

# Family FOCUS

Volume 2/March 2009

A Quarterly Publication from Parental Stress Center

## Superhero 5K Run to Benefit PSC

**S**uperheroes don't just exist in the pages of a comic book or on the big screen in Hollywood. Sometimes they are right in your neighborhood. Sometimes you can be one of them.

PSC has joined forces with The Superhero Foundation ([www.superherorun.com](http://www.superherorun.com)), a group that is dedicated to bringing child abuse to the forefront of society's issues through educational campaigns and community events. The Foundation's signature event is the Superhero Run, which will take place this year on Saturday morning, April 18 at North Park. Parental Stress Center is honored to be the beneficiary of this Run, the first in the country to be held outside the Foundation's home city of Austin, Texas.

The 5K Superhero Run is sponsored by Ariba, the Pittsburgh-based leader in enterprise software for Spend Management. "The volunteer planning group, led by Erica Burg from Ariba, is well-organized. They have an energy and enthusiasm that is infectious," says Bob Feikema, PSC's Director of Programs and Community Initiatives. He continues, "This is a tremendous opportunity for people to get involved to raise

visibility for the need to help families in which abuse has occurred and prevent child abuse from happening."

The Superhero Foundation hopes that every major metropolitan city will eventually have a Superhero Run. Part of its mission is to empower victims of child abuse by supporting organizations like PSC. The Superhero Run is a public display of the community's commitment to help abused and neglected children recover so that they can live a "normal" life and break the cycle of abuse.

The Superhero Foundation also aims for all 50 United States governors to recognize and proclaim April as

National Child Abuse Prevention Month. To date, only nine states have taken this initiative. PSC will be working with local representatives to get Pennsylvania on board.

Volunteers are needed on the day of the event to assist with conducting the Run, which will also include games, live entertainment, a raffle and other family activities. A post party is scheduled for 7pm at the Town Tavern on the South Side.

If you are interested in donating, volunteering, or becoming a sponsor of the Run, please contact Erica Burg at 412-760-0483 or email [pittsburghsuperheroes@gmail.com](mailto:pittsburghsuperheroes@gmail.com).



**Parental Stress Center**

[www.pscfamily.net](http://www.pscfamily.net)

# Taking the Case: An in-home family counselor discusses his philosophy on helping at-risk families

**P**SC's in-home family counselors face a daunting challenge.

They have only a matter of months to work with families that are at the highest risk for child abuse and neglect.\* These families are struggling with issues related to poverty, drug addiction and mental health. Most often, they face a combination of those and other problems. The situation is usually worsened by the absence of family and social support.

With so many things going on, one might ask, "Where to begin?" For Jeff†, it's all about attitude. When asked to discuss what it takes to be a family counselor, Jeff said, "You have to genuinely love people to do this job." The "intake process," or first home visit, is crucial; it can make or break the case. The counselor must make every effort to earn the family's trust. Jeff does this by treating the family with dignity, as human beings who deserve respect and understanding. No matter what the situation, he comes to their homes with the mindset of a partner, not that of a superior. "I tell them that they are wonderful people, people with worth. I thank them for the privilege of being in their home, and I tell them that we will work on their goals together."

Jeff stresses the value of what he calls "counselor education," the time when the family educates him about their relationships, stressors, and what they would like to change. He understands that families may feel ashamed of their situation. Shame can lead to hostility and the assumption that they are being judged unfairly. They fear that outsiders can't or won't understand what they're going through and will only see what is on the surface: the absence of furniture in the house; the children who behave inappropriately; the poor condition of



*Youth Performing Arts Collective (YPAC) actresses rehearse some moves for the upcoming production of **And the Tree Grows Strong**. This will be the second show of the 2008/2009 YPAC season. Written by Pittsburgh native Bob Gorczyca, the play tells the true stories of nine of African American women who overcome tremendous hardships while raising their grandchildren. Three performances are scheduled for March 19, 20, and 21 at 7:30pm at the Kelly-Strayhorn Theater in East Liberty.*

the neighborhood; etc. Jeff knows how to look past all this. When talking with the family, he makes sure he has a "smile in his voice." After he has earned their trust – whether it takes 10 to 15 minutes or two or three more home visits – they are open to working with Jeff to make the changes needed to strengthen the family.

An effective counselor also builds good relationships with caseworkers. There are three parties in every case: the PSC counselor, the CYF caseworker, and the family. The relationships

that exist among these individuals make up what Jeff refers to as the "dynamic triad." If one point is wobbly, the whole suffers. But when all three work together, it's the children who benefit the most from a more stable, safe, and loving home.

(You can read about another family counselor's experience in the October 2008 edition of Family Focus. Check the archives at [www.pscfamily.net](http://www.pscfamily.net))

\* as determined by the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF)

† name has been changed

# PSC Welcomes New Board President

**T**he Honorable Lisa Pupo Lenihan was elected President of Parental Stress Center's Board of Directors on July 24, 2008.

