



# Stop It Now! NEWS

The Campaign to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse

FALL 2005 VOL. 13, NO. 2

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## Helping Families Have Hope

# PARENTtalk: A Unique Resource

*“It would be easier to tell someone my son is a drug addict, drug pusher, or even a murderer than a sex offender.” —PARENT*

These words speak to the difficulty, isolation, and stigma often associated with being a parent of a child with sexual behavior problems. Every day on the Stop It Now! national Helpline we speak to callers concerned that a child in their family may be at risk to act out an inappropriate sexual behavior with another child. In the last year alone, over a third of all Helpline calls concerned at-risk or sexually abusive behaviors between two children. This data mirrors national statistics indicating that between 30-50% of sexual abuse cases are committed by a child under the age of 18.

In the early 1990s, Stop It Now! conducted focus groups that included parents of children with sexual behavior problems. What we learned at that time was profound and is still echoed today by Helpline callers and in more recent research conducted by our Sites and Affiliates in the United States and the United Kingdom.

During the focus groups, we heard parents talk about their need for more information on healthy sexual development, warning signs, and how to talk about child sexual abuse with other adults. They voiced the need for a consistent response among professionals when a child has committed a sexual offense. They desperately wanted to know that they were not alone. And lastly, they voiced a need for a sense of hope—hope that life can get better.

In response to this data, Stop It Now! created *PARENTtalk*, the first newsletter specifically designed for parents of children with sexual behavior problems. The focus groups and the newsletter itself were made possible with funding support from the Jessica B. Cox Foundation and the Vermont Children's Trust Fund. *PARENTtalk* was the first publication of its kind and is still the only resource we know of specifically for parents of young people at-risk to sexually abuse. We are proud to have published 12 issues of this invaluable newsletter to date.



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## ▪ SITE NEWS

### ▪ GEORGIA

Stop It Now! Georgia is planning for its move in October from a pilot project to a statewide program. To make this transition, a Program Specialist will be hired to bring local communities the training and technical assistance necessary to fully integrate Stop It Now! Georgia into current prevention programs. The Statewide Coordinator will then focus on policy initiatives and participation on various state level collaboratives.

### ▪ MINNESOTA

Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota sponsored a videoconference featuring two Stop It Now! experts. Outreach and Education Coordinator Ann Lindstrom presented an overview of adult and community responsibility for child sexual abuse prevention, and national expert panelist Victor Vieth shared information about the growth of child prostitution in Minnesota. The conference was broadcast to six locations throughout the state. In an effort to reach more people throughout the state, Stop It Now! MN also presented at five statewide conferences. They have also responded to requests for educational materials from 84 of 89 counties in Minnesota. In 2005 alone, Stop It Now! Minnesota distributed almost 15,000 pieces of educational material throughout the state.

## GUEST COLUMN

# Protecting Children and Ministering to Sexual Offenders: A Faith Perspective

by Reverend Debra W. Haffner

*The Reverend Debra W. Haffner is the director of the Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing ([www.religiousinstitute.org](http://www.religiousinstitute.org)) and an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister.*



Reverend Debra W. Haffner

As a sexuality educator and as a minister, I help people learn to treat each other with dignity and respect. I believe that our sexuality is a sacred gift to be celebrated with holiness and integrity. I am pained by the brokenness, oppression and loss of meaning that too many people experience about their sexuality. The sexual abuse of children and adolescents is a soul-scarring desecration of their sexuality and their spirituality.

Two years ago, the Unitarian Universalist Association asked me to begin a project to help its congregations address issues of sexual abuse prevention and the inclusion of persons with a history of sex offenses into the congregation. I interviewed dozens of congregations, clergy, and sex offender treatment specialists. I also had the opportunity to work with the staff and board members of Stop It Now! and learned a great deal from their excellent resources. This winter, the UUA published the results of this work as an online manual called *Balancing Acts: Keeping Children Safe in Congregations* ([www.uua.org/cde/ethics/balancing](http://www.uua.org/cde/ethics/balancing)).

