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## Back to School

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**It's the most wonderful time of the year!** You may recognize this lyric by Andy Williams. While Mr. Williams was singing about the winter holiday season, Staples brilliantly borrowed the lyrics for their "Back to School" commercial. While a giddy Dad rides his shopping cart down the aisle tossing in school supplies, his two children are behind him, dragging their feet, with heads down, and scowling eyes: HILARIOUS! I am somewhat wistful when summer comes to an end, but I love to sing Andy Williams' song too! The end of summer and the beginning of school is a busy, sometimes melancholy, sometimes exhilarating time of the year. For all the parents who feel like the Dad riding the shopping cart through the school supply aisles, ENJOY. For those wishing the summer would last a bit longer, check out the Staples commercial. I guarantee you will smile. You may even start singing the song with Andy and me!

[http://www.staples.com/sbd/cre/marketing/easybutton/commercials\\_09\\_mwtoity.html](http://www.staples.com/sbd/cre/marketing/easybutton/commercials_09_mwtoity.html)

*Mary*

## What every parent (and child) needs to know about sexting

We've all heard shocking stories on the news involving teenagers who send explicit photos of themselves to their peers, seemingly unaware of the possible social and even legal consequences. However, many of us feel removed from those headlines. Not my child, parents might think, or Not in this school district. Well, prepare yourself for a bombshell: Around one in four teens is already involved in sexting, and that number could-quite possibly-include your own offspring.

Many parents and teens have absolutely no idea of how serious and "pervasive an issue texting is," says former district attorney and nationally recognized expert on the prosecution of crimes against children. J. Tom Morgan, author of [Ignorance Is No Defense, A Teenager's Guide to Georgia Law](#). "And that ignorance can be extremely costly."

If you fall into that "no idea" category, consider these sobering statistics. According to a recent New York Times article, "24 percent of 14- to 17-year-olds had been involved in some type of 'naked sexting,' either by cell phone or on the internet."

Clearly, sexting isn't as isolated as many parents would like to think," Morgan points out. "And when it comes to light," they are often shocked and mortified to find out that their kids are doing this stuff. Meanwhile, the teens themselves are forced to learn painful lessons – sometimes at a very harsh cost that can haunt them for years.

As adults, it is our duty to protect our kids – even from themselves. Clearly, many young people are not getting the message, "despite hearing horror story after horror story in the news. Parents must take responsibility for talking to their children about what is and isn't appropriate...and for enforcing consequences when lines are crossed."

Read on for twelve things Morgan urges you to keep in mind regarding talking to your child about sexting.

**Don't wait.** It's a mistake to assume that your child is too young or too inexperienced to worry about sexting. Par-

ents need to start having conversations with their kids as they head into the sixth and seventh grades. Remember, almost one in four teenagers engages in sexting and many of them begin at an early age.

**Be a broken record.** If you've had a conversation with your child about sexting, great. Now repeat it. In order for parents to be effective in preventing their children from getting involved in a sexting scandal, a continual dialogue must go on in your household.

**Understand the world they live in.** It's important for parents to realize that virtually everything around today's teens tells them that sexting is okay, or at least, "not that bad." They live in a world of sexualized messaging in music, movies, and even conversations at school. Pornography is easy to access on the internet. Plus, electronics ranging from cell phones to computers are readily available. Realize from the outset that you might be up against an (understandable) what's-the-big-deal mentality.



**Know the consequences.** While it's not something that teens are apt to consider, the fact is that child pornography laws can apply to sexually explicit images if any party involved is under 18. And that can lead to steep legal ramifications.

**Realize that being registered as a sex offender is possible.** The stark fact is, in some states, sexting can land a teen on the sex offender registry – a designation that can severely and irrevocably alter the course of a young person's life. It's vital that students understand that they do not fall under the same set of rules that apply to consenting adults.

**Make it clear that any involvement is unacceptable.** It doesn't matter if a child is the original sender of the material, a recipient, or "only" forwarding something that was sent to him or her. Any and all involvement with a sexting scandal can have serious legal repercussions. If your child is a recipient, tell your child to delete the material immediately and never to forward it.

**Understand the scope.** While the word "sexting" calls to mind texts sent via cell phone, it is not limited to that medium – any explicit material sent via any electronic device,

*(Continued on page 3)*

(Continued from page 2)

including email, Skype, video chat, instant messaging, and text, qualifies.

