

Children First

In Case You Missed It

Board of Directors Spotlight

The NYSPCC welcomes Daniel M. Healy, Jr. as the newly appointed Board President effective February, 2021. Dan succeeds former President and long time board member, Karl Wellner who has stepped down from the board after serving over 16 years in various roles. Joining us as Vice President, is Alison Kelly Hutchinson, Managing Director, Brown Brothers Harriman. Also, retiring after serving more than 32 years on the board in various roles is David Stack. (More on David and Karl inside!)

New Website!

This February, The NYSPCC launched their redesigned website. Take a look at the new and improved website at nyspcc.org.



Our Safe Touches Program Goes Virtual!



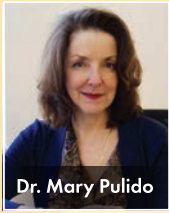
The NYSPCC's evidence-based, research-informed Safe Touches program reaches thousands of New York City students each year, teaching them valuable body safety tools and child sexual abuse prevention concepts using live puppet skits. Typically, these workshops are facilitated in-person by two facilitators in students' classrooms, but in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became clear this model would need to be adapted to a virtual format.

Child sexual abuse prevention education continues to be vitally important. At the start of the pandemic, reports to child protective services decreased 40-50% and remote learning meant some students were quarantined with an abuser or left under the supervision of an unfit caregiver with little opportunity to seek help from trusted adults

outside of their home. With this need in mind, The NYSPCC's Training Institute set out to develop a virtual Safe Touches program. Regardless of where students are learning, they have the right to know how to keep themselves safe from sexual abuse and who and how they should tell when they feel unsafe, scared, or confused.

A number of modifications were made to ensure Safe Touches would be successful in a virtual format. New program protocols and terms of participation were written and implemented to ensure students who disclose abuse or make concerning statements can be appropriately followed up with and reports to child protective services can be made, if necessary. All Safe Touches facilitators were trained in the new workshop model and best practices for virtual presentation.

By offering Safe Touches virtually, we have reached nearly 2,000 students so far this school year! Ninety-nine percent of teachers who hosted a virtual Safe Touches workshop for their students and completed an evaluation reported that they would recommend Safe Touches to their colleagues. One school counselor emailed to express her gratitude for the program saying, "I am so grateful and excited to have this opportunity to share [Safe Touches] with our students. [After following up with a student], he stated that he now feels he knows what to do [if he ever gets a not safe touch or feels scared or confused]—which is a testament of how important this program is!" Child sexual abuse can be prevented through proper abuse prevention education, and The NYSPCC is proud to be able to make this life-changing education accessible to students whether they are learning at home or at school!



Mary's Corner

Parents: Internet crimes are on the rise and children are the target

By Mary L. Pulido, Ph.D.

Child sexual abuse exploitation, or internet child pornography, is the fastest growing type of child abuse. Parents need to be aware that due to schools being closed across the United States, most children are glued to their computers and phones, where child sexual abuse predators lurk. Predators make casual contact with a child, gain their trust, and eventually introduce sexual content into the conversation. They will often send the child sexually explicit photos or videos, and/or ask the child to send them sexually explicit photos or videos of themselves. The predator can then use these to continue the exploitation.

During the pandemic, The NYSPCC conducted a national poll of 1,000 American adults, asking about their perceptions of child pornography on the internet. When informed how rampant online sexual exploitation of children has become, most Americans expressed surprise, which indicates youngsters may not be adequately protected as they double-down on screen time during pandemic virtual school and stay-at-home periods. With information that 70 million online images and videos of child pornography were reported to law enforcement in 2019 alone, 62% of Americans said that was "far more than expected," and 66% said they didn't know this was a serious, growing problem.

Another important finding of the poll was that nearly seven out of 10 (68%) Americans want law enforcement to be able to identify and track users of online child pornography. This segment of the population supports the secret installation by federal and state law enforcement of malware software on the devices of people who visit child pornography websites through anonymous internet networks.

Also of importance, is that 72% of Americans want technology companies to be required by law to actively search for child pornography on the internet. Current law only requires them to report images or videos of child pornography to law enforcement as they are encountered, as opposed to actively searching for and reporting them. Overall, nearly three-quarters (74%) of the American public believes not enough is being done to prevent online distribution of child pornography.

Each time a pornographic image is circulated, the child in the photo is irreparably harmed again. It is irresponsible and a detriment to children's health and safety to continue to look the other way when these horrific images, often showing violence towards toddlers and children, are shared. It's clear that more initiative needs to be taken to hold both perpetrators and enablers accountable, and to prevent our children from becoming victims of sexual exploitation.

