

Winter Issue 2011

Volume 3 Issue 1

Tidbits

A quarterly newsletter from WV Birth to Three



*Bringing support and information to the children
and families of West Virginia*



WV Birth to Three
Regional Administrative Unit
Administered by RESA 8

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Daddy's Girl

Kurt Knodrich gave up his career as a police officer to fight for children with disabilities.

By Nancy Henderson

Kurt Kondrich could hear his newborn daughter Chloe crying in the adjacent hospital room just moments after his wife Margie had given birth. As a police officer, he had once delivered a baby on a sidewalk, and he knew the crying was a good sign.

"But I could tell, with my sixth sense or whatever, there was something wrong because they kept looking over us," Kondrich says. "And I kept saying, 'Is she okay?'" Then the doctor walked over with his mask on and looked at us and said, "Your baby has characteristics of Down Syndrome."

The doctor appeared to be startled that Kondrich would want to hold his child after hearing the news. "I would argue that she was prettier than the other girls there. She's a beautiful, beautiful angel," he recalls. "I was a cop then. I didn't know anything about Down Syndrome or disabilities. But I'm always up for a mission and a challenge. So that was the beginning of my journey into the disability field."

From Cop to Crusader

A take-charge "people person," Kondrich began his career in law enforcement in 1985, when he graduated with a criminology degree and landed a job with the Atlanta Police Department. Six years later, he became deputy sheriff in Fort Myers, Fla., but missed his family in Pittsburgh. So in 1993, when he heard that his hometown police department was hiring veteran officers, he applied for a job.

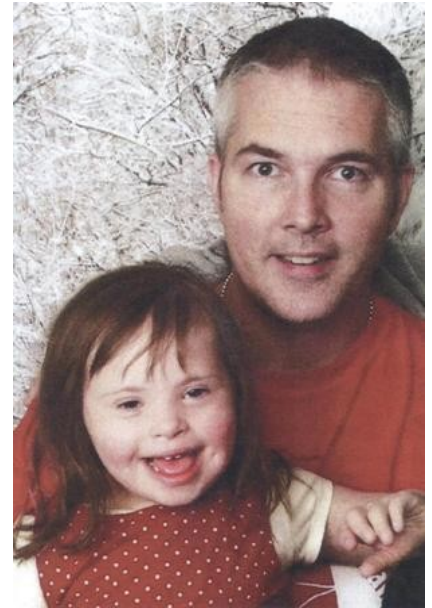
"I always loved community things," he says. "I used to walk the beat. I was a bicycle officer. I did the DARE program in some of the inner-city schools. I always enjoyed working with the community and doing that type of outreach. And that was probably preparing me for what I'm doing now."

After Chloe was born in May 2003, Kondrich's wife diligently worked with the little girl to sharpen her learning skills. Chloe underwent physical therapy, participated in a reading program using books with

sight words, and strongly bonded with her older brother Nolan, who nudged her along. "It was really neat to watch, you know. Even early on Chloe wanted to be like her brother," Kondrich says. "Through positive peer modeling, he was able to pull her up. She does well walking and running, and her speech is awesome. I'm sure we all aged a lot during those years, but like anything in life, if you put the hard work down early, it pays off in the long run."

Wanting to find out as much as he could about his daughter's preschool options, Kondrich attended gatherings of the Pittsburgh/Allegheny County Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC), an advisory group of parents, educators, service providers and agency representatives involved in early intervention services.

One of only a handful of fathers who came to the meetings, Kondrich began asking questions and soon found himself serving on the statewide ICC as a



SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

Do you know of a child who is not moving, hearing, seeing, learning, or talking like others his age? **WV Birth to Three** may be able to help. Please call 304-267-3595 or 1-866-681-4957. If you are in need of specific community resources, please contact your WVBTT Service Coordinator or Parent Partner.



