

ARE THEY SOCIALLY READY?



In this edition:

- Rollin' With Heart Gallery
- Hillsborough's Bully Busters
- Child Trauma: New Research

[Click to Read More](#)

Cover Story

Jumpstart Your Child's Social Skills for School

Brenda Curtwright, Ph.D., coordinator of the Social Communication Skills Clinic at the USF Health Silver Child Development Center has tips for helping your child with his or her social skills as school begins:

As your child prepares for the new school year, it's a good time to talk about social-readiness skills. This is especially true if your child is transitioning to a new environment — from elementary to middle school, for instance, or from middle



school to high school. Stress related to making new friends and fitting in can cause major concerns for students.

A recent online survey of 600 teens by Nemours Health System found that back-to-school nervousness about social issues (a concern for 30 percent) ranked a close second to worries about school work (32 percent).

Parents often are at a loss for words on this topic,

because they believe their children, especially tweens and teens, will tune them out. However, research has shown children are still listening and looking for parental support and guidance — even if they don't show it.

Curtwright provides seven simple tips parents can discuss with their child to help jumpstart his or her social skills.

They include telling children to: remain approachable - "disconnect" (from technology enough) to connect - be yourself - make the first move in starting a conversation - try new things you might like, especially with activities - cast a wide net for friends - and if a friendship cools, don't worry.

Curtwright's advice appeared in a special section of the *Tampa Tribune*. To read the entire article, go online to <http://www2.tbo.com/content/2010/aug/11/121054/how-can-my-child-jumpstart-his-social-skills-for-s/>.

Achieve the Dream Stories

West Tampa Middle School Defies the Odds to Become an 'A' School

From a column by Bill Maxwell in the St. Petersburg Times:

Mount Pleasant Standard Based Middle School in West Tampa is an A school for 2009-2010. Many people are surprised, some incredulous. After all, the school seems to have a lot of insurmountable barriers: It was founded just seven years ago; 99 percent of its students are black; 97 percent qualify for the National School Breakfast/Lunch Program; many come on the first day of school four grade levels behind; it has only nine teachers; it rents its small building from a church; and at North Rome Avenue and Spruce Street, it is in one of Tampa's poorest black neighborhoods.

Yolonda Waitress has been the principal for most of the school's short history. Her philosophy and vision embody everything good about Mount Pleasant, known as "Home of the Diamonds." "One of the things that make Mount Pleasant very successful is that we do not accept excuses from the children," she said. "We tell the children, 'You can. There's no such thing as you can't. If we're here teaching you, then you can do it. And if you're going to remain at Mount Pleasant, you will do it.' I strongly believe in making children accountable for their own success. We can teach them. We can instruct them. We can lecture them. We can hug them. We can do all these things. But we definitely have to make them accountable and want to succeed.

"In spite of any of our students' circumstances at home, I honestly believe that if you can reach the inner child to make them want to be successful for themselves, you can override any kind of environment they're in. We try to develop the whole child. No matter who's in your life — your mom, your dad, your brother and sister — the bottom line is you're accountable for yourself."

See the full story online at <http://www.tampabay.com/opinion/columns/inside-an-a-school/1115140>.

13-Year-Old Plant City Girl is 'Perfect' Hall of Fame Little League Pitcher



Chelsea Baker, the Plant City girl who has pitched two perfect games in Little League, has earned a place in the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. Yes, Cooperstown, N.Y. The sports shrine has sent a letter to the 13-year-old knuckleballer, asking her to donate the Brandon Farms No. 12 jersey she wore during her second no-hitter April 9.

Read the stories about Baker at <http://www2.tbo.com/content/2010/aug/11/120725/plant-city-girl-pitchers-jersey-headed-hall-fame/> and <http://bit.ly/b6XxOB>. (Picture by the Tampa Tribune.)

Local News

See Updated Community & Provider Calendar of Events, and Employment Opps

Check out the **Children's Board** Community and Provider Calendar of Events, updated frequently, at <http://www.childrensboard.org/calendar.aspx>. See the remaining back to school bashes, ECC Night at the Rays, and much more. Also, check employment and volunteer opportunities at http://www.childrensboard.org/jobs_volunteer_opportunities.aspx. Note: both the calendar and the employment and volunteer opportunities were most recently updated on August 18.

Heart Gallery of Tampa Bay Gets Bookin' and Rollin'

News from Jesse Miller, director of the Heart Gallery of Tampa Bay, a traveling photographic exhibit of children in foster care needing a loving, adoptive home. (The Heart Gallery is sponsored by the **Children's Board** and Hillsborough Kids, Inc.):

Hillsborough County Libraries - Three Heart Gallery exhibits were featured in the month of July within the Hillsborough County Library System: at the main library in downtown Tampa, Town 'N Country and New Tampa. In addition, Heart Gallery bookmarks were distributed in all branch libraries of the county. Altogether, approximately 40,000 people viewed the exhibits at the libraries last month.

