

to democracy but they only increased our resolve in preserving the greatest form of government the world has ever known. They tried to destroy our economy—but the whole world knows America is still open for business, for farming, for travel. And they tried to extinguish the flame of liberty and hope in our country, but they only made it burn brighter. Yes, America has changed—we're stronger than ever.

CRISIS IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 26, 2002

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, over the past few days, millions of Americans watched their television screens transfixed by the horrific images of a woman repeatedly striking her 4-year-old daughter in a department store parking lot. As a result of intense media coverage, the mother eventually turned herself in and the state took protective custody of the child.

The unsettling incident has unfortunately played itself out in the media like a tragic movie of the week. Clearly, the child needs protection to determine if this violence was a pattern of abuse, and to prevent additional incidences of mistreatment. The mother faces up to three years in prison. The 4-year-old child is left to struggle with the emotional scars caused by the mother's physical abuse and the subsequent trauma of being removed from familiar, albeit dangerously dysfunctional, family surroundings.

The assumption and hope is that the child is now under the custody and supervision of the state and has been placed in a safe home. Unfortunately for the thousands of nameless children under the protective custody of state child welfare systems, the assurance of a safe and healthy environment is inconsistent with the reality.

Nationwide more than 550,000 children are currently in foster care. Class action lawsuits and multiple newspaper reports have documented the failure of states to meet the social service needs of vulnerable children and families in crisis, despite billions of dollars in federal assistance. Across the nation, allegations of limited access to services, improper placements, inadequate staff training, poor wage compensation coupled with massive case-loads, and high staff turnover rates are commonplace.

In the following article, the Columbus Dispatch identifies an innovative program aimed at meeting the challenging objective of ensuring child safety and providing much needed support services to parents in crisis. The Family to Family program detailed in the article is based on the belief that some families in crisis can receive services in their own homes. The family preservation program links troubled families with social service agencies, community centers, and other social service networks. The goal is to coordinate service delivery in efforts to increase quality and continuity of services.

The disturbing incident of child abuse caught on videotape taps into our greatest fears about abusive parents and the harmful

experiences of children, who through no fault of their own, are subjected to inadequate care. This incident highlights the need for a competent child welfare system that swiftly and effectively meets the needs of vulnerable children and families in crisis. To that effect the following article presents one possible solution to this ongoing child welfare crisis.

The article follows:

[From The Columbus Dispatch, Sept. 22, 2002]
HELPING MEND TROUBLED FAMILIES; AGENCY'S INNOVATIVE PROGRAM KEEPS KIDS AT HOME OR NEARBY

(By Encarnacion Pyle)

Sabrina Martin's oldest daughter told a teacher last winter that her mother had whipped her so hard that she had bruises.

In the past, a social worker likely would have stopped by Martin's house, packed her two children's clothes into a garbage bag and dropped the kids off at a foster house far from their family, friends and school.

But under a new program, Franklin County Children Services worked with the single mother from South Linden to safely care for her daughters as it investigated the abuse charge.

Family to Family is built on the belief that families often can be helped to care for their children in their own homes. Or, when children need to be removed, that they should be placed with a relative, close friend or foster family in the neighborhood.

The program linked Martin, 31, to St. Stephen's Community House, where she learned new skills for being a parent and the girls learned ways to control their behavior.

During its investigation, Children Services discovered that a baby sitter had hit 8-year-old Sadie. And although Martin would rather not have been involved with the agency, she said, the Family to Family program helped her become a better parent.

"Parenting is hard, especially if you're single and your children are challenging," she said. "I used to be so hot-tempered, I'd snatch the girls up by their arms. But I've since learned better ways to discipline them and deal with stress."

Children Services and St. Stephen's introduced Family to Family in North and South Linden in 2000. It was so successful that the agency, with help from the Gladden Community House, expanded the program to Franklinton last year and hopes to start it on the Near East Side in October.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation in Baltimore created the program 10 years ago as a way of meeting the growing challenges facing the child-welfare system, said John Mattingly, the group's senior associate.

"It is not another social-services pilot, fad or new model for child-welfare work," he said. "There is no quick fix."

The number of children being cared for away from their parents' homes nationwide has more than doubled from 260,000 in the 1980s to more than 550,000 today, with only a few communities reporting a decline in the past few years.

In Ohio, 26,000 children are in foster care. In Franklin County, 2,585 children are in paid placement, which includes all temporary and permanent custody, said John Saros, executive director of Children Services.

As a result, social workers carry enormous caseloads, and children are staying longer in foster care and group homes and suffering more-difficult behavioral and physical problems.

