

# WESTLAKE PARENT CONNECTION

November 2005

## A PARENTING COALITION IS BORN... PARENT TO PARENT WESTSIDE NETWORK

The Westlake Parent Connection assembled representatives from neighboring communities at the end of last school year to discuss forming a coalition of organizations committed to creating a healthier environment for our youth.

Over the summer people from Avon, Bay Village, Fairview Park, North Olmsted, Rocky River and Westlake formed a working committee and launched a coalition called **Parent to Parent Westside Network (PPWN)**.

Our goals are simple: together we promote education, communication and networking with our parenting peers about the tough issues facing our young people.

Our children do not pay attention to geographic boundaries when socializing, so neither can we.

If you or your organization wish to join the coalition please contact us at [parentcon@wlake.org](mailto:parentcon@wlake.org)

## PPWN ART AUCTION

The Parent to Parent Westside Network will host an Art Auction on April 1, 2006. This exciting evening is the new westside coalition's first fundraising effort.

The event, at Westlake's La Centre, features gallery-quality framed art in all price ranges. In addition, gourmet coffees and desserts—including a chocolate fountain may be enjoyed as you visit with old and new friends from our neighboring communities.

Plan to attend and browse the broad range of professionally framed art and sports memorabilia! The selection of art is impressive and offers something for all décor choices and budgets!

Interested in helping or donating Silent Auction items please go to [Art Auction Volunteer Opportunities](#) and find a spot to help!

The **Parent to Parent Westside Network** represents parenting organizations from Avon, Bay Village, Fairview, North Olmsted, North Ridgeville, Rocky River and Westlake. This coalition of parenting groups joins efforts to promote education, communication and networking among our parenting peers. We understand that our children's social, academic, and athletic lives cross geographic boundaries, therefore we as parents must form our own "network" with our peers in other cities.

While together we share the desire to keep our children safe from risky behaviors, our individual groups may strike out on different paths to achieve that aspiration. For a list of programs offered by individual organizations that are open to anyone irrespective of their residence visit. [View Programs](#)



## WWW.WESTLAKEPARENTCONNECTION.COM

From the WPC's inception, we've enjoyed the unwavering support of the Westlake School Board, Superintendent Dr. Jim Costanza, and the Westlake public school principals.

By building the WPC website into the district's home site, we set the cornerstone of our communication tools. Over 2,000 people have visited our website since February 2005.

We've been contacted by parents from all over the country and even a phone call from Dateline News after producers came upon us while researching a story.

Today we stand on our own and

proudly launch our own domain – thus making the WPC a bona fide com-



[www.westlakeparentconnection.com](http://www.westlakeparentconnection.com)

munity-based organization.

Donation dollars have allowed us to purchase software and hire a professional site designer.

So although the look is changed you'll still have valuable information at your fingertips. Information is easier to find and the site easier to navigate.

The WPC website is a reality because our school district and webmaster Albie Wise believed in the WPC's mission.

We are grateful.

## 2005-2006 CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Looking for ways your group, organization or company can help us achieve our mission? Consider being a corporate sponsor.

### LENDING LIBRARY

**\$150 - \$250**

In partnership with Westlake Porter Public Library, the WPC has established a "parenting" lending library. Books purchased for this program are donated to WPPL who then catalogues them and shelves them accordingly. Parents interested in borrowing those books just need to key in: Westlake Parent Connection to get a complete list of the titles available. Books donated through our sponsorship programs will be identified as such with a plaque in the inside cover that will read: Book generously donated by ..... in partnership with the WPC

### WEBSITE MAINTENANCE

**\$250 - \$500**

For the last 3 years the WPC website was on the Westlake Schools system website. We are in the process of creating our own domain. Donations towards the completion of this project will

be acknowledged by a banner on our homepage reading: The WPC thanks the ..... for their generous donation towards the maintenance of this website.

### AUDIO/VIDEO EQUIPMENT

**\$500 - \$1000**

Parent programming is an essential WPC service. In the past we have relied on "whatever equipment was on hand". As our audience grows, so have our venues. To ensure the best use of our speakers and to ensure their message is heard we need to purchase our own equipment. Donations towards this project would be acknowledged on the opening page of each presentation with a statement to the effect that the equipment used during the presentation was generously donated by.....

### ADVERTISING

**\$1000 - \$2500**

Printing costs of our annual program booklet featuring all of the upcoming 411 Parent Sessions for the current school year eat up a major part of our operating budget. Donations towards

this project would be acknowledged with a plaque on the back panel of the brochure stating that: This brochure was generously donated by ..... in partnership with the WPC.

