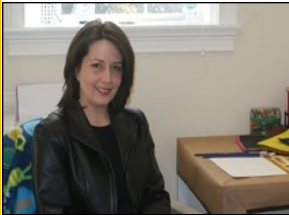




# Child Chat

*"Dedicated to children and those dedicated to serving them"*

Steven Wayne Dolliver, Editor



*Child Chat* is a quarterly newsletter of Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center. It is 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.

## Counseling Corner: Clinical Supervisor Q & A

**Cathy Carter, M.S., ATR, LMHC  
Clinical Supervisor**

*Cathy is a graduate of Florida State University with an M.S. degree in Art Therapy. She is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor, a Registered Art Therapist, and holds a certification in Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Cathy was a Counseling Intern with the CAC prior to returning as a full-time therapist in 2009.*

**Editor's Note:** *I had an opportunity to catch up with LSCAC Clinical Supervisor Cathy Carter to ask her a few questions about her Counseling Program specializing in TF-CBT. Her answers proved to be both entertaining and enlightening. I hope you enjoy the "Q & A"!*

**Q1:** Cathy, first, I want to congratulate you on eleven (11) years of employment with Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center. What has been the most gratifying aspect of your tenure with LSCAC?

**"I am always amazed by the resiliency of the clients we serve. I am truly honored to be a part of their journey in learning how to address the difficulties they have experienced and to understand that their traumas do not define them."**

**Q2:** Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) is the evidence-based clinical modality of choice at LSCAC for treating children with severe trauma backgrounds. In your professional opinion, what makes this therapeutic approach so effective in meeting the needs of child survivors of abuse?

**"TF-CBT is a structured, step-by-step modality aimed to build a foundation of education and coping strategies at the beginning of counseling to help the client be come prepared to process, in depth, the trauma(s) they have experienced. It is vital for our clients to achieve a level of healing that allows them to discuss their traumatic experience without becoming emotionally overwhelmed."**

**Q3:** Are there children who present to LSCAC that may not be particularly responsive to TF-CBT? If so, how do you and your counselors engage those children?

**"Sometimes the younger clients may not appear to be as responsive to the counseling process. They may need additional time to learn and practice relaxation skills, affective identification, and modulation. Our clinicians use multiple approaches, games, and activities to help engage the clients while they participate in each step of TF-CBT."**

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## From the Editor's Desk

Obviously, children do not vote. They rely on adults to represent their interests and advocate on their behalf. Yet, does it even occur to us that the votes we shall cast on November 3 (or before) carry profound implications for children's welfare and their futures?

Kids need safe and affordable housing. It should matter to us then that an estimated 2.5 million American children are homeless. That is 1 of every 30 children living in one of the most affluent countries in the world.

It should matter to us then that 1 of every 5 children in the United States live in families whose income falls below the poverty line.

Kids need healthy and nutritious food. It should matter to us then that on a daily basis approximately 3 million children in our nation are categorized by the United States Department of Agriculture as "food insecure". That means that even though they may qualify for free or reduced lunch at school, they can harbor no reasonable expectation of a hot meal when they return home. In far too many cases, they cannot entertain the prospect of any meal at all.

Kids need quality, affordable healthcare. Kids break bones. Kids incur cuts and bruises. Kids suffer physical and sexual abuse. Kids get sick. Kids get diseases. Sometimes, kids need surgery. Some kids need many surgeries. It should matter to us then that, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as of April 2020 5.2% of children under 18 years of age possessed no health insurance coverage. That calculates to approximately 3.8 million uncovered child lives.

It is surely axiomatic that we love our children, irrespective of our political affiliations. Republicans love their children. Democrats love their children. Libertarians love their children. Independents love their children. In fact, our love for our children may be the only bipartisan sentiment left in our insidiously bipolar nation.

So, at this critical political juncture, how do we show our children just how much we love them? First, we must vote. Our votes, combined with those of others of like mind, are immensely powerful. Second, we must vote our conscience, as a conscientious vote is borne of thoughtfulness and rationality.

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**"...their traumas do not define them."**

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**Child Quote:** *"Every child is gifted. They just unwrap their packages at different times."*

- unknown

## From the Editor's Desk

(continued from cover page)

Third, we must vote with a collective mindfulness of how our votes shall affect the children who have no voice but that which we impart to them by accepting our full measure of responsibility for them.