If you would like more information on any of the topics in this newsletter or would like to submit a story or picture of your own, please feel free to contact your **Parent Partner, Dawn Heatwole**

Dawn Heatwole
Parent Partner

WV Birth to Three
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Martinsburg, WV 25401
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parent member. Later that year, he quit his job as a police officer and, when the chair of the Governor's Advisory Council for Early Intervention stepped down, he was asked to fill the vacancy. In 2007 he earned his masters degree in Early Intervention from the University of Pittsburgh.

Kondrich, 47, is now director of Community and Family Outreach at Early Intervention Specialists, a certified provider serving several Pennsylvania counties. He attends community fairs, baseball games and other events, where he educates the public about the importance of early childhood intervention. He often speaks to large crowds and has no qualms about calling on state legislators to win support for programs that affect children with disabilities. "A lot of times lobbyists don't really believe in what they're doing. They're just doing it because they're getting paid big money," Kondrich points out. "I'm not a lobbyist. I'm a father who's on a mission to make sure that long after I'm gone, I'm gonna leave behind these programs that are really entrenched. I'm kind of fearless. People say, 'How do you do that?' I just do it."

The law enforcement experience serves him well, he says. "I do move quickly," Kondrich says. "When I was a policeman and worked the night shift, especially in Atlanta, we'd be backed up on calls and I'd arrive at a house at 2:00 in the morning and people would be drunk or high and there'd be a fight. I'd have like 10 seconds to assess the situation, figure out if I needed backup, figure out if there are any weapons and if I could take this guy if I had to arrest him. I had to think real, real quick." In his current work, he says, "The message needs to get out there. It's not like you can do early intervention from 5 to 8, or 8 to 11. It's that important that parents know about it."

Last December, Kondrich won two major awards for his efforts. The state ICC gave him the Ronald Cowell Award for Excellence in Service to Young Children with Disabilities and Their Families, while the Infant and Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA) honored him with its 2009 Regional Parent Leadership Award at a conference in Washington, D.C. "He is tireless in his mission of acceptance and inclusion for special needs children," wrote one supporter. "In a very short time he has become well known throughout Pennsylvania as the parent advocate for children," said another. "Of all the parents I have ever worked with in 20 years, I have never met a parent more deserving of this award."

Living Proof

Chloe, now 7, is almost as well known as her father, from whom she apparently inherited her love of people. Now in second grade at a mainstream school, she frequently appears in video clips on her dad's blog (<http://chloesmessage.blogspot.com>), where she dances, reads and enthusiastically meets her state senators, some of whom



now keep her photograph on their desks. When she visits them, she often autographs copies of *Making a Case for Life* by author Stephanie Winkic. She is, after all, the girl on the cover. (EP reviewed the book in the June, 2010 issue.) "It's very powerful because a lot of these legislators are older and they didn't grow up with kids with Down Syndrome in their school," Kondrich says. "As a matter of fact, they were sent to institutions. So now a little girl walks in there and shakes their hand. She calls everybody 'buddy.'"

Chloe has also become a walking billboard for early childhood intervention. "It'll save the taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars over the course of her education by the fact that she's not being bussed and doesn't have to go to a special school," Kondrich says. "She reads better than some of the policemen I used to work with. I'm not kidding. She loves books. She just digests them...Chloe's gonna be running a school someday or she might run for office and get some sanity back in the state capital."

Until then, she'll keep winning over the lawmakers and high-profile celebrities. Pittsburgh Pirates third baseman Andy LaRoche, for example, featured her on a television show that aired in the U.S. and Canada. Her videos have garnered kudos from around the world. She even drew the attention of the Republican vice presidential candidate two years ago. When Sarah Palin, whose son Trig was born with Down Syndrome, came to town for a political rally, she spotted Chloe waving and holding a sign that read, "We love kids with Down Syndrome."

"So the Secret Service came over and said they wanted to meet us," recalls Kondrich. "They did not want to meet us for money or for our politics. You know why she wanted to meet us? Because Sarah saw a child with Down syndrome, a little girl who captivated her." When Palin returned to Pittsburgh to deliver a speech on disabilities, she once again singled out Chloe. "There was nothing mentioned about the campaign and election," Kondrich says, referring to the conversation that ensued between his wife Margie and Palin. "It was two mothers talking."

