



Child Chat

"Dedicated to children and those who serve them"

Steven Wayne Dolliver, Editor



Spring has sprung!

Child Chat is a quarterly newsletter of Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center designed to acquaint the Lake and Sumter County communities with our professional staff and their trauma-focused services to children, as well as to highlight topical children's issues.

NCA Site Review: A Time to Shine

It happens every five years. It is an organizational rite of passage. It is a "proving ground." It is an opportunity. It is an accomplishment. It is validation. When the National Children's Alliance (NCA) conducts its Reaccreditation Site Review of our Center on May 4, it shall be all of these things. Most of all, perhaps it shall be an affirmation—an affirmation of a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) service model that binds 881 Children's Advocacy Centers across the nation. The MDT service model is an integrated child abuse intervention approach that permits children to tell their respective trauma stories only one time in the presence of key community-based professionals. MDT professionals include, but are not necessarily limited to, law enforcement officers, child protection case-workers, prosecutors, victim advocates, forensic interviewers, medical providers and mental health counselors. Fidelity to the MDT service model

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE®



ensures that these professionals "in the system" receive the necessary information on alleged abuse incident(s) to make critical decisions within a narrow window of time. These critical decisions may include removal of the child from the biological home, arrest of the verified offender, and/or prosecution of the verified offender. Most importantly though, there is a high probability that fidelity to the model shall allow the child victim to avoid the re-traumatization that often accompanies multiple recitations of the trauma-inducing event(s). After all, our goal is to alleviate trauma, not to exacerbate it.

So, when NCA comes to visit on May 4, its reviewers shall measure our Center relative to best practice standards in ten (10) primary focus areas governing Children's Advocacy Center services throughout the nation: 1) Multidisciplinary Team, 2) Cultural Competence and Diversity, 3) Forensic Interviews, 4) Victim Support and Advocacy, 5) Medical Evaluation,

(continued on page 2)

From the Editor

The Importance of Being Earnest

Earnest: a serious and intent mental state; a considerable or impressive degree or amount

When I first moved to Florida from Boston in the spring of 1983, it was something of a lark. Two years earlier I had earned a Master's Degree in Sociology at Boston College and subsequently completed my Ph.D. coursework there. Along the way I served two years as a Teaching Fellow at BC and concurrently held down a full-time Probation job in downtown Boston. As if that were not taxing enough, I also negotiated an adjunct position teaching Social Science classes to nursing students at Laboure (pronounced lah-bo-ray) Junior College every Saturday. As you can imagine, my free time was at a premium back then. However, on Sunday mornings I managed to get together religiously with five graduate school buddies for some spirited games of pick-up basketball at the BC "Rec Plex". Those were not particularly artful games as I recall—lots of pushing and shoving and fouling—but they did serve to release some pent-up aggression, as evidenced by the cuts and bruises incurred along the way. Still, there were compensations for the residual suffering of rough play, and one of them was a relaxing soak in the warm embrace of a locker room jacuzzi. In fact, it was during one of those soaks that I made a critical decision that would dramatically change my life. For it was then that I contemplated my brutal schedule and the grave physical, social, and emotional toll it was exacting. I concluded that meager meals, no social life, and the debilitating stress my duties engendered were not a recipe for sound physical health and emotional well-being. So, on that forbiddingly cold January day I hatched a plan that flowered on a portentous May day, and my 1,600 mile southerly sojourn commenced.

As I said before, my relocation to Florida was something of a lark. I knew no one, and I had no job prospects awaiting me at the journey's end—just hopes and dreams and enough "seed money" to rent a living space and put food in my belly. It took me six months of odd-jobbing before I landed a modest position as a counselor in an alternative education program called ALPHA on the east side of Orlando. Admittedly, the pay was dreadful, and the intrinsic rewards initially were not much better. But it was at ALPHA that the semblance of a professional career began for me, and for that I shall always be grateful—for that and a certain special client whose story shall become central to this piece.

