

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Mission Statement

The Children, Youth, and Family Consortium was established in fall 1991 in an effort to bring together the varied competencies of the University of Minnesota and the vital resources of Minnesota's communities to enhance the ability of individuals and organizations to address critical health, education, and social policy concerns in ways that improve the well-being of Minnesota children, youth, and families.

The quotes in this newsletter were gathered from people who attended Family Re-Union IV: The Family and The Media.

Media and the Family What's behind the hype?

by Martha Farrell Erickson, Director, Children, Youth and Family Consortium

The impact of media on children and families has been a hot topic this year as campaign rhetoric winds up for 1996. Behind all the finger-pointing and clichés about family values is a complex subject that touches all of our lives. On July 9 and 10 nearly 1000 people gathered in Nashville, Tennessee to turn this topic inside out, examining what we really know about media's influence on children, what needs to be done about it, and who ought to do it. For the second year in a row the Children, Youth & Family Consortium was co-host of Family Re-Union, an annual family policy conference moderated by Vice President Al Gore and his wife Tipper. Our partner in hosting this year's conference was the Tennessee General Assembly's Select Committee on Children and Youth, chaired by Representative Bill Purcell and directed by Dr. Karen Edwards, both longtime child advocates. Family Re-Union IV brought together researchers, educators, human service providers, religious leaders, advertisers, media industry leaders, and policy makers - including President Bill Clinton.

In this issue of Consortium Connections we bring you highlights and insights from Family Re-Union IV. And we ask you to join with us in moving from talk to action as we seek positive ways to use media for the common good, without trampling on First Amendment rights. We all have a place in this important effort for children and families.

The Impact Of Media On Children And Families

The conference began with a discussion of what is known about media influences on children and families. As often happens, conversation gravitated toward the well-documented effects of media violence on children's attitudes and behavior. Particularly for children who are already vulnerable for other reasons, extensive exposure to media violence promotes aggression and desensitizes youngsters to the emotional impact of violence.

While media violence is an easy target for criticism, children and youth at the conference also spoke eloquently about some of the more subtle effects of media on their lives: encouragement of early sexual activity; for girls especially, messages about the ideal body image, to which they can never quite measure up; gender and ethnic stereotyping; and, in general, a distorted view of the way real people live. Viewers of all ages spoke to the overwhelming power of advertising to turn us into insatiable consumers by the age of three.

Beyond the influence of media's messages, the presence of TV as a member of the family has its own effect. Extensive TV viewing is associated with a sedentary lifestyle (and its associated health problems) and with social isolation. And as more and more families have multiple TV sets in the home, family

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Consortium Connections

Consortium Connections is published three times a year by the Children, Youth, and Family Consortium: A University and Community Collaboration.

Publication staff: Michael Brott, Judith Kahn

Children, Youth and Family Consortium
University of Minnesota
12 McNeal Hall, 1985 Buford Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55108
612/626-1212 Fax 612/626-1210
email: cyfcec@maroon.tc.umn.edu

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Marilyn Larson, Director, Community Connectors Inst.
Karla Burkle Graduate Assistant
Galina Briskina Undergraduate Assistant

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members may become increasingly cut off from each other as they each retreat to watch their own favorite programs.

Of course, media can be a positive force as well. Quality children's programming has been shown to enhance learning, promote academic skills, and encourage pro-social behaviors such as caring and sharing. (Thank you, Mr. Rogers!) For viewers of any age, programs showing healthy relationships and nonviolent conflict resolution provide positive models. Public health initiatives, such as Harvard's designated driver campaign a few years ago, demonstrate how positive attitudes and behaviors can be influenced through a systematic effort to write those behaviors into scripts of popular TV shows. And the power of advertising can be turned to the common good through effective public service announcements.



So, What Needs To Happen And Who Is Responsible?

The latter question is easy - we ALL are responsible. And there is plenty of work to go around. Although some points of action are more controversial than others, the following ideas lit the fire of many conference participants.

- Parents are and should be the primary regulators of their children's use of media. Even when children are exposed to harmful material, parents may turn it into a positive learning experience through thoughtful discussion with their child. Many participants noted, however, that parents already are overburdened and it is unrealistic to expect them to be the sole protectors of their children from the bombardment of current negative programming.
- Value-based associations, which families could choose to join, might help parents identify films and TV programs that are acceptable - or unacceptable - within their own belief system.
- Parents need and deserve the benefit of technology that helps them regulate their children's television viewing. For example, both President Clinton and Vice President Gore expressed their support for legislation requiring that all new television sets be equipped with a "v-chip" to allow parents to block out unacceptable programming. Technological developments are happening faster than we can write about them.
- Schools can play a role in helping students become media literate, and curricula are available to assist teachers in this important role.
- The media industry must share responsibility as well. Suggested action steps include a stronger commitment to quality children's programming; development of rating systems for TV and music that will help consumers make informed choices; and a willingness to enter the best interests of children into the equation that guides their programming decisions.
- Likewise advertisers need to use their creativity to find ways to act on principle and still meet the bottom line. (See Kevin Lynch's article on page 3).
- The role of government is the most controversial issue of all; how do we protect our children AND our cherished right to free speech? But many conference participants called for strengthening the FCC, enforcing existing

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laws (e.g. the Children's Television Act of 1990), and generally asking more in return from the broadcasters who are allowed to come into our homes via the public airways. And many, but not all, conference participants called for renewed support for public broadcasting as an invaluable free alternative to the market-driven commercial networks.

