

# reClaiming Children

National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

September 2009

Vol. 2

Issue 2

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## Family Celebrating Success!

Are you ready to celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference in Washington DC this December?! We're all gearing up to make this conference our best one to date! 20 years is surely something to celebrate, so aside from the great information, resources and networking opportunities you typically get from a National Federation conference, prepare yourself to have a great time too!

In this edition of the newsletter, we highlight some of the fantastic, informative and exciting events that are happening in the children's mental health movement. We discuss our upcoming conference, announce our new and improved training curriculum with ready to go certified trainers, and feature the success of our 2009 Children's Mental Health Awareness Week.

The Children's Mental Health Awareness Week events were a huge success. We sold and distributed over 100,000 green ribbons bearing the words "Children's Mental Health Matters." National Federation chapters all across the country held awareness events. Youth across the country were not to be out done, inside you will see one great idea they came up with. The May 7<sup>th</sup> legislative briefing featured Goldie Hawn; how exciting to have her not only speak to Congress about our issues, but wearing one of our green ribbons as she testified. This issue of our newsletter highlights some of the new steps we're taking, as well as some new lessons learned.

Visit our new and improved website at [www.iffmh.org](http://www.iffmh.org) !!!



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FAMILIES  
For Children's Mental Health

# Executive Address

From the desk of Sandra Spencer



What were you doing in the fall of 1989? “*Rain Man*” was the movie of the year and “*Don’t Worry, Be Happy*” won both the album and record of the year. San Francisco beat Cincinnati in the Super Bowl, and actress/comedian Lucille Ball died.

I know some of you were not even born yet or were still in grade school not even aware that you would become involved in a movement that would change the world. A large number of you were already in that movement, blazing new trails and paving the way for all who would follow.

On August 28, 1989 at 8:56am, the official articles of incorporation were signed, making the Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health a national family-run organization. The stated purpose of the organization was “to engage in activities to improve systems of care for children and youth with emotional, behavioral and mental disorders.” As we now celebrate twenty years as the national family voice for children’s mental health, I want us to remember the work of all those who have committed themselves to this challenge, even as we look ahead to continue our efforts to improve systems of care for children and youth.

I hope you are all preparing to attend the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference. It would be great to have all of our chapters, our past and present board members, and all of the membership present at the conference. After all, this is not merely the anniversary of the national office; instead this is a celebration of you! We will honor the work you do for children’s mental health, and the support you provide our organization through your membership.

This year’s conference theme also takes us back to the simple message underlying our existence “Children’s Mental Health Matters.” We aim to make children’s mental health a national priority. This theme invites us to focus on promoting positive mental health from birth to adulthood.

Of course, health care reform is on everyone’s mind this season. Be sure to read our policy section for the latest updates. You will definitely want to know what else is going on at the National Federation so don’t stop reading.

Got Gear? The National Federation’s internet store has gone live! Check out the great National Federation apparel you can order to help us market the family movement. Order your t-shirts, sweat-shirts and other fun items and wear them to the conference. I look forward to seeing all of you in Washington, DC in December at our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

Sincerely,



# Policy Room

## Principles of Health Care Reform

This past year the National Federation has worked hard in our advocacy efforts. The major issues that have surfaced are health care reform, education reform, and juvenile justice. Keeping up with the furious pace of health care reform has been especially challenging, as the rate of policy change has been growing, the National Federation's resource capacity unfortunately has not. Now more than ever it is essential that we capitalize on the resources, expertise, contacts, and relationships of our chapters and membership in order to further our collective policy goals.

We have stepped forward by revitalizing the National Federation's Policy Principles of Health Care Reform (shown on the next page). We plan to take this further by creating a document that all of our chapters agree upon, that everyone signs, to make clear our stance on issues that all National Federation chapters share in common. We realize that our chapters may have different perspectives on issues that are important to us all. That is why a statement of common principles is necessary to solidify our position as the family voice for children's mental health.

As we all have seen from watching and reading the news, some of the top issues facing Congress are health care, the economy, and the environment.

Through the advocacy of the mental health community, mental health language has been written into health care reform legislation. In addition, this legislation includes language that addresses health disparities, in order for all people to access comprehensive as well as culturally and linguistically competent health care, regardless of race, gender, geographical location, or socioeconomic status.