The elementary school students who matriculated at ALPHA largely hailed from low socio-economic circumstances. They were the throwaway children of desperate families fallen prey to crime, drugs and abject depravity. Many were estranged from their parents—some forever. Others never really knew them. Most were raised by grandparents who, of perceived

(continued on page 2)

Inside This Edition

- NCA Site Review: A Time to Shine.....Page 1
- Editorial: The Importance of Being Earnest.....Page 1
- Bids 4 Kids Alive and Well.....Page 2
- Meet Erlande Alexandre, Counselor.....Page 3
- "Beware of Slime".....Page 5
- Bikers "C.A.R.E.." Pinwheel Run.....Page 5

Child Quote: "Listen earnestly to anything your children want to tell you, no matter what. If you don't listen eagerly to the little stuff when they are little, they won't tell you the big stuff when they are big, because to them all of it has always been big stuff." - Catherine M. Wallace, author

Child Chat



NCA Site Review: A Time to Shine (from p. 1)

6) Mental Health, 7) Case Review, 8) Case Tracking, 9) Organizational Capacity, and 10) Child-Focused Setting. We welcome this opportunity to showcase our efforts on behalf of our children, as well as to receive valuable recommendations from the review team that shall enhance the manner in which we serve them.

At the Center we take our responsibilities in the service of children very seriously, and we hope that a successful site review shall illustrate our earnestness. Relevantly, in April 2020 the Center Management Team commenced an initiative called the **ICONS Project**. ICONS involved a comprehensive review of Center compliance with the aforementioned ten NCA standards. We selected the term “icon” as the symbolic representation of the project, as it stands for “something widely and uncritically admired, especially something symbolizing a movement or field of activity.” We believe the term captures the spirit of our aspirations as a children’s service organization. With respect to the project, the acronym ICONS guided the action steps in the review process, as follows: 1) **I** = Identify areas to improve, 2) **C** = Create a plan, 3) **O** = Own the plan, 4) **N** = Navigate the plan, and 5) **S** = Sustain the plan. Thus, we assigned all ten NCA Standards sections across our Management Team, critically examined strengths and needs in our services, and created and worked our action plans as designed. We continue to refine and polish in preparation for our site review and for the years ahead.

Many view accreditation visits with trepidation. After all, so much rides on a favorable outcome. I suspect that the fears of the “many” may be the unwelcome by-products of lack of overall organizational preparation. We know that we are not perfect, but we also know that we are prepared. So, we shall be welcoming, transparent, and receptive in our quest for continuous quality improvement. And we shall ultimately embrace the moment that comes but every five years—our time to shine!

Bids 4 Kids Alive and Well!

There was something conspicuously different about the March 2022 edition of Bids 4 Kids from the previous two years—**PEOPLE!** Seriously, the past two years have been a siege, with social isolation the prevailing condition. In 2020 the scourge of COVID and the considerable health risks it presented compelled cancellation of our annual fundraiser altogether. And last year, with COVID’s Omicron viral strain dominating the health and wellness landscape, Bids 4 Kids was reduced to an exclusively virtual event. We discovered that digital devices, for all of their technological merits, shall never rival the majesty of human-to-human interaction.

Yes, B4K 2022 was different. The smiles were just a little sweeter. The greetings were just a wee bit warmer. The conversations lasted a few minutes more. The “hail fellow well met” handshakes lingered with the inexpressible glory of physical contact. Hugs were “non-hovering” and heart-felt. Old friends exclaimed as though they had forgotten the joy of...old friends. Veritable strangers became instant friends. We were distinctly ourselves, and yet we were united as one.

B4K 2022 was truly a celebration of life—a triumph of the human condition against all odds and obstacles, COVID notwithstanding. We had defeated the health menace of our generation. As the excitement built and the bids rained down, I could not help but wonder. If we could summon up the tenacity to defeat COVID, could we one day martial the moral forces to eradicate child abuse? Just imagine the unrestrained celebration were we to alleviate the suffering of the most innocent among us. Now that would surely be a “celebration of life”!

