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Exploration Station's New “Feelings Room” Open House November 19

Created out of a partnership between Project SUN and the Exploration Station...a children's museum, a facility of the Bourbonnais Township Park District, the Feelings Room is intended to help children explore their feelings.

The Pledge for Life Partnership Life Education Center and Project SUN will join the Exploration Station in hosting a free open house event to showcase this new permanent social-emotional health exhibit. The Open House will take place **Saturday, November 19, from 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM.**

The Exploration Station is located at 1095 West Perry Street, Bourbonnais. Exhibits are primarily targeted at children between the ages of 2-8. However, it is a space the entire family can enjoy. Families are invited to come see the exhibit and experience some "just for the fun of it!" activities.

Watch the video below for a peak at the new exhibit:



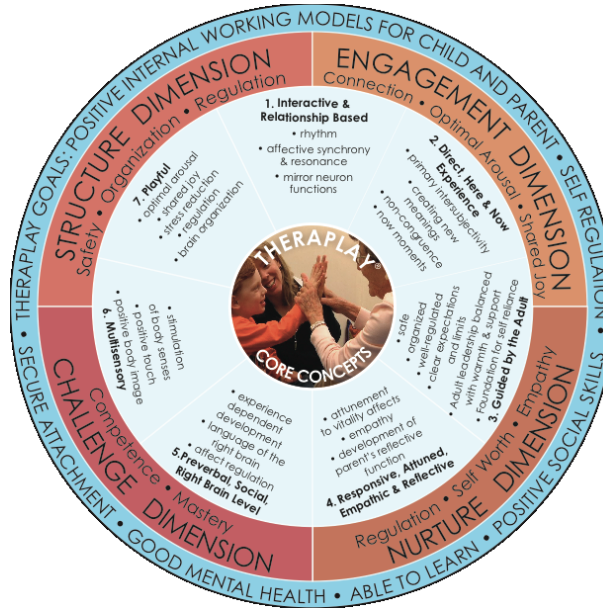
"Just for the fun of it!" Campaign Launched

The "just for the fun of it!" campaign was birthed out of the notion that busy families sometimes need to be reminded that it is necessary for families to take time to do fun things together. The campaign will introduce examples of simple, inexpensive fun (and sometimes silly) activities families can try that will foster healthy communication skills, while building trusting relationships!

Activities are designed to build strong attachments between children and the important adults in their lives using research-based strategies developed by The Theraplay Institute (TTI). Theraplay has been recognized by the Association of Play Therapy as one of the top **psychotherapies for children**. It was developed over 50 years ago, and is practiced around the world.

TTI asserts that strong attachment between the child and the important adults in their life has long been believed to be the basis of lifelong good mental health as well as the mainstay of resilience in the face of adversity. Modern brain research and the field of neuroscience have shown that attachment is the way in which children come to understand, trust, and thrive in their world.

The Four Core Concepts of Theraplay



[Click here](#)

Theraplay interactions focus on four essential qualities found in healthy parent-child relationships:

Structure: *"I feel safe."* The adult, the leader in the relationship, creates organization and predictability for the child, which communicates safety.

Nurture: *"I feel special."* The adult provides caring that can calm and soothe the child in a manner that makes one feel good physically and emotionally.

Engagement: *"I feel seen."* The adult is present in a manner that the child experiences being seen, heard, felt, and accepted.

Challenge: *"I feel strong."* The adult supports the child in the acquisition and mastery of new skills, enhancing the child's sense of competence and confidence.

Project SUN Welcomes New Faces

Sarah Winkel, Karla Duran Fragoso, and Rosalinda Chavez join Shemara Fontes (who is now full-time), Cyndi Brown, Rhonda Showers, and Deb Baron as Project SUN staff members.

