



MAKING CONTACT

2011: It's our 40th Anniversary

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Contact Community Services, Inc. An organization doesn't reach this milestone without being dynamic, forward-looking and responsive to community needs. We started in 1971 as a counseling hotline staffed completely by volunteers. Today, telephone services now include four programs; we are well known to educators and mental health professionals as trainers and consultants in social and emotional learning and behavioral intervention; we provide evidence-based youth development programming; and we are a highly-regarded school partner, collaborating on alternative education, early intervention, and mental health support programs.

At 40 years old, we remain energetic and committed. In this issue of *Making Contact*, you will read about the Student Assistance Program which became part of the organization in the fall. We are awaiting certification from OASAS to fully



Contact Community Services

implement this program that provides mental health support to students. You will also read about our participation with the Syracuse school district's high school graduation initiative, which will help more youth achieve academically and beyond.

It is also fitting that this year, the Mental Health Association will transition from being our affiliate to becoming a part of Contact and strengthening our voice as an advocate and resource for social, emotional and mental health concerns.



2010 CNY SEL Regional Summit

How much energy do we give to negativity, our own and that of our children and students? Do we put anywhere near the same amount of energy into the positive? Author Howard Glasser called for the practice of "radical appreciation" to propel ourselves and children toward greatness," in his keynote address at the second annual Social Emotional Learning Summit in November. Glasser is founder of Children's Success Foundation, creator of the Nurtured Heart Approach and author of *You Are Oprah: Igniting the Fires of Greatness* and *Transforming the Difficult Child*, the top-selling book on the topic of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). What he proposes, he said, is "not just another behavioral intervention, but a spiritual intervention."

Speaking to nearly 250 educators, parents, youth workers and others, Glasser said that hyper-intense children learn that adults are more interesting and alive when things go wrong. "We are their most interesting toy, but we are relatively boring when things are going right." Instead of giving lectures, admonishments, warnings, threats, etc. when a rule is broken, give the energized lectures and appreciation many

Left to right, Pat Leone, Contact's executive director, Susan VanCamp, Contact's director of school services, Howard Glasser, Summit keynote speaker. Front, Angelina VanCamp, who opened the Summit by welcoming the participants.

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PAVING R WAY: ACADEMICS, ENRICHMENT, PARENTS AND FAMILIES

While many programs struggle with parent involvement, PRW has had great success. A six-person parent board plans parent trainings, and there are always large turnouts for family activity nights.

Besides academic hour, PRW offers enrichment activities such as cooking, sewing, lacrosse, basketball, jewelry-making, web design, African drums and, below, beauty shop.



In Brief

Syracuse Schools Earn Primary Project Certification



Syracuse's Salem Hyde and Franklin Magnet elementary schools earned Primary Project certification in 2010. Primary Project is an evidence-based program for children who may be having school adjustment challenges in preschool through 3rd grade. Through weekly meetings with a highly trained paraprofessional in a playroom setting, children's self-confidence, social, emotional and learning skills improve. The program, a collaboration between Contact and the Syracuse City School District, is being implemented in twelve Syracuse city elementary schools.

Certification is a rigorous process and requires evaluation data from the past three years. The National Certification gives recognition to Salem Hyde and Franklin, offers opportunities to participate in research studies and encourages other providers to visit their sites as models for implementation.

Hotline Featured in United Way Campaign

United Way of Central New York focused on the Contact Hotline as an example of one of the many important programs that United Way donations support. The video, used in presentations throughout the community, features Mary Mol, hotline manager, and two of our volunteers. To view the video, go to www.contactsyracuse.org.

Telephone Services Administers OnCare Dispatch

Contact is now providing dispatch and scheduling for OnCare's respite services for families of children with mental health emergencies. OnCare (formerly the System of Care) is a community project focused on strengthening children's mental health support network which consists of area agencies, service providers, and families that utilize these services. After a case manager requests support for a family, Contact reaches out to a pool of Onondaga County Child Protective Service workers to identify who can provide respite time and schedule the one-on-one care so that a parent or guardian can take a break.

Contact New Home of Student Assistance Program

What if...

A student could talk to a well-trained professional during the school day for free and confidential counseling about substance use or other issues?

A youth with a poor attendance record could just check in with a caring adult to hear "Good morning, glad you're in school today"?

A young person being bullied for his sexuality had a concerned adult to talk to?

A teacher alarmed by a student's paper about suicide could send him/her down the hall to talk to a therapist?

One adult said, "I believe in you"?

The Student Assistance Program (SAP) is a school-based answer to these and other "what ifs...?" It provides a counselor to whom youth and parents can turn for immediate assistance and ongoing support. SAP, operated by the Onondaga County Mental Health Department since 1985, became a program of Contact Community Services this fall.