The Importance of Being Earnest (from p. 1)

obligation, took on caregiver responsibilities they neither sought nor wanted. The mantle of responsibility somehow missed a generation and landed ever-so-oppressively on those who had already discharged their parental tasks in their proper time. Still, irrespective of caregiver, these wanton waifs of meager means ate sparingly, studied nominally and smiled grudgingly. They sneered and leered and disdained one another with unfettered alacrity, never apprehending that such disparagement was borne of their own self-loathing. Though possessed of tender years, they already hated where they came from and seemed to recognize, almost intuitively, that their futures were as fatally sealed as those of the family members who preceded them. And so they bided their time with no joy, no hope, and no dreams—living only for the perverse pleasure they derived from making others’ days as miserable as their own.

Amidst this bitter backdrop of ugliness, hopelessness and despair stood an impossibly small, unassuming eight-year-old. His name was Earnest, an apt moniker for a child who tried hard but seldom tasted the elusive fruits of his considerable efforts. The teachers observed that Earnest was not one of the “bad kids” whose misguided mischief had brought them to this academic outpost for the behaviorally bankrupt. Rather, Earnest was universally recognized as a “good kid” who bravely endured an ADHD affliction that resisted remedial medications and had already left him a grade behind his peers with no solution in sight. All knew that Earnest’s acting out behaviors were merely a by-product of frustration with his attention deficit plight and never maliciously motivated. On the whole, his hurt was an internal pain largely reserved for private suffering. So it was, in the absence of a more suitable setting, that Earnest spent his school days as a miscast victim of ill fortune.

Sadder still for Earnest is that he was the personification of vulnerability, this frail reed of a boy with the misplaced grin. He possessed all of the essential features of a bully’s dream with his shock of flaming red hair, frightful constellation of freckles, and an unflinching politeness designed to thoroughly unnerve unrepentant hooligans. Unwitting target that he was, Earnest could not understand his peers’ derisive catcalls, their sharp jabs to his ribs, and their incessant denigrations. He could not understand why his innocent overtures to make friends were met with such harsh rebukes and unflinching rejection. For he was not like them. He was sweet and kind and caring. He believed in the inherent goodness in others, and he received even the slightest gesture of human kindness as manna from Heaven. And, good Lord, how he toiled over his schoolwork, though its completion required three times more than the norm. It may not have been exemplary work, but at least Earnest could say it was “done work” (which was more than the vast majority of his malingering classmates could say). I must admit that I had come to admire Earnest’s doggedness in the classroom—a trait he displayed in equal measure in counseling sessions with me. He worked assiduously to develop coping skills, repair ravaged self-esteem, and combat the corrosive anxiety that was only exacerbated in the presence of his insensitive classmates. Earnestly (pun intended), in spite of all obstacles, the young man forged ahead.

As Earnest was warming to his tasks in those early days of our tenure together, so was I acclimating to the unfamiliar physical environment of Orlando. Upon my arrival in Florida, I had settled in Casselberry, a northern suburb a veritable world away from the inner city where my ALPHA clients and their families resided. Seldom did I trek into Orlando except for my commutes to and from work. However, occasionally I would accommodate parents for family meetings at their homes when their respective

(continued on page 3)

Child Chat



Meet Erlande Alexandre, Counselor

One of the distinct pleasures of producing a quarterly newsletter as *Child Chat* is the opportunity to introduce our readers to new Center employees. Accordingly, it is our pleasure this month to introduce Counselor **Erlande Alexandre**. Welcome to our Advocacy Center, Erlande. We wish you many years of rewarding and distinguished service to our children and their families!



Q1. Where were you born and raised?

I was born and raised in Haiti.

Q2. Who was the greatest influence in your family during your formative years? What made that family member so impactful in your life?

