



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
ILLINOIS

SOS NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2013

HOME SAFE HOME

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

ENSURING SAFETY & STABILITY
FOR CLIENTS & COMMUNITIES

PG 5

HOUSING: SAFE SPACE

PG 4



**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**
ILLINOIS

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DO WE HAVE YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS?

Don't miss out on event announcements and Village news.
Send your e-mail address to:

KKAVANAGH@SOSILLINOIS.ORG

We'll make sure you're on the list!

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CEO Message

A PEACEFUL HOME A PEACEFUL COMMUNITY

“ VIOLENCE CAN ONLY BE CONQUERED
WITH THE MOST POWERFUL FORCE
WE HAVE...OUR CAPACITY FOR LOVE ”

SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS CEO - TIM MCCORMICK



The shooting that occurred on December 14, 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School shocked the nation and the world. This act of violence that took the lives of 20 children and six adults also pierced the soul of our nation and awakened us all to examine our collective moral conscience. Each random act of violence against any child violates core values as to how we, as a good society, protect and care for those who are most vulnerable. The sad reality is that not only are our children today victims of gun violence or bullying, but they are exposed to many acts of violence in movies or video games in their most formative years, thusly impacting their belief and understanding of what it means to be safe.

The Connecticut shooting singularly reflected the multiple daily acts of violence that continue to occur across our nation, even as recently as the bombing at the Boston Marathon. It is estimated that by the time an average child leaves elementary school, he or she will have witnessed on their TV screen at home, 8,000 murders and over 100,000 other acts of violence. By the time that child is 18 years of age, he or she will witness 200,000 acts of violence, including 40,000 murders. Our appetites and levels of tolerance for violence have left society searching for ways to regain our moral

sense of balance and to live and foster a virtuous society where children are safe and secure.

At SOS Children's Villages Illinois, we see firsthand that violence against children includes physical violence and psychological violence, such as insults, humiliation, discrimination, neglect and maltreatment. Although the consequences may vary according to the nature and severity of the violence inflicted, the short- and long-term repercussions for children are very often grave and damaging.

SOS Children's Villages Illinois begins the critical process of healing a young life exposed to and victimized by violence. Often this is a time-consuming process that marshals the resources of many professionals committed to both healing the child and stopping the cycle of violence, as they strive to end fear in the children's lives. The Village serves as a counterbalance to provide the needed emotional, physical and psychological safety for a child to be a child: to live with the excitement, to dream new dreams and to create new visions of a society rooted in the enduring and unconditional love they experience in each of our homes.

I ask you to read this newsletter in the context of our society by heightening your awareness of the varying levels of violence that confront each of us. I suggest we take inventory of who we are and how we foster a better community, as well as our ability to provide safety and support to those who are most vulnerable. Yet more importantly, I ask you to rekindle your hope through what you see here on these pages. With your ongoing support, the memories of the violence of Sandy Hook Elementary School and the violent behavior in our streets will be overcome by the security and stability of our mutual lives together, loving and caring for those most vulnerable in our society. For violence can only be conquered with the most powerful force we have, that is as humans, our capacity for love.

WRITTEN BY SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES
ILLINOIS CEO TIM MCCORMICK

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Emergency situations arise suddenly, leaving little time to plan or react in the moment. Though we are unlikely to anticipate every possible emergency situation, SOS Children's Villages Illinois is taking a hard look at existing structures and developing comprehensive plans for each phase of an emergency. This assessment helps provide the peace of mind and framework needed to effectively help children, families and staff, before, during and after a crisis arises. By teaching basic emergency response skills and techniques, practicing and testing their effectiveness, children, parents and staff at SOS Children's Villages Illinois will be equipped to respond in any crisis situation.

For many children, their experience in foster care can be both reactive and traumatic. Where they live, the school

they attend and several other details of their daily lives are beyond their immediate control. Children struggle to cope with separation from their parents and, even sometimes, their siblings. SOS Children's Villages Illinois serves as an oasis, providing the stability and structure children need to grow and thrive. Involving children in the emergency preparedness process not only continues to ensure their physical safety, but also provides structure and teaches them to develop healthy, proactive ways of responding in a crisis.

