**Education Building Block: Building Stronger Families**

A mom and two young children asked for services. Mom grew up in a chaotic household that included domestic violence, substance abuse and the use of drugs in front of her as a child. She herself has overcome addiction and works hard to remain clean and sober. Mom wanted services due to the older child’s disrupted behavior. The child acted out by hitting, biting and kicking whomever was in her path when she was upset or frustrated.

The In-Home case worker educated mom by using the Active Parenting Curriculum. She also demonstrated coping strategies for children and adults to the mother and everyone began using them. Building Stronger Families offers free books and she took a book titled “Anger Geared towards Young Children”. At the next visit the child brought the book, held the book up and said the word “mad”. This was a major breakthrough as mom said the child was now referring to the book and using the feeling word “mad” when angry instead of just physically responding when angry and upset.

At the initial intake this family scored in the areas of needing assistance in parenting skills, family interaction, and child well-being. Through the education they received on effective time-outs, modeling of redirection and acknowledging feelings, age-appropriate behaviors and discipline, mom became more effective as a parent and more confident in understanding the different methods in managing behaviors for herself and her children.

At closure, the child was attempting to bite less than once a week, instead of several times a day. As a result, all the children played cooperatively together since they weren’t afraid of being hurt by the other. Mom was calmer and much more confident. The scores in parenting, family interaction and child well-being all increased from needing assistance to mild strengths. Final results noted the children were now thriving in a healthy, safe and nurturing environment.

**Health Building Block: Senior Companion Program**

Seventy-seven year old Ava has been a Senior Companion in Owensboro for over a year, serving 20 hours per week between 4 respite clients through Hospice of Western Kentucky. To date, Ava has served a lifetime total of 1,073 hours.

Ava expresses serving her clients’ loved ones gives her tremendous joy. A native of Owensboro, Ava lived in Las Vegas, Nevada for several years, but moved back home to care for her ailing mother in 2001. Ava stated she also needed a change of scenery and wanted to do something with her life that served a purpose.

“This program is truly a “Godsend” and “I’m blessed to have each of my clients’ loved ones in my life. Not everyone is comfortable working through hospice because they think it’s depressing. “When you think of hospice, you think of death and the end,” Ava expressed. “At first, I didn’t think I was going to be comfortable working with hospice clients because I knew as soon as I became attached to them, they were going to pass away and I was going to become a basket case. The more I spend time with them, it doesn’t matter how long they will be in my life or how long I will be in theirs,” Ava added.

One of Ava’s clients, Mary, stated that Ava has really helped with her mother’s spirits. Mary added her mother, Kaye, anticipates Ava’s arrival each week. “Not only does my mother need someone her age to spend time with, but it gives me a break to run errands and get some fresh air for a few minutes,” Mary stated.

After speaking with Ava, her clients and their loved ones, they all agree the Senior Companion Program has had a positive emotional impact on their lives. When one person connects and cares about another…..great things happen.