



"All My Life's a Circle"

Harry Chapin is one of my favorite story tellers, song writers and singers. Chapin, like our dear friend and former PCSAO Executive Director Dan Schneider, died much too young. But, as Dan did, he left a legacy and music was a part of that legacy. One of his songs, "All My Life's a Circle" has been running through my head continuously for the past few weeks:

*All my life's a circle
Sunrise and sundown
The moon goes through
the night time
While the daybreak comes around*

*All my life's a circle
And I can't tell you why
Seasons spinning round again
The days keep going by.*

My life is like a circle. I am often at my computer when the sun rises and I watch the sun going down through the windows of our new offices. In between sunrise and sunset I am in the halls of the statehouse trying to make sense of this life and what it is about. And it does feel like a circle; sometimes feeling very out of control.

As the 2006-2007 Ohio budget unfolds, we continue to be pleased that the funding and support for the Access to Better Care initiative is strong both in the House and the Senate and for that we are very grateful. I spend a lot of time each week in meetings where we are discussing how the new dollars will be

allocated to counties and how we will be strengthening the Family and Children First Councils. Talk about something coming full circle for me: I wrote the Executive Order while I was in the Celeste Administration creating the Children's Cluster and making it illegal to probate children to adult MRDD institutions. Now some 20 years later we are creating behavioral health transformation plans through the Community Addiction and Mental Health Boards and the Family and Children First Councils to serve children with multiple behavioral health needs.

However, as we are planning for this work, I am also part of a group of advocates trying to construct a DA Medical Plan that will serve less than half of the 15,000 very sick and vulnerable people needing medications. Between 22% and 25% of these people need psychotropic drugs. How have we come to a point in our state and country when we are making decisions about who gets medication and who does not? Who will be hearing voices and who will not? As my life was going around in circles last week about this issue I actually had to leave a meeting because I was physically sickened by the discussion.

Or how about the woman, who we

will never see again, who died from a stroke while waiting for her DA Medical Assistance and the drugs she needed for her hypertension?

Then what about the 25,000 working poor parents, lots of them women, who will lose their health care coverage in July 2005 and will have no way of receiving treatment for things like heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, maternal depression, the list goes on and on. Talk about a vicious circle; these are women we made a compact with: "Go to work, keep a job and we will help you with child care and health care." Now some of them cannot afford the child care co-pays and will not have health care coverage. One of their choices is to go back on welfare. Surely that is not what we had intended when people joined this circle.

But in the middle of these tough budget days good things happen as the sun rises to remind us that life

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**By GAYLE
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Creating Impressions

What is that saying about first impressions? You get one chance at making them and they last a lifetime.

So, when I was asked to write an introductory article about myself, I began thinking about my options of how best to make this first impression.



By Greg Kapcar
PCSAO
ASSISTANT
LEGISLATIVE
DIRECTOR

My initial inclination was to rattle off a list of qualifications, but how exciting could that be? My seven-year-old niece, Sarah, was quick to weigh in on the subject with her recommendation. She believed the best ice breaker was to

start off with a good joke and offered one she thought would be perfect for the situation (and even gave me permission to use it)... What vegetable should you NOT take on a boat trip? Answer: Leeks. I am sure there's an analogy in there somewhere that can be made about a leaking boat and the state budget. But, after careful consideration it is probably better if I share my background and experience, what I have done, and why I am so excited about joining the team at PCSAO.

My career in the social service field began nearly 14 years ago as a psychology intern-student at Baldwin-Wallace College. My internship was with Berea Children's Home and Family Services and consisted of various field placements at an outpatient counseling office, day care center, and residential treatment facility. The placement that set my career path was the Southwest Child Abuse Prevention Program. As a group facilitator, I was part of a team that taught families and children stress management skills and positive discipline techniques.

After graduating and receiving my license in Social Work, I was hired by what was then

the Center for Human Services (now known as the Center for Families and Children) as a psychiatric case manager. There I provided case management services to severely mentally disabled adults by advocating and linking clients with housing, financial, medical and social resources.

In March 1993, I returned to the place that stirred my enthusiasm for working with families and children – Berea Children's Home – and remained there for the past twelve years. During that time, I worked with unruly youth and their families to prevent further official involvement with the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court; helped prospective foster and adoptive parents navigate the state's certification and licensure requirements; facilitated children's access to treatment options in a residential treatment center; and most recently served as the first advocate for government affairs and public policy by managing the organization's local, state, and federal advocacy efforts.