The NYSPCC undertook the research to highlight the gap between awareness of the problem and its prevalence—so that policymakers, technology companies, public health organizations, schools and, of course, parents and families can be motivated to take action.

Parents, any adult who talks to your child about sex online or sends them sexually explicit photos is committing a crime. If you have suspicions or concerns about a possible predator, please report them immediately to the police. You can also make a report through www.cybertipline.com.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a time to strengthen the protections that you put in place for your children. Let's start by protecting them from the dangers that lurk on the internet. For more information about keeping your child safe visit www.nyspcc.org.

Restoring Resiliency Response

Child protection agencies experience high rates of turnover among their staff. To help combat this, the Nebraska Division of Children and Family Services and the Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development at the University of Nebraska partnered with The NYSPCC in 2020 to implement its *Restoring Resiliency Response* (RRR®) crisis debriefing protocol as part of a multi-component intervention to address secondary traumatic stress among frontline workers and supervisors across the state.

The RRR® model was developed in 2006 by Dr. Mary L. Pulido based on research and focus groups with child protection workers. RRR® sessions are designed to help alleviate the stress and anxiety associated with secondary traumatic stress issues child protection workers face following a critical incident, such as a child

fatality or violence against staff in the field. Individual or group debriefing sessions are facilitated by trained clinicians and held within 48 to 72 hours after the critical incident. The RRR® model differs from classic crisis debriefings in that it does not have an investigatory stance that requires staff to retell the details of the incident. Focus is placed on the stress reactions currently being experienced by workers and on the individual's ability to utilize support systems and past coping techniques. Each session includes education about how trauma can affect individuals and utilizes cognitive behavioral therapy and relaxation techniques to enhance coping. The RRR® model is currently being implemented within the New York City child protective system, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), and has been adopted and used nationally.

In May 2020, Dr. Pulido led a half-day virtual training for administrative and research staff from the Nebraska Division of Children and Family Services and the University of Nebraska on the background of the RRR® protocol and implementation considerations. Then, in September 2020, over the course of four virtual sessions, The NYSPCC's Clinical Director, Amy Pumo, LCSW, and Director of the Training Institute, Jessica Trudeau, MPH, successfully trained clinicians in Nebraska on the protocol. The RRR® model rolled out across the state in January 2021. This partnership was part of a larger nationally funded project looking to test and evaluate workforce strategies aimed at improving child protection worker recruitment, retention and satisfaction.

Events With a Purpose

Virtual Spring Luncheon

The 9th Annual Spring Luncheon, was held virtually on April 21, 2020, featuring Brad Edwards Esq, a nationally recognized attorney who specializes in providing civil representation for children, survivors of sexual abuse, and victims of violent crimes. For the past decade, Brad has been pursuing a precedent setting case in Federal Court, on a pro bono basis, on behalf of victims who were sexually molested by well-connected billionaire, Jeffrey Epstein, which inspired Brad's book *Relentless Pursuit: My Fight for the Victims of Jeffrey Epstein*. The Spring Luncheon raised over \$265,000 to help support the funding for our Trauma Recovery and Safe Touches Programs.

Upcoming Event

THE NYSPCC INVITES YOU TO AN

WISH EVENING

THURSDAY • APRIL 29, 2021 • 6 PM

SAVE THE DATE



FEATURING
A VIRTUAL CONVERSATION WITH GUEST SPEAKER
V
(Formerly Eve Ensler)
Playwright and Activist
Photo Credit: Paula Allen

V is a Tony award-winning playwright and author of the Obie award-winning, theatrical phenomenon, *The Vagina Monologues*. She is the author of a number of books including her latest bestsellers, *The Apology*, and *In the Body of the World* as well as The New York Times bestseller, *I am an Emotional Creature*. She is founder of One Billion Rising, the largest global mass action to end gender-based violence in over 200 countries.

NY SPCC
New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
www.nyspcc.org
For additional information: ishave@nyspcc.org

Virtual Wine Gala

The 2020 Virtual Wine Gala was held on November 11, 2020 and was hosted by Emmy award-winning ABC news correspondent Deborah Roberts and actor/writer Ali Wentworth. The night featured a wine-tasting led by Rob Jensen, founder and owner of Testarossa Winery in Los Gatos, California. Brad Edwards, Esq., legal counsel to many heroic survivors of child sex trafficking perpetrated by Jeffrey Epstein, was the recipient of the Strength of Our Society Award, which recognizes the work of individuals who have demonstrated and promoted advocacy on behalf of abused and neglected children.



