



E-Quipped for Prevention

November 2011

Stories, resources, and training for
Cherish Our Children Leaders

Relationship Building

Connecting with other groups to prevent exploitation

Public Forums

From Diaconal Minister Heather Kistner, Northwest Synod of Wisconsin

At Peace Lutheran Church in Menomonie, WI, we have a Cherish Our Children Team that organizes spring and fall forums about trafficking that are open to the public. We want to create opportunities to build relationships with others in order to inform the public and prevent exploitation. We research, plan, and advertise a quality event, so that we draw a good crowd.

For one of our forums, we invited local law enforcement and social services personnel to lead a panel discussion. The presenters gave definitions and explained the differences between human trafficking and sexual assault and talked about their roles in dealing with these crimes. After the presentation, participants were able to ask questions and learn more about the prevalence of sexual exploitation in our community and ways to combat this growing issue.

For the next forum, the audience heard the personal story of a 19-year-old woman who was approached by a trafficker as he tried to lure her into prostitution. By researching articles in the local newspaper, our Team discovered how common this is in our community. After hearing the young woman's story, a local nurse came forward to suggest the topic for our next forum: What are the emotional and physical consequences for those involved in sex trafficking?

Through building relationships in our community, we invite others to work with us to answer the question: "What can we do better in our community so that we can prevent this from happening?"

One of the next steps in this community is to connect with law enforcement to re-invigorate efforts to have local



businesses display the "Safe Place" logo in their windows. Upon seeing this logo, young people who are feeling threatened, being chased, or are vulnerable in any way can stop into that establishment and ask for help, knowing that it is a safe place. Law enforcement is responsible for ensuring that these businesses truly are safe places for those who are vulnerable.

Connecting Through Training

From Pat Caley, Associate in Ministry, Central/Southern Illinois Synod

The Cherish Our Children Task Force from the Central/Southern Illinois Synod invited members of our synod to come to a summer training event. We used the [*Safeguarding God's Children*](#) training materials from the Episcopal Church, presented by an Episcopal Priest. Approximately 25 people participated in this training, where our goal was to show people what they could take back to their congregations. Cherish Our Children congregation manuals were given to all participants. Our synod purchased the *Safeguarding God's Children* training materials and has made them available for congregations to use.

The desired outcome of this training was to give people the tools to help them recognize what makes children vulnerable to exploitation and to create safe environments to prevent the possibility of exploitation. Whether these churches became Cherish Our Children congregations or not, they still benefitted from the training and the relationships they built. One of the positive outcomes so far is that one local congregation has used the program with their church council and as an adult Bible study.

At my former congregation, I was also part of a team that held a gathering for the community and local congregations. We invited law enforcement, child protective services, a representative from the local school district, and a member of the health department to talk about their work to prevent the sexual exploitation of children and deal with its consequences. Participants also learned how to create safe zones for children where they are free from the threat of exploitation and violence.

www.cherishchildren.org

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Relationship-Building Tidbits

- The Cherish Our Children Team from Zion Lutheran Church in Brantwood, WI visited the Prentice High School Athletic Director. They both thanked her for her good work with promoting respectful behavior at athletic events and shared information about the trafficking of children in northern Wisconsin. Now they are wondering if other congregations have built relationships with county social service agencies. Simply reply to this email with your stories.
- Several congregations in the Upstate New York Synod have had a speaker from the regional office of the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#). Does your synod have a regional office for this organization?
- The Northwestern Ohio Synod is working with [Darkness to Light](#) to provide child sexual abuse prevention training for congregational leaders.
- The Southwestern Texas Synod held a workshop at [the ELCA Global Mission Gathering](#) in San Antonio, TX. Might your synod task force do the same?

How have you been in action?

Send your ideas to Erica Larson, E-Quipped Coordinator (elarson@lakenokomis.org), by November 10 for the December 2011 issue of *E-quipped for Prevention*. The topic for December is "Action" - God's people in action (service, advocacy, funding, ?) to prevent child sexual exploitation. Please share your stories (less than 100 words).

Cherish Our Children

Cherish Our Children is a national Lutheran ministry of prayer, education, relationship-building, and action to prevent child sexual exploitation.

We believe that "Love born of faith in Jesus Christ calls us all to attend to, discuss, resist, and reject the system of sexual exploitation"
([ELCA Message on Commercial Sexual Exploitation](#), pg. 1.)

You are invited to [give financially](#) to support this ministry. Thrivent members may designate Cherish Our Children to receive Choice Dollars. Donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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