Heart Gallery Website Increases Visitors - According to Google Analytics comparing July 2009 to June 2010, Heart Gallery website visitors increased by 1,000, and 60 were new visitors. The website is www.heartgallerytampabay.com.

Girls Just Wanna Have Fun - 80's Night at the Roller Derby in Tampa Benefits Heart Gallery Foster Teens

On Aug. 7 at the Skateplex in Tampa, women Roller Derby team members skated for Heart Gallery female foster teens. More than \$2,000 worth of supplies for foster teen girls was collected. These gifts will be made into packages for teens aging out of foster care. Among the 600 people at the event were 10 Heart Gallery foster teens and representatives from the Guardian Ad Litem program.

The Heart Gallery teens enjoyed a VIP night of fun, including signed souvenirs from the Derby teams. Carissa Alvarnaz, who was adopted after seven years in foster care and who has since become an advocate for foster teens, performed the National Anthem at the start of the bout and director Jesse Miller blew the traditional start whistle. A page in the program was dedicated to the Heart Gallery's Birthday Buddies program. Also, on the morning of the event Alvarnaz, the Derby president and Jesse Miller of the Heart Gallery interviewed on-air at WMNF's women's show to promote the event.



With Kids' Safety On the Line, CPIs Can't Get It Wrong - See <http://www.tampabay.com/news/humaninterest/with-kids-safety-on-the-line-child-welfare-cant-be-wrong/1084714>.

Children's Board Announces New, Free iPhone/iPod Touch App

The Children's Board has announced a new, free iPhone/iPod Touch app: Family Guide to Services in Hillsborough County.

It's a free app and available today in the App Store. Here's a direct link in iTunes: <http://tinyurl.com/CBHCAApp>

The app has information on the **Children's Board**, Board Member bios and pictures, a CEO Message, funded program information (including names, phone numbers, faxes, emails, websites, map location, and driving directions).

For full app details, visit <http://www.childrensboard.org/GuideApp.aspx>.

Sen. Storms, Rep. Glorioso Recognized for Concurrent Custody Legislation



State Sen. Ronda Storms and State Rep. Rich Glorioso were recognized on Aug. 10 by the Hillsborough Community Alliance, a group of child welfare representatives, at the Alliance's monthly meeting at the **Children's Board**, for their leadership during the 2010 State Legislative Session to pass concurrent custody legislation. The legislation makes it easier for selected family members or others to have same-time, equal ability as parents to make decisions to provide for a child as deemed appropriate by the court. (This is different from power of attorney, which gives a person the right to make all the decisions on behalf of a child.) *(Pictured are Storms and Glorioso at the **Children's Board** with Judge Tracy Sheehan, chair of the Community Alliance.)*



On Aug. 17, also at the **Children's Board**, the Florida Kinship Center at the University of South Florida held a conference on concurrent custody at which Judge Sheehan, attorney Laura Ankenbruck of Bay Area Legal Services and **Children's Board** chief operating officer Amy Petril presented information on topics including informal and formal custody and how state legislation gets passed.

Hillsborough Anti-Bully Group, 'Bully Busters,' Marks Its First Year

Hillsborough County Commissioner Rose Ferlita formed the county's Anti-Bullying Advisory Committee a year ago in response to high-profile bullying allegations at Walker Middle School in 2009. The Bully Busters campaign — composed of the adult committee and a youth council — is a joint effort between the Hillsborough County Criminal Justice Liaison, the Sheriff's Office and Crime Stoppers.

While the campaign tries to educate and promote awareness in the community, the end goal is simple: eliminate all forms of bullying from the county. As the initiative approaches its one-year anniversary, committee members will have a number of successes to celebrate. Nickelodeon News interviewed Bully Busters for a potential television segment, and the Girl Scouts want to join forces. The committee, which does not use any tax dollars, also received significant funding from grants and donations.

While the committee has proved it can garner support on a national level, members say the initiative's success rests in the hands of a group of giggly middle and high school students. In September, the committee installed antibullying bench ads with the number for Crime Stoppers, allowing students and parents to text or call in anonymous tips. The 50 red, white and blue benches encourage students to "Take charge, report a bully and remain anonymous." The phone number also ran in Bully Busters' public service announcements on Bright House Networks and WEDU-Ch. 3. The initiative's biggest obstacle, however, is one that even the youth council can spot: awareness.

Youth-centered organizations including the **Children's Board**, the Center for Girls and the Tampa Housing Authority are conducting a survey to learn more about the extent of bullying in Hillsborough, said criminal justice community prevention coordinator Eddie Santiago. There are also plans to combat cyber-bullying and purchase resources parents can check out at a library. While Ferlita's term as commissioner ends in November, she said the initiative is not likely to disappear. "This issue will never sunset." <http://www.tampabay.com/news/humaninterest/anti-bullying-group-marks-its-first-year/1115448>.

