

Mental Health Program Serves Growing Community Need

Tucked away in a nondescript office building in Pasadena, Md., is a small satellite office run by the Board of Child Care that is having a big impact on families within the community.

For six years, BCC's Outpatient Mental Health Clinic has helped countless children and their families during a time when many similar clinics are struggling to stay open. BCC has put its full support behind the community-based program, which has proven to be

an invaluable resource for local families, as well as for a growing number of families from outside the immediate community.

"I don't know what these families would do without us," says Susanne Goetz, Clinical Director for the Outpatient Mental Health Clinic. "It's a wonderful service."

The clinic's staff of 11 (including two student interns) serves approximately 250 children between age three and 18 each year. Most children seen are between ages 10 and 13, and 60% live in Pasadena and Glen Burnie, Md.

Children arrive at the clinic exhibiting a range of behaviors and conditions, including trauma from physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and domestic violence, attention deficit disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity



Susanne Goetz

disorder, depression, mood disorder and grief. The clinic has a close working relationship with other local human services agencies and many of the children are referred to the clinic by their schools or pediatricians.

Staff work with the children using different therapies, such as

Carla's and Justin's Story

Before Justin arrived at the Board of Child Care's Outpatient Mental Health Clinic, he was filled with anger. He would yell, scream, kick, hit, throw things and hide under tables. The 5-year-old had just started elementary school and his extreme behavior was causing problems in the classroom.

Justin's grandmother, whom he was living with at the time, and his mother decided to place him in therapy. After doing some research, they settled on BCC's Outpatient Mental Health Clinic. "We really liked what the Board of Child Care had to offer," recalls Justin's mom Carla. "They seemed

to really care and they wanted to work not just with Justin but the family too."

Indeed, the therapists at BCC's clinic soon learned much of Justin's behavior problems were a reaction to his family situation. He was living with his grandmother because his mom Carla struggled with drug addiction. BCC staff told Carla that she needed to get herself healthy in order for Justin to become healthy.

Carla took the advice seriously and began working on her recovery. Despite a brief relapse, today she is clean and lives with Justin and her fiancée. She works as a waitress and attends church each week with Justin. Carla admits she feels guilty about the strain her addiction caused Justin,

but BCC's staff have helped her to think positively and look toward the future.

The results of the therapy Justin continues to receive at the BCC clinic are "amazing," Carla says. Now almost 9-years-old and in the third grade, Justin no longer has behavioral problems in school and has made friends. He and his mom have become extremely close over the past year and continue to work on communicating and relating with one another on a new level.

"He has coping skills now and he uses them," Carla says. "Now he is respectful. He knows what's right and wrong and he does what's right by choice. Without the program there at the Board of Child Care, he wouldn't have that today."

individual and group therapy, family therapy, play therapy, medication management classes and social skills and anger management classes.

“Basically we try to help children resolve troubling issues that have occurred in their life and they resolve that through different aspects of therapy,” Goetz says. “And in the resolving, we also want to teach them different coping mechanisms so when they are faced with other things that may occur in their life, they are a little more resilient.”

Because of some of the traumas the children have been through, much of what the clinic does is teach children feelings. “A lot of kids don’t know how to change

from one state to another. They don’t know what it means to be angry or to be sad. They have to be taught different tools to deal with themselves,” Goetz points out.

Many of the issues the children are coping with are intergenerational, which is why the clinic’s staff makes working with the parents a critical aspect to a child’s therapy. Moms and dads are encouraged to take parenting skills classes and family therapy offered by the clinic. If the parents are dealing with substance abuse problems or unemployment, staff point them to where they can get help.

Last summer, the clinic added a home therapy aspect to treatment that involves a clinician conducting

family therapy sessions inside the home to better assess how to help families. “The point is to get someone in the home because coming into the clinic once a week for 45 minutes is not going to make a change if there is multi-level issues going on,” Goetz says.

While the Outpatient Mental Health Clinic staff encounter many heartbreaking situations among the families they serve everyday, just as many families show signs of how the clinic is making a short but meaningful impact on them. “People are very kind and thankful,” Goetz says. “They stay in touch with us. They know that we care about them and they know that we are here for them.” ■

...and BCC Receives *continued from page 4*



New Jersey church group donates sweat equity

Wielding shovels, rakes and paint brushes, dozens of youth from Clinton United Methodist Church in Clinton, N.J., descended on the Board of Child Care’s Baltimore and West Virginia campuses in July and

August to spruce up and enhance the grounds.

In West Virginia, the church’s senior youth group tackled painting projects. On the Baltimore campus, the Clinton UMC junior youth group graded soil, painted a scoreboard for the athletic field and brought a neglected nature trail back to life by cutting back weeds and laying mulch. But the group’s most significant achievement was building an outdoor chapel. To do so, they cleared ground underneath a grove of trees, spread mulch, constructed wooden benches and a wooden cross, and fashioned a pulpit from the stump of a tree that was felled for the project.

In Baltimore, the BCC residents worked alongside the

youth group members who stayed for a week and slept and showered in BCC’s Activity Center and ate meals in the BCC cafeteria with the residents.

BCC President and CEO Thomas Curcio has maintained a 20 year relationship with the youth leaders at Clinton UMC. Curcio spoke with this year’s visiting group, thanking them for their hard work and educating them about the work that BCC does on behalf of children and families. ■

Interested in getting your church’s youth group involved with BCC?

Call Brent Stouffer, Spiritual Life Director, at 443-865-9220 to find out how you can help.