However, I would argue that before we vote, we must "know the score". We must do our homework by researching what our presidential, congressional and gubernatorial candidates purport to stand for and the actions they have taken over time to demonstrate the strength of their convictions. In that light may I suggest an illuminating online resource titled **USA FACTS**. This non-partisan website presents the candidates' stances on all of the major issues: education, healthcare, income, defense, economy, budget, civil rights, social services, environment, infrastructure, housing, drug policy, crime, guns, immigration and foreign policy. So, make your vote an informed one, and make it count!

Finally, let's talk about legacy—not the rhetorical "wouldn't it be nice" legacy, but the rich, abiding and enduring legacy we hope to leave our children. No one person shall singularly change the course of human history, though a select few may be remembered in the annals of time. However, each of us functions as a small piece of the overall mosaic. By the same token, no one vote in and of itself determines the outcome of an election. But, the votes of the many, taken together, cement the legacy we leave. They embody our hopes, our dreams, our desires and our beliefs as we move forward as a society. They represent our faith in the leaders we choose. They symbolize our wisdom as we pass the torch to the next generation. So, I would urge you to vote as if your children's lives depend on it...because they do!

**Children's Lives Matter!**



Voting—a habit learned early!

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## Medical Musings on Kid Care

**Editor's Note:** In this perilous time of COVID-19, our Heather Palasky, APRN, reminds us of the importance of vigilant self-care—for our children and for ourselves.

There are [5 main pillars of health and wellness](#) that are important for everyone, including children. Starting good habits early will increase the likelihood our children will incorporate healthy habits throughout their lives, enhancing their future.

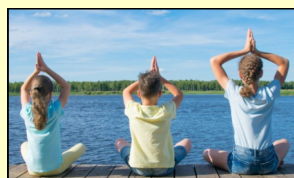


The first area is [nutrition](#). Children should have balanced nutrition. While the balance of the macronutrients, fats, carbohydrates and protein is highly influenced by our DNA and varies by person, teaching children what a balanced diet looks like is important. Eating whole foods, not processed foods, as much as possible. Watch their fat intake that can be hidden in even "healthier" foods such as nuts and avocados by eating in proper portion sizes. Carbohydrates should be whole grain to support a healthy glycemic index and the foods impact on the blood sugar by allowing the natural sugar to be processed slowly rather than a dump in the blood for that typical "sugar rush" with the following crash. Lean protein, such as chicken and turkey, are preferred more

often than beef or fatty cuts of pork and should be included in each meal and snack.



The second area is [exercise/fitness](#). Children should engage in 30-60 minutes of activity that elevates the heart rate every day. Being involved in sports or extra-curricular activities is a great way to accomplish this while having the extra benefit of coaching, mentorship and social relationships with peers. Limiting screen time (TV, phones, video games) to 2 hours per day will help achieve this.



The third area is [stress management](#). Involvement in spiritual community, meditation/prayer time, and focused breathing is important to regenerate the spirit and release stress. There are many negative consequences to chronic stress and teaching children early how to manage their stress will benefit them throughout their life.



The fourth pillar is [sleep](#). Depending on the age of the children, they require on average 7-10 hours of sleep. Good sleep hygiene includes having relaxation time 1-2 hours before bed. No screen time during that time as the blue light from the screen can affect sleep by signaling to the brain that it's daytime and the need to stay awake. Focus on something quiet and relaxing, such as reading a book or some of the stress relieving activities mentioned previously.

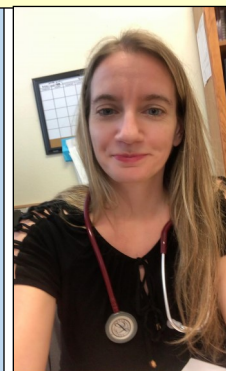


The fifth pillar is [supplementation](#). Vitamin supplementation is important for children to fill in any nutritional gaps or any genetic vitamin deficiencies. Vitamin D, for example, is one of the vitamins that tends to be low in many Americans and can influence one's mood, energy, bones, skin and hair, and affect the immune system (and of course boosting our natural Vitamin D absorption by spending time outside soaking up the sunshine). Check with your child's doctor in regards to the need for supplementation.

## Meet Heather Palasky, APRN



**Heather Palasky**, Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN), joined the Center's Child Protection Team in April 2015 after relocating from Philadelphia, PA. As a pediatric Registered Nurse for 24 years and a board-certified APRN for 6 years, Heather has dedicated her professional career caring for children in need, from the smallest and sickest of premature and critically ill babies to special needs children and those affected by abuse and neglect. When not at work, she is a wife and mother of three children and enjoys an active lifestyle as an avid fitness professional helping others with their health and wellness.





