

WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

Continued from page 5

themselves as somewhat reluctant leaders who had not envisioned themselves in the leadership positions they now assumed. They emphasized that encouragement as a leader came from the emotional support from other parents, public recognition and positive feedback of their contributions and their successes with personal behavior change. As their leadership skills and opportunities increase, these Parent Leaders begin to serve as important role models for other potential Parent Leaders.

In a review of current leadership measures, Parents Anonymous® Inc. found there were no tools to assess parents as leaders. Parents Anonymous® Inc. created a Parent Leadership Behavior Scale, the first valid and reliable measure of Parent Leadership behaviors, based on the Kouzes and Posner's *Leadership Practices Inventory*, 1995.

Building the best service systems to support strong and healthy families takes hard work and can be achieved when parents and providers work side-by-side, strive to support one another, and practice good leadership.

For a copy of the Parents Anonymous® Inc. Research Profile, *Research on Parent Leadership: Significance and Findings*, contact Meryl Levine at (909) 621-6184, ext. 220.

CPLT SHARES SUCCESS

Continued from page 5

Parents Anonymous® Inc. identified Parent Leadership and the importance of parents working side-by-side with service providers to effect policy and practices that benefit families over thirty-four years ago. In 1996, the federal reauthorization of the Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA) required that all states create and maintain meaningful Parent Leadership roles in the planning, implementation, oversight and evaluation of all program activities. Parents Anonymous®, cited by name in the CAPTA legislation, has engaged parents in meaningful leadership roles throughout its history and has advocated for the involvement of parents in the planning and operation of family strengthening programs in California and throughout the country.

Meaningful Parent Leadership and engagement of families happens when parents have opportunities to develop improved services for families. The efforts of various family strengthening organizations to partner with parents speaks to the important work accomplished by Parents Anonymous® Inc. and to the changes that have occurred in our nation's perspective about enlisting parents in meaningful leadership roles when it comes to ensuring quality of services for children and their families.



Parents Anonymous® Inc.
The National Organization
675 W. Foothill Blvd., Suite 220
Claremont, CA 91711-3475
(909) 621-6184
(909) 625-6304 Fax

The Parent Leadership Express is published in partnership with the Office of Child Abuse Prevention.

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Claremont, CA
Permit No. 57

Parent Leadership

EXPRESS

Number 3 • Winter 2003

OCAP IMPRESSED WITH CALIBER OF CALIFORNIA PARENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

The California Department of Social Services Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) visited with the California Parent Leadership Team (CPLT) at the Team's meeting in Sacramento on November 3rd and 4th. OCAP is very pleased with the level of participation and commitment by the parents on the Team. It is clear that Parents Anonymous® Inc. has created many new opportunities for Team members to take on new leadership roles.

During the meeting, Team members shared their experiences as Parent Leaders serving on various child abuse prevention task forces, committees and councils in their own counties as well as at the state level. Additionally, they discussed their roles as Parent



OCAP staff and Parents Anonymous® Inc. staff meet with the California Parent Leadership Team.

Leaders and what got them involved in leadership activities on behalf of children and families.

State staff was impressed with the Parent Leaders that comprise this diverse Team. Staff noted that they are a group of dedicated individuals who are obviously committed to working with the State, with their

own counties and with individual service providers to protect and serve the children and families of California as effectively as possible.

We encourage other counties not represented on the California Parent Leadership Team to identify Parent Leaders who have availed themselves of family strengthening services and encourage them to submit an application to join the CPLT.

THE PATH TO PARENT LEADERSHIP TAKES MANY ROUTES

Few people are born thinking "I want to be a Parent Leader when I grow up." For most people, becoming a Parent Leader is a process with perhaps a particular incident or "defining moment" that spurs them toward taking on a leadership role. Some parents become leaders because of a crisis or issue involving their child that requires that they advocate on behalf of that child. Some may think that things could be done better at an agency where they receive services and speak up for change. Still others may have been invited to attend a meeting or serve on a committee because someone else sees leadership qualities in them even before they see those qualities in themselves.

