

# Approaches In Child Guidance

...working together to help children and families reach their goals

Fall 2010

Community Child Guidance Clinic  
CHILD CENTERED ★ FAMILY FOCUSED

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## Back to School—Outpatient Clinic Helps Children and Families Learn Ways to Make the School Year More Successful.

Back to school is a time of change and a time when many children and families may benefit from some additional support to make the transition smoother. Some of the biggest challenges encountered during this time include trying to adapt to the demands of school work, homework, as well as social stressors. And children aren't the only ones feeling stress during this time. Parents also often find this time to be particularly challenging as they want to see their children succeed and don't always know the best ways to help. When these issues arise and families encounter difficulties, it can be helpful to enlist the support of a clinician who can work with the child

and family to help them explore the causes of the problem and find solutions so that children and their parents can meet the demands of the school year with less stress and more success.

Helping children with organization is an important task that ranks high on the list of parental worries during the school year. A lack of organizational skills can result in difficulty completing schoolwork as well as homework. And helping children learn organizational skills is more important than ever before, as there has been a steady increase in the amount of homework over the last several years. According to researchers at the

University of Michigan, in 1981, children ages 6-to-9-years-old spent 44 min. per week on homework; in 1997, they spent more than two hours per week<sup>1</sup>. The amount of time children ages 9-to-11 spent on homework increased from 2 hr. 49 min. to more than 3 1/2 hours per week<sup>1</sup>. The increase in the amount of homework can result in struggles between children and their parents. Parents often want to support their child but may be confused about how involved they should be<sup>1</sup>. A clinician may be able to offer parents the guidance they need in deciding on the best ways to offer support,

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## Annual Butterfly Release Teaches CCGC Students a Lesson on Change.

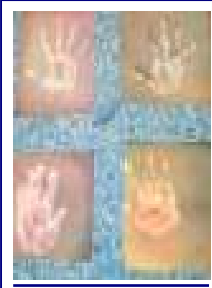
On July 9, 2010, CCGC students released the first of six Monarch butterflies which they have been caring for as part of a special annual project created by Gail Griffith, Speech Language Pathologist, CCGC School, who purchased the butterflies in caterpillar form at Magic Wings in Deerfield, MA. Mrs. Griffith began the project eight years ago when she was looking for an innovative way to talk with students about change. As part of the butterfly segment, CCGC students watch a video about the Monarch Butterfly's four stages of growth: stage 1 egg, stage 2 caterpillar (larva), stage 3 chrysalis (pupa) and stage 4 adult (butterfly). The lesson starts during the



The first Monarch butterfly released at CCGC

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## Save the Date: 7th Annual Silent Auction Fundraiser on October 22, 2010



Handmade quilt by  
CCGC students and  
Laura O'Donnell

The Community Child Guidance Clinic will hold its 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Silent Auction & Live Auction fundraiser on October 22, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. at Georgina's Restaurant in Bolton, Connecticut. This year features an exciting array of raffle items including a beautiful quilt handmade by the students of the CCGC school and teacher, Laura O'Donnell. Also included are one-hour hot air balloon rides, park hopper tickets for four to Disneyworld and Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida among many others. Proceeds raised from this year's event will be used to help support the Clinic's Autism Assessment Program. If you are interested in donating silent auction items, buying tickets to attend the event, or have general questions, please contact Lindsay Williamson at (860) 643-2101 or [law@ccgcinc.org](mailto:law@ccgcinc.org).

### *Back to School continued from page 1*

as children have different needs and learning styles. Some children may have formal diagnoses such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or a learning disability, while others, particularly those entering middle school, may not have had the need to organize themselves and simply need some time to learn new skills. Understanding the causes of the problem can pave the way for success, as once parents understand the problem better they are often able to empathize with their child and offer them the support they need.

Social stress is another concern among children when going back to school, as school is the place where children judge one another from day to day. Some children worry about keeping up with their peers socially or academically. Dealing with these issues alone can cause anxiety for children and parents, alike. For some, talking with a teacher or parent is all that is required. For others, especially for those whose social problems are more chronic, a social skills group can make a difference.

Social skills groups for children are an effective way to teach children the skills that they need to be successful with their peers. The clinic offers many groups throughout the year to help children sharpen their social skills. These groups require a referral from the child's clinician and are often a helpful supplement to individual treatment. Examples of ongoing social skills groups include The Friendship Group (ages 6-8), which provides a small, structured group for children to learn and practice positive ways to interact with peers. Discussion, activities and role plays are used to practice effective communication, problem solving and conflict resolution. A social skills group has also been offered for children (ages 9-12), with activities geared more toward their age group. In addition, a teen girls group (ages 14-17)

was recently created to address issues related to relational aggression. Goals for this group included learning effective problem-solving skills and ways to build healthy support systems. In addition, a parenting group, Caregivers Count is a popular group that addresses common issues or challenges of parenting a child with mental health needs. Parents and/or caregivers receive support by connecting with other caregivers who share similar experiences, and at the same time, are educated about specific parenting strategies to try out at home. For more information on upcoming groups, please contact Liane-Lussier Smith, LCSW at [lls@ccgcinc.org](mailto:lls@ccgcinc.org) or (860) 643-2101.