Her enthusiasm for PSC's mission to prevent child abuse and neglect is rooted in her personal belief in the importance of family unification. "You can do nothing but feel good about that mission," she said.

Judge Lenihan has served as a U.S. Magistrate Judge for the Western District of Pennsylvania since 2004. When asked how she planned to fit Board leadership into her already packed schedule, Judge Lenihan put

**Her enthusiasm for PSC's mission to prevent child abuse and neglect is rooted in her personal belief in the importance of family unification.**

Parental Stress Center in a special category: "Even if you don't have the time, you make the time."

During her six years on PSC's Board, Judge Lenihan has drawn upon her extensive professional experience with boards to assist the agency in developing a board governance structure. She continues to be an astute source of information on legal issues for PSC's human resources department.

After graduating from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, Lisa began her legal career with the firm of Dickie, McCamey & Chilcote. She has



been recognized by the *Pittsburgh Business Times* twice, once at age 28 as the youngest female partner of a law firm with more than fifteen members, and ten years later as the first woman to head a top 25 Pittsburgh law firm.

Her lengthy resume speaks to her interest in social issues. She was a founding member of the Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force Legal Committee and currently serves on the board of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. She is a member of the PA Bar Association Commission on Women in the Profession and the PA Supreme Court Commission on Judicial Independence.

PSC's Executive Director Jim Thompson states, "I am very pleased to have this experienced, knowledgeable legal expert on our board. Judge Lenihan has donated a great deal of her time and energy to this agency, and I know that PSC will continue to thrive under her leadership. My staff and I enjoy working with her."



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### President

Hon. Lisa P. Lenihan

### Vice President

Antonio F. Dias, Esq.

### Treasurer

Jack Feeney, Esq.

### Secretary

Debra Smyers

### Committee Chairs

Mary Ann Howard

Hon. Lawrence Kaplan

David M. Mastovich

R. W. Wobb

### Members

Paulette Blakey

Asst. Chief Maurita Bryant

Charles L. Desmone

Hon. Kim Eaton

Anthony J. Guida

Augusta Kairys

Sophie Masloff

David Newell

Senator Jane C. Orie

### Honorary Board

Janice S. Friedman

Ronald D. Grabowski

### Executive Director

James Thompson III

5877 Commerce Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Phone 412.361.4800

Fax 412.361.4801

*For additional information  
or to offer suggestions  
please email  
webmaster@PSCFamily.net  
or visit our web site at  
www.pscfamily.net*



5877 Commerce Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

## Calendar of Events

*March 19, 20, 21, 2009*

**YPAC performance of Bob Gorczyca's  
And the Tree Grows Strong,**  
Kelly-Strayhorn Theater 7:30pm

*April 18, 2009*

**Pittsburgh Superhero Foundation  
5K Run and Walk,**  
North Park Oregon Pavilion  
8am registration, 9am start

*June 25, 2009*

**Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra  
Community Partners Concert featuring  
musical guest Chaka Khan,**  
Heinz Hall 8pm

*November 14, 2009*

**34th Anniversary Family Celebration,**  
LeMont

## Parental Stress Center Programs

### **Family Unification Services (FUS)**

Intensive in-home counseling, support, and resource referral to prevent child abuse and neglect. Referrals of families to PSC are made through child welfare agencies in Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties.

### **Visitation Services**

Professional supervision of parent/caregiver visits with children who are in placement outside the home or who have not visited with the non-custodial parent due to custody-related issues.

### **Youth Services**

Out-of-school activities for older youth (ages 14 to 19) including a performing arts program, a community service initiative, culinary arts classes, and a mentoring/athletics program. A summer day camp program is also offered for younger children.

### **Economic Empowerment Initiative (EEI)**

Financial literacy classes for families and older youth, individual financial assessments and resource referral, income tax preparation assistance, and leadership training for low income individuals.

### **Fundraising**

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra Community Partners Concert (June 25, 2009): Ticket proceeds benefit the non-profit organization of your choice. Be sure to designate your purchase to Parental Stress Center, code #11783. To purchase tickets, call the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra Box Office at 412.392.4900 or 1.800.743.8560 or visit [www.pittsburghsymphony.org](http://www.pittsburghsymphony.org).

---

### **SPECIAL THANKS**

**MASSolutions, Inc.** designed this newsletter and launched PSC's marketing campaign.

**Ariba, Inc.** volunteers have been working tirelessly to make the 1st Pittsburgh Superhero Foundation 5k Run and Walk a success.

**The International Culinary School at The Art Institute of Pittsburgh** cooked a delicious Thanksgiving dinner last year for the families we serve.

**Whole Foods** provided Executive Chef Lon Durbin's service as instructor for the weekly Faison Junior Chef's Society classes.

**Just Harvest** provided training and technical assistance for PSC's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program since its inception in 2006.

**State Senator James Ferlo** underwrote costs of the Citizens Leadership Initiative's Community Conversation at North Side Common Ministries.