Bess the Book Bus is Traveling the U.S. Again, Giving Away Books

Since departing Tampa in May, Jennifer Frances has delivered more than 20,000 books to about 7,000 children in 22 states, all part of the mobile literacy outreach of Bess the Book Bus. Frances started the book bus in 2002 and has delivered free books to Bay area children in schools, Head Start programs, The Spring, Metropolitan Ministries and other nonprofit organizations, promoting literacy and putting books into the hands and homes of underprivileged children. One of the stops on the first leg of this year's trip was the Harlen Day School in New York. See <http://www2.tbo.com/content/2010/aug/03/na-journey-to-reading/>.

P.L.A.Y. Project Teaches Parents to Engage in a New Way with Autistic Children -
<http://www.tampabay.com/features/humaninterest/for-children-with-autism-a-new-possibility-for-treatment/112173>.

Credits Earned in Hillsborough Schools Have International Distinction -
<http://www.tampabay.com/news/education/k12/hillsborough-school-district-wins-accreditation/1107832>.

Groups Work to Change 'Anti-Snitch' Culture Following Major Crimes -
<http://www2.tbo.com/content/2010/jul/25/na-groups-working-to-change-anti-snitch-culture/>.

USF Survey: Teens' Attitudes May Predict Physical Health -
<http://www2.tbo.com/content/2010/jul/28/teens-attitude-may-predict-physical-health/life-health/>.

Neighborhood News

Family Support & Resource Centers Promote Back-to-School Fairs

The **Children's Board**-funded Family Support & Resource Centers (FSRCs) in Brandon, Ruskin, Town 'N Country, North Tampa and Central Tampa all had their annual Back-to-School Fairs this month.

The Central Tampa FSRC, located at the **Children's Board**, gave out school supplies in **Children's Board** bags and also gave out backpacks. Radio Disney participated at Central Tampa's event.

The **Children's Board**, FSRCs and the Early Childhood Council of Hillsborough County will be at the Tampa Convention Center Back to School Bash on Aug. 21-22.



Advocacy

Commentary: Advocating for Improving the FCAT School Assessment

Mary Ellen Elia, superintendent of Hillsborough County Public Schools, writes a commentary saying FCAT school assessments need improvement. See the story online at <http://www.tampabay.com/opinion/editorials/hillsborough-superintendent-fcat-needs--improvement/1114668>.

State News

Number of Florida Foster Children Drops Slightly for 2009-10

State officials say adoptions of Florida foster children dropped in 2009-10 after two record years. The fiscal year ending June 30 saw 3,368 foster children adopted. That's 409 fewer than the record 3,777 for the prior year. It's still more, though, than before Florida began a public awareness campaign three years ago. Gov. Charlie Crist credited the Explore Adoption campaign for the two record years. Crist spokesman Sterling Ivey said officials are unsure why the past year was off. Ivey said the faltering economy and a smaller pool of children may have been factors. The number of foster children available on any given day has dropped from about 1,000 to 850 since the awareness program began.

See <http://www2.tbo.com/content/2010/aug/05/florida-foster-adoptions-dropped-past-year/news-breaking/>.

Commentary: New Hope for Foster Youth With Redesign of Independent Living -
<http://www2.tbo.com/content/2010/aug/05/na-new-hope-for-foster-youths/>.

Florida to Get \$555 Million in Education, \$784 Million in Medicaid Funding

Florida is set to receive \$554.8 million to help schools retain or hire back teachers, as well as \$784 million in extra Medicaid funding under a sweeping aid package for states approved by the U.S. House.

But it remains unknown exactly how much new money will flow into local school districts that have been struggling to produce balanced budgets for 2010-11. Tampa Bay area school districts have managed to avoid layoffs for the coming school year, but news of the federal funding still generated an optimistic buzz among worried teachers.

See <http://www.tampabay.com/news/florida-in-line-to-get-13-billion-from-new-federal-stimulus-bill/1114500>.

National News

Can Too Much Video Game Playing Cause Kids Attention Problems?

Yes, it's just like you thought. The more your child or teen sits around watching TV or playing video games, the more at risk they will be for learning problems and attention problems.

Read more about it at <http://newideas.net/video-game-playing-attention-problems>.

American Academy of Pediatrics Posts Child-Focused Disaster Prep, Response

The American Academy of Pediatrics has posted on its website recommendations for involving your children in disaster preparation and response.

See <http://www.aap.org/disasters/index.cfm>.

Adoptive Services Organization Offers Pastors Incentives to Adopt Kids

Bethany Christian Services is supplementing the \$1,000 offered by the Southern Baptists to adopt children by another \$1,000.

