

With the range of programs that Presbyterian Children's Village offers and the number of people that we serve, it can be difficult to convey the personal impact of the work that we do—or the gravity of the challenges facing children and families. To help us tell those stories, we have produced a new DVD called "Healing Spirits". This 17-minute video tells the history of the Village and provides an overview of the services we provide. More importantly, it lets us hear from some of the staff and volunteers who carry out our mission, as well as the children and families who are impacted by our services.

We hope that viewing the DVD will be a next step in your faith journey of concern for the needy children in our community. We encourage you to use the discussion guide to continue the conversation that arises from the DVD. You may want to devote a series of discussions to these concerns, using recommended reading and viewing guides as well as current events.

Our DVD is designed to make public viewings easy to manage. From the main menu, you can choose to watch the entire video by selecting the "Play Feature" option. On the main menu page, you can also access 3 additional segments that focus on ways that you can support the Village. Also on the menu page is an option called Video Segments. This lets you view each of the segments as a stand-alone feature. This lets you easily select a segment that would most resonate with your group.

Healing Spirits Video Discussion Guide

1. What societal problems bring children to Presbyterian Children's Village? In what ways are we helping to alleviate these problems, individually or as part of a congregation?
2. The poverty rate in Philadelphia was estimated at 25% in the 2010 Census. In Southwest Philadelphia, where the work of PCV is concentrated, it rises to 57%. How important is that environment in shaping a child's ability to aspire and achieve? How does this impact the way we think of our community? Can we have a direct impact?
3. A case worker states that foster care can be a perpetual cycle. Why do you think foster care children tend to not break the cycle of being part of the child welfare system? What are some important factors that help a child or family break away from this condition?
4. What are some of the barriers that prevent people from getting the support they need before social services must intervene? What should the role of government be in this process?
5. People in the video mention a number of types of abuse. What are some of the kinds mentioned? Do any of these surprise you? Who should be made more aware of these issues and how can we raise awareness?
6. Our adoptive mom who continues to care for foster children along with her adopted children describes her relationship with the child's biological parents. What struck you about her story? Does this change any thoughts you already had about foster parents?
7. In the *A Safe Home for Every Child* segment, it is repeatedly stated that establishing a firm schedule is the first step taken with our residential clients. Discuss why this is emphasized for these children.
8. Several ways are mentioned that one can help these children and families, both directly and indirectly. What things are you doing now that may help? Where might you be able to do more?

Suggested Reading

The Other Wes Moore by Wes Moore

Two kids named Wes Moore were born blocks apart within a year of each other. Both grew up fatherless in similar Baltimore neighborhoods and had difficult childhoods. How did one grow up to be a Rhodes Scholar, decorated veteran, White House Fellow and business leader, while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence?

A Child Called "It", The Lost Boy, A Man Named Dave by Dave Pelzer

This trilogy of memoirs chronicle one man's life as the child of an abusive mother and alcoholic father, his journey through the foster care and juvenile justice system, and how he became a successful adult with a child of his own. (These titles are also available as a single volume called **My Story**.)

On Their Own by Martha Shirk and Gary Stangler

Foster care is designed to provide for children up until the age of 18, but what happens after that? Shirk and Stangler note in the introduction to their study that in today's society, young people don't tend to reach full maturity until their mid-twenties, and most children leaving foster care aren't even equipped with the basic tools (a high-school diploma, a driver's license or state ID, work experience) that the average 18-year-old possesses.

The Heart Knows Something Different by Youth Communications

For the teens who contributed to this volume, the journey to adulthood has been particularly arduous, because they are all participants in the foster-care system. What is clearly missing from all of the writings is any trace of self-pity, although many of the young people express regret or even remorse for their past lives. The problems and issues the writers express are universal, and their courage will touch the hearts of all.

Suggested Viewing

These films may contain strong language, violence, and adult themes. We urge you to use discretion, especially in group screenings.

Aging Out

Navigating the transition from adolescence to adulthood is challenging for even the most mature and privileged youth. For three young people in New York and Los Angeles, making the transition to independent living is considerably more difficult as they "age out" of the foster care system and suddenly discover, for the first time, that they're on their own.

America

A psychiatrist at a youth treatment center encounters her newest patient, a bi-racial boy named America. Through their sessions, she helps America come to terms with his roller-coaster life, which began when he was taken by authorities from his crack-addicted mother, and placed into foster care as an infant.

Antwone Fisher

A young navy man is forced to see a psychiatrist after a violent outburst against a fellow crewman. During the course of treatment a painful past is revealed and a new hope begins.

The Blind Side

The story of Michael Oher, a homeless and traumatized boy who became an All American football player and first round NFL draft pick with the help of a caring woman and her family.

Precious

In Harlem, an overweight, illiterate teenager who is pregnant with her second child is invited to enroll in an alternative school in hopes that her life can head in a new direction.

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