It is an excellent fit for Contact, says executive director Pat Leone. "SAP, like our

other programs, is built on a youth development philosophy of helping youth cultivate their strengths. As in our other school and afterschool programs, the most important asset for a young person is at least one caring adult. That relationship can help keep a youth in school, prevent substance abuse, or save a life."

"A teen soul is raw. A lot of adults forget that. Teens need our guidance and direction. An adult may wonder why a youth is so upset about a relationship that lasted three weeks, but a teen's feelings are intense and he or she feels intense loss," says SAP program director Jeanne Elmer. "Our counselors are specialists in adolescent mental health."

Our counselors can "change the course of a youth's life," says Elmer. "Students feel empowered, safe and protected because they have someone to talk to who will not judge them, punish them or share what they say with anyone else."

SAP counselors help students deal with alcohol and drug use, stress, grief, behavioral problems, anger management, eating disorders, suicide prevention and other emotional issues. Each student assistance counselor is

very much part of the school's culture. Each runs support groups, coordinates drug and alcohol abuse prevention programs, helps students conduct public awareness campaigns around special issues and provides education and training for school staff, parent and community groups. Students seek out the counselor or are referred to the program by parents or school personnel.

SAP is now funded by the NYS Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), North Syracuse Central School District and Say Yes to Education, Inc. on behalf of the Syracuse City School District. When fully operational, SAP counselors will work in the five Syracuse high schools (Henninger, Corcoran, Nottingham, Fowler, Institute of Technology) and two North Syracuse schools (Cicero-North Syracuse High School and North Syracuse Junior High). The program will not be fully implemented, however, until Contact receives certification as a prevention program by NYS Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Service in 2011.

Veteran's Documentary Goes National

Our Veterans and Their Families: 21st Century Challenges has gone national, according to WCNY-Channel 24 executive producer Peter Spartano. A growing number of PBS affiliates were scheduled to air the 60-minute show, produced by WCNY in partnership with Contact/Mental Health Association. This project was the culmination

of a three-year grant from Excellus BlueCross BlueShield to help educate veterans and their families about mental health issues and services and encourage them to seek help. Stations in California, Michigan, Hawaii, Wisconsin, West Virginia, Ohio and Idaho featured the special in November to focus on the problems of today's veterans and their families. The broadcast covers four areas: Mental Health Needs, Redeployment Stresses, Reintegration Needs, and Special Needs of Female Veterans and includes insight from panelists who have intimate knowledge and experience in working with veterans. The show aired originally on WCNY in May as a Memorial Day special and was rebroadcast locally in November.

Paving R Way Youth Make Rap Video

Living life ain't about what your friends say. We are living our own lives, going to make our own way. We are making our own choices, positive results everyday..."

Be sure to check out Paving R Way's rap video on our homepage: contactsyracuse.org. The students of PRW wrote and performed the rap song about the need to stay in school and why Paving R Way is important to them. The video was produced by School of the heARTS.



SEL Summit

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times a day when rules are *not being* broken. Be willing to flip the switch on your energy 180 degrees,” he advised. However, “good job” and “thank you” lack anywhere near the energy we express when a child does something wrong. Radical appreciation requires us to be explicit in describing the greatness we see. Instead of waiting to “catch children being good, let’s create children being great,” he said.

Glasser’s Nurtured Heart Approach is currently being used by schools, parents and therapists worldwide to stem the tide of the overuse of labels and medications which tend to lead to long-term difficulty. According to Glasser, his Nurtured Heart Approach has had extraordinary results with children labeled with ADHD or other behavior problems. That same intensity that goes awry in terms of acting out problem behavior can become an asset and contribute to a child’s new and growing sense of greatness, he said. Unfortunately, too many people today find themselves struggling

with the intensity of a challenging child and are advised to moderate the intensity by using medications as a first intervention rather than as a very last resort.

The Summit also included workshops on mental health best practices, service learning, and implementation of SEL in school. Mark J. Barth, Ph.D. from the New York State Education Department (NYSED), Office of District Services – Student Support, led a workshop on school climate and culture and conditions for learning.

Speaker Kristin Riley abandoned her planned presentation to talk about the importance of passion and inspired the audience with her own story of her recent adventures at Mt. Everest. Riley, deputy commissioner and director, Division of Children and Family Services, New York State Office of Mental Health, urged the audience to keep pushing on in their passion for SEL and youth, even if they experience setbacks. Passion for a cause, she said, “is not dependent on someone else doing something, it is not dependent on the current level of funding. It can begin anytime, anyplace. It is not about waiting.” However, reaching for a goal is also about perseverance, she said. Even if we fall short of a goal because of reasons beyond our control, we have still made the climb and made an impact.