These suggested directions for action are not only about harnessing the negative forces, but about seizing the opportunities that media present. How can we use media to create a positive culture that encourages respect, responsibility, caring and a healthy zest for life? In the context of market forces that often run counter to the best interests of children and families, how can we use our collective energy to call for a better way? These are questions that will guide our follow-up efforts in the coming year.

If you wish to receive announcements of our media and family follow-up meetings, call the Consortium at 626-1212.

"For the first time in the history of television, an opportunity exists. I don't think the industry is reacting like the tobacco industry anymore. More than 70% agree something needs to be done."

Jeffrey Cole, Director
UCLA Center for Communication Policy

"There are people in the industry that want to do good. It's going to take a united front of advertisers and producers and network people to make the change."

Ken Wales, Executive Producer
CBS series, Christy

Business, Television And Families

by Kevin Lynch, © 1995 CEO, Lynch Jarvis Jones Inc.

As a participant in Family Reunion IV and the experts forum that preceded it, I observed three general lines of dialogue. The first concluded with overwhelming evidence that television content, particularly violent and sexual content, has a negative effect on children and families. The second area of discussion focused on a sacred regard for the First Amendment, and widespread opposition to anything with the slightest resemblance to censorship. The final focus was on the responsibility of parents to regulate proper use of television within the household, and the role of media literacy in shaping appropriate responses to television content.

The discussion was enlightening and passionate, but I was deeply disturbed by what wasn't discussed sufficiently: the relationship between society, the media and business. I believe that any serious attempt to examine what can be done to avoid the deleterious effects of television must begin with an examination of this relationship.

Free Broadcast Television: Intrusive And Invasive

Free Broadcast Television (FBTV) is fundamentally different than any other media.

Other media must be actively sought by those who wish to consume them.

FBTV, on the other hand, is an intrusive, nay, invasive medium with unparalleled power for implanting images. It is in the air(waves). The air enters your home whether you want it there or not. The air is often toxic.

Because it is invasive and involuntary, it is naive to say that the responsibility for protecting a family from FBTV lies entirely with parents. Parents shouldn't need V Chips and blocking devices on their TVs any more than they should need barbed wired fences around their yards.

No! Society has a responsibility to keep intruders from roaming the streets freely.

The argument has been made that you can keep the intruder out by not owning a television. This is equally naive. In today's society, you must own a television to have access to the threshold level of information needed to be a functioning member of society. Owning a TV is like having a door on your house: You can't get by without one, but having one does not mean you welcome trespassers.

A Publicly Supported Commercial Event

FBTV has no reason for being except as a tool for commerce. Broadcasting companies exist for the sole purpose of

delivering a profit to shareholders.

FBTV earns a profit by delivering an audience to advertisers, its one and only customer. Advertisers buy FBTV because it produces a return on investment. The moment FBTV stops delivering a desirable audience, in a state of mind susceptible to advertising's influence, advertisers will stop buying it.

It's a simple business transaction. But it would not be possible without massive public subsidies of the FBTV oligopoly, which occurs at two levels:

- For a relatively low license fee, society grants broadcasters exclusive use of limited airwaves. Without this precious raw material, there would be no profit.
- The advertiser's expense is tax deductible to the corporation. Surprise! As a taxpayer, you're paying for toxic FBTV.

Against this backdrop, the idea of "free speech", with regard to FBTV, takes on a new meaning. In fact, there is nothing "free" about it.

Hiding Behind The First Amendment

One of the stipulations of most discussions of family and media is that First Amendment rights are inviolable. It is horrendously politically incorrect

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Campaign Against Violence

by Turn Off The Violence in association with the Minnesota Medical Association

We'd all like to turn off the violence. Wouldn't it be nice if it were that easy? If we could turn off all the violence with the push of a button or the turn of a knob? Well, there is one kind of violence we can turn off that way and maybe it's a small step in the right direction.

Beginning October 12, 1995, we're asking people to turn off violent television programs, not listen to violent music, not go to violent movies, not rent violent videos - and to choose to solve problems in nonviolent ways.

Who will decide what's "violent?" You will. But look closely. We've been witnessing violence for so long we may not even recognize it as violence any more. And that's the problem.

CAN YOU RECOGNIZE VIOLENCE?

For too many people, violence is becoming an ordinary way of resolving conflict, demonstrating power, releasing emotions, or being entertained.