"She's changed people's attitudes," Kondrich proudly says of his daughter. "I honestly believe that in seven years, this child has done more and planted more positive seeds than most of the miserable people I have met in my lifetime, and I've met a lot of miserable people. She has unconditional love, purity and goodness. She just takes off and goes. I think that energy and passion is what drives me."

"It's just amazing to watch this child," he adds. "I tell people, 'Don't ever feel sorry for me.' If God showed up tomorrow and said, 'You know, we made a mistake. Here's your daughter and she's going to be on American Idol,' I'd say, 'No, no, no, you're not taking this one. She's all mine.'"

Nancy Henderson is an award-winning writer whose articles have appeared in Smithsonian, The New York Times, Parade, US Airways magazine and many other publications. She is author of *Able! How One Company's Extraordinary Workforce Changed the Way We Look at Disability Today* (BenBella Books). Nancy often writes about disability issues and people who are making a difference through their work.

ANNOUNCEMENTS!

HEALTHY PREGNANCY

Becoming a mother is one of the most exciting times in a woman's life. Whether you're dreaming of motherhood, trying to conceive, or already pregnant, you'll find mom-to-be tools, news, and information on all stages of pregnancy at:

www.womenshealth.gov

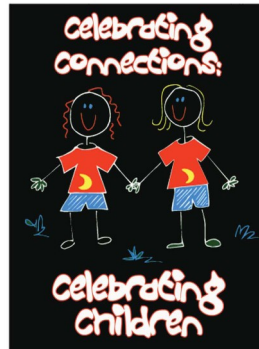
The web site covers topics such as:

Before You Get Pregnant:
Information for all Women

Getting Ready for Baby

Childbirth and Beyond

You won't want to miss this!



2011 Celebrating Connections

February 22-25
Charleston Civic Center
www.wvearlychildhood.org

Woodbine House specializes in books for and about children with special needs.

Check them out on-line at:

www.woodbinehouse.com

"The quickest way for a parent to get a child's attention is to sit down and look comfortable."

Community Spotlight Organization:

Friends in Action of the Eastern Panhandle (FIAEP)

Friends in Action of the Eastern Panhandle (FIAEP) is a network of people of all faiths and ethnic backgrounds whose common interest is to provide caring outreach to families in need in our community. Teams of 5-8 volunteer-mentors are linked with a family in their community for one year in a supportive relationship. The mission of the program is to help families identify their strengths and develop attainable and manageable goals that guide them toward financial independence and personal well being.

The FIAEP commitment is, first and foremost, a commitment to caring. Caring builds hope and feelings of self worth; it is the foundation of change. FIAEP is more than a conduit of resources from the middle and upper classes to the poor, it is an experience that builds community and enhances the lives of all who participate.

The families in our program have made a commitment to themselves and the program to actively pursue a better life for themselves and their children. They agree to welcome the outreach and caring from volunteers for one year to enrich their lives and those of their children.

For further information contact:

Melissa Mallamas, Executive Director
304-728-5012 or mmallamas@fiaep.org

CHECK OUT THESE WEBSITES!

<http://www.wvdhhr.org/wvbirth23>

<http://resa8.org>

<http://www.toddertoddler.com>

<http://www.creativekidsathome.com>

<http://www.wagesandstages.com>

<http://www.aap.org>

<http://www.healthychildren.org>

<http://www.growingchild.com>

<http://www.babyzone.com>

WV Birth to Three's Fall Lunch & Learn

Pam Zapf, OTR/L presented a workshop entitled, "Sensory Integration: How to Identify Sensory Integration Issues- Strategies and Techniques for Parents, Care Providers and Professionals" for the WVBTT Fall Lunch & Learn held at the WV School for the Deaf and Blind in Romney, WV on October 27, 2010. The session encompassed 3 hours, in which Pam guided the participants through several "Calming Suggestions and Activities" to use with children with Sensory Integration Disorder. The workshop was a great success, and Pam received an overwhelming positive response.

