

Fall 2010

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The van der Kolk Center is now open!

By Catherine Buday/GateHouse News Service
The Metrowest Daily News
Posted Sep 24, 2010 @ 06:28 AM

Miranda, a 17-year-old from Connecticut, fell apart at 9 years old after her mother died.

By middle school, she was skipping class, lashing out at teachers and severely depressed. Busted for drug possession at age 12, she was shuttled around to foster homes and institutions for troubled children.



On Wednesday, she sat in the comfortable library at The van der Kolk Center on Farm Road and talked about her plans: college next year, then a career as a novelist or photographer. The van der Kolk Center, where she has lived for the past five months, is helping her through counseling, neurofeedback, physical therapy, yoga, sports and poetry. "I'm feeling a lot better," she said. "People work with me one-on-one here to get me ready for when I can go home."

About 100 members of the social services community were on hand Wednesday to rename the former Glenhaven Academy as The van der Kolk Center, in honor of Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, considered one of the world's leading authorities on helping deeply traumatized individuals. **"This is truly a dream come true,"** said van der Kolk, who attended the renaming ceremony with his family. "It is what I always envisioned a treatment place should look like."

The center is now home to 30 children and young people ages 12 to 22 who have experienced severe trauma in their lives, whether through physical and emotional abuse, family tragedies or other causes. Many suffer from anxiety disorders, attachment disorders, attention deficit disorders and other problems. Van der Kolk - the founder and medical director of the Trauma Center at Justice Resources Institute, which operates the Marlborough school - said he sees the number of such young people growing.

"There are 10 times as many traumatized children as there are soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq, and there is tremendous denial of this problem," van der Kolk said. **"Our prison facilities are filled with people who were once traumatized children. These children are being misdiagnosed and medicated so badly that they can't be reached."**

While many of the young people at the center still need medication, they also receive other kinds of help to restore their bodies and spirits. One room has trampolines and other equipment to help students deal with sensory issues. An "escape room," for children who need time alone, is painted in soothing tones of blue and strewn with soft pillows. Two homey dining rooms serve family-style meals; other rooms house computers, neurofeedback equipment, musical instruments and books. **"Now we are able to give kids a lot more individual attention," Clinical Director Alicia Strauss said. "We are able to meet kids where they are, and to make them more aware of their bodies so we can retrain their brains."**

JRI President Andy Pond said the center's approach treats each student individually. **"Many programs exist to treat troubled adolescents," he said, "but few do so by exploring the root causes of that trauma and devising a highly customized treatment, and that is exactly what this program will do."**

Creativity in Trauma Treatment

Contributed by Ilya Yacevich, M.A.

A gifted young college student, with high aspirations of being an accomplished performance artist, experiences invasive memories of sexual abuse, and freezes when he tries to step onto the stage.. A professional musician, who has had a successful career and won numerous awards, is tormented by nightmares and panic attacks after an assault. The piano is her inspiration and hope, and yet she no longer feels safe enough to perform.

Think about when you feel most creative and alive. How you feel? Excited, hopeful, energetic? We feel compelled to do new things. Centered and focused. We're open to new experiences; our passion connects us with others. We have new ideas, take in the world around us and get inspired by it. One particularly devastating effect of trauma is the way in which it blocks us from our creative selves. We feel immobilized. Frozen. We feel hyper-alert, anxious, and scared. We become isolated. The world consumes us, and rather than feeling inspired and engaged, we retreat. And like a skipping record, we get stuck in the same groove- the same patterns playing over and over again, so that it's the only thing we hear.

Many people seek treatment with an individual therapist to help with trauma symptoms. But over the last two years, an innovative new initiative has been developing at the Trauma Center to help people regain hope, connect with others, and reconnect with themselves.

The Creative Healing Project offers unique groups that bring people together around a common creative strength. Whether it be a group of musicians and artists, parents who are passionate about using drum and dance to heal their families, or a group of refugee women who worked with sewing and handicrafts back home, the groups work with these creative strengths as a way to heal from trauma.

Ilya Yacevich, Trauma Center clinician spearheading the initiative, recalls how many creative people come to the Trauma Center. "We were seeing a lot of creative people with



Trauma Center clinician, Ilya Yacevich (middle) leading an exercise.



Photograph by participant on display at Trauma Center Art Show

musical backgrounds. So we designed a treatment group geared towards musicians. In 2009, we held a group called 'This Musical Journey: A Group for Musicians Impacted by Trauma.' In 2010, we established 'This Artist's Path', which was open to not only musicians, but to visual and performance artists, as well as writers."

The groups are designed to do multiple things: To increase connection with the body and ability to self regulate, to strengthen positive support systems, and to increase connection to creative self. To achieve these goals, the groups incorporate many of state-of-the-art methods to address trauma symptoms, including body-based exercises like movement, yoga, and dance; mindfulness practice; creative sharing; and organizing community events.

"I had been in a support group for chronic pain before, but hadn't found it very helpful. All of us had seemed very stuck. But here, the music, energy, and creativity, seemed to keep us all in motion. Risky, but safe at the same time. We danced, sang, laughed, cried, and argued together. It helped create a change in my perception of self and the trauma that I had experienced, enabling the slow transformation from victim, to survivor to begin."

One unique component to this group treatment program is that participants work on organizing a community event. During "This Artist's Path," the group organized an art show that included a visual art exhibit, music and spoken word performances, and a movement exercise that even the guests participated in.

Bessel van der Kolk, Medical Director, describes how the groups' focus on creativity and the body brings about significant changes in participants. "The groups emphasize expression, exploration, and engaging in actual physical, motoric, and interactive processes. They help people explore new sensations, new actions, new ways of engaging with other people, which helps them overcome shame, inhibition and fear and become more fully present and alive."