We know that there is no real health without mental health, and this extends to environmental health as well. For example, legislation to lower lead levels in the environment takes into account the fact that high lead levels cause problems in brain development for children.

Every year many bills are introduced that never make it to the House or Senate floor because not enough attention has been drawn to them. This is

By Andrea Barnes



why it is crucial to garner as many bill sponsors from Congress as possible, as a way to put the bill on the radar of more legislators.

When the majority leaders (Sen. Reid and Rep. Pelosi) decide a bill is a sufficient enough, they place it on the floor schedule. The National Federation is advocating for a handful of bills that have been introduced in Congress, but still need continued advocacy to push them through the legislative process.

The Healthy Transitions Act would help youth who are transitioning from childhood to adulthood. The Stop Abuse in Residential Treatment Centers Act would create federal safety standards for private residential treatment centers, which are currently regulated by a loose patchwork of state laws. The Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Reauthorization Act would renew funding for the program and also create additional protections for young people in the system.

Taking into account our broad scope of interests in Congress, now we are designing a process to carry out efforts from Policy Day in December of 2009 through Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week in May of 2010, when we will return to Capitol Hill.

### Principles of Health Care Reform

As highlighted by Goal 2 of the final report of the President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, “Mental Health Care Is Consumer and Family Driven,” family-driven care is essential to improving outcomes for children, and we strive to create a system that:

- Enables parents to select culturally and linguistically competent supports, services, and providers;
- Promotes clear goals with specific outcomes that are monitored;
- Designs, implements and evaluates effective programs; and
- Makes parents partners in care and funding decisions.

### We Believe:

Children with mental health needs:

- Have strengths and make valuable contributions to their families.
- Are children first and deserve the same love, care, and attention as all other children.
- Have a right to safely participate in community life, live with their families, and attend school.
- Come from all backgrounds and must be treated with dignity and respect.
- Must receive all the services and supports necessary to achieve their potential.

Mental health is essential to overall health:

- Consumer involvement in the form of family-to-family and youth-to-youth support programs provides critical assistance to those in need while also reducing costs.
- Family- and youth-run organizations must be funded and sustained.
- Services and supports should be culturally and linguistically competent so that the needs of the diverse populations are appropriately addressed.
- Educating parents will improve outcomes for children, especially in the form of parent-to-parent and peer-to-peer services in the community.
- Providers should take into consideration practice-based and community-defined evidence, respecting cultural preferences and traditions in creating care models.

### We Support:

Clinical, therapeutic outcomes *and* functional outcomes such as these:

- Children remain at home with their families;
- Children stay in school in the least restrictive environment possible
- Children stay out of the criminal justice system.
- The health care system should equip children with the tools they need to transition to full adulthood, not just to adult mental health systems.
- The health care system should involve collaboration and care coordination that will form the basis for a shared responsibility model for services and outcomes, and will link medical care with behavioral care.

School- and community-based resources are key to providing children with accessible care and early intervention to address symptoms before they develop into diagnoses.

- Public programs such as Medicaid and SCHIP must be preserved and strengthened to ensure critical access to health care and related services for individuals with chronic illnesses, including individuals with mental illnesses.
- Health care reform must ensure that individuals with mental and substance use disorders have access to the full array of services necessary for recovery from these conditions and are not subject to arbitrary limits on days, visits, and other conditions of coverage.
- Health care reform must ensure that services for mental health and substance use are offered at parity with coverage of other chronic health conditions.
- A quality coordinated health care system should use state-of-the-art health information technology, using privacy-protected, family-accessible, consumer-centered electronic medical records.
- For youth in contact with the juvenile justice system, there should be a greater availability of mental health and substance use services.



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# Features



In 2007 representatives from the National Federation visited Ottawa, Canada to take part in an international leadership exchange and networking meeting. The exchange and meeting were hosted by the International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership (IIMHL). Representatives from eight countries make up the IIMHL and participate in the annual exchange and meeting.

As a result of the National Federation's participation in the exchange and meeting in Canada, the seed for starting a national family organization in Canada was planted, and continues to be cultivated. The family organization in Vancouver, BC calls itself **The F.O.R.C.E.** (Families Organized for Recognition, Care and Equality) **Society for Kids Mental Health.** The F.O.R.C.E. provides information and referral, advocacy, and educational meetings for families of children and youth with mental disorders.

