

A Note from the Editor:

In these challenging economic times we are doing everything possible to minimize the costs associated with communications. A redesign of the newsletter is just one step toward achieving that goal. We hope that you enjoy the new format!

NCCF Harnesses Technology: Neurofeedback helps kids regulate emotions

David is looking at a computer screen tracking three boats: one yellow, one blue and one purple. He doesn't have a joystick. Instead, he has metal tabs attached to his head that connect to a computer and track his brain waves. His expression is calm and focused. The goal is to increase the calm and focused brain waves and decrease the higher and lower-frequency waves associated, respectively, with anxiety and distraction.

David is part of a new and ongoing program in neurofeedback at NCCF led by Dr. Ken Talan, the program's psychiatrist. Neurofeedback is a form of biofeedback that allows individuals to shape their own brain waves. By monitoring the progress of the boats David is learning to increase the brain waves associated with calm and focus and decrease those associated with anxiety and distraction.

As David watches the boats--intently trying to increase the calm and focused brain waves and decrease the ones that connote anxiety and distraction—he receives several indicators that signal success. As the calm waves increase, the blue boat speeds up, a tone sounds, and his score

goes up. As the anxious waves decrease, the yellow boat goes slower. As the distracting low frequency waves decrease, the purple boat slows.

Dr. Talan's goal in bringing neurofeedback to NCCF is to reduce clients' reliance on psychotropic medication by allowing them to better regulate their emotions, level of arousal, and the quality of their attention. Dr. Talan monitors David's progress by watching a second screen that shows David's EEG signal.

David recently graduated from the residential program. He, his mother, and the people who work with him have all noticed that David is less anxious and explosive and more aware of his internal processes since using the neurofeedback. He also has decreased his use of psychotropic medication and will continue to get neurofeedback at his new school.

David is one of a group of five students at NCCF who have been receiving neurofeedback sessions in the past year. Cutchins Programs received a grant from the McKesson Foundation that allowed Dr. Talan, Marcia Landsman, Clinical Coordinator and Jay Indik, Program Director to get trained in neurofeedback, to buy the start-up equipment, to receive supervision, and to connect with other clinicians who provide neurofeedback.

Neurofeedback, like medication, supports the other treatment NCCF clients receive. The initial use of neurofeedback has been promising and plans this year are to expand its use to more students.

Jay Indik, Program Director
NCCF



From the desk of the Executive Director:

- Helping an adolescent acquire improved social skills.
- Teaching a child to read.
- Assisting a young person to approach life's challenges with a sense of competence.

This is the work of our staff.

Accomplishing this work requires the development of meaningful relationships based on trust. For a child or adolescent, trust that "you will be there for me when you said you would" is a critical component.

It follows then that a significant measure of the quality of services that our organization provides is how long staff stay. Nationally, for agencies with similar missions, the average staff tenure is estimated at two years. In the last decade, our staff tenure averages have been in the four to five year range. For the fiscal year just ended, it was five years and 4 months! We are very proud of this. It speaks to the quality and dedication of our staff, the continuity of their treatment efforts and the culture of the agency. We, at Cutchins, actively cultivate a culture in which staff feel valued, have meaningful connections with their peers, and feel like the work they do makes a difference both within the organization and in the community at large.

A new fiscal year is beginning. It is a year that is promising many changes in the ways that mental or behavioral health services are provided in the Commonwealth for children and adolescents. Long in planning, the services of Massachusetts's Child Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI) are starting to open. Change raises anxiety, but we are confident that we will continue to provide the highest quality of treatment for those we serve.

The support of our community is crucial. Of course financial contributions are needed. However knowing that the community appreciates and respects our efforts is of greatest value.

Thank you for your continued support!

Andrew Pollock, M.Ed.
Executive Director
Cutchins Programs for Children and Families



Sunny Skies Prevail for Staff Appreciation

The Staff Appreciation BBQ, held on August 8th at the Clarion Hotel in Northampton, was a major success. Spirits were high that Saturday—a picture-perfect, sun-drenched day—one of only a handful this summer. Staff turned out from NCCF, Three Rivers, and the Children's Clinic. Many staff brought family, and everyone enjoyed the pool, complimentary drinks at the cabana-bar, and scrumptious food. There were brief speeches and employees each received an attractive, stainless-steel water bottle, with the Cutchins logo. All in all, it was a great day to celebrate the extraordinary employees with whom we are so lucky to work at the Cutchins Programs for Children and Families.