Though emergency preparedness and disaster management often call to mind images of floods, tornadoes and fires, we all experience other crisis situations with far more frequency. Family emergencies, broken down cars, last minute deadlines, even getting lost on a

road trip occasionally serve as sources of panic or anxiety. As active participants in the emergency and crisis planning process, children at SOS Children's Villages Illinois develop critical life skills including healthy coping mechanisms, developing back-up plans, building a strong safety net and communicating clearly and effectively. These skills, useful for all individuals, extend far beyond emergency preparedness and help provide a strong foundation for children's growth, development and ultimate success as self-reliant adults.

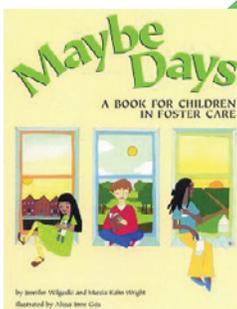
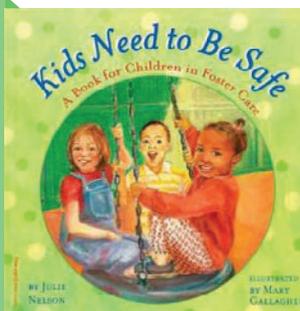
BOOKNOOK SUGGESTED READING

Here are a few books we've found helpful in our attempt to forge a closer bond between foster child and foster home:

Kids need safe places to live and safe places to play. For some kids, this means living with foster parents. In simple words and full-color illustrations, this book explains why some kids move to foster homes, what foster parents do and ways kids might feel during foster care. This book makes it clear that the troubles in their lives are not their fault; the message throughout is one of hope and support.

KIDS NEED TO BE SAFE: A BOOK FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

AUTHOR: JULIE NELSON |
PUBLICATION DATE: DECEMBER 2005 |
AGE RANGE: 4 AND UP |



MAYBE DAYS: A BOOK FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

AUTHOR: JENNIFER WILGOCKI |
PUBLICATION DATE: FEBRUARY 2002 |
AGE RANGE: 4 AND UP |

Will I live with my parents again? Will I stay with my foster parents forever? For children in foster care, the answer to many questions is often "maybe." *Maybe Days* addresses the questions, feelings and concerns these children most often face. Honest and reassuring, it also provides basic information that children want and need to know, including the roles of various people in the foster care system and whom to ask for help.

HOUSING

SAFE SPACE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: AN INTERNATIONAL EPIDEMIC



Finding and maintaining housing is especially relevant for young people leaving care. However, youth aging out of the foster care system often lack the support and skills required to find proper housing by themselves. However, without suitable accommodation, the risk increases that young people struggle to deal with other issues in their lives, such as looking after their health and well-being, doing well in education or maintaining employment. Thus, housing is more than just four walls and a roof.

Up to 100 million people are homeless worldwide and there is a considerable amount of hidden homelessness in addition to that. An estimated 1 billion urban residents live in inadequate housing, that is, housing that does not meet even their most basic needs, such as sufficiently protecting them from rain and cold. Periods of transition, in general, expose people to the risk of being unable to find adequate housing. This is even more the case for young people moving out to live on their own for the first time.

When leaving an out-of-home care setting, children who age out of the system are at risk of being either poorly housed or even homeless. Once an individual becomes homeless, it is especially difficult to get back on track. Therefore, it is crucial to do everything possible to prevent homelessness in the first place.

As research has shown, family-type alternative care settings are better prepared to respond to the individual needs of young people. Residential care settings and the services provided thereafter cannot offer the same individualized approach.

STORIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

JOSEF, 20 YEARS OLD FROM POLAND

Josef was 10 years old when he was placed in a residential care facility, where he was one of about 50 children. On each of the two floors, 25 children shared a common bathroom and were supervised by four caregivers. When Josef turned 18 he left care and moved into his girlfriend's flat. He had met his girlfriend in the facility; she already had a good job and was studying at a university.

After a while Josef realized that he wanted his own flat and soon he and his girlfriend separated. Yet Josef did not have enough money to afford living on his own; the salary from his part-time job was only enough to pay the school fees. He knew that he needed help. One evening after getting home from school, he wrote a letter to the local mayor. After two weeks, the city government replied telling him that he had the right to apply for subsidized housing. Nobody in his residential care facility had informed him about this right.

