



Child Chat

"Dedicated to children and