



ABOUT US



Vision

Children grow up free from abuse

Mission

Ensure that the voices of children are heard and understood in cases of alleged abuse

Child First Doctrine

The child is our first priority

Leadership Message



Hello,

How does an organization such as CornerHouse define success? Reflecting on this past year, there are several measures as we assess how we have met our mission to assure that the voices of children, teens and vulnerable adults are heard and understood.

- We have provided forensic interviews for over 400 clients. This includes children (the younger ones in child-friendly, multi-session formats), teens and vulnerable adults.
- 4 Linkage Agreements were successfully negotiated with community partners. These agreements will increase our ability to refer non-offending family members and children for counseling and other support.
- Over 80% of the caregivers who came to CornerHouse with their child were provided with referral information and crisis support. Thanks to a gift from the Midwest Regional Children's Advocacy Center, we were able to provide materials in Hmong, Spanish and Somali as well as English.
- We trained 1256 law enforcement, county attorney and child protection professionals in 28 training programs. As a part of our training program, we continued our international efforts by training in Colombia, South America and Japan.
- In order to assure that we had the resources to help make all of these good works happen, we completed two very successful fundraising events. Our 20th Annual Minnesota Twins

Not the needs of the family
 Not the child's "story"
 Not the evidence
 Not the needs of the courts
 Not the needs of the police,
 child protection or attorneys

The child is our first priority

From the Back of the House

Welcome to our new series
"Back of the House."
 There are many people who
 work diligently in the
 background to serve the
 children and teens that
 come to CornerHouse to be
 helped, supported, and
 heard. This series will keep
 you posted on the
 transitions in the "back of
 the house" as they occur:

Staff: *Justin Diercks* joined
 the Forensic Services
 Assistants Team as our
 new Video Technician.

Volunteers:
 We've been fortunate to

Event netted over \$89,000 and our 2nd Annual Let's Dance event netted more than \$74,000. These events also resulted in increased community awareness of our mission—and they were a lot of fun!

- We have expanded our outreach through our Facebook and Twitter accounts. This has enabled us to be more actively involved in many of the important conversations which occurred in our field, including the Penn State tragedy.

Ultimately, our success was in the changed lives of the children who came to CornerHouse. While I can't share the details of any of their lives, I can tell you that we have all seen relief in the eyes of a child leaving here because the burden of a nasty secret has been released, relief that their home would be safer because the adults in their lives have assured this, and in some cases, relief on the parts of caregivers in knowing that "nothing" had happened to their child.

Thank you for your support; we couldn't do this work without our incredible staff, our dedicated board of directors and volunteers, our donors and community team members.

Happy New Year,

Patricia Harmon
 Executive Director

Help! I'm Drowning in Hormones: Forensic Interviews with Adolescents

While adolescents often appear physically and, at times, behaviorally more similar to adults than children, recent brain research makes it clear that in many ways, adolescents do not process information, make decisions and communicate with the same clarity as adults. In fact, scientists have found that the human brain does not reach full maturity until we are well into our twenties.

Comparing the brain scans of children as they grow from pre-teens into early adulthood reveals that while they have well developed spatial, sensory, auditory and language skills, the prefrontal cortex of their brain is still very much a work in progress. What this means is that adolescents have limited abilities in the areas of decision making, selfcontrol, emotional regulation, planning, attention, insight and impulse control. Add to this the impact of hormonal changes, peer

add another member to our Family Services volunteer team! Please help us welcome: *Katie!*

Volunteer Spotlight: **Wendy Anderson**



Wendy has been with CornerHouse since September 2011 as a research volunteer.

She is observing 2 different types of interview techniques and how these techniques may affect the quality and quantity of information shared by individuals we interview. Wendy also hopes to look at how these different techniques may be affected by age, gender and other demographics. Wendy submitted her volunteer application in January of 2011 with the specific intent to engage in this research study.

influence, technology and the increasing need for independence and you have a complex mix of factors that can impact forensic interviews with adolescents.

Investigative professionals must understand the unique developmental challenges they may face interacting with an age group that is neither child nor adult. Do not be fooled by the adolescent who looks and may act like an adult. Be prepared for the emotional intensity that adolescents may express about their experiences. These feelings may be directed at the interviewer as, among other possibilities, anger, annoyance, frustration and sadness. Just as with children, interviewers must maintain a neutral and friendly demeanor even when faced with an emotional adolescent who may not welcome adult intervention. It is critically important that adolescents do not feel judged or interrogated during the forensic interview.

Understanding that adolescents do not have the developmental ability to accurately assess risk and make good decisions about their own behavior helps us understand why they are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse and how this can impact their communication with us in forensic interviews. Investigative professionals must keep this in mind as they interview adolescents in the same “child friendly” way they would younger children.

Miriam Maples
Training Director

References

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Wendy is in the 2nd year of her Social Work PhD studies, already having a MSW, and having interned at a Children's Advocacy Center in Chicago.

Wendy loves the idea of being able to help CornerHouse and the broader field of forensic interviewing – to help determine the best interview practice for the best results.

Wendy lives in Chicago with her husband, commutes up to the Twin Cities every week to attend classes and volunteers at CornerHouse twice a week. When in Chicago, she also works 30 hours a week and additionally volunteers at CASA (www.casaforchildren.org).

Wendy states that she has had many opportunities to observe the staff and has noticed that their passion and commitment is so very evident in everything they do. They are truly dedicated to finding the

Did you know...

that some corporations match your volunteer hours with matching grants? For instance UnitedHealth Group Dollars for Doers just matched Jennifer Thielen's 34 volunteer hours with \$200!! Thank you Jen for submitting for this grant!

