



Promoting Healthy Communities

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MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

“Mental Health Matters” Provides Quarterly News and Stories of Interest to TGC Supporters and Community Partners.

TGC Update

By Keith Rickard, MBA
Executive Director

The Guidance Center is a comprehensive community mental health center. That means we try to provide mental health and substance abuse treatment services to everyone in our community. We are charged by licensing regulations to be everything to everyone regardless of one's ability to pay for care. Free services to community residents are made possible, to some extent, by Federal, State, and County tax dollars.

The Guidance Center is not immune to the nation's current financial crisis. We received notice on December 1st, 2008 that the State was cutting TGC's grant subsidy by 8.3%. In real dollars this amounts to \$68,600 in the 2009 budget. We have been informed that one version of the governor's 2010 budget (that begins in July 09) could reduce our grants up to \$200,000 more.

Thirty seven percent of the clients served by TGC have no insurance to pay for their care. This means that 1400 of our 3800 clients have no way to pay for their services. With fewer grant dollars, TGC must take swift action to be able to maintain a service level for which demand will inevitably increase during these hard financial times.

Marriage surveys often reveal that the number one stressor in a marriage is money problems. As these problems increase marriages crumble, families struggle, domestic violence increases, and substance abuse problems sky rocket. We are gearing up for a 10-15% increase in demand for services in the months ahead.

My message today is to ask for your help. We need operating funds to maintain our current staff levels so

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that we can be available when you, your family, or your neighbors need help. Current literature on the cost of behavioral health reveals that the cost of not providing services is nearly twice that of the actual treatment costs themselves. These costs show up in corporate profit declines from absenteeism, as well as increased cost in law enforcement, corrections, child welfare, and court services.

I can not emphasize enough the importance of early intervention and access to care, and the need for high-quality mental health services and treatment. An investment in The Guidance Center is an investment in the hope of a brighter future for people with mental illness, improved public health and awareness, reduced stigma associated with mental illness, and improved access to quality care.

I know that times are hard for everyone. But I also know some of us are blessed enough to be able to help even in the hardest of times. I give back to TGC every year through payroll deduction. I will be increasing my own personal pledge in the months ahead and would ask you to join me in protecting a vital community service that any one of us could need in the days ahead.



Dr. Charles Smith author of "Raising Courageous Kids" recently led seminars for staff and parents at the J. David Kaaz Campus of The Guidance Center.

Noteworthy News

PROFESSOR AND NOTED AUTHOR DR. CHARLES SMITH GUEST SPEAKER AT TGC

On December 3, 2008, Dr. Charles Smith provided two workshops at the J. David Kaaz Campus of TGC. Dr. Smith is a professor and parent educator in the School of Family Studies and Human Services at Kansas State University.

According to Dr. Smith our children's lives are filled with opportunities, both big and small, to make a difference in the world. Perhaps there will be a bully to deal with at school, an offer of drugs, or a life threatening accident. Eventually, life will demand that our children face fear, make choices, and take action.

During the workshops, Dr. Smith outlined the eight stages from birth to early adolescence in which he believes courage develops, and offered concrete examples of how parents can nurture the virtue of every day courage in children. Participants were provided with a free copy of Dr. Smith's book "Raising Courageous Kids" following the workshop.

Smith has created online educational resources and several websites for parents and parent educators, including The WonderWise Parent (<http://www.ksu.edu/wwparent/>) and Raising Courageous Kids at <http://www.raisingcourageouskids.com>.

NEW CLINICAL STAFF AT TGC

The Guidance Center is pleased to announce the addition of Shannon Winter, LCPC to our clinical staff in Atchison.

TGC Workshop Schedule



Feb 4

Special Topics in Family Therapy – Problems of Family Justice Including Foster Care and Abuse

March 4

What works in Psychotherapy?

April 1

Doing Effective Cognitive Behavioral Treatment

For information and registration, please contact Dr. Dave Barnum at 682-5118 or visit our website at www.theguidance-ctr.org.

The Guidance Center is BSRB approved provider for continuing education

SAVE THE DATE!

