



# Psyche Matters

The Newsletter of the Sullivan Center for Children

## Welcome to the Sullivan Center

by David Wolter, M.A.

The Sullivan Center for Children is a place to improve mental health and to foster growth. It is a place to explore your own sense of self amidst the troubles you may be facing. It was founded in 1989 as a comprehensive outpatient treatment facility with the goal of providing quality outpatient psychological and psychiatric services to children, adolescents and families in the Central Valley.

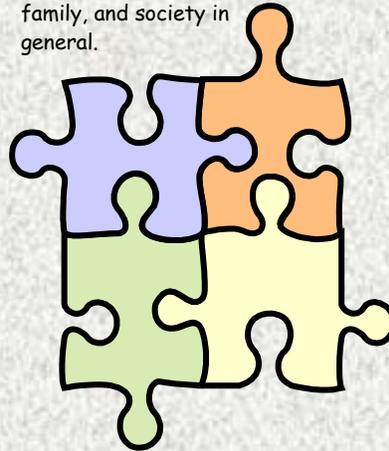
We are located in the southeast corner of Shaw and Valentine, behind the Bank of America building and see clients Monday through Saturday, morning,

afternoon and evening. We specialize in testing and assessment and in providing therapy to children, adolescents, couples, individuals and families.

Raising a child is one of the most difficult and important challenges we face. A child's maturation, normal parental uncertainty, and the complexities of today's world, make recognition of problems, and knowing what to do if a problem is identified, very difficult. The professional staff at the Center can work with you and your family, as your children grow and as your family goes through changes, to provide information, resources,

recommendations, consultations, periodic assessments and interventions as needed.

The philosophy of the Center is deeply rooted in the belief that attending to mental health needs of children is essential in determining the overall health and adaptation of the child, the family, and society in general.



## From the Director

by Kathy Sullivan, Ph.D.

Licensed Psychologist and Clinical Director

We are very happy to unveil this first edition of "Psyche Matters," the now official newsletter of the Sullivan Center for Children. We decided on the name because, of course, nothing "matters" more than our psyche, its stability and health, and because it encapsulates the subject matter of what the Sullivan Center is all about. And then there is the fact that, of course, the true "owner" of the Sullivan Center - our cat, Psyche

- well need I say more. . . . It is our hope and intent to provide information in this newsletter that will be informative to our



readers about a variety of different topics and will keep everyone up to date on the general events and programs that we have to offer. We are open to suggestions from anyone who wishes to submit them about how we could make this newsletter more informative and helpful as we proceed in this endeavor. You may jot your ideas down and give them to the office staff who will get them to the editors, or you may discuss your ideas with your clinician and ask them to pass it along to the editors. If you have articles,

ideas, and/or resources that we may provide to other patients, feel free to submit those as well. Initially, we will publish this newsletter quarterly, and depending upon the interest and the general energy, may publish it more frequently in the future.

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August 15, 2008

## Inside this Issue:

- ☺ Parenting Support Group Begins this Fall
- ☺ New Staff Have Been Hired to Accommodate the Center's Growing Desire to Provide Mental Health Help to Families in the Central Valley
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- ☺ Play Therapy Described
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# What is Play Therapy?

by Lisa Ganiron, Psy.D.

"We played ping pong and I won." "We had a big war with army men and cannons and horses and bazookas and missiles in the sand and I blew up all his men." "Dr. Dave sure has a lot of fun toys to play with." "Can I come here every day?" How many times have you heard these or similar comments after your child's therapy session? Ever wondered what goes on in that office between the therapist and your child once the door closes? While it may sometimes sound like the Sullivan Center is one big playroom, what's really occurring during those weekly "playdates" can be crucial to positive behavioral and

emotional changes. During play therapy, a relationship is developed between your child and their therapist so that children learn to trust and ultimately allow the therapist into their personal world. Most adolescents and adults are able to openly communicate their concerns, but younger children often lack the sophisticated language to discuss their thoughts and fears. Research suggests that children express their internal



thoughts, feelings and beliefs through play. As clinicians, we identify and interpret a child's pattern of play in an effort to find the best way to help the individual. Appropriate interventions specific to the child's concerns can then be introduced through play, as natural, self-guided learning is often an effective method for teaching a child new behaviors. In addition to play therapy, your child's therapist may also utilize other forms of therapeutic interventions including art or music therapies, psychodrama, and family therapy. Just remember, playing Monopoly isn't just about playing Monopoly.

## Meet the Sullivan Center Staff: Dave Calandra, M.A., LMFT

by Kelli Barton, M.A.

Dave earned a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master of Arts degree with an emphasis in Marriage and Family Therapy from Fresno State University. As an intern, he worked with children and families with Comprehensive Youth Services, Family Court Services, and the local VA hospital.

