

As With All Good Things...Nature is the Mother of Collaboration
A Tale by Linda Reddick, CPS Supervisor, Jenkins County Georgia

The following tale was shared with the Family-to-Family phase 2 counties and others who joined the August 11, 1998 statewide videoconference on the integration of family-centered, neighborhood-based services in rural America. At this session, Ms. Linda Reddick, a CPS supervisor from Jenkins County, Georgia shared this tale that she created to underscore the critical importance and necessity for collaboration in the protection of children and stability of families.

I pass this tale on to you in hope that you become one of nature's most beautiful larks!

Once upon a time there was a Lark. As she flew around the meadows hunting bugs, seeds, and berries, she would occasionally break into song. One day, she had been particularly productive in finding food and so, started singing the melodious song when, she had a wonderful idea. The Lark thought to herself "there are many birds in the valley and ALL of them have wonderful songs as well. What the valley really needed was a choir - a collaborative choir." So, she flew across the valley to enlist volunteers. She came first to the **administrative eagle** who looked down his beak and said - "I travel in the highest winds above the valley and collaboration would not necessarily add prestige to my name and it is not on my agenda." Next, the Lark made an appointment to see the **educational peacock**. Certainly a bird so endowed with knowledge would know the benefits of a choir and would be more than willing to have some input into the collaboration. But, the peacock said - "I love to lecture but collaboration seems so plain and so simple." Next, the Lark ran into the **juvenile justice nightingale** who was known for the most beautiful voice. but the nightingale said - "I love to sing but I cannot sing with a group, I sing strictly solo." Off the Lark winged to the **public health swans**. Enthusiastically she explained her idea of a collaborative choir. But the shy swans just stuck their heads under their wings and wouldn't even try. The Lark next arrived at the tall tree of **mental health owls** - certainly they appreciated music. A bird so wise would readily see the need for a collaborative choir. But instead, the owl just hooted - "who, who me" Who, who me?" Finally the Lark went to the community leader parrot. surely he would assist and get the choir started. But the parrot squalled..."Join the choir, join the choir, that's all I hear, join the choir, join the choir."

By now, the Lark was feeling a bit rejected when all of a sudden there was a rustle in the bushes and out hopped a **service sparrow**. Did I hear you talking about a choir - a collaborative choir? I don't sing very well but if you will lead me I'll give it all I've got and off the sparrow flew to enlist the rest of the flock.

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We know that collaboration amongst our local professionals is not always easily achieved. However, collaboration is possible. Enlist the support of the people who live in the communities you serve. Most people are very willing to help if asked. If the community is fractured, begin small. Find one or two champions of child protection who will join you in seeking out others to coalesce around child protection and family stability. The Family to Family publication Cliffnotes #4 has specific information on how to get started. Start today - there's no time like the present! ▪