

CAFA

CHRISTIANS AS FAMILY ADVOCATES NEWSLETTER



THIS ISSUE'S FEATURES:

- A Letter From Our Founder
- Meet & Greet
- Welcome New Partner Churches!
- Integrating Faith & Mental Health
- A Mental Health Moment

A LETTER FROM OUR FOUNDER

CAROLYN REXIUS, LCSW

Colossians 2:6 says, "Just as you trusted Christ to save you now walk in Him". The Bible goes on to explain that life problems and struggles with relationships are a part of living for everyone. Since it was written, people have found wisdom in the pages of the New Testament. Wisdom that lightens the load of the pain of living, That wisdom is truth that gives insight to both the Christian and the non-believer.

When I began as a Lay Counselor in the local Church, my husband and I had decided years before that when our youngest child, Suzi, started high school I would go back to college to become a Professional Counselor. I registered at the U of O on my 42nd birthday. Many said to me, "You will be 50yrs old before you are licensed!" I replied: " I will be 50 anyway, I might as well be better equipped to help people."

Now at 82 yrs old, I am still blessed to be helping people. When I began there were very few professional therapists who held a Christian faith & worldview. So, my mission was to offer my services in particular to clients of the Christian faith. I offered marriage and parenting classes in many different churches. When Echo Lucas and I started CAFA, our primary focus was the Christian community.

As CAFA grew our clients came from all sorts of places in the community. We held firm to the inspiration and guidance of our faith and our connections with the local Church.

When our supervised visitation services began, we were in full partnership with many local churches. They provided the physical space and the volunteers from their congregations. We could not have offered the children this chance to stay in relationship with their parent without the full participation of the local church. When CAFA began our Safe Families for Children ministry, once again the local churches made it happen. We have always seen CAFA as a partner to the local church in providing services to the hurting families of Lane County, in addition to being a mental health agency providing for the mental health needs of the local population.

It is with great excitement that we expand on that ministry as Toby expands the number of churches who partner with us in these efforts. We have always been an active Church community member, we look forward to "enlarging our tent".

Partnering with the Local Church: Continuing our journey together.



Meet & Greet: Toby Gallego

CAFA is excited to introduce you to Toby Gallego, our new Church Engagement Coordinator for Safe Families and Kids Connecting! Toby is currently completing his Masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Bushnell University. Over the past few months many people at CAFA have benefited from Toby's therapeutic hospitality as he provides counseling and fulfills his internship requirement for his degree. Prior to seeking his degree, Toby served as a pastor. Throughout his time leading a faith community, Toby has built relationships across Lane County with pastors and faith leaders. He has a heart for others and desires deeply to mentor and encourage everyone to be who God has made them to be. We are so excited to watch

what God does with Toby as he continues to carry the work, and resources CAFA provides out into the community. If you are interested in learning more about how your church can participate in Safe Families or Kids Connecting please reach out to Toby by calling our office or emailing him at tobyg@cafaweb.com.



Welcome to Our New Partner Churches!

Crisis and relationship struggles unfortunately impact many families in Lane County. When adults struggle with mental health problems, addiction, and painful pasts they can struggle to be safe for those they love and problems arise in families. Our hope is that with the right kind of support, equipping these individuals with knowledge, skills, and insights, and giving families safe places to connect with one another healing can lead to reunions and safe, healthy, thriving families. There are two services provided by CAFA that do just this and they could not be done without the local Church. One of these programs is called Kids Connecting, a supervised visitation program. For this program to thrive we need Partner Churches to provide spaces for safe, comfortable, playful visits between children and their non-custodial parent. (continued on the next page...)



Welcome New Partner Churches! cont.

We also need volunteers who are able to be present in these visits to help ensure everyone is comfortable and follows important guidelines that keep everyone safe. We are so grateful to Fairfield Baptist Church for joining us in providing space for this program!

Safe Families for Children is another program at CAFA that cannot be done without volunteers and Church communities committing to serve. Safe Families provides tangible support to parents and hosts children while parents are navigating a crisis or struggle that otherwise might lead to neglect or trigger more intense challenges for the family. Sometimes parents are needing to travel for work, have a medical procedure, or are working to establish safe housing. With the help of faith communities in Lane County we can help parents feel seen and supported, help them keep their relationships with their children, and help kids feel safe and cared for while their parents tackle some of life's greatest struggles. Thank you to First Baptist Church for committing to join us in keeping families together in Lane County!

Integrating Faith & Mental Health

When CAFA began in the early 90's, the idea of people having a therapist in a similar way to having a family doctor was just taking hold of the country. This was a bit of a dilemma for many Christians. They felt the same pain and confusion over life problems and relationships as their non-Christian neighbor but held a worldview that these problems should not be, or that they could pray the struggles away. Because of this, many were leery of going to therapy. If they did choose to pursue therapy they desired and struggled to find a therapist who was open about being a Christian.

For many, that struggle continues today. Our faith encourages us with the gifts of "a peace that passes understanding" (Philippians 4:7). We believe we should have endurance and confidence and courage to face the world and any struggles we have with our mind, heart, and body. And it's true - our faith can help us! We also benefit from acknowledging we live in bodies and have brains that have biological limitations and factors that influence how we experience this world. It is out of these two things CAFA has created a "Faith & Mental Health" series. We'd love to share it with your church! Contact our office to learn more.

Faith and Mental Health Moment

With Executive Director Corey Jackson, LPC

Relationships: A Life Issue

An 80 year longitudinal study from Harvard University identified a key factor in life expectancy and healthy aging. The Harvard Study of Adult Development followed cohorts of individuals for 80 years and looked at a variety of factors associated with those who lived healthy lives well into their later years. There was one factor that proved to be a better indicator of life expectancy than anything else. More important than genetics or even lifestyle was the presence of healthy relationships.

The study found that the quality of relationships was a better indicator of life expectancy than cholesterol levels. Those with close friends and family by age 50 were by far the healthiest by age 80. The opposite was also found to be true. Chronic loneliness was listed as powerful as smoking or alcoholism in terms of negative health outcomes. The study showed that not only are relationships good for the body, but also may have protective factors supporting healthy brain functioning into the later years. The joy experienced through relationships was found to contribute to more lasting and sustaining health impacts than wealth or fame. Putting in the work to increase the quality of our relationships really does pay off.

To me, this all seems to point to the idea that we are, at our core, relational beings. We are created for relationships! God's call for us to meet together frequently and the social safety net created by health church affiliation could literally be adding days or years to your life. It is no coincidence that

CAFA has recently taken steps to collaborate and support our local churches. We believe that the church is one of the few remaining places to meet others, make friends, and foster healthy relationships. We will continue to roll out trainings and seminars in our community to promote healthy communication, social skills, and conflict resolution vitally needed to foster healthy relationships. This is part of our commitment to the sanctity of life. So the next time you are spending time with the people you care about, take a moment to reflect on how this may be real investment in the future of your mind, body, and spirit.

Interested in learning more?
You can read Liz Mineo's
article from the
Harvard Gazette here:



Or listen to Professor Waldinger's
Ted Talk reviewing the study here:



Want to help us continue the good work of
connecting to & equipping the local church?

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