



Safe Neighborhoods News

Safe Kids Now National Network

October-November 2025

Stephanie Mann, Director

Sher Graham, Editor

Our Mission: Safe Kids Now National Network shares information empowering global communities to create and maintain self-sustainability in safe neighborhoods for children, families, and neighbors.

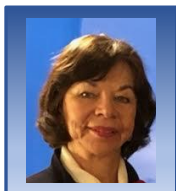
(www.safekidsnow.com)



Our Vision: To bring awareness of how to Adopt-a-Block and create volunteer/paid neighborhood safety experts who inform, communicate and educate techniques and methods of community safety within their neighborhoods.

NEIGHBORHOOD IMPORTANT NEWS!

- **INTENTIONAL GRATITUDE.** Give gratitude for 3 things each morning. Write them down and read them aloud. Share this time with your children and other family members. Be in gratitude each moment of the day for that time. Time is short.
- **SPREAD AWARENESS.** Visit the SKN website and download our free “Ten Steps to Make A Safe Neighborhood” guide. Share this with others and spread awareness building sustainability safe neighborhoods. www.safekidsnow.com



From the Director's Desk

Stephanie Mann

Happy October-November! This is a time of prayer for our global community. So much is happening in many countries where our children are not safe. Thousands of families are without their homes, as they have been destroyed by violence acts. These families go without the basic essentials of life – a home, food, education, and safety. This is a time that communities, neighborhoods need to come together to be there for each other.

Let's make a commitment to “know your neighbor”. Find a way to bring non-violence and peace to your family and your neighbors.

In this issue, we are focusing on lessons learned from homeless neighbors, cell phone addiction and mental health tips for the holidays.



Lessons I Learned from my Homeless Neighbors

By Stephanie Mann

While I was working for the Oakland Police Department as a crime and violence prevention consultant, I noticed that homeless people hung out at the entrance to the police department. Over time, I got to know them. One day, as I was leaving, I was asked if I wanted to meet Mother Wright, who was serving food in Old Man's Park. Little did I know that I would end up working with Mother Mary Ann Wright for four and a half years.

One Saturday, we didn't have enough servers, so Mother Wright called out over her megaphone, asking for a volunteer. James stepped forward. We worked together and we came to know each other. He asked if I would help him. My first thought was that he wanted money. To my surprise, he stated, "I don't want to go back to San Quentin Prison, but I didn't know what I need to change." Since I didn't know, I offered to sit down after lunch and see if we could figure it out. That marked the beginning of a two-month session, held every Saturday.

After every meeting, I took notes to see if I could offer him some motherly wisdom that I had shared with my three children. My parents had gotten divorced when I was ten, and my father was an alcoholic. Then my mother and her boyfriend abandoned me in Mexico City at age 15, and I didn't speak the language, but I knew something about survival and how to thrive.

During one of our sessions, James said that he had learned a great deal, and other homeless men expressed interest in joining us. That made me a bit nervous meeting a group of homeless men in the park, so I suggested we meet in a public place. Across the street was an old church with hand-painted words "New St. Paul's Baptist Church." We met with Pastor Flemon Henry, and decided to meet for three months to see if any progress could be made to help the men.

To my surprise, eighteen men attended the first meeting, and some were high on drugs. At every meeting, the number of men present fluctuated. It was challenging to get them to sit still and listen to one another; however, once we overcame that hurdle, the men began to share their life stories with each other. They told horror stories of abuse, whippings, abandonment, and exposure to drugs, gangs, and crime, and confessed to abusing women and relatives who tried to help.

Pastor Henry was aware of the mental, physical, and emotional abuse that many of the homeless men had experienced. I never thought adults could be so violent and cruel toward their own children. Due to drug addiction of some of the participants, the group dwindled to nine men. During the three months, it became clear that these men needed guidance from people who cared about them.

Pastor Henry emphasized the importance of God's help in learning how to forgive oneself and others. As one man said, "I forgot how to love." After three months, five men got jobs, three men got into a drug rehab program, and one decided to work with Pastor Henry and help other men who were struggling.

I learned a great deal from the pastor about the power of God to heal and change lives. Violent behavior is a clear indication of power abuse. When one doesn't know how to handle their emotions or how to empower themselves, they may resort to controlling others with anger and violence. I heard many stories of trying to escape from oneself through drugs, sex, and violence to take control of the moment.

American taxpayers spend \$220 million a DAY on child abuse and neglect, which often leads to homelessness. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), an estimated 500,000 homeless people are living on our streets, which costs around \$45,000 for each person annually. Many local governments give the homeless money for food and drugs to keep them alive.

Change is needed and should be at the forefront of the public conversation. Child abuse and drugs negatively impact families. We should be asking the question, "Why aren't more volunteers and church leaders reaching out to help empower the homeless neighbors in our communities? Why aren't city leaders funding Neighborhood Safety Experts to help bring neighbors together to create stronger families and communities that support each other?" Church leaders could help reduce social isolation, fear, and anger by promoting "Love Thy Neighbor" to help prevent child abuse.

We should all be encouraged that Charlie Kirk helped to demonstrate to young people the power of the human spirit to stay calm and speak up without anger. He showed us, by example, why love and faith in God are critical for America's survival.

There are numerous rewards to be gained by helping others. People experiencing homelessness taught me valuable lessons I never would have learned if I had not gotten involved. For two hundred years, Americans didn't rely on the police or government to keep us safe and healthy. Americans relied on God and one another. In a free society, people must work together to create thriving families and neighborhoods, which will make our cities safer, more productive, and much more peaceful.

