

**HELPLINE****Newsletter**

May 2007

**1-800-CHILDREN**

**Prevent Child  
Abuse Georgia**

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[www.pcageorgia.org](http://www.pcageorgia.org)  
or [www.stopitnowga.org](http://www.stopitnowga.org)

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world.

Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

-- **Margaret Mead**

## A Message From Our Statewide HELPLINE Coordinator

Dear Volunteers and Community Partners,

As you may or may not have noticed – there have been a few changes at the 1-800-CHILDREN HELPLINE over the last few months! You may see, for example, that Liz Ferguson is not writing this section. Liz has provided incredible leadership to the HELPLINE for many years, and in February, as a result of some reorganization and strategic planning, she took on more responsibility in other areas of the agency and transferred leadership of HELPLINE to me. I feel very fortunate to have learned from Liz over the past several years, and she has prepared me to work closely with the amazing team of HELPLINE staff and volunteers. Liz is always available and would love to hear from you even though her primary responsibilities no longer include the day-to-day management of the HELPLINE.

Other changes include the way HELPLINE calls are routed through our system and our process for training HELPLINE volunteers, which will be highlighted in this newsletter in more detail. All of these changes are being made as a result of careful analysis of call data and feedback from volunteers. Our primary goal is to create a service that is more accessible for everyone who needs it and an environment that is supportive and enjoyable for our valuable community volunteers.

You will also meet our newest HELPLINE staff member, Shabnam Majidi, who joined the PCA Georgia family on April 9<sup>th</sup>. We are so happy to have her with us! You will also hear from Collette Balder, Executive Director of R.O.C.K. Group in Chatham County, who will share how she has served her community in partnership with the 1-800-CHILDREN HELPLINE.

I hope you enjoy the content of this newsletter, and that you will feel free to contact me at any time at 404-870-7363. I'm excited about the community partnership we have with all of you.

Warmly,  
Sally

## A Greeting from the Newest Addition to the HELPLINE!

Hello from the newest member of PCA Georgia! I started working as the HELPLINE Program Specialist in the beginning of April. I am here every weekday from 12:00pm to 8:00pm. I am amazed at the many resources the HELPLINE can connect callers with from around the state. It is a thrill to work for an organization that reaches out to all parts of Georgia.

A little about me: I am a true Georgia native. I grew up in metro Atlanta and was educated in the public school system. For college, I moved to Athens and attended the University of Georgia. After that, for graduate school, I moved back to Atlanta to attend Georgia State University. The past two and half years I worked in Child Protective Services at Fulton County Department of Family and Children Services.



Shabnam Majidi  
HELPLINE Program Specialist

I am so eager to switch over into working for children and families before abuse occurs. It is especially exciting to be working with all of our experienced and dedicated volunteers. I am thrilled about my new position at PCA Georgia and look forward to my role at 1-800-CHILDREN HELPLINE.

## HELPLINE SUCCESS STORY OF TWO LIVES CHANGED

**A Father's Story of Perseverance and Hope** By Martha Perusek

After 10-year-old Brianna's mother left them, Jose ended up alone with his daughter, a single father for the first time. "I had no job, no car. It was hard to pay the rent," says Jose. Without a car, Jose had no way to get Brianna to after-school functions or extracurricular activities. Though an accountant by profession, he delivered pizzas part-time to make ends meet.

The emotional and financial stress made Jose's new role as a single father even more challenging. "Brianna had a bad attitude and was acting out. I didn't know what to do," he said. Jose and Brianna were in trouble – just one of thousands of Georgia families for whom financial concerns and other stressors make child abuse a very real possibility.

But that was before Jose made his first call to the Prevent Child Abuse Georgia HELPLINE (1-800-CHILDREN) two years ago and talked with Cheryl, our HELPLINE Program Specialist. "Cheryl just listened and understood what I was going through as a single father. I didn't know which way was up. She helped me."

HELPLINE rarely gets to talk to dads. To be able to reach out to a dad is special. Jose said that Cheryl helped him understand that his role was to build a better life for Brianna. "She helped me grow as a person and understand that everything I do is for my daughter. She also helped me understand that Brianna was acting out because she wanted her mom." With this new understanding, father and daughter's relationship began to improve, and so did their family's situation.

Jose got a job with a temporary accounting agency and started a small income tax business. Jose's job situation continued to improve, and he now has a full-time accounting position, including benefits, and has expanded his tax business. With his new success, he was able to buy a car and to allow Brianna to participate in school functions, dance lessons, and other healthy activities.

Throughout the next two years, he continued to call the HELPLINE, and Cheryl referred him to counselors and help groups in his area. "I took counseling sessions at church. This gave me a strong emotional lift," Jose said.

"I'm better because of the HELPLINE and Cheryl's encouragement to get counseling. I'm not angry anymore."

