

Children's Health

Documentary Tells the Story of the Children of Alcoholics

(NAPSA)—A unique summer camp offers hope and comfort to children of alcoholics. It is also featured in a documentary being shown on Public Broadcasting Stations across the country.

One in four children in America lives in a family with alcoholism or alcohol abuse, according to the American Journal of Public Health.

Often, children of alcoholics are busy maintaining facades of normalcy to the outside world, making excuses for their parents' unexplained absences or unpredictable behavior while quietly taking care of younger siblings.

"I was mad because I knew I wasn't going to have a childhood. I wasn't going to be a regular child and be able to just play around," recalled 13-year-old Brandy, one of 19 million children in America growing up with alcoholic parents.

"When parents can't stop drinking, their children often pay the price," said Emerald Yeh, a San Francisco television reporter who documented the lives of several children of alcoholics over a 17-year period, following two of them from elementary school age into adulthood. Her eye-opening interviews with these children can be seen in the 30-minute, award-winning documentary *Lost Childhood: Growing Up in an Alcoholic Family*, now airing on PBS stations throughout the country.

Yeh points out that only five percent of children of alcoholics get any help. Studies show that without some kind of intervention or support, these children are at high risk for physical, emotional, behavioral and mental health problems. They are four times more likely than other children to become alcoholics themselves.

Yeh's documentary presents a message of hope as she visits Kid's Kamp, a summer camp retreat in Northern California for children of alcoholics. The camp, along

Resources for Children of Alcoholics

www.NACOA.org

www.al-anon.org

www.alateen.org

www.lostchildhood.org

www.thechildrensplaceprogram.org



with a year-round prevention education program run by The Children's Place in Redwood City, is designed to help children develop valuable coping skills that help them into adulthood.

"The unspoken laws the children learn in an alcoholic family are don't share your feelings, hide your pain and don't trust anyone," said Jerry Moe, a counselor now at The Betty Ford Center who specializes in children of alcoholics. Moe devised Kid's Kamp as a safe place where the children can share their feelings with others, learn trust and have a chance to simply be kids.

"I cannot even tell you what I think I would have been like today without that," said Juliana, now an adult who is first seen at the age of eight in *Lost Childhood* as she struggled with her father's chronic drinking.

"Not one American goes untouched by this issue in some way. It is our fervent hope that *Lost Childhood* will go on to be a major resource and teaching tool to help thousands, perhaps millions of affected children," said Sis Wenger, executive director of the National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA) upon viewing the documentary.

To find PBS airdates for *Lost Childhood: Growing Up In An Alcoholic Family*, or to order a copy, visit www.lostchildhood.org. The Web site also provides information about further resources for children of alcoholics.