Turn off violence in all its ugly forms.

Physical violence, Verbal violence
Sexual violence, Gang violence
Domestic violence, Violence in music
Playground violence, Hate crimes

Violence is any time someone hurts another on purpose with words or actions.

Each of us has the power to turn off violence beginning in our own homes.

The Seven Guiding Principles of Turn Off the Violence

1. Turn Off the Violence is a simple campaign, focusing on TWO OBJECTIVES:
(a) to educate people about the negative influence of violent entertainment on our attitudes about the acceptability of violence; and
(b) to educate people, especially young people, about legal, safe, and positive ways of resolving conflict.

2. Turn Off the Violence is a COALITION of individuals and organizations. The coalition offers the strengths of shared knowledge, shared resources, and shared purpose.
3. Turn Off the Violence addresses ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE.
4. Turn Off the Violence is INCLUSIVE of many groups. Because no fragment of society has been left untouched by violence, it is important to involve as many diverse groups as possible.
5. Turn Off the Violence is a GRASSROOTS campaign. We operate on a limited budget and encourage participation by groups and individuals in all phases of planning and implementation.
6. Turn Off the Violence is NOT A CENSORSHIP project. We do not compile lists of music, movies, or

TV shows we think are violent. Instead, we ask people to make careful, informed, personal choices about entertainment. We encourage people to voice their opinions to producers and advertisers. If enough people begin expressing their preferences for non-violent media, the market for violent entertainment will shrink and become unprofitable.

7. Turn Off the Violence is ONLY THE FIRST STEP. Many influences shape violent attitudes and behaviors, but violence in entertainment is one kind of violence we can turn off. Then we can begin to teach our children appropriate ways of dealing with conflict.

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Tips for parents to stop the media violence

1. Set clear limits. Limit your children's daily TV viewing and video game playing time to one or two hours — or less.
2. Don't use TV as a babysitter. It's easy to tell your children "go watch TV" when you're busy (or can't think of anything else for them to do), but that can begin a pattern of indiscriminate viewing (or video game playing).
3. Don't make TV the focal point. Avoid placing the TV in the most prominent location in your home, and keep TV sets out of your kid's rooms.
4. Offer other enjoyable activities. Encourage reading, music-making, hobbies, sports and social activities as alternatives to television.
5. Choose what to watch. Avoid "channel surfing" and never use TV as background noise.
6. Ban unacceptable programs. Teach children critical viewing skills and be clear about why you object to certain programs, movies, and video games. Make sure your own actions are consistent with the values you enforce.
7. Identify high-quality programs. Teach children to be critical of overly commercial, simplistic, violent, and unrealistic programming, but also provide examples of what you consider high quality programming.
8. Know what your kids are watching. Watch some of your children's favorite TV shows.
9. Discuss media violence. Talk about non-violent ways to resolve conflict.
10. Voice your opinion about local TV programming and movies. Call or write your local stations and the networks to express your opinion about programs and commercials.

MediaNet/MediaForum:

The Family and The Media

The Children Youth and Family Consortium's Electronic Clearinghouse, available through the internet, is a collection of information promoting the health and well being of children, youth and families. Much of the information showcases special work or research being done at the University of Minnesota and surrounding communities. There is also information from other institutions and organizations throughout the country.

This summer, the Clearinghouse added **MediaForum**, an electronic resource collection and networking tool developed for Family Re-Union IV: The Family and The Media. (This service was previously known as MediaNet; due to popular use of the name, we've changed our service's name to MediaForum.)



MediaForum includes conference information as well as related research, policy and opinion documents. It informs users about the myriad of social, economic and policy factors around media's influence in the lives of children and families. And, MediaForum will continue to provide an Electronic Bulletin Board/discussion group (Media-L) to facilitate the discussion of issues covered at the conference, increase the number and diversity of voices participating in this discussion, and hopefully to move our nation toward policies and action.

There are two sections of particular interest. The section called "Effects" contains several recent research studies including papers by Wartella, Wright, Huston, Murray and Walsh. Under "Actions" are tip sheets on how you and your children can be better media consumers, as well as information on several public education campaigns which successfully used the media.

Conference participants as well as members of the general public are welcome to use MediaForum and participate in the bulletin board discussions.

We are constantly adding to the collection of information available on MediaForum and would appreciate your suggestions and contributions. Mail your applied research, policy articles, editorials, program descriptions, and recommendations to the CYF Consortium. When possible, please provide an electronic copy (e.g., e-mail or on disk).

