

LEWIS COUNTY JUVENILE COURT



Community Newsletter

Volume 1, Number 6



December 2021

Going Above & Beyond

It is safe to say that the last few years have been a difficult period for many people and departments. The stress that comes from adjusting to unknown factors can lead to an elevation of discontentment, frustration, and a lack of thankfulness. It is important to take the time to practice soaking in the joys and positive things that surround you. Whether it is at home or while at work, recognize the moments when others go above and beyond.

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Practicing Positivity

- Take 10 minutes a day to sit quietly with your thoughts. Reflect on the small things you are thankful for.
- Take walks on your breaks & notice the surroundings. Clear your mind from stress and reset.
- Volunteer for a local organization. Giving back is good for the heart.
- Keep a gratitude journal.
- Remember to take deep breaths.
- Speak kindly to others and let them

"This last Saturday's work crew was I believe perhaps one of, if not the most rain we've experienced on a crew. None the less it was a good day & the youth were troopers & we actually had fun while accomplishing our goals. We were all dressed and ready for the rain but it just hammered us. I had the youth put on dry sweat-shirts & clean rain coats as well as dry gloves & stocking hats after the lunch break; We were all soaked. When I returned to the office, I literally looked like I had been swimming in a muddy river. I commented to Detention Supervisor Lowell Stewart that I would have some laundry to do next week & would have to figure out that process since we do not have a washing machine anymore to do laundry as I have in the past. The following Monday, when I returned to my office, there sitting on the floor was a bag of clothing. Lowell & Detention Officer Randi Folsom had gone into the work crew van, took out all the wet & dirty clothing, & brought it to the Lewis County jail & washed it. I then read Lowell's email telling me what they had done. I was so touched by this act of kindness from my co-workers. I replied back to their email thanking them. When we look for what makes this job special it is found in this type of not just teamwork but friendship & a sense of family.

- Community Service Officer Jerry Elliott



ACES

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

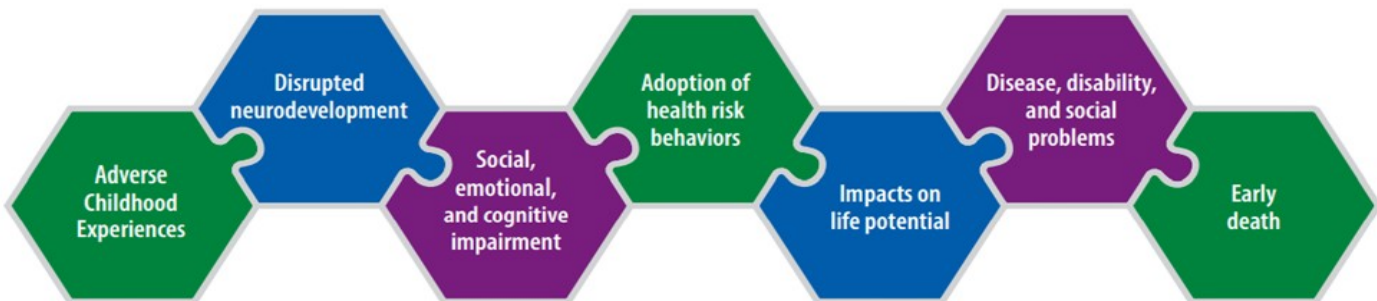
Each staff at the Lewis County Juvenile Court, whether working in detention, probation, or the Guardian ad Litem program, are training in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to some degree.

What are ACEs? Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years). These events could include but are not limited to: experiencing violence, abuse or neglect; witnessing violence; having a family member commit suicide; having a parent with substance abuse problems; having a parent with mental health problems; having an instable parent; having a parent incarcerated.

Why is it important to understand ACEs? ACEs are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance use problems in adulthood. ACEs can also negatively impact education, job opportunities, and earning potential. According to the Center of Disease Control (CDC), about 61% of adults surveyed across 25 states reported that they had experienced at least one type of ACE, and nearly 1 in 6 reported they had experienced four or more types of ACEs. “ACEs can have lasting, negative effects on health, well-being, as well as life opportunities such as education and job potential. These experiences can increase the risks of injury, sexually transmitted infections, maternal and child health problems (including teen pregnancy, pregnancy complications, and fetal death), involvement in sex trafficking, and a wide range of chronic diseases and leading causes of death such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and suicide.” Experiencing ACEs can lead to toxic stress and this stress can change brain development and affect such things as attention, decision-making, learning, and response to stress.