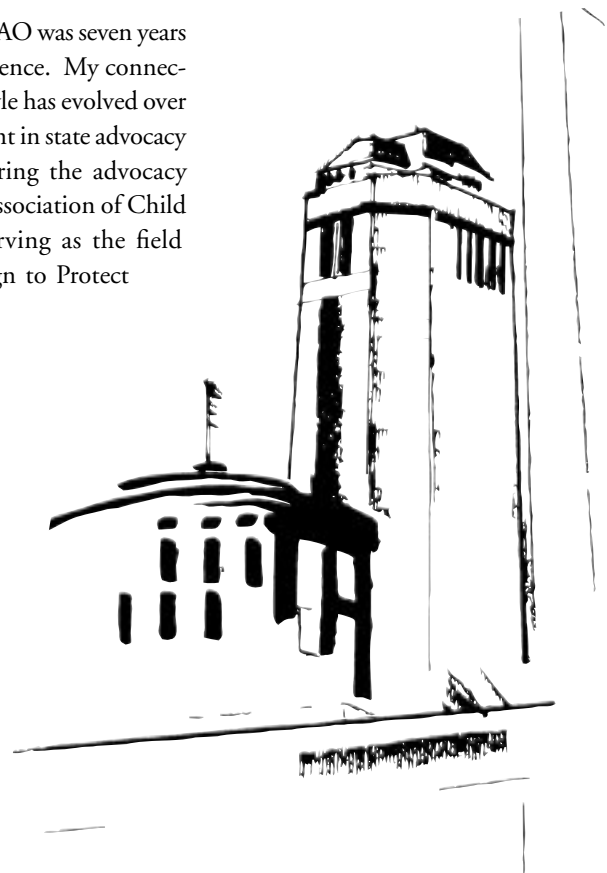
My first contact with PCSAO was seven years ago at the Annual Conference. My connection with Crystal and Gayle has evolved over the years as my involvement in state advocacy progressed through chairing the advocacy committee of the Ohio Association of Child Caring Agencies and serving as the field director for the Campaign to Protect Ohio's Future.

I have always been impressed with PCSAO's reputation in and around the Statehouse, as well as with state departments and the media. From the outside looking in, PCSAO and its staff were always in the right place at the right time to proactively advocate for sound public policy on behalf of children and families. Not all of

the battles are won, but it is the association's "can-do" attitude and persistence that has me excited about joining the team. I cannot think of a better place or a better team of people to work with than PCSAO when it comes to having a statewide impact and serving abused and neglected children.

In closing, I would be remiss if I did not thank Sally, my wife of 11½ years, for her constant support and encouragement. We are both very excited about moving to Columbus. Sasha (our six-year-old Golden Retriever) on the other hand, has no clue what's in store for her. But, she knows something is up since we've been cleaning the house everyday before work so it is ready to show to potential buyers on a moment's notice.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve with you. I look forward to getting to know you and working with you in the years to come.



All My Life's a Circle (continued)

is really a circle. Last week at the OU Alumni Luncheon in Columbus, I was asked to present the Dan Schneider Strategic Leadership Award to Senator Bill Harris. This award, endowed by Mark and Wanda Weinberg in memory of Dan, honors a person who leads by creating public value and inspiring others to make change for the better. This award recognizes one's achievements, a person whose clear vision and dedicated service enhances both their profession and the lives they touch.

As I was writing my remarks for this occasion, I realized that on May 23, 2005 it would be the second year anniversary of our dear friend Dan's death, and how much I miss him each and every day. But also, how that circle just keeps on going, the organizations he founded, both PCSAO, the Network for Child Safety and the Ohio University Executive Leadership Program, continue to create public value for protecting children and their families in our state and in our country. And at PCSAO, we are so lucky to have the legacy carried on through Jessica Schneider, who in her own right is a terrific communications specialist, but also is a piece of the Dan circle with us each and every day.

And I think that Senator Harris carries on that work that Dan did as he leads in his capacity of President of the Ohio Senate. He has been facing tough leadership challenges and trying at all times to balance the economic needs of our state with the needs of its most vulnerable populations. To both Dan and Senator Harris, being of service was and is very important. In my last conversation I had with Dan, I told him what a good servant he had been, and at first he said in that self-deprecating way of his, "I hope so" and then he said "You know I think that I have been a good servant" and he most certainly was. But that circle again was completed as we recognized another man who continues to be a servant on earth, Senator Harris.