At the same time, the number of foster families nationally has dropped, so that fewer than 50 percent of the children who need temporary placement are placed with

foster families. The others go to group homes, institutions and—in some cities but not Columbus—to homeless shelters.

With Family to Family, instead of automatically taking custody of children, social workers from Children Services and the community centers meet with parents to work out ways to keep them home.

When that doesn't work, the parents are invited to sit down with foster parents and social workers to plan the child's care.

Friends, family, teachers, counselors, pastors, juvenile-justice workers and anyone else who can help the family are encouraged to attend. That's largely because children today have so many needs that parents must be experts in discipline, special education, learning disabilities, health care and mental health, said Marilyn Mehaffie, associate director of St. Stephens.

During the meetings, parents are praised for their strengths before their weaknesses are discussed.

"Before, we'd start by criticizing them for being a crack addict with no money and no food in the house," said Walter Torain, who heads Family to Family and Children Services' north region. "Now, we'd first praise them for being active in their children's schooling and caring enough to show up to the meeting."

Family to Family has placed nine children in foster homes in their Linden-area neighborhoods. Five more stayed in their own homes. Thirteen new foster homes were created in the area.

The biological parents are encouraged to tell the foster family what their children's favorite foods are, how they like their hair done, what makes them grumpy and how they can be comforted.

"That keeps birth parents from trying to find fault with the foster parents," said LaTisha Hines, Family to Family coordinator at St. Stephen's.

Children, who rarely were consulted about what is best for them, often are included in the discussion.

"It helps the kids from feeling like something is being forced on them," said Marika Sanders, a social worker at St. Stephens. "And it lessens their anxiety about divided loyalties."

To help limit the alienation that comes with removing children from their parents, friends, school and everything they know, Children Services heavily recruits foster parents in the neighborhood.

"Keeping kids in their community cuts down on the trauma," said Cordelia Foster, 53, who has cared for more than 65 children in 14 years as a foster mother.

The strategy represents an about-face to the traditional goal of child-welfare agencies of pulling children away from abusive or neglectful parents at all costs, often to the detriment of the child, said Richard Wexler, executive director of the National Coalition for Child Protection Reform in Alexandria, Va.

"It's the first good news I've heard about Franklin County Children Services in years."

Despite the benefits, the program's introduction presents formidable challenges, notably because child-welfare agencies have to accept a new way of doing business. Compounding the task are the traditionally ill feelings between foster parents and birth parents and the public's general mistrust of child-welfare agencies.

Still, Mattingly said, the program has flourished.

It began in Ohio and four other states, and now is in 32 communities nationwide. Combined, they've received nearly \$75 million in grants and technical assistance from the Casey Foundation, a private organization that works to improve the lives of disadvantaged children.

"Child-welfare agencies can improve," Mattingly said, "but it's hard work."

To become more community-friendly, Children Services plans to hire more translators and workers who speak foreign languages, because of the growing diversity in the county. And it will create a committee of child-welfare workers, court officials and mental-health and addiction experts to help decide where to place children with severe behavioral and mental-health problems.

"We've had such great success with Family to Family, it's time for more-revolutionary changes," Saros said.

Sabrina Martin credits Family to Family with smoothing out her relationship with her daughters.

"I don't think we would have been able to get back on track without it," she said.

SUCCESS OF THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 26, 2002

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, on August 11, 2002, the men and women of Nagorno-Karabakh exercised their right to vote—a right which we have cherished for more than two centuries and a right that we hope will spread across the world.

Democracy, Mr. Speaker, is at the core of our existence as a nation, and democracy and democratic values are what we fought for in Europe during two World Wars and are continuing to fight for in the war on terrorism.

As freedom loving people who stood up against tyranny, we have a duty to applaud and support others who aspire to the principles that resulted in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights.

Mr. Speaker, on August 11, 2002, the people of Nagorno-Karabakh re-elected President Arkady Ghukassian by a majority vote in what the independent election observers from the United States, Russia, Great Britain, France, Italy and Armenia called a free and transparent election.

The independent international observers, who monitored the election and the subsequent vote count, included a number of acting and former parliamentarians, former diplomats, foreign policy experts, and representatives of non-governmental human rights organizations. In addition, journalists from the United States, Russia, France, Spain, Great Britain and Armenia covered the course of the election.

The democratic presidential election of Nagorno-Karabakh, with an impressive 76 percent turnout, is evidence of the people's adherence to Western values and its determination to form a civil society and organize its affairs through a representative body based on the rule of law.