KAMILA, 23 YEARS OLD FROM UZBEKISTAN

Kamila grew up in a residential care facility, which she had to leave when she turned 16. She was accepted to a competitive secondary school in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. In order to study at the school, she had to move from her small hometown to the capital, which is three hours away. Kamila knew that an education would help her find a better job in the future and felt lucky to have this opportunity.

Yet she soon encountered an insurmountable problem. She found out that she was not able to rent a flat in the city because she was a minor. She had no one that could help her secure housing, and there were no services from the municipal council that could offer accommodation; thus, it was impossible for her to attend the school. Today Kamila is living in her hometown, working as a cleaning lady in the local primary school.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IS RESPONDING.

There are various options to strengthen support for young people in transition with regard to housing. The International Community is finding it crucial to develop strategies that are flexible and adaptable to differing needs. Support may include extending the stay in a care placement until youth aging out feel sufficiently prepared. They also are providing support to enable them to live independently. This includes practical and financial, as well as, emotional support.

In order to respond adequately, the International Community has an assessment to help young people emancipate from the system. Also, a support hub for those aging out of the system has been set up. This allows for a wide opportunity of services and support for the youth. Furthermore, attempts are being made to close gaps between law and practice in this context.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

COVER
STORY

ENSURING SAFETY & STABILITY FOR CLIENTS AND COMMUNITIES

Just as SOS Children's Villages Illinois works to help children in need grow into caring, productive and self-reliant adults, it also works to continually grow and improve the strength of its programs, services and administrative policies and procedures to best serve the children entrusted to its care. SOS Children's Villages Illinois seeks to be proactive and to support continuous learning and improvement for clients and staff.

AT SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ILLINOIS, QUALITY MEANS:

TREATING EACH CHILD, FAMILY MEMBER AND EMPLOYEE WITH THE DIGNITY HE OR SHE DESERVES • RESPECTING THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF CLIENTS AND STAFF • PROVIDING ALL SERVICES IN A TIMELY MANNER • PROVIDING ALL SERVICES IN A SAFE AND SECURE SETTING • PROVIDING ALL SERVICES IN FACILITIES THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE, CLEAN AND FUNCTIONAL • RESOLVING LEGITIMATE COMPLAINTS REGARDING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES • ASSURING THAT ALL SERVICES PROVIDED MEET OR EXCEED HIGH STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES WHILE RESPONDING TO THE CLIENTS' NEEDS • DELIVERING SERVICES PROVIDED BY COMPETENT, CARING AND TRAINED PERSONNEL

SOS Children's Villages Illinois seeks to actively include children, youth, families, stakeholders and staff at all levels of the quality-improvement process; this includes recognizing, unfolding and analyzing strengths and problems, and then testing, implementing, learning from and revising solutions to all areas of our operations. Together, we will continue to provide a supportive, community environment and help children and families succeed.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND HOW IT AFFECTS THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AT OUR VILLAGES, VISIT [f /SOSCVI](https://www.facebook.com/SOSCVI).

WRITTEN BY SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS QUALITY
IMPROVEMENT COORDINATOR KATIE REILLY

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

We ask you to join us in extending a warm welcome to Ms. Tita Yutuc, who became a part of the SOS Children's Villages Illinois family in March of 2012. As the new Chief Operating Officer, Tita brings twenty years of non-profit experience to managing services for our Villages.



Tita came to SOS Children's Villages Illinois from ChildServ, a child welfare agency that assisted DCFS wards and their families, offering a wide array of community-based programs and family services. As Assistant Vice President of Clinical & Residential Services at Childserv, Tita managed two sites, leading efforts within the agency to systematize policies and procedures across departments. Tita was responsible for assuring operational compliance with all monitoring and quality service standards, especially involving DCFS, COA and other regulatory bodies. During her tenure with ChildServ, Tita was also recruited by the Executive Service Corp to be an Interim Director for nonprofit agencies. Finally, Tita comes to us with a great deal of knowledge about working with youth. Tita spent eight years as Vice President of Youth Programs with Mercy Homes for Boys and Girls, where she managed two campuses consisting of 132 youths. SOS Children's Villages Illinois is grateful that Ms. Yutuc has chosen to lend us the benefit of her vast experience and overall leadership. We recently interviewed Ms. Yutuc, to share with you her initial impression of her time spent with SOS Children's Villages Illinois.