Can ACEs be prevented? Across the CDC Technical Packages there are several strategies that can prevent ACEs from happening in the first place as well as strategies to mitigate the harms of ACEs. The evidence tells us that ACEs can be prevented by:

- Strengthening economic supports for families
- Promoting social norms that protect against violence and adversity
- Ensuring a strong start for children and paving the way for them to reach their full potential
- Teaching skills to help parents and youth handle stress, manage emotions, and tackle everyday challenges
- Connecting youth to caring adults and activities
- Intervening to lessen immediate and long-term harms



Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Questionnaire

This Questionnaire will be asking you some questions about events that happened during your childhood; specifically the first 18 years of your life. The information you provide by answering these questions will allow us to better understand problems that may have occurred early in your life and allow us to explore how those problems may be impacting the challenges you are experiencing today. This can be very helpful in the success of your treatment.

While you were growing up, during your first 18 years of life:

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household often: Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? Or Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt? Yes No If Yes, enter 1 _____
2. Did a parent or other adult in the household often: Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? Or Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured? Yes No If Yes, enter 1 _____
3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever: Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? Or Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you? Yes No If Yes, enter 1 _____
4. Did you often feel that: No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? Or Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Questionnaire 2 Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other? Yes No If Yes, enter 1 _____
5. Did you often feel that: You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? Or Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it? Yes No If Yes, enter 1 _____
6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced? Yes No If Yes, enter 1 _____
7. Were any of your parents or other adult caregivers: Often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at them? Or Sometimes or often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? Or Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife? Yes No If Yes, enter 1 _____
8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs? Yes No If Yes, enter 1 _____
9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide? Yes No If Yes, enter 1 _____
10. Did a household member go to prison? Yes No If Yes, enter 1 _____

ACE SCORE (Total "Yes" Answers): _____

*Note: This questionnaire should only be given to adults ages 18 and older; it should not be given to children or youth under the age of 18.

The study's researchers came up with an ACE score to explain a person's risk for chronic disease. Think of it as a cholesterol score for childhood toxic stress. You get one point for each type of trauma. The higher your ACE score, the higher your risk of health and social problems. (Of course, other types of trauma exist that could contribute to an ACE score, so it is conceivable that people could have ACE scores higher than 10; however, the ACE Study measured only 10 types.) As your ACE score increases, so does the risk of disease, social and emotional problems. With an ACE score of 4 or more, things start getting serious. The likelihood of chronic pulmonary lung disease increases 390 percent; hepatitis, 240 percent; depression 460 percent; suicide, 1,220 percent.

A high ACE score isn't necessarily a crystal ball. "There are people with high ACE scores who do remarkably well," says Jack Shonkoff, a pediatrician and director of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. For more information on your ACE score go to the CDC website.

Everyone experiences trauma at some point in their life; however, not everyone is traumatized. In the next newsletter, we will share about resiliency and the impact it has on ACEs and trauma.

Employing Youth

Helping youth gain job readiness skills



This past summer, the High Rock Lookout that sat on the peak of the Sawtooth Ridge in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, was dismantled piece by piece and was loaded onto a JetRanger helicopter. The pieces have been stripped of paint and stored. In the May 28, 2021 Chronicle newspaper, crew leader and archaeologist Rick McClure, who has been reviewing plans for this summer's work told the Chronicle, "It's a big job." "Getting the structure off the mountain is the easy part. Four or five helicopter trips down the ridge are only expected to take 90 minutes. The actual deconstruction will be the "painstaking" part, McClure said."

In order to make the reassembly an easier project,

Probation Officers Dean Durant and Seth Foster brought youth to White Pass on November 17th to teach them how to stamp each piece for inventory. This was a massive and tedious project as the youth had to learn how to organize the pieces and how to stamp wood. It was a 10 hour day but the youth didn't complain. The youth have heard stories about the Lookout but due to COVID and the restoration project, have yet to do the famous hike. "It is great to know that I participated in this project. I look forward to one day seeing it rebuilt and visiting it myself," a seventeen year old youth shared afterwards. He explained that he had some stamping experience before the project but that he learned a lot during the day.



