



Volunteer **E**mergency **F**amilies for **C**hildren  
**Northern Valley Region**  
**Family Newsletter**

**Congratulations!**



**John Feehan and son Christopher**

**John Feehan** has received the Governor’s Award for Volunteerism. The award was presented on October 6, 2005 at the Library of Virginia.

John is active in many charitable organizations besides VEFC. These include the Special Olympics and Chairman of the Warren County Special Education Advisory Committee. He is the surrogate parent for

Warren County Public Schools where he represents special education students who have been removed from their homes.

He is an active member of the Elks Lodge, where he serves on the Scholarship Committee (national and local), is Chairman of the Americanism Committee, and takes part in organizing and running Hoop Shoot. And these are just some of his charitable activities.

Congratulations, John, and we are proud to have you in VEFC!

**Donna Ryan**, social worker for Winchester and VEFC Council member, is the proud mother of a baby boy!

Jake Maddox was born on August 17. He entered the world weighing 8 pounds 15 ounces.

Congratulations to the Ryans!



**Donna Ryan and daughter Maggie**

**Placements**

**June:** 14 requests; 7 placements; 7 cancelled or found alternate locations

**July:** 11 requests; 6 placements 5 taken by family or alternative locations

**Aug.:** 6 requests; 4 placements; 2 found long-term families

**Sept.:** 6 requests; 2 placements; 4 were accommodated by other means

Next Council Meeting:  
**Wednesday, October 5,**  
 12:00 noon at Nineveh  
 Presbyterian Church

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## Speaking Engagements

Pat Spory spoke at two Lutheran churches in Shenandoah County. The attendees were interested in spreading the word about VEFC as well as making hospitality bags.

Pat also made two visits to the First Presbyterian Church in Winchester. The church is interested in providing some financial support to VEFC. Some of the attendees may be interested in becoming VEFC host families.

On October 14, Pat was interviewed on WFTR Radio in Front Royal.



## Training Sessions and In-Service Training

An information meeting will be held on October 27, followed by training sessions on Tuesday evening, November 15, and all day Saturday, November 19. Pat Spory is looking for agency input during one of these training sessions.

Another training session is planned for January or February.

## Host Families Needed

For a number of reasons, including health problems, moves, family emergencies of their own and life changes that are causing them to take some time off, we have lost a number of host families. At this time, we only have eleven active families, which is very low.

*We hope that VEFC families can help in the following ways:*

1. It is very important that those families who are active take placements when they are called if it is at all possible.
2. Encourage your friends to become host families.
3. Give Pat Spory contact names and numbers for groups that might like to hear her speak about VEFC. These could be church groups, community groups, mothers' groups, or any organization concerned about children.

**Please try to help us in this effort.**

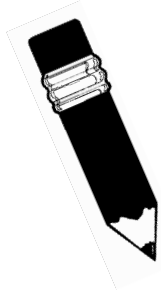


## Newsletter e-mail

We would love to hear from our Newsletter readers. Please let us know:

- How you like the Newsletter
- Any suggestions you have about the Newsletter
- Questions for the "Ask Stephanie" column
- Any jokes or stories for our humor page
- Suggestions for crafts or activities for children

**Write to us at: [vefcnoval@yahoo.com](mailto:vefcnoval@yahoo.com)**



## Sandy

### *Dealing with Borderline Personality Disorder*

Dear Stephanie:

*"Sandy" is 15, adopted into a family at age 2 after experiencing neglect and physical abuse. Her older sister, "Belinda" (age 16), adopted into the same family, is also a survivor of neglect and abuse but with more severe physical abuse. Belinda recently moved into a residential treatment program. She has been diagnosed as having mental retardation, ADHD, Oppositional Defiance Disorder, and exhibits some characteristics found in autistic children although she is not autistic. Before she moved from her adoptive home, the older sister sometimes physically attacked the younger, stole things from her, and frequently verbally fought with her.*

*Therapists suggest that Sandy, the younger sister, has a "borderline personality." She has trouble learning and is impulsive. Though Belinda is no longer in the home to victimize her, she seems to continue to cast herself in the role of a victim, most frequently characterizing her mother as the villain.*