WOULD YOU SHARE WITH OUR READERS YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS?

I have been with SOS Children's Villages Illinois for just over a year, but in that time I have grown to love and appreciate the mission of the organization even more. Everyone has been helpful, warm and welcoming. People have been open to sharing their experiences, insights and stories—which has been much appreciated. The oral tradition of a place and the telling of its history is sometimes better than anything written down.

WHY IS SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

I have dedicated my professional career to working with our most vulnerable youth, and I believe that SOS Children's Villages Illinois really has the tools to help transform the lives of our children. Working collaboratively with foster parents, case managers, clinicians, educators and others, in a Village setting—in my opinion—helps give our youth the best advantage at being successful. The impact on the lives of the children touches my heart.

WHAT CAN INDIVIDUALS OUTSIDE THE ORGANIZATION DO TO HELP FURTHER THE MISSION OF SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS?

Just get involved. People can always lend their personal talents or skills to an organization. A speaker at our recent SOS University graduation talked about the importance of letting your light shine. Being a model for children is one of the best things you can do.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



SUMMER2013

June is Children's Awareness Month & National Safety Month

JUNE 23RD – Hermann Gmeiner's Birthday: Founder of SOS Children's Villages International, he passed away in April of 1986 and would be 94 today

July is National Family Reunion Month & National Make a Difference to Children Month

August is Children's Eye Health and Safety Month & National Immunization Awareness Month

AUGUST 2ND & 16TH – Village Birthday Celebrations

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO KEEP
YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

SAFE AT HOME



Keeping our families out of harm's way is our number one priority. Unfortunately, when someone is injured, the effects go beyond that person and extend to family members, friends, neighbors, employers and communities. The National Safety Council suggests that the key to preventing injuries is making simple changes to your lifestyle—recognizing where most hazards are and how injuries can occur when participating in different activities.

A FEW OF THE MANY STRATEGIES TO PREVENT INJURIES:

Stay off your cell phone when you are driving. Your safety practices directly influence the safety practices of your children.

Get trained in first aid, CPR and AED online or in a classroom.

Check and if necessary, change the batteries on your smoke and carbon monoxide detector.

Properly dispose of unused and expired medications.

Share these strategies with family, friends and neighbors. Explore more safety practices in the new safety at home sections including, home and recreational safety, motor vehicle safety, emergency preparedness and family safety training. You can play a large part in keeping those around safe and alive.

Special SOSCVI Note: In November 2012, 100 staff members and volunteers at SOS Children's Villages Illinois received certification through the American Red Cross for Adult & Pediatric CPR, AED and First Aid. This spring, several SOS Children's Villages Illinois employees became Certified Instructors through the American Red Cross to help train new employees and provide ongoing training and reinforcement for certified individuals. SOS Children's Villages Illinois is taking practical measures to keep children safe at home.

IT IS A JOY THAT BELONGS TO THE CHILD ALONE

“ THIS IS NOT AN EXPERIENCE WE CAN SHARE IN...IT IS A JOY THAT BELONGS TO THE CHILD ALONE ”

ARTS AND CULTURE PROGRAM COORDINATOR- NAOMI SPECTOR



It seems unexpected that a good part of our foster care community necessarily remains invisible. In order to safeguard anonymity at our Villages, a child's joy is often secreted away. Thumbing through pictures of our Garden Day Festival, I am reminded of my colleague, some months back. “Oh! This photo is so cute! I wish we could use this!” I am not particularly squeamish, but I find myself having a gut reaction to what she is looking at: it is a picture of a little boy, hands fully immersed in a pot of dirt and worms. I can only imagine the response of the hypothetical recipient of the brochure we are creating. I understand her enthusiasm though, my office-mate. In truth, I love worms. I always have, since I was a little girl. I loved the thought of them buried safe underground, as evidenced by the cool, rich, dirt that still clung to their sides as they broke surface. Facing the camera head on, his eyes gleam with happiness. “No. We can't use that.”