See <http://www.bethany.org/A55798/bethanyWWW.nsf/0/404AF745C1E397488525773F006E158B>

From Fit Youth After World War II to Fat Youth Today - [http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/opinion/os-ed-childhood-obesity-060710-20100604_0_5071432.story?track=rss&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+orlandosentinel/news/opinion+\(OrlandoSentinel.com++Opinion\)](http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/opinion/os-ed-childhood-obesity-060710-20100604_0_5071432.story?track=rss&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+orlandosentinel/news/opinion+(OrlandoSentinel.com++Opinion))

TA Partnership for Child & Family Mental Health News: Teen Suicide -

<http://www.tapartnership.org/newsletter/archives/201008.php>

First Director Named for New National Youth Suicide Prevention Center

Effie Malley has been named by the American Association of Suicidology as the first director of the newly formed National Center for the Study and Prevention of Youth Suicide, effective August 31. Malley will be responsible for developing and leading the center which will provide national leadership in advancing scientific and programmatic efforts on multiple levels of preventive planning and implementation regarding youth suicide, notably to engage new stakeholders, promote youth suicide prevention as a cross-cutting issue, and develop partnerships with youth-serving organizations. AAS is a membership organization for all those involved in suicide prevention and intervention, or touched by suicide and leads the advancement of scientific and programmatic efforts in suicide prevention through research, education and training, the development of standards and resources, and survivor support services. For more about AAS, go to www.suicidology.org.

More Signs point to Earlier Puberty, Starting as Early as Age 7 -

A new study shows that girls are more likely today than in the past to start developing breasts by age 7 or 8. The research is the latest in a flood of reports in the past decade that have led to concern and heated debate about whether girls are reaching puberty earlier, and why it might be happening.

Increased rates of obesity are thought to play a major role because body fat can produce sex hormones. Some researchers also suspect that environmental chemicals may mimic the effects of estrogen.

See www.nytimes.com/2010/08/09health/research/09puberty.html

Special Report Research Followup: Childhood Trauma Can Shave Years Off Life

Childhood trauma can shave years off life, research suggests. Childhood trauma can cut your life short, according to new research that shows how adversity during childhood can shave a decade or more off your life.

“Our latest research shows that those reporting multiple adversities could shorten their lifespan by 7 to 15 years,” Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, a health psychologist at the Ohio State University College of Medicine, told a session of the American Psychological Association meeting in San Diego.

Kiecolt-Glaser and her research partner Ronald Glaser and co-authors found that “childhood adversity can lead to inflammation and cell aging much earlier than for those who haven’t experienced these events.” Such adverse events include losing a parent, being abused or witnessing parental marital strife.

“What we have is clear evidence that adverse childhood experience may have lasting measurable consequences, even later in life,” she says.

Using a community sample of 58 caregivers for a spouse or parent with Alzheimer’s disease or dementia and a control group of 74 demographically similar people who had no caregiving responsibilities, researchers analyzed participants’ depression levels and occurrence of childhood trauma to see how negative emotions and stressful experiences affect known biochemical markers of stress.

The researchers measured several blood inflammatory markers, including telomeres, which are the ends of strands of DNA. Shorter telomeres have been linked with aging, age-related diseases and death.

Participants completed questionnaires on depression and responded to questions about past child abuse or neglect; a parent’s death during childhood; witnessing severe marital problems; growing up with a family member suffering from mental illness or alcohol abuse; or lacking a close relationship with at least one adult during childhood.

“We found that childhood adversity was associated with shorter telomeres and increased levels of inflammation even after controlling for age, caregiving status, gender, body mass index, exercise and sleep,” Kiecolt-Glaser says. “Inflammation over time can lead to cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, arthritis, Type 2 diabetes and certain cancers.”

In the sample, 32% of participants reported some form of abuse — physical, emotional or sexual — during childhood; 68% reported no such abuse. Just under half (44%) reported no childhood adversities; 33% reported one, and 24% reported multiple adversities.

Participants with cancer or diabetes and those who had surgery recently were excluded from the study, as were those taking anti-inflammatory drugs.

Kiecolt-Glaser says the study found that childhood abuse and care giving were also associated with higher levels of depression, which she says suggests that psychological factors may influence the incidence and progression of a variety of age-related diseases.

“Interventions that diminish stress or depression or inflammation may enhance health and have a positive impact on immune and endocrine regulation,” Kiecolt-Glaser says. Psychological treatment, exercise, yoga and meditation can lessen these negative emotions, which she says may diminish the inflammation.

“In terms of the whole inflammation literature, I’m very much impressed by the data in terms of exercise and how powerful it is. Of all the things that people can do for themselves, exercise is perhaps one of the best interventions,” she says. *The online story can be found at http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2010-08-14-APA-adversity-shortens-lifespan14_ST_N.htm.*