



Health Resources

The News About *Fetal Alcohol*

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder describes a range of birth defects caused by the solvent alcohol when alcohol is consumed by the pregnant mother. These birth defects occur in the baby's brain in the womb. Alcohol in the womb acts the same way on the baby's brain cells as paint remover acts on painted furniture. As a solvent, alcohol dissolves brain cells. This brain damage is permanent. This damage can not be reversed, can not be fixed by drugs, cured by therapy, or repaired by time in jail.

Each day, 10,657 babies are born.

- One is HIV positive
- Three have Muscular Dystrophy
- Four have Spina Bifida
- Ten are born with Downs Syndrome
- **Twenty** are born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
- **One hundred are born with Alcohol Related Neurological Disabilities (ARND)**

Most people with Fetal Alcohol brain defects look like you and I. Only a small percentage of people with Fetal Alcohol brain defects have facial deformities. All persons with Fetal Alcohol brain birth defects have a physical disability. Because the alcohol dissolves brain cells they are missing or have compromised brain functions. These people have neurological deficits. For instance they have difficulty with abstract concepts, often can not take what they have learned on Monday and use it on Wednesday and sometimes when information goes into the brain it does not stick. They often appear as if they lack remorse for criminal activity and behave socially inappropriate, and sometimes do not appreciate the consequences of their actions. Parents and caregivers who deal with persons with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders must learn that these people have neurological disabilities and have behaviors that often present as non-compliant behaviors when in reality are neurological non-competence. These difficult behaviors are not developmental delays that will disappear with time. These neurological deficits are permanent and the behaviors are a lifelong disability which often causes many secondary disabilities.

Most people with FASD are not assessed so their disability goes undetected, sometimes their whole life. Families struggle in pain wondering what is wrong with their child. Caregivers never understand why their child behaves with such odd and problem causing behaviors, because they do not know that their child has a brain defect.

When they become adults, these children often find their behaviors often land them in jail. This

undiagnosed brain defect gives judges no choice but to lock them up because there are no resources for these people. Thus early professional assessments which includes a pediatrician working with a neuropsychologist are key to assisting families and keeping these unfortunate souls out of jail.

It is vital that Americans understand the reasons why pregnant women drink alcohol. Understanding begins with not judging these women as bad people, as failures. Understanding the situation that these women live with requires a heartfelt and clear minded knowledge of family violence, the history of close relationships, poverty, lack of education, addictions, and that these women lack the awareness and resources as to how to cope with the harsh unforgiving realities of living in daily difficulty. Poor and marginalized women are not the only women who drink while pregnant. Rich stock brokers and wealthy doctors have wives who binge drink while pregnant. Young educated professional women binge drink almost as a right of passage, often not knowing they are pregnant. The research literature is clear; there is no safe amount of alcohol consumption while pregnant. If you are planning to get pregnant do not drink alcohol.

FASD is a multi sector problem; it is a school, police, legal, social, community, family, and national problem. FASD is 100% preventable. To make headway with this problem we need to create solutions using a variety of social agencies with education as the key.

There is some good news. Once parents have an assessment and the specific neurological deficits have been identified, appropriate responses can be created. The main concept to learn is a notion called the "external brain". The "External Brain" means appropriate supervision 24/7 and it means designing appropriate structures that create opportunities for the person to be successful. These people can be successful.

Kathy and I are the parents of a 24 year adopted son with this terrible disability. We are part of a Christian Ministry which was started to establish a structured 24 hour supervised environment (Home) for people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders. You can contact us at www.knowhimministry.org to learn about our work.

FASD is the largest cause of mental and/or intellectual disabilities in most industrialized nations. We hope to create a facility that will allow these people to be productive citizens, hold jobs and stay out of jail.

We are actively fund raising and have a motorcycle ride on August 21. We encourage interested persons to contact us. The two main practical suggestions if you are a caregiver of a person with FASD is to lower your expectations and change their environment. Do not give up hope. There are people who can help you as people have helped us.

To learn more about Fetal Alcohol issues check out these websites: www.asantecentre.org www.come-over.to

It is a huge undertaking to build a home for these people. We appreciate any type of support; manpower, ideas, or financial. We need more people willing to work for this great cause.

It would help our project if you know of anyone who:

- Has a family foundation.
- Anyone in TV, Radio, Newspaper, or Magazine.
- A church that does missionary work, as we would like missionaries to be part of the program.
- Anyone who might have land that they would like to donate in far southwest suburbs.
- Anyone who might be able to help in any part of our many projects.

Walt and Kathy Teichen parents of Kevin with help from David Boulding Lawyer.

Upcoming Events:

- August 21, 2005 Motorcycle Ride
- September 9, 2005 Fetal Alcohol Awareness Day
- October 23, 2005 Brunch at Drury Lane
walt@knowhimministry.org
630-418-3300



Brunch to raise awareness of Fetal Alcohol Held at Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace, IL November 21, 2004. Pictured are Art Dykstra President of Trinity Services, David Boulding attorney, Kathy Teichen, Tom Donaldson President National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Walt Teichen, and Vivian Botka parent.