

**Serving: Andover. Bolton. Columbia. Coventry. East Hartford.
 Ellington. Glastonbury. Hebron. Manchester. Marlborough. South
 Windsor. Stafford Springs-Stafford. Tolland. Vernon-Rockville**

A SOCIAL PARADOX

Non-Profits are always short of dollars, yet a recent report by the Connecticut Community Providers Association shows they are the most cost-effective way to deliver services. For example, employees in non-profits make salaries twenty-five to forty percent less than comparable State employees. During good economic times non-profits increase their services and develop new programs. Our Autism Assessment Program Building Blocks is a prime example of this. Grants from

the State, municipal support and program dollars from foundations and contributions are easier to come by. Our staff get raises and morale is high. During economic downturns (should I say "recession"?) dollars become more scarce. State municipal and foundation support is considerably less and contributions are also less.

The paradox is that this is precisely the time when we are called upon to provide more services. Tough financial times, underemployment or unemployment, reductions and other available

services, uncertainty over the future, homelessness and myriad other factors create stress on families and we see it daily in the children and parents who come to our Clinic.

During this time of greatest need for kids and families, we end up with the least amount of resources to provide the service. We don't pretend to have the solution and we won't sit around and complain. The non-profit community is resourceful. The Clinic has been around for over fifty years and we will find a way.

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WHY AREN'T WE THE MANCHESTER CHILD GUIDANCE CLINIC?

It is common to hear us referred to as the "Manchester Child Guidance Clinic". Because of our location on North Main Street in Manchester, we have become associated with the Town of Manchester. In fact, since we were founded in 1958 we have always been the "Community Child Guidance Clinic". Years ago it got to the point that we had to put a separate listing in the yellow pages. In addition to our listing under "Community Child Guidance Clinic", we listed ourselves under "Manchester Child Guidance Clinic" so that people could contact us when needed.

So why don't we give in and call ourselves by the town in which we are located? The clear answer is that Manchester is one of fourteen towns that we serve. A full listing of these fourteen towns can be found above in this newsletter. We serve a population of people east of the Connecticut River and in all there are over two hundred and seventy-Five thousand people living in the area we serve. Slightly over fifty thousand of these people live within the Town of Manchester. In addition, certain specialty programs at the Clinic, such as our school and our home-based services,

serve children from towns outside of the area that are referenced. In fact, currently we are serving children from 18 additional towns to the fourteen towns that we focus upon.

The reason that we are the Community Child Guidance Clinic has nothing to do with our location. It is philosophical. We are here to serve a region of the State. This region is the rapidly growing, vibrant, east-of-the-river group of towns we view as being within our community. This area is partly urban, partly suburban and partly rural and is a diverse mix.

The next time that you think of us as being the "Manchester Child Guidance Clinic", please stop for just a second and remember that we are the "Community Child Guidance Clinic" and that the reason behind this is philosophical - that we view the region that we serve as a community and that we have the resources and the commitment to serve the diverse needs of this entire community.

BUILDING BLOCKS AUTISM ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

Our newest Clinic program, Building Blocks, has been very busy this year. We have currently assessed twelve children, and we're lining up more all the time! The children we assess range in age from 24 months to 17 years. Each child has his/her own challenges, strengths and needs, and no two children fall exactly on the same place within the autism spectrum. To meet this challenge, we have organized a highly skilled group of assessors, including a child psychiatrist, a PhD psychologist, a speech and language pathologist and an occupational therapist. Our autism committee also includes clinic and school administrators (including our Medical Director), social workers trained in child development, and a marriage and family therapist.

Children who come to us are assessed over a one month period of time using clinical observations, standardized testing, family interviews, as well as school and pediatrician records testing and measurements. A report is written at the conclusion of the assessment and presented to the parents in notebook form. A meeting is then held with the family to discuss diagnosis and treatment and the family is presented with an updated list of community providers, resources and supports.

The idea of creating an autism assessment program was conceived by local pediatricians who were concerned that there were not many autism assessment services available to their east of the river clientele. Autism can be a lengthy and expensive disorder to appropriately assess. In the State of Connecticut, some programs have a waiting list of between three to five years, accompanied by a price tag that most people simply can-

not afford.

No definitive prevalence studies exist, but experts state that approximately 1:150 children are on the autism spectrum, and only about half of those have received diagnosis. The risk is three to four times higher in males than females. We are aware that parents are typically the first to notice unusual behaviors in their child. Parents will often describe their child as "different" from birth. Sometimes the child may have been developing normally for a period of time and then suddenly becomes silent, withdrawn, self-abusive or indifferent to those to whom they are close. Most parents are correct when they notice developmental problems, although they may not know how to do something about them.