Thanks to her dad's new attitude and coping skills, Brianna is now truly thriving. "Last year she had straight C's in school," Jose said. "Now she's straight A's and B's!" She's also very active in the dance squad, cheerleading, and student council. Next football season, she's going to be a junior cheerleader for the Atlanta Falcons.

Jose credits Cheryl and Prevent Child Abuse Georgia HELPLINE with helping his family avert a more serious crisis. "Cheryl helped me understand that my focus is to make Brianna a healthy person. She kept me together a lot of times. If I hadn't called, I don't know what would have happened," he said.

Cheryl sees things differently. "Jose did it all," she said. "It was all about helping him to focus on what he could control and to build a life for his beautiful daughter." That's what the HELPLINE and other Prevent Child Abuse Georgia programs are all about. When the storms of life hit – like job loss, illness, or separation – we empower families to rebuild and create strong homes so their children can grow and thrive. Parenting can be difficult under the best of conditions, but during times of stress, children and families are even more vulnerable to the devastations of abuse.

Prevent Child Abuse Georgia's HELPLINE is a free, confidential resource for all Georgians on any issue related to children and parenting. It connects parents to valuable community resources, helps school-age children deal with issues like bullying, and supports churches and communities in building safe havens for children.

Jose says, "I would advise anybody to use the HELPLINE and continue to use it. It takes time. It helps you grow, if you let it. Let the HELPLINE help you. That's what it's there for."



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Faith Summit: “Turning Choice Into Change”



This year Prevent Child Abuse Georgia hosted its 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Faith Summit at the metro Atlanta American Red Cross. Our theme was, “Turning Choice into Change: Empowering Families through Leadership and Faith.”

This innovative event was offered to selected leaders within diverse faith organizations, and was facilitated through the leadership of PCA Georgia’s Faith Leadership Coalition and a team of students from Georgia State University’s School of Social Work, master’s level program.

Faith Leadership Coalition members:

- **Rev. Dr. Luther E. Smith, Jr.**, Professor of Church and Community at Candler School of Theology at Emory University and Chairman of the Board of the Interfaith Children’s Movement of Metropolitan Atlanta (ICMma)
- **Sue Stubbs**, Director of the Office of Child and Youth Protection for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta
- **Rev. Tami Groves**, Executive Director of ICMma
- **Sue Rother**, Consultant (Retired) Georgia Baptist Convention
- **Rev. Helen Pearson Smith**, Central Congregational United Church of Christ
- **Wendy Lipshutz**, Shalom Bayit Program Director, Jewish Family and Career Services

Georgia State Student Team

- Kimberly Chin
- Wilkenda Davis
- Yeni Garcia
- Terri Crouch

### THANK YOU

A special **THANK YOU** to Hank Farrell of the American Red Cross for allowing the use of their entire training facility for the day! The event would not have been possible without this generous donation!

Workshops pertaining to the prevention of child sexual abuse and family violence were offered, as well as training on organizational policy and practice. Rev. Dr. Luther E. Smith, Jr. served as the keynote speaker and shared a sobering message about the responsibility of all faith communities for the health and well-being of children and families. In addition, participants were given the opportunity to engage in facilitated dialogue with other faith leaders, as well as prevention and child welfare experts from around the state.

The session was well attended and hosted more than 50 faith leaders from a variety of congregations. The participants serve in key roles within their respective faith communities and hold positions such as pastor and associate pastor, youth and children’s ministry director, office of child and youth protection director, safe environment leader, child safety minister, lay counselor, licensed therapist, refugee parents coordinator, and child and family advocate.

The summit was a successful event and will hopefully serve as a catalyst for PCA Georgia’s continued outreach and education for faith communities. If you would like more information about the event, or would be interested in serving on next year’s planning committee, please contact Cheryl McClure at 404-870-6569 or by email: [cherylm@pcageorgia.org](mailto:cherylm@pcageorgia.org).



Sue Stubbs & Tami Groves  
Faith Leadership Coalition



Dr. Luther E. Smith, Jr. and  
Dr. Fran Reeves, HELPLINE Volunteer



Pastor Olu Brown, Impact Church  
Jack Padgett, Jr., PCA Georgia Board



Yeni Garcia, GSU Student  
At registration

## **COUNCIL CORNER: Chatham County**

By Colette Balder, Executive Director, Coastal Empire R.O.C.K. Group (Prevent Child Abuse Chatham)

When the R.O.C.K. Group was first formed and became the Chatham County Chartered Council of Prevent Child Abuse (PCA) Georgia, I thought one of the best resources offered to councils was the 1-800-CHILDREN HELPLINE. Five years later, I still believe that to be true.

