

There's Hope For Neglected Kids

By Quinn Leggett



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There is hope for the abused and neglected child.

Effective programs have been developed to aid families in solving their problems or at least in coping with them.

Many young, inexperienced parents cannot cope with the common problems involved in raising their children. Resistance in toilet training, bedwetting and tantrums can become so frustrating to parents, that it may lead to severe discipline and punishment. This can lead to the strong possibility of abuse and neglect.

Lack of parenting skills may not be the only problem a family possesses. There could be several factors that contribute to the cause of stress in a family unit, such as marital problems, economic, emotional and social problems. Many parents are socially isolated, without friends or relatives to give emotional support. Therefore, parents at-

tending parenting skills classes can meet other parents with similar problems of child rearing and discover they are not totally alone. This is one way of helping the socially isolated family to develop relationships with other parents.

Staff of child protective agencies consists of child protective social workers, homemakers, volunteers and foster grandparents. Each staff member presents a different role and provides a different function to the family. However, all members of the staff are striving toward the common goal: the best interest of the child.

The child protective service worker has legal authority to protect children. Therefore, they are responsible for the overall welfare of the child.

The worker has the responsibility for making sure the abused and neglected child receives the proper medical attention and must

familiarize himself or herself with the child's medical history. It is important that the worker evaluate the developmental status and psychological growth of the child. This information may be a highly useful resource when a court of law is making its decision in regard to neglect and abuse.

Their position may be demanding and the total well-being of the child may depend on the decision made by the worker. A good example

of the importance of decision-making is when an abused and neglected child is able to return to his home or is placed in an alternate home or environment. This is a crucial decision for the worker to make, for the welfare of the child is the worker's main concern. It is preferable to keep the child in its own home and to work with the family as a unit.

If the child remains in the home, an appropriate treatment plan will be arranged for the parents and the child. It is important that the worker be aware of and recognize the treatment needs of the parent and the child. The treatment is designed to help the parents, not to punish them.

This is not an easy job. It sometimes seems impossible to establish a rapport with one's clients.

Many times the families are very hostile and do not realize that the social worker is there to help them. Once the worker has established a rapport with her client, it is much easier to communicate effectively with them and to help them.

A caseworker may decide to assign a homemaker or volunteer to a family that can utilize the services that the agency is providing.

Homemakers in the home can be of vital help to the caseworker as well as to the family itself. Homemakers observe basic family patterns of behavior to assist in evaluating the home situation. They teach the basic skills in home management, such as food planning, marketing and providing transportation. They also offer understanding and

emotional support to the parents.

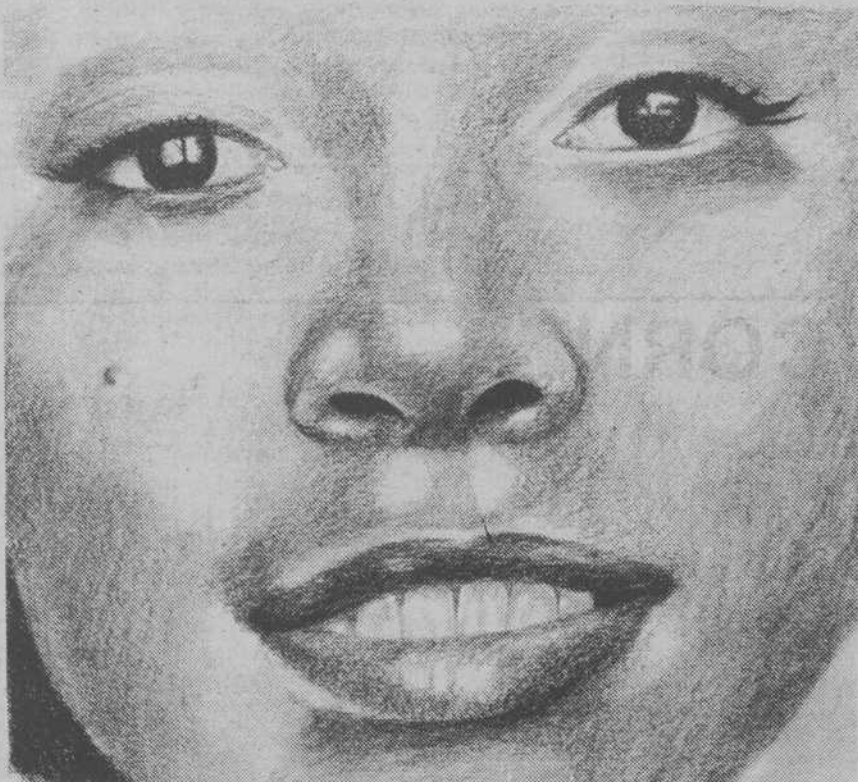
Although the homemaker visits the home more frequently than the caseworker and the family may think of her as a friend, the homemaker has the responsibility to report any incident occurring in the home which may affect the safety of the child.

