

PROJECT SUN

Helping children flourish

Supporting Our LGBTQIA+ Children

Guest Speakers:

Rev. Barbara Lohrbach

St. John United Church of Christ,
Pastor, & Kankakee PFLAG Facilitator

Jennifer Corke-Kafer

Parent & Advocate

Arwa Sons

Clinical Director, Nexus Indian Oaks
Family Healing Center

Term of the Month:

LGBTQIA+

A common abbreviation for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual, Transgender, Genderqueer, Queer, Intersexed, Agender, Asexual, and Ally community.

Source: uis.edu

I grew up in a conservative religious community so I've heard all the arguments about why my beloved daughter needs to change a part of who she is. A library of books line my shelves in my attempt to reconcile my faith and my understanding of sexuality and gender identity. More importantly, I have relationships with people who have taught me about acceptance and love. I no longer feel the need to reconcile my faith and my acceptance of those who are LGBTQ for there is no conflict. I hope to help some other parent find a way to that love and acceptance as well. I have a lesbian daughter, her name is Sarah. That is not a confession—that is a joy! - Rev. Barbara Lohrbach

All major professional mental health organizations have affirmed that all variations of sexuality and gender are not mental illnesses. Mental illnesses faced by those in the community are often a result of non-acceptance, discrimination, family rejection, and prejudice. As parents, there is a lot we can do to combat that with our kids, whether they are a part of the LGBTQ+ community or not. We can be a huge catalyst for community acceptance and allyship. - Jennifer Corke-Kafer

November's Parent Café, "**Supporting Our LGBTQIA+ Children**" will be held via webinar on November 19, 5:30-7:00 PM. For registration information, visit the Project SUN Facebook page or [CLICK HERE](#).

LGBTQIA+ Resources For...

- [Everyone - Guide to Being an Ally to Transgender and Nonbinary Youth](#) - An introductory, educational resource that covers a wide range of topics and best practices on how to support transgender and nonbinary people.
- [Youth - How to Help Yourself or a Friend](#) - Young people of all backgrounds experience mental health challenges, and research shows LGBTQ+ youth to be at a higher risk for mental health disorders. Here's how to help!
- [Parents & Caregivers - Talking With Your Questioning Teen](#) - Five conversation-starting tips to support and guide a teenager who might be curious or confused about their gender identity.
- [School Counselors - Supporting LGBTQ+ Students](#) - Tips for working with LGBTQ students virtually amid COVID-19.
- [Professionals - Black & African American LGBTQ Youth Report](#) - Explore data on a range of topics - from the importance of family connections to the role that schools play in the lives of Black and African American LGBTQIA+ youth.

Managing Grief & Loss During the Holidays

Grief and loss can be particularly painful during the holiday season. Youth and caregivers are invited to join us for interactive events planned for each group. Learn grief management skills, about local resources, and how to support others who are struggling.

Presenters for these events will include:

- Donna Balazs, MA, LCPC - Bereavement Coordinator, Uplifted Care
- Moshe Brownstein, LCSW - Counselor, Collective Balance Counseling LLC

Let's Talk Event for Young Adults

Project SUN's "Let's Talk: Breaking the Silence" series for young adults, ages 16-21, will take place online **Thursday, Dec 10, from 6:30 - 8:00 PM**. Participants will hear from a panel about grief and loss resources and break into discussion groups.

[CLICK HERE to share the registration link.](#)

December's Parent Café

Project SUN's December Parent Café, "Managing Grief and Loss During the Holiday Season," will take place online via GoToWebinar, **Thursday, December 17, from 5:30 - 7:00 PM**.

[CLICK HERE to register.](#)



Helpful Resources

We challenge you to read at least one of these resources!

Visit projectsunkankakee.wordpress.com/ to comment and share your thoughts or questions. Pass along what you find helpful to a friend or family member!

FRIENDLY READ - Less Than 5 Minutes

- [Involving Your Child in Their Treatment Decision-Making Process](#) - Giving children information appropriate for their developmental age can help their understanding of their condition and treatments and enhance their confidence.

REFLECTIVE READ - More than 5 Minutes

- [Sesame Street's Parent Resilience Building Guide](#) - "Little Children, Big Challenges" offers tips to parents on how to help their child develop resilience skills to face challenges that occur throughout the day.
- [The Importance and Paradox of Early Childhood Care and Education](#) - Dependable child care is critical for healthy development. However, costs are often unaffordable, and many child care workers are not making a living wage.

ACADEMIC READ - Longer than 10 Minutes

- [Supporting Children and Youth in the Child Welfare System during COVID-19](#) - It is essential that child welfare professionals recognize the strengths and potential of all children and youth rather than focus on risks and deficits.

Key Takeaways From "Anxiety: Symptoms and Treatment Options for Early Childhood Through Adolescence"

October's Parent Café presenter, Dr. Khalid Arshad, is a Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Specialist for Riverside Medical Center. Dr. Arshad provided helpful response to two key participant questions.

What options for treatment can I pursue for my child who might be showing signs of anxiety?

If your child's anxiety has little effect on their day-to-day functioning, your first move can be to consider parenting approaches that provide structure, empathy, and support. If you see anxiety impacting their daily functioning, starting Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) may help. Feel free to meet with a few therapists until you find one that your child feels comfortable with. If therapy is not showing improvement, talk with your therapist about adding medication to their treatment plan. Often medication is more effective with continued therapy.

My child uses breathing exercises to calm their anxiety at school, but now can't do them with a mask. What can we do?

In this situation, one sensory perception is drowning out the others. So try helping them use all five senses. We call these grounding techniques. If the child is sitting, ask them to focus on what they are feeling as they sit and consider the sounds around them. This helps draw their mind away from their anxiety.

A second option is progressive muscle relaxation. Ask your child to focus on relaxing each part of their body one part at a time, from their neck to their toes. They can do this silently, even in a classroom environment.

Final 2020 System of Care Community Navigator Training

Wednesday, Nov 18 | 8:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Help us build a Strong and Unified Network in Kankakee County! Open to all who are interested, this training is a tool designed to benefit your work, or simply enhance your personal knowledge. Attendees will learn to use the online Kan-I Help database, and scenarios when they might choose to make a referral to Project SUN. *2021 training dates coming soon!*

CLICK HERE to register and learn more.



Help Us Connect With Children's Arts & Recreational Activities

Nearly 100 arts and recreational activities are now listed on kanihelp.org. Project SUN is looking to connect with even more local options, as these informal supports often play a large role in a child's mental wellness.

Click here to explore local activities on Kan-I Help. Contact the Project SUN office to suggest other options: ProjectSUN@cfkrv.org

Peer Parent Mentor Position

Do you have experience in securing mental, emotional, or behavioral health services for your child?

You may qualify for a part-time Peer Parent Mentor position. Your efforts to secure services for your child have given you valuable insights. As a Peer Parent Mentor, you will provide support to parents and other caregivers who need help in navigating their child's journey through the system of care.

Apply today!

Email your cover letter and resume to ProjectSUN@cfkrv.org

Racial Justice Film Screening Series Schedule for 2021 Coming Soon

Your help is needed! Throughout 2021, Project SUN will be hosting screenings and discussions of race-themed films to address systemic racism. To assist Project SUN in planning this year-long series or offer a film suggestion, please contact projectsun@cfkrv.org.