Consortium staff are available to demonstrate the system or to do workshops on how to access the Internet and the resources available there. For additional information on demonstrations and workshops, call Lori at (612) 625-7251, or MediaForum, email: cyfcec@maroon.tc.umn.edu

Directions for Accessing CEC and MediaForum

You can find MediaForum on the world wide web at:
<http://www.fsci.umn.edu/cyfc/cyfc.html>

To access MediaForum through the Gopher system, select "Other Gophers" and make the following choices:

North America
USA
Minnesota
Children, Youth & Family Consortium Clearinghouse

The TELNET address is gopher-
cec.mes.umn.edu:1300

To join the discussion on MediaForum's electronic bulletin board:

- Send a message to LISTSERV@vm1.spcs.umn.edu, leave the subject blank start the text on the first line - text should read - SUBSCRIBE MEDIA-L
userid@node name
- You will receive a return e-mail message confirming receipt of your comments and that they were appended to the discussion.
- The topics change periodically; the subject line message will change with the topic. See the MediaForum bulletin board for current topics and how to participate.

"With greater liberty and freedom comes greater responsibility and the need for self-discipline. The media is, without a doubt, a teacher in our society and we must hold them to the same standards as we hold our educators."

Hubert H. Humphrey III,
Attorney General
State of Minnesota

"There seems to be two options available to families. Monitor your children's TV watching and talk with them about what they see. Or turn it off. These two options are not realistic; we have to provide more ways that parents can choose."

Vice President Al Gore, Jr.

Consortium Update

Home Work: Expanding support for parenting

Home Work: Expanding Support for Parenting is a project supported through the Children, Youth, and Family Consortium by the Minnesota Extension Service, College of Education and Human Development, and College of Human Ecology, all part of the University of Minnesota. The project was initiated as a practical response to the expressed need to inform and support parents and others nurturing the learning and development of children in their homes.

The goal of Home Work is to develop a catalog of inexpensive, parent friendly, and culturally sensitive materials appropriate for use without professional guidance or instruction. Materials will be organized based on the National Extension Parent Education Model's six parent skill categories: Care for Self, Understand, Guide, Nurture, Motivate, and Advocate. The parenting materials will be developmentally appropriate for four age groups: infancy and early childhood, elementary school, middle school, and secondary school age children.

More information on the catalog will be available in subsequent issues of this newsletter.

New Staff

Welcome **Rebecca Cullen!** Becky joined the Children, Youth and Family Consortium staff in August as Associate Administrator. She has worked at the University since 1980 including experience with the Office of Research and Technology Transfer Administration and the Department of Pediatrics in the Medical School.

A Note from Our New Chair

Robert Blum, MD, MPH, Director, Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Health, Department of Pediatrics, University of Minnesota Medical School

It is an honor, though a bit intimidating, for me to assume the Chair of the Advisory Council for the Children, Youth and Family Consortium. I am honored because I have the opportunity to work even more closely than ever before with an outstanding and extremely dedicated group of people who include not only those who are on the staff of the Consortium, but those who are on the Advisory Council, the Dean's Council and, most importantly, the numerous working groups that truly operationalize the vision of a University-Community collaboration.

I am also intimidated to take over from Rich Weinberg, who, more than anyone, cultivated the concept of an all University-Community Consortium for Children, Youth and Families and for whom today's efforts represent the realization of a dream. Since I had the opportunity to serve on the original planning committee for the Consortium, and have served on the Advisory Council since its inception, I feel I have a pretty good sense of its vision.

Rich often refers to the Consortium as an essence. Clearly, the linkage and facilitative functions of the Consortium are frequently difficult to pinpoint but essential to our mission. He also uses the word synergy to describe the Consortium, for when you bring



Robert Blum

people together from across the university, metropolitan and greater Minnesota communities on behalf of young people, the effects are multiplicative rather than additive.

But the challenges that face young people and their families today in many ways are more difficult and more extreme than ever

before. The Consortium must be the voice of the University advocating on behalf of children, youth and their families. We must work closely with the State Legislature, state agencies, and community organizations to better understand the issues faced by young people and to help identify effective strategies in addressing those problems. We must provide a single point of access to those from outside the University community who don't even know where to go first when seeking to tap University resources on children and youth issues. We must be willing to develop new partnerships in education, bringing the expertise of the community into the University and the expertise of the University to all who work for children and youth whether they have a Ph.D. or a G.E.D. as a diploma. We must be willing to fail, for if we are not willing to try things that do not work, we are not trying hard enough.

I look forward to working with you on behalf of all children, youth and families in our communities.

Karla Buerkle joined the Consortium staff in July as a graduate assistant for the Home Work project. Karla is a fifth year doctoral student in School Psychology, College of Education and Human Development. She is currently working on her dissertation which explores the meaning of residential mobility and school changes in the lives of high-risk children and families.

Galina Briskina joined the Consortium staff in the late spring of this year to work on the Electronic Clearinghouse. Galina is a CLA senior majoring in Linguistics; originally from St. Petersburg, Russia, she and her family came to the United States four years ago.

New Photojournalism Project

The Consortium has received funding from the University of Minnesota Partnership to Address Violence Through Education (PAVE) to begin to develop and produce Seeds of Violence or Seeds of Promise, a photo/editorial project. The project will include reports that incorporate the learnings and research of the University of Minnesota; each report will include both problems and suggested solutions. Topics include: factors that predict a child will grow into a successful adult; the impact of father involvement on children and families; the power of emotional investment in children; and communities that are putting children first.

