

Date: March 15, 2011

To: 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Class  
Bret Harte Elementary School  
Long Beach CA

From: Peter Wright  
Long Beach ALIVE Presenter

Dear Students:

I was very happy to receive all of your letters which thanked me for coming, told me what you learned or found interesting about the Long Beach ALIVE presentations in your classroom. Many of you also asked questions. I have thought about them and will try to give you brief answers to them.

– Yes, adults get abused too. The Women’s Shelter of Long Beach, which is listed on the resource card I passed out, takes care of adults (not always women) who are being abused.

– No, I am not sure that only three kids die in the United States every day from child abuse. That is an average number, it could be more on some days or less on others.

– Other than coming into the classroom to tell the story about child abuse, I don’t work with kids directly. There is another volunteer in ALIVE who is on the Child Abuse Response Team and does work directly with abused children.

– Whether or not the abuser goes to jail or gets therapy depends on what kind of abuse was happening and how serious it was.

– Yes, I really do like volunteering for Long Beach ALIVE. When I was a kid no one really talked about child abuse and nothing much was done about it. Now we teach kids how to recognize and report it.

– Yes, I (and about ten other volunteers) do go to other schools in Long Beach to show them the videos and teach them to speak up about child abuse.

– The consequences for the abusers depend on how serious the abuse was. Sometimes a program of counseling is enough (like Kurt and his sister’s parents) and other times the abuser goes to jail (like the son of the customer of Anthony’s mom who was abusing him).

– You wondered why ALIVE doesn’t just arrest the abuser for life. It is the police, the social workers, and other officials who decide if the abuse case should be taken to trial and have a judge and/or jury in the court decide on the punishment.

– Your question was about how a kid could get therapy when it is not always free. One way would be to contact “For the Child” which is on the resource card I gave you. If they could not provide the therapy then they would most likely be able to recommend a place that could.

– Your question about abused kids needing to have good friends and feel that they are not alone is an excellent one. Unfortunately I cannot make sure that they get “good, loyal and great friends”, but it is up to all of us to make sure that we are friendly and provide support to a kid that seems sad or not to have any good friends.

- The Department of Social and Child Services continues to work toward improving the conditions for children in foster homes. It has not always been that great, but I like to think that it is getting better. You asked what kind of abuse occurs the most: just on my own, I would think that Emotional Abuse may be the most common, because it is also behind all of the other abuse.
- You asked when the ALIVE program was made....it started at least fifteen years ago in Carson (next door to Long Beach) and has been in the Long Beach schools for over a decade. If you are asking about the videos...yes, they are getting pretty old, but they are so good that we have not been able to find any newer ones that tell the story of child abuse that well.
- You were wondering how many abusers are in the United States. We don't really know, but at least now more abuse cases are being reported and more kids are getting help.
- You asked if it happened to me...Just that one incident I remember about being pushed down some stairs at the birthday party by my father.
- Thank you for the drawing you made of me and you!!
- The answer to your question about the consequences to the abuser would be the same as I answered to Brenda (above).
- You asked about the causes of child abuse. There are many, many causes. Some of the ones we talked about were that the abuser was using drugs or alcohol, the parent was treated badly when they were a kid and when they grew up they acted the same way because they did not know any differently, the abuser has emotional problems and needs counseling or therapy, stress, violent examples in society or on TV or in the movies etc. etc.
- Some of the consequences of someone being neglected are that the neglected person's health may be poor (because of a lack of food or medicine), they may not be safe (because of a lack of supervision), they may be emotionally troubled and worried (because of a lack of care and love) or they did not have the chance to have a normal, happy childhood (like Rachel in the video).
- Please see my answer to Diana (above) to answer to your question about what kinds of abuse are considered to be neglectful. There are others too, but those are some.

I think that answers most of your questions.. Each and every letter you wrote to me was excellent because you told me what you had learned. I am going to keep your letters to remind me what a great bunch of kids you were. Thank you very much for writing them.

Love,

Peter Wright  
Long Beach ALIVE