Dave has been with the Sullivan Center for Children for 3½ years and enjoys providing therapy services for children, adolescents, adults, couples, and families.

Sullivan Center staff report that Dave brings a naturally calm presence to the Sullivan Center and has been described as "strong, steady, quiet and secure." "He is like a rock or an anchor." "Clients are drawn to him and easily have faith in him." "He is fun and has a good sense of humor."

Dave brings a wide variety of experience with him to the Sullivan Center. After he graduated, he took a position as a Senior Counselor in the Substance Abuse Program for Turning Point Community Services in the Fresno area. He worked with Turning Point for 18 years and was promoted to Program Coordinator and then to Regional Director. As the Regional Director he developed and managed a program which offered intensive services such as housing, case management, and mental health treatment for the homeless and incarcerated populations within the Fresno community.

Dave maintains a busy practice and yet remains open to new clients and referrals. He is a joy to work with and we are proud to have him on staff at the Sullivan Center for Children.

### Special Announcements:

**CALENDAR:** The Sullivan Center will be closed for Labor Day weekend on Saturday, Aug. 30<sup>th</sup>, and Monday, Sep. 1<sup>st</sup>, unless you make prior arrangements with your therapist. We will be open Monday, Oct. 13<sup>th</sup> (Columbus Day) and on Tuesday, Nov. 11<sup>th</sup> (Veteran's Day). Please check with your therapist to verify appointments for those days and to let your therapist know of upcoming vacation dates. Thank you.

**GROUPS:** We currently offer 6 different groups: *Tuesday nights - high schoolers*  
*Thursday nights - parents*  
*Friday afternoons - young adults*  
*Saturday mornings 9am - 12-14 yr. olds*  
*Saturday mornings 10am - 8-12 yr. olds*  
*Saturday mornings 11am - 4-8 yr. olds*

## New Staff Additions at the Sullivan Center for Children

by David Wolter, M.A.

The Sullivan Center for Children staff consists of Psychologists who have been at the center for 18+ years, newer Psychologists, Marriage and Family Therapists, a Psychiatrist, Interns and Office Staff. Ohhh, and Psyche, the cat. It has been our goal to add to our staff and therefore



**Each staff person at the Sullivan Center is a unique part of what makes us who we are**

increase what we offer to the community.

This Spring we added Stephanie Kubit, MA, LMFT, to our staff. Stephanie is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist who works with a variety of mental health issues but also has a passion to help children and families where a medical illness has been detected.

Every year, the Sullivan Center is host to several psychological interns who are finishing up their training. This Summer, we welcome Jamie Milotz, MA, from Folsom, Candi Mickett, MA, from Huntington Beach, and Kelli Barton, MA, from Sacramento. Each of these interns will be with us for a one-year commitment.

The Sullivan Center also welcomes David Wolter, MA, a Marriage and Family Therapist Intern from Clovis, for a two-year commitment.

## Parental Guidance

by Treon Hinmon, Psy.D.

What would you say if I offered you a job – a really tough job with long hours, challenging duties, overwhelming responsibilities, virtually no tangible compensation, and an iron-clad 18 year commitment? You'd be in charge of the workplace environment, resources, budget, and training program. In fact, the training program would be your primary objective. You would start with one employee – a totally helpless individual with no skills – and expand your staff as you see fit. You'd have total discretion over every policy and practice, except firing or replacing your existing staff. You'd be given no training, business plan, or guidelines other than to proceed for the term of your contractual commitment. Would you jump at that opportunity? Would you welcome the challenge with open arms?

Well, congratulations! You're already hired. That's parenting: a full-time, around-the-clock, 18+ year commitment to managing a child and his/her environment on the journey from infancy to adulthood. It has great potential for excitement and satisfaction ...or stress and worry, depending on your circumstances and perspective. Each day brings new challenges and possibilities. The tricky part is figuring your way through those circumstances.

Starting October 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Sullivan Center will offer a new resource for parents in the Central Valley: Parental Guidance – a support group for parents. This open-ended group will meet on a weekly basis to offer parents the opportunity to discuss the challenges in their families and receive the feedback and support of other parents in the local

community. A licensed therapist will facilitate group discussions and provide clinical insights to the social, emotional, and developmental challenges that today's children must navigate.

Participation in Parental Guidance begins with a free 30 minute consultation with a Sullivan Center clinician who can help you assess your treatment needs and goals. Prior to participating in group, parents will receive 4 hours of training in behavior management including techniques for strengthening relationships, communication and discipline. This service may be covered by your insurance under mental health benefits for group therapy. The date and time for this 4 hour class is Saturday, September 27<sup>th</sup>, from 1pm to 5pm.

For more information or to register, contact Dr. Treon Hinmon at 559-271-1186, ext 124.