For Lake County Parent Leader Diane Davis it was the day her daughter was born. "I remember looking at her and promising her that she would never regret choosing me for her mom. My dream for her was to

make sure she got the services and supports she needed until she was old enough to choose her own dreams." Diane leads by example. "Now my daughter and I insist on the services and supports together to make her dreams possible or if they don't already exist we help to create them. In the process I have learned that I am competent, intelligent, compassionate, tough, and empowered. That empowerment is what I would like to share with other parents through any work I do."

Sharon Angle, Parent Leader from Sacramento County, became an advocate for her children when they were very young. "My daughter was born in 1968 with multiple handicaps. We lived in a small rural town with no services. So I learned to search for resources but most of them were hundreds of miles away. I also learned that most things are accomplished by 'who you know.' My

Continued on page 2

THE PATH TO PARENT LEADERSHIP TAKES MANY ROUTES

Continued from page 1

defining moment was when I decided to be the person in the know so that my children would have the opportunity to try whatever in life they desired within reason. While attending family therapy with my two grandsons (who have mental health and other special needs), the therapist told me about an advocate role with a pilot program that she thought I would be perfect for. That was 5 years ago and I'm still doing it. I relocated to Sacramento four years ago to pursue family advocacy full time and became a member of the California Parent Leadership Team."



Team members Kathy Dreyer, Maria Moreno and Gwen Watson share their experiences as Parent Leaders during the CPLT meeting.

Cleopra Dyas, Los Angeles County Parent Leader, began her own journey to leadership as a single parent working to make a living to care for her young son. "My child was acting out at school and at home. He refused to come home and Child Protective Services was called in. I read an article about Parent's Anonymous® and called and found there was a weekly meeting at SOAR, a community center in South Los Angeles. This gave me an outlet to vent my frustrations to caring listeners. I got my child out of the Child Protective Services system within a year. For me, the defining moment was when I realized that I had an inner strength that could carry me through. Now I help other parents to understand how to work within the system." In addition to serving on the California Parent Leadership Team, Cleopra is a member of the Parents Anonymous® National Parent Leadership Teamsm where she promotes and models Parent Leadership in order



Art Hernandez, Cleopra Dyas and Patty Enciso discuss their paths to Parent Leadership.

to build and support strong and safe families.

For **Siskiyou County Parent Leader Gwen Watson**, the day her parental rights were terminated and she lost her young son she made the decision to become the person that her son would be proud to have as a mother. "I decided that if and when he came to find me when he turned 18, I would be someone he would

be proud to call Mom. When my daughter was 4 months old I got a job with an agency that had helped me. I became a parent advocate and served as a community liaison between the agency and others in the community. I did a lot of work with the court system and became a member of our local Child Abuse Prevention Council as a parent representative. I also decided to go back to college and began a work-study program where I serve as a peer mentor. Now I use my skills to help other parents, especially young mothers, who are re-entry students, learn how to juggle school and their responsibilities as parents. I'm passing on my passion for advocating on behalf of children, too. It's so important that parents become active in their children's education and social lives."

Art Hernandez of Riverside County became a Parent Leader through his experiences in trying to adopt a six-year old boy whom he has cared for since infancy despite Art's challenges of being single and disabled. After seeking support through a Parents Anonymous® group in Arizona, Art moved to Southern California where he joined a local group and eventually took on the role of Parent Leader of the group. "This was a good way for me to

help others as I had been helped." Art also began volunteering his time and advocating for grandparents raising grandchildren. In addition to being a member of the California Parent Leadership Team, Art was asked to serve on the Board of Directors for Prevent Child Abuse of Riverside County. "My rather unique experience of being a disabled single man adopting a child gives me a chance to share a different perspective with those who make decisions about children and families."

Butte County Parent Leader Melissa Ebrahim's path to leadership began when, as a single parent escaping domestic violence, she returned to college. "While I was in school I began to step out of the victim persona and I started sharing my story." Melissa began to speak in public on the issues that mattered to her. "A friend introduced me to a counselor at Lifetime who invited me to speak publicly on welfare reform issues." Melissa was invited to testify before the United States Congress on two occasions, advocating for Welfare Reform and Reauthorization.