**Realize that sexts don't go away.** If you send something electronically, it can last forever. Teens (and adults, for that matter) have no control over how long someone saves an image or to whom it might be forwarded. With social networking sites as well as pictures and videos going "viral," it is not unusual for compromising pictures to resurface years down the road.

**Put reality over ideals.** Most sexts originate with girls, many of whom never imagine that a picture sent to a trusted "special" boy might be seen by anyone else. Especially if you have a daughter, set up a scenario she can relate to in order to help her realize that something she shares electronically probably won't stay a private matter. For example, you might start by saying, "Say you're dating a guy you really like, but then you have an argument..."

**Be wary of recordings.** Live video (like Skype) can be recorded and downloaded for distribution and streaming later. Teens can't assume that a live chat is over once they've logged off.

**Avoid predators.** Parents need to warn their teenagers never to send pictures of themselves to strangers they meet

on the internet. The friendly stranger who claims to be your child's age may actually be a sexual predator. Unfortunately, sexual predators on the internet are skilled at convincing teenagers to remove their clothing on camera. Sometimes these pictures end up on internet porn sites.

**Communicate consequences.** It is imperative for parents to let their children know that you will have zero tolerance when it comes to sexting. Make sure they know that they will lose privileges as a result of sexting themselves or for passing another's sext along. Accept no excuses and follow through on enforcing the consequences you set up.

I can't stress enough how important it is to talk to your kids about the consequences of their actions every single day," Morgan concludes. "When children see their friends sexting and getting away with it, they feel like they can, too. You have to keep a constant stream of reminders in front of them in order to move their behavior in the right direction.

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[www.crosstimbersgazette.com](http://www.crosstimbersgazette.com). This article appeared in the Saturday, April 23, 2011 printing of the publication. Much of the text of the article was authored by J. Tom Morgan, a nationally recognized expert on crimes involving young people and the author of *"Ignorance Is No Defense, A Teenager's Guide to Georgia Law."*

## Staff in the News

Sue Lesar graced the hallways of AFGC for ten years and it was with much sadness (and a little denial) that the agency said goodbye. It won't be a surprise to those who knew her that her name placard remained beside her office door long after her last day. Her contributions to the agency were many and her joyful countenance, wit, and warmth have left a lasting impression. We are grateful for her service. We wish her well in her retirement. We are delighted she will return now and then to lend her expertise and share her sunshine!

Farewell.



## ADOLESCENT PROGRAMS

### TEEN LIVING UPDATE

**From: Nikkiah Wyatt, LPC, LMFT,  
AP Clinical Supervisor**

Hi Foster Parents! We have successfully completed another summer in the Teen Living Program. The teens went on trips to various places such as the Smithsonian Folk Festival in Washington, DC, Skate-N-Fun Zone, the Pentagon, the Tidal Basin Paddle Boats, Six Flags, and the Baltimore

Aquarium. The summer culminated with a cruise on "The Spirit of Washington" on the Potomac, and an overnight trip to Ocean City, Maryland. I believe the teens gained valuable information and grew socially, emotionally, and behaviorally over the summer with our support and teamwork. Thank you for working with us as a team and contributing to a successful summer. We now embark upon a new school year. We look forward to working with you to help the teens have a successful school year.

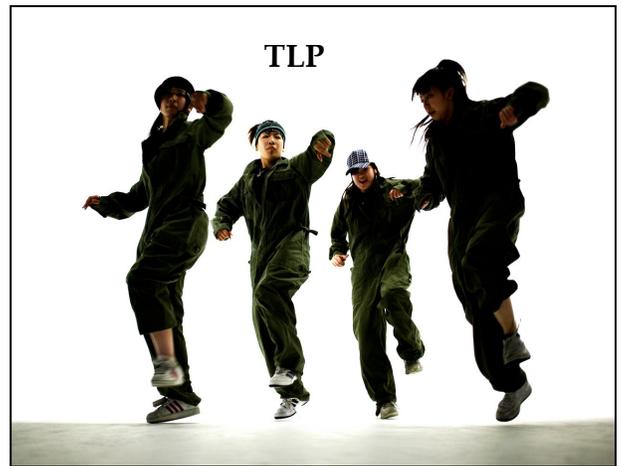
Again, I hope that regular updates from the Adolescent Programs team in this newsletter will facilitate communication and mutual support between our program and your homes. Below, please see another portion of the community guidelines. These guidelines help the program run smoothly and helps ensure that teens are provided a safe and respectful environment.

### COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

The Adolescent Programs team has reviewed and revised the community guidelines for the Teen Living Program to better fit the needs of the youth and the program. Below, you will find a segment of the community guidelines. The Teen Living Program participants have been informed of the guidelines below. Please feel free to contact myself or your child's Adolescent Programs Counselor if you have any questions or comments. Thank you for all you do for our teens.

#### Listening to Music

1. Community members on Level 2 or below may only listen to MP3 players, iPods and use other electronic devices with headphones on Fridays during free time, and during transportation, unless a staff member has given them permission.
2. Community members on Level 3 or above may only listen to MP3 players, iPods, and other electronic devices with headphones on, in the Level 3 lounge during free time Monday through Thursday, on Fridays (anytime), and during transportation.
3. Staff may ask community members to turn down their music, even when listening to music with headphones, if the volume is disruptive.
4. During the summer, musical devices with headphones may be used during free time Monday through Friday but not in group nor during Community Meeting.



## Guiding Adolescents Toward Empowerment

### GATE and GATE Prep Updates

**From: Ellie Cunanan, LMFT, Assistant Director of Clinical Services**



Summer is ending and we hope everyone has had an enjoyable and relaxing last few months. With school starting, we wanted to let you know of a slight schedule change for the GATE Prep group. GATE Prep group will continue to meet on Wednesdays and Fridays. Pick up for the GATE Prep participants will be at 1:00 p.m. from the Springfield Metro Station. GATE Prep groups will be held from 3:30 - 4:30 p.m. Any participants who are attending high school will be picked up directly from school. GATE group will continue to meet on Mondays and pick up for GATE participants will be at 1:00 pm from the Springfield Metro Station.

Please note that attendance and active participation at the GATE and GATE Prep groups is essential and an opportunity for the youth in these groups to gain useful information and support from their peers as they take steps toward greater independence. As foster parents, you can provide the encouragement and support to these youth so they are better able to meet their responsibilities, which is greatly appreciated.

We also wanted to let you know about some upcoming Independent Living events:

The Fairfax County Department of Family Services Foster

Care Life Skills Group is sponsoring an information session entitled, "So...You're turning 18" which focuses on the rights and responsibilities of an 18 year old. The event is being offered on Tuesday, September 22, 2011 between 6:30 and 8:30 pm at the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Training Room of the Fairfax County Department of Family Services (12011 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA). There will be a second offering of this event on Monday, September 26, 2011, between 6:30 and 8:30 pm in Room 220 of the South County Human Service Center (8350 Richmond Highway, Alexandria, VA). RSVP is requested by September 15, 2011. Please contact your Case Manager or Ellie Cunanan at 703-425-9200 if you would like to attend this event.

On Wednesday, September 28, 2011, between 5:00 and 7:00 pm, there will be an Information Fair and Kick-Off at the Arlington County Department of Human Services (2100 Washington Boulevard, Lower Level, Arlington, VA). This event will showcase available resources for youth in the community and is sponsored by the Arlington County Independent Living Program and the Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth and Families. Please contact your Case Manager or Ellie Cunanan at 703-425-9200 if you and/or your youth are interested in attending.



So, how about that Hurriquake? Just in case the recent seismic activity and lines in the grocery stores before Irene caused you to wonder whether you, your home, and your family really are prepared for an emergency, please use the enclosed inserts from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the American Red Cross. BE PREPARED, BUILD AND CHECK YOUR KIT, PRACTICE YOUR PLAN, (CALL AFGC).

## In the Spotlight:

### Ana and Donald Burns



Ana and Donald have lived in Northern Virginia most of their lives. They have raised three daughters, all three at various stages in their college careers at present. The Burns' home is always bustling with kids, pets, and lots of activities. Ana has been a stay-at-home mom which has allowed her to be very active in their daughter's schools and Donald has a home improvement business and has been actively involved as a coach for the girls' sports teams. How they began their journey as a foster family seven years ago will warm your heart. How they keep their door open for new youth and why graduated youth still feel a part of the family is inspiring.

Their youngest daughter Stephanie was a 5th grader when she met a child in foster care at her school. It made a huge impression. Enough so that she found the phone number for a foster care agency, yes, AFGC, and pleaded with mom and dad to make the call and become foster parents. The rest as they say, is history.