Helping Children Heal

"I wish I could have taken better care of my brothers," said 12-year-old Rachel* to her NYSPCC therapist. At such a young age, she seemed to carry the weight of the world on her shoulders.

Rachel lived with her mother, but stayed with her father, stepmother, and two younger stepbrothers on the weekends. Sometimes during these visits, her father would hit her stepmother in an alcoholic rage, and Rachel would take responsibility for her brothers' safety. They usually hid in the bathroom, until the fights were over, which was signaled by her father storming out of the apartment and her stepmother taking a pill to fall asleep. Rachel took care of her brothers as best she could, but eventually, child protective services intervened and referred the family to The NYSPCC.

Rachel began in-person, weekly therapy sessions at The NYSPCC's Trauma Recovery Program in January 2020. The therapist noted that Rachel was anxious and depressed. She experienced hypervigilance—always on the lookout for hidden dangers—and dissociation—feeling disconnected from her thoughts, feelings, and memories. This made it difficult for her to talk about her experiences and emotions. This was further aggravated when the COVID-19 pandemic started six weeks into her treatment.

At first, the transition to virtual therapy sessions was a big adjustment for Rachel, but she adapted quickly once she realized that she could attend sessions remotely, from the safety and comfort of her home—and wearing her cozy, pink pajamas.

Because Rachel had been expressing herself most easily through art while attending in-person sessions, The NYSPCC purchased art supplies and had them shipped directly to Rachel's home. Rachel started to draw and paint daily. She shared her creations with her therapist each week. Rachel illustrated her emotions and trauma history with her artwork, which helped her talk about them with her therapist. Rachel liked to personify her feelings and personality traits through images of animals and people in action. Rachel also listened to music during therapy sessions, discussing the meaning behind the lyrics and the way the rhythms made her feel. "Rachel feels her emotions very strongly, but doesn't always understand them," says her therapist. "Music brings her joy and clarity."

Art and music helped Rachel process and talk about her trauma. Rachel expressed concerns for her brothers' safety and a significant amount of self-blame, believing that she could have done more to protect them. Her therapist assured Rachel that being a parent to her brothers was not her responsibility, which

**Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*

helped her feel less shame. The therapist also taught Rachel about trauma, domestic violence, physical abuse, and alcoholism, which further helped her understand her father and how the situation at home was out of her control.

The therapist counseled Rachel's mother, as well, providing psychoeducation to help her understand what her daughter went through. The therapist helped Mom communicate better by encouraging her to not minimize her daughter's feelings and to spend more time listening. In this way, the therapist facilitated healing conversations between mother and daughter, so that Rachel received the extra support she needed at home, in between therapy sessions.

Now, more than a year into treatment, Rachel's hypervigilance has calmed, and her anxiety and depression have greatly diminished. She better understands how her feelings are connected to her trauma experience and can express herself more freely through words and art, which is helping her to heal and grow stronger.

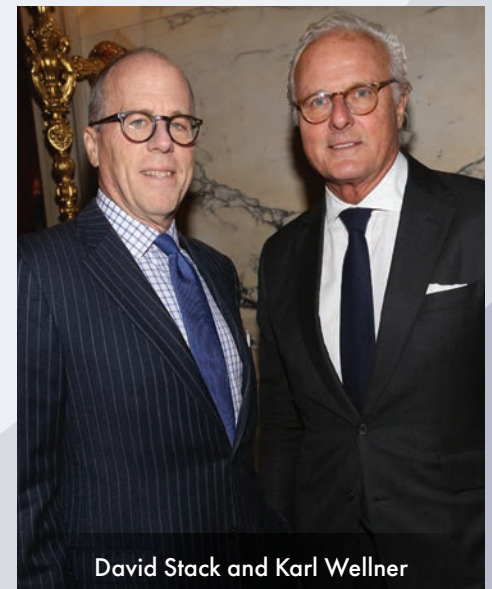


Thank You!

Two long time, devoted Board members, Karl Wellner and David Stack were lauded recently by The NYSPCC for their many years of outstanding service. Karl joined The NYSPCC Board in 2005 and has served as Secretary, Vice President and most recently President of the Board. His solid leadership and unremitting commitment to the mission of the agency for so many years is invaluable and he will be missed by all. Although Karl is stepping down from his role on the Board, we know he will never step down or away from his pledge to help children heal and recover from abuse. We thank Karl for all his support and unwavering commitment over the years, along with his wife Deborah Norville, who

has also served as an emcee for our Gala and as a member of our Children's Council.