Newsletter

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Cutchins

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Summer Grows Vocational Opportunities at New Directions School

The Vocational Program at New Directions School has blossomed into a sustainable, instructive arm of the Summer Program at Northampton Center for Children and Families (NCCF). Under the guidance of vocational instructors, Lauralee Sampere-Gagnon and Nancy Karp, and the countless hours dedicated by our teaching and support staff, the adolescent students have access to real-life job experiences that very few other area middle and high school students can match. Not only does New Directions School offer training in on-grounds vocational units, the students also have opportunities to gain valuable work experience by volunteering in the community at area businesses and other non-profits. These placements open doors for students in the areas of employment, networking, and community involvement. Each student who participates in the vocational component of the summer programming at New Directions School leaves with his/her head held high, an overwhelming feeling of accomplishment and inclusion, and a valuable work experience to add to the resume.

The teachers and staff at New Directions School take pride in what they do and offer superior lessons and programming throughout the school year. When most of their counterparts in area schools are preparing for a summer of vacation, our teachers are preparing lesson plans and designing work experiences that will better prepare students for life after graduation. The curriculum for the adolescent students is based mainly on vocational opportunities and methods to teach work skills and prepare students for the expectations that they will face when they enter the work force. The staff has even designed a stipend method so students can earn money for their work and have an added incentive to participate in these work experiences.

The summer curriculum split students into three groups. Students thirteen and under were placed in thematic units with a more academic track. The older students were placed in either on-grounds or off-grounds vocational units—depending on experience, safety, and skill set.



On-grounds, students spent three weeks in each of three units. The first and most popular on-grounds unit was the Cutchins Snack Bar. The Snack Bar was a pre-culinary unit designed to teach light cooking skills, money management, customer service, food prep, small business management, and employee/ employer relationships. (Many staff in the Northampton business office will miss the breakfast burritos and fruit smoothies.) The second vocational unit—Horticulture—was designed to teach landscape management skills. Students were able to bring plants from seed and germination to transplanting and harvesting of vegetables and flowers. All of the gardens and flowerbeds were meticulously manicured by students. Horticulture students also learned about different plant types, weeding skills, watering schedules, and tool care. In the third unit --Arts and Woodcraft—some students spent time in the woodshop designing and building benches, bridges, bookcases, and more. Other students helped to design a yearbook and manipulate photos of their experiences.

Students who have demonstrated independence, superior work skills, and safety were given a fantastic opportunity to earn school credits by working in off-ground vocational placements. Over the past several years, the New Directions School has been able to partner with local businesses and non-profit organizations

to create volunteer placements for students to gain real work experience. This year, we had students working at the Northampton Survival Center, Forbes Library, Advanced Auto Tech Repair, Look Park, Vernon Street Daycare, VA Medical Center, ThayerCare Day Habilitation, CVS, and Mad Science. Students formed new relationships and honed their employment skills in real positions at well-respected organizations.

Each of these organizations has shown a dedication to our program by accepting volunteers. They believe in our cause and display a strength-based attitude towards teaching and mentoring our students. All of the supervisors and co-workers at these placements took the time to implement any necessary modifications or accommodations. They went above and beyond and our students saw that and responded by working hard, defining themselves as dependable, industrious, and dedicated employees. The students showed a great deal of improvement, confidence, and independence when they were able to be seen as valued members of the community and workforce.

The vocational experiences that we at New Directions provide for our students represent a part of our mission. It is also imperative that the school be able to act as a bridge to the community, to reach out and form connections that will provide positive relationships. We model for our students how to interact in the community, how to form connections, and how to be active and civic minded. New Directions School values its place in the Pioneer Valley and we look forward to many more years working tirelessly to meet the needs of the students, staff, and the community.

Justin Smith, Principal
New Directions School

Three Rivers' Cape Crusaders

The children who live at the Three Rivers Program are children who during psychiatric hospitalization could not get behaviorally stable enough to move to any community setting, including community residential programs, so it is very strange indeed to contemplate taking these children, as a group, on vacation to Cape Cod for the weekend. Nevertheless, as strange as it is, that is what we have been doing at the Three Rivers Program each summer for the past four years.