Ana and Donald have sage advice to share with new and prospective foster parents: a) make sure you are able to commit the time the youth need, b) make spending real quality time with the youth a priority, c) understand that every child is unique, d) have realistic expectations for your foster youth, e) be patient, be patient, be patient, and lastly, f) don't take things personally. The Burns' readily admit that foster parenting is very hard work. But, they add, "the rewards will always outweigh the challenges."

### \*\*\*PLEASE NOTE TRAINING SCHEDULE CHANGES\*\*\*

**AFGC Foster Parent Training in September will not be held on the 3rd Thursday, but will instead be held on:**

**Wednesday, September 28th, 7pm-9pm**

**Please join AFGC staff and fellow foster parents for a presentation on:**

**"Working with HIV/AIDS in TFC Clients"**

**Guest Speaker: Dr. Angela Wilbon, Children's National Medical Center**



**NEW FOSTER PARENTS BEGINNING THEIR PRE-SERVICE TRAINING IN SEPTEMBER WILL BEGIN ONE DAY LATER THAN PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED on Thursday, September 29th, 6-9pm. New Foster Parents are encouraged but not required to attend the HIV/AIDS presentation on Wednesday, September 28th, 7-9pm.**

**Week Two of Pre-Service Training will resume on Wednesday, October 5, 6-9pm, and all remaining training nights will be held on Wednesday evenings, 6-9pm.**

**For more information on the HIV/AIDS training evening please call Charity at (703) 425-9200. For more information on the Pre-Service Training schedule change please call Mary at (703) 425-9200.**

**Earn Training Credits by reading the Newsletter.  
Take advantage of this opportunity to make sure  
you satisfy the 24 hour per year requirement.**

Read this month's newsletter, answer the following questions and return to either Kesha Taffe or Mary Laigle. The fax number is 703-425-9206.

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**T or F** According to a recent New York Times article, "3% of 14- to 17-year-olds have been involved in some type of naked sexting, either by phone or on the internet.

**T or F** Because they are not yet adults, teens involved in sexting do not have to worry about being placed on the sex offender registry.

**T or F** Live video (like Skype) is the only way teens can communicate electronically without worry of distribution and streaming.

The Teen Living Program Update focused on Community Guidelines affecting what activity? \_\_\_\_\_.

GATE Prep will continue to meet on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ . GATE will continue to meet on \_\_\_\_\_. If not in high school, and therefore picked up from school, all GATE and GATE Prep participant will be picked up at \_\_\_\_\_pm, at the \_\_\_\_\_ metro station.

**T or F** The Federal Emergency Management Agency and the American Red Cross recommend one gallon of water per family per day.

**T or F** The Federal Emergency Management Agency and the American Red Cross recommends listing an out-of-state contact as well as a local contact on the family's emergency plan.

In the event that an emergency requires evacuation of the foster home, and foster children are taken to a different location, Virginia Department of Social Services and AFGC require foster parents to call and notify whom?  
\_\_\_\_\_.



Earn your Training Hours



**HAVING DIFFICULTY ATTENDING THE MONTHLY FOSTER PARENT TRAINING? NEED HOURS TO SATISFY THE 24 HOUR YEARLY REQUIREMENT?**

**Complete Page 7 of the August 2011 Newsletter and write a one-page narrative of what "Cultural Competence" means to you. This will satisfy the mandatory training requirement: "Cultural Competence."**

**In addition to completing Page 7 of this Newsletter (September 2011), satisfy the mandatory training requirement: "Emergency Procedures and Preparedness" by submitting a one-page narrative describing your recent (within the past month) family emergency practice drill, and list where the written escape plan is posted in your home.**

**Deliver to the Foster Care Department to ensure credit.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



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**September 2011**

**September 5th – Labor Day, AFGC Office Closed**

**September 6th – First day of School, Fairfax and Prince William County Public Schools**

**September 28th-Foster Parent Training 7-9pm RESCHEDULED TO WEDNESDAY, THIS MONTH ONLY – Special Guest Speaker: Working with HIV/AIDS in a Treatment Foster Care Setting SEE PAGE 6 FOR DETAIL**

**September 29th – *Pre-Service* Foster Parent Training 6-9pm – RESCHEDULED TO THURSDAY, THIS WEEK ONLY SEE PAGE 6 FOR DETAIL**

**Web sites that offer Foster Parent Training Certificates:**

**[www.Fosterparenttraining.com](http://www.Fosterparenttraining.com)**

**[www.fosterparentcollege.com](http://www.fosterparentcollege.com)**

**[www.Fosterparents.com](http://www.Fosterparents.com)**