The person who was the greatest influence during my formative years was my uncle. When I was 14 years old, my mother left me in Haiti and emigrated to the US in search of a better life. During my mother's absence, my uncle became my caretaker until I was able to travel to the US to be with my mother.

Q3. What famous person do you admire most and why?

None at this time.

Q4. What college did you attend, and what degree did you earn there?

I attended Webster University and Graduated with a M.S. degree in Mental Health Counseling.

Q5. Why did you decide to enter the counseling profession? Was there a professor at your college who was particularly influential in your career choice? How did he/she inspire you?

My initial career choice was not counseling (it was physical therapy). However, I always had the desire to help others. Whether it was being a listening ear or just providing sound advice, it was a natural desire for me to engage people around me. I finally made the decision to pursue my counseling career after meeting my husband (who was my boyfriend at the time) encouraged me to follow this path.

Q6. What do you like most about working with children?

What I like the most about working with children is the fact that I can engage their participation and get them to open up to me through games. I find this method very useful compared to trying to get an adult to open up.

Q7. What is your greatest challenge in working with children?

My greatest challenge in working with children is keeping them interested in learning and processing their problems.

(continued on page 4)

The Importance of Being Earnest (from p. 2)

schedules proved prohibitive for meetings at the school or when they were beset with nagging and omnipresent "transportation issues." Such was the case one fateful night when Earnest's mother beckoned me to her home. Her balky old Cutlass had gone "belly up."

It was an uncharacteristically cold November night when I ventured into the city—a night designed for hot chocolate with melty marshmallows. On the week before Thanksgiving no one expected the mercury to dip into the high thirties. Nevertheless, the weather will do as it will, and I was happy to have my lined leather jacket along for the ride. I was armed with an address and some vague directions to a "little white house sitting twenty yards back from the street." That was it. Those were the days before cell phones and GPS and Siri, so I was at the mercy of those vague directions and my own directional "instincts." Put simply then, I was quite likely in a heap of trouble. Still, with abiding faith and a silent prayer, I set my course west on I-4, exited at Colonial Drive and took the right as I was directed. I crawled along Colonial, slowing at each successive street as I sought the marker for Parramore. Happily, my new-found "instincts" served me well and soon I was snaking my way along that bidden street. As I crept along I craned my neck, longingly seeking that "little white house" set just off the road. Farther down the street I noted that the neighborhoods assumed an increasingly distressed complexion. Wrought iron bars decorated the windows. Trash dodged junked cars in the yards. Weeds interspersed, high and wild, between the detritus as space allowed. Suddenly, I saw movement in the fading light on the diagonal corner to my left. Two murky figures deftly made an exchange and quickly receded into the deepening shadows of the impending night. It was then that the small town boy from coastal Maine that forever resides within spoke loudly and insistently, "Steve, this is not safe. It's time to go home, it's time to go home, it's time to go home NOW!"

A wiser man would have heeded that nagging voice firing its warning shot from my stomach to my brain. But the stubborn New Englander in me forged ahead, intent on completing my mission. After all, Earnest and his Mom were expecting me! Barely a block ahead I discerned a faint light penetrating the darkness. Could it be a beacon guiding my way—or a lighthouse perched on forbidding rocks? As I advanced ever closer, I soon recognized that my "beacon of hope" was merely a neon sign illuminating a woe begotten neighborhood store. It sputtered intermittently, heralding the promise of raffle tickets within. I noted the store's sagging walls, which begged for more substantial studs and a fresh coat of paint. As with the contiguous yards, weeds poked defiantly through the sidewalk seams in bold profusion before the wanting edifice. And more defiant still were the scores of rough-looking customers lounging lazily against the outer wall, nursing the alcoholic beverages they had tucked discreetly in small brown paper bags. They surveyed my silver Honda Accord, an unfamiliar vehicle, with narrow, suspicious eyes. They strained to identify the mysterious driver behind the tinted glass. For the second time that night the foreboding voice spoke to me, "You need to listen to me. I mean it! You have no business being here—GET OUT! (Of course, there was still the matter of Earnest and his Mom)...."