Observers from the British Helsinki Human Rights Group, which had observed 85 elections within the jurisdiction of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, stated that the election in Nagorno-Karabakh had surpassed many elections internationally recognized and approved by the OSCE and the Council of Europe, in particular, the elections in Bosnia and Kosovo.

The five independent observers from the United States, which included former high-

ranking foreign service officers and foreign policy experts, were extremely impressed with the election process and the people's resolute determination to live in freedom. One observer described it as "an impressive exercise in democracy."

Mr. Speaker, last summer I visited Nagorno-Karabakh and saw first-hand the harsh yet dramatic terrain of Nagorno-Karabakh and the rugged individualism of its people and leadership. Their compassion and conviction to forge ahead despite the difficult challenges was reminiscent of our founding fathers, who when faced with the choice of liberty or tyranny fought to live in freedom.

The people of Nagorno-Karabakh continue to live with the daily reminders of the war—landmines, collapsed buildings, and the noticeable absence of fathers, brothers and sons. Yet, they have chosen to rebuild their lives and their towns so their children will live in freedom.

Congratulations President Ghukassian and congratulations to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh for your spirit and your commitment to freedom and democracy.

TRIBUTE TO STERLING HEIGHTS FIREFIGHTERS

HON. SANDER M. LEVIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 26, 2002

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, September 11, 2001 stands as a stark reminder of the valor, commitment, and sacrifice exhibited every day by firefighters and law enforcement officers throughout our nation. Like so many others in public life they serve the community, but they do so at great risk of peril to their own health and lives.

I am particularly pleased and proud to rise today in recognition of the careers of two distinguished firefighters from Sterling Heights, Michigan upon their retirement and as they embark upon a new phase of their lives.

Training Chief Rick Williams began his firefighting career in 1978. Since then, he has obtained numerous certifications ranging from appointment of Chief of Training in 1996, to receiving the Fire Chief's Award in 2002 for presenting the Fire Department's annual report and conducting many public education programs.

Fire Inspector John Vought was appointed a firefighter in 1978, and has received many certifications from receiving the Outstanding Firefighter of the Year Award presented by the Sterling Heights Elks Club in 1992 to the Meritorious Unit Citation for the rescue of three children from a house fire in 1989.

We are indeed grateful for the service that these two individuals have provided the community and the citizens of Sterling Heights over their long careers. They have served the public well and have received many letters of thanks and commendation from the community in response.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking these men and wishing them a healthy and happy retirement.

THE NEW YORK SPECIAL JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS

HON. JERROLD NADLER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 26, 2002

Mr. NADLER. Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, today marks a historic occasion for New York and for the United States Congress. This is the first Congress that has convened here in New York since the First Congress convened here to watch President Washington take the oath of office and to pass the Bill of Rights.

We join here today not as Republicans or Democrats, but as Americans. The symbolic gesture of our joint meeting is both solemn and celebratory.

It is solemn because we come here today to honor a city devastated by the most terrible single attack on American soil in our history, and the thousands of innocent people lost in that attack. As the elected Representative for the area of New York most directly impacted by the attacks of September 11, 2001, I can tell you that my constituents are grateful for the act of solidarity with New York that we show here today. I can also tell you that they are even more grateful that Congress has rallied to help this City for the past year.

Our joint meeting today is also celebratory. One year ago, a group of vicious and heartless terrorists sought to cripple this city and this country by obliterating one of its great landmarks. It was their hope that not only would thousands be rendered lifeless, but that our way of life, our democracy, would be extinguished. Today, we celebrate the life and vibrancy of our democracy that still lives—and do so in a city that remains the most lively, diverse, and mighty on the face of the earth, despite the worst efforts of those terrorists.

It is only right that we seek out those who sought to destroy us. But bombs and bullets are merely the tools we use in our self-defense. Revenge against our foes will come not through bloodshed, but through acts defiant of their goals. For the last year, despite the aim of the terrorists to kill our national spirit, this nation has proudly and defiantly displayed the flag from our homes, our cars, our community centers, and our houses of worship. Despite the murderous foes who sought to divide us, our people have joined in concerts celebrating our country and its ideals, and vigils marking our unity.

Over two centuries ago, after stumbling through a government under the Articles of Confederation, with most of the world wishing to see our demise, we gathered here, defiant of the world and its wishes, resolved to make our great democratic experiment work. It is only fitting then, that we stand here again defiant of those who wish for our demise. Let there be no doubt, today we are telling the world that New York lives on, America lives on, and her ideals live on!

MISSILE DEFENSE

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 26, 2002

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I respectfully submit the following correspondence for the