

## Detecting Child Abuse Part Of County Teachers' Schedules

BY TERRY POPE

Outside of family relationships, school teachers are a student's most important contact. Therefore, it is the teacher who often discovers that a child has been abused or neglected.

In addition to their normal classroom duties, teachers must deal with suspected abuse or neglect and determine if a case should be reported. It is a routine that Brunswick County school teachers often face with confusion, fear or uncertainty.

"It's hard for us sometimes," said Myra Turner, kindergarten instructor at Lincoln Primary School. Ms. Turner was one of several teachers who participated recently in a county workshop that focused on recognizing and reporting suspected child abuse. The workshop was sponsored by the Brunswick County Association for the Education of Young Children.

Last fall, Ms. Turner testified in Brunswick County Juvenile Court in a case involving one of her students who was suffering from rickets. The court ordered the parents to seek medical treatment for their daughter, who is now recovering well.

"In the case that I dealt with, the father was the cause," Ms. Turner said. "He thought he was doing the best thing for the child, but he wasn't."

After reporting the incident to the schools' social worker, Ms. Turner was able to see the case go through the legal process that she now attributes to saving the child's life.

"If you could see her now you would realize that her life was saved. But it had to be such an extreme case to do it," she added. "I was lucky. It was so obvious."

The two stages in helping a child abuse victim are, first, recognizing the problem, and second, doing something about it, said Assistant School Superintendent Stephanna Tewey. Prior to joining the Brunswick County school system in 1978, Ms. Tewey designed and wrote a training program for educators in the area of child abuse and neglect that includes a manual, filmstrip and teaching aids now used in classrooms across North Carolina.

"Everybody recognizes child abuse when they see it," Ms. Tewey said. "Doing something about it was where educators needed help. When I first started the project, I had a lot of feelings myself that I had to deal with."

During her research, Ms. Tewey studied both victims and their abusers and helped identify the potential abuser and what causes their actions.

"It was just outside the realm of my experience and I just didn't understand it," Ms. Tewey said. "I really didn't understand the problem. I even had physical reactions; I couldn't eat. I imagined the soldier on the battlefield who sees the people, his buddies, around him getting shot and killed."

Although workshops often help, Ms. Tewey would

like to see all teachers undergo a 30-hour training course preparing them for handling abuse cases. After teachers report the incident to the school social worker, community help should also involve doctors, judges, juvenile services, the sheriff's department, health department and other organizations.

In instructing the teachers recently, Ms. Tewey urged, "You can't do it by yourself. You have to learn to work together. I've been involved in some child abuse cases where there would be 30 different agencies involved."

Detecting child neglect or abuse is not always easy, she added, especially in a family with limited resources. Clothing unsuitable to the weather, like long sleeves in the summer, can be attributed to poverty or to hiding the signs of abuse, such as bruises or burns along the arms.

"We get a lot of that, but it's hard for us to tell if it's neglect," Ms. Turner said.

"They've been told since the abuse started not to tell anyone," said Pauline Williams, kindergarten instructor at Lincoln Primary School. "It seems like they're more open when you don't show any emotion."

However, getting children to open up and admit they've been abused requires skills that not every teacher possesses, Ms. Tewey said. It is best to talk to the child in a comfortable, private setting, such as a quiet section of the classroom, if a teacher chooses to investigate a case on their own.

Some educators can often develop good relationships with the parents, Ms. Tewey said, but understanding and helping the abuser is another difficult area for teachers to deal with. One must take the same attitude towards the abuser as they do to the victim—they both need professional help, she added.

According to Ms. Tewey, child abusers can be categorized as often under a lot of stress, young with families living far away or in another state and living in a small space with few friends in the neighborhood. It's a description that matches a lot of military families, which are common to southeastern North Carolina, she added.

"The more stressful situations you introduce, the more vulnerable you become," Ms. Tewey said. "Their actions are aimed not totally at a child, but at all of these things. Sometimes you may have a grown-up person standing there who is really a child."

Recognizing situations vulnerable to abuse and doing something about them can help teachers save children's lives, Ms. Tewey said.

"Everytime we have a training session, the Department of Social Services will complain that they're getting too many reports of child abuse," Ms. Tewey said. However, it's better to play it safe and continue to report suspected cases of abuse or neglect when you may be saving a child's life, she advised.

## Parents Concerned As Lice Cases Reported At Lincoln

BY TERRY POPE

Several cases of human lice have recently been discovered at Lincoln Primary School, causing some parents to become concerned about the county schools' policy for dealing with the infestations.

"We need to be educated," Leland resident Sudie Mintz told the Brunswick County Board of Education Monday night. "Very few of the teachers have any idea what to look for. Parents don't know what they're looking for."

Ms. Mintz' daughter, a student at Lincoln Primary, has contacted human lice twice since the start of the school year, once in November and again in January. She contends the school needs to step up its efforts to rid of the pest.

Ms. Mintz said it took the school nine days before checking students on her daughter's school bus for other infestations. A routine check that revealed no other cases in November. After contacting the pest a second time in January, a check of her daughter's classroom revealed two more cases while one case was found on the school bus.

"It's humiliating, it's embarrassing," Ms. Mintz said. "I tell them it's not a disgrace to get lice, it's a disgrace to keep lice."

