



VOLUNTEER EMERGENCY FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN
of Warren, Frederick, Winchester, Clarke and Shenandoah

Family Newsletter

Vol. V No. 3

February 2004

Family Appreciation Dinner

The 2004 Family Appreciation Dinner

will be held on

March 20

at the

Front Royal United Methodist Church

at 5:30 p.m.

Mark your calendar now for an evening of food and fun. We will have a lasagna dinner (chicken will be available for children who prefer it) complete with all the trimmings.

Games, door prizes, and good company will make the evening a special one for our VEFC families.

As a part of the program, we would like families to share a story about a placement situation they have experienced.

Please RSVP by March 14, by phone or e-mail, to Pat Spory, to let us know how many people in your family will attend. Pat's telephone number is 540 636-9858; her e-mail is pspory@vefc.org.

We look forward to seeing you March 20!

December Placements

There were 11 requests for placements. Nine placements were made. No home was found for one child and one was not appropriate for placement.

January Placements

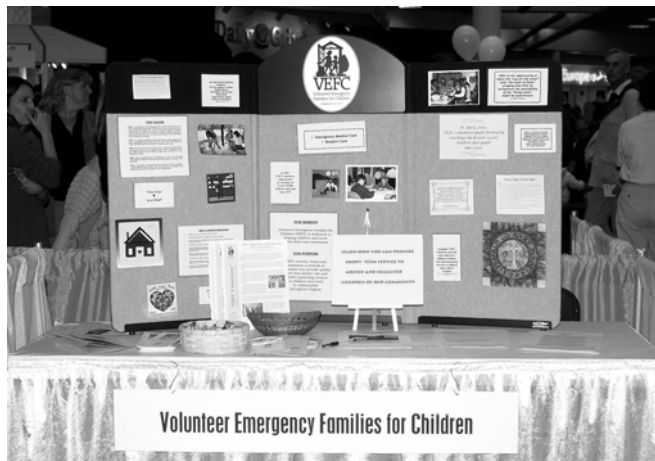
There were 13 requests for placements. Ten placements were made. Two children were not placed because they were not taken from their homes. One was deemed not appropriate for placement.

Next Council Meeting

The next VEFC Council Meeting
will be

**March 3, 2004
at 12:00 noon**

Some Happy Stories of VEFC Care



Community Wellness Fairs

The Winchester Community Wellness Fair was held on Saturday, February 21, at the Apple Blossom Mall. Member of the Council manned the VEFC booth at the event.

A number of people stopped and asked questions, took information, and showed interest in becoming families or serving VEFC in other capacities.

There will be wellness fairs on Saturday March 13 (Shenandoah County) and Saturday April 24 (Warren County). Volunteers to man the VEFC booth are needed for both these fairs.

Please contact Pat Spory if you can help with either of these fairs.

In-Service Training

An In-Service training session will be held on **Thursday, April 15, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm.**

It will be held at **St Paul's Lutheran Church** in Strasburg.

The training will focus on assisting VEFC families in accommodating children with a Hispanic background and helping them understand the cultural expectations of these children. Fabiana Shtanko and Katie Baldwin will serve as speakers at this event.

Speaking Engagements

Pat Spory spoke at both services of the **Riverton United Methodist Church** in Riverton on January 25. Eleven people expressed interest in becoming VEFC families. Pat is planning a special training session for these people.

Pat is planning to speak at the **Marlo Heights Baptist Church** on February 18. On February 24 she will speak to the "Fourth Tuesday" group at the **Berryville Baptist Church**.

Ways for Groups to Assist VEFC

Do you belong to a group, club or church that would like to help VEFC? There are many ways to help aside from becoming a host family. Here are some of them that you may wish to share with others:

- Make and fill hospitality bags or baby boxes. Or do just one part; provide bags or collect items for the bags.
- Donate items to be given as door prizes at the VEFC Family Appreciation Dinner.
- Help to serve food at the appreciation dinner or provide the food for the dinner.
- Baby-sit for new host family training sessions.
- Provide snacks or building use for host family training sessions.
- Connecting VEFC coordinator to possible speaking opportunities.
- Offering the use of a church or meeting place for the appreciation dinner.
- Manning the VEFC display table at community events.
- Fundraising for VEFC (ideas: ice cream social, making and raffling off a quilt, etc.) If donating money, it goes to the Richmond office and is used by the entire program statewide.
- Persons with certification in counseling, child development, CPR, or First Aid could offer their expertise to provide in-service training for

Stories from Two VEFC Families

Bill was ten and Bob was eight when they first came to our home. The boys' father was having mental health problems and checked himself into the hospital. The boys were turned over to DSS and were then brought to us.

It turns out that the boys also had behavioral problems and were on fairly heavy medication. This was quite noticeable as Bill's medications began to wear off. We only had the boys for one night, and it did not present any significant problems.

We discovered that we knew the boys' baby sitter, which really helped to break the ice. We had come home fairly late that evening, so we took the whole family out to dinner. It was quite evident that the boys were used to taking care of themselves. They had been moved around a good bit, and that showed as well.

The next morning, we took the boys to their schools. After the school day, the boys went to another VEFC home and were then placed into a therapeutic home.

Mary, age 11, has had many weekend respites with us over the past eight months. These monthly respites were instituted on the advice of the family therapist. Usually, Mary only stays overnight. Most of the time she spends with our girls, who are several years older than she is.

