

Children from the Coalition Against Child Abuse & Neglect have participated in the Butterfly Strokes program.

This is a note that Nancy Mazzola received pertaining to the program.

August 7, 2012

There is a family with three children: two sisters, 7 and 4 years old, and a brother 3 years old. The children were removed from their homes and placed into Foster Care because they had all witnessed domestic violence at home, and also because of the mother's drug use. Because of the contentious and violent atmosphere in the home, the girls, 7 and 4, were unable to be placed together as they did not get along and were acting out the fighting that they had grown up with. After all the children were removed, it was disclosed that the two girls were victims of sex abuse at the hands of their father. In addition, the paternal grandmother used to abuse the little 3 year old boy. She would hold his head under that bathwater, almost drowning him, when he would cry. As a result, he was very afraid of the water, and was unable to be bathed by his foster mother.

The foster parents for all the children decided to bring them to the Butterfly Strokes swimming program, sponsored by the Marcie Mazzola Foundation and Saf-T-Swim. They were unsure, however, if the little boy would be able to tolerate being near the pool at all, since he was exhibiting symptoms of the trauma related to his grandmother's abuse in the bathtub. They tried anyway.

It was a success. At the end of the 6 week swim session, we had observed significant changes in the children's behavior. First, both girls were getting along with each other very well. They enjoyed each other's company during the swim lessons, and are building their relationship in a positive way. Second, the 3 year old boy was able to make it through every single lesson in the water! And at the end of the 6 weeks, he cried when he found out it was over. His foster mother reports that she is now able to bath him on a daily basis, and that he and his sister are always asking to go to the beach or the community pool.

This is truly a success story. The Butterfly Strokes program was able to help traumatized children in ways that traditional talk therapy may never have been able to.

**Anthony Zenkus, LMSW**

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