Kathy Dreyer of Yolo County has a mantra that defines her as a parent and a leader. "The buck stops here is what I said to myself when I started parenting. I wanted to be the best parent I could be but sometimes I felt angry and irritated. I did not want to parent the way I had been parented and decided to break the cycle of abuse." For Kathy, it was important to become a personal leader and a role model for her children. "I wanted my kids to have a supportive environment so I worked not only on myself but on the community, too. I wanted to be an active part of the village that raises the child." Kathy was instrumental in starting a Parents Anonymous® group in Yolo County. She also serves on a Child Welfare Services Stakeholders subcommittee and has been active on the Board of Directors of the Mental Health Association as a patients' rights advocate, and as a member of the Yolo County Child Abuse Prevention Council.

Calaveras County Parent Leader Mike Carll became involved as the result of being a single father with two daughters who both have special needs and through his own recovery process. "My family and I wouldn't have



Tammy Ghasvarian, CPLT member, co-leads a Team training with Parents Anonymous® Inc. staff.

survived without the support of agencies. I became involved because I got help with my own problems and wanted to be able to help others." In addition to his membership on the Calaveras County Prevention Council and the California Parent Leadership Team, Mike works part-time for the Children's System of Care as a Community Services Parent Liaison. "I want to help make changes in the system in order to strengthen families. When blame ends, healing can begin."

For **Patty Enciso of Los Angeles County**, the road to Parent Leadership came as a result of her own personal growth. "I'm the type of person that when I know there is a better way, I go for it. I wanted to stay clean, change my life and become a better person." Patty started her journey through Narcotics Anonymous. When she became a parent at the age of 19 she knew she needed help and sought services. "I attended a Parents Anonymous® group in Pomona and was later asked to be the Parent Leader of the group. At first I thought, 'who me?' but later I realized I was already being a leader in the group." Patty went on to become a founding member of the Parents Anonymous® National Parent Leadership Teamsm and as a result of her Parent Leadership activities, now works as a mental health worker with an intensive in-home services program. "I want to help other young women who are struggling. I do it to help give them hope that there can be change and that they are not helpless to become the people and parents that they want to be."

The members of the California Parent Leadership Team have faced many challenges as they grew into the leaders they are now. And as their stories so clearly illustrate, the path to Parent Leadership can take many interesting and exciting routes.

KEEPING UP WITH THE CPLT: AN UPDATE ON PARENT LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

The California Parent Leadership Team has been very busy.

✓ **Kathy Dreyer** (Yolo County) was a co-trainer with Parents Anonymous® Inc. staff at a workshop entitled "Blazing New Trails with Parent Leadership" at the annual OCAP sponsored conference, "California Focus: Family Strengths and Family-Centered Services" held in Sacramento on August 27, 2002.

✓ **Art Hernandez** (Riverside County) and **Kathy Dreyer** attended Family Support America's National Parent Meeting in Chicago, September 27-29, 2002 where they shared the successful Parent Leadership model in California and learned from other parents.

✓ **Sharon Angle**, **Tammy Ghasvarian** (Nevada County), and **Mike Carll** (Calaveras County) have been appointed to the Office of Child Abuse Prevention's (OCAP's) Prevention Advisory Council.

✓ Team members were invited to serve on several Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Regional Workgroups. **Sharon Angle** (Sacramento County) was invited to serve on the *Differential Response and Court Case Resolution Workgroup*; **Art Hernandez** was invited to serve on the *Successful Permanency Workgroup*; and **Kathy Dreyer** serves on the *Partnerships in Practice Workgroup*.

✓ **Maria Moreno** (Ventura County) is serving on the Ventura County Parent Leadership Task Force, a partnership of parents and social workers from the Department of Children and Family Services who are working together to strengthen the Child Welfare System in the county.

✓ **Cleopra Dyas** (Los Angeles County) participated in the Child Abuse Prevention Conference sponsored by the Los Angeles Unified School District in November. She was part of a panel discussing services for families and helped disseminate information on Parent Leadership at a booth with Parents Anonymous® Inc. staff.

✓ **Art Hernandez** was asked to serve on the Board of Directors for Prevent Child Abuse of Riverside County and participated as a co-trainer with Parents Anonymous® Inc. staff at their Fall Family Strengthening Conference.

✓ **Tammy Ghasvarian** served as a co-trainer with Parents Anonymous® Inc. staff for the Parent Leadership Task Force created by Fresno County Department of Children and Family Services.