About the Director: *Stephanie L. Mann, Crime and Violence Prevention Consultant and founder of Safe Kids Now National Network LLC. Her experiences in crime prevention has given her the insight, wisdom, and vision to advocate for safe communities and neighborhoods for all children around the world. She is the author of seven books on family, home, neighborhood and city safety. Stephanie conducts workshops and keynote speeches as a professional speaker on crime prevention and safety. You can reach her at safeneighborhoods@gmail.com or visit <https://www.safekidsnow.com>*

How Addicted to the Cell Phone is your Family?

By Sher Graham



How many times daily do you NOT look at your phone? How many hours between checking your cell phone? These are questions you should be answering and doing a self-check on, and then check your family members. Children will emulate what they see. If parents are constantly on their cell phone, and allow older siblings to do the same, what do you think younger children will do?

An article on cbs.com/Pittsburgh discussed 'a new study from Reviews.org which found that nearly 57-percent of Americans admit to being addicted to our phones. That, however, only scratches the surface of the report and there are some concerning findings. Not only are we addicted, 75-percent of the responders said they're uneasy when they realize they've left their phone at home. Think about how many times in a day you check your phone, some responders said upwards of 100.'

Identifying cell phone addiction can be crucial for maintaining a healthy balance in your life. Here are some tips to help you recognize signs of cell phone addiction:

- **Constant Checking:** If you find yourself compulsively checking your phone for messages, notifications, or updates, even when there are none, it might be a sign of addiction. Check in with your children and family members before you check your messages.
- **Neglecting Responsibilities:** When phone usage starts to interfere with your daily responsibilities at work, school, or home, it could indicate an addiction. What is the state of your home? Do you avoid priority tasks? Do you help in maintaining a relationship with your spouse and children before you have a relationship with your online friends?
- **Withdrawal Symptoms:** Feeling anxious, irritable, or restless when you can't access your phone is a common sign of dependency. Do you avoid having a conversation with your spouse? Do you just sit in a chair and do nothing but scroll through your cell phone? Do you feel that you need the latest phone to make sure you don't miss anything? Do you know what is happening in your community or with your friends?
- **Loss of Time:** If you often lose track of time while using your phone and spend more time on it than intended, it might be a concern. How many minutes do you spend daily with your cell phone instead of real human beings?
- **Social Isolation:** Preferring to interact with your phone rather than engaging in face-to-face interactions with family and friends can be a warning sign. Are you isolating yourself from others, even if you are in the same room?
- **Sleep Disturbances:** Using your phone late into the night or having trouble sleeping due to phone usage can indicate an unhealthy relationship with your device. Do you check on your children and hug your partner first thing in the morning?
- **Denial:** If you find yourself denying or downplaying the amount of time you spend on your phone, it might be time to reassess your usage. You may be in denial.

Stop and take a step back and leave your phone off for 24 hours. Life will be there when you turn it on again. Smell the roses. Look up at the sky.

Recognizing these signs early can help you take steps to manage your phone usage and maintain a healthier balance in your life. If you feel that phone addiction is affecting your well-being, consider seeking support or setting boundaries for phone use.

About the Writer: Sher Graham began as a changemaker at age 12. Her commitment to making life better for others began with the legacy inspired from her grandmothers. As an international-best-selling author and speaker, she shares her personal journey through her writings and public speaking of surviving parental substance abuse disorder, verbal/physical assault and being a child who didn't have a voice. The mental health and business book anthology will be released in audiobook and coaching workbooks in 2026. Her journey has led her to advocate for mental health services, bring awareness of empathy and kindness as she guides others to create heart calm within their chaotic environments. A Kent State University graduate, she is a Neurobehavioral Health Communications Specialist for OSBI-Synergy Soulutions Collab, LLC, in Mobile, AL. You can reach her at slgraham4969@gmail.com or <https://www.shergraham.com>.



**From the Editor
Sher Graham**

ARTICLES: If you have an article you would like to share, please email by the 1st of each month to safeneighborhoods@gmail.com. The articles in Safe Kids Now News do not necessarily reflect the vision and mission of our organization. We provide a forum for our network members to express their thoughts on current topics related to children and families. If you have any issue with an article, please let us know.

MENTAL HEALTH MOMENTS

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH FOR YOUR CHILDREN DURING THE HOLIDAYS

To support a child's mental health during the holidays, maintain routines, create realistic expectations, and allow for expression of all emotions. Encourage them to participate in planning and activities, ensure they have downtime, and limit overstimulation by having a quiet space available. Model healthy behaviors yourself and focus on connection over perfection to reduce stress for everyone.

Establish structure and routine

- ✓ Maintain routines: Stick to regular schedules for meals and sleep as much as possible to help children feel secure.
- ✓ Plan for disruptions: If routines are disrupted, like staying up late, pack a "go bag" with their pajamas and toothbrush so they can get ready for bed quickly upon returning home.
- ✓ Manage expectations and emotions
- ✓ Set realistic expectations: Talk about what to expect from holiday plans and let kids know it's okay if things aren't perfect.
- ✓ Encourage emotional expression: Create a safe space for children to express all their feelings, not just happiness. Let them know it's okay to feel sad or overwhelmed.
- ✓ Check in regularly: Gently ask how they are feeling to help them feel supported.

Minimize overstimulation and stress

- ✓ Create quiet spaces: Set aside a quiet area where a child can go to decompress from noise and activity.
- ✓ Limit overstimulation: Pay attention to signs of anxiety and be willing to skip some events or take breaks as needed.
- ✓ Prioritize downtime: Ensure your child has time to relax and recharge through quiet activities like reading or listening to music.