Any congregation that includes children, teenagers, and families, regardless of its denomination, needs to be addressing sexual abuse prevention, and many of them will need your help. Given the prevalence of child sexual abuse, many congregations and clergy are faced with the decision of if and how a person with a history of sex offenses can safely be included in the adult life of the congregation. They need to understand that the treated sex offender who is known to the congregation and who agrees to abide by a limited access agreement for participation is much less of a risk to children than the adult or teenager whose sexual interest in children is known only to themselves.

Thus, congregations also need to develop and implement policies to keep all adults, teens, and children safe from sexual abuse and harassment. Faith communities can offer a lifespan sexuality education program consistent with their own values that includes a program to help parents educate their children about healthy sexuality. Such education provides children with the skills they need to understand their own

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## DEVELOPMENT NEWS

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### A Message from Maxine Stein, CEO

Stop It Now!'s website, [www.stopitnow.org](http://www.stopitnow.org), steers several hundred calls a month to the national Helpline. In fact, 50% of our calls come to us this way. In this day and age, there is no doubt about the importance and effectiveness of a strong web presence. But for Stop It Now!, whose work is about one of the most charged and difficult issues our society faces, the website is much more than a portal of information and resources. Our website, which averages 600 visitors a day, has become a confidential place for people to access sensitive information in the privacy of their own space.

The sexual abuse of children is not easy to talk about. The very people who most need to speak up often feel they don't know what to say or with whom to talk. We have learned in our work that adults who are concerned about child sexual abuse in their family or their community remain silent because they feel they have nowhere to turn. For many, it takes great courage to pick up the phone and reach out to our confidential services; for those that don't, our website offers a safe place to begin tackling their concerns honestly.

Our website puts a human face on the issue of child sexual abuse. We post Stories of Hope that show healing from child sexual abuse is possible for all the people involved. We highlight the unique work of our sites and affiliates around the country. As a social change tool, the Stop It Now! website is place to reach people, motivate them, empower them, and educate them. Ultimately, we hope by reading through the information and resources that we provide, that people will be motivated to take positive action. While the website is not a substitute for personal help, it is a strong and effective beginning.

We want our website to be even more than it is now. We want to have content that will be both deeper and broader. Our website has the potential to become the "go to" site for a wide range of people in communities, families, and professional fields such as law enforcement, child protection services, public health and policy, mental health treatment and more. Stop It Now's website could become THE place to search for an answer, a referral, or important information. We would like to include on our website legislative updates, a list of activities around the country relevant to our work, more extensive information about our sites and affiliates, and a library of relevant books and articles.

Our vision is a dream and goal for 2005-2006. We need to raise \$15,000 for this work, and I welcome inquiries from interested people or groups who would like to offer financial support. Please call me at 413-587-3500. I look forward to your participation in this important endeavor.



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#### PROTECTING CHILDREN CONTINUED FROM PAGE TWO

development and to reach out for help if it is needed. This education also allows a community to talk with children and teens about behaviors that may lead them to abuse other children as well. And faith communities need to offer support to their adult congregants who have suffered sexual abuse and violence.

As people of faith, we must hear the cries of those who suffer from the failure of religious communities to address sexuality issues, including the spiritual devastation that sexual abuse brings. I invite you to think about how you can help faith communities promote sexual morality, justice, and healing.

*Editor's Note: The UUA manual has been adapted as a non-denominational Christian and Jewish resource, "A Time to Heal: Protecting Children and Ministering to Sex Offenders." Single copies can be ordered from the Christian Community/Life Quest at 1-800-774-3360.*



## Bob Falconer: Financial Supporter

When Bob Falconer heard about Stop It Now! in the mid 1990s, he was no stranger to helping children. As a writer, activist, philanthropist, and sexual abuse survivor, Bob had long been involved in the field of child sexual abuse prevention. Bob believes that the way children are raised determines the quality of the culture and the political structure in a society. "If we continue to raise our children violently and in a violent society," Bob says, "we will foster the negative behavior that perpetuates abuse."