Turning over another photo, I find what must be my absolute favorite amongst

the bunch. It is a picture of a little girl, arms and legs fully extended, inside what looks to be a Cyr wheel; an acrobatic device, like a huge hula-hoop, that propels the person stationed inside around and around. The photo is taken from quite a distance, out-of-focus, blurry, and the subject's back is to the camera. The background is almost entirely asphalt and curbside construction. Not a bit of garden in-sight. With her back turned to us, this young lady is perfectly protected. We deem this useless, for the purpose of marketing. Yet, one knows absolutely the sense of freedom this child must have felt, in that weightless moment, as she flew through space. “No. We cannot use this.”

Examine these photos. Fuzzy, out of focus, subject matter cannot be publicized. These photos, nonetheless, manage to capture that one thing we most need to know about SOS Children's Villages Illinois. When I was a child, my playtime was

delightfully private. I fancied my world was like that of the protagonist of Francis Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*. Of course, I did not understand the story of that little girl, helping herself and a sick cousin heal from wounds, both physical and emotional, as I do today—staring down at these pictures in front of me. Then, a secret garden was a lush, green spot of potential wonder. Today, this very real garden in Auburn-Gresham is a safe haven. It offers that larger sense of peace that Burnett envisioned in 1910. This is not an experience we can share in, that we can display. Rather, the experience necessitates turning one's back to the viewer because it is a joy that belongs to the child alone. This joy is carried inside, and forward, onto asphalt, across parking lots, and inside hands buried in deep, cool soil.

WRITTEN BY SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS ARTS AND CULTURE PROGRAM COORDINATOR NAOMI SPECTOR

SPEAK UP

AT SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS, WE KNOW THAT THE MOST MEANINGFUL INSIGHTS ARE OFTEN SHARED THROUGH CONVERSATION, AND WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU THINK. FOLLOW THE ORGANIZATION FOR TRENDS IN FOSTER CARE AND CHILD WELFARE:

COME VISIT!

Are you looking to learn more about SOS Children's Villages Illinois or see the organization in action? Consider attending an event, or scheduling a volunteer project with a group of friends, family or co-workers.

EMAIL INFO@SOSILLINOIS.ORG TO LEARN MORE.

BE OUR FRIEND!

Looking for the latest updates, events and information? Look no further than your computer! Let's keep the conversation going!

 @SOS_CV_ILLINOIS

 /SOSCVI

 SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS

SHARE YOUR STORIES

How did you first encounter SOS Children's Villages Illinois? Why do you stay involved? What is your favorite memory with our organization? We want to hear your stories and learn about your involvement.

TO SHARE, PLEASE CONTACT KRISTINE KAVANAGH AT (312)372-8200 OR BY E-MAIL AT KKAVANAGH@SOSILLINOIS.ORG.



CONGRATULATIONS

TO OUR TWENTY-NINE PRE-K, KINDERGARTEN, GRADE SCHOOL, HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE GRADUATES!

Since 2008, SOS Children's Villages Illinois has celebrated a 100% High School Graduation rate compared to the national average of 50% for children in foster care.



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
ILLINOIS

LEND A HAND

Become an SOS Volunteer: GIVE THE GIFT OF TIME

Volunteers play a vital role in the development of the children in our care. By sharing your time and talent, you can help change a child's life. We understand that your time is valuable, and we truly appreciate this dedication. We accommodate our volunteers by creating a flexible schedule and assistance when needed. Join us as we change the life of a child. Opportunities include:

VOLUNTEER PARENT ASSISTANT

TUTORS

MENTORS

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

AND MORE

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT BECOMING A VOLUNTEER AT SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS, PLEASE CONTACT THE SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE AT (312) 372-8200.



SAVE THE DATE

Crafted

CHIC AND COZY. VINTAGE AND MODERN. FUN AND CHARITABLE.

Join us as we transform River East Art Center for an evening of one-of-a-kind art, inspired music, handcrafted cocktails and unique local eats all benefitting SOS Children's Villages Illinois.

THURSDAY

OCTOBER 3, 2013

To purchase tickets, please visit www.sosillinois.org or call SOS Children's Villages Illinois at 312.372.8200

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