Just as I had slipped past those prying eyes, I spied the little white house. The object of my attention was just where Mom said it would be—tucked inconspicuously twenty yards off the street to the right. This was the place! Sadly, my headlights

(continued on page 4)

Child Chat



Meet Erlande Alexandre, Counselor (from p.3)

Q8. What is the toughest thing about working with traumatized children?

The toughest thing about working with traumatized children is not taking their trauma home with me.

Q9. Speaking of trauma, your family's country of origin (Haiti) has suffered two major earthquakes in 2010 and 2021. What kind of impact did those events have on you and your family?

The earthquakes were devastating. Fortunately for me, I did not have family members who died in the earthquakes.

Q10. As a counselor working with traumatized children, you shall be exposed to situations that may, in turn, induce trauma in you – the condition we call “vicarious trauma.” What is your self-care plan for dealing with vicarious trauma?

Good thing for me, I have a support system at home. I have the privilege to go home to an environment where I can hit the reset button. Whether it's spending time with my family, or just spending time in my garden, I'm able leave all this trauma from work at the door.

Q11. I know that you are still within your first 90 days of employment with the Advocacy Center. However, if you could project several years down the road, what are the three (3) most important things you would like to take from your experience with the Center?

First, I would like to be more efficient in Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy [TF-CBT]. Second, I would like to master my ability to work with children. Third, I would like to become more organized with my record keeping.

Q12. Erlande, as you consider your career trajectory, what do you see yourself doing professionally in ten (10) years?

Professionally, in 10 years, I see myself continuing to work with both children and adults. In addition, I would love to extend my counseling services to my own country (Haiti) through some type of not-for-profit organization.

Calling All Advocates!

Unfortunately, COVID-19 seriously impeded our plans to recruit volunteers to join our Family Advocacy Program for two years. However, with the easing of the coronavirus threat, we are prepared to resume our recruitment efforts. If you have a passion for children and a burning desire to advocate for them, please contact us at (352) 323-8303 and ask for either Steve or Cathy. Either shall gladly guide you through the preliminary requirements for the program (i.e., interview, background screen, application process, advocate training). Your call could well be the first step toward one of the most rewarding endeavors you shall ever experience. We look forward to hearing from you soon!

The Importance of Being Earnest (from p. 3)

trained on the rickety structure, a mélange of “broken bones” and peeling paint. It struck me that the house looked scarcely habitable. My heart ached for its unfortunate inhabitants—two sweet souls who surely deserved better.

So intent was I on my destination that I had not noticed the score of bodies that had methodically circled my car. It was only when three of them shone in my headlights that the fact was thus revealed. Their expressions were menacing, and their body language spoke emphatically of ill intentions. I did not know why they were so angry, but their message was painfully clear: they did not want me there! And for the third time that evening, my panicked inner voice begged for my hasty retreat. But I knew with a resigned certainty that it was too late for that. I could not go forward. I could not go back. A headlong dash from the vehicle was not an option either. So, I sat, waiting for further definition of the situation—wondering why this malevolent mob had detained me and what might follow. A thunderous, threatening boom abruptly pierced my ruminations, “Get outcha car, and do it NOW! There I was, caught between the proverbial Scylla and Charybdis! If I stayed in my car, it would likely be torn apart. If I got out of my car, I would likely be torn apart. For what reason on either count, I knew not. A seeming nanosecond later, a rhythmic guttural chant arose from the determined throng and climbed to a fever-pitch: “Get out! Get out! Get out! Get out!” They sounded bloodthirsty and unquenchable. They furiously rocked my car until I thought it would turn over as they accentuated their desire. I prepared for the worst, though I resolved that I would not go down without a fight (another New England trait)....