Creative processes, whether it be writing, playing music, cooking, or dancing, are things that can be of particular use in the healing process. These are all activities that enable us to think differently, to express our emotions and experiences, to sooth ourselves, and to tell our stories. This ability to reconnect with an internal part of oneself that holds passion, inspiration, and hope is life changing. The Trauma Center will be starting a new group for Creative Artists this Winter 2011. If you are interested in learning more, please contact: **Ilya Yacevich at 617-232-1303 x321.**

Spotlight on...New Year of Training

Contributed by Margaret Blaustein,
Ph.D., Director of Training

Here at the Trauma Center, we are invested in provision of high-quality training on the understanding and treatment of traumatic stress. In addition to our workshops, training programs, and in-service training and consultation efforts, we are pleased to be able to provide a comprehensive learning environment for interns and post-doctoral fellows who have an interest in developing expertise in this area. This past September, the Trauma Center welcomed 3 pre-doctoral interns, 1 practicum student, and 1 postdoctoral fellow, who joined our two advanced fellows as our 2010-2011 training class. We will be accepting applications for postdoctoral fellows for the 2011-2012 class in January, 2011; information about the Trauma Center training program can be found on our website.



2010 - 2011 Training Class. Standing, L-R: Vincenzo Teran, Mark Gapen, Hilary Hodgdon, Nyssa Green. Sitting, L-R: Laura Stone, Amanda Zelechowski, Amy Fingland.

Fundraising Update: We are almost there for DTD!

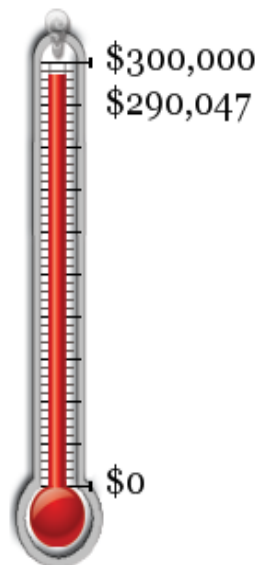
Contributed by Alexandra Cook,
Ph.D., Director of Development

In the spring, we told you about the problem of trying to get the Developmental Trauma Disorder (DTD) field trial funded, and you responded! We need \$300,000 to run the field trial of DTD across 5 sites, and we are 97% of the way there.

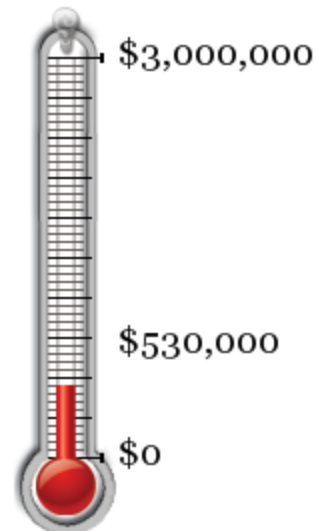
The diagnosis of DTD is critical to the field of trauma because of its clinical utility, its broad research implications, and the effect of future funding of trauma research and clinical service.

Please help us meet this goal!

DTD Fund Drive



Endowment Fund



We keep plugging away at our long term goal to ensure The Trauma Center is around for many years to come. Remember **all contributions to this fund up to \$50,000 are matched.**

Please consider donating to the Trauma Center's Endowment Fund! Visit www.traumacenter.org

Currently Enrolling:

Behavioral Coping Skills Group for Adult Women Trauma Survivors:

Tuesdays, 3:30 pm

Contact: Janice Stubblefield-Tave at (617) 232-1303, x218.

Healing Through Dance Group for Adult Men and Women:

Thursdays, 4:00 pm

Movement & Music to safely explore what it feels like to create different movements and rhythms, drawing from cultures around the world.

Contact: Janice Stubblefield-Tave at (617) 232-1303, x218.

Trauma-Sensitive Yoga Classes

For Women: Wednesday evenings 6:00 pm and Saturday mornings 10:00 am. **For Men:** Tuesday evenings. Yoga Classes are for trauma survivors who are currently in therapy (at the TC or elsewhere).

Contact Ritu Sharma at (617) 232-1303, x208.

The Art of Healing:

Beginning Winter 2011

Part of the Creative Healing Project
For Artists impacted by trauma.

Contact: Ilya Yacevich at (617) 232-1303, x321

NOW AVAILABLE:

Introducing an updated and improved Trauma Assessment Packet with NEW automatic scoring software for multiple client files. For a full description and to order, please visit:

www.traumacenter.org/products/instruments.php.

UPCOMING EVENTS...



TRAUMA CENTER at JRI WORKSHOPS:

Spring, 2011 (date TBD): Yoga and Body-Oriented Strategies With Children and Adolescents — Dave Emerson & Ilya Yacevich

April 14-15, 2011: From MindFlight to MindSight: Overcoming The Phobia of Inner Experience — Kathy Steele

June, 2011: Trauma Sensitive Yoga Teaching Certificate Program — Dave Emerson & Jenn Turner

For information on these and other workshops, please visit:
www.traumacenter.org/training/workshops.php.

DR. van der KOLK'S LECTURE SERIES:

1st Thursday of every month, 12-1:15pm. FREE!
No registration necessary.

Please visit www.traumacenter.org/about/lecture_series.php for topics.

For more information about the Trauma Center at JRI or to make a tax-deductible donation, please visit:
www.traumacenter.org.

ATTENTION: *Our National Institutes of Health-funded study, Women's Yoga, is currently screening interested participants.
Contact: Dr. Ritu Sharma at (617) 232-1303, x208.*

 **TRAUMA CENTER**
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