

It takes a community to raise a child

Richard D. Ackley, Jr.

In 1994 children's author Jane Cowen-Fletcher released a book, published by Scholastic Press, called, "It Takes a Village" which shares the story of a young African girl who is tasked with taking care of her little brother during market day. The girl loses track of her brother, searches the entire market, only to find the rest of the village has also been watching over him as well.

The Sokaogon Chippewa Community of Mole Lake has been successful locally, and setting an example for its community children, utilizing a community garden initiative which has been in operation for the past several years. The garden which is maintained by community member and Environmental Department Director Tina VanZile, has been a valuable tool in building positive attitudes among youth.

VanZile is involved in ensuring water quality safety and keeps the entire community aware of protecting its water quality and enforcing a successful "recycling program."

"The community garden offers young participants a variety of unique learning experiences, thereby enabling these young people to

gain valuable "hands-on" capabilities along with the satisfaction of watching the fruits of their labor materialize," said VanZile.

VanZile also gets the community youth involved in an annual Environment Fair. The Sokaogon Chippewa Community is working with the magnitude of the many possible juvenile delinquency distractions facing our youth today and its tribal government staff and volunteers recognize that it is truly a community's responsibility to "help raise" its children and it must continue and it must constantly include positive activities and experiences.

Several years ago, Associate Attorney General Tom Perrelli announced the "Attorney General's Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence" on Oct. 13, 2011. This Task Force, part of the Attorney General's Defending Childhood Initiative; is a project that addresses the epidemic levels of exposure to violence faced by the nation's children.

Based on testimony at four public hearings, comprehensive research, and extensive input from experts, advocates, and impacted families and communities nationwide, the

Defending Childhood Task Force issued a report to the Attorney General presenting its findings and comprehensive policy recommendations back in the fall of 2012. The report served as a blueprint for preventing children's exposure to violence and for reducing the negative effects ex-

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perienced by children across the United States.

Whether as victims or witnesses to violence, this exposure is often associated with long-term physical, psychological, and emotional harm. A higher risk of engaging in criminal behavior later in life and becoming part of a cycle of violence is also of great concern. Almost one in 10 American children saw one family member assault another family member, and

more than 25 percent had been exposed to family violence during their life.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), which promotes pediatrics and advances child health priorities; "The major setting for violence in America is the home." When children are exposed to a traumatic event, including a violent crime, their response may vary. Some children become fearful. They may prefer to stay at home, and they may have trouble sleeping and concentrating in school. Appetites often change, and children may complain of headaches, stomachaches, and other vague symptoms. Even minor changes in their daily routines can upset them terribly.

The cycle of violence some children exposed to violence learn to resolve their own conflicts in a violent manner. Others seem to become desensitized to violence and the pain and distress of others. Some retreat into a shell, avoiding people and the world around them.

All children require love, nurturing, and support, to grow mentally and physically

healthy and thrive and to break the cycle of violence affecting them. The AAP is helping in a variety of ways including developing policy, conducting research, lobbying Congress, building coalitions, raising public awareness, funding community-based projects, and supporting

training and professional education.


With community programs and members like VanZile helping look out for kids in the Sokaogon Chippewa Community of Mole Lake, we hope to keep them safe and break the cycle of violence.

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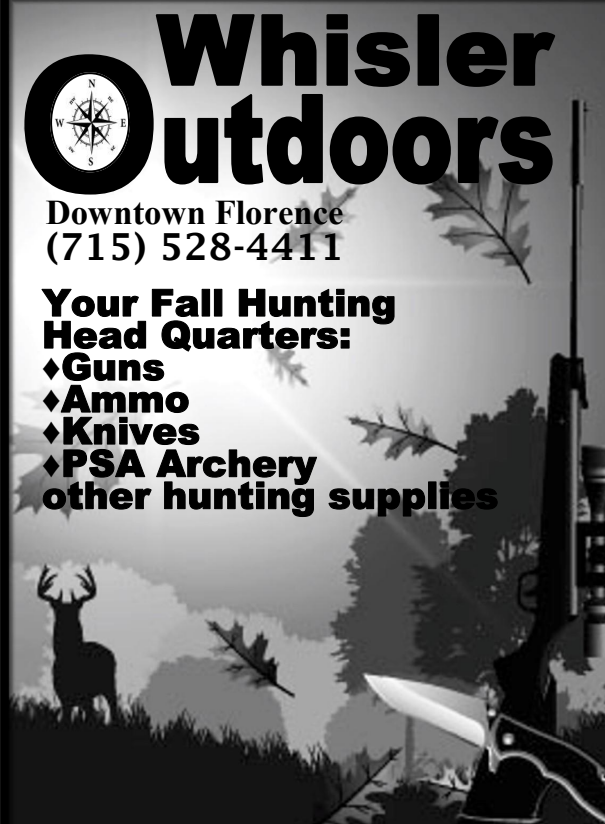
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