In March of this year, a small group of staff from the National Federation

## The National Federation Goes Abroad!

By Sandra Spencer



once again participated in the IIMHL meeting and exchange this time held in Australia and New Zealand.

The five day trip included spending 2.5 days at the Werry Centre ([www.werrycentre.org.nz](http://www.werrycentre.org.nz)) in Auckland, New Zealand and 2.5 days in Brisbane, Australia. The trip provided the group with an opportunity to hear about best practices that are being implemented in not only Australia and New Zealand, but also around the world. It also provided the National Federation with an opportunity to showcase its products and practices for leaders from around the world.

The next IIMHL exchange and meeting will be held in Ireland. The National Federation has representation on the planning committee made up of leaders from Canada, New Zealand and Ireland. The National Federation's involvement in the planning helps to ensure that the needs of children, youth and families remain a priority for IIMHL.

Several initiatives have grown out of the National Federation's participation in IIMHL. Two of these initiatives are underway within the United Kingdom. The first initiative involves, a National Federation representative serving as a member of a diverse group of UK stakeholders who are focusing on a policy initiative to transform the

juvenile justice system's treatment of young offenders with mental health needs.

The second initiative involves the National Federation working with the UK's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) unit and educating them on the benefits to children, youth and families by implementing the principles and practices of Systems of Care. The National Federation has been invited to present on the benefits of implementing Systems of Care at a UK national conference in October 2009. The conference will be attended by practitioners serving young people and their families and policy makers.

The National Federation is excited to be involved in these international initiatives and will continue to actively seek out opportunities that allow it to share the importance of family and youth involvement in decision making.

Visit the IIMHL website at [www.iimhl.com](http://www.iimhl.com)



## Climbing the Hill; Advocacy in Action!

By : Andrea Barnes

In the midst of health care reform and budget crises, how do we ensure accessible, effective, family-driven, youth-guided and culturally competent services and supports for our children and youth with mental health needs and their families? Your work at the local and state level and our collective work at the federal level are needed now more than ever.


We must work hard and we must work smart. And we must be consistent in our coordinated efforts to get our issues heard and attended to. Policy Day 2009 will set in motion a series of connected events and communications leading up to Children's Mental Health Week 2010 that are designed to maximize our collective impact.

The National Federation intends to help you (1) make your voices heard in Washington DC on December 3<sup>rd</sup> (2) keep your message in front of your legislators after the Congressional Recess; and (3) get your legislators' support locally and nationally for Children's Mental Health Week in May 2010.

A dynamic plenary presentation will bring you up to date on the most pressing federal policy issues. Your choice of a workshop will introduce you to legislative advocacy, present a proven advocacy agenda model, or provide youth with tools for advancing their policy agenda. Following these morning activities, each **pre-registered participant** will receive a personalized packet of information and a map for their afternoon trip to the Hill.



NATIONAL FEDERATION



**Youth Track**

Increasing youth engagement and involvement is a positive way to build stronger communities. The 20th Anniversary Conference Youth Track is going to be packed with activities, excitement and creative workshop. From leadership to advocacy to creative ways to express yourself, this youth track is going to do it all!

## 2009 Poster Contest!!!



2009 Children's Mental Awareness Poster

**Calling all talented, creative and artistic youth!!!**

Participate in the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health Poster Contest!!!  
 Help raise awareness for children's mental health and reduce stigma!  
 Share your interpretation of positive mental health and have it entered into the national contest.  
 The winner will be announced at the Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.

**Deadline: November 15th**

**\$150 for the Winning Poster in each age group**

Log on to [www.ffcmh.org](http://www.ffcmh.org) for more information and requirements, rules and regulations!!!



# Good Trainings, Great Trainers!

By Marie Niarhos

The National Federation’s mission includes a commitment to providing leadership and technical assistance to the nation-wide network of family-run organizations. This includes training. During the past several months, we amped up the National Federation Training Program by increasing our focus on the “Family-Driven Care” curriculum, and certifying a new cadre of experienced family-trainers.

## What’s behind our trainings?

Our trainings are comprehensive, have been fully developed, are outcome oriented and can be individualized to meet the needs of individual communities. Each curriculum has been through a rigorous development, implementation and evaluation procedure. First, the National Federation determined that there was a need for a training curriculum about the topic and that our organization had the legitimate and deep experiences needed for development. The initial draft was built using National Federation standards; being cognizant of cultural and linguistic competence, learning styles, critical thinking skills and the use of evaluation and data. It was piloted and evaluated by participants and much time, effort and expertise was employed to revise and improve the training.