It was then that an impossibly small, unassuming figure emerged from the little white house. He was but a silhouette casting a shadow far larger than his slight proportions. His voice burst forth in a disarming torrent of anger and indignation. “Leave him alone! Don't you touch him! Mr. Dolliver is my counselor and my friend! Get away from him!” It was the strident voice of one who had endured too much bullying and too many slights. It was the decisive voice of one demanding his fair share of respect—and, by extension, a fair share of respect for those whom he admired. It was a determination borne of his own...well, earnestness.

The huge man with the booming voice shrank in supplication. “But we thought he was with DCF and was gonna take you away from you' mamma. We wasn't gonna let that happen!” he explained contritely. With a soft apology to me and to Earnest, he quietly eased away. The crowd similarly dispersed, leaving Earnest and me alone in the sudden stillness. I tousled his hair and told him how proud I was that he had stood up for me. His mother burst forth and embarrassed him, as mothers often will, with a crushing hug and a big sloppy kiss. Earnest wiped off the kiss, but he hung onto his pride.

The Sequel: The next day the school was abuzz with the story of how Earnest had faced down an angry mob and, in so doing, had saved his unwitting counselor. Even Earnest's most insensitive classmates recognized that he had prevailed in a watershed moment. Their bullying subsided and their caustic remarks over the color of his hair and his legion of freckles morphed to some occasional good-natured ribbing. Earnest had earned their grudging respect, a respect for which they so desperately yearned. And Earnest and I continued our counseling sessions through the balance of the school year. He grew immeasurably and earned my affectionate moniker: “little man.” He continued to take on his studies with dogged determination, finding serviceable compensations for his ADHD. On his last day with me, I congratulated Earnest on his many accomplishments and asked him for the secret to his success. He responded just as I would have imagined: “I learned how important it is to accept myself and just be me.” In other words, Earnest had learned **the importance of being Earnest.**”

Child Chat



Beware of “Slime”!

Sliming: an unplanned debriefing of a traumatic event or a series of traumatic events that, due to lack of preparation, compels feelings of trauma or re-traumatization for the solicited party

When I invoke the word “sliming”, your mind probably migrates to a signature line uttered by actor Bill Murray’s character Peter Venkman in the 1984 hit comedy “Ghostbusters”: “He slimed me!”. (If you are too young to recall the original, then perhaps you caught the sequel!). Well, the term possesses an equally distasteful connotation in the field of traumatology, where it refers to an action that puts a person at substantial risk for symptoms of vicarious trauma. TEND Academy, a “go to” resource for all things trauma-related, warns us that victim services professionals are potentially prone to sliming others, just as they are potentially prone to being slimed. It all starts innocently enough. For example, imagine that a male paramedic—we’ll call him Jake—administers to a fragile little girl, Wendy, who has suffered an especially hideous incident of sexual abuse at the hands of her unspeakably monstrous father, Brutus. Wendy, though brave, with stands almost unendurable physical and emotional pain. With her tight blond curls and quiet demeanor, the little girl reminds her vigilant attendant of his own pre-K daughter Sally. Jake cannot fathom how a Daddy could hurt his own daughter—especially in such a cruel, savage, and deeply personal way. He goes home that night and hugs his own precious Sally, but the tormenting thoughts of Wendy, the violated little girl in the soiled yellow dress, persist. Next day at work Jake remains unsettled. He picks at his lunch and dreads the prospect of a call—particularly a call to serve another Wendy. He drifts distractedly through his day, preoccupied with her image. That night, with Jake in the throes of a fitful sleep, the monster invades and awakens him with a start. No sweet dreams, only nightmares....



