

PARENTING

Phone service offers health hints for parents

By Lee Strong
Associate editor

You've just learned that one of your child's friends has chicken pox, and you don't know what to do if your child develops it.

It's 10 p.m. and you've just had another argument with your teenager about household chores.

You're not sure whether it's a good time to begin toilet training your toddler.

Parents face these and many other minor and not-so-minor dilemmas each day.

Thanks to ViaHealth, they now have a new free local resource to help provide some basic information.

ViaHealth — a system of health-care providers in greater Rochester — now operates "The Parent Information Line," a phone-in system through which individuals can access information on hundreds of parenting topics from asthma to leg cramps to whining by phoning 716/922-LINK (5465) or, outside Rochester, 1-877-922-LINK.

The telephone system is offered through ViaHealth's call center. Callers are plugged into an audio health library to receive basic information in either English or Spanish. The callers simply enter a four-digit number for the information they want to receive. The numbers are listed on literature the service sends out. Callers can also hear

topics listed over the phone.

The recorded messages include information about the topics ranging from possible causes to methods of home treatment.

The recorded message for nose bleeds, for example, mentions that they are common throughout childhood, and are generally caused by dryness of the nasal lining. The message notes that normal rubbing or picking, or blowing of the nose can lead to bleeding. To stop the bleeding, it advises, squeeze the soft part of the nose against the center wall for 10 minutes. If that does not work, try a different spot to make sure that pressure is being applied to the right spot. It also suggests inserting some gauze with petroleum jelly on it to help increase pressure when squeezing.

The message mentions that such traditional remedies as applying a cold washcloth to the forehead or the back of the neck do not work. It also suggests as means to prevent recurring nosebleeds to avoid giving children aspirin, as this can make them susceptible to nose bleeds, and placing some petroleum jelly on the center wall of the nose daily for a week to help fight the dryness, and using a humidifier.

Once individuals hear their message, they can then direct their calls to available staff members at the center during regular business hours (8 a.m. to 8 p.m.) for more information, or leave a message for staff to

call them back. Parents can also request free printed copies of the audio information they heard.

According to Kathy MacMaster, RN, the call center's manager, the audio system is now receiving 300-400 calls a week. The system has been available since last October, but was not publicly promoted until April. The response was so heavy — 2,000 calls in April — that people were sometimes unable to get through. The center has now added extra phone lines for the audio system so that it can handle 16 calls at any one time.

The beauty of the audio system is that it allows people to get information during off-hours or when they want some basic knowledge before talking with a health care professional, MacMaster noted. For some people, the privacy of audio system is often more comfortable than face-to-face conversation.

"You might not feel comfortable talking to a person about your child's bed wetting," she explained.

Indeed, bed wetting is one of the most frequent topics about which people seek information, MacMaster noted. Others concern behavior and discipline. And immediately following the April 20 shootings at Columbine High School that left 15 people dead, she reported, there was a flurry of requests for information in such teen-related categories as "House Rules," "What's Abnormal" and "Teaching Responsibility."

"A lot of time, people don't want to make it obvious they have these concerns about these issues," MacMaster said.

The system is not intended to provide diagnoses or medical advice, however, or to replace visits to health-care professionals, she cautioned.

"It's really information that you can take and evaluate in your own way," MacMaster said.

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To receive a free brochure listing topics available through the Parent Information Line, call weekdays between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Events

☉ **Summer reunion:** St. Mary's Hospital babies; to celebrate St. Mary's Family Birth Place grand opening; if you or someone you know is a St. Mary's baby, call 716/723-6750; to donate photos and memorabilia to Unity Health System's permanent archive call 716/723-6762.

☉ **May 20-23 — Lilac Festival:** Kids activities noon-1 and 5-8 p.m. daily; Madeline and Clifford 2 p.m. May 22, Berenstain Bears noon May 23, Gary the Happy Pirate 1 p.m. May 23; festival runs 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily; Highland Park, Rochester.

☉ **FRI, MAY 21 — Third Friday Family Sing:** with Bill Mehls; 7-10 p.m.; Unitarian Universalist Church, Cooley Rd., Canandaigua; \$2 per person; \$5 per family; refreshments available; call 716/396-1092.