*Sandy falsely reported that she was raped by a teenage neighbor. She frequently makes up stories about herself that portray her as a victim and tells these stories to strangers and friends as though they are factual incidents. She lies about what teachers or friends have done to her. When she is injured—something as small as insect bites—she frequently calls attention to it. Her mother says that she seems to deliberately push her to the point that she has to respond with disciplinary action.*

*Sandy was placed in a VEFC home for a few weeks to help the tension in the adoptive home to de-escalate. During this period, she continued to cast herself in the role of a victim and did not accept responsibility for any of her own actions causing problems in her life. She continued to lie and to steal and say she does not trust anyone but her therapist and sometimes her adoptive dad.*

*In the brief time a child like this is with a VEFC family, what can be done to help her to move toward wholeness?* —  
VEFC Parent

Dear VEFC Parent,

It appears that Sandy is displaying typical borderline traits. This disorder, though not often diagnosed in children, is called Borderline Personality Disorder or BPD. Borderline people have an inability to tolerate the levels of anxiety, frustration, rejection and loss that most people are able to put up with. They have an inability to soothe and comfort themselves when they become upset and an inability to control impulses toward the expression of love and hate that most people are able to hold in check. What most defines the BPD is great difficulty in holding on to a stable, consistent sense of one's self: "Who am I?"

A child who is diagnosed with BPD often did not have a consistent and caring caretaker, especially before ages 3-4. In BPD, there is often a likelihood of a trauma history. Physical and sexual abuse, neglect, hostile conflict, and early parental loss or separation are more common in the childhood histories of those with Borderline Personality Disorder. Acting as a perpetual victim is a part of the diagnosis of BPD. Her older sister may have been an additional caretaker in Sandy's early years who was abusive to her.

Caretakers were inconsistent, so, at an early age, this child saw only two choices: be a victim or turn around and be the abuser. Sandy may see her choices as black or white, all or nothing. This is to say, in personal relationships, she may believe that her foster mother hates her, especially when she disciplines Sandy. On the opposite side, she may also believe that her foster dad should pay 100 per cent attention to her alone.

Borderline personality disorder is so named because the sufferer is considered to be on the border between psychosis and neuroses. It is characterized by marked instability in functioning; affect; mood; interpersonal



relationships; and, at times, reality testing. A child with BPD might manifest overwhelming anger when in a state of crisis. Psychotic symptoms, when present, are short lived, circumscribed, or accompanied by good reality testing. The person with BPD is frequently dissatisfied with the effect her behavior has on others and with her own functioning. The effect of all this trouble upon others is profound: family members never know what to expect from the volatile child, except they know they can expect trouble: suicide threats and attempts, self-inflicted injuries, outbursts of rage and recrimination, repeated starting and stopping of school, and a pervasive sense, on the part of the family, of being unable to help.

For the comfort and safety of the child and the family, boundaries often need to be established. These limits include appropriate touching, duration of phone calls, length of time the child can participate in an activity, and prevention of assault and suicide.

Setting boundaries is particularly important since lack of boundaries is usually a part of the history of a person who has been abused. For example the foster parents should decide the boundaries for Sandy before her visits. The “disciplinary action” should be appropriate for a 15-year-old girl but, above all, be consistent. Sandy is probably skilled at begging and pleading to push boundaries. When a limit is set, she may then accuse the foster parents of not caring for her. The limits should be held gently and consistently, and, ideally, explained ahead of time—while she is calm and better able to listen. The consistency of the foster family is the most loving and stable piece that the family provides for Sandy.

*Treatment may include:*

1. Medications for mood, anxiety and psychosis (closely supervised by a child psychiatrist);
2. Individual therapy with a therapist who specializes in developmental disorders; and
3. Possible need for psychiatric hospitalization if Sandy threatens suicide or homicide.