One of the first programs we started in Chatham County was the "Need to Talk?" (NTT) program in our middle schools. The primary reason was that it provided a real service to youth and it didn't cost us anything. We soon started getting phone calls from school counselors and social workers requesting the NTT cards to give to students they couldn't reach or who wouldn't talk to them face-to-face about issues. The anonymity of the 1-800-CHILDREN HELPLINE is appealing to students, and, as we are finding out, to parents as well. When you are talking to a HELPLINE specialist, there is no embarrassment, shame or humiliation because he or she can't see you, doesn't know you, and has no history of you. These individuals simply want to listen and help. I can tell you firsthand through my own experiences why the HELPLINE is so valuable.

This past April, the R.O.C.K. Group was contacted by a mom in need of support. The mother said she was feeling hurt, confused and didn't know what to do. She said her child was visiting friends and an incident occurred which led to her daughter being subsequently examined for "possible" sexual assault. The mother was distraught. We sent her information to help her talk to her child and referred her to the 1-800-CHILDREN HELPLINE. We called the HELPLINE staff to alert them to the referral and asked that they let us know if she called. If she did not, we were prepared to find other resources for her. We're happy to report that she did call. After receiving the caller's permission, HELPLINE staff informed us of the call and together we were able to help this family through a distressing period. Help is ongoing from both sides.

On another occasion, I awoke to find my front yard vandalized. There was no extensive damage; however, there was a lot of debris such as toilet paper, crepe paper, party cups, pink and white spoons and forks stuck in the ground and in my flower beds. There were also sanitary napkins taped to my car and mailbox. I'm a big CSI fan so I donned gloves, grabbed an "evidence" bag and got to work. I quickly determined that the culprits were adolescent girls and this was probably a result of a slumber party. It appeared that my yard was not the intended target.

Several items I found disturbing included a dance class schedule with a girl's name on it and a series of

messages written in silver magic marker. These messages included, "U R stupid," "4 U loser," "U suck crunky" and others too graphic to repeat. I looked up the family name in the phone book and discovered they were my neighbors and lived just three blocks away. I called the mom and gently asked if her daughter had hosted or attended a slumber party the night before. The mother told me that there was a slumber party, but her daughter was not invited. She did, however, visit the girls to show them her new haircut and was cruelly turned away.

During my long talk with the mother, she disclosed that her daughter was in sixth grade, an honor student, very quiet, and involved in dance and art classes. A few months prior, the girl stopped wanting to go to school and her friends no longer called. She definitely fit the profile of a bullying victim and her mother was heartbroken and unsure of what to do. I made a few suggestions, sent her some resources and referred both she and her daughter to the 1-800-CHILDREN HELPLINE. I again alerted the staff to the referral and I hope the family uses this resource. Of course, the mother now knows who I am, what I do for a living, and how to contact me if I can assist her from my end.

If you've never had reason to interact with the 1-800-CHILDREN HELPLINE or any of the skilled staff and trained volunteers, please know that they are wonderful! They can share information without violating the confidentiality or anonymity of the callers, and always appreciate the referrals. The HELPLINE staff, like all program providers, document call results. The data can be helpful to councils and it is one resource that I will always support.

The recent changes made to the HELPLINE have encouraged me to promote it even more. Callers now go directly to 1-800-CHILDREN, without going through the PCA Georgia switchboard. Callers never hear "child abuse" in the greeting, but instead receive a warm "Thank you for calling the HELPLINE, how may I **HELP YOU?**" I hope this change will increase the call volume and serve more families. Our community, like many others, has few resources for parents or youth who just need to talk through situations or problems. And it's FREE – to callers and councils! I thank our HELPLINE specialists for helping us cover our families with blankets of support. You provide real protection to our children. You're great!

## Volunteer News: What I Love About Prevent Child Abuse Georgia

By Lynnita, HELPLINE Volunteer

“Prevent Child Abuse Georgia teaches me so much about caring for entire families going through tough times. Abuse affects all persons involved in so many different ways. Due to the availability of the HELPLINE in the community, we are able to educate families that there is a light at the end of the tunnel by taking initiative to make changes in their lives.

Coming to PCA Georgia teaches me patience and betters my listening skills over all. Since life throws us curve balls at unexpected times, I am able to take what I learn and apply it to my daily life. Improving my listening and problem-solving skills makes me not only a better volunteer, but a

better person in my family, neighborhood, workplace and community.

Education is the key to success. I appreciate PCA Georgia’s diligence to continually educate its volunteers through workshops and seminars. One thing with the HELPLINE, you constantly learn something new! I’ve been volunteering for two years and it never gets old. I’m always taking home material to read and study. Educating myself for the HELPLINE prepares me in supplying callers with the resources they need to enhance their lives. You never know who will be on the other end of a call with a new situation that you can help with. It’s exciting and continually fresh.”