“Responsible Fatherhood”

The Consortium was awarded a sub-contract on a Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) project, “Responsible Fatherhood: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations for Policy and Program Development.” The purpose of this project is to improve DHHS’s ability to better use scarce resources to facilitate more responsible parenting through: 1) a synthesis of the pertinent research literature and empirical findings on paternal involvement and paternal conduct that enhance child development and child and family well-being, including specific program interventions designed for fathers; and 2) the development of a theoretical framework to inform program design and evaluation methodology decisions in the area of responsible fatherhood and paternal involvement.

Consortium Electronic Clearinghouse (CEC) Reorganized

The reorganization of CEC by subject area was completed this spring. The CEC Advisory Board suggested that each subject area should have a “champion,” someone with an interest/expertise in that area who would organize the collection of materials for that subject. Currently, there are champions for FatherNet, Evaluation, Infants and Children, Parenting, AdoptiNFO, and Work and Family. In addition, CEC continues to meet with a planning group regarding Southeast Asian issues and a University of Minnesota research team regarding adoption issues. CEC has been

responding to an increasing number of requests for demonstrations/workshops. Presentations this year included MN Planning and the Family Service Collaboratives; the MN Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers; and a joint presentation with the Minnesota Extension Service (MES)/ 4-H Youth Development staff (CYFERNet) at the state-wide MES annual conference.

Evaluation Forum Held

The Research Workgroup of the Consortium presented a Research Evaluation Forum on September 12, titled “Everything You Wanted To Know About Evaluation Research But Were Afraid to Ask.” The three hour program, which drew a capacity crowd, began with panel presentations from researchers in the community and at the University of Minnesota. But the highlight of the afternoon was the small group discussions where participants had the opportunity to ask specific questions pertaining to their organization. Due to the popularity of the event, the Research Workgroup is considering scheduling another forum for late fall.

Comprehensive Pregnancy Care

At the request of physicians within Allina’s Total Pregnancy Care Initiative, Consortium Director Marti Erickson has been meeting with them to develop an Allina-Consortium partnership that would focus on:

- Implementation of the STEEP program as part of their continuum of care for new or expectant parents. (STEPP is a preventive

intervention program for high-risk parents and infants developed in 1986 by Marti with Byron Egeland from the Institute of Child Development.)

- Development of a Father to Father initiative to support fathers in being a positive force in their children’s lives from the moment of birth.

The Pregnancy Care team will prepare a proposal to submit to the Allina Foundation by January.

The State of Children: Are Children Safe?

On November 30th, the Consortium will cosponsor a symposium on child abuse with the University of Minnesota’s School of Social Work Child Abuse Prevention Studies Program, and the MN chapter of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC). The program will feature Deborah Daro, from the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse and author of *Confronting Child Abuse*, and Theresa Reid, Executive Director of the National APSAC. Also at this time, the Consortium will present their annual award for outstanding service and contribution.

The symposium is scheduled for 1:00-4:00 p.m. in the auditorium of the Hubert H. Humphry Institute of Public Affairs. For more information contact Heather German, (612) 624-4033.

Father to Father Kits are available

The Father to Father program is a product of Family Reunion III: The Role of Men in Children’s Lives; a national conference held in July, 1994, which was co-moderated by Vice President Al Gore and his wife, Tipper. After spending a year developing the guiding principles and objectives of Father to Father, Vice President Gore and the other Board of Directors kicked off the program during the week of Father’s Day this past summer in Washington, D.C.

The key guiding principle of Father to Father is that supportive unions between two or more fathers can help them be the best fathers that they can be. By nurturing these alliances, existing local community organizations and agencies will help strengthen fathers’ roles in their families and communities. Using the Father to Father principles to guide their efforts, communities will be able to develop and implement programs that are specific and sensitive to the fathers and families within their local areas.

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Turn Off the Violence - Continued

Non-violent Methods of Conflict Resolution

Conflict is a necessary, even useful, force that encourages change and growth. However, people can choose to respond to conflict by non-violent means or by violence. It's up to each of us to decide to "turn off the violence."

- Identify the problem. Focus on the problem, not on the person.
- Keep an open mind. Things aren't always the way you think they are.
- Listen and take time to "hear" what the other person is saying.
- Use humor.
- When you anticipate a difficult situation, plan ahead, thinking of several alternative ways to peacefully resolve the dispute.
- Postpone decisions. Give yourself time to calm down and avoid overreacting. Be open to compromise.

- Avoid the conflict. Sometimes it's not worth it to argue.
- Other strategies: flip a coin; take turns; share; get someone else to listen to both sides and help work out a peaceful resolution.
- More ideas: get some space; take deep breaths; make a conscious effort to relax; count to ten; confide in a friend.