### WPC SPONSORING SPEAKER(S)

For the last 3 years, the WPC brought programs to the Westlake community at little or no cost to our organization. As we expand our outreach programming we will bring nationally known speakers. Your organization would appear in all the advertising and programming documents.



## WPC BOOK REVIEWS

### Smashed: Story of a Drunken Girlhood—by Koren Zailckas

Koren Zailckas presents a peek into the world of alcohol and young girls who take their first drink in junior high, continue the practice in high school and go on to college to face the unsupervised life of a free-at-last coed.

There are many unforgettable and downright scary scenes in this well composed book, but probably the most chilling are the confrontations Koren has with her parents beginning with her first trip to a hospital emergency room where she arrived at sixteen, cradled in her father's arms, near death from alcohol poisoning.

Consistently from that time on, when Koren is "caught" drinking, her mother and father gloss over these incidences as "rights of passage" for a teenage girl. This is not the story of a hard-knock kid from the streets. Koren grew up in a

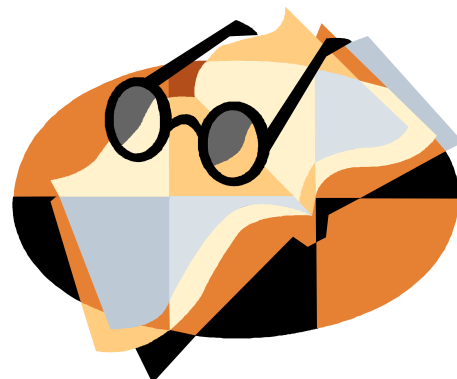
two-parent, upper-class Boston suburb that mirrors Westlake.

"I wrote this book knowing that my alcohol abuse, though dangerous, was not unprecedented. Nor were the after-effects I experienced as a result of it. Girls are drinking as much and as early as boys for the first time in history," she writes.

Koren takes her readers along on her alcohol fueled tilt-a-whirl ride leaving them nauseated by the thought of this love affair our young girls have with booze. Like a freeway rubbernecked, this book grips your attention and holds tight until the last page is turned.

If you have ever uttered the words, "You're going to drink anyway, I'd rather you did it under our own roof where we can keep you safe", please

take a deep breath, be brave and pick up this book—your daughter will thank you some day.



You can find these books at  
Westlake Porter  
Public Library.

## Stressed-out Girls: Helping Them Thrive in the Age of Pressure—By Roni Cohen-Sandler

Clinical psychologist and bestselling author, Roni Cohen-Sandler presents the modern day dilemma faced by girls growing up in a "do it all" generation. Their arduous struggle to excel academically, time-manage membership in multiple organizations, vie for some "respectable" level of popularity amongst their peers, build up uniquely competitive college resumes and look absolutely fabulous all the while has placed these young women on a potentially destructive path that could lead to anything but the very success that they seek.

Cohen-Sandler cites numerous personal experiences from actual clinical work and interviews to explain why teen girls feel more stressed out than boys. She identifies the five most common at-risk groups: girls in transition, "square pegs," insecure girls, perfectionist girls,

and girls distracted by personal or family problems; and, in doing so, also emphasizes that the families of these girls are often left feeling confused, bitter, and not knowing how to proceed in the best interests of the girls.

Her framework of coping skills includes advising parents, and educators to be sensitive to the ultimate goal of *empowering* these girls and NOT *enabling* them. Although a good three fourths of the book focuses on the fundamentals of identifying the characteristics of this generation of girls and then categorically addressing the specifics of each at-risk group, the final chapters zero in on a rather brief, yet thought-provoking regimen for the adults (whether parent, teacher or school administrator), who are trying to guide these girls through this tumultuous time in their respective lives.

While her advice is occasionally vague, the book is still very much a worthwhile read for parents and educators alike; raising awareness of how we all have contributed in one way or another to create this culture that can often have a very real and debilitating effect on our young women.

Cohen-Sandler's final comments are quite positive; reminding us that by providing these girls the avenues to free themselves from the pressures of being "supergirls", we, in turn, free ourselves and can instead enjoy the awesome pleasures of watching them blossom into the thriving wonderful women they were born to become.