## Volunteer Training Process – EXCITING NEW CHANGES!

In an effort to provide ongoing education for our current volunteers, and to better engage new volunteers, we have created a new training schedule that includes an initial HELPLINE orientation and breaks the remaining HELPLINE training into "bite size" modules. Veteran volunteers can also choose to attend these training modules as a “refresher” or simply to take part in a more in-depth discussion about a certain topic.

Additionally, continuing education is now being offered the first Monday of every month from 6:00 - 8:00 pm. Topics offered mirror the wide range of calls we receive, and we hope will equip volunteers to respond to callers’ needs. We strongly encourage all volunteers (veteran and new) to take part in these sessions, and welcome new ideas for additional topics.

A copy of the 2007 schedule is posted in the HELPLINE for volunteers. Please let us know if you have any questions about the new training process, or any comments on how we can further enhance the HELPLINE.

|  | Sun  | Mon                                  | Tue                        | Wed | Thu                                | Fri | Sat                          |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----|------------------------------------|-----|------------------------------|
| <b>May</b>   |  |                                      | 1                          | 2   | 3                                  | 4   | 5                            |
|  | 6  | 7                                    | 8<br>HL INVC<br>6-8pm (ST) | 9   | 10                                 | 11  | 12<br>SS Vid Time<br>(6-8pm) |
|  | 13   | 14                                   | 15                         | 16  | 17<br>HL Orientation<br>6-8pm (DM) | 18  | 19                           |
|  | 20   | 21                                   | 22                         | 23  | 24                                 | 25  | 26                           |
|  | 27   | 28<br>OFFICE<br>CLOSED               | 29                         | 30  | 31                                 |     |                              |
|  | 2007 *HL In-Service - Child Development (Debra) - Lit. Coordinating / Saily Facilitating<br>(Changed to Tues Due to Scheduling Conflict) |                                      |                            |     |                                    |     |                              |
|  | Sun  | Mon                                  | Tue                        | Wed | Thu                                | Fri | Sat                          |
| <b>June</b>  |  |                                      |                            |     |                                    |     |                              |
|  | 3  | 4<br>HL INVC<br>MONDAY<br>6-8pm (ST) | 5                          | 6   | 7                                  | 8   | 9                            |
|  | 10   | 11                                   | 12                         | 13  | 14<br>HL<br>Continuing<br>Ed-8pm   | 15  | 16                           |
|  | 17   | 18                                   | 19                         | 20  | 21                                 | 22  | 23                           |
|  | 24   | 25                                   | 26                         | 27  | 28                                 | 29  | 30                           |
| 2007 *HL In-Service - Parenting Discipline (Donna/Leslie) - Cheryl Coord / Eve HL Facilitating |  |                                      |                            |     |                                    |     |                              |

**HELPLINE Birthdays**

|         |      |
|---------|------|
| Fran    | 2/17 |
| Tiffany | 3/21 |
| Nonie   | 4/8  |
| Kirby   | 4/28 |
| Brian   | 5/5  |

**Special Thanks to Our Generous HELPLINE Funding Sources**

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Cobb County Board of Commissioners
- Criminal Justice Coord. Council – Victims of Crime Assistance (VOCA)
- Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta
- Fulton County Department of Human Services
- Georgia DHR: Promoting Safe and Stable Families

1-800-CHILDREN

We're on the Web!

See us at:

- [www.pcageorgia.org](http://www.pcageorgia.org)
- [www.stopitnowga.org](http://www.stopitnowga.org)

**Welcome To Our Newest HELPLINE Volunteers**

Since our last newsletter, HELPLINE has welcomed six new volunteers:

**Al  
Brenda  
Emily**

**Jennifer  
Sandra  
Sonya**



Each of our new volunteers is progressing through their training and shadowing as expected. Two of these individuals (Sandra and Sonya) recently took the famous **HELPLINE Plunge** and answered their first “solo” call. This is a tremendous step for a HELPLINE volunteer to take and we are incredibly proud of each of them!

HELPLINE is continually looking for new volunteers. Upcoming 2007 orientation dates are posted on our website at [www.pcageorgia.org](http://www.pcageorgia.org). If you know anyone who is interested in becoming a HELPLINE volunteer, please call us at 404-870-6565 or send an email to [helpline@pcageorgia.org](mailto:helpline@pcageorgia.org).

**About Prevent Child Abuse Georgia**

Headquartered in Atlanta, Prevent Child Abuse (PCA) Georgia is a statewide, private, non-profit organization dedicated to preventing child abuse. PCA Georgia leads, supports and coordinates citizens and professionals in a comprehensive effort to end child abuse.

Preventing child abuse means strengthening the ability of parents and communities to care for their children’s health and well-being. Each of us has opportunities to help insure that children grow up nurtured, safe and healthy. Preventing child abuse is the work of everyone, every day.

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