Violence is a learned behavior. It can be unlearned.

Turn Off the Violence was begun in 1991 in Minnesota. It began as a coalition of law enforcement, educators, social service providers, and other individuals working together to educate people about violence. . . to encourage them to make personal choices in their own homes, in their neighborhoods, in their lives. . . choices that can help to reduce violence.

In 1993, the Minnesota Citizens Council adopted the campaign and continues to administer it as a coalition.

Our printed materials are the "seed" of the campaign. They are the results of collaboration among the coalition. This is our gift to you in the hopes that you will "plant the seed" in your home, your neighborhood, your life, . . . and nurture it so that it grows.

Some day, together, we may reap the harvest in a world that thinks of violence only as the last resort, not the only resort, . . . or the best.

Violence is a learned behavior. It can be unlearned. 1995 campaign
In memory of all victims of violence.

turn off the  Violence

For more information send a self-addressed stamped envelope to:
TURN OFF THE VIOLENCE
P.O. Box 27558, Mpls., MN 55427
Phone: (612)593-8041

Please reproduce this article and pass it on.

TV Watching... Did You Know?

by Michael Brott, Community Program Specialist, Children, Youth and Family Consortium

By the time children graduate from high school, they will have spent 15,000 to 20,000 hours watching television as compared to 11,000 to 12,000 hours in school (Evelyn Kaye, *The Family Guide to Children's Television*). Children born today will spend more time watching television than doing anything else but sleeping. When you factor in the type of television children are watching, the statistic becomes even more alarming. From 1982 to 1986, the amount of television time allocated each week to violent cartoons increased significantly. And the number of violent acts on TV in the past decade has increased from about 19 to 27 per hour (Linda Katz, *Parents Magazine*). "Teenagers are exposed to an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 references to sexual activity on television and movies each year" (National Commission on Children, *Beyond Rhetoric*). On

average, a child sees at least 8,000 television murders by the seventh grade and more than 10,000 other violent acts.

The Center for Media and Public Affairs was contracted by TV Guide to watch and analyze 18 hours worth of daily television. On April 2, 1992, from the hours of 6 a.m. to midnight, the center taped, tabulated and evaluated the programs on 10 channels in Washington, D.C.: the affiliates of ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS and Fox; WDCA (a non-affiliated station); and the cable channels WTBS, the USA Network, MTV, and HBO. In that brief timespan there was a "...total of 1,846 individual acts of violence; 175 scenes in which violence resulted in one or more fatalities; 389 scenes depicting serious assaults; 362 scenes involving gunplay; 673 depictions of punching,

pushing, slapping, dragging, and other physically hostile acts; 226 scenes of menacing threats with a weapon... The outlet purveying the most violence on that particular spring day was the unaffiliated station: 376 scenes, or one very three minutes... WTBS - 321 scenes (18 per hour); HBO- 257 scenes (14 per hour); USA Network - 209 scenes (12 per hour); MTV - 202 scenes (11 per hour); Fox - 182 scenes (10 per hour); CBS - 175 scenes (10 per hour); ABC - 48 scenes (three per hour); NBC- 39 scenes (two per hour); PBS - 37 scenes (two per hour)" (TV Guide, August 22, 1992). The study concluded that violence is a pervasive, major feature of today's television programming and it is coming from more sources and in greater volume than ever before.

Business, Television and Families - *Continued from page 3*

to suggest any First Amendment limitations for FBTV.

I cherish the fact that I can write and publish this article without fear of imprisonment. And that you can read or not read it, and agree or disagree. But I have a hunch that the founding fathers weren't envisioning an invasive, subsidized, oligopolistic medium, with the proven ability to harm children, families and society, when they fought for those rights.

I am not calling for government censorship, but I'm deeply disturbed by the kneejerk tendency to hide behind the First Amendment and call it a day. Just because something is legal doesn't mean that it's necessarily right, decent or responsible. Constitutionality is not a synonym for desirability.

The discussion needs to reach some higher ground.

Corporate Responsibility and FBTV

FBTV is a business proposition, pure and simple. Therefore, discussions of reform must ultimately focus on the corporations who support it and benefit from it.

This discussion needs to begin, grow and eventually exert irresistible pressure on corporations, much as the environmental movement has developed and evolved in the last 25 years.

Since FBTV is a toxic byproduct of industry, corporations must take responsibility for its environmental impact. Let me suggest five initiatives worth considering, ranging from voluntary corporate efforts to broader

societal efforts:

1. Development and promulgation of voluntary self-regulation and reporting systems for the corporate beneficiaries of FBTV, using the CERES environmental principles as a model.
2. Media literacy and training for corporations and advertising agency media buyers.
3. Development of a system for reporting on toxic FBTV content, measurement of advertiser support for it and dissemination of this information through a vehicle similar to Consumer Reports.
4. Shareholder actions directed at broadcasting companies and the top 100 advertisers.
5. Adjustment of the tax code to eliminate involuntary public financial support for toxic FBTV.