The new draft was reviewed by an expert panel and was piloted in several communities. The National Federation now has curricula that is continuously evaluated, updated and adjusted to meet the individual needs of communities.

A Sampling of our Topics:

### *On the Road to Family-Driven Care*

The “Family-Driven Care” curriculum was developed and piloted in diverse communities with assistance from the National Evaluation Team. Since the family-driven care value is not just for family members, the training is intended for all members of any community who are working to improve their approach to working with families. It includes five modules covering the evolution of family involvement, the definition of family-driven care, a continuum of



family involvement, moving from rhetoric to reality and exploring tough questions. Individuals and groups participating in this training will develop action plans to help your community work toward achieving family-driven care.

### *Creating Better Partnerships: One at a Time*

Equal numbers of family members and professionals come together in this training to build effective, sustainable partnerships. Through thought

Provoking processes, participants

examine their own understanding of themselves and how they perceive their family member or professional partners. Step-by-step the trainer leads the group to better understand and work with each other. The community chooses its purpose for the day; a community action plan, local principles of partnership or individual goal setting and works toward this outcome as partners.

### *The World of Evaluation*

Individuals and communities participating in this training learn the value of evaluation in transforming their children’s mental health services, supports and systems to be family-driven. Participants need no prior evaluation experience, but are community partners, collaborators, providers, families and others with a stake in children’s mental health systems of care. The training covers definitions and history, the use of evaluation for advocacy, its role in evidence based practices and critical questions.

### **Check out our expertise:**

On December 4, at the National Federation Conference in Washington, D.C., you are welcome to attend a pre-conference workshop which will give you the opportunity to sample our interactive training techniques, exceptional materials and outcome based presentations. “Evidence as Co-Pilot: Data Informed and Family Driven” will provide participants with effective tools for using evaluation to make informed, data-based and family-driven decisions. We hope you will attend!

# Children's Mental Health Awareness Week

## Promoting Positive Mental Health and Well-Being for Children, Youth and Families

By Kameisha Bennett



The National Federation declared the first full week in May (May 3-9, 2009) *National Children's Mental Health Awareness Week*. This year's theme for awareness week was: **Promoting Positive Mental Health and Well-Being for Children, Youth and Families**. We invited all our chapters, state and partner organizations and supporters to use the week to further promote and spread awareness about children's mental health.

A legislative briefing was held on May 7<sup>th</sup> on Capitol Hill. The briefing discussed current issues and challenges impacting children with mental health challenges; largely focused around education. The event had a wonderful turn out of legislators, their staff, and advocates.

The panel of speakers included Laurel Stine, Director of Federation Relations from the Bazelon Center, Howard Muscott, Director of the New Hampshire Center for Effective Behavioral Treatments and Supports and A. Katherine Powell, Director of the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The briefing speakers focused on education reform, health care reform and improvements in quality of life for children and families.

Several members of Congress, including Representative Tim Murphy (R-PA), offered remarks about the importance of funding for mental health programs. Academy Award Winning actress Goldie Hawn was the honored speaker, who joined the morning panel to advocate for more funding and support for mental health programs. Her passion and dedication to children was inspiring.

### The green ribbon campaign was also a visible success!

At the briefing, as families, providers, partner organizations and other supporters all wore green ribbons to show their commitment and spread awareness. The entire panel also showed their support by wearing their green ribbons throughout the briefing.



*A full house at the legislative briefing. This was one of the most successful turnouts in Awareness Week history!*

Major events were not only happening in our nation's capitol, but also in our chapters, state and partner organizations. National Federation Chapters hosted a diverse array of events. For instance, one of our Texas chapters, the Denton County Federation of Families had an ice-cream social after the City



*Speakers at the legislative briefing (left to right) Laurel Stine, Howard Muscott, Goldie Hawn and A. Katherine Powell*

# Children's Mental Health Awareness Week



of Denton's reading of an official Proclamation recognizing Children's Mental Health Awareness Week. In Minnesota there was a "Walk for Mental Health" to raise awareness of the mental health needs of young children, youth, young adults, parents, families and the elderly.

