



# Child Abuse Action Network

Summer 2006 Newsletter

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## Inside this Issue:

*Adverse Childhood Experiences  
CAAN Spring Conference 2006*  
Page 1

*2-1-1  
Maine*  
Page 2

*Story of A  
Survivor*  
Page 2

*Welcome: New  
CAAN Members*  
Page 3

*Humane Systems  
for Maternal and  
Child Health:  
What Will It Take?*  
Page 4

*CAAN  
Scholarship  
Awarded to  
Kala Clark*  
Page 5

*2004 CDSI  
Report*  
Page 6

## Adverse Childhood Experiences CAAN Spring Conference 2006

by Vickie J. Fisher; CAAN Coordinator, Muskie School of Public Service

THE CHILD ABUSE ACTION NETWORK'S annual spring conference was held May 25, 2006 at the Central Maine Commerce Center in Augusta, Maine. Approximately 100 people from various disciplines across the state attended. The theme for this year's conference was a continuation of last year's Adverse Childhood Experiences theme. This year the conference was entitled "Adverse Childhood Experiences: where do we go from here?" Last year's conference presented a lot of research on the topic leaving Maine professionals wanting to know more, so CAAN developed this year's conference with that in mind.

The keynote speaker of the day was Dr. Frank Putnam, Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry at Children's Hospital Medical Center, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. His presentation centered on the costs and consequences of child abuse and neglect. He shared what his state is doing about this problem through their OhioCanDo4Kids program. More about this program can be found on the web at <http://OhioCanDo4kids.org>.



Dr. Frank Putnam

Other speakers included Dr. Stephen Rose and Dr. Thomas McLaughlin from the University of New England who presented their research from the University of New England. Dr. Richard Aronson and Susan Savell identified resiliency and protective factors for people who have experienced adverse childhood experiences.

The audience's favorite of the day was Yvonne Mickles, Director of Safe and Healthy Communities and Director of the Youth and Lifelong Learning with the United Way of MidCoast Maine. Yvonne presented her personal story, which was inspiring to all who heard it. Yvonne is a true example of resiliency and hope.

CAAN hopes to continue this theme next year, as there is still much work to be done. Look for this continuing topic in future newsletters.

**More information about the  
Adverse Childhood Experiences Study can be found at:**

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/ace/about.htm>



## Introducing 2-1-1 Maine *Find Help. Give Help. Help Starts Here*

2-1-1 Maine is an easy-to-access resource that links individuals to a broad range of health and social services across the state and right in our own communities. Launched in Cumberland and Washington Counties on February 7, 2006 and to be available statewide on July 1, 2006 2-1-1 Maine is a website ([www.211maine.org](http://www.211maine.org)) and a phone number (**simply dial “2-1-1”**) that connects people to quick, comprehensive, and confidential information and referral services.\* 2-1-1 Maine is a voice/TTY line, the website has voice reader capacity and the organization is affiliated with language translation services to ensure access to all Mainers.

From finding a single parents support group, to locating a weekend food pantry, to identifying weatherization services, to learning where to make a difference by volunteering, 2-1-1 is the simple, centralized tool to find the answers. 2-1-1 Maine is a partnership of the ten United Ways in Maine, Ingraham, and the State of Maine.

\*Cell phone, internet and cable service will be added for all counties on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Some large business telephone systems may need special hardware to access 2-1-1 by phone. 2-1-1 calling is free from most telephones though cell phone and pay telephone line charges may vary. For more information contact Robbie Lipsman at 874-1000 x.323.

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## Story of a Survivor

by Vickie J. Fisher; CAAN Coordinator, Muskie School of Public Service and  
Edited by Yvonne Mickles

The Child Abuse Action Network had the honor of having Yvonne Mickles speak at our annual spring conference. Yvonne is the new Director of Safe and Healthy Communities and Director of Youth and Lifelong Learning at the United Way of MidCoast Maine. Prior to that, Yvonne worked at the Maine State Housing Authority as a Homeless Initiatives Coordinator. Yvonne is passionate about ending homelessness through education and advocacy. However, Yvonne isn't just another dedicated, committed social worker. Yvonne has lived the same story that foster children and homeless adults and children live every day in our country.



Yvonne Mickles

Yvonne was born on the other side of the country in California to drug addicted parents. As a young child, she learned to care for herself as well as her parents. At age 9, her father was sent to jail and her mother, who suffered from mental illness, was hospitalized. From this point, she was in and out of foster homes. Yvonne's world had little stability. At age 11, she was returned to her mother and her mother's new husband. Her

Cont. on Page 3

stepfather announced that his rules would be obeyed or she could leave. After several altercations, her rebelliousness and his physical abuse lead to her being thrown out of the house at age 11 with her mother holding the door.

Yvonne spent a number of years homeless. She did what she could to survive. Life was not easy. She slept under bridges, stole for food and became involved with the law on a number of occasions. She was a survivor. She trusted no one and was determined not to allow anybody to get inside her head. The turning point for Yvonne came when she became pregnant at age 16. She did not want her child to be homeless and live the lifestyle she was living. She returned to school, took parenting classes, and slowly began to get her life in order. Yvonne cites the most important piece to overcoming adversity is to have a mentor. *'One caring adult in a person's life can truly make a difference. People are our greatest asset and our biggest liability if we do not invest in people our liabilities will continue to grow.'*

Nadine Martin, Resource Coordinator in Region 2 for Children's Behavioral Health Services, (CBHS) speaks highly of Yvonne and her presentation to Service Providers. She says, *'Yvonne Mickles is a daring example of a child growing-up in a world of poverty, drugs, and dysfunction – to become the brave role model that she is today. She has transformed herself into an educated and enlightened leader who now sets the pace for others to follow. How magnificent.'*

It is true. Yvonne is a great example. Today, she is a responsible parent, a respected professional and a true leader in advocacy for homeless persons. As The Child Abuse Action Network, Public Health, Corrections, the CAN Councils and many other disciplines begin to seriously consider Adverse Childhood Experiences, they must not forget Yvonne Mickles. There is hope. Yvonne overcame impossible odds. Others can too.

