

CHECKUP

Couple sets out to help victims of fetal alcohol effect

By **SANDY ILLIAN BOSCH**
STAFF WRITER

Walter and Kathy Teichen of Elmhurst aren't authorities on the medical condition that affects their son. The problem is, they aren't sure who is.

"We're having trouble finding a medical expert," said Walter Teichen, whose son, Kevin, suffers from fetal alcohol effect. While the better-known fetal alcohol syndrome results in physical characteristics that can be easily recognized, fetal alcohol effect isn't as obvious but has lifelong, debilitating effects. Both conditions are caused by a woman's use of alcohol during pregnancy and the resulting damage to a developing child's brain.

For Kevin, who was adopted by the Teichens in 1981, the disease has meant years of special education. He has had trouble in school, trouble making friends and trouble with the law. He was arrested in 2001 for retail theft and spent four months in jail.

It wasn't until Kevin reached adulthood that the Teichens, thanks to an evaluation at Northwestern University Medical Center, were finally able to put a name on Kevin's condition. But a diagnosis wasn't enough. Their son needed help, and that help doesn't exist.

"Like most people with FAE, Kevin needs structure," Walter Teichen said. But only one facility exists in the country specifically for adults with FAE. That Minnesota facility is only 18 months old.

In the last several months the Teichens have taken it upon themselves to create a place for Kevin and others with FAE. Through the Know Him Ministry, they're working to raise money and awareness.

"We're trying to get the word out," Teichen said.

The thing people with FAE need most is structure, Teichen said.

Teichen said his son needs structure so much, he doesn't mind the monotony of jail. Know Him Ministry hopes to provide that structure by putting people to work. On a donated piece of land in Hopkins Park, the Teichens hope to build a group home and a farm where residents can raise chickens and crops.

"We've come a really long way," Teichen said.

But there's a long way to go. Know Him Ministry is working with area rotary clubs on a possible partnership that could lead to help building a \$250,000 barn on the site. But even after that, there are staffing costs, maintenance and plenty of other start-up expenses.

A brunch scheduled for Sunday, Nov. 21, at Drury Lane in Oakbrook Terrace aims to educate people about the project, the disability and the need for help.

"It's to make people aware of how severe the disability is," Teichen said.

Tickets to the brunch, which will feature speaker Tom Donaldson, president of the National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, cost \$50.

Since work began on Know Him Ministry, Teichen has heard from many parents who know his story and are looking for help.

"The need is tremendous," he said.

The National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome estimates that 20 babies are born in the United States each day with fetal alcohol syndrome. Another 100 or more might have other alcohol-related disorders. Teichen said many of the 41,000 babies born in this country each year with the effects of prenatal drinking were born to mothers with severe drinking problems, but others were hurt by a single drinking binge.

For tickets to the Nov. 21 brunch or information on how to help Know Him Ministry, call Teichen at (630) 530-4030.



It took nearly 20 years for Kathy & Walter Teichen of Elmhurst to put a name to the troubles suffered by their adopted son, Kevin. Kevin struggles with the effects of Fetal

Alcohol Effect while his parents struggle to create a place where Kevin and others like him can get the help they need. (Doings photo by Steve Johnston)



Christina G. Steil
DERMATOLOGY

Christina Steil, M.D.
Board Certified Dermatologist
40 S. Clay, Suite 210E
Hinsdale, IL 60521 • (630) 455-0045
Member of American Medical Association
Member of The American Academy of Dermatology

YOUTH MELANOMA RATES SOAR

Melanoma rates in children younger than age 15 increased by 60% between 1992 and 2001, according to a study conducted by researchers from the National Cancer Institute. Melanoma occurs in only one in 100,000 children younger than age 15 and in fewer than one in 1 million children younger than age 10.

But the melanoma rate nearly doubled between 1973 and 1994 for people ages 15 to 29, and increased about 10% for that age group between 1991 and 2001. It is the most diagnosed cancer in women ages 22 to 29.

Office Hours:
Monday 1-8 Thursday 7-4
Tuesday 1-8 Friday 8-12



Integrated Pain Management, S.C.

"Where East Meets West Treats Pain The Best!"

Pain Types Treated:

- Back Pain • Headaches • Knee Pain
- Shoulder Pain • Neck Pain • Wrist Pain

Dr. Tian Xia, D.O.
(312) 842-4588



1 S 132 Summit Ave. #308
Oakbrook Terrace, IL
(Also in Lincoln Park)

www.chicagopaincontrol.com