Many people extend themselves to make this trip a reality. The program brings the nurse, the administrators, and Milieu Counselors, including awake night staff, nearly 200 hundred miles to re-establish base camp sea-side.

We were fortunate to find out about a big house in South Sandwich run by the New England Food Foundation which is donated every summer for use by programs in Massachusetts. The house is big enough for the children, counselors, clinical director, program director and all to stay overnight. It has a beautiful yard with a terrific climbing structure. It has a full sized basketball court, a large pond for fishing, and of course, the beach.

There are a number of reasons why we are able to make this work: First, the Three Rivers behavioral management system is as natural as we can make it. We do not need a time out room or a level review meeting to maintain our structures. Secondly, we do not expect children to be perfect. We can accommodate and de-escalate a fairly wide range of behavioral difficulties without feeling that things are out of control. That is a fact which speaks directly to the skill of the residential counselors. Without a doubt, however, it is the commitment of the caretakers which is the predominant factor that permits the program to go on a vacation together.



The reason why we undertake this risky business is probably harder to articulate than *how* we do it. All the children in our care suffer from a profound sense of discouragement about the quality of their lives, and one essential ingredient in the antidote for that affliction is fun. Talk is cheap, but the Cape is expensive (though for us, the lodging is free). The experience that life contains the promise of fun, not just in theory but in actuality—*priceless!*

Rob Terreden, Program Director
Three Rivers

On BOARD



Doug Kohl

Personnel Committee,
Fund Development Committee,
Children's Clinic Sub-Committee

Members of the Board of Directors and Staff know Doug Kohl as successful businessman, Board Member, and longtime friend and patron of Cutchins Programs. Although a very private person, Doug agreed to be interviewed for the Fall edition of The Cutchins Programs for Children & Families Newsletter to share his thoughts on the agency.

Doug appeared at the interview as he does at most meetings—casually dressed, soft-spoken and modest. When asked how he came to be on Cutchins Programs' Board of Directors, he chuckles, "Ben [Barnes] wanted to infuse some 'young blood' into the Board. That was thirteen or fourteen years ago!"

Getting Doug to share information about his personal life (other than talking glowingly about wife Rachel and two year-old son Joshua) is not easy. "What's to know?" he asks with a self-deprecating shrug. When pushed, he offers that he was born in D.C. and raised in New Jersey. With a little more cajoling Doug admits that he attended Harvard—pursuing a degree in Social Anthropology. "But," he adds, "I also studied design—that contributed to my interest in home building and land developing."

Although Doug attended one of the most traditional universities in the country, he took a less-than-traditional route to his baccalaureate degree. Midway through Harvard, Doug took a sabbatical, opting to live in a solar-powered tee-pee in Santa Fe, New Mexico where he learned about organic gardening and attended a school of naturopathic medicine. He returned to Harvard three years later.

Upon graduation, Doug set his sights on the Pioneer Valley. He recalls, "I didn't want to live in a big city; I wanted New York and Boston easily accessible; and, I had friends in the Pioneer Valley." Doug quickly made the Valley his home. After a short time working for a solar energy company he launched Hadley-based Kohl Construction in 1986. In twenty-plus years Kohl Construction has built hundreds of fine custom homes and created numerous communities with a focus on thoughtful and responsible solutions to planning, building and design challenges.

This demonstrated business acumen is valued highly by fellow Board members and Executive Director Andy Pollock. Says Pollock, "For years, I've watched Doug at meetings. He watches and listens so intently. He takes everything in and then responds in a very insightful way. We definitely rely on him for thoughtful advice."

Doug has been providing that thoughtful advice for fourteen years ... a significant commitment by any organization's measure. He says his allegiance to Cutchins is inspired by the passion and commitment expressed by staff. "Andy [Pollock] spoke at the first Board retreat I attended," says Doug, "and, he talked about the kids and wove a rich tapestry of stories that was so very compelling. And every year after, all of the staff has compelling stories." He adds, "It's truly amazing to me that an organization can do so much with so little [funding]. And, it's got to be doing something exceptionally right to retain the quality of staff. There's a real sense of community and respect internally. That's extraordinary."