The job, to be sure, can be frustrating as well as physically and emotionally draining. One receives few rewards and not much personal satisfaction.

Therefore, I personally believe it takes special kinds of persons who are willing to give of themselves and have real concern for helpless little children.

I'm not saying we can save all the children. My (See Children, page 23)

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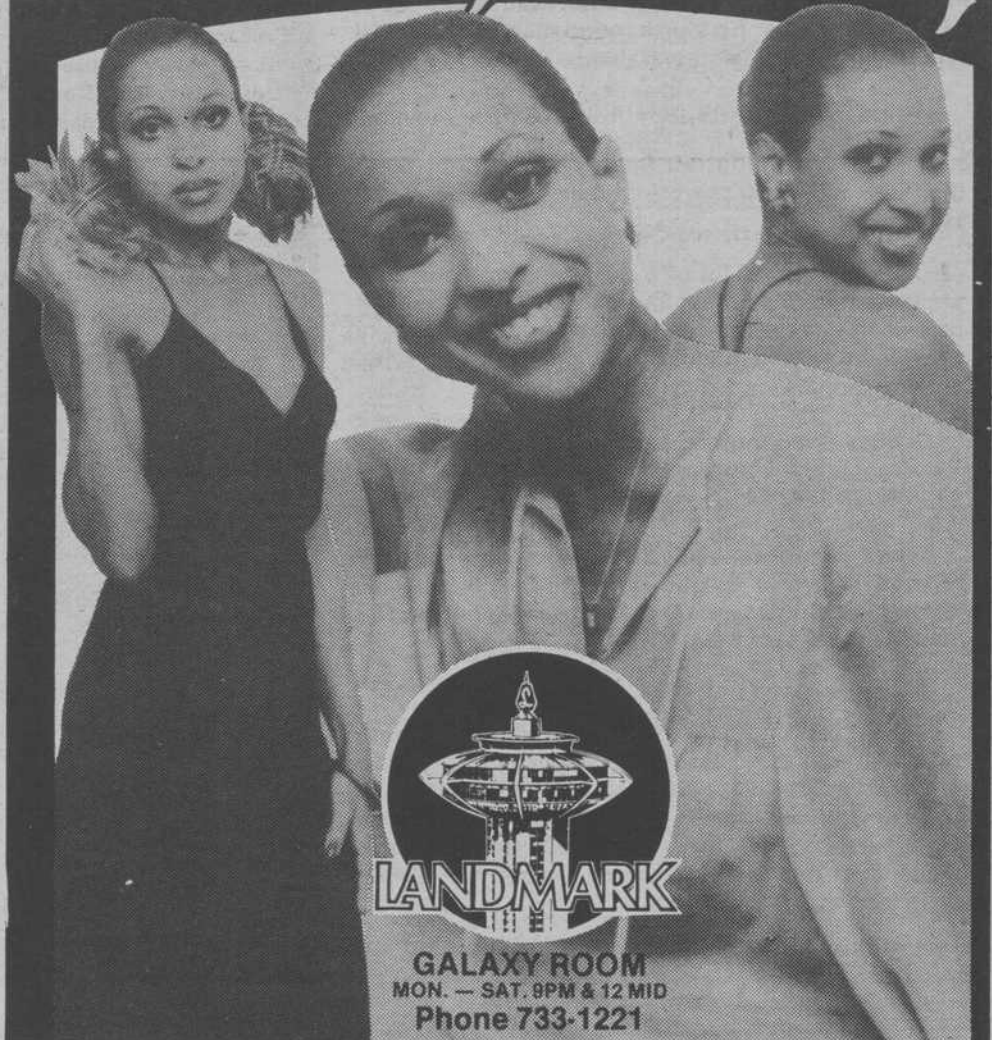
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