

7th Annual RSVP Recovery Conference

Healing Broken Families and Relationships: A Connection-Focused Approach to Recovery

October 16, 17, 2014

RSVP 2014 will focus on promoting recovery and healing for children and families with complex needs.

Like other communities, Ashland County is challenged with having many children in the custody of the county and is seeking solutions to the on-going problem of children being placed outside their home. In addition, we are working to foster services and programs aimed at strengthening families and reducing the need for placing children outside the home or community.

Most of the children who are in placement have histories of abuse, neglect or other trauma and require safe, supportive and nurturing relationships to recover. Given the right supports and resources, these children can recover from these experiences and thrive.

The Mental Health and Recovery Board, in collaboration with Ashland County Child Protective Services and Wager's Way, has organized a 1 ½ day workshop for mental health and addiction professionals, law enforcement, juvenile justice, child and family services and others in our county and region. The workshop will focus on the Connection Focused Approach to recovery and relationships and will feature Dr. Rebecca Bailey and Linda Kohanov, along with Dr. Bailey's colleagues from Transitioning Families. The second day of the workshop will include equine-assisted demonstrations of the principles of the Connection Focused Approach that Dr. Bailey and Linda Kohanov have developed and a demonstration of how horses can (but are not required) to be used in the connection-focused recovery process. More background on the conference facilitators is included below.

We would like to invite organizations from Ashland, Richland and surrounding Counties to participate in this unique opportunity. The workshop is intended for a diverse audience of professionals, including counselors, social workers, child care workers, investigators, attorneys, Court Appointed Special Advocates and Guardians Ad Litem. In addition, current and potential foster parents and families who are considering or who have adopted children are invited to attend.

About the Conference Facilitators

Psychologist, author, and abduction/family reunification expert Dr. Rebecca Bailey, and author/equine-facilitated learning pioneer Linda Kohanov team up to share the horse-facilitated activities, therapeutic interventions, relationship-building tools, and personal empowerment/life skills they've found to be highly effective in helping people heal from trauma and learn to thrive in their relationships and personal lives.

Rebecca Bailey, PhD, is a leading family psychologist and personal therapist. Co-author of the new book *Safe Kids, Smart Parents: What Parents Need to Know to Keep Their Children Safe* (with Elizabeth Bailey, RN BC), she is frequently called upon as an expert commentator on CNN, Good Morning America, and other national news shows, including those hosted by Anderson Cooper, Diane Sawyer, Piers Morgan,

and Katie Couric. The founder of Transitioning Families, Dr. Bailey has employed various forms of animal-assisted therapy, working with dogs, horses, and nature-based experiential techniques. She has also led trainings for police departments and the FBI to raise awareness and sensitivity to the issues that victims of rape, abduction, and other crimes face in surviving these extreme experiences, reuniting with their families, and healing over time. While she has worked with hundreds of individuals and families in crisis, she is best known as the therapist who helped Jaycee Dugard reunite with her family after she was rescued from a highly-publicized 18-year abduction in California.

Linda Kohanov, author of four books, including *The Tao of Equus* (2001), and *The Power of the Herd* (2013), has worked with numerous mental health professionals to offer equine-facilitated interventions to people in crisis, including rape and childhood sexual abuse survivors, veterans and their spouses, and families dealing with divorce, remarriage, troubled teens and children with disabilities, suicide attempts, and other challenges. Since 2003, Linda has also trained over 200 professionals worldwide in the techniques she and her colleagues have developed since Eponaquest was originally founded in 1997 as a collective of counselors, educators and horse trainers.

Terry Probyn will share her family's experience of healing after her daughter, Jaycee Dugard, was rescued following 18 years in captivity. In 1991, Jaycee was kidnapped by two strangers from a bus stop in her hometown of Lake Tahoe. She survived years of physical and emotional abuse at the hands of her two assailants. She was finally reunited with her mother and family in 2009, eighteen years after she was taken.

About the Conference

This will be a one and a half day workshop with Dr. Rebecca Bailey and Linda Kohanov. The workshop will provide an opportunity to introduce the concept of connection-focused approaches to providing mental health and other social services to families with acute and complex needs. CEU's will be provided for Counselors and Social Workers.

The first day of the workshop (8:00-4:00) will focus on the work that Dr. Bailey is doing in her program, Transitioning Families. Speakers will present material that describes Dr. Bailey's approach.

The second day of the workshop (8:00-12:00) will take place at the Ashland County Fairgrounds where, in a half-day workshop, equine-assisted facilitators will demonstrate the principles of connection-focused services. There will also be a demonstration of how horses can be used as a part of the therapeutic process.

The workshop is funded by a grant from the JAYC Foundation and other partners, including the Mental Health and Recovery Board of Ashland County, Ashland County Child Protective Services, Wagers' Way and others.

Most cultural traditions have a story to explain why human life is so hard, why there is so much suffering on earth. The story is always the same- at some point, early in our human origin, we forgot that we were all connected. We broke apart, we separated from each other. We even fragmented inside ourselves, disconnecting heart from head from spirit. These stories always teach that healing will only be found when we remember our initial unity and reconnect the fragments.

(Margaret Wheatley)