

Observer-Tribune

THE CHESTERS • THE MENDHAM

Oliver Twist still with us

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Contributing Writer

Mendham's Karen Carbonello, in recognizing the need for healing arts programs for children at risk with her founding of Creative Heartwork, the only non-profit in the state dedicated exclusively to art therapy for children, is a local barometer of a national trend.

Childhood traumas of Dickensian proportions, including abuse and neglect, are on the rise.

According to the federal Department of Health and Human Services, more children are now being abused and neglected than in 1986, and their injuries are more serious.

In 2000, three million referrals concerning the welfare of about five million children were made to Child Protective Service agencies throughout the United States.

Of these, about two-thirds were screened in, receiving investigations or assessments to determine whether the allegations could be substantiated.

Almost one-third of investigations resulted in a finding that the child was maltreated or at risk of maltreatment.

In the year 2000, about 879,000 children were found to be victims of maltreatment.

Other findings in the most complete (1993) National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect indicate:

- * Under the Endangerment Standard, the number of abused and neglected children nearly doubled from 1986 to 1993. Physical abuse nearly doubled, sexual abuse more than doubled, and emotional abuse, physical neglect, and emotional neglect were all more than two and one-half times the previously recorded levels.

- * The total number of children seriously injured and the total number endangered both quadrupled during this time.

- * Girls are three times more likely than boys to be sexually abused.

- * Boys had a greater risk of emotional neglect and of serious injury than girls.

- * Children of single parents had a 77-percent greater risk of being harmed by physical abuse, an 87-percent greater risk of being harmed by physical neglect, and an 80-percent greater risk of suffering serious injury or harm from abuse or neglect than children living with both parents.

- * Children in the largest families were physically neglected at nearly three times the rate of those who came from single-child families.

- * Race is not an issue in the incidence of maltreatment or maltreatment-related injuries.

Source: National Clearinghouse on Childhood Abuse and Neglect Information