The Summit was sponsored by Contact and our new CNY Social Emotional Learning Institute, with support from OCM-BOCES, St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center, East Syracuse Minoa School District, New York State Office of Mental Health, NYS Education Department, It’s About Childhood and Family, Inc. and Syracuse Onondaga Drug and Alcohol Abuse Commission. Financial support was provided by United Way of Central New York and Families Together in New York State, Inc. which provided scholarships to parents.



Carolyn Kelly (left) and Shelby Miller of East Syracuse Minoa High School participated on a student panel at the SEL Summit. Youth from East Syracuse Minoa and Lafayette Central School talked about service learning as a vital part of their social and emotional development and learning. “I learned I can do a lot of different things, I can work independently, and I can do anything I set my mind to do,” one youth said. Another talked about learning “to manage my emotions, be more organized and not to judge people because everyone’s life is different.” The panel was moderated by Barb Englehart, an intervention specialist with ES-M.

CNY Social Emotional Learning Institute

Through our CNY Social and Emotional Learning Institute and its website (cnysel.org), Contact will expand its training and consultation services and reach a wider audience of educators, mental health professionals and parents.

“We have decades of experience in addressing the social, emotional and mental health barriers to academic success through school and afterschool programs, as well as training for educators, youth and their parents,” says Pat Leone, executive director. “Trainings in evidence-based behavioral intervention programs are the core of the Institute. Current offerings include training and even implementation of

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Student-Targeted Aggression Replacement Training, and Functional Behavioral Assessment. We will continue to add trainings in evidence-based programs and curricula,” she says.

Contact trainers are available through the Institute to present these evidence-based programs, as well as to tailor trainings or consultation to the particular needs of a school or district. The website will also continue to grow as a resource. Look for announcements about the upcoming events, including the Institute’s summer training schedule, in the coming months.

Contact to partner with SCSD to keep youth in school

The Syracuse City School District is looking to Contact to provide services as part of a five-year federal High School Graduation Initiative grant. The U.S.

Department of Education funding supports activities such as early warning systems designed to identify students at risk of dropping out, rigorous academic programs and support services to engage students and implement dropout prevention, credit recovery programs, and targeted re-engagement programs that identify out-of-school youth and encourage them to reenter school. The Initiative targets high schools with high dropout rates or middle schools that feed into schools with high dropout rates.

Contact will provide nontraditional case management and social, emotional and behavioral support services to selected students at risk. Our nontraditional case management model has been instrumental in achieving successful academic, social and emotional outcomes in our Way To Go and Paving R Way youth development programs. Although the graduation initiative is still in the planning stage, it is likely that Way To Go and Paving R Way at Lincoln Middle School will also serve as models of a community-based afterschool program for targeted youth. Both programs include academic enrichment support, career exploration, positive recreation and enrichment, service learning and case management. Way To Go has been funded as a pregnancy prevention program, but because it is a comprehensive youth development program, its academic outcomes have been impressive, boasting an 84% graduation/GED rate among teens identified as "at risk" because of family, academic, financial, or other environmental factors.

Syracuse's high school graduation rate is an alarming 49% district-wide and falls well below the state graduation rate of 71%. The district's most recent figures show that 25% of freshmen in 2006 had dropped out by June 2010. Three primary reasons for dropping out are disengagement, lack of



preparation and external or family-related barriers to success, according to the grant application.

Contact's graduation initiative specialists, working with targeted students in Corcoran, Fowler, Henninger and Nottingham help bring together supports to address these issues. Our presence in the high schools, through the Student Assistance Program and Way To Go will enhance program delivery.

Contact's program will be one of several the district will offer. A transition case manager will assess students to determine the best approach and each student will have an individualized graduation plan that addresses his/her specific academic, behavioral and mental health, socio-economic and other special supports and needs.

The project recognizes that keeping kids on track for graduation begins before high school. Case managers will also work with the feeder schools, including Lincoln

Middle School, the home of our Paving R Way program.

Executive director Pat Leone points to our involvement in the graduation initiative as part of our continuum of school services that address behavioral, social, emotional and mental health barriers to academic success. "Contact has been an effective and resourceful partner with the Syracuse district. We would like to see our collaboration become a model in other districts, as well. We are helping to keep children in school and on track for graduation, starting even in the earliest grades with Primary Project's early school adjustment; STEP which works with elementary school children with behavioral problems; youth development programs PRW and WTG; our new Student Assistance Program and now the graduation initiative."

While our role in the graduation initiative is still in the planning stage, the goal is very clear: *More youth will graduate from high school.*



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M&T BANK SUPPORTS SUMMER STEP PROGRAM

M&T Charitable Foundation funded the 2009 and 2010 summer STEP program at Orenda Springs in Marcellus and will underwrite it again in 2011. Their support will provide summer opportunities for students in grades 4 through 6 to engage in problem solving skills, leadership development, decision making, making good choices and being responsible. The contribution will cover the costs of summer programming, supplies, transportation and direct service to STEP students.