## Bids4Kids and COVID-19: Where do we go from here?

Every year in March, just like clockwork, Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center has hosted its annual fundraiser called **Bids4Kids**. A harbinger of spring, the by-invitation-only gala event has attracted prominent Lake and Sumter County community partners whose magnanimity flowed from one abiding feeling: their love for children. So, every year they bid generously from their hearts on copious donated items. Every year many of them committed \$1,000 donations to sponsor children's services. They gave because they knew that in the giving they were indirectly sustaining hope for children who had suffered the cruel ravages of physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. They realized that there might be no greater purpose than to lift the spirits of young, afflicted lives.

We @ the Center thought that our prosperity would routinely emanate from the kind bounty of Bids4Kids. Then, enter the coronavirus, and Bids4Kids 2020 was no more and lost was our security. It fell victim to risk—the risk attached to congregating in a convention center that perhaps could not consistently accommodate social distancing. It fell victim to fear—the fear of not only contracting the insidious illness, but perhaps passing it along to loved ones. It fell victim to the absence of a back-up plan that no one felt would ever be necessary.

Of course, we recognize the fury that COVID-19 unleashed was not personal, for a virus possesses no inherent enmity. Instead, it operates impersonally and indiscriminately, preying on the most vulnerable of us with scant regard for gender, race or socioeconomic station. And, surely it harbors no particular antagonistic feelings toward children. Yet, despite these acknowledgments COVID-19 does feel personal. It has forced children into social isolation, which puts less "eyes" on them to prevent abuse or to report abuse. It has disrupted their in-school education in favor of technology-driven



## Child Chat

### Bids4Kids (continued)

the same efficacy. It has relegated LSCAC counselors to teletherapy interventions, which lack the "connectedness" of traditional face-to-face therapy sessions. And, then again, there is the issue of lost revenue for the Center with the cancellation of Bids4Kids 2020.

Nonprofit organizations as LSCAC are not equipped to absorb indefinitely the losses wrought by COVID-19. Therefore, cancellation of Bids4Kids posed a potential devastating fiscal blow with the shortfall of tens of thousands of dollars from our coffers. Still, as with all other nonprofits in these daunting times, we are stubborn, resilient, determined and indomitable. We spend our money prudently and sparingly. We seek and pursue new grant opportunities as a desert wayfarer yearns for water. We manage a hardscrabble existence, confident that better times are just around the corner. Most importantly, we shall prevail because our children need us.

**Editor's Note:** *As the preceding suggests, Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center is a proud organization that has persevered through good times and challenging times for the past twenty-three years. Its resourcefulness speaks for itself. And its identity in the local community as a preferred provider of trauma-focused services to child survivors of abuse is well-established. If you would care to support Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center in its work by making a financial donation, the address is as follows:*

**Lake Sumter Children's  
Advocacy Center, Inc.  
300 S. Canal Street  
Leesburg, Florida 34748**

*On behalf of the Center, I wish to extend our utmost appreciation. Thank you!*

*"If you want to give light to others, you have to glow yourself."  
- Thomas Monson*

### Addressing Vicarious Trauma

LSCAC is in the midst of developing a 5-year Strategic Plan that shall guide our fortunes from 2021-25. One of the initiatives we shall vigorously pursue with the help of our direct services staff over that period is a concerted plan to address vicarious trauma. Vicarious trauma (VT) is defined as "the cumulative transformative effect on the helper of working with survivors of traumatic life events." First responders, such as police officers and firefighters, are particularly prone to this secondary "trauma overload" and its potentially deleterious consequences, which often mimic PTSD symptomology. We are equally concerned about the residual impact for our Center staff in working daily with abused children.

Assessment of our Center shall be the necessary first step, as we poll our staff for their perceptions of our organization's effectiveness in meeting their needs with respect to VT. Accordingly, we shall employ an holistic instrument called the Vicarious Trauma-Organizational Readiness Guide (VT-ORG) to obtain baseline information. Naturally, we recommend this VT tool to other organizations hoping to implement effective VT-mediation practices. In addition, we would urge you to consult the Vicarious Trauma Toolkit at [www.ovc.ojp.gov](http://www.ovc.ojp.gov) for guideposts in advancing your own VT program.

Ultimately, with a revamped VT program, we hope to provide the same sense of safety and support to our staff that we regularly provide the children we serve.



