

## SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN

In June 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops published a document titled, "Charter for the Protection of CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE". It was approved unanimously by all the Bishops at their meeting in Texas. It is mandated that all dioceses and parishes follow the recommendations as laid down in that document.

Chapter Four - "TO PROTECT the Faithful in the Future" is where our focus will be. Article 12 states;

"Dioceses/eparchies will establish 'safe environment' programs. They will cooperate with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children. . ."

An Office for Child and Youth Protection has been established in Washington, D.C. and one of the tasks of this office will be to produce an annual public report on the progress made in implementing the standards in the Charter. Two people from this office visit the Diocese of Orange once a year and determine how we are implementing the standards.

It is also stipulated that volunteers and others who have consistent contact with children under the age of 18, must be screened and their backgrounds checked. All of our volunteers are fingerprinted and their backgrounds are checked.

In order to meet the education mandate our Diocese has determined that we will use the "KIDS and COMPANY" program created by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to educate our children about appropriate and inappropriate behavior, when it is okay to say, no to an adult, what are the tricks used by predators to manipulate, what is a realistic threat, and how to recognize and avoid other dangers to their safety. It is an excellent program and will be offered to students in the Parish School and in the SRE program.

Darlene Hembreiker, Sister Mary Elizabeth, Ruth Bradley, Laura Benoit, Sr. Irma Gomez, and Lidia Smith attended two days of training in order to train the presenters for our parish. The Parish School teachers will be trained in January and the SRE group will be trained in January/February.

I am looking for volunteers to work as part of a task force to go into the classrooms and teach the principals as outlined by the Kids and Company program. You will be trained how to do this with our SRE students. If you are a teacher, former teacher, or someone who would like to see our children given the tools to protect themselves, we need you. Some of our present teachers will also be trained but not all can make that commitment. Your commitment will be for one or two hours a year after you have received the basic training.

Please consider this important ministry and give me a call at 714-826-1140 or [rbradley@sticypress.org](mailto:rbradley@sticypress.org). I will be looking forward to your call.

Ruth Bradley, Director  
Office of Youth Faith Formation