Family and friends of Dan Schneider pose with Senate President Bill Harris, recipient of the Dan Schneider Strategic Leadership Award, and Ohio University President Roderick J. McDavis following Sen. Harris' acceptance speech. (L-R) Dan's wife, Jan Collins; PCSAO Communications Specialist Jessica Schneider; PCSAO Legislative Director Gayle Channing Tenenbaum; Senate President Bill Harris; and Ohio University President Roderick J. McDavis. (Photograph compliments of Mike Elicson, Capital Creative.)

I think each of us in our own way tries to complete the circle of this life in the best way we can and tries to look for ways to be of service as the seasons come and go. At PCSAO, this month we have added a new person to our circle, Greg Kapcar. I have had the honor and pleasure of working with Greg over the last four years in both his role as Chair of the OACCA Legislative Committee and the Field Coordinator for the Campaign to Protect Ohio's Future. He is also a person committed to being of service and we are so lucky to have him join the PCSAO family. ♥

All My Life's a Circle

Seems like I've been here before
But I can't remember when,
But I've got this funny feeling
We'll all be together again,
(We hope so Dan)

All my life's a circle
I can't tell you why
Seasons spinning round again
The days keep going by.
(The budget will be over soon).



Senate President Bill Harris accepts the Dan Schneider Strategic Leadership award at the 22nd Annual Ohio University State Government Alumni Luncheon on May 17 in Columbus. Sen. Harris received the award for a lifetime of professional and personal leadership. (Photograph compliments of Mike Elicson, Capital Creative.)

The PCSAO Conference Committee is finalizing workshop presenters, exhibitors and entertainment for the 2005 PCSAO Annual Training Conference. The conference, which takes place September 21-23 at Holiday Inn Worthington in Columbus, will unite social workers, child advocates and experts from

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across Ohio and the nation for training and networking opportunities with professionals who share a very important mission: To keep children safe, keep families stable and empower our communities.

Every person who attends will contribute to the overall success of the conference. We need you to celebrate the achievements of award winning families and foster children; and the people whose work benefits children and families; to take part in the innovative and diverse workshops that are offered; to work together and share stories about the important work that you do; and so much more.

The 2005 Conference is an important training opportunity for child welfare professionals, and an exciting event! For more information, call PCSAO Conference Coordinator Jeed Jitprasert at 614-224-5802, or e-mail her at pcsao@sbcglobal.net for more information. ♥



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A member of a 2004 Family of the Year poses proudly with a blanket he received from the "My Very Own Blanket Project," which is one of the many exhibitors at the 2004 Conference.

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How Other States Are Addressing Minority Disproportionality in Child Welfare

Ohio has begun to examine more closely the minority disproportionality issue. Other states are exploring this issue, some have developed recommendations, and one or two have developed pilot programs. States that are addressing this issue include Colorado, California, Minnesota, and Iowa.

Colorado

In Colorado, six years worth of data were examined. They used race to compare the number of cases opened and other decision making areas. The study revealed that ethnicity factor in determining whether a child would be removed from their home. A special program called Youth in Conflict that serves children who are having trouble functioning in the home and community was also examined. For Youth in Conflict, African-American, American Indian, and Hispanic youth were referred more often. Minorities were found to have a higher percentage of having a second case and less likely to have a reunification goal in their service plan. Regional and county differences existed, much like they do in Ohio. According to Sharon Ford from the Colorado Division of Child Welfare Services, since this study was conducted, the state has been unable to follow up with the counties and tribes to see if any of them have been active in addressing this problem.

California

California has recently developed a plan to overhaul its child welfare system. The redesign is modeled on a strengths-based perspective and focuses on the "disproportionality of children of color". Unfortunately, the redesign is still in the planning stages, so neither programs nor evaluations of the redesign have occurred. San Francisco County is exploring the problem because stakeholders in that area were aware of the acuteness of the problem. Although only 11% of the child population is African-American, these children represent 70% of the children in foster care in San Francisco County. Developers of the Disproportionality Project laid out three general goals: develop recommendations to address the problem, gain public support for

the recommendations, and initiate research that will determine why people believe disproportionality exists.

The group made nine recommendations to complete within the five years. These included improving collaboration with other departments and with the community, launching a "positive message" campaign, focusing on youth permanence, and implementing policies and practices that ensure consistency for all family placements, focusing on preventive services, and improving the department's data systems. Eight models were recommended to address the issue of minority disproportionality.

This comprehensive project has just ended the planning stage and is now moving onto an "action" stage, so no evaluation has occurred on their recommended models.