Thank you, Pam!



NURTURE YOUR CHILD'S CONFIDENCE

An article from www.zerotothree.org

Confidence is a belief in your ability to master your body, behavior, and the challenges you encounter in the larger world and is an essential ingredient for your child's healthy development. Children who are confident are eager to learn new skills and face new challenges.

Self-confidence is also crucial for getting along with others and working out everyday social challenges—such as sharing and making friends.

How does self-confidence develop? Starting from day one, a child learns who he is through his relationships and interactions with primary caregivers. Parents, relatives, child care providers and teachers reflect back to children their unique strengths and special attributes. In large part, a child's sense of confidence is shaped and nurtured by everyday experiences with those who care for him.

Here are several important ways that you can nurture your child's self-confidence through your everyday interactions together.

1. Establish routines with your child.

When events are predictable, happening in approximately the same way at approximately the same time each day, it helps your child feel safe, secure, confident, and in control of his world.

2. Make sure your child has lots of time to play.

Play is how children learn about themselves, other people, and the world around them. Through play, children also develop confidence - when they find the ball behind the couch, get

the right plastic shape into its hole, or make the jack in the box pop up. Let your child lead playtime - this will build her confidence, assertiveness, and leadership skills.

3. Help your child learn to be a problem-solver.

Help your child work through problems rather than solving them for her. Show her how to arrange the blocks on the bottom of the tower so they provide a secure base, then let her figure out to make it balance.

- Tell her that you see how frustrated she is.
- Ask her if she knows what may be causing the problem: *Why do you think it keeps falling?*
- Offer your observations, for example, noting that the rug is soft so the blocks aren't steady.
- Ask if she wants suggestions: How about building it on the hard floor?

The goal is to guide and support your child in her problem-solving efforts but not do for her what she has the skills to accomplish herself.

4. Give your child responsibilities.

Feeling useful and needed makes children feel important and builds confidence. Jobs should be age appropriate. Very young children can sort laundry with you, help feed pets, water plants, wipe off the table, pick up toys, etc..

5. Celebrate your child's successes.

Recognizing your child's accomplishments helps build his confidence. At meal time or before bed, talk about what your child did that day or is learning to do: *Today you worked hard on catching the ball. It was so much fun playing with you.*

6. Encourage your child to keep at the tasks he is struggling with.

Children learn by doing. Break down difficult tasks into manageable steps to help your toddler feel confident and successful. As you work on a task or skill that is tough for your child, let him know that you will not be disappointed if he isn't ready yet. You are there to support him whenever he wants to try again.

7. Talk about experiences to help your child make sense of them.

Prompt your child to find solutions to dilemmas. *You did a great job trying to pour your own juice. Some juice is in the cup. Some spilled. You look sad about that. It's okay. Spills happen when you're learning to pour. Here, you can wipe it up with this sponge. That pitcher is heavy for little hands. I'll give you a smaller one and you can try again.*

8. Be a role model for your child.

Your child is always watching you for clues about what to do or how to feel about different situations. Your reactions help your child learn how to handle emotions like sadness, anger, frustration, and how to solve problems or deal with challenges. So model the kinds of behaviors you want your child to develop.

Children Learn What They Live *by Dorothy Law Nolte*

If children live with criticism,
they learn to condemn.

If children live with hostility,
they learn to fight.

If they live with ridicule,
they learn to be shy.

If children live with shame,
they learn to feel guilty.

If children live with tolerance, they
learn to be patient.

If children live with encourage-
ment, they learn confidence.

If children live with praise,
they learn to appreciate.

If children live with fairness,
they learn justice.

If children live with security,
they learn to have faith.

If children live with approval,
they learn to like themselves.

If children live with
acceptance and friendship,
they learn to find
love in the world.