Oh, What a Night!!

The 2nd annual Let's Dance event held at the Saint Paul Hotel on November 12 was a huge success. The celebrity dancers - Dez, Archelle Georgiou, Patrick Hammer, Rich Stanek, Tom Tinkham, Ember Reichgott Junge - and their partners were amazing. They raised over \$7,000 in votes! Guests enjoyed watching the celebrity dancers, dancing and hearing about the work of CornerHouse. Thanks so much for helping to make this a huge success! We netted over \$74,000!

Special thanks to event co-chairs, Ed and Sue Padilla, to our presenting sponsor, NorthMarq and to our hardworking committee:
Ann Fleischauer
Conni Bjornnes
Damon Noga
Hosain Lipson
Ike DeLugo
Lana Weber
Laura Oberg
Patricia Harmon
Rut Newman
Sharon McLaughlin



best means for the children to feel safe in telling their stories here at CornerHouse.



Please "like" us on facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/CornerHouseMN!!>

CornerHouse is very fortunate to have such a dedicated professional as Wendy help us with our research into improving interview practices.

Staff Spotlight



Bill Koncar, Forensic Interviewer at CornerHouse, was the first School Liaison officer at Brooklyn Center High School, serving from 1994 until 2009. This included serving 1,000 kids from grades 7 through 12 in one building, individuals becoming adults and craving respect from their surroundings – both teachers and peers.

Bill was there to supervise and connect with them. Because kids in that age range are more likely to commit a crime than people of other age groups, most junior and senior high schools now have police liaison officers. It's also a good age to have police officers connect to kids, to show that they are there to help, to listen, to be "on their side" and to let kids see that police officers are not just there to arrest people. It is the PR side of being a Liaison Officer in a school setting.

Liaison Officers offer security and guidance in schools all around the nation. Any adult at a school is a mandated reporter, and reporting an incident to the Liaison Officer meets the requirements that come along with that. But Liaison Officers also intervene in conflicts, work with the school Social Workers and educate in many different subjects at schools: personal safety, abuse, drugs, truancy and more.

By building relationships with the students and the teachers, Bill was consulted for many different things: both crime and non-crime related. A few students got into trouble with weapons, drugs, and truancy. But more came to Bill to let him know about problems they were facing with their peers or at home. Some of these problems did involve abuse and Bill did investigate Child Abuse as well. So his path brought him to CornerHouse many, many times.

Bill turned out to be an officer, a counselor, a friend to over 16,000 students and their teachers. He still meets them when he is out, playing his accordion in the community. And they thank him

CornerHouse Wish List:

check out the wish list below or search for our wish list at [Amazon.com!](#)

- **Markers**
- **Coloring books**
- **Stencils**
- **Toy train set**
- **Children's musical books**
- **Floor lamp**
- **Dishwasher**

Gift cards:

- **Cub Foods**
- **Target**
- **Sam's Club**

- **Ikea**

*Please call
Sharon McLaughlin at
612-813-8334 if you wish to
make a donation.*

for his influence in their lives. CornerHouse is very fortunate that Bill has chosen to be a Forensic Interviewer here!

CornerHouse Staff Consultant to the Office for Victim's of Crime

CornerHouse Associate Director, *Jennifer Anderson*, recently became a consultant to the Office for Victim's of Crime (OVC) Training and Technical Assistance Center (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/welcome.html>). The OVC Consultant Network provides victim services professionals access to speakers and experts for the benefit of all victims of crime. CornerHouse is proud to be a part of this network and hopes it brings many opportunities to further our mission.



Upcoming CornerHouse Child Sexual Abuse Forensic Interview Training Schedules

CornerHouse Interagency Child Abuse Evaluation and Training Center would like to announce the following availability in its 2011-2012 training schedule.

Child Sexual Abuse Forensic Interview training at CornerHouse in Minneapolis, MN

This training teaches a credible, reliable and non-traumatic forensic interview process for children and vulnerable adults who allege sexual abuse. Training methods consist of lecture and discussion, review of CornerHouse videotaped interviews, skill-building exercises and an interview practicum. The course is designed for teams of law enforcement investigators, child protection investigators, prosecutors and forensic interviewers. Participants are strongly encouraged to attend as a multi-disciplinary team. Courses are outcome based and include an exam upon completion. Course Fee: \$950

January 9-13, 2012

February 13-17, 2012

April 9-13, 2012

May 14-18, 2012

CornerHouse Advanced Forensic Interview Training

This training is open to law enforcement, child protection investigators, prosecutors, and forensic interviewers who have completed the required prerequisites. This course teaches advanced forensic interviewing issues, modifies the interview protocol for physical abuse and other violent crimes, outlines research on memory and suggestibility, provides a mock cross-examination demonstration, and provides participants the opportunity to learn and utilize a video-recorded interview assessment tool to critique their own interviews. Advanced training course at CornerHouse in Minneapolis, MN: Course Fee: \$850

Prerequisites

1) Completion of one of the following basic interviewing courses:

- CornerHouse Child Sexual Abuse Forensic Interview Training or On-Site Child Sexual Abuse Forensic Interview Training
- ChildFirst™
- Finding Words™
- First Witness™

2) Completion of a minimum of fifteen (15) interviews using RATAc® (requirement waived for prosecutors)

March 6-9, 2012

For registration, please contact Sandy Heitkamp at (612) 813-8310 or sandra.heitkamp@childrensmn.org

Visit our website: <http://www.cornerhousemn.org>

Managing Editor: Rut Newman (please email her at Rut.Newman@childrensmn.org if you have any feedback)

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