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[Back to Home Page](#)

Seminar focuses on dealing with feelings

Centers for Hope offering session for children, caregivers in expressing themselves

By Jessica J. Burchard
The Winchester Star

Winchester — New situations often bring out mixed emotions in children and adults.

While grown-ups can find ways to talk about their feelings, youths may need to express themselves differently.

The Centers for Hope, a part of Blue Ridge Hospice, are hosting a seminar on April 15 at the Our Health Building to give show both children and caregivers a way to deal with different feelings.

Winchester Public Schools and Apple Valley Counselor Association are co-sponsoring the program.

The all-day seminar on the Moon Balloon Project will explain the importance of using art and symbols as means of expression.

The project began as a children's book read in elementary schools. It has since become a seminar and training guide for adults.

"We have found the Moon Balloon has been used to help many families. Symbols are universal," said Joan Drescher, co-creator of the project. "Once people learn how to use images and symbols, they can show how they feel."

According to the project's Web site, www.themoonballoonproject.org, the balloons illustrating different emotions are shown in a particular order. The first is the safe balloon to build trust, then balloons representing other emotions are shown.

"Each balloon addresses a different feeling a child might have," said Drescher. "I think it's a language and a tool people don't use often enough."

Once children understand how to use the balloons as symbols, they create their own illustrated stories about their feelings.

Co-creators Drescher and Liz Ennis split responsibilities during presentations.

Drescher focuses on the children using "The Moon Balloon Book," while Ennis talks to caregivers about taking care of themselves.

The program's comprehensive nature is why the Centers for Hope invited Drescher and Ennis to speak.

"It's just so well done and a great resource in working with families," said Sally Gascoigne, coordinator of the Winchester Center for Hope.

She added the project also ties in with the hospice's Camp Hope — a one-day camp in August for children who have lost a loved one.

"We're trying to offer resources and training and another method to use creativity," Gascoigne said.

The registration deadline is April 8 with a cost of \$75 a person. The fee includes a work book, training guide, and breakfast and lunch.

For more information about the Moon Balloon Project, contact Sally Gascoigne toll free at 877-210-4673.