COMMUNITY EVENTS



Berkeley County

- *Children's Day at the Mall*, March 26th at Martinsburg Mall. Free, fun child-friendly activities 10am-3pm.
- "The Little Red Hen Cooking Show" at Wonderment Puppet Theater 412 W. King St. Martinsburg. Saturdays and Sundays through March 13th, noon and 2pm. Tickets \$4.50, no charge for children 2 years and under. Call 304-258-4074 or visit www.wondermentpuppets.com
- *Child Spirit Consignment Spring Sale* - March 10th & 11th at the Berkeley County Fairgrounds in Martinsburg. 10am - 8pm. Sale of gently used, high-quality children, youth and maternity clothing, plus toys and other items. Consignors and shoppers please go to: www.childspiritconsignment.com
- *Parent Support Group* for parents with children who have ADHD or other challenging behaviors. Starts January 24th 6:00pm - 7:30pm at Little Eagle Child Care Center in Kearneysville. Call Tricia Sheely at 304-433-4722 or email at jadenssmom@hotmail.com

Jefferson County

- *Father-Daughter Dance*: Feb 13th 3pm-5pm, Jefferson County Community Center at Sam Michaels Park. \$10/couple, \$4 each additional child. 304-728-3207 or visit: www.jcprc.org
- *Parent Support Group* for parents with children who have ADHD or other challenging behaviors. Starts January 24th 6:00pm - 7:30pm at Little Eagle Child Care Center in Kearneysville. Call Tricia Sheely at 304-433-4722 or email at jadenssmom@hotmail.com
- *Jefferson County Indoor Playground* for children up to age 5 will be offered on Thursdays and Fridays 9:00 - 11:00am & 1:00 - 3:00pm. \$5 per child/\$3 for each additional sibling. Located at the Jefferson County Parks and Recreation Building, 235 Sam Michael's Lane, Shenandoah Junction, WV 25442. Call 304-728-3207 or visit: www.jcprc.org



Washington County, MD

- *Trains of Christmas Show* at the Hagerstown Roundhouse Museum open on weekends now until Feb 27th. Adults \$4.00, 12 & under \$0.50. 301-739-4665 or visit: www.roundhouse.org

Frederick County, MD

- *Annual Winter Model Railroad Open House*, Frederick County Society of Model Engineers. January 23, 30 & February 6th. Railroad car filled with model train exhibit. 423 E. Patrick St. Frederick, MD. Free. Call 301-371-5293 or visit www.fcsme.com
- *Cabin Fever Festival* Feb. 12 & 13th at the Frederick County Fairgrounds in Frederick, MD. Arts & crafts show in heated buildings and tents. Adults \$6.00, children 12 & under \$3.00

Frederick County, VA

- *Free First Friday - Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum*, 54 S. Loudoun St., Winchester, VA. 5-7:30pm. Come explore the Museum free of charge. Call 540-722-2020 or visit: www.discoverymuseum.net

Other places to explore in the area:

- Discovery Station, 101 W. Washington St. Hagerstown, MD 301-790-0076
- Explore & More! Nature Zone at Jay Dees Family Fun Center. Seven rooms of interactive science fun! 2332 Henshaw Rd., Inwood, WV 25428. Call 304-229-4343 or visit: www.jaydeesfun.com

Grant Cty/ Hardy Cty

- For more information about future events in the Grant/Hardy Cty area visit: <http://gowv.com> or www.hardycountychamber.com



Morgan County

- *Morgan County Starting Points Play Group* for children birth - 5yrs meets at the MC Starting Points office located at 292 N. Washington St. Berkeley Springs each Wednesday at 9:00am. Call 304-258-5600 or email ProgramCoordinator@starting-points.org
- For more information about future events in Morgan County visit: www.berkeleysprings.com

Hampshire Cty/ Mineral Cty

- For more information about future events in the Hampshire/Mineral Cty area visit: <http://gowv.com> www.mineralcountywv.com www.cometohampshire.com

