

Juvenile Assessment Center
of Lee County
2117 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.
Fort Myers, FL 33901
(239) 344-5100
www.swfjac.org

March 2010

The JAC Perspective



The Juvenile Assessment Center of Lee County ... assisting youth and their families to seek the treatment and programs they need to lead productive, crime free lives.

CALENDAR

Lee County Juvenile Justice Council

March 4
1:30 p.m.
Justice Center Annex
Sixth Floor, Courtroom A
Fort Myers

Prevention Network

March 12
10:00 a.m.
Lee County Human Services
2440 Thompson Street
Fort Myers

Circuit 20 Juvenile Justice Board

March 17
1:30 p.m.
Southwest Florida Workforce
Development Board
9530 Marketplace Rd., Ste. 104
Fort Myers

**Law enforcement
should call ahead to**

**344-5161
or 344-5171**

**when bringing an
arrested youth
to the JAC.**

Sticks and Stones in the Cyber Age

Nearly every adult can remember experiencing childhood cruelty or school yard taunts. Learning to deal with it has been a part of the process of growing up for almost everyone. However, the stakes are different these days. It is possible for bullies to taunt other youth through electronic technology. Unlike face-to-face school yard taunting, it is now possible for bullies using electronic communication to hide their identity or to use a false identity. An electronic communication can be distributed to a wide audience very quickly. Unlike the schoolyard taunting of bygone times, electronic communications can last forever.

Electronic aggression or "cyberbullying" can include teasing, harassment, making mean or vulgar comments, spreading private, sensitive information

United Way in the Neighborhood

United Way Neighborhood Houses bring health and human services into neighborhoods where services are needed. Each United Way House is unique, depending upon the partner agencies which participate at each location. Some of the services provided include food distribution, assistance in filing for unemployment, consumer credit counseling, support groups, tax return assistance, job placement, literacy programs, emergency rent/mortgage/utility assistance, medical



about someone, making fun of someone, spreading lies or rumors, or making threats. It is communicated through email, text messages, a website, blog, or other form of electronic communication. The phenomenon of cyberbullying is fairly new so there is not a clear body of research on its prevalence among youth. It is estimated that anywhere from 9% to 35% of youth have been the victim of cyberbullying. Complicating the issue is that many youth who are victimized by a cyberbully do not report it to an adult. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers cyberbullying an emerging health issue. Their position is that, as technology becomes more affordable and sophisticated, the rates of electronic aggression are likely to increase, especially if prevention policies and practices are not put into place.

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equipment loan program, and medical services. United Way Neighborhood Houses are located in Bonita Springs, Cape Coral, Dunbar, East Fort Myers, Harlem Heights, San Carlos/Estero, Lehigh Acres, Suncoast, LaBelle, Sanibel, Page Park, and Pine Island. Information on the services provided at each location, addresses, and contact



information is at
[www.unitedwaylee.org/
UWNeighborhoodHouses2-8-10.pdf](http://www.unitedwaylee.org/UWNeighborhoodHouses2-8-10.pdf)

Sticks and Stones in the Cyber Age (*cont.*)

Does electronic aggression cause real harm? Those on the front line - youth, educators, and caregivers - have called attention to the problem of electronic aggression for several years. Researchers are just beginning to look at the impact of being a victim of electronic aggression. From a research point of view, the verdict is still out. Some research does show that a high level of emotional distress can be experienced by a victim of electronic aggression, but more research is needed on whether there are enduring effects. Although researchers have not substantiated that there is specific harm caused by electronic aggression, they have found co-occurring problems with being a victim of electronic aggression. According to the CDC*, "youth who are victims of internet harassment are significantly more likely than those who have not been victimized to use alcohol or drugs, receive school detention or suspension, skip school, or experience in-person victimization." The CDC also reports that victims of internet aggression are more likely than non-victims to have poor parental monitoring and to have weak emotional bonds with their

caregivers. Researchers have identified that youth who report perpetrating electronic aggression are more likely to also report perpetrating face-to-face aggression. (CDC)

There are things that parents can do to help prevent cyberbullying. Stay informed. Talk to your child about how they use electronic communications and where they go online. Explore the websites that they are frequenting. Talk to your child about electronic aggression. Explain that electronic aggression is harmful and an unacceptable behavior. Discuss your expectations for the appropriate use of electronic communications and the consequences of inappropriate use. Encourage your child to tell you if they are a victim of cyberbullying. Parents should contact law enforcement if the cyberbullying involves threats of violence, stalking, harassment, hate crime, extortion, or child pornography.

Community Forum on Minority Overrepresentation

According to the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, last year, Black youth made up 12% of the 20th Judicial Circuit's youth population (age 10-17) but accounted for:

- 24% of the referrals to the juvenile justice system,
- 33% of cases detained for delinquency,
- 29% of cases committed for delinquency, and
- 33% of cases transferred to adult court.

On March 18th the Department of Juvenile Justice will host a community forum, "Addressing Minority Overrepresentation in the Juvenile Justice System." The forum will be from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Mt. Hermon Church, 2856 Douglas Ave. in Fort Myers. RSVP by March 15th to Rhyna.Jefferson@djj.state.fl.us or (850) 921-4172. An agenda for the forum is available at www.djj.state.fl.us/Communications/public_notices.html.



The JAC of Lee County is operated by the Lee County Sheriff's Office in partnership with the Lee County Board of County Commissioners and the Department of Juvenile Justice.

New Local DJJ Leadership

The Department of Juvenile Justice recently appointed Margaret "Peg" LaMarca as the Chief Juvenile Probation Officer for the 20th Judicial Circuit. Joseph "Joe" Dinda has been appointed as the Acting Assistant Chief Juvenile Probation Officer for the 20th Judicial Circuit.

Text 69866 for Safe Place

Project Safe Place is a national network of voluntary community sites that assist youth who have run away and/or are in crisis to access immediate help and supportive resources from the nearest Safe Place Youth Shelter. Safe Place now provides a 24-hour text support service for youth in crisis. A youth is able to text the number 69866 with the word SAFE with the address and city where they are located and a text message will be returned with the name and address of the closest designated Safe Place. See www.nationalsafeplace.org for more information about the Safe Place program.