November marked a huge achievement for the Lewis County Juvenile Court's Education and Employment Training Program (EET) implemented by Probation Officer Lee Montgomery. On November 19th, two youth were hired as Temp Employees for Lewis County. These youth are participating in the Juvenile Court's EET program. Our EET program includes an opportunity to gain work experience. They are placed at an approved work sight and are paid for up to 20 hours through our program which is grant funded through the State. One of the youth worked for the Washington State University Extension Office's Leaf Exchange program on November 23rd.

"It went well. [Youth] worked really well. We did a lot of leafs and styrofoam. He moved between loading and unloading leafs and back to styrofoam packing without hesitation. I would put him on my team if I needed an Employee. -Pete"

The other youth is currently doing his work experience at the River Bend Pet Center and it is reportedly going very well. These youth have gone through weeks of learning job readiness skills with Lee Montgomery, mock interviews with staff, new hire paperwork with the Lewis County HR Department and are excited to apply their skills. It is an exciting step for the program to have Lewis County hiring them as Temp Employees.

Making a Difference

Guardian Friends of Lewis County is a Registered 501(c)(3) organization and is staffed entirely by non-paid volunteers. We raise funds for the needs of individual foster children and their siblings that are not covered by funds provided by the State of Washington and federal funds, and seek to partner with other local resources for goods and services to meet as many needs as possible. We are also a partner of the Lewis County Volunteer Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Program, a member program of Washington State CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates). Guardians ad Litem can apply for grants for children on their caseloads for items such as:

- Sports fees and equipment
- Academic tutoring
- School supplies
- Music lessons
- Instrument rental
- Graduation supplies
- Summer camp tuition
- Specialized therapy
- Counseling services
- Clothing and shoes
- Bedroom furniture
- Driver's Education

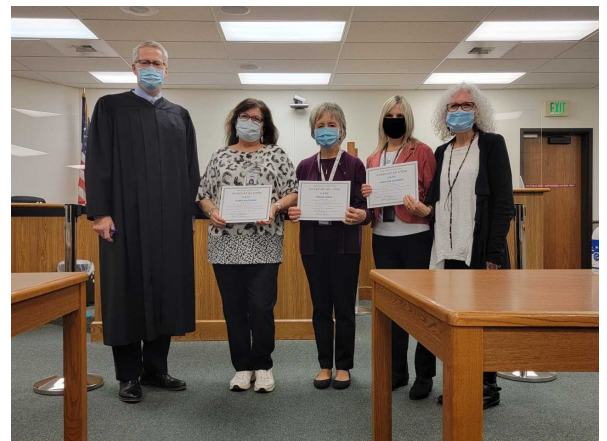


On 11/23/2021, members of the 501c3 nonprofit Guardian Friends accepted a \$5,000 donation from Immanuel Lutheran Church in Centralia. Pictured from left to right: Reverend Peter Mohr, Lewis County Probation Manager/Guardian Friends Board member Rickie Anders, Guardian ad Litem Carla Thompson, Guardian ad Litem Charla Dunham, Immanuel Lutheran Church President Gwen Kruger and in the front row, Guardian ad Litem Lisa Blankenship.

We have various programs within the nonprofit such as Duffles of Love, the annual Christmas Wish List, and tutoring. The Duffles of Love program is a separate program that we do that provides a brand new duffle bag to each youth that is removed from their parent's care. Rather than have a youth place items in a plastic bag, all social workers are provided these quality bags to give to children and in the event that the child is moved to a different foster home or placement, the duffle bag goes with the youth. The annual Christmas Wish List program is where a youth in foster care can fill out a Christmas Wish List to provide to their court appointed advocate. We strive to make sure that we buy at least one thing on the child's list that they are hoping to get for Christmas. Bikes are a huge request! We budget roughly \$50 per child but there are many times where the wish is going to cost beyond \$50; such as a bike. This year we received wish lists from 59 foster children in Lewis County. This year we had a request from 7 children for bikes. We asked the community to help us fill these requests and Goebel's Septic, Torgy's Mulching and Development, and various community members rose to the occasion and sponsored bikes for each of these youth. Many other community members asked if they could sponsor as well so all of the other wishes that were beyond \$50 were sponsored. With the help of the community, we have been able to answer every wish on each of the lists!