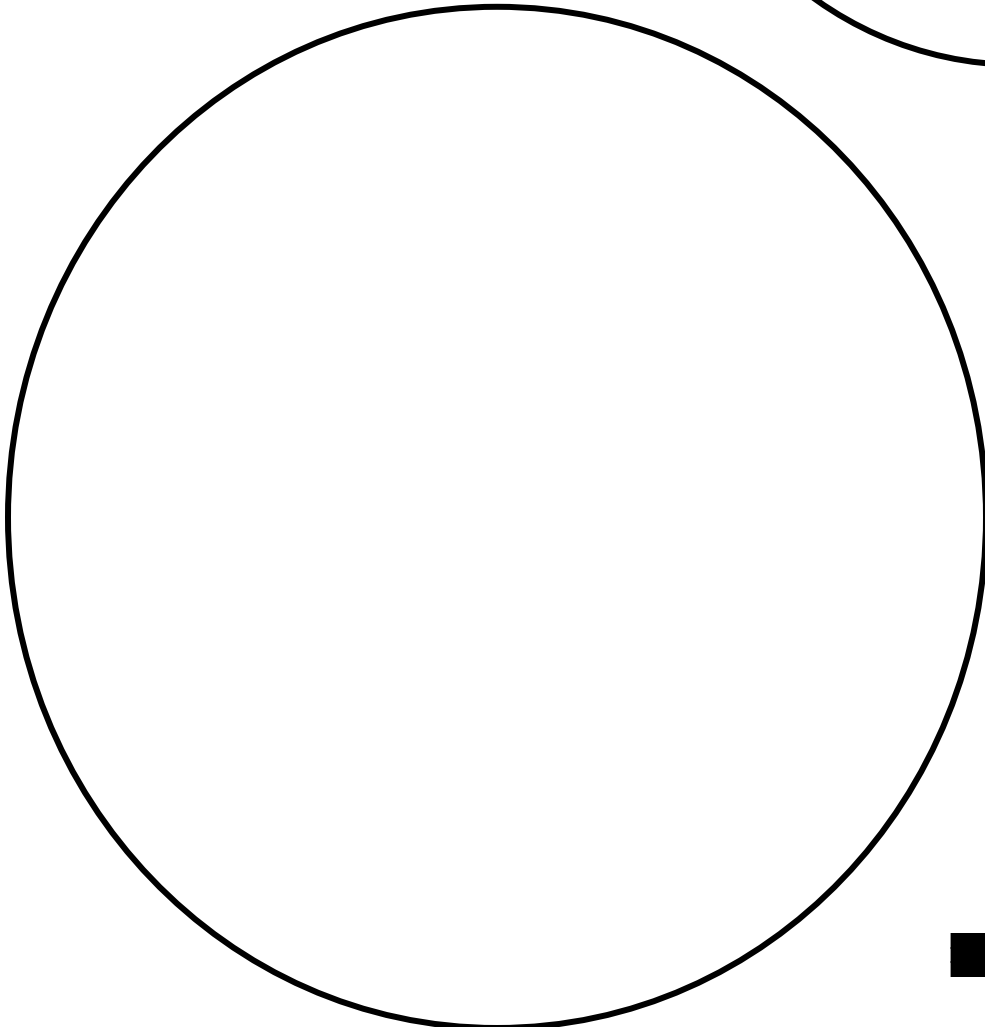
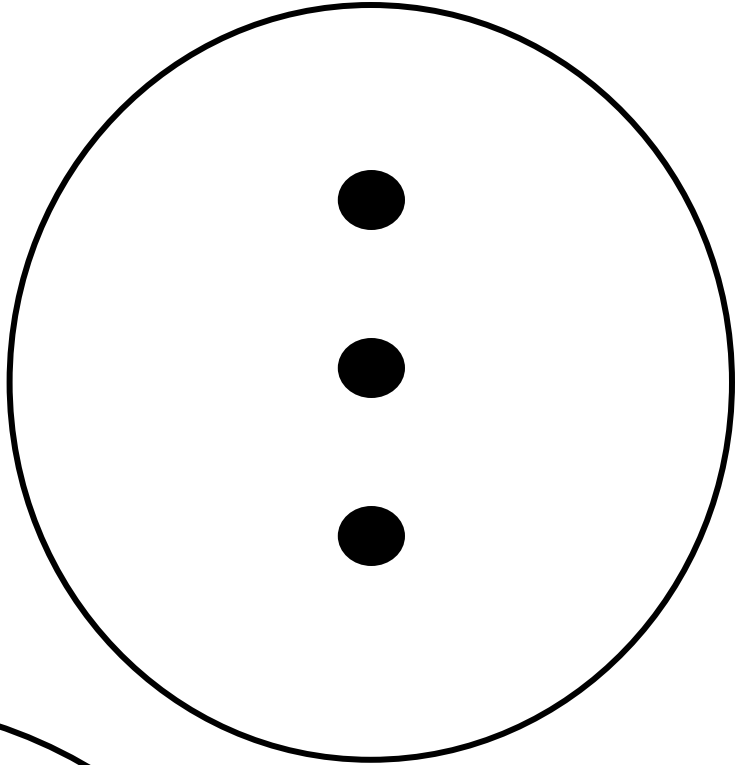
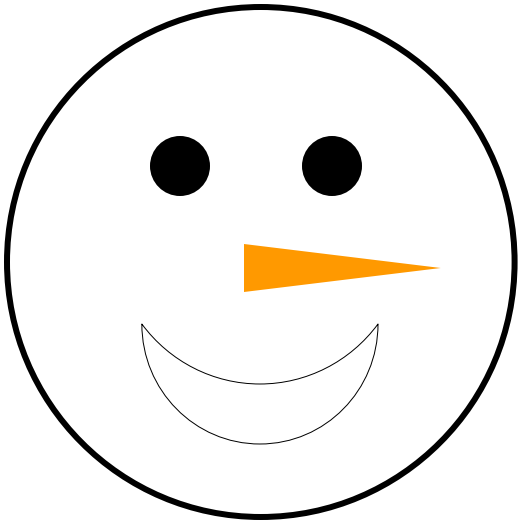
Pendleton County