BPD in children refers to a syndrome characterized by a combination of externalizing (disruptive behavioral problems), internalizing (mood and anxiety symptoms), and cognitive symptoms. Some researchers use the term borderline to describe this picture because of the resemblance to BPD in adults, but others propose that the term multiple complex developmental disorder be used.

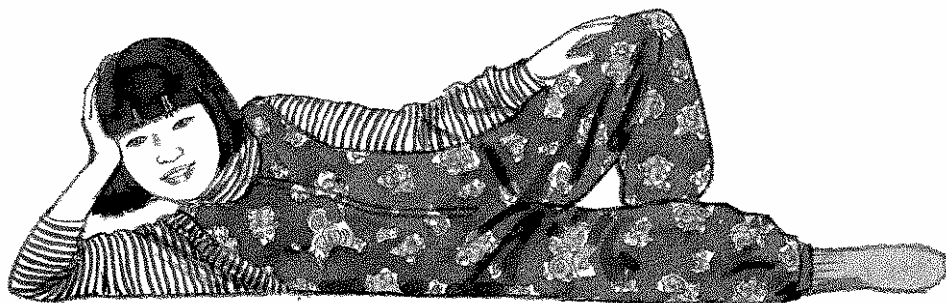
Follow-up studies of these children show that they have a tendency to develop a wide range of personality disorders, not just BPD. However, one reason the continuity between the childhood and adult disorders remains a tantalizing hypothesis is the overlap in risk factors, such as seriously dysfunctional families and exposure to sexual and physical abuse. Further research in this area is necessary not only to find the causes but also to allow for the earliest possible intervention.

Additional information is available at the following sites:

- [www.borderlinepersonality.ca](http://www.borderlinepersonality.ca)
- [www.bpdresourcecenter.org](http://www.bpdresourcecenter.org)
- [www.emedicinehealth.com](http://www.emedicinehealth.com)
- [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

—Stephanie Tracy, LCSW

*Send questions to “Ask Stephanie” at [vefcnoval.com](http://vefcnoval.com)*



## ♥♥♥♥ Some VEFC Stories ♥♥♥♥

### Two Stories of Respite Care

*Respite care offers valuable assistance to both foster parents and parents with mental or physical problems or who need a break from children with problems. Sandy in the "Ask Stephanie" article is a good example, as are the two cases below.*

**Sally and the Smiths:** Sally had stayed with the Smith's before (see July 2005 Newsletter). Sally is from El Salvador and is 13 years old. She was removed from her family and placed with the Smiths because of sexual abuse allegations against her father. She was then placed in a foster home.

Sally has had several respite visits with the Smiths since her foster placement. Mrs. Smith noted that Sally seemed more outgoing and relaxed during her last visit than she had been before.

Sally enjoyed helping out at a local coffee house where the Smiths volunteer. She accompanied them to church on Sunday and to the potluck lunch afterward, where she saw friends she had made the first time she stayed with the Smiths. She helped Mrs. Smith with the housework and baking. And the whole family enjoyed just relaxing together and playing board games.

Sally's visit with the Smiths gave her a chance to connect again with adults who have shown caring interest in her, both in the Smith's home and in their

church. Following her visit, she went back to her foster home, where she seems to have adjusted well.

Sally has a new court date in November which may result in her returning to El Salvador to live with her grandparents. Her grandparents had raised her for much of her early life.

**Johnny and the Blacks:** Johnny's mother has some mental health problems. Unfortunately, Johnny has both physical and mental difficulties. Johnny is 13 years old, not an easy age in the best of situations. Johnny's mother needed a break, and VEFC was there for her.

The Blacks took care of Johnny for the weekend. Mrs. Black said the placement was a good one. She added that Johnny was well behaved and seemed to enjoy himself. "He wanted to watch too much television, of course," she said. "He was very concerned about upsetting us," she remarked. "We had to tell him on a couple of occasions that we were not upset with him,"

Johnny went home to his mother at the end of the placement.

### Wandering Child

It was 12:30 in the morning when the police found Bobby. He was wandering along the highway in town. Bobby is three years old.

The police took Bobby to the police station and called Social Services. When a social worker arrived, the police were still trying to find out Bobby's name and to whom he belonged.