TGC TO HOLD FUNDRAISER IN MAY

Plans are underway for TGC's first annual fundraising event to be held May 1 - 2, 2009 as part of Mental Health Awareness Month activities. The "Mission Possible" Scavenger Hunt will be a fun filled tri-county event providing participants the opportunity to explore the local region while solving clues and completing a series of tasks during a 24 hour period. The winning team of the hunt will be recognized at a banquet following the hunt and will be awarded a \$2,500 prize.

UPCOMING NAMI EVENTS

NAMI is offering a free twelve week Family to Family class for consumer family members beginning Saturday, March 7th. Registration is required and is limited to 20 individuals. To register or for more information, please call Barbara Wood at 913-369-2495 or Suzanne Nelson at 913-682-3967.

Please join fellow consumers, family members, providers and advocates in Topeka at the **Annual Mental Health Advocacy Day** on Thursday, February 19, 2009 at Memorial Hall, 2nd Floor Auditorium 10th & Jackson. This is a great opportunity to become better informed about mental health policy issues in the Kansas legislature and to educate your legislators about the issues of the day.

Your Mental Health Matters

Laugh Out Loud!

Humor Improves Mental and Emotional Health

The sound of roaring laughter is far more contagious than any cough, snuffle, or sneeze. Humor and laughter can cause a domino effect of joy and amusement, as well as set off a number of positive physical effects.

Individuals with a greater sense of humor are more cheerful and have a higher self-esteem. They are also more likely to develop close, social relationships (these positive relationships can help us deal with stress). Humor can help to minimize the importance of stressful experiences (so you have 30 people coming for dinner and you burned the potatoes... In the big scheme of things, is it really the end of the world?). Finally, laughing can produce positive physiological (body) effects such as reducing muscle tension, increasing the flow of oxygen to the blood, exercising the heart, and producing endorphins (naturally produced body chemicals that decrease pain and increase a sense of well-being and euphoria).

Laughter is a powerful emotional medicine that can lower stress, dissolve anger and unite families in troubled times. Mood is elevated by striving to find humor in difficult and frustrating situations. Laughing at ourselves and the situation helps reveal that small things are not the earth-shaking events they sometimes seem to be. Looking at a problem from a different perspective can make it seem less formidable and provide opportunities for greater objectivity and insight.

Humor also helps us avoid loneliness by connecting with others who are attracted to genuine cheerfulness. And the good feeling that we get when we laugh can remain with us as an internal experience even after the laughter subsides.

Mental health professionals point out that humor can also teach perspective by helping patients to see reality rather than the distortion that supports their distress. Humor shifts the ways in which we think, and distress is greatly associated with the way we think. It is not situations that generate our stress, it is the meaning we place on the situations. Humor adjusts the meaning of an event so that it is not so overwhelming.



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Here are some things we can do to improve our mood, enjoyment of life and mental health.

- Attempt to laugh at situations rather than bemoan them – this helps improve our disposition and the disposition of those around us.
- Use cathartic laughter to release pent-up feelings of anger and frustration in socially acceptable ways.
- Laugh as a means of reducing tension because laughter is often followed by a state of relaxation.
- Lower anxiety by visualizing a humorous situation to replace the view of an anxiety-producing situation.

MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF LAUGHTER

- Humor enhances our ability to affiliate or connect with others.
- Humor helps us replace distressing emotions with pleasurable feelings. You cannot feel angry, depressed, anxious, guilty, or resentful and experience humor at the same time.
- Lacking humor will cause one's thought processes to stagnate leading to increased distress.
- Humor changes behavior – when we experience humor we talk more, make more eye contact with others, touch others, etc.
- Humor increases energy, and with increased energy we may perform activities that we might otherwise avoid.

Finally, humor is good for mental health because it makes us feel good!

(Information for this article obtained from Helpguide.org)

TGC's STAR PROGRAM

BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES YOUNG CHILDREN

When "Johnny" came to the Center at age 3 he had already been removed from two daycare centers and the Head Start Program - due to an inability to control his aggressive behavior and his emotions.