Iowa

In Iowa, pilot programs have been developed in two separate counties. The Minority Youth and Family Demonstration Project in Woodbury County, which includes Sioux City, was developed to address the disproportionate number of American Indian children who enter the system. According to Dr. Brad Richardson who oversees both programs, American Indians make up only 3% of the population in the county but represent 50% of the children in juvenile detention centers. This disproportionality exists in the child welfare system as well. This program is looking to increase the number of American Indian foster and adoptive homes through recruitment and through gaining access to foster homes and relatives homes in other states because Woodbury is in close proximity to two other states. The program is also designed to ensure that these children are receiving culturally appropriate services through cultural competency training, utilizing services on the reservations, organizing a specialized unit of

social workers to deal with American Indian cases, and increasing the number of Native Family Team Meeting Facilitators who involve the tribe in the child planning reviews. While this program is geared toward American Indians, the strategies employed are similar: recruiting homes that are culturally appropriate, involving the community, the reservation, in getting services and involving the family, the tribe, in the decision making.

The second program is located in Polk County, which includes the city of Des Moines, and is geared toward reducing the disproportionality of African-Americans in that county's child welfare system. The project is run by a private local provider in the county and families are referred who have one youth receiving services and have a founded report of abuse or neglect. It employs two embedded case workers, meaning they live in the community where their clients reside. The case workers help the families with housing, food, income and educational needs in addition to other typical services. A case worker was also employed to provide emergency transportation and day care as well as helping plan and prepare meals. The program has served 11 families and the Department of Human Services has had no subsequent cases with any of these families.

Minnesota

In Minnesota, research showed that African-American families were less likely to receive counseling and more likely to receive child protection services, and that African American children are under state custody for longer periods of time than Caucasian children. African-American families were also reported for neglect more often than abuse. Families with neglect issues often have multiple problems such as domestic abuse, substance abuse, and poverty. This prompted a reform called Alternative Response which helps to address the problems that lead to neglect.

According to the Minnesota Department of Human Services, "Alternative Response is based on the belief that parents love their chil-

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Minority Disproportionality (continued)

dren and want them to be safe. Sometimes parents need help to make that happen." If a child is in serious risk of harm, then a traditional investigation occurs. If, however, it is determined that a family is eligible for an Alternative Response or a traditional investigation, the family chooses which option it would like to use, so the program is voluntary. A county worker does not look at the specific incident, but instead, looks at the resources and strengths of the family and also the needs of the family. The worker then connects the family with formal and informal services in their community. These services include transportation, education, counseling, and child care.

The pilot project ran in 20 counties for four years and has recently gone statewide. An evaluation of Alternative Response over a four-year period showed that child safety was not compromised and the evidence actually shows that "the safety status of children improved." The pilot also showed that while start-up costs and worker time was greater than traditional child protection services, in the long term the program actually cost less and was more cost effective. Part of this was due to the fact that follow-up and closing the case was more expensive and time consuming for traditional services. The other part is that families who used Alternative Response were less likely to have a new report made on them.

Among the three largest racial groups in Minnesota; Caucasian, African-American, and American Indian, the rates of recurrence were lower during the follow-up period. Alternative Response had fewer families who later had to have their children removed from the home.

Overall, workers and families had positive attitudes toward Alternative Response and there was greater satisfaction in the relationship between the two parties. Well-being improved too. Families in Alternative Response reported that they were better off due to the project. At the end of the three-year follow up, they also reported less stress in the home, a higher mean income, and fewer problems in obtaining health care for their children. The program has been considered a success in more than just addressing racial disproportionality; it helps to keep children in their homes and reduces the chance of abuse from reoccurring.

Finally, Minnesota has a Children of Color Outreach program that has been in effect since 1996. This program provides guidelines on selecting culturally competent providers, a directory on organizations that serve diverse population, supports research on disproportionality in the child welfare system, training in cultural competency, and translates child welfare publications for non-English speaking populations.

Conclusion

The issue of disproportionality looks different in several states. Yet, most states that are addressing this problem have recognized that certain basic ideas are important. These are; involving the community, providing preventive services, offering culture competency training, and ensuring that the methods, policies and practices are used consistency and equally among all families no matter the race. As Ohio and other states begin to understand and better address disproportionality issues in their systems, it will be useful for states to look to each other for program models and outcomes to inform our efforts.

To find out more about what states are doing to address disproportionality, visit www.pcsao.org and click on Disproportionality.

The sources used for this article are available upon request. Contact anneswartwout@yahoo.com ♥