And the next day Jake narrowly averted a disaster. The emergency call indicated that a little girl had been struck down in a “hit and run.” Witnesses at the scene suggested that the tiny child was desperately clinging to life but may have sustained grave injuries with the force of the impact. Jake and his partner sprinted to their vehicle, intent on a speedy departure. Whether it was his lost sleep, sparing sustenance, or pervasive distractions, Jake slipped as he sought to hoist himself through the passenger door. His buddy was oblivious as she gunned the engine. She juiced the accelerator, while Jake’s body hung precariously from the door. Arms flailing wildly, Jake grabbed the frame and thrust himself inside, miraculously escaping injury. However, his time at the accident scene was a veritable blur. He switched subconsciously to “auto-pilot” and robotically completed his medical responsibilities. The stricken girl had no face and no name. You see, Jake had completely dissociated from her. Though he later discovered that his diminutive patient had pulled through her ordeal, he was emotionally numb to the good news. Jake drove blindly home that evening, vaguely recollecting his time behind the wheel. He issued a perfunctory greeting to his wife Kelly, waltzed around his dinner plate, and dodged the demons that relentlessly tormented his sleep. Jake awoke the following morning with a stomach ache and a profound desire to skip work. But he went anyway. He did

(continued on page 6)

Celebrating a “Rite of Passage”

We are pleased to announce that Center Counselor Sorimar Gonzalez recently passed her licensure examination in partial fulfillment of requirements to attain the status of Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC) in the State of Florida. Furthermore, we anticipate that she shall have completed the requisite 1500 hours of direct mental health services provision by the time you receive this newsletter. Since Sorimar has already received at



Sorimar Gonzalez

least 100 hours of documented clinical supervision, she shall soon be eligible for her LMHC. Sorimar, congratulations on being one step closer to realizing a significant milestone in your promising career! We celebrate with you on passing the exam, just as we shall celebrate your inevitable receipt of the coveted license. Thanks for all of your hard work along the way! We would be remiss were we not to acknowledge Center Clinical Supervisor Cathy Carter, who guided Sorimar’s clinical fortunes the past few years. Kudos to you, Cathy, for contributing so prominently in her success!



A “Happy Dance” for Sorimar

Bikers “C.A.R.E.”

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. At our Center it is a time of reflection in honor of the many children who have suffered the cruel ravages of abuse and struggled so mightily with the after-effects. At the same time, we take a moment to pause and renew our hope that increased public awareness of the problem shall move us ever closer to the eradication of child abuse. Until that glorious day arrives, we redouble our commitment in the service of children who need our support in “seeking truth, healing wounds and instilling hope.” We are fortunate to have laudable community partners as Bikers C.A.R.E. who support us in advancing our mission to support our children. On Saturday, April 9 C.A.R.E. sponsored a community fundraising event of fun and festivities to commemorate National Child Abuse Prevention Month. It was the 5th annual event under the banner “Bikers C.A.R.E. Pinwheel Run.” Graciously, C.A.R.E. dedicated the proceeds from the event to five (5) Children’s Advocacy Centers in Central Florida, including our own. We extend our sincere thanks to C.A.R.E. for its thoughtfulness and generosity. We would also like to thank five our own Center Child Protection Team (CPT) staff who participated in this critical fundraising effort: Holly Sharlow, Ana Hernandez, Regina Berry, Cori Williams, and Logan Kovacic. Thank you so much, ladies!



Bikers C.A.R.E. Pinwheel Run

Child Chat



“Slime” (continued from p. 5)

not notice the worry etched on Kelly’s face as he quietly slipped out the back door.

Jake carried a boatload of burden as another workday dawned. The sad misfortunes of two little girls—girls no older than his own Sally—dominated his waking thoughts. The emotional and behavioral fallout from them was paralyzing. He could not eat. He could not sleep. He felt depressed. He felt anxious. He could not do his job. He was spinning in his own private whirlpool, disoriented and lost. Jake knew he needed to talk with someone before he lost it altogether, but whom? He did not wish to air his “dirty laundry” with just anyone. It had to be a trusted friend, a confidante, a buddy—someone who would listen without judgment....It was at that moment that a long-standing paramedic mate rounded the corner. Tim was perhaps not his best friend, but Jake and he had spoken before of their families and even about some tough situations each had faced on the job. Surely he would understand....

And that was when the **SLIMING** began.

