

Eastside native brings parenting lessons home

By John Matuszak

Eastside Editor

When Walnut Ridge High School student Jody Johnston carelessly damaged her new car, she didn't wait for her parents to lower the boom.

Having been raised to take responsibility for her own actions, she returned to her parents her car keys, drivers license and checkbook and placed herself on restriction.

Her mother, Millie, returned the checkbook with the observation that the account did not contain enough to pay for the damages, and that her daughter would have to do more work to correct the situation.

"They were not out to be mean, but they were looking for solutions, something I would learn from," recalled the eastside native.



JODY JOHNSTON-PAWEL

Jody Johnston-Pawel, now a family counselor and parent educator, has sought to bring together lessons all parents can learn from with her new book, *The Parent's Toolshop: The Universal Blueprint for Building a Healthy Family*.

Johnston-Pawel, now living in Springsboro, near Dayton, acknowledged that people are at first skeptical about a blueprint that can be used in all family situations.

But once they apply the simple steps to their own lives, they are quickly convinced of its effectiveness, she said.

Johnston-Pawel's career path is not surprising, considering her background.

Her mother, Millie McCarty, is founder and executive director of Lighthouse Christian Counseling. Her father, Brian Johnston, is the retired executive director of Directions for Youth, which provides intervention for young people before they reach the juvenile justice system.

Both parents were among the first in the Columbus area to teach parenting classes, Johnston-Pawel said.

Their foray into the field came about through necessity, when Johnston-Pawel's older brother began to exhibit behavioral problems.

"They were unprepared for the problems posed to them of raising a child in the '60s," Johnston-Pawel said. "Their own upbringing had not prepared them. And like a lot of people, they wanted to be better parents" than their own parents had been, she added.

They studied Parent Effectiveness Training, but found that it lacked discipline. They then latched onto a method called Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP), which included the missing element.

One benefit for the family was improved communication skills.

"I would give my parents A-plus-plus as excellent listeners," Johnston-Pawel said. "I always felt as if we could talk, and I would not get bombarded with advice."

While in high school, Johnston-Pawel worked as a youth leader at Shady Lane Presbyterian Church and volunteered with One-on-One, a forerunner of Directions for Youth.

After graduating high school in 1977 and enrolling in Wright State University to study social work, Johnston-Pawel spent her summers in Columbus volunteering to work with inner city youth and gaining valuable experience working with young people.

Johnston-Pawel has learned that there are two types of unhealthy parents, "the more dangerous, damaging kind, the ones who just don't care," and parents who just don't know any better.

"But if you want to learn, I can teach you skills," Johnston-Pawel promised.

Those skills are contained in her 450-page book, which came about through her desire to have a one-volume parenting reference book available.

Johnston-Pawel's "Universal Blueprint" asks families to ask two questions when a conflict arises.

The first question is "Whose problem is it?" If it is the child's or another person's, Johnston-Pawel suggests that listening and problem-solving skills be used to find a solution.

If it is your own problem, concerns should be respectfully and clearly expressed.

The family also should ask what type of misbehavior is being exhibited.

Johnston-Pawel's categorizes misbehavior as "unintentional" and "on purpose."

Unintentional behavior can result from the developmental stages of childhood, medical conditions such as Attention Deficit Disorder, or can simply be part of the personality of the person involved.

But just because a behavior is unintentional doesn't mean it should be ignored, she noted.

"On purpose" behavior, such as a child's noisy attempts to attract attention, should be addressed by finding a positive way that the purpose can be met.

Johnston-Pawel will be bringing her lessons home full circle this summer.

A staff member for Directions for Youth, who had previously been trained in Johnston-Pawel's "Universal Blueprint" methods, has brought the information to the agency and training for parents will begin this summer.

Parenting classes can benefit any family, and parents shouldn't wait until there is a crisis before seeking out information, Johnston-Pawel offered.

"The love comes naturally, the skills are learned," she said.

To purchase a copy of *The Parent's Toolshop*, check local bookstores or send \$29.95 plus \$4 for shipping and handling to Ambris Publishing, P.O. Box 343, Springsboro, Ohio 45066. Credit card orders can be faxed at 513-748-4620. Johnston-Pawel's Internet site is www.parentstoolshop.com.