Cutchins staff and Board say "goodbye and thank you" to veteran therapist Edouard Beauvais and "welcome aboard The Board of Directors"

Colleagues refer to children's play therapist Ed Beauvais as a gentle giant for a couple of reasons: 1) his stature—at six foot five inches tall, Ed looms large over colleagues and clients; and, 2) his heart—Ed has committed close to 20 years of his life to connecting with kids who most need his help at The Children's Clinic.

In August, this greatly respected therapist retired from his post at The Clinic. Director Cynthia Monahan is sad to see Ed leave his role as therapist, but glad he will continue to advocate for the children that the Clinic serves in his new role as Cutchins Board member. According to Cynthia, "Ed understands the essence of what we do and who we serve so he can be another voice for children and families on the Board."

Ed said that it was "synchronicity" that led him to The Children's Clinic. A therapist in private practice in Easthampton, Ed had never before in his career perused the help wanted ads. On one particular day in 1991, he did . . . and, there was the ad for The Children's Clinic. Ed recalls, "I met Cynthia and that was it. I had found a group of highly skilled therapists who were committed and engaged in actively sharing their work. Cynthia's leadership and commitment to traumatized children is truly unique. She has held and supported me and the rest of the staff in a rich dialogue completely unusual for an outpatient mental health clinic. I will always be grateful to her for helping to shape my professional work."

Cynthia Monahan is equally full of praise for colleague Ed Beauvais. She reflects on his tenure at the Clinic, "Ed has been such a gentle, warm and funny presence in the lives of so many children. He is creative in his approach to create a therapeutic alliance. And, he is unfailing in his commitment to find ways to remain available as a therapeutic force for as long as a child needs."

Cynthia went on to share an example of this extraordinary commitment. She remembers, "There was this one boy that started treatment at age 5. He was in foster care and moved through many families. Even when the boy was placed an hour's drive away, Ed found ways to maintain the therapeutic relationship. Eventually, this boy was placed with a family who kept Ed's letters and cards from him resulting in a loss of contact for many years. Just recently, this boy (now 20 years old) reconnected with Ed and learned of Ed's efforts to reach him over the years. The boy's response: I knew he wouldn't give up on me!"

If you ask Ed, he claims to come by his profession naturally. According to Ed, there is a "family commitment" to mental health care --wife, Pamela McCarthy, LICSW, is the Director of the Counseling Service at Smith College; and, both of Ed's brothers and their wives are also in the mental health profession. "In fact," says Ed, "my brother Richard and his wife Phyllis founded Wellspring—a multi-dimensional residential treatment center for children, adolescents, and adults in Connecticut."

Ed hopes that having been on "the inside" he can bring a different perspective to the Board. He says, "As special as the Clinic is, it is a piece of the greater agency—an agency that has fostered the same reputation for clinical excellence, commitment to children, and high morale and longevity of staff." He adds, "I want to be a part of continuing the Mission of the agency."

Ed Beauvais was officially inducted into the Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting on September 9, 2009 at The Hotel Northampton. Welcome!

Mission

Childhood is the time to develop the fundamental skills and understanding necessary to lead happy, productive, and satisfying lives. Attainment of these goals may be profoundly affected by emotional and psychological pain and suffering caused by biology, trauma, loss, emotional disturbance, mental disability, and stigma.

The mission of Cutchins Programs for Children and Families is to provide highly competent, cost effective services to help families, children, and adolescents who are experiencing emotional and behavioral difficulties. We provide clinical assessment and treatment, special education, and behavioral intervention, both in the community and at our residential sites, closely coordinated with the child's family and service network. Our work helps to stabilize behavior and then transform painful childhood, adolescent, family, and biological challenges into lifetime resilience and hope.

Vision

The vision of Cutchins Programs for Children and Families is to ease suffering and interrupt patterns of despair. We will provide healthy models of relationship and communication. We will lead with innovation and integrity, serving as a model for best practices. We will work diligently with family and other health care and human service providers to insure that the continuum of care fully meets the needs of those we serve. We will enhance our services with carefully planned growth.

For a complete list of our values visit www.cutchins.org

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FALL NEWS