Jake descended on his friend with a laser focus. His design was simple. He would “talk it out” — all of the angst and apprehension—until he had released the pain, purged the demons, and restored his equilibrium. He would put thoughts of the damaged girls in his rearview mirror and resume his life, untainted by what he had seen. Thus, he fairly pounced on Tim, pulled him into an unoccupied office, and breathlessly recounted in lurid detail the encounters he had with the two wee girls over the prior two days. It was a headlong dive into the deep end of the emotional pool—a dive for which Tim was wholly unprepared. Jake had offered no precursor explanations and made no requests for permission. He had simply leapt in, eager and unbidden. When the onslaught was over, Jake was thoroughly exhausted and gulping for air, but he felt relieved to have “let it all out.” Unfortunately, in his furious haste to “unburden”, Jake had failed to apprehend Tim’s obvious distress with his troubled disclosures. As it turns out, Tim was dealing with his own private pain. **How could Jake have known that Tim and his wife Lori had lost their own daughter Kate to cancer just four years ago at the tender age of five years?** Still, perhaps Jake would have gauged the situation better had he thought to ask....

How do we eradicate the **SLIME**?

In the preceding story Jake clearly did not intend to “slime” his buddy Tim. At the same time, his failure to extend proper consideration before debriefing delicate matters likely resulted in unnecessary re-traumatization for Tim, given his tragic loss of daughter Kate several years before. So, in trauma-exposed workplaces, how do we avoid “sliming” (traumatizing or re-traumatizing) our valued colleagues? The answer lies in a debriefing methodology developed by our friends at TEND Academy. It is called **Low Impact Disclosure (LID)**. LID is predicated on the “mindfulness” we exercise as we contemplate staffing a traumatizing event or a series of traumatizing events that we wish to process with a work colleague. Let’s examine in order the preconditions that precede a successful Low Impact Disclosure:

1. **Exercise increased self-awareness.** Pause and consider the manner with which you would debrief when you have heard or seen “hard things”? Contemplate how you would prefer to have those hard things presented if you were the listener. What content would you prefer not to hear? How much specificity are you willing to accept? Take a survey

(continued to the right)

“Slime” (from left)

of your typical work week and note all of the ways in which you formally and informally debrief with your colleagues. How much detail do you or your colleagues include? What content is generally considered to be “out of bounds”?

2. **Give fair warning.** Before you tell anyone around you a difficult story, you must give them fair warning. When you call someone with bad news, you almost invariably cushion the blow by asking, “Are you sitting down?”. By the same token, give your prospective listener that quintessential courtesy before initiating a debriefing. For the most part, no one likes to be surprised—especially when diving into murky waters!
3. **Seek consent.** Once you have given warning, you need to ask for consent. This can be as simple as saying: “I need to debrief something with you, is this a good time?” or “I heard something really hard today, and I could use a debrief. Could I talk to you about it?” The listener then has a chance to decline, or to qualify what he/she is ready, willing, or able to hear.
4. **Low Impact Disclosure.** When you have received consent from your colleague, you can decide how much to share. Imagine that you are telling a story starting with the outer circle of the story (i.e. the least traumatic information), and you are slowly moving in toward the core (the very traumatic information) at a gradual pace. Think about what it is you need to share in order to process your feelings and reactions to the story.

So, that’s how you accomplish Low Impact Disclosure in your debriefing sessions with your co-workers. Just four easy steps that shall go far in preserving the health and well-being of all concerned. At our Center we are putting the finishing touches on a Vicarious Trauma Plan that we call TEAR: Trauma Exposure and Awareness Response. We intend to make LID an integral technique in our debriefing strategies. From time-to-time we shall share elements of our TEAR Plan with you through this newsletter in the hope that you will find the ideas useful to you in developing your own vicarious trauma prevention strategies. In the meantime, you have our best wishes to **BE SAFE AND BE WELL!**



Our Center: Home Sweet Home!