APSAC Applauds the Resilience of the Children and Families of Parkland, Florida

The children of Parkland, Florida are demonstrating to the world the power of strong families and community. By challenging the adults and systems that have failed them, they are showing strength and determination that would make any parent proud. Common sense tells us the importance of parental support, and the past decades of scientific studies on traumatic stress help us understand even more.

Researchers categorize stress based on the effects on the child. Healthy stress propels kids to do their best, like when preparing for an athletic event or academic exam. Normal stress such as dealing with rejection by a peer or from the college of first choice, may take a short-term toll but a relatively quick recovery is inevitable. Toxic stress, is defined as an overwhelming stressor that causes physiologic changes in the brain and body. Toxic stress floods a child’s brain with stress hormones and affects every cell in the body. The sense of consistency and safety provided by a loving caregiver provides both emotional and physical benefits to the developing brain of a child when stress can’t be avoided. APSAC members have seen the devastating effects of toxic stress on children who have experienced maltreatment; it is now becoming clear that American children are being increasingly exposed to the toxic stress of death and injuries from gun violence. Together, we must seek real solutions; this country owes our children better.

As we watch the children of Parkland rise to speak truth to power, we see in their resilience a testament to the power of the buffering effects of strong families and communities. The citizens and parents of Parkland, Florida, join the citizens and parents of Columbine, Colorado, Newtown, Connecticut and too many other communities charged with nurturing their children back to health after a preventable, traumatic experience. We all have a role to play in making sure these tragedies stop.

The American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children is the premier, multi-disciplinary professional society dedicated to ensuring the best possible interventions for children and families at risk of or involved with maltreatment. For more information visit www.apsac.org or email info@apsac.org

APSAC Home Page