His family was referred to TGC by Head Start staff and following a behavioral health assessment "Johnny" was placed in the STAR program. Within eighteen months of participating in the program, he met all of his goals and was enrolled in Kindergarten at a local school. Since that time, Johnny has continued to show marked improvement in his behavior and social skills, and with the support of his case manager, parents and teachers will continue to overcome the behavioral health issues that have interfered with his success in the past.

This is but one of the many successful outcomes for pre-school aged children and their families since TGC began offering the STAR program 2 years ago. The program, which is based at the Kaaz Campus in Leavenworth County is licensed by the State of Kansas and is able to serve 19 children ages 3-5 who are currently or are at risk for experiencing serious emotional disturbances.

The Goals of our program are:

1. Early Identification of children who experience or are at risk of experiencing a serious emotional disturbance
2. To preserve families and prevent out-of-home placements
3. To prepare children to enter Kindergarten with the emotional, social and other school readiness skills necessary to be successful learners.

At STAR the teachers and the mental health staff encourage families to be active partners in their child's education and welcome their input and involvement in service planning and provision. Behavior management strategies are taught to parents through individual and group sessions as needed.

At first glance, a typical day for a child participating in the STAR program would appear like any other early childhood program. However, close examination reveals key differences. Each child's instruction is based upon his/her unique approach to the environment, and encourages appropriate expression and honest development. Our emphasis is in acquiring appropriate socialization skills, self regulation and acquiring skills to function in a classroom setting. These skills are honed in a classroom with a ratio of one teacher for every four students.

A typical day in the program begins with morning songs intended to engage each child, encourage eye contact and to help each child learn appropriate boundaries followed by a nutritious breakfast served family style where children learn



Serving Tikes At Risk

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to pass, share and cooperate. Breakfast is followed by reading and sharing time to encourage focus and communication with the teacher. The children next participate in directed play time during which each child is required to pick an area of play in the room and to play there until such time as they have appropriately requested another area to focus their play (if another child is in that area, they must request to join them, and play cooperatively there). Finally, there is reflection time to find out what went well with the day, and what areas need improvement. The children are on a stop light system, which gives immediate feedback and recognition. If a child ends the day on the red light, he/she always starts out the following day on green. This gives every child a new start, and allows staff time to guide behavior on present behavior, not past occurrences.

Some children do have specific behavior programs that must be followed, but most of the children are guided with simple rules and expectations that are given on a consistent basis from all staff.

Additionally, to ensure that children experience increasing success at home as well as at school, TGC offers an extensive array of services for families and caregivers including:

- Parent support groups
- Case Management/Home visits
- Collaboration with other service providers
- Crisis services
- Parent-child therapy

TGC is proud of the accomplishments of the young children served through STAR and welcome inquiries regarding the program. For additional information about STAR and other early childhood services offered through The Guidance Center, please contact Toni Minor, Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at (913) 682-5118.

WE ALL BENEFIT FROM SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER

There once was a farmer who grew award-winning corn. Each year he entered his corn in the state fair where it won a blue ribbon... One year a newspaper reporter interviewed him and learned something interesting about how he grew it. The reporter discovered that the farmer shared his seed corn with his neighbors.

"How can you afford to share your best seed corn with your neighbors when they are entering corn in competition with yours each year?" the reporter asked.

"Why sir," said the farmer, "don't you know? The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it from field to field. If my neighbor's corn is inferior, cross-pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my corn. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbors grow good corn." The farmer was very much aware of the connectedness of life. His corn could not improve unless his neighbor's corn also improved.

So it is in other dimensions. Those who enjoy a life filled with hope, must help their neighbors find hope. Those who want to live well, must help others live well - for in the end, the value of a life is measured by the lives it touches. And those who find happiness must help others to find happiness - for the welfare of each is bound up with the welfare of all. - Author Unknown

A community is only as strong as its weakest member. When we invest in the mental health of those experiencing mental illness, we strengthen our community as a whole.



DONATION FORM

We appreciate that supporting TGC with a financial contribution is a significant and generous commitment. Your financial support of The Guidance Center helps to make Mental Health services available to individuals and families in Atchison, Jefferson and Leavenworth Counties who might otherwise be unable to afford them. Thank you.

Contact Information:

Please do not include my name in published donor lists

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