

## **Show the Truth and the Effects that Graphic Pictures have on Children**

*By Rosemary Connell*

I spent a great deal of time studying Show the Truth activism before starting the movement in Canada, and still give a great deal of thought to each and every location we choose. Eight years ago I travelled to the States with several other experienced pro-lifers to learn how and why these posters were used, to observe people of all ages reacting to the displays, and especially to study this concern about children. Since then and during over 800 Canadian presentations, we have studied and recorded children's reactions to these posters and interviewed parents. We have been able to assess children's responses according to age.

Young children (approx. 5 and under) do not react to the photos but rather to their parents' response. When parents respond quietly, which most of the parents at the March did, young children hardly notice the images or can be easily distracted.

Slightly older children (approx. 6 to 9) generally recognize the truth of the pictures and, like the child in "The Emperor's New Clothes" are quick to speak the obvious truth and ask questions such as "What happened to the baby?" or "Who hurt the baby?" At this age, they are generally concerned about their own safety and the safety of other children. Most often all that is needed at this age is a simple reassurance from their parents that they are cherished and have been protected since conception. Children of pro-life families can be given the added comfort of knowing that their parents and grandparents do everything they can to take care of other people's babies too.

Pre-teens recognize the truth of the photos, but one of the main reactions at this stage is wanting to do something themselves to help babies. One 9 year old boy wondered why the police weren't stopping from killing the babies. Another 11 year old boy said, "When I grow up, I'm going to be the Prime Minister so I can stop that!" Children of pro-life families can be given practical ways to act on their natural concern. This is the time in their lives when they begin to realize that there are real injustices in the world and so it is the perfect age to develop healthy pro-active ways of dealing with evil.

We have come to the conclusion that at no age are children harmed by seeing the photos of aborted children. It is their parents' reactions to the posters and answers to their questions that affect them. When parents become visibly agitated, yell, swear, make threats, or try to give them pro-abortion rhetoric, young children are naturally disturbed by the commotion and older children are confused and disturbed by the misdirected anger. These types of parental reactions are what cause true anxiety in children. When pro-life parents respond in the ways I have described above, young children are calm and untroubled and older children become convicted to join in their family's mission.

Our pro-life children need all the tools they can get as they go out into the world to defend life. One 10 year old child of a very active pro-life family saw our posters for the first time and said, "Is that what abortion is?" For the first time he realized why his parents poured some much time, energy, money, emotion and prayer into fighting this otherwise abstract issue. This child is now 14 and joins our show the Truth presentations. We cannot treat abortion so "graciously" that no one feels angered or saddened enough to fight it. If our children are empowered to defend babies, through work and prayer, they will not be afraid to look at the faces of those for whom they are fighting.

I encourage any concerned parent to contact me. We offer to talk to children with the parents present or we have material available for parents who want to educate their children themselves.