A social worker took Bobby to a VEFC family, the Clarke's. Although he cried when the social worker left, Mr. Clarke was able to calm Bobby down by sitting and rocking with him. The next morning, waking in a strange place unsettled Bobby again. But the Clarke's were able to calm him down quickly. Bobby was quite happy the rest of the day playing with the Clarke's little daughter.

The police finally found out Bobby's identity and what had happened. He had been on visitation with his father. That night his father decided to go out partying. He left his mother, Bobby's grandmother, to put Bobby to bed. She put Bobby to bed on the couch and then she left also. Bobby woke up and found out he was all alone. So he went out and began to look for his father and his grandmother.

Social workers contacted Bobby's mother, who was furious about the neglect of Bobby by his father and grandmother. Bobby was reunited with his mother

## A Little Humor

An elderly woman and her little grandson, whose face was sprinkled with bright freckles, spent the day at the zoo. Lots of children were waiting in line to get their cheeks painted by a local artist who was decorating them with tiger paws.

"You've got so many freckles, there's no place to paint!" a girl in the line said to the little fella. Embarrassed, the little boy dropped his head.

His grandmother knelt down next to him and said, "I love your freckles. When I was a little girl, I always wanted freckles. "Freckles are beautiful!"

The boy looked up. "Really?"

"Of course," said the grandmother. "Why, just name me one thing that's prettier than freckles."

The little boy thought for a moment, peered intensely into his grandmother's face, and softly whispered, "Wrinkles."

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A grandmother was telling her little granddaughter what her own childhood was like. "We used to skate outside on a pond. I had a swing made from a tire; it hung from a tree in our front yard. We rode our pony. We picked wild raspberries in the woods."

The little girl was wide-eyed, taking this in. At last she said, "I sure wish I'd gotten to know you sooner!"

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My grandson was visiting one day when he asked, Grandma, do you know how you and God are alike?"

I mentally polished by halo while I asked, "No, how are you alike?" "You're both old," he said.

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When my grandson asked me how old I was, I teasingly replied, "I'm not sure."

"Look in your underwear, Grandma," he advised. "Mine says I'm four."

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"Our five-year-old son Mark couldn't wait to tell his friend about the movie we had watched on television, "20,000 Leagues under the Sea." The scenes with the submarine and the giant octopus had kept him wide-eyed.

In the middle of the telling, my husband interrupted Mark. "What caused the submarine to sink?"

With a look of incredulity, Mark replied, "Dad, it was the 20,000 leaks!"

A Sunday School class was studying the Ten Commandments. They were ready to discuss the last one. The teacher asked of anyone could tell her what it was. Susie raised her hand, stood tall, and quoted, "Thou shall not take the covers off thy neighbor's wife."

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A second grader came home from school and said to her mother, "Mom, guess what? We learned how to make babies today."

The mother, more than a little surprised, tried to keep her cool. "That's interesting," she said. "How do you make babies?"

"It's simple," replied the girl. "You just change "y" to "i" and add "es."

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"Give me a sentence about a public servant," said a teacher.

The small boy wrote: "The fireman came down the ladder pregnant."

The teacher took the lad aside to correct him. "Don't you know what pregnant means?" she asked.

"Sure," said the young boy confidently. "It means carrying a child."

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A grandmother was surprised by her seven-year-old grandson one morning. He had made her coffee.

She drank what was the worst cup of coffee in her life.

When she got to the bottom, there were three of those little green Army men in the cup. She said, "Honey, what are these army men doing in my coffee?"

Her grandson said, "Grandma, it says on TV, 'The best part of waking up is soldiers in your cup!'"

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A nursery school teacher was delivering a station wagon full of kids home one day when a fire truck zoomed past. Sitting in the front seat of the fire truck was a Dalmatian dog. The children started discussing the dog's duties.

"They use him to keep crowds back," said one youngster.

"No," said another. "He's just for good luck."

A third child brought the argument to a close. "They use the dogs," she said firmly, "to find the fire hydrant."