Summary

Dealing with the "family and media" crisis should not be reduced to a choice between censorship and parental monitoring, as much of the current debate would suggest.

Toxic FBTV invades the home for the sole purpose of profit. It is a subsidized business given exclusive use of a limited public asset. Must the citizens protect themselves and their families from FBTV? Or should those of us that profit from FBTV assume responsibility? Viable long-term approaches to reducing the toxic effect of FBTV must focus on making bad TV bad business.

Good Television - Congratulations SafeTeam!

The SafeTeam, a statewide public education program implemented in collaboration with ARGO and Associates, KMSP-TV/UPN-9, and the Minnesota Department of Education, has received two national wards for excellence in children's television. The National Association of Broadcasters awarded the SafeTeam the *1995 Service to Children in Television Award* in the category of Public Service Campaign (Large Market) and the *Best of the Best Award*, which honors station winners for their superior contributions to children's television.

Programming for the SafeTeam includes print materials that are distributed to 22,000 educators in 1,023 schools along with daily broadcast mini-lessons that are seen by over 700,000 children per week.

Father to Father -

Continued from page 7

In order to help communities get started and/or build upon their services for fathers, the national board of Father to Father, practitioners in the field, and the staff of CYFC developed the Community Starter Kit which is available from the Children, Youth and Family Consortium (CYFC). The CYFC will not only distribute the Kits to interested organizations (e.g., YMCA, ECFE), but also act as a liaison among communities around the nation by linking them with resource people and organizations to support them in reaching out to fathers. One way that the CYFC will do this is through FatherNet, an electronic clearinghouse of resources related specifically to fathers. You can access FatherNet through the World Wide Web at: <http://www.fsci.umn.edu/cyfc/FatherNet.html>.

To receive more information about Father to Father, FatherNet, and/or to order a Community Starter Kit, call Tim Balke at (612) 625-7243.

"We need to move the market place to do good."

President Bill Clinton

Connection Corner

Be a Befriender. Women who care about young single mothers will be trained in October to act as **Befrienders** through a unique collaborative program created by Children's Home Society of Minnesota and Health Start (see Consortium Connections, Volume 4, Number 2, Spring 95 for article on this program). The program introduces young mothers who have little support to older women who either know what it's like or who care about their future. For more information contact Judie Russell, Children's Home Society, (612) 646-4414, ext. 271.

Action alert! For up to the minute action alerts during the welfare reform debate in Congress this fall call the **Child Advocates Hot Line**. In the Metro area call 871-1473; all other areas dial 1-800-626-6108.

Family Matters is a program from the Points of Light Foundation which is being implemented in the metropolitan area by United Way of Minneapolis Area's Volunteer Center and the Volunteer Center of St. Paul. This pilot project is focusing on preparing nonprofit agencies, places of worship, businesses and educational institutions to accept families as volunteers. For more information contact Kathryn Lentz at 340-7453.

The **Males in Families Section** of the **Minnesota Council on Family Relations** will be sponsoring a dinner meeting on Thursday evening December 7, 1995, in the Earle Brown Conference Center on the St. Paul Campus of the University of Minnesota. The event will begin at 6:00 p.m. It precedes the annual conference of the Minnesota Council on Family Relations which will be held on Friday, December 8.

Action for Children, and public-private partnership with the State of Minnesota, has created a program to help answer questions about raising children. The campaign, "**Kids Can't Wait**" will provide information in five areas:

- Preventive Health - finding care for pregnant mothers and shots for kids.
- Parent and Family Involvement - supporting kids.
- Child Abuse Prevention - keeping kids from being abused.
- Child safety - keeping kids safe by using car safety seats, educating parents on injury prevention and personal safety for kids.
- Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention - explaining the dangers of using drugs and alcohol and teaching children to choose healthy activities.

Call **toll-free**, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday: 1-800-KIDS-709 (1-800-543-7709) out of state; or 296-4000 in the metro area.

The purpose of the dinner meeting is to provide opportunities for persons involved in or interested in work with fathers to socialize, interact, and learn together.

For details or a registration form, contact Ron Pitzer, Rural Sociology, 92 COB, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108, or call (612) 625-8169; fax (612) 625-3746; *e-mail* rpitzer@mes.umn.edu.

On the move... The **Minnesota Parenting Association**, affiliate of the National Parenting Association (formerly known as the National Parenting Association of Minnesota), has moved from their Bloomington offices to: 1030 University Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104. Their phone number is (612) 290-4755, fax (612) 920-4785.

PACER Center Programs

PACER Center is a statewide nonprofit organization that serves families of children and young adults with disabilities. PACER's programs help parents become informed and effective representatives for their children in early childhood, school-age and vocational settings.

For information about these and other programs call 612/827-2966 Voice/TDD. Or in greater MN call 1-800-53PACER.