There are currently 121 youth in foster care from Lewis County. Each of these youth have a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA/GAL). The GAL Program is through the Lewis County Juvenile Court. The court is seeking more volunteers that would like to help speak on behalf of abused and neglected children. For more information on how to volunteer, please contact 360-740-2683 to speak to the GAL Coordinators.

On November 18th, Judge Lawler swore in three new Guardian ad items. Thank you to Cheryl Jones, Karen Halverson, and Christine Dickinson for becoming a voice for abused and neglected children!



Meet the Team



Susan Wickert

I have enjoyed working with youth for most of my adult life. They are inquisitive, challenge our thoughts and beliefs and have their future in front of them with so many significant life choices to make. I was a youth group leader with my church for 15+ years. I started out with the Juvenile Court as a part time Legal Assistant processing diversions. When truancy started, I worked with Jennifer Walker processing all of the new truancy petitions. It was not uncommon to have 30 to 40 truancy hearings set before Judge Brosey on a given weekly truancy court docket. I was offered a full time position as a Legal Assistant several years later and processed all offender documents with Lee Montgomery as Court Officer. The office manager at the time trained me to process all invoices for the court.

When the office manager position came open in November of 2002, I applied and was appointed. In 2010, I was assigned to oversee the Guardian Ad Litem program. Over the years, my job has included hiring and training legal assistants on all aspects of document processing for all referrals, processing all financial information and managing the Guardian Ad Litem program. I have learned many new systems, the most recent being Munis (ongoing!) I remember one day after Munis first came out telling myself as I struggled with it that I was going to have to "make friends with the system" because it wasn't going away! I have been involved in investigations and discipline which has been my least favorite responsibility.

The thing I most enjoy about my job is a tough question. I love to see employees work hard at mastering their role. I enjoy being able to support them in developing their own niche for the court and community, or guiding and encouraging them in learning a new software system. I enjoy being given an opportunity to participate in thinking outside the box and really impact youth and our community. As far as individual tasks, I would say payroll, as it is extremely meaningful. Our employees are here to earn an income for themselves and their families while they work with youth. It is important to get the information done timely and correctly as it effects each employee in a very personal way. I also enjoy the challenge of maintaining the budget within the guidelines provided and remain in the black at year end while utilizing tax dollars responsibly. For the bigger picture, I really enjoy being part of such a great team that has the potential of having a very positive effect on youth and their families. I have three favorite memories. Years ago, we had a youth who had committed residential burglary. He was remorseful and wanted to meet the family he had burglarized. His probation officer set up an appointment in the office. This nervous young man came in and the family was waiting for him in the conference room. He was given the opportunity to meet them face to face, hear from them how the crime had affected them and then offer full acknowledgement of responsibility and a genuine apology. He was truly remorseful and wanted to turn his life around. Not only had he changed, but it provided encouragement to his assigned PO and all of the court to witness when true reconciliation takes place. My second favorite memory was when Jennifer Walker had worked with a youth involved in gang activity, who actually wanted to end up in Green Hill School (he did) and had a change of perspective while incarcerated. After his release, he worked very hard to build a life, and returned to thank all staff employed by the court for intervening and having a huge positive impact on him. It was a moment I'll not forget. My third favorite memory was when Shad (as a Probation Officer working Recovery Court) expressed a need for additional staff to accompany him and the recovery court participants on a ropes course in Salem, Oregon. I really wanted to go and he welcomed me aboard. I got to interact with the vanload of teens while traveling and at the course. I was very nervous about several of the events (especially the ones high up in the trees, or jumping from a 20+ foot perch and swinging out on a rope), but we had one young man who was cheering me on and I was able to encourage the other teens to face their fears and persevere. I remember being up in the trees and even though I had a harness on and in my head I knew I couldn't fall, I was shaking from fear with tears running down my face because I was so scared. Shad told me he was proud of me that I was trying; that made all the difference.

It was a reinforcement in that moment of just how much we effect one another by our words and that we have a profound opportunity to be an encouragement to someone else who is struggling. It was amazing to be part of a team and be there to encourage each other. I guess that's truly my favorite thing about working for the court. I believe in what we do and am very thankful that I get to be part of it. I'm looking forward to working with detained youth and helping them develop basic life skills once our building remodel/addition is complete.

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my family and especially my four grandchildren. I enjoy gardening, decorating, building things and am considering beginning to work with restoring old furniture.