This course is listed with  
Fresno County Family Court  
Services

## Parents' Guide to "Back to School"

by Candice Mickett, M.A.

The start of a new school year is an important time in your child's life...new teachers, peers, and challenging tasks. Consistent communication with your child and child's teacher is essential in order to support your child throughout the ups and downs of the school year. By attentively listening and validating your child's feelings and concerns, he/she will experience you as a consistent resource and will learn that communication can be an effective coping



Listen to and validate  
your child's feelings

skill. Choose a time everyday to ask your child specifics about his/her day (i.e. best/worst part; fears/concerns; activities/accomplishments). Showing active interest in your child and his/her

accomplishments can enhance the parent-child relationship and your child's self-esteem. Also, a child's teacher is an important figure in his/her life. Frequent communication with your child's teacher may be important to fully understand your child's experience at school. Don't forget to ask questions in regards to your child's behavior, mood, academic strengths and weaknesses, and social relationships.

## Kid's Korner



by David Wolter, M.A.

You may still have time to read one more book this Summer. Have you read The Hobbit by J.R. Tolkien yet? This book actually prequels his Lord of the Rings trilogy and has many great riddles in it. Here's one for you to try:

**This thing all things devours:  
Birds, beasts, trees, flowers;  
Gnaws iron, bites steel;  
Grinds hard stones to meal;  
Slays king, ruins town,  
And beats high mountain down.**

(answer on page 4)

If you decide to read The Hobbit, you may also enjoy this website that features the riddles, quizzes, chapter summaries and other artwork by children about Bilbo and Gandalf:

<http://www.berghuis.co.nz/abiator/unit/hobbit/hindex2.html>

What books have you read lately? Send in your list to the editor and have a chance to win a prize! In future issues, we would like to feature your ideas, your artwork, and your poems. Email your ideas and poems to the editor. Pass your artwork to your therapist with a signed consent. We'll have fun together seeing what others do!

## The Sullivan Center for Children

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"Understanding  
the World  
Through a  
Child's Eyes."

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## Questions and Answers

by Lisa DeBenedetto, M.A., LMFT

**Q:** My daughter had over 2000 texts on her cell phone bill this month and most were after midnight....what should I do?

**A:** If the cell phone use is interfering with your child's quality of life, school performance, or ability to perform daily tasks then it might be time to discuss expectations with your child. Who pays for the cell phone? Does the cell phone need to be handed over to mom or dad at a certain time each night and then returned in the morning? Clear expectations regarding cell phone usage may alleviate future conflict with your child. Write down rules that both parent and child agree to and refer to it when the next bill arrives.

**Q:** My ten year old has been having bad dreams that even bother him during the day...how can I help him stop being so scared?

**A:** There are some things you can try to help your child gain control over those scary images. Ask your son to draw a picture of what he has been dreaming about and then encourage him to rip up his picture and throw it away. Another way to quell bad dreams is to have your son write down everything that he can remember about his dream as soon as he wakes up. Have him keep a dream journal that he can keep by his bed to capture all of his thoughts.

*answer to Kids Korner riddle on page 2: time*

## How Do I Know When to Have My Child Tested?

by Mark Barnes, Ph.D.

There are a variety of psychological tests that are designed to assess many different aspects of a child's cognitive, emotional, behavioral and psychological functioning.

There are also a variety of reasons why a child or teen should be tested. This article is aimed at helping parents in their decision-making process regarding getting their child the psychological testing they need and yet not exposing them to unnecessary and costly procedures.

There are generally three reasons to consider having a child undergo psychological testing. The goal of all three reasons is to gain more information about the child. However there are different

reasons to look for more information. The first reason to gain more information is when

your therapist has questions as to what may be affecting your child that is resulting in psychological symptoms. When a therapist evaluates a child for clinical issues they use their training and expertise to help them understand the child's psychological issues.



When they complete this clinical evaluation and find they still have questions about diagnosis and treatment planning they often refer for testing. The goal of this testing is to answer questions regarding complex symptom presentation so that a more exact diagnosis can be made.

The second reason psychological testing is used is when a treating clinician has questions about a child's cognitive and

academic functioning. Oftentimes children come to a psychological clinic for emotional or behavioral problems that may be secondary to learning problems. Sometimes a therapist wishes to determine if the child has difficulty learning in a traditional academic setting and so a learning disability evaluation is recommended.

When a child or teen has been in treatment for some time and progress has stalled or he or she may have regressed are other times when testing may be suggested. Testing at that time can provide the treating therapist with a better understanding of the child's current psychological organization. The result would be a redefined treatment plan with more precise therapeutic interventions designed to move past the impasse or reverse the regression.

There is a lot to know about testing and future articles will be aimed at helping the reader become a well-informed consumer of these highly specialized clinical services.