Communication between home and school is imperative and it helps when parents and school administrators communicate regularly. However, talking with a child's teacher can be difficult especially when problems are more complex. This is when a clinician can be of help. An important aspect of treatment includes collaboration with school personnel, as clinicians look at the whole child rather than focusing on one aspect of their lives. According to Laura Feeney, LCSW, an outpatient clinician and a former school social worker, "Many times when we see children at the clinic they do not present with the difficulties seen at school. It helps to talk with the school staff who work directly with the child on a day-to-day basis to get an overall picture of the way a child functions." While the school year can bring up all types of challenges, with the right support it can also present children and their parents with important opportunities for learning and growth.

#### Reference:

Ratnesar R. The Homework Ate My Family, Kids are Dazed, Parents are Stressed—why piling it on is hurting students. *Time Magazine*, June 23, 2003.

## On Board with CCGC: Dr. Ellen Marmer Celebrates 40 Years on the Board of Directors

Ellen Marmer, MD, celebrates her 40th year as a board member of Community Child Guidance Clinic, with this marking her 8<sup>th</sup> (nonconsecutive) year as President. When asked why she has chosen to dedicate herself to the CCGC Board, she says that it is exciting to be part of the delivery of services to children. Dr. Marmer is also a person that likes to get things done. She says that it is readily apparent that the CCGC board is a working board. She likes the fact that she gets to roll up her sleeves and get to work. And with her direction, much work has been accomplished over the past 40 years.

With a starting budget in 1959 of approximately \$30,000 and a case load of sixty children, the Clinic today has a budget of \$4.5 million dollars and treats more than one thousand children per year. And the numbers are continuing to grow. According to Dr. Marmer, there has been a dramatic increase in the numbers of families served and this will likely continue, as today's families are struggling with more problems than ever before. A report from the Connecticut Health Foundation outlines key trends that would suggest that the need for children's mental health

services will likely increase in Connecticut.

First, several factors associated with increased risk of mental health problems among children have risen<sup>1</sup>. For example, between 1985 and 1996 in Connecticut, child poverty (defined as a family income of \$16,700 or less for a



Ellen Marmer, MD

family of four) increased from 12% to 17%, though the state's rank as highest in per capita income did not change and child poverty declined nationally over this period<sup>1</sup>. In 1989, when our economy was last very strong, Connecticut's child poverty rate was only 7%<sup>1</sup>. Next, the number of births at low birth weight increased from 6.6% of all births to 7.2%<sup>1</sup>. A large number of low birth weight children are being diagnosed with moderate-to-severe emotional and behavioral problems, which, in turn,

are indicators for mental health disorders later in life<sup>2</sup>. In addition, families headed by a single parent increased from 22% of all families with children to 27%<sup>1</sup>. Child abuse and neglect reports have more than doubled since 1990 and quadrupled since 1970, as approximately 8 in 10 substantiated reports involved children under 10 years of age and 36% involved physical or sexual abuse<sup>1</sup>.

The likely demand for increased services will require the support of a strong Board of Directors to ensure that overall policies and objectives are met and that there are adequate financial resources allocated to support the Clinic's programs. The CCGC Board is currently recruiting new board members. If you or someone you know would like to work on a dynamic board that is dedicated to supporting children and families in the community, please contact Dr. Marmer at (860) 643-2101.

References: 1. Geballe S, JD, MPH. *The State of Children's Mental Health in Connecticut: A Brief Overview*. Connecticut Voices For Children, June 2000.

2: Weiss SJ, St. John Seed, M. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development* September, 2002; 33: Number 1.

### *Annual Butterfly Release, continued from page 1*

first two weeks of summer school and after three weeks, the first caterpillar has usually emerged into a butterfly. Once this happens, the children gather together to celebrate its release. Watching the evolution firsthand invites many questions about the stages of change which often lead to a parallel discussion about ways that CCGC students have changed throughout the school year. Mrs. Griffith said she recalls how one child reflected on his own metamorphosis during his first year at CCGC School, where he learned skills to improve his behavior. The Monarch Butterfly project is one of many that focuses on the use of hands-on teaching experiences that provide CCGC students with lessons that they are sure to remember.



CCGC students with  
Mrs. Griffith at butterfly release

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## Approaches

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BY PROVIDING A SYSTEM OF  
CHILD CENTERED AND FAMILY FOCUSED  
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TO MAINTAIN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN  
THEIR HOME AND COMMUNITY.

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