



Today, it's all about the family

If you take the time to look around you'll notice something. There are many different kinds of families. Some have two parents, while others feature a single parent. And sometimes there is no parent and grandparents are the ones who raise their grandchildren. Some children live in foster families, adoptive families, or in stepfamilies. Families are much more than groups of people who share the genes or perhaps an address. They should be a source of support and encouragement. This does not mean that everyone gets along all the time. Conflicts are a part of family life. Many issues can lead to conflict, such as illness, disability, addiction, job loss, school difficulties and marital problems. Listening to each other and working to resolve conflicts are important in strengthening the family.

We are entering a time of the year when family, in any incarnation, is important. That's because families provide children with a sense of belonging and a unique identity. Families are, or should be, a source of emotional support and comfort, warmth and nurturing, protection and security.

At Seashore Family Services of New Jersey (notice that the word Family is part of our name,) we recognize one important fact: families are much more than groups of individuals. Families create a place where every child and adult can feel that he or she is special and be encouraged to pursue his or her own dreams; a place where everyone's individuality is permitted to flourish.

We feel that the family's importance comes from its ability to instruct children and gives guidance about personal values and social behavior. It instills discipline and helps

them learn and internalize codes of conduct that will serve them for the rest of their lives. It helps them develop positive interpersonal relationships, and it provides an environment that encourages learning both in the home and at school. It gives children a sense of history and a secure base from which to grow and develop. Yet, as important as these functions are, they do not happen automatically. Every parent knows it takes hard work to keep the family going as an effective, adaptive and functional unit.

There are many factors that can shape one's vision of the family and how it actually works. For example, religious and moral beliefs can help form a person's ideas of the way things "should" be. Economic situation and living conditions will influence the functioning of the family, perhaps in ways that run counter to your preconceptions. Today's geographic mobility can put distance between extended families, with hundreds or thousands of miles separating grandparents and their grandchildren; if you grew up with your grandparents nearby, the new realities may be uncomfortable for you.

And don't forget that television, movies, the Internet and other media bombard us each day with fantasy images of the family. And if your family doesn't measure up to these depictions - if your family isn't always as happy as those families on the TV commercials, or doesn't settle arguments within a thirty-minute time slot - you might

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feel you aren't doing as good a job as you should.

So we arrive at a simple conclusion. There are many variations of "normal," some of which may not conform to your expectations. You might feel something is awry with your own family when nothing is wrong at all. You may just have to rethink your expectations of what a family should be.

But to us, the most important function of the family is to look after and foster the growth of the youngest set. The children. At SFSNJ, we feel strongly that it is of utmost importance for every family to share regular activities where they can share ideas and find out "what's happening". It is a great way for a caregiver (whether a parent, grandparent, foster parent) to be involved, discuss rules, monitor activities and friends, and be a good role model. For example, research indicates that teens who have frequent family dinners are less likely to currently use marijuana and tobacco, drink alcohol and get drunk.

So make your family a priority this holiday season, and beyond. Nurture the family and it will grow solid roots. And always remember to be there for each other. Like we are here for you.

Tips for the Holidays

The holiday season, between Thanksgiving and New Year's in the United States, is the most dangerous season of the year for those trying to maintain sobriety and anyone driving on the public highways.

For example, did you know that there are more alcohol-related traffic fatalities during the Holiday season than any other time during the year in the United States?



If you, or someone you know, is planning on celebrating the holidays by drinking

alcoholic beverages, using a designated driver is a smart move. If you are hosting a holiday party, you might consider having a safe holiday party to protect your guests.

For many, the problem during the holidays is not to avoid drinking and driving, it's to avoid drinking at all. The holiday season, between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day can be the most difficult time for alcoholics and their families.

At Seashore Family Services of New Jersey, we know that the holidays are a time to have fun, and that can be accomplished without alcohol. There are many ways to have fun without drinking and have a safe and sober holiday.

We'd like to suggest that you go to http://alcoholism.about.com/od/holiday/Safe_Holiday_Tips.htm for ideas.

Have a safe and happy holiday!



Seashore
Family Services of NJ
Comprehensive Services for Families

Did You Know?

Compared to teens who eat dinner frequently with their families, those who have infrequent family dinners are more than twice as likely to have used marijuana in the past 30 days.

Introducing Our Staff - Joyce Green Rodriguez, M.A.T.

Joyce Green-Rodriguez currently works as the Program Director of Seashore Family Services of New Jersey (SFSNJ) and is responsible for the direct management of the G.R.O.W.T.H Transitional Housing Program. As Program Director, Ms. Green-Rodriguez sits on several local, county, and statewide panels that target homelessness and women's issues.

Prior to joining SFSNJ, she was the Director of Residential Services at the Women's Center of Monmouth County where she supervised and managed the daily operations of a Domestic Violence Shelter and a Domestic Violence Transitional Housing program.



Ms. Green-Rodriguez holds a Bachelor degree in Sociology from Fisk University and a Master degree in Teaching from Monmouth University, Long Branch, NJ. Ms.

Green-Rodriguez's administrative and direct care experience in Transitional Housing began in 1993, at Spring House, a Transitional Housing Program located in Eatontown, NJ. As the Executive Director at Spring House she managed and maintained the daily operations of Spring House's Transitional Housing Program.

Ms. Green-Rodriguez has over thirty-five years of experience working with individuals, adolescents, and families in both the fields of social service and education. As an educator, she has taught students of all ages and is certified to teach all academic studies from pre-school to twelfth grade. Since 1994, Ms. Green-Rodriguez has provided group instruction to adult students seeking their high school diploma at Monmouth County Vocational School District.

Currently, Ms. Green-Rodriguez is enrolled in the Warner Leadership Institute (WLI) and is pursuing her doctorate degree in Ministry.

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35 Beaverson Blvd.

Bldg. 8 Suite 8A

Brick, NJ 08723

732-477-3507

270 Chambers Bridge Road

Brick, NJ

732-920-2700

226 Main Street

Toms River, NJ

732-244-1600

www.sfsnj.org

Message from the Director



I hope each of you has a wonderful and safe holiday season. As the New Year dawns, this is an excellent time to reflect on the past and plan for the future.

2008 was a great year for us. We changed our name. Developed a new look and opened a new office. 2009 promises to be an exciting year too. We are committed to continue to expand on our ability to deliver existing new programs to our neighbors in Ocean and Southern Monmouth Counties.

As many of you know, Seashore Family Services of New Jersey has been providing services since 1972. In those 36 years, SFSNJ has been providing personalized yet professional substance abuse counseling, prevention, assessments and referrals.

And we continually strive to develop new and innovative programs.

What you may not know is that most of our funding comes from county and state grants. The problem is that the grants that we have relied upon to fund our core programs are shrinking. This means that some of our valuable core services are in jeopardy. As the economy continues its current downturn, non-profit agencies like SFSNJ are expected to provide increased services with a decrease in funds.

But you can help.

We need your support to help make up for any shortfall. Just go to our website (www.sfsnj.org) and please donate whatever you can. Because we want to be here when you need our help.

On behalf of everyone at Seashore Family Services of New Jersey, I hope you have a happy and safe holiday season. And thank you.

**Roberto Flecha, MBA, LCADC, CCS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Providing personalized yet professional substance abuse counseling, prevention, assessments and referrals in Ocean and Southern Monmouth Counties.

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35 Beaverson Blvd.
Bldg. 8 Suite 8A
Brick, NJ 08723