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## Welcome: New CAAN Members

CAAN would like to welcome the newest members to our board. **Barbara Piotti** of Kennebec Valley Mental Health Institute has replaced Dr. Jim Jacobs, a long-standing member of our board. Barbara brings enthusiasm and dedication to CAAN. Her knowledge of the mental health system in Maine is a real asset to our group.

We would also like to welcome **Jan Clarkin** of Maine Children's Trust. She will be joining us in August. Jan has been an active part of one of CAAN's committees and we welcome her knowledge and expertise.

# Humane Systems for Maternal and Child Health: What Will It Take?

by Richard A. Aronson, M.D., M.P.H., Maternal and Child Health Medical Director, Maine Bureau of Health, DHHS

The following are 10 characteristics of humane systems, policies, programs, and services for children and families:

1. Honor and respect the dignity of all people, and of their cultures.
2. View everyone as an “expert” and honor all voices, especially those who have historically not been included in the design of the policies that affect them. Always ask: Who else should be at the table?
3. Involve families and communities from start to finish.
4. Use simple and clear, non-jargon, non-bureaucratic, non-violent language and communication. This means not using acronyms unless we are willing to explain what the letters mean, and not using military metaphors such as “targeted” and “surveillance” unless we define them first.
5. Draw on the strengths, resiliency, and resources of all people involved, including the families and communities that we serve, as well as the strengths that make systems and policies work well.
6. Collect, keep track of, analyze, and use data in an honest, clear, and accurate way that is true to the basic principles of public health and that serves as the foundation for action.
7. Advocate at all levels for resources to humanize and dignify systems, policies, programs, and services in the long term.
8. Be faithful to the purpose of public health, which is to foster the conditions that will enable the whole population to achieve optimal health. And to be able to serve the health of the public, take care of our own health first.
9. Be non-judgmental, and realize that behind every statistic, every risk factor, every death is a real human being, with all the complexity, magnificence, and potential for good that is in each of us.
10. Be relationship-centered...i.e. carry out the work of public health within a context that appreciates the vital role of loving and thoughtful human relationships in promoting health, safety, and justice.



# CAAN Scholarship Awarded to Kala Clark

by Penthea Burns, Coordinator for Child Welfare Projects at  
Institute for Public Sector Innovation, University of Southern Maine

**KALA CLARK** was awarded the CAAN scholarship in memory of Jean Meggison of East Boothbay on June 22, 2006 at the Teen Conference at Colby College. The achievements of Kala Clark are shining examples of fortitude and determination in response to life's daunting challenges.

Kala entered foster care in the Maine as a young teen. At age 15, Kala took the initiative to create a legal solution enabling sibling visitation; not only so she could see her own brothers, but also so that all youth in care could reunite with their siblings. She began by writing Maine Governor John Baldacci, saying "I recommend that all siblings, whether in foster care or split between the original home and foster care, should be granted the time to enjoy each other's company."

Kala worked with the DHHS Commissioners Office and the Youth Leadership Advisory Team (YLAT) to draft language for a legislative proposal. YLAT members help develop, guide, and revise the Office of Child and Family Services policies in order to create safety, comfort, and opportunities for all youth in care. Once refined, LD # 1682: An Act to Support Sibling Rights in Child Welfare Custody Matters was submitted for legislative consideration by Maine's governor, along with his budget proposal. Without Kala's efforts this bill would never have been conceptualized, the DHHS Commissioner would never have championed it, and the Governor would never have submitted it.

Kala is an active participant and leader in local meetings, engaging in discussions about how to strengthen Maine's child welfare system through policy change and community education. Kala has shown an unwavering commitment to righting the wrongs that affect siblings in the child welfare system locally and nationally.

In September 2005, Kala represented Maine in Washington D.C. at the 3rd Congressional Conference on Civic Education. Kala has also been a Youth Legislator in Maine's Youth Legislative Advisory Council (MYLAC). MYLAC is a first-in-the-nation Youth Legislative Council that has the authority to submit legislation. Kala has worked to hold automobile insurance providers accountable for maintaining coverage for child welfare care providers. In addition, she is a member on the Maine Youth Opportunities Initiative (MYOI); a statewide initiative focused on creating resources and opportunities for youth in transition from foster care.

Kala has not only been active in advocating for siblings who have been separated, but she has also volunteered numerous hours fundraising for cancer efforts, working with students with special needs, cleaning up the neighborhood and assisting teachers in elementary schools

Kala exemplifies responsibility and commitment. She takes on a task and dedicates herself to it. She is reliable, has a positive attitude, is motivated to do outstanding work, and goes far beyond the basic requirements of the task at hand. Being a young person in care brings many challenges, and Kala has worked hard to successfully make her experience one that is positive for both herself and for the other youth who are in her situation.