

## VALLEY SNAPSHOT Sunday, February 7, 2010

### Why I volunteer BY DONNA SIEGEL



Donna Siegel poses with some of the Kids on the Block puppets at an Assistance League of Victor Valley booth display. Volunteers use the puppets for several local educational programs for children, including a program geared toward identifying and preventing child abuse. The programs are available at no cost. For more information, e-mail [dfilly686@msn.com](mailto:dfilly686@msn.com) PHOTO COURTESY OF DONNA FILADELFIA

## **SPECIAL TO THE DAILY PRESS**

When the Kids On the Block puppeteers are performing before an audience of fully engaged and attentive children, they frequently sneak a peak from behind their puppet character to catch the children's expressions of awe, delight and excitement. At the end of the scripted performance, the children's eagerness to ask the puppet characters questions validates that the children have been hearing the message and they want more information.

This is typically a scene of excited children just bursting to get to ask a question. But on one occasion, following a program focused on how to identify and prevent child abuse, the most important question asked was one from a small, timid girl who had been seen struggling quietly and emotionally throughout the program. Her facial expression set her apart. She looked very sad, worried and close to tears as the key message kept being repeated. "You must tell someone!" Also, a list of people children can trust to tell such a story had been given numerous times.

Finally the small, nervous girl raised her hand. Directing her gaze toward the puppet representing an abused child.... she forced the following words, "But what do you do if nobody listens?"

At that moment, that little girl's life changed. A dozen or more school staff members heard that plaintive plea for help. Sadly, other adults who she had confided in already had shamelessly failed her. But not this time. The outcome for that child was that finally, the adults who could help her did hear her. But that day, because of the KOB program, she risked speaking up and being failed yet again. That day, the KOB set the stage for her life to be changed and for the adults around her to hear her.

This was a great day for the Assistance League of Victor Valley's legacy of helping children. It was also a testimony to the dedication and effectiveness of the CrossWalk students who presented the program that day.