Bob says that until he learned about Stop It Now!, he felt that "most approaches toward prevention were like emptying the ocean with a teaspoon." He was drawn to Stop It Now! because it was "ahead of the curve." He is particularly interested in work related to juvenile offenders, a highly treatable population that represents great hope for stopping the cycle of abuse. He also feels strongly about reaching out to families, especially non-offending parents. Stop It Now!'s newest brochure, *Let's Talk*, addresses these needs and is the kind of groundbreaking work that Bob has come to recognize as Stop It Now!'s extraordinary contribution to a complex problem.



From his first small, unrestricted grant to Stop It Now! almost ten years ago, Bob has been a consistent friend and supporter. He served on the Board of Directors from 1999 to 2004; he helped provide funding to start the Stop It Now! site in Georgia; and he joined the Founder's Safety Net for Children when it was created three years ago. Bob has also participated in the Stop It Now! Dialogue Project by talking about his experience as a sexual abuse survivor in a joint forum with recovering offenders, an experience he found to be personally valuable.

If you would like to join Bob and Stop It Now! in our work to prevent child sexual abuse, please call Maxine Stein at 413-587-3500.

## SITE NEWS

### PHILADELPHIA

Stop It Now! Philadelphia has been working with the local community to provide new resources for child sexual abuse prevention. In addition to the Stop It Now! Helpline and child sexual abuse prevention training, Stop It Now! Philadelphia has recently trained neighborhood-based community council members to be 'first line' resources on issues involving child sexual abuse. Stop It Now! Philadelphia will also be training parents and foster parents as part of a new city initiative, Achieving Reunification Center (ARC), for children who have been removed from their homes by social services and are now returning to family situations.

### UNITED KINGDOM AND IRELAND

The United Kingdom & Ireland Helpline has received over 3300 calls since it began in 2002. Nearly half (47%) of their calls are from persons worried about their own behavior, 30% are from friends and family worried about a person's behavior, and less than 5% are from a parent or caregiver of a youth displaying abusive behavior. This is a marked contrast with US helpline statistics of 6% who call about their own behavior and 34% who call about youth with sexual behavior problems.



### Donate to Stop It Now! through the Combined Federal Campaign.

Federal government employees can support

Stop It Now! through the Combined Federal

Campaign (CFC), which kicks off in September and runs through December. **Select our CFC code #0844** to designate a contribution.

Now is the time of year for all employees to check with your employer about charitable giving and matching gifts programs.

## PARENTtalk: A Unique Resource

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Each issue of *PARENTtalk* includes an article written by a parent or caregiver of a child with sexual behavior problems. The most recent issue, Spring 2005, featured a story from a parent whose older son sexually abused her younger son. It is a courageous story about the complexity of being the parent of both the child who was abused and the child who perpetrated that abuse.

In addition to a story from a parent, each *PARENTtalk* newsletter contains an article written by a professional in the field of youth and sexual behavior. These articles have touched upon issues such as healthy sexual development, specialized treatment, and support groups.

Upcoming issues of *PARENTtalk* will focus on internet-related concerns with youth and also on children with developmental disabilities or mild autistic disorders



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such as Asperger's Syndrome who also exhibit sexual behavior problems. We also have a Spanish issue in the works!

Stop It Now! receives consistent feedback about the value of *PARENTtalk* from parents and professionals alike. In the words of a Helpline caller, "I cannot tell you how thankful I was to get *PARENTtalk*. I used to feel like I was the only one in the world going through this!" And from a clinician working with youth who have sexually offended we heard: "I was having trouble getting the parents in our support group to talk together. Then I brought several copies of your newsletter to group. While reading the stories out loud together, the parents all of a sudden opened up!"