*Tammy Smanik is Westlake High School's PTSA Health, Safety & Welfare Chairperson & the mother of 4 children, who attend Parkside Intermediate School, Westlake High School and the College of Wooster.*

# MAY I HAVE A WORD

...GINA WITTENBERG

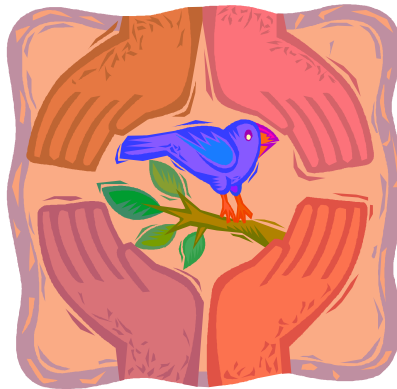
## A Few Thoughts On Tolerance

I was eager to hear my middle schooler's comments on the Lee Burneson Middle School assembly about bullying. Was it useful information? Was it well-presented? Will it help her and her classmates cope with a bullying personality? As is often the case, her response to my questions was a question of her own; I'm not being bullied, so why did I have to sit through another lecture?

I'm sure parents of young teens would agree that at this point you have to tread lightly. You have a small window of opportunity to reinforce one message from the many possible. Should I emphasize the skills presented to protect her from bullying in the future? Or should I stress her responsibility to help a classmate who may be being bullied today?

In the ensuing pause, while I was making my choice, my first grader piped up to ask what a bully was. My daughter quickly replied that bullying is when a bigger or stronger person is mean to someone who is smaller or

weaker. Without missing a beat, he replied that when you're bigger, you need to



help littler kids. My seven year old had decided the message for me, and probably delivered it better to boot.

Since that day, I have been thinking about where he learned that lesson so well. It was clear that in that moment, he was speaking with his heart as well as his head. That simple statement was more than a reiteration of something he heard from a parent or a teacher. The strong helping the weak is an idea he holds dear.

I'd like to take full credit, but the truth is that the notion that with strength comes responsibility was learned dur-

ing his preschool years in a Montessori classroom. The Montessori Method is unparalleled in its success in teaching conflict resolution and tolerance especially to the preschool set. Its emphasis on Peace Education establishes a core of life-long commitment to doing the right thing and the power of one. They learn the lesson that the strength of the community is always measured by the strength of the weakest member, whether the community is defined as your classroom, your family, or your school.

**To learn more about the Montessori Method of education contact Westshore Montessori Association @ [www.westshoreMontessori.org](http://www.westshoreMontessori.org)**

**Editor's Note:** On October 12, 2005, Lee Burneson Middle School presented bully-proofing trainings conducted by award winning therapist, Jim Bisenius. LBMS Teachers, administrators and students participated. The Westlake Parent Connection sponsored an evening program by Mr. Bisenius for parents.

CD's on Mr. Bisenius's programs are available to borrow from the LBMS guidance department or from the WPC Lending Library at Westlake Porter Public Library.



**Westlake  
Parent  
Connection**

***Our mission:** The Westlake Parent Connection (WPC) is a non-profit parent led group assembled to educate, communicate, and network with our parenting peers about tough issues confronting the youth in the greater Westlake community.*

**Our Vision:** A community that is known for its parental outreach and is free from underage alcohol and tobacco use, illegal drug use and violence.

The WPC was founded in January 2003, and is committed to bringing quality programming on topics that challenge our peers as we raise our children to make healthy choices. Please consider joining our efforts. Contact us at:

[parentcon@wlake.org](mailto:parentcon@wlake.org)

*Connect the pieces...talk to each other*

## A WORD FROM WPC PRESIDENT ...DANI ALTIERI MARINUCCI

At a recent Parent to Parent Westside Network meeting a member shared information about the Westlake PSTA's latest health and safety initiative; "Driving Safely to School Week". Maureen, a Rocky River representative, leaned over to me and whispered, "You all are so proactive."

Her observation was chillingly poignant, as she nears the first anniversary of her beloved son's tragic death.

And that, my friends, is what motivates the WPC's work. We are proactive because in our quest for a healthier and safer community for our children, one loss of life is too

many .

The WPC is driven to achieve this mission by bringing parents as many tools as there are families in our community.

We **communicate**: making it easier for parents to talk to each other is as simple as including parent's in a school directory. We **educate**: offering parenting seminars or shooting out an Information Flash on the latest lethal activity. And we **network**: adding new communities to our group – Welcome! Lake Ridge Academy and St Edward's High School parents– spreads our message.

If life was a game show and given the choice, a parent would always select the door that guarantees their child's safety and good health.

Asking our peers to stand up and link arms in a collective effort to create a safe and healthy community is not simple. The work is not easy, but it is worth every minute we attend to it.

I know Maureen sees the value. I hope you do as well.

Please consider becoming a more active member in the WPC or Parent to Parent Westside Network

[Contact Us](#)

Visit us on the web at  
[www.westlakeparentconnection.com](http://www.westlakeparentconnection.com)