



Network News

FASD HOPE

February 2005, Issue 6

A Note to Parents by Beverly Palibroda

The Network News is intended as a way for parents and caregivers to connect with each other and share in the daily experiences of loving and supporting those who are living with FASD. On my wall in my home office I have a scrap of paper with a simple message: “Remember, we all stumble, every one of us, that’s why it is a comfort to go hand in hand” (Emily Kimbrough). I truly believe that we find

comfort when we take the hand of another when we are facing challenges. As parents and caregivers, you too deserve to have a hand held out to you, as a source of kindness, understanding, and comfort. Think of this newsletter and the Saskatchewan Fetal Alcohol Support Network as that hand held out to you. Let this newsletter inspire you to reach out to others either to offer or to accept the support we all need.

Did You Know?

- ☼ 2005 FASD National Conference
Equality of Access: Rights and the Right Thing to Do
Feb 24, 25, 26 Victoria, BC
- ☼ Western Canadian Conference Adults with FASD
Circle of Sharing—Successful Journeys
March 23-24, 2005 in Winnipeg, Manitoba
- ☼ Community Awareness and Action Workshops
A joint project of the Saskatchewan Fetal Alcohol Support Network
and the National Crime Prevention Strategy
Various locations throughout Saskatchewan
Spring 2005 Contact 975-0806 skfasnetwork@sasktel.net
- ☼ Explosive Child Conference
Effective strategies of supporting children with challenging behaviours
March 4, 2005 Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
- ☼ Parent Support Group Meetings
For more information call 975-0884 or
Toll-free: 1-866-673-FASN (3276)
- ☼ SFASN Annual General Meeting
May 27, 2005 Watch for details in the Spring publication Living with FASD

For information regarding upcoming events please contact the SFASN office.
In Saskatoon call: 975-0884
Toll-free: 1-866-673-FASN (3276)
Email:
fas.esupportnetwork@sasktel.net

Something to Watch For!!

On February 22, 2005 the Saskatoon StarPhoenix and the Regina Leader Post will be including a 10-page feature on FASD.



A Story of Hope

by Shirley Hellquist

My life today bears no resemblance to anything I imagined it would be when I got married over 40 years ago. We have adopted 6 children as well as fostering many others for varying lengths of time. We still have four young people at home – two of whom have been diagnosed with FAS.

Our two children with FAS have affected the whole family in many ways. FAS is not only an individual matter; it is a family issue. People who are affected by FAS benefit greatly by structure in their lives and so our family life, by necessity, is a lot more structured than other family members might wish it to be! Although there have been many challenges over the years there have been many successes as well.

Things that have made a difference:

- EARLY DIAGNOSIS – I can't emphasize this enough.
- Early and ongoing intervention – special preschool programming, physio/occupational/speech therapy, Teacher Associate help in both elementary and high school, appropriate counselling, when needed, by a counsellor who was knowledgeable about FAS
- Supportive teachers and school administrators
- Structure and routine in our home – simple concrete rules that are appropriate for their developmental age **not for their chronological age!**
- Constant supervision – it is far better to prevent a problem than to have to react to something that has happened.
- “Time off” for us as parents – it is important that all parents have time away as a couple from their children but it is especially important for parents of special needs kids.
- Advocacy – we have been advocates for our kids both in the community and in their schools. This is essential. We need to

ask for what our children need. We as parents know them better than anyone else. We have had to be confident in that! We have had to speak up – tactfully but forcefully! Others, especially some of their teachers, have advocated for them as well.

- Putting in place whatever it takes for our children to be as successful as possible. I have often said that we have to do what we have to do even if outsiders think we are being overprotective or whatever.

Life has been, and still is, full of many joys and challenges. Often with time comes perspective! What once was a crisis now is a memory that brings laughter. (This is one of the times when closer supervision would have been the answer to preventing the situation in the first place!!). Success at school has required close cooperation between home and school, teacher associate help, specialized programs and **many hours of parent help with homework!** Our two kids with FAS have now graduated from high school in a modified program. They are both attending a job-training program at Saskatchewan Abilities Council and our son has a paid part-time job as well.