The first thing a parent should do if they notice developmental challenges is to contact their pediatrician, who will examine the child and make recommendations for follow up assessment/treatment, including referral to programs such as Building Blocks. It will prove very helpful if the parent will write down what is noticed in the child's development over time. In addition, every State guarantees special education supports and related services. The Building Blocks program supports and encourages parents in partnering with their local school dis-

tricts to become apprised of services and assessments that may be appropriate in meeting their child's developmental needs and challenges.

We are always excited to meet new children, and to work with their parents and families. The children we assess have come from all different backgrounds and ethnic groups, and are sometimes new to the United States! One such child we met was a four-year-old whose family had moved to the United States from Africa a short time ago. Because of the family's cultural beliefs and values receiving the result that their child did indeed have autism was very hard for the parents to accept and the mother, in particular, was highly resistant to accepting his diagnosis. She knew that something was certainly wrong, as her child could not communicate or socialize and had very poor eye contact and few self-help skills. To ease her concerns about assessment some members of the Building Blocks team met in with the parents in settings with which they were familiar and comfortable, such as their home and in the school. Following the diagnosis, this young boy's mother found that her son was now able to access numerous helps at school including occupational therapy, speech therapy, social skills training, and the help of a one-to-one classroom aide. Receiving the diagnosis also allowed the parents to seek additional speech therapy which was paid for by insurance.



A Social Paradox (continued)

The next time you are asked to make a contribution, think of the pressures out there on families and remember the social paradox.

WE MEASURE WHAT WE DO

We measure our results in several ways and Client Satisfaction Scales are one important way we do this. Every three months we pick a week and ask everyone who comes into our waiting room to fill out a thirteen question form on services they receive. Our questions range from our courteousness, the condition and cleanliness of our building, respect for their cultural background, and promptness of response, to over-all satisfaction with the help received. Our results are consistently over ninety percent positive! In our latest survey one hundred percent of those responding said they would return if the need arose in the future.

The few complaints we get we take seriously and our senior staff meet regularly to find ways to address issues. We are thankful to our clients who take the time in giving us candid input and we are proud that we do so well with the people who are the most important to us.

NEW EMPLOYEES

- Denise W. Coley, Psy.D.,
Psychology Resident
- Laura S. Feeney, MSW,
Psychiatric Social Worker
- Amy C. Gagne, M.S.
Special Education Teacher in School

TRANSITIONS

By Amy Gagne

My name is Amy Gagne and I am the newest teacher at CCGC School. As I sit here now I think about all the things that have occurred in the last three months. There I was in February working at a public high school with my one-on-one student. I sat at the computer looking and thinking about the next step in the career that I had chosen. All of a sudden a job posting on the internet caught my eye. A job at CCGC as a special education teacher was being offered. I thought to myself "I have taught elementary school and just finished my degree in Special Education. This might be the right fit for me." So off I send my resume and letter.

A week or so later an email in my inbox appeared. A few days later I received a phone call asking me to come visit. I walk through the school. I think "I like this place. Everyone here seems so nice." I leave that first day all sorts of excited. A few days later I receive the phone call that I have been waiting for. They want me to come teach at their school. I call everyone I could think of: my husband, my family and the teachers who were my references. Everyone I talked to built up my excitement.

On my last day at the high school I get congratulations from the friends I worked with and some choice words from my one-on-one student. I think to myself that I can succeed at this job. Part of me fears that maybe public schools are the place for me and this will not fit. I fear that the staff will not accept me as part of their group. It think to

myself "I will not be able to settle these fears unless I try." So off I go.

After three months here, I have learned that no day is the same and that you have to be able to think on your feet. Whether it be a new intake (or two) or behaviors, I learned that I can handle more than I thought I could. I have made friends with the staff here and do not feel like an outsider. I am so happy to be here at CCGC and know that this is the place for me.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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- Daniel C. Wright

**THE RIGHT
FIT**

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ODDS and ENDS:

1. Access to the Clinic. Since January of 2009 100% of the people with Medicaid insurance who applied to our clinic were offered appointments within two weeks and 86% were offered appointments with one week.
2. In all clinic programs combined we served 1,208 clients in 2008.
3. We now have a total of 93 employees. In 1958 we had 3!
4. Our oldest employee is 79 years old and has been with us for two years. Our youngest employee is 21 and has been with us for three years.
5. Kathleen Peters recently joined

our Board of Directors. Her father was John Foulds who was a long term Board member and our Board President in the 1990's. We are proud to have our first second generation Board member.

6. A simple solution. Worried about the flu? Our Medical Director says the simplest way to prevent flu is to wash your hands and if you are sick, to stay at home!

SAVE THE DATE

6TH ANNUAL SILENT AUCTION

October 16, 2009

Manchester Country Club
305 South Main Street
Manchester, CT 06040