☉ **FRI, MAY 21 — Storytime and pajama party:** *Pete's Pizza* by William Steig; 7 p.m.; Barnes and Noble Book Store and Cafe, 3349 Monroe Ave., Pittsford; refreshments served; free; call 716/586-6115.

☉ **Workshop: "Who are the Winged Creatures?"** exploring legends related to birds and their importance to the Iroquois people; includes crafts, visit by a wildlife rehabilitator with owls; 10 a.m.; for ages 8-12; Ganondagan State Historic Site, 1488 Victor-Holcomb Rd., Victor; \$7 per person, \$6 for Friends of Ganondagan; advanced registration recommended; call 716/924-5848.

☉ **SAT, MAY 22 — Back to Nature Ceramics:** learn about pine cone birdhouses, fossil pots, forest animals, pet rocks; for ages 6-14; 2-5 p.m.; Gates Community Center, 1605 Buffalo Rd., Gates; \$17 for Gates residents, \$19 for nonresidents; wear old clothes and bring a box to carry home projects; call 716/247-6100, ext. 235.

☉ **SUN, MAY 23 — Bird Spotting Day:** talks, walks with staff members to learn about birds, make a bluebird nesting box; 10 a.m.-3 p.m.; Rochester Museum and Science Center, Cumming Nature Center, Gullick Rd., Naples; \$4 for adults, \$3 for seniors and college students, \$1.50 for children in grades K-12, free for preschoolers and RMSC members; for information call 716/771-4552.

☉ **MON, MAY 24 — Support group:** adoptive parents; Adoption Resource Network, Inc.; Henrietta Town Hall, 475 Calkins Rd., Rochester; 7-9 p.m.; \$7; 716/586-9586.

☉ **TUE, MAY 25 — Zoodiscovery class:** splash, slurp, swim into a look at animals and their relationship with water; for 3- and 4-year-olds and caregivers; 10:15 and 11:15 a.m.; 1:15 p.m.; The Seneca Park Zoo, 2222 St. Paul St., Rochester; \$8 for member families, \$14 for nonmember families; call 716/336-7200.

☉ **THU, MAY 27 — Art workshop:** "Mini Masterpieces: Colorful Mosaics"; for ages 2-5 with adult; 10:15-11:15 a.m.; Memorial Art Gallery, 500 University Ave., Rochester; \$6 per person, \$18 maximum; reservations required; call 716/473-7720, ext. 3056.

☉ **SUN, MAY 30 — Pond Life:** for junior naturalists; guided walks, stories, crafts, other activities; 1-3 p.m.; Genesee Country Nature Center, Flint Hill Rd., Mumfords; \$10; registration required; call 716/588-6822.

☉ **SUN, MAY 30 — Wildflower hike:** 2-3:30 p.m.; Mendon Ponds Nature Center, 3914 Clover St., Honeoye Falls; \$2 for nonmember individuals, \$6 for nonmember families, \$1 for member individuals, \$3 for member families; call 716/334-3780.

☉ **MON, MAY 31 — Full moon hike:** learn about creatures of the night; for adults and children 8 and older; 8-9:30 p.m.; Mendon Ponds Nature Center, 3914 Clover St., Honeoye Falls; \$2 for nonmember individuals, \$6 for nonmember families, \$1 for member individuals, \$3 for member families; call 716/334-3780.

☉ **SAT, JUNE 5 — 19th Century Rochester:** brought to life by RMSC Players; meet Frederick Douglass and his friends while touring Mount Hope Cemetery; then visit museum; \$10 for adults, \$5 for children 3-18, free for children under 3; reservations required; call 716/271-4552, ext. 342.

☉ **JUNE 11-12 — St. Michael's Festival:** rides, children games; 5-11 p.m. June 11, noon-11 p.m. June 12; St. Michael's Church, 320 S. Main St., Newark; call 315/331-6753.



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Clap for reading!

Khari Johnson, 5, right, with father Jemeul, sing and clap to the songs of entertainer Jim McCarthy May 10 at St. Monica School, Rochester. The entertainment was part of a Family Reading Night during which students chose books, then read with parents and took a test on what they had read. About 150 students and parents attended. Khari is in St. Monica's pre-kindergarten class.

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