

Cheryl Anderson Post Crescent column: Kaukauna mom reaches out to help parents, teens ‘rekenekt’

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Tricia Propson isn't a professional counselor, nor does she pretend to hold all the answers when it comes to raising children. The Kaukauna mother of four does, however, have a deep desire to reach out to hurting teens and their parents.

That's probably why she says God began nudging her about five years ago to go beyond her work as a freelance communications consultant for mostly faith-based nonprofits through her Cornerstone Communications Company.

"I felt like God was saying to me, 'Tricia, I didn't save you, I didn't straighten your life out so you could hide in your little Christian bubble. I want you to be out there and help me find the lost,'" Propson said. "I didn't really know what that meant, but he kind of got a hold of me, shook me up a little bit and I started seeking what does that mean, what does he want me to do? ... So I said, 'I'll go where you send me.'"

Although still a work in progress, Propson, 50, began rekenekt, a ministry dedicated to making healthy connections between parents and teens to save lives.

"There's a lost generation of teens who are looking to their parents for something and don't know what it is," she said. "And you have a generation of parents who want more than anything to give their kids what they need but don't know what that is either. It's heartbreaking."

About two years ago a rash of suicides hit Kaukauna. The young people who took their lives were all from solid families.

"So I started collecting obituaries and I still carry them with me," Propson said. "It's a reminder to me that these parents didn't see this coming. They didn't think anything was wrong with their own kids. God nudged me to find out why these normal looking, head of the football team, or normal, everyday American girl takes their life. I was perplexed."

Propson, who grew up in a broken and difficult home and spent many years in counseling, stepped out in faith. Two years ago she set up a graffiti wall at Lifest, the annual Christian music festival in Oshkosh.

She asked teens to jot down what they wished they could tell their mom and dad and what they wished their parents would tell them.



"I was not prepared at all for what this did in these kids," she said. "These kids were very open to sharing their hearts."

Propson also set up a "Rent a Mom" booth, which kids could come in to for 15 minutes and tell her anything they wished they could tell or ask their own mother. "Again, I was not prepared," she said. "I was faced with questions that ranged for what do I do when I get my period ... to I had an abortion and I never told anyone and I really want to tell my mom, to my uncle raped me when I was 8."

"It really made me stop to think about the role of parents in our society today and the role moms and dads used to hold in our society, which was to train up and be an authority over and mind and care for these young ones," she said.

"(In some cases) parents have kind of removed themselves from that role. And I think as a society we've kind of bought into the lie that parents aren't necessary."

They have their teachers. They have their guidance counselors. They have their youth pastor, their friends. They don't want mom hanging around."

In a nutshell, Propson has found parents who think they're doing everything right and children who don't think the same thing.

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So she tries to reconnect them through workshops, seminars, events and camps. The four-part renekt Parent Resource series, which can be offered as a faith-based or values-based program, includes “Bringing Hope to a Lost Generation: Reconnecting parents and teens;” “Checking the Connection: Evaluating your relationships with your teen;” “Reading the Blueprints: Understanding the role for parenting teens;” and “Getting the Conversation started: Moving towards healthier relationships.” Programs for youth are available as tie-in programs, and programs also are available for parents and teens together.

“I really feel like God has shown me the depths of despair; he allowed me to go through all that. He could have stopped any of that at any time. I believe he allowed me to walk that path, had his hand on me always, protected me so that I could come out the other side a whole human being. And ready to help other people connect.

“I’m just a mom ... whose heart was breaking for the families out there that are hurting. I’m nothing special.”

A connection

For more information on renekt, go to www.cornerstonecomm.org/html/renekt or e-mail Tricia Propson at: trish@cornerstonecomm.org.

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