Children's Summit Video Available

In the Fall of 1993 leaders from throughout the state met at the Minnesota Children's Summit to discuss what we know about supporting healthy development in children and, given what we know, what we should do about it.

The highlights of the Children's Summit are available on a video produced by the Consortium and the Minnesota Extension Service. The tape is designed to be used by communities or agencies as a springboard for further discussion at the state level, as well as planning and problem-solving at the local level.

The 45 minute video can be rented (\$8.00 for one week) by contacting: Minnesota Extension Service Distribution Center, 612/625-8173, and asking for Item #VH-6298. Questions regarding the content of the video or information about purchasing the video should be directed to the Consortium office 612/626-1212.

"...there's no shortage of good will in Hollywood. There seems to be a real shortage of audiences that want to watch good programs."

Gary David Goldberg, Executive Producer
UBU Productions
(Brooklyn Bridge, Family Ties)

"The ultimate power lies with the viewer. If you are bothered by what you see on TV, then turn it off and they will get the message loud and clear ... and that kind of stuff won't go on TV."

Colleen Needles, News Anchor
WCCO-TV, Minneapolis, MN

Who is the Consortium?

"We all too often in Hollywood circle the wagons and holler censorship and the First Amendment when we're confronted with criticism.

A lot of us don't do that with Siskel and Ebert...we take those criticisms as part of the creative process."

Tom Selleck, Producer and Actor

"The little old FCC is the government. The single most important thing the government can do is obey the Constitution which protects us. All the speech we're talking about today is speech which is protected under the First Amendment."

Floyd Abrams
First Amendment Lawyer

Hubert H. "Skip" Humphrey III Attorney General of Minnesota since 1982, has consistently been a strong advocate in the campaign against violence. He helped to convene and currently provides leadership to the Minnesota delegation working on media and its impact on the family.

Sheila Miller is a crime prevention specialist with the Golden Valley Police Department. Currently, she is on loan to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety coordinating the Minnesota Crime Alert Network project. Along with a colleague, Sheila helped create Turn Off the Violence, a coalition of people dedicated to educating the public about the negative influence of violent entertainment and positive ways to resolve conflict.

Mark Vukelich is Director of Communications and Public Information for the Minnesota Medical Association. For the past three years, Mark has directed the MMA's award winning "Stop the Violence" campaign. Mark and his wife have two daughters Emily and Anna.

Dr. David Walsh is a licensed psychologist and Executive Director of Clinics and Systems Operations for Fairview Behavioral Services in the Twin Cities. David is the author of *Selling Out America's Children*, a book focusing on how society sells violence, irresponsible sex, and materialism to our children with the overwhelming power of modern media.

Katia and Steven Petersen are the co-founders of ARGO and Associates, an organization specializing in prevention education services, including consultation, training and multi-media curriculum development. Katia and Steven, along with KMSP-TV, are the originators of the SafeTeam, a nationally awarded children's television program.

Consortium Calendar

■ October 27-28 *Building Non-Violent Communities: A Day of Learning*, a statewide conference sponsored by violence prevention initiatives and organizations from throughout the state. The conference will be held at Ruttgers Resort in Brainerd - bus transportation from throughout the state is encouraged. Fee: \$50.00 (include. bus, lodging (dbl occup.), food, and program). For more information call 430-6805.

■ November 2-3 *From Vision to Action for Young Children and Their Families*. This event was planned by representatives of more than 40 statewide organizations and agencies in an effort to coordinate and support policy changes and action strategies at the state and local levels. For more info call Action for Children at (612) 296-4156.

■ November 3-5 *Multiracial Family Conference and Celebration*. 1st Universalist Church, Minneapolis. This conference will provide a community forum of education and support for a broad spectrum of multiracial families, individuals, and family service professionals, and will focus on the celebration of our rich differences and similarities, while embracing the many contributions we bring to our communities. For more information contact Barbara Jones (612) 729-7397.

■ November 6-9 *Eleventh Annual Midwest Conference on Child Sexual Abuse and Incest*. Holiday Inn-Madison West, Middleton, WI. Call toll free (800) 442-7107.

■ November 14 *Keeping Our Promise to Our Children* with Dr. James P. Comer, author of *Raising Black Children*, *Maggie's American Dream*, and *School*

Power. Basilica of Saint Mary, Mpls; 7:00 - 9:00 pm; \$5.00
Sponsored by St. David's School and Pillsbury Neighborhood Center. To register call: (612) 939-0396, Ext. 500.

■ November 30 *State of Children: Are Children Safe?* a symposium on child abuse featuring Deborah Daro and Theresa Reid. Hubert H. Humphry Institute of Public Affairs Auditorium 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. For more information call the Heather German at (612) 624-4033

If you have items for the Winter issue of the Connection Corner or Consortium Calendar please send them to the Consortium office by December 15 1995.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Children, Youth, and Family Consortium
12 McNeal Hall, 1985 Buford Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55108

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