### Make Our Specialty Your Specialty

Did you know that helping stop child abuse could be as simple as making a \$25.00 annual investment? Indeed, it is true. When you purchase a State of Florida "Stop Child Abuse" specialty license plate, you are contributing to two dedicated organizations who make it their mission to keep children safe and to help them develop their fullest potential: Children's Home Society and the Florida Network of Children's Advocacy Centers. The proceeds from your specialty plate, which shall be divided equally between the two programs, shall sustain essential initiatives to prevent child abuse and shall sponsor continuous quality services to child survivors of abuse.

The imperative "Stop Child Abuse" emblazoned on your license plate shall emphatically demonstrate to all whom you encounter your absolute commitment to the health and well-being of children throughout the State of Florida and beyond. You shall have a beautiful license plate displaying a powerful message for all to see.

To order your Stop Child Abuse specialty plate online, go to [myfloridaspecialtyplate.com](http://myfloridaspecialtyplate.com). Then, click the tab "click here to order now" and select the order option you prefer.

We thank you in advance for supporting the brightest of futures for the smallest among us—our children thank you, too!





## Counseling Corner Q & A (continued from cover page)

**Q4:** Cathy, as a Registered Art Therapist, you utilize art therapy fairly routinely in your work with traumatized children. What is art therapy, and what does it do for these children that more conventional verbal therapies do not?

**“Art therapy is a master’s level mental health profession that integrates human development, visual art, and the creative process with models of counseling and psychotherapy. Through the art making process, clients visually express, then verbally discuss, their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. In blending art therapy with TF-CBT, specific art materials and activities are selected at each step of the TF-CBT model. The selection of art materials is extremely important. As the art making process triggers the trauma centers of the brain, art materials that provide more structure and control are utilized while creating trauma narratives.”**

**Q5.** I hear the term “vicarious trauma” ascribed to professionals who work in environments where emotional pain, grief and loss are prevalent conditions of the job—especially relative to first responders, such as police officers and firefighters. First, what is vicarious trauma? Second, does it affect LSCAC staff who work daily with child survivors of abuse? And, finally, what does one do to alleviate it?

**“Vicarious trauma, also known as compassion fatigue, secondary trauma, and indirect trauma, is a cumulative response of working with people who have been exposed to traumatic events. The LSCAC staff provide daily services to multiple child victims of abuse, placing them at risk of having their own traumatic symptomology, including, but not limited to, intrusive imagery, avoidance, numbness, and hopelessness. It is important for staff to participate in supervision and peer support, as well as taking time for self-care.”**



**“The selection of art materials is extremely important...as the art-making process triggers the trauma centers of the brain....”**



**“Even in uncertain times, keeping routines and structure can give children a sense of stability and safety.”**

## Counseling Corner Q & A (continued from far left)

**Q6.** With the advent of COVID-19, I know that you and your clinical team have been primarily using telehealth interventions with your clients, as opposed to face-to-face therapy. How has that been working out?

**“At the beginning of the pandemic, we participated in telehealth training to inform our decisions in best serving our population. We did provide on-site services to children who were coming to our facility for new investigations. Our counseling clients were provided services through telehealth for the first month. We concentrated on helping them adjust to the changes and challenges they were experiencing with school closures and travel restrictions. After the initial month, we re-started on-site services for a limited number of the on-going counseling clients. We do continue to accept more clients into our counseling program and determine which avenue will benefit them the most, either on-site or through telehealth.”**

**Q7.** Speaking of COVID-19, do you have any words of wisdom to share with parents to help them get their children through this difficult period?

**“Children look to their parents for stability. Even in uncertain times, keeping routines and structure can give children a sense of stability and safety. Parents can plan family time to play and create with their children. Even if this time is limited due to work schedules, scheduling one day or night a week for family fun time can give children, and their parents, a consistent dedicated time to spend with their family and to take a break from stressors.”**

## Expand Your Knowledge

Staying current with the issues surrounding child abuse is a never-ending quest. Consequently, perhaps you would be interested in some [free](#), self-paced online classes sponsored by the National Criminal Justice Training Center. Simply go to [info@ncjtc.org](mailto:info@ncjtc.org) for information on the following classes:

- Child Abuse: The KNOW AND TELL Program
- Conducting Child Abuse Investigations: Adult Interview and Interrogation



- Interviewing At-Risk Children
- Legal Considerations of Child Abuse Cases
- Medical Diagnosis of Abuse
- Strategies for Supporting Resilience and Healing in Victims of Child Maltreatment
- Technology-Facilitated Child Abuse Investigations
- Victims of Child Exploitation

Take advantage of the opportunity to earn eight (8) hours of valuable training at no cost!