

Summer, 2005

A publication for
and about St. John
Open Arms Grieving
Children's program

COMFORTER

(helping families embrace life again)

Get Ready to Open Your Heart

The Comforter's Training (for volunteers) and the 7th Annual Good Grief fundraiser top the calendar of events for Open Arms in the next two months.

• **The Comforter's Training** will be held at the Eastside Open Arms facility September 14, 15 and 17. This training equips volunteers to facilitate grief groups for children and adults.

During the three-part training we cover such topics as: **1) Confidentiality, boundaries and group rules; 2) Group process; 3) The four tasks of grief; 4) Grief and trauma: knowing the differences and providing interventions that work; 5) Creative ways to help grieving children; 6) Helping survivors of homicide; 7) Suicide, complicated grief and sudden loss; 8) Understanding the children's point of view and how they process grief; and 9) Working with the surviving parent or caregiver.**

All volunteers who want to serve in the Open Arms grieving program are required to take this training and make a 6-month commitment (one night a week for 3 hours). There is no charge to Open Arms volunteers. However, if you want to take the training for your personal growth we ask that you make a \$100 donation to

Open Arms. For more information or to register, please contact Maureen McWalters at 313-921-7983, ext. 233.

• **7th Annual "Good Grief" Award Reception and Fund-raiser** will be held at the Roostertail on October 19, from 6 to 8 p.m. The event will feature a strolling dinner, silent auction, and stories from some of the families whose lives have been changed through the Open Arms Program. The Vernice Davis Anthony Award For Excellence will also be presented during the evening to Delores Bennett and Communities in Schools.

All proceeds will benefit Open Arms Grieving Children's program. Tickets are now on sale for \$75. Some auction items (original artwork, jewelry and sports memorabilia) are already receiving bids on the Open Arms website. To purchase a table or to advertise in our program booklet, please call Maureen McWalters at 313-921-7983.

For information, tickets or to donate or bid on auction items, visit www.stjohn.org/openarms or call 313-921-7983. **RM**



STJOHN HEALTH OPEN ARMS

Inside This Issue

- Get ready to open your heart
- Open Arms calendar
- Open Arms champion
- We need your help

REAL MEDICINE™



Open Arms
11148 Harper Avenue
Detroit, MI 48213

NON PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE PAID
ST. JOHN HEALTH

Good Grief Fundraiser
October 19, 2005
Roostertail in Detroit
6 p.m.

Open Arms Calendar Get ready to open your heart...

Evening Support Groups begin again Monday, August 15, Westside and Thursday, August 18, Eastside

Three-Part Volunteer Training
September 14, 15, 17
Call to register at 313-921-7983

7th Annual Good Grief Fundraising Dinner
Wednesday, October 19, 6-8 p.m., The Roostertail

December-Christmas Memorial Service
Watch your mail in early Nov. for date, time and location **RM**

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?

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REAL MEDICINE™

We May Grieve and Cry, But We Will Be Alright!

By Zahirah Alleyne-McNatt
(Summer Intern for St. John Community Health)

Sometimes we forget how hard it is to grow up. Children are dealing with issues today that challenge their very being and as their parents, teachers, mentors and neighbors we must remember to strengthen them. Open Arms has done just that with their remarkable summer program.

As a summer intern, I had the opportunity to witness Open Arms' new summer program. I observed children, ages 7-14,



participate in interactive workshops covering topics including self-esteem, grief coping skills, abstinence, safety (fire, guns and violence), positive mental attitude (PMI) and conflict resolution. I watched the children become more confident, more outgoing and less afraid to express their feelings. The skills these children learned this summer apply to all areas of their life whether it is handling the schoolyard bully, dealing with grief and loss, or getting better grades in school.

What stands out most in my mind is hearing young girls state proudly, "I am intelligent" or hearing young boys say that "I am a nice person" and their discovery of non-aggressive ways to handle their problems.

The children also participated in very purposeful, yet fun activities such as STEP

(an African-American rhythmic art form that uses stomping and clapping to show teamwork and unity), jewelry and quilt making, yoga, clay work and pet therapy. I had the privilege of teaching the STEP class. The nature of STEP is very disciplined and I feared the children would not understand that concept. Boy was I wrong! Not only did they understand "discipline," they displayed it by staying committed, trying over and over again until they got it. They developed a "don't give up" attitude. *I loved it!*

The program came to a close with an evening barbecue where the children performed for family, friends and volunteers. They chanted together, "We may grieve and cry, but we will be alright! Thank you Open Arms! You're out of sight!" Working with Open Arms enhanced my summer. My only wish is that every child could have the chance to experience such a life-changing month. **RM**



Remember a loved one and at the same time help a child through the grieving process. Honor the accomplishment of a friend or commemorate the life of someone who has touched you by making a donation in their name to St. John Open Arms. We will put a plaque on our memorial wall in honor of your friend or family member.

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realmedicine.org/openarms

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An Open Arms Champion!

By Zahirah Alleyne-McNatt & Maureen McWalters

During the day Sybil Scott is a Chaplain at St. John Hospital and Medical Center (SJHMC). She works with families in crisis who are dealing with life and death issues. As Chaplain at SJHMC, Sybil constantly sees one side of a family's grief; their immediate reaction to a death. Over time, she became concerned with how families



Sybil Scott (left) being honored as top Open Arms Volunteer for 2004, presented by Gwendolyn Pettway (right), Open Arms Program Coordinator and Clinical Supervisor.

were coping. She decided that Open Arms would be a place for her to help families get the ongoing support to process their grief.

Here at Open Arms Sybil has worked with all age groups but is currently working with adults. As she facilitates the adult's grief group she tries to address parenting issues as they come up. But here at Open Arms we've seen that doing so within the grief-work setting does not address the scope of the need. It

was clear that the parents needed to work through some of their own grief first. Then they could focus on how to better provide a stable and loving environment for their children. Chaplain Scott stepped in to help facilitate our pilot group, *Lessons in Parenting*. The parents themselves say it really is helping them work toward meeting the general challenges of raising a child and dealing with issues of family structure and parental expectations.

Sybil Scott serves as a Chaplain at SJHMC and a group facilitator at Open Arms. She also runs the bereavement program at her church. For Sybil all this is not just something to keep her busy. As she says, "it is a calling from God." In each role she is meeting spiritual and emotional needs with her gentle understanding. We at Open Arms believe that Chaplain Scott's service wherever she goes has been without measure. We want to honor and thank her for her ongoing support of the families we serve at Open Arms and for all the other families that she touches beyond our reach. **RM**

We Need Your Help

The picture on the right is of one of our tables that we use during groups, trainings and gatherings. Most all of our tables are in a similar or worse condition. **We need your help to replace them.**

We also have other ways you can help, include providing any of the services listed below or designating your dollars for a specific program or need. Please contact Maureen at 313-921-7983 to help with these requests.



- Eight 8-foot resin folding tables to replace our damaged ones.
- A digital camera to capture pictures of our group and events.
- Candles for our memorial services.
- Helium tank and balloons for our memorial services (we rent one each time we need one)
- A van in good condition, to provide transportation for families who otherwise would not receive our support.
- A volunteer with a chauffeur's license and a good driving record to pick up and drop off families who have no way to get to and from our evening groups. (Monday and/or Thursday evening from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., we will provide the van)
- A volunteer with security experience to provide security for our Thursday evening group. (3 hours once a week)
- T-shirts and printing services. **RM**

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