Parent not pal

By Chaplain Sharon J. Reives

CBS News Magazine "*48 Hours*," aired a story Aug. 9, 2002, about a teenage girl, Valessa Robinson who, along with her boyfriend and his friend, while high on drugs, kidnapped Valessa's mother in her mother's own van and eventually killed her. Valessa's classmate said that whenever she would call for Valessa to go somewhere with her, she never had to get permission because her mother was never there. So, Valessa always went wherever she wanted to go.

Her mother was a successful real estate agent. She was climbing the ladder in her career… and at the same time, losing her daughter. After her parents divorced, Valessa felt that she had lost a strong supporter… her father. The mother's boyfriend said that he could not believe that they went on vacation and her mother left Valessa behind; because, Valessa did not want to go. He said that he could not believe that she left her there… a teenager left at home unsupervised.

Correspondent Peter Van Sant asked Valessa, who is now sitting in prison on manslaughter charges for her mother's death, "What do you wish were different?" Valessa answered, "I wish my mother had disciplined more. I wish she had told me, 'No, you cannot do that.'" Out of all the things this girl could have said, she said, in essence, that she wish her mother had been a mother to her… not a sister, not a friend, not a buddy, not a pal… but a mother, in other words… a parent.

Thank God for programs like "*Be a Parent, Not a Pal*" and "*It's All About You*." They are multimedia programs designed by attorney Richard P. Campbell and the law firm of Campbell, Campbell Edwards & Conroy to educate students, parents, teachers and members of the community about the Social Host Law and to illustrate the legal consequences of allowing those under the age of 21 to possess alcoholic beverages. Other members of the firm, Christopher A. Callanan, Mark J. Hoover, David M. Rogers, Mary McGoldrick and Russell X. Pollock have joined Richard Campbell in presenting this program at various schools.

During the presentation, the attorneys tell the stories of victims, and of the consequences of underage drinking as well as of the hosts who have been prosecuted under the Social Host Law. They show what happens when good kids make bad decisions and well-meaning parents who, while thinking that they are providing safe havens for their children and children's friends, painfully discover that these havens are not safe after all. They discuss the liability of social hosts when civil actions, with millions of dollars at stake, rapidly follow criminal prosecutions. They give new perspectives on the question, "Mom, Dad, can I have a party here at the house? Some of my friends will be drinking, but since I'll collect all of the car keys, we'll be safe and everything will be all right."

The firm's commitment to the issues of underage drinking and social host liability evolved out of Richard Campbell's representation of Ruth Langemann, the plaintiff in Langemann v. Davis, who sustained catastrophic injuries when a drunken teenager driving away from a house party, crashed into her car. "I owe it to Ruth to try to prevent other alcohol-related tragedies," explains Richard Campbell.

Richard Campbell and the other members of the Social Host Team present these programs as a public service. The firm receives no compensation.

Also in the presentation, the attorneys talk about the less obvious consequences of a violation of the Social Host Law… the effect on eligibility for interscholastic athletics and on applications for college, graduate and professional school, the military, jobs, and even for loans and mortgages. In short, the program is all about teens and the legal effects on teens who violate the Social Host Law.

On this Mother's Day weekend, let us remember the wisdom that is provided in the Old Testament book of Proverbs 22:6, "*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it*."

Navy military families learn resiliency with FOCUS Project

By MC2(SW) Liz Vlahos, Defense Media Activity - Navy

WASHINGTON - The Families Overcoming Under Stress (FOCUS) Project is a military service being highlighted during April as part of the Month of the Military Child.

FOCUS, a service initiated by the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in 2008, teaches practical resiliency skills to service members and their families to better equip them to meet the challenges of deployment and reintegration. Part of this involves teaching the family to communicate and solve problems effectively, and to successfully set goals together and create a shared family story.

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> **– Kirsten Woodward, director of the Family Programs Division at the U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.**

"The role of the program is to basically help families identify, look through, and define what [it] is that's causing their stress," said Kirsten Woodward, director of the Family Programs Division at the U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. "[The] program can then assist with that stress in terms of emotional regulation, defining a shared family narrative, and working through compounding stressors that might come from a deployment, multiple deployments, or high operational tempo issues."

Two of the tools FOCUS uses for teaching these skills are the feeling thermometer and the personal narrative. The feeling thermometer, modeled after the Navy's Operational Stress Continuum, helps family members to discuss their emotional states. Green means "comfortable," yellow means "less comfortable," orange, "uncomfortable," and red, "extremely uncomfortable."

The personal narrative is when each member of the family writes a story about his or her life as part of that family. In a subsequent meeting, each family member shares his or her narrative, with focus on the children, and from that point the family builds a combined narrative. This helps the family to be able to understand different perspectives, clear up misunderstandings and create a stronger family unit.

"When a service member deploys, the whole family is really experiencing that deployment," said Dr. Anna Crane, a family resiliency trainer for the FOCUS Project aboard Joint Base Little Creek-Fort Story, Va. "Deployments can be an opportunity for a lot of growth, but [there's] quite a few challenges often associated. FOCUS provides skills so families can stay strong through those multiple deployments. We frequently hear that as a service member, when they're deployed and their family's okay, they're able to do their job even better."

Chief Information Systems Technician Liam Benincasa, assigned to Naval Special Warfare Group 2 Support Activity, Little Creek, Va., is pleased with the shift in the Navy's view of the Sailor's family.

"When I came in 11 years ago, there was the old adage of 'your spouse didn't come in your seabag,'" said Benincasa. "To see now, 11 years later, where they're really understanding that families are just as important to the military as the service member... definitely makes me feel better about being in the military."

To learn more about the FOCUS project, visit the website www.focusproject.org.