✓ **Gwen Watson** is serving as a Peer Mentor with adult students, many of whom are parents, in the Re-Entry Program at the College of the Siskiyous in Weed.

✓ **Sharon Angle** and **Tammy Ghasvarian** both spoke at the Nevada County Children's Policy Summit. Sharon co-trained with Parents Anonymous® Inc. staff and Tammy was part of a parent panel on advocacy.

Thanks and congratulations to these dedicated Parent Leaders. Their energy seems boundless!



JOIN THE CPLT

Are there parents in your county who have leadership skills and are committed to strengthening families in California? Let them know you believe in them by nominating them to serve on the California Parent Leadership Team. Make sure your county is represented on the Team and is benefiting from the additional knowledge and skills Team members bring back to their counties.

To Nominate a Parent Contact:

Meryl Levine

Parents Anonymous® Inc.

(909) 621-6184, ext. 220

mlevine@parentsanonymous.org

WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

What is it that makes one a leader? With Parent Leadership and Shared Leadership as core principles of our programs, Parents Anonymous® Inc. has studied current research on leadership and launched an ambitious research agenda focusing specifically on Parent Leadership.

Understanding the qualities that make one a leader can help enhance the partnerships between parents and providers in the discussions, activities and decisions related to family support services. Professors Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner discuss the qualities of exemplary leaders in their book, *The Leadership Challenge*. They found that leaders engage in these Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership.

Model the Way – "Exemplary leaders know that if they want to gain commitment and achieve the highest standards, they must be models of the behavior they expect of others."

Inspire a Shared Vision – Exemplary leaders have "visions and dreams of what could be," and their enthusiasm spreads to those they lead.

Challenge the Process – Exemplary leaders recognize the good ideas of consumers and front line staff and are willing to challenge the system to get new products, services and systems adopted.

Enable Others to Act – "Leadership is a team effort." Exemplary leaders "work to make people feel strong, capable and committed" by fostering collaboration, building trust and believing that "leadership is a team effort."

Encourage the Heart – Exemplary leaders "show appreciation for people's contributions" and know that celebrations and rituals build a strong sense of collective identity and community spirit."

Parents Anonymous® Inc. took the research on leadership to a new level when we asked how these leadership skills are developed in Parent Leaders and how can they be measured? In 1994, Parents Anonymous® Inc. conducted innovative ethnographic research which identified the pathways taken by parents as they developed their leadership abilities. The findings delineate a conceptual framework, called "Pathways to Parent Leadership," and show that parents are most likely to become Parent Leaders when they feel accepted, not judged, and positively reinforced by other parents and professionals. The Parent Leaders in the study initially described

Continued on page 8

CPLT SHARES SUCCESSES AT NATIONAL MEETING

By Kathy Dreyer, Parent Leader, Yolo County

With a commitment to ensuring that partnerships between parents and providers become the foundation for child abuse prevention policies and practices, Parents Anonymous® Inc. and the Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) supported two members of the California Parent Leadership Team to attend a national conference this past September.



Art Hernandez, Parent Leader



Kathy Dreyer, Parent Leader

As members of the California Parent Leadership Team (CPLT), Art Hernandez, Riverside County, and I were fortunate to attend a Family Support America Conference in Chicago. We attended the conference to share the innovative Parent Leadership model that OCAP and Parents Anonymous® Inc. have developed in California and to learn from other parents throughout the country. The theme of the conference was "Parent Engagement" and we focused on issues related to including parents in the planning and decision-making processes of activities relevant to families. While attending the conference, I came to think of including parents in decision-making as being similar to the working of the gears in an automobile's transmission: The car won't go forward unless the gears all work together. Similarly, programs designed for families will not proceed without parents partnering in this process.

After my work with Parents Anonymous® Inc., I know about Parent Leadership and I recognized that "Parent Engagement" is similar to what Parents Anonymous® Inc. has been promoting and practicing from its very beginnings with the concepts of Parent Leadership and Shared Leadership.

Continued on page 8

MOVING PARENT LEADERSHIP FORWARD:

Lake and Shasta counties are taking big steps to move Parent Leadership forward. Below are highlights of their Parent Leadership strategies.

