

LifeNET, Inc., Makes a World of Difference for Families

A world in which parents have immediate access to every bit of information they need to protect their children from maltreatment and neglect, or better still, a world without child abuse is the business of LifeNET (Life Network Engineering Technologies, Inc.).

LifeNET's Child Abuse Prevention Networks currently serve over 600,000 people annually in nearly 100 countries from the U.S. to Oman, from Australia to Kazakhstan. When it comes to child abuse prevention, using the Internet, LifeNET is "Number One." Search for "child abuse prevention" at www.google.com. LifeNET's flagship service—www.child-abuse.com—or its Cornell-based antecedent—child.cornell.edu—is right at the top.

www.child-abuse.com links those who need information with those who have information. It is a network that functions as the "nerve center for professionals" while at the same time providing immediate access to reliable content for parents, children, and other family members.

Extensive tools for professional support reside here, because of LifeNET's unique strategy of providing an authoritative "umbrella" network consisting of top organizations in the field. The network is a "one-stop shopping-center" for what people need to know about combating child abuse. Global partners include the International Society to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect, and Childwatch International's Children's House. National partners include Cornell Human Ecology's Family Life Development Center (FLDC), the National Center on Child Fatality Review, the U.S. Army's Family Advocacy Online, the Family Violence and Sexual Assault Institute, disability-abuse.com, and the Physician's Network on Child Abuse and Neglect. The partnership also includes two statewide programs—Prevent Child Abuse California and Prevent Child Abuse New York.

LifeNET was born out of an amazing coincidence. The company's two key founders had been pursuing the same basic vision for more than a decade without knowing each other. Tom Hanna, as development coordinator of Cornell's FLDC, had first designed and prototyped a national computer network on child abuse and neglect in 1985, with sponsorship of Apple Computer and General Electric Information Services Company. Herbert O. Truesdale, as CEO of Tri-Corp, Inc., had been pursuing a model of state-to-state computer networks under the rubric of the Endangered Child Network. Then in 1994, Hanna and Cornell professor John Eckenrode, Human Development, won a planning grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce to determine the readiness of child abuse professionals to use computer networking.

This grant took Hanna to the San Diego Conference on Responding to Child Abuse in January 1995. Tri-Corp sent staff to the conference to learn about the field. Carrying the "secret" of Truesdale's Endangered Child Network, Tri-Corp representatives were amazed to find Hanna and Cornell demonstrating a theoretical model of a national network at the conference. This surprise encounter led to a critical decision: should the two projects compete, or should they join forces? It was not long before Hanna and Truesdale had combined their network designs and LifeNET was born. During these formative stages, Cornell Research

the LifeNET business model for preventing child abuse through the appropriate use of internet technology is driven by three marketplace realities.



Herbert Truesdale (l.), chair and CEO, and Tom Hanna (r.), Executive Vice President

Foundation's Richard Cahoon helped the infant collaboration take its first baby steps. Encouraged by Cornell's then-vice president of information technology, Stuart Lynn, Hanna and LifeNET collaborated in building a test-bed website for what would become the Child Abuse Prevention Network.

The Department of Commerce grant ended in December of 1995. Cornell's FLDC and the Human Ecology's Dean's Office worked with Hanna and Truesdale on the process of spinning the test-bed out of the university and into LifeNET. Hanna retired from Cornell in 1997, after a 28-year career, and LifeNET took over full sponsorship of the Child Abuse Prevention Network. Originally launched in California's East Bay, LifeNET is now based in Ithaca.

The LifeNET business model for preventing child abuse through the appropriate use of Internet technology is driven by three marketplace realities. First, there are hundreds of thousands of professionals in the U.S.—and hundreds of thousands more around the world—who struggle day-to-day with the difficulties that surround every case of child abuse. Second, agencies and organizations that deal with family violence are now beginning to see the Internet as a key resource in meeting their mission and serving their clientele. And, third, IT solutions for the for-profit and governmental sectors do not often meet the needs of the 250,000-plus not-for-profits in the U.S. who toil to protect children from abuse and neglect.

CEO Truesdale still sees strong ties to Cornell into the future. "We plan to continue investing in the interface between information technology and human problem-solving," he said. "What better place to do so than at Cornell, where human ecology, information technology, and research excellence coexist in a nurturing environment."

Tom Hanna
Executive Vice President
LifeNET, Inc.



For more information:

LifeNET, Inc.
210 Eddy Street
Ithaca, NY 14850-4614
(607) 275-9360; LifeNET@aol.com
<http://child-abuse.com>