David Stack joined The NYSPCC board in 1989 and has served in various roles, including Vice President and President. David's leadership and steadfast allegiance to fulfilling our mission was instrumental in positioning The NYSPCC as a leader in the child welfare field. David is a staunch advocate of our work, constantly spreading awareness of our programs and initiatives, and proved successful at securing new board members and donors for the agency. We could not have seen the many successes we have without the support and dedication of David and his wife Sarah. We will miss them and wish them well in their retirement. Thank you Karl and David!



David Stack and Karl Wellner

Research & Evaluation—Bringing out our Best

The Research and Evaluation Department worked diligently during 2020 to continue evaluating and improving programming despite the impact of COVID-19. We have achieved success in both our internal initiatives and client focused programming.

Happy Anniversary!

December 31, 2020 marked our first full year of using a new customized database, which the Department built and tested over the prior three years to improve data input efficiency and program outcome tracking.

Children First

The impact of supervised visitation on children with complex trauma is not well understood. In 2020, a new survey was implemented to assess children's feelings of safety during participation in court mandated visitation with non-custodial parents. This information is critical to understanding children's experiences, responding to their needs, and informing the greater field of supervised visitation research.

Leading the Way

Similar to the limited study of children in mandated visitation, research and resources for custodial parents—particularly survivors of domestic violence and other trauma—are lacking. In 2020, we developed and piloted a structured support program for custodial parents through a grant from the NYS Office of Children and Family Services. This novel program was an overwhelming success, with 80% participation in the first year, and many parents reporting their gratitude for the support.

In the coming year, the Department will assess The NYSPCC's newly developed Safe Touches online workshop to prevent child sexual abuse, and exponentially scale up program reach. This and other planned initiatives will keep the agency at the forefront of research in the field of child protection.

Parenting Journey

“Graduates often express that the group helped them feel less alone and more motivated to keep working toward reunification.”

Our Therapeutic Supervised Visitation Program aims to help families develop safe, healthy, and consistent parent-child relationships in the aftermath of intrafamilial trauma. One of our tools toward this end is our Parenting Journey (PJ) intervention. PJ is a 12-week parent group developed by family systems therapists. The curriculum is designed to help parents increase their use of self-care and expand their support system; recognize their strengths as parents; and reflect on how their childhood experiences of being parented influences their decision-making as parents. We offer this group to our visiting parents, who are most often the parents who have caused harm in the family. Although our visiting parents often feel reluctant to participate initially, the feedback from parents who complete the group has been overwhelmingly positive. Graduates often express that the group helped them feel less alone and more motivated to keep working toward reunification with the child. One parent from a recent group said, “I was starting to lose hope, now I feel like I shouldn't give up and there is light at the end of the tunnel,” while another said, “This group helped me develop awareness of how my behavior was impacting others; now I see my mistakes, forgive my mistakes, and am working toward my goals of being a better parent.”

Staff Spotlight

Rashaad Banks, Assistant Director of the Training Institute

Rashaad Banks, joined us in February 2021 as the Assistant Director of the Training Institute. Rashaad will support the Training Institute with department operations and systems. Rashaad can be reached at Rbanks@nyspcc.org.

Lisa Gitelson, Esq., Assistant Executive Director/Legal Counsel

Lisa Gitelson, Esq., joined us in February 2021 as the Assistant Executive Director/Legal Counsel. Lisa will oversee the Research & Evaluation department, Operations, the Training Institute, and our Public Policy agenda. She will also provide the NYSPCC with guidance on legal matters concerning NYSPCC clients. Lisa can be reached at Lgitelson@nyspcc.org.

Lea Shave, Director of Fundraising Events

Lea Shave joined us in August 2020 as the Director of Fundraising Events in the Development Department. Lea oversees all of The NYSPCC special events as well as all third party events benefiting The NYSPCC. Lea can be reached at Lshave@nyspcc.org.

Jessica Trudeau, Director of the Training Institute

Jessica Trudeau was promoted in November 2020 to the position of Director of the Training Institute. Jessica has been an integral part of the training department as Assistant Director and in her new role, she will oversee all activities of the Training Institute. Jessica can be reached at JTrudeau@nyspcc.org.

**The New York Society for the Prevention
of Cruelty to Children**

161 William Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10038-2607



For more information on reporting
child abuse and neglect, please
visit our website:



www.nyspcc.org

Special Thanks

We are grateful to the following supporters who have made Annual Fund gifts of \$1,000 or more since May 15, 2020* to help support our work with NYC's children:

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- Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Atkin
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- Mr. Allen Black
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