Families with members affected by FASD need supports and services if the individuals are to be successful. This is far from easy to put in place but it is very rewarding to see the progress that results when they are in place. Although our two young adults with FAS are now 21 and 22, they are not ready yet for independent living. They will always need a lot more structure and support than typical youth their own age in areas of daily living and employment. We do not know what the future holds but we have great hope that they will continue to mature and that with the proper supports in place they will continue to be successful.



Strategies for Parents

In this section we will print short articles related to tips, strategies, or support mechanisms that provide parents, grandparents, caregivers, and other family members with concrete tools to aid in daily life. Of course, not all strategies will be applicable to your unique situation. The following article has been reprinted with permission of the author.

5 Ways to Parent with Finesse

by Deborah Critzer-Fox

1. React to "shockers" with semi-interested boredom. When children announce something to which you feel an instant reaction in your gut, take a deep breath, smile calmly, and say, "Really? Tell me more." Remember, part of the reason children "come up with" shocking news is to get you to react or push your buttons. Parents with finesse do not often get tricked into reacting to their children, instead becoming the trickster by showing calmness and level-headedness.

2. Set up a sequence of events that discipline the children and RELAX! The other night my children and I were invited to go swimming. Before leaving I explained to them that we would be leaving the pool at 7:30, in my car at 7:40 and home at 7:50. I asked each child, in turn, before we left to repeat this sequence back to me. I then asked what would happen if the above sequence was not followed (they all correctly responded that we would not be allowed to go back again). I gave them a 15 and 5 minute warning prior to announcing that it was 7:30. I then sat back and watched calmly as they began to reluctantly get out of the pool. My son was still in, looking as if he would not come out. I said to no one in particular, "We have 6 minutes to get to the car, I suppose we can make it if we run part of the way...I'm not sure, I'm parked kind of far from here." Everyone began to panic and get dried off, hurrying to get me out of the

gate and on the way to the car. At the car I said, "Wow! Great job! You could have swam 30 seconds longer!"

3. Act as if there is all the time in the world, even when there isn't. Kids know when we are in a rush. A parent with finesse pretends not to be worried and stressed, knowing that spending 5 calm minutes chatting with a child in the morning can save 30 minutes of battling to get out the door on time.

4. Notice the little details and acknowledge them. An observant parent recognizes when children contribute. We notice these desirable actions that make our home a better place and say "Thank you for that!"

5. Humility. Parents with finesse know when to say, "I don't know." We know that we do not have all the answers. We know that we often make mistakes. We apologize when we are wrong. We hold our children accountable for their actions, with compassion, when they have erred. We know that doing our personal best as a parent means working really hard at it sometimes and giving up and taking a rest other times. We remember often to be grateful, giving thanks for these beautiful little human beings.



Spring Publication Update:

The spring issue of the publication *Living with FASD* will be ready for distribution by early March. Several changes have been made, including changes to format, content, and the creative process. We are excited about the changes to the publication and hope they will be well received.

The committee working on the publication consists of board members: Shelley Kolisnek, Jonina Male, Sylvia Nagy, Kim Skidmore and staff member Beverly Palibroda. Members of the committee have had opportunity to share their gifts and work toward the goal of putting a vision onto paper.

Become a Member:

Annual SFASN membership is \$15.00. Benefits include: receipt of the biannual publication *Living with FASD*, quarterly receipt of *Network News*, ability to access print resources from the office, including new FASD Tips as they become available.

In addition, you will gain a sense of belonging, commitment to a common goal, and a furthered sense of community involvement. Membership forms are available from the office.

Please contact Kim Fast: 975-0884 or toll-free: 1-866-673-FASN (3276)

Request for Articles:

The success of each publication will rely on the information that is available. We would ask that each of the members give some thought about how they might contribute to the future publications, whether it is the *Network News* or the fall issue of *Living with FASD*. Perhaps you have a story idea

to pass along, are willing to prepare an article, submit photography, poetry, or other wise words. Please contact the office with ideas, feedback, or to inquire about submitting your information. Your help is greatly needed.

Please contact Beverly at 975-0806 or by email: skfasnetwork@sasktel.net.

How to Contact Us

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Toll-free: 1-866-673-FASN (3276) Warm Line-for parents and professionals

In Saskatoon: 975-0884

Email: fas.esupportnetwork@sasktel.net

Website News

Just a reminder that you can visit us online at:

www.skfasnetwork.ca

The FASD Tips are available online. Feel free to copy and pass along to others who might be interested.