Organizers distributed green ribbons and wore green t-shirts to symbolize new life, new growth and new beginnings. The walk started at the University of Minnesota, Crookston gazebo on the campus mall at 10 a.m. The walk was followed by several guest speakers. It was considered a success in the community.



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The G.I.F.T.S., Inc. (State Organization) in Guam created a 2009 green ribbon poster that has been placed at schools, police stations, agencies and various businesses.

Youth activities and events were also outstanding all week! On May 7<sup>th</sup>, youth from across the country performed at the SAMHSA-sponsored "Hear Me Now" performance at the Harman Center for the Arts Center in Washington, D.C. Special guests included actor Solomon Trimble, who was featured in the movie *Twilight*, and Sabrina Bryan of The Cheetah Girls. Youth amazed the audience with their talent, which included spoken word, singing, piano, guitar, and dance.



# Children's Mental Health Awareness Week

## BUST IT makes a BIG impact

By Lorrin Gehring



On May 7, 2009 System of Care (SOC) Communities across the country participated in BUST IT ("IT" being stigma), a youth action designed to draw attention to the mental health needs of children and youth throughout the United States. At 1PM EST young people simultaneously held 30 seconds of silence during which time they had signs displaying myths and facts about mental illness. At the end of the 30 seconds of silence they blew bubbles to symbolize hope and yelled "BUST IT!" The action was organized and planned by a planning committee comprised of youth and youth coordinators.

Safe Schools/Healthy Students and Youth MOVE also partnered with SOC communities to participate in the action. The objective for BUST IT was to provide a "contact" experience to reinforce the fact that children's mental health impacts all youth in one way or another. The longer-term goal is to reduce the stigma that is often associated with having a mental health need. BUST IT actions across the country demonstrated solidarity among children and youth who have, or are at risk of having, a mental health need.

At least 28 known SOC communities and partners participated in BUST IT, and many others are rumored to have joined the action too. Communities ranged from New Jersey, Maine,

Illinois, Idaho, Texas, Oregon to Guam! Educating the community about children's mental health needs, reducing the stigma children with mental illnesses face, and creating solidarity in the local schools are all goals that communities cited for conducting BUST IT activities.



The afternoon timing of BUST IT created an opportunity for communities to partner with their local schools in hosting the action. Most communities that participated were able to have the action hosted at local high schools, middle schools and elementary schools. Several communities chose to conduct the action at their state capitals.

Other locations included a youth shelter, a local reservation, and at local conferences and carnivals. The number of youth and adults participating in the action ranged from four at one site, to over a hundred and fifty. Witnesses to BUST IT reached over 1,000 in some communities and well into the hundreds in many others.

Many communities are still in the process of collecting and compiling the data they collected from awareness day to better judge the responses and reactions in their communities. Some immediate results from the action included a letter of support from a city council, open discussions and questions that eliminated existing stigma and many other positive comments about the signs and information shared.

Communities that participated in a post action survey expressed excitement and interest in planning and participating in a similar youth action next year. The young people who participated in planning BUST IT and carrying it out are truly the ones who made this tremendous event possible, and who brought national attention to the importance of children's mental health. We look forward to bringing the same passion and energy that made this years action such a success into the future.



## National Federation 20th Anniversary Conference!

December 3-6, 2009  
Hyatt Regency Washington  
on Capital Hill  
Washington, DC

Register Today at  
[www.ffcmh.org](http://www.ffcmh.org)

**Dress for success and style at the conference, make sure  
you get all of your National Federation gear today!**

**[www.cafepress.com/nffcmh](http://www.cafepress.com/nffcmh)**



# Moving Forward

Resources, Reminders, and Resolutions

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For more information  
Visit us at:  
[www.ffcmh.org](http://www.ffcmh.org)

### Here are a few articles to look forward to in the next issue:

Youth Matters, Youth Voices  
National Initiatives  
20th Anniversary Conference Highlights

### Resources available from the National Federation:

Policy and Advocacy Alerts  
Training Opportunities for *YOUR* community  
Newly developed Tools and Resources

### Coming Soon!!!

Evidence as Co-Pilot: Data-Informed and Family-Driven Workbook  
Critical Issues Guide on Financing

### Check out the National Federation's website for:

20th Anniversary Conference updates  
2009 Poster Contest Information  
Fact Sheets, News briefs and Updates  
New Developments, Reports and Findings!

Contact us at:

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