



A Mother's Impact On Her Child

By Sherri Rodgers-Conti, Executive Director of Southeast CASA

We will soon be shining the spotlight on one of the most important people in our lives, our mother! This Mother's Day, Southeast CASA (Court-Appointed Special Advocates for Children) would like to honor all of the wonderful mothers in our community.

We believe, and I'm sure you do too, that every child deserves to be raised in a loving, safe home. But WHY is this so important?

Scientific studies have shown that a mother's love physically affects the size of her child's developing brain in the region important for learning, memory, and stress responses. Children who experienced a nurturing mother as they grew up had brains that were 10% larger than children whose mothers were not as nurturing. "It's now clear that a mother's nurturing is not only good for the development of the child, but it actually physically changes the brain," said Dr. Joan Luby, researcher and psychiatrist at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Mo.

So, what does nurturing a child look like? A nurturing mother responds to her child's needs, hugs and holds their child, makes eye contact and has verbal give and take, even when the child can only coo. She sets limits, is consistent and firm while showing love

and kindness. The parents are the authority figures, guiding the child as he or she learns to navigate their boundaries. A child who feels that his or her mother provided an emotional safe haven, was there in times of distress, will likely be a well-adjusted child.

Just being there for the child makes the biggest impact of all.

It is no surprise, therefore, that children raised in a nurturing home typically do better in school and are more emotionally developed than their non-nurtured peers. They are more sensitive to the suffering of others and better able to form rewarding relationships. They think life's problems are manageable, and believe the obstacles the world throws at them can be overcome. They view themselves as capable, and they believe they can solve their problems.

Surely moms deserve a special day for the difference they make in their children's lives!

For more information about Southeast CASA, visit www.southeastcasa.org.