Lake County

The opening of a new Family Resource Center in Lake County provided the perfect opportunity for Parent Leadership Training. Paula Austin, CAPIT/CBFRS Liaison, and Erin Woodward, Child Abuse Prevention Council Director, thought that highlighting the importance of parents and providers working hand-in-hand to meet the needs of families was the right message to send and the right way to operate the new center. Through technical assistance calls with Parents Anonymous® Inc. staff, two trainings were scheduled in Lake County.

Thirteen parents and twenty-three county administrators and staff from community-based agencies actively participated in the first training, entitled, **Shared Leadership: Building Partnerships with Parents to Strengthen Lake County Families**. During the training, participants;



Parents and providers work together to identify key child abuse prevention agencies in Lake County.

Parent Leadership within Lake County; 3) brainstormed solutions to agency and parental barriers to sharing leadership; 4) shared their knowledge of community resources; and 5) identified additional agencies and parents to participate in the ongoing Parent Leadership activities in the County.

Rich discussion between parents and providers identified a concern about how parents' and staff's attitudes and beliefs about one another may help or hinder their partnerships. It was agreed that the second training would address this important topic. Attendees left the training with the goal of reaching out to additional key agencies, parents and other community members who may want to participate in the follow-up and Parent Leadership session.

One month later, Parents Anonymous® staff and Parent Leaders from the CPLT returned to Lake County to provide follow-up training and to help the County develop a six-month Parent Leadership Plan. The attendees at this follow-up training were committed to working as a team on an ongoing basis to implement Parent Leadership activities in Lake County. Through discussion and group activities, participants learned how their attitudes, perceptions and values help or hinder their partnership. Attitudinal variables that can facilitate successful parent-professional partnerships were also identified and include:

- Believing that there is shared responsibility;
- Recognizing everyone's perspective;
- Using common language and sharing information;
- Working together towards a common goal;
- Having multiple and flexible options for parents to be involved in ways that are meaningful to them.

Lake County developed a Parent Leadership Plan that included supporting and strengthening parents by developing Parents Anonymous® groups for parents and children throughout the County and by including parents in key policy and planning councils and committees. There were so many strong Parent Leaders identified in Lake County that two parents were nominated, and one selected, to serve on the California Parent Leadership Team.

COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS

Shasta County

A different approach to Parent Leadership is being taken in Shasta County. Parents Anonymous® Inc. staff met with Christine O'Neil, CAPIT/CBFRS Liaison, Betty Futrell, Child Abuse Prevention Council Director and two Department of Social Services administrators to provide on-site technical assistance in Shasta County in October 2002. The purpose of the meeting was to identify the Parent Leadership training needs in the county and develop a training plan. The Department of Social Services has a strong commitment to Parent Leadership and wanted to see parents actively partnering throughout their child abuse prevention system. It was decided that a Shasta County Parent Leadership Committee would be developed and Parents Anonymous® Inc. would provide ongoing, sustained support and training throughout the next year to help the Committee develop and implement a Parent Leadership Plan for the county.



Participants share their Parent Leadership Plans.



Shasta County parents and service providers learn about the benefits of Shared Leadership.

Two trainings were scheduled for January and February 2003, to begin this important effort. During the first training:

- Parents, administrators and service providers learned the benefits of Parent Leadership and its positive



Tammy Ghasvarian, CPLT member, answers participants questions, along with Lynne Jones and Tom Taylor, Program Managers, Shasta County Department of Social Services.

outcomes in strengthening services to children and families.

- Strategies for identifying, recruiting and supporting Parent Leaders were addressed to increase participation of parents.
- A core group of agency representatives and parents were identified to serve on the Shasta County Parent Leadership Committee to move Parent Leadership forward.

The second training will be for the members of the newly formed Parent Leadership Committee. Through facilitated discussion, Committee members will develop a Parent Leadership Plan by identifying the current resources in the county, the places where policy and program decisions are being made that impact families, and the ways Parent Leaders can work with providers to shape those decisions.

The Shasta County Department of Social Services understands that Shared Leadership doesn't happen overnight. They are committing staff time and resources on an ongoing basis to ensure that parents and agency staff are working together to best meet the needs of children and families in Shasta County.

For More Information About Parent Leadership Training and Technical Assistance for Your County,

Please Contact:

Meryl Levine

Parents Anonymous® Inc.

mlevine@parentsanonymous.org

(909) 621-6184, ext. 220