Debra Mayconich Baron, PhD, directs Project SUN. She has a long history of working to make Kankakee and Iroquois counties safer and healthier places to live and work. Having joined the CFKRV staff in October 2018, Dr. Deb is passionate about helping children and their families flourish. She has been involved in numerous efforts to address mental health services, substance abuse and violence prevention, self-empowerment, community engagement, and racial justice.

As a graduate of Illinois State University with an extensive experience in the recreation industry, **Sarah Winkel** will serve as the new program manager. She is passionate about working with our partners to offer families programs and services to help them flourish. With the motto, *"We need to*

serve the communities we live in," Sarah will oversee Project SUN's program operations.

Project SUN's communications coordinator is **Shemara Fontes**, MBA. She is a recent graduate of ONU and has been with Project SUN for over one year and a half, initially serving as our community outreach intern. She is from the Cape Verdean islands and is an ally and big advocate for Social Justice. She will also lead our youth engagement activities.

Serving as our administrative assistant **Karla Duran-Fragoso** was born and raised in Mexico City. She has a Degree in International Relations from Universidad del Valle de Mexico and is fluent in English, Spanish, and French. Karla has been living in Kankakee for the last past 3 years, working in different industries. She is involved in creating a space for open conversation about equity, racism, and social awareness in the LatinX community in Kankakee County.



From left to right we have Shemara Fontes, Karla Duran Fragoso, Rhonda Showers, Cyndi Brown, Rosa Chavez, Sara Winkel, and Deb Baron.

Rhonda Showers works with Project SUN part-time as our lead parent liaison. She also represents the Mental Health Network of Kankakee County, which she founded to build relationships among providers and the community to strengthen our county's response to the mental health challenges we face. Additionally, she works as the Community Outreach Pastor at Peoples Church in Bourbonnais. She brings a wealth of experience working with families and helping them to access resources.

Cynthia Brown, also known as Cyndi, is a daughter, mother, grandmother, and wife. She is a caregiver in every sense of the word, particularly caring for her grandson and her father. Cyndi has a passion for helping others. She works with Project SUN as a peer mentor and hosts our monthly Caregiver Craft Classes. These classes also serve as an informal support group for those caring for children in the behavioral health system of care. She enjoys all aspects of learning and is eager to take on new jobs to help Project SUN wherever she can.

Rosa Chavez is no stranger to Project SUN, having served on the Pledge for Life Partnership Youth Advisory Council for the past four years. A first-year student at Kankakee Community College, she will serve as our new community outreach intern. Rosa is passionate about mental health. She looks forward to working with various youth groups in Kankakee County. As an intern,

she will be helping to staff our outreach events and provide support for our youth engagement activities.



Project SUN table at the Strong House Fall Fest



Staff at the Community Foundation Masquerade Ball

Cyndi's Caregiver Craft Classes 

 *Pill Bottle Snowman*

**November, 28th
6:00-8:00 PM
701 S. Harrison Ave
Kankakee, IL**

**For all parents and caregivers with
children in the behavioral health system
in Kankakee County**

REGISTER VIA EVENTBRITE 

[You Can Also Register Here](#)

LGBTQ+ Initiative information



An important step in supporting Kankakee LGBTQ+ Youth is to conduct a survey of Kankakee County residents about experiences with gender identity and sexual orientation discrimination, as well as gather other information to help guide future actions to promote greater equity.

Project SUN is planning to host informational sessions to bring awareness to the issues experienced by youth in the LGBTQ+ Community. These sessions will seek to recognize challenges and learn how to amplify voices in the promotion of equity for the LGBTQ+ youth community.

[Complete the Survey Here](#)

Project SUN monthly newsletters are intended to inform family members and those working with families. You are all valuable members of the **Strong and Unified Network (SUN)** being built to support the children's mental, emotional, and behavioral health system of care in Kankakee County. You are encouraged to invite others to become involved in these efforts to help children flourish. Please share this newsletter with those who may find this information useful. Suggest they

visit projectsunkankakee.org and sign-up to receive their own copy and become a member of the Network.



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