

New “Fuzzie” Program Launched by Diocese of Rockville Centre

Looks to Teach Children and Parents About Personal Safety

Rockville Centre, New York, October 15, 2006 – In an effort to educate young children about the importance of safety and the protocol they should follow if they feel threatened, the Diocese of Rockville Centre has begun an educational program entitled “Fuzzie.”



Fuzzie, a stuffed animal, is used along with a booklet full of fun exercises that provide a toolkit for parents and teachers to teach and discuss safety with children. The booklet is an owner’s manual for kids on how to keep *Fuzzie* safe, and in doing so learn about their own personal safety.

“The booklet is yet another effort by the Diocese to help give teachers and parents the tools to teach kids to be safe,” said Eileen Puglisi, director of the Office of Protection for Children and Young People.

The program, which will be available to First graders in Catholic schools and in Religious Education classes, teaches children the importance of knowing where they live and who they can trust.

Presently, there are five sites involved in the program: St. Mary's of Manhasset (school); St. Agnes in Rockville Centre (Rel. Ed); Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary in Southampton (Rel. Ed); St. Isidore's in Riverhead (School); and Cure of Ars in Merrick (Rel. Ed.), however, the *Fuzzie* program will soon spread to all elementary schools and religious ed. programs throughout the Diocese.

A significant part of the lesson teaches children to say “no” when they feel uncomfortable, to go to someone they trust, and to tell them exactly what happened. Knowing how and when to dial 911 and to stay away from strangers are also key components of the program.

“The *Fuzzie* project is a joint effort between the Office of Protection for Children and Young People, the Office of Education, and the Office of Faith Formation to continue our efforts to enhance children safety and protection programs in the schools and parishes of the Diocese,” said George Rand, Associate Director for Children and Youth Formation in the Office of Faith Formation. “*Fuzzie* is a likeable character that both children and parents can relate to on an important and sensitive subject and in a non-threatening manner.”

Children are encouraged to send *Fuzzie* e-mails at Fuzzie@drvc.org or write him a note and send it to Fuzzie, Diocese of Rockville Centre, P.O. Box 9023, Rockville Centre, N.Y. 11571-9023.

“This new program will give us the opportunity to talk to our students about their safety in a non-threatening way. The chance to have the students discuss safety issues using *Fuzzie* will enhance the programs we already offer in our schools on safety, child abuse and bullying,” said Sister Joanne Callahan, O.S.U., M.S., P.D., Superintendent of Schools.

For more information about the Fuzzie program, please contact Eileen Puglisi, Director for the Diocesan Office for the Protection of Children and Young People at epuglisi@drvc.org or 516-678-5800 Ext 573.