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Daisy Makes A Difference

by Cristy Cardinal, Director of Prevention Education at HAVEN

When I started working with HAVEN's Prevention Education program in September 2008, the curriculum that I was most excited about was Helping Kids Help Themselves—mostly because of Daisy. Daisy is HAVEN's mascot, a purple raven with bright green overalls. Daisy had been a part of HAVEN's education program for almost 10 years at that time, and had evolved from a storybook and puppet show to a low budget video tape of someone reading the story to pictures, drawn by a volunteer years ago.

In spite of the outdated delivery method (really, we were working with schools that couldn't actually show a videotape because they no longer had the equipment), the story Daisy had to share was an important one. Daisy's uncle sexually assaulted her and made her promise not to tell. In her story, though, Daisy learns some valuable lessons. First, what her uncle chose to do to her was not her fault. And second, she learned that he wanted her to keep a bad secret, and that she can and should tell a grown-up she can trust about what happened.

But the low-budget and poor quality of the video had long ago started to lose its appeal to most kids, who are accustomed to stellar animation and high quality entertainment. The Daisy costume was showing wear, and we actually decided to suspend taking it with us to presentations because we were concerned about the safety of asking people to wear it. Shortly before I joined the HAVEN team, a grant was awarded from the Verizon Foundation to give Daisy and her video an update, and it was just about the first thing I started working on when I got settled. I had the amazing opportunity to work with Carrie LeZotte and Lora Probert from One of Us Films, the Detroit-based film company that had been contracted to make the new animated short film based on the original Daisy story (In case you've never had the privilege of working on a film or video project, it's not nearly as glamorous as you might think! I mean, the glamour kind of fades by the 35th take of anything).

Daisy Tells a Secret is a remarkable 11-minute video, where the painstaking efforts of the folks at One of Us Films are evident from beginning to end. We discussed marketing the video, but it is not a standalone piece; it requires explanation and further education to be complete. In Oakland County, that's accomplished with trained prevention educators who are a part of HAVEN's staff (for more info, contact me at ccardinal@haven-oakland.org). But what about outside of Oakland County, or for home schooled kids? How could we round out the program for them?

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