about Prenatal Exposure to Alcohol, and is working to start a chapter at her college.)

Road Trip

In November, I was able to take a road trip that covered three states and over 3500 miles, presenting to communities in each state about my research and Healthy Brains for Children.

Billings, MT - Charlie Hanson, a former student of Grand Rapids, MN, whose mother was mentioned in The Fatal Link, arranged for a presentation to the Billings Lions Club, as well as a 20 minute radio interview. Both went well, with connections being made in the Billings, MT area.

Lewiston, ID – I met over breakfast with Representative Liz Chavez, from Lewiston, ID. We had a nice visit about the efforts she has sustained over the past many years raising awareness of FAS in Idaho, including legislation that was a direct result of her efforts. As the Idaho chapters develop, she is interested in helping Healthy Brains for Children devise a long-range strategic plan to impact future legislation.

Twin Falls/Boise – I met with Janet Gates of Boise, a founding board member of Healthy Brains for Children, while she was in Twin Falls visiting her family. We are looking at ways to initiate chapters in both locations.

Pocatello, ID – Tim and Lori Bridges, adoptive parents of an FASD daughter, contacted me prior to my trip and emphatically stated they wanted to help start a chapter in the Pocatello area. He was quite surprised at the level of interest in this subject. By the time I arrived in Pocatello, he had scheduled a presentation with the Gate City Noon Rotary and had made the arrangements to have a community presentation in the evening. Three television stations were present at the Rotary presentation. Ten people signed up to be a part of the start-up of a chapter in the Pocatello area.

Fargo/Moorhead, MN – I met with two people from the Fargo/Moorhead area. We are scheduling a week in February for me to be in the Fargo Moorhead area presenting to service clubs and other organizations in the effort to start a chapter in that area.

Chapter Reports

On September, 17, 2009, the first chapter, Grand Rapids, MN, met for the first time. Here is what is happening since that time.

Grand Rapids Chapter

This chapter has scheduled their first awareness activity at the Women's Expo being held at the community college in February. They have obtained the use of a fetus display and are researching the damage that happens throughout the pregnancy so they can show what damage happens at what time during the pregnancy. They have been on the radio and local access television reporting their start-up and mission. The television station has asked that they provide a monthly awareness segment. They have police personnel, chemical dependency professionals, parents of FASD children, lay people, business people, and service club members in their chapter. Their start-up membership fee was donated by a local business. They have submitted a funding request to the local Rotary

Clubs to fund an awareness project in the Grand Rapids area.

Brainerd Lakes Chapter

This chapter successfully requested the start-up fee of \$500 from the local Elks Club. One of their founding members was interviewed by the Brainerd Dispatch in celebration of Adoption Month. The front page story told of her adopted son and his diagnosis of FAS. In the story, she told of her involvement with Healthy Brains for Children. See the story on our homepage.

This chapter has parents of FASD children, education professionals, clergy, retired business people, active business people, and service club members on their starting steering committee. They are looking forward to working with the Brainerd Rotary clubs on the Rotary project due to start in March.

Culdesac, ID

This small school in west central Idaho has a couple of teachers who expressed interest in a chapter. Already, one teacher has been having discussions with students about the dangers of prenatal exposure to alcohol.

Southeast Idaho Chapter

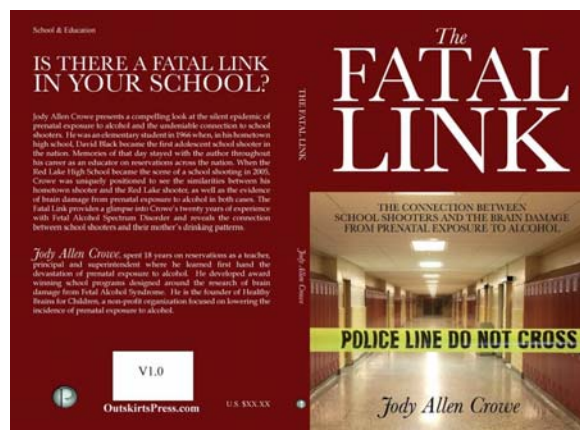
On November 10, ten people indicated an interest to initiate a chapter in the Pocatello area. A week later, six people met and started the process of starting a chapter. The steering committee named the chapter and began the process of becoming incorporated in Idaho. They suggested using a dime as a membership pin, with the thought that the dime would be a good conversation starter.

Start a Chapter in Your Community

**Be a change agent in your community.
Contact me to find out how YOU can start
a chapter of Healthy Brains for Children
in YOUR community!**

Donate to HBFC

Healthy Brains for Children will send you The Fatal Link when you donate \$20 or more. Send your tax deductible donation to: Healthy Brains for Children, Inc. 14412 Laurian Lane, Brainerd, MN 56401



**Please consider a donation to
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Contact Us

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To contact some in one of our chapters go to our Chapters page on our website.