If you are a parent and would like to share your story or would like more information about *PARENTtalk*, please call the Stop It Now! Helpline or send an email to [info@stopitnow.org](mailto:info@stopitnow.org).

### STOP IT NOW! SITES AND AFFILIATES

#### Stop It Now! Georgia

Prevent Child Abuse Georgia  
1720 Peachtree St. NW, Suite 600  
Atlanta, GA 30309  
404-870-7363

#### Stop It Now! Minnesota

Project Pathfinder, Inc.  
1821 University Avenue, West  
Suite N385  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
651-644-8515

#### Stop It Now! Philadelphia

Joseph J. Peters Institute  
100 South Broad St., Suite 1700  
Philadelphia, PA 19110  
215-701-1570

#### Stop It Now! UK & Ireland

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation  
PO Box 9841  
Birmingham B487WB  
England  
1-67- 746 0168

Stop It Now! created a groundbreaking public health approach to prevent the perpetration of child sexual abuse. Its public policy, public education and research programs have protected our children by emphasizing adult and community responsibility. These programs reach out to adults who are concerned about inappropriate sexualized behavior in another adult, adolescent, or child, and to adults who are concerned about their own thoughts and behaviors.

HELPLINE: 1-888-PREVENT [www.stopitnow.org](http://www.stopitnow.org)

### EXPERT PANEL

#### **Robert Appel**

Vermont Human Rights Commission

#### **Judith Becker, PhD**

University of Arizona

#### **Suzanne Brown**

Washington Coalition of Sexual  
Assault Programs

#### **Robert Burakoff**

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#### **Lisa Fontes, PhD**

Springfield College

#### **Joan and Kent Haskell**

Family affected by child sexual abuse

#### **Keith Kaufman, PhD**

Association for the Treatment of  
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#### **Larry Kressley**

Public Welfare Foundation

#### **Wanda K. Jones, Dr. P.H.**

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Department of Health and Human  
Services

#### **Gina Ogden, PhD**

Wellesley College Centers for  
Research on Women

#### **David Prescott**

Sand Ridge Secure Treatment Center

#### **Mark Rosenberg, MD**

The Task Force for Child Survival  
and Development

#### **Linda Spears**

Child Welfare League of America

#### **Victor Veith**

National Center for Prosecution of  
Child Abuse

\* Organizations listed for  
identification purposes



## Collaborations in the Field

- ▶ In March, Stop It Now! was invited to a groundbreaking national meeting—the Surgeon General’s Workshop on Making Prevention of Child Maltreatment a National Priority: Implementing Innovations of a Public Health Approach. CEO Maxine Stein participated in this two-day think tank that included participants such as Dr. Elias Zerhouni, the Director of the National Institutes of Health and Carol Berkowitz, the President of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The purpose of the meeting was to challenge leaders from diverse sectors of the child maltreatment fields to “firmly establish and sustain an inclusive and comprehensive public health prevention framework.” Maxine reported that “The Surgeon General’s clear commitment to addressing child maltreatment signifies the vital shift in thinking and action that is needed in the United States to bring a public health solution to preventing and eradicating child sexual abuse. Stop It Now! is gratified to play a central role in this work alongside federal agencies, other national organizations, and community-based efforts.”
- ▶ Director of Public Education Joan Tabachnick was recently invited to join the Prevention Advisory Committee (PAC) of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC). Chaired by Cordelia Anderson, a Stop It Now! Minnesota Advisory Board member, the committee’s goal is to build prevention partnerships and coalitions around the U.S., to advise in the development of NCMEC’s prevention strategic plan, and to develop policy and organizational practices to promote prevention.

### STOP IT NOW! NEWS

is published three times a year.

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To sign up for online distribution of this newsletter, please visit our website.

We are interested in your comments and suggestions.

Please e-mail or write to us at:

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