Typically, when Mary gets in the car, she immediately rattles off a list of TV shows she plans to watch during the weekend. She has never challenged our authority, but must be reminded that she is not in charge. We tell her that our family has planned to go places or to do certain things on the weekend. Mary is told that she will participate in these activities, and watching TV is not very high on the list. She will pout a little, but then participates in the activities.

During the period of these respites, we have seen a big difference in the way Mary relates to her mother. The first few times we had Mary, she didn't seem to care when she went home and would have liked to stay longer. In addition, she never wanted to maintain contact with her mother. Now, Mary calls her mother from our house, and is eager to return home at the end of the weekend. It is obvious that the mother-daughter bond is much stronger.

VEFC Families *Do* Make a Difference

You never know what is going to occur when you are the on-call Child Protective Services (CPS) worker. One night last fall, the pager went off around 1:00 a.m. Upon calling the dispatcher back, I was asked to meet three deputies and a state trooper on Interstate 81. When asked why, the dispatcher stated that I needed to pick up three children whose mother was being arrested.

I got out of bed and found the nearest clean clothing and headed to the office. I called my supervisor and told her what was going on. The first thing I grabbed at the office was my VEFC packets and a couple of car seats. (I had no idea how old the children were.) I contacted a VEFC family and asked if they could help. They agreed.

As I arrived at the scene on Interstate 81, the first thing I noticed was all the flashing lights. It appeared to be a horrible scene. Traffic was slowed down and I had no idea where to park the van.

As I got out of the van, one of the deputies who knew me began to explain the situation in more detail. The family was traveling through on their way back home to North Carolina. The mother had made the bad decision to have some liquor in her coffee and was pulled over and arrested for DUI. The father was eight hours away and was willing to leave then to pick up the kids.

The children, who all turned out to be above the age of ten, gladly grabbed their belongings and jumped into my van. I spoke with the father over the phone, and he said he would meet me in the office the next morning to sign the papers and gave verbal permission for the night.

Thanks to VEFC, a lot of unnecessary court appearances and paperwork was avoided—even if it did mean that a social worker arrived on a VEFC family's doorstep at 3:00 in the morning with three children.

I am eternally grateful to the warmth and smiles that greeted me that early morning when I was a stressed-out CPS worker needing a place for three children to stay the night. If VEFC did not exist, I would have been drinking lots of strong coffee at my office while these children slept on our floor.

—Chanda Barkdoll, Social Worker

The Wit and Wisdom of Children

Thank God for Children Saying Grace

Last week, I took my children to a restaurant. My six-year-old son asked if he could say grace. As we bowed our heads, he said, "God is good, God is great, thank you for the food, and I would even thank you more if Mom gets us ice cream for dessert. And liberty and justice for all! Amen."

Along with the laughter from the other customers nearby, I heard a woman remark, "That's what's wrong with this country. Kids today don't even know how to pray. Asking God for ice cream! Why, I never!"

Hearing this, my son burst into tears and asked me, "Did I do it wrong? Is God mad at me?"

As I held him and assured him that he had done a terrific job and God was certainly not mad at him, an elderly gentleman approached the table. He winked at my son and said, "I happen to know that God thought that was a great prayer."

"Really?" my son asked.

"Cross my heart," the man replied. Then, in a theatrical whisper, he added (indicating the woman whose remark had started this whole thing), "Too bad she never asks God for ice cream. A little ice cream is good for the soul sometimes."

Naturally, I bought my kids ice cream at the end of the meal. My son stared at his for a moment and then did something I will remember the rest of my life. He picked up his sundae and, without a word, walked over and placed it in front of the woman. With a big smile he told her, "Here, this is for you. Ice cream is good for the soul sometimes and my soul is good already."

My friend will never forget a moment with his daughter some years ago when she was five. One day during a thunderstorm—lightning flashing, thunder roaring—he went to check on her. He found his little girl standing on the window sill leaning spread eagle against the glass.

"Jennifer, what are you doing?" he asked.

"I think God's trying to take my picture," she said.

Here's a little girl who knows who she is; she knows her value and worth.

—Tony Campolo in his article "If I Should Wake Before I Die," *The Christian Reader*, Nov./Dec.

A little boy was in a relative's wedding. As he was coming down the aisle, he would take two steps, stop, and turn to the crowd. While facing the crowd, he would put his hands up like claws and roar. So it went, step, step, ROAR, step, step, ROAR, all the way down the aisle.

As you can imagine, the crowd was near tears from laughing by the time he reached the pulpit. When asked what he was doing, the child sniffed and said, "I was being the Ring Bear."

In a Midwest city, a young child was "acting up" during the morning worship hour. The parents did their best to maintain some sense of order in the pew but were losing the battle.

Finally, the father picked the little fellow up and walked sternly up the aisle on his way out. Just before reaching the safety of the foyer, the little one called loudly to the congregation, "Pray for me! Pray for me!"

Six-year-old Angie and her four-year-old brother, Joel, were sitting together in church. Joel giggled, sang and talked out loud. Finally his big sister had had enough. "You're not supposed to talk out loud in church."

"Why? Who's going to stop me?" Joel asked.

Angie pointed to the back of the church and said, "See those two men standing by the door? They're hushers."