- For more information about future events in Pendleton County, please visit: <http://gowv.com> www.pendletoncounty.net





BUILD A SNOWMAN!



Region 8 Regional Administrative Unit

109 South College Street
Martinsburg, WV 25401
Phone: 1-304-267-3595
Fax: 1-304-267-3599
Toll free: 1-866-681-4957
www.wvdhhr.org/birth23
Counties served: Berkeley,
Grant, Hampshire, Hardy,
Jefferson, Mineral, Morgan,
Pendleton



WV Birth to Three is administered by the Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health, Office of Maternal, Child and family Health in cooperation with the Early intervention Inter-agency Coordinating Council (ICC).

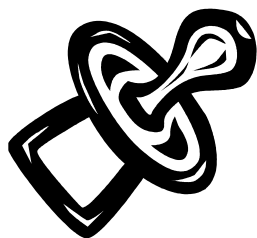
HEALTH TIP: If your baby uses a pacifier, be SAFE!

A pacifier is a relatively safe device for babies, but it should still be used properly to avoid potential problems. The American Academy of Pediatrics offers these suggestions for pacifier use:

*Never offer your baby the nipple & top from a baby bottle in place of a pacifier, as it poses a choking hazard. *Buy pacifiers that can't be separated or disassembled. *Solid plastic pacifiers are especially safe choices. *The widest part of the pacifier should be at least 1 1/2 inches wide so it can't fit in baby's mouth. It should also have ventilation holes.

*Don't tie your baby's pacifier to the baby or the crib.

*Examine pacifiers regularly to see if the rubber is deteriorating, tearing or changing color. *Replace when it shows signs of wear. *Don't use a pacifier designed for a younger baby, who has a smaller mouth.



FIVE RESOLUTIONS

Every Parent Should Make:

According to Good Morning America's parenting contributor Ann Pleshette Murphy

1. Catch Kids Being Good (praise them as much as possible)
2. Add Some Boredom to Kids' Lives (by planning more down time)
3. Read to Kids Every Night
4. Laugh a Lot
5. Plan Adult Time