In addition to presenting the board members with a folder of information on lice Monday night, Ms. Mintz also offered some suggestions to help reduce the spread of lice in the schools. Once lice has been discovered, the schools should thoroughly clean all carpets, toilet facilities, furniture and rugs, she said.

"Coatrooms should be eliminated," she added. The coatrooms at Lincoln are small, allowing the students' coats to touch which could cause the transfer of lice from one garment to another. Also, the moment a case is discovered, the entire student body should be screened, Ms. Mintz advised.

In November, several cases of human lice were also discovered at Union Primary School. School nurses went classroom to classroom inspecting the students, but only a few cases were found, said Principal Freeman Gause in a November interview. The problem there was declared contained after the students were treated and allowed back in the classrooms.

The Brunswick County Board of Health adopted a policy last year titled, "Health Education, Nursing and Referral Procedures For Human Lice and Scabies In Schools." Under

the plan, the county health department acts as a standby in case the school nurses, four for the 11 schools, need assistance.

The lack of school nurses during a lice outbreak is one of the problems, Ms. Mintz said. A nurse is stationed at Lincoln on Wednesdays and part of Thursdays, "and we have lice every day," she added. "It's not something that's just one and a half days."

Board Chairman Dr. James Forstner, a family practitioner, said there is usually a "surge of reported cases of lice at the start of the school year and the beginning of T-ball season."

"Fortunately, they don't carry any dangerous diseases or the bubonic plague," he said.

Under the policy, if a student is found to have lice or scabies, then he or she is isolated from the rest of the students or sent home for treatment. Parents are instructed to contact the family physician or the county health department for treatment procedures.

The condition can be treated with several drug-shampoos, some of which can be purchased over the counter, such as RID or Kwell Sham-

poo. The health department provides residents with such treatment shampoos, but Ms. Mintz said they should also be available at the individual schools.

"The parents are going to have to get out there and be aware of it," said board member James Clemmons. "We have a very transient group of people up there (Leland). They move around quite a bit."

According to Lincoln Principal Joe Butler, the school is following the county's policy for handling reported lice cases.

"One of the problems is having personnel always available at the moment," Butler said. "We check to see if the child has been treated. According to my knowledge, once they have been treated there is a test to determine if those nits are still there. I know of two cases where we had to send the child back."

Head lice can live two days and body lice from four to seven days away from the body. Head lice eggs can survive ten days off of humans and body lice eggs 30 days away from the host, making it important to retreat with shampoos in seven to ten days after removing the nits with fine-tooth combs.

## New Brochures Are In Mail

Approximately 10,000 copies of a revised emergency plan brochure are in the mail to Brunswick and New Hanover County residents who live within a 10-mile radius of Carolina Power & Light Co.'s Brunswick nuclear power plant.

This brochure, prepared annually, describes emergency plans for areas near the plant. It outlines precautions resident could be advised to

take in the event of an accident at the plant. It also provides information on radiation, describes how the Brunswick plant produces electricity and provides a list of nuclear terms which would be used in explaining an emergency situation, should one occur.

Anyone who does not receive a brochure may obtain one by stopping at the Brunswick Visitors Center in Southport or by calling 457-6941.

## 1985 Spelling Bee Enters First Round

Competition was to begin today (Thursday) in the Brunswick County Spelling Bee with preliminary classroom bees at six county schools.

For the second consecutive year the bee is sponsored jointly by the Shallotte Junior Woman's Club and the State Port Pilot of Southport.

Winners of the school bees will advance to the county bee, which will be held April 18 at the Brunswick County Government Center. The winner of that bee will represent Brunswick County in the National Spelling Bee held in Washington, D.C., June 3-10. The Scripps-Howard newspaper group sponsors the national event.

Classroom bees were scheduled for students in fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grades at Waccamaw

Primary, Southport Primary, Shallotte Middle, South Brunswick Middle, Bolivia Elementary and Leland Middle schools.

Classroom winners receive certificates, while county winners receive trophies from the Shallotte Junior Woman's Club and assorted prizes as follows: first place, a 13-inch color television; second place, a set of encyclopedias; third place, a thesaurus and dictionary; fourth place, a world almanac; and fifth place, a dictionary.

Contributions from local merchants and individuals provide an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C., for the county bee winner and an escort. Those interested in contributing donations are asked to contact Debbie Hewett, spelling bee

chairman for the Shallotte Junior Woman's Club, at 754-8412 after 4 p.m.

Joseph Southern of Southport, a student at Southport Primary School, won the county bee last year.

## Oratorical Contest Begins

West Brunswick High School students will compete in the annual American Legion oratorical contest next week, Feb. 11-15.

The local competition is sponsored by American Legion Post No. 247 of Shallotte. The winner receives a medal and advances to the district contest and the opportunity to compete for a cash award.

On the national level, the Legion contest began in 1938 and is intended to help high school students become better speakers and to inform

students and the public at large on various topics.

West Brunswick High School senior Marion Gore won the local contest in both 1983 and 1984 and advanced to the state finals, earning a \$500 scholarship each year.

Post Commander Jim Buffaloe said West Brunswick faculty member Kathell Williams, who has coordinated the contest the past six years, told him recently she expects new contestants to push Miss Gore for the award this year.

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