

# Ex-volunteer's \$530,000+ lifts SCAN

## Donor was victim of abuse as a child

**VIVIAN SADE**  
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A local group is now better equipped to help children who have been abused after receiving the largest private donation in its history from a former volunteer.

SCAN Inc. (Stop Child Abuse and Neglect) has created the Joan Sherman Program for Resilient Children after receiving a gift of \$534,930 from Sherman, a former SCAN volunteer and board member. Sherman lived in Fort Wayne

for years and now resides in the New York City area.

Research shows children who have been traumatized can be taught skills that help them adapt and recover. The Devereux Center for Resilient Children, a nationally recognized, non-profit leader in behavioral health, has developed resiliency assessment and behavioral screening tools that are used with families in SCAN's Family Restoration Division. The involved families have already crossed the line of abuse and neglect and are re-



Sherman

ferred by the Allen County court system and the Department of Child Services.

The Joan Sherman Program for Resilient Children will use Devereux screening tools and provide resources and staff training to help traumatized children.

Sherman began her longtime career in banking after leaving home at age 18. She was a victim of child abuse while growing up in Michigan and became involved with SCAN as a volunteer after attending a fundraiser with friends. She served on SCAN's board of directors from 2003 to 2006.

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"One of the things that clicked with me was the message of SCAN and the impact the agency was having on children who were abused and neglected," she said.

Sherman was raised in a family where there was abuse and neglect, she said. As the oldest of four girls, she described her and her siblings' childhood as "horrible."

"We had plenty of food and a nice house – never suffered from poverty. But back in those days, in the late 1960s and the 1970s, especially in small-town America, I don't think we really talked about child abuse," Sherman said.

In looking at why some children who face adverse experiences fare better than others who have endured the same conditions, research

shows certain protective factors, in essence, "buffer" the effects of negative experiences.

A study at the University of California-Davis found that among children with four or more risk factors – such as inadequate or hostile parental care or a chaotic living environment – only a third became successful adults. Within that third, researchers identified several protective factors.

Among them: the children had been active, social infants; had at least one positive role model; had a sense of autonomy and initiative; and had one or more skills that gave them a sense of pride and acceptance among peers.

Through the new program, specific resiliency skills such as attachment, initiative and self-control will be taught to children to help them adapt and recover from trauma.

"The opportunity to teach

our child victims the protective factors that will build their resiliency is a vast window of opportunity," SCAN Executive Director Rachel Tobin-Smith said.

Sherman and Tobin-Smith hope to leverage additional dollars from the community to help underwrite the cost of supervised visits not reimbursed by the state.

In 2010, 60 percent of families completing family restoration services were able to improve parenting skills and the home environment to a level that allowed their children to return home.

In 2010, SCAN helped 27,143 children and adults through a spectrum of prevention and family restoration services.

"It is very exciting to realize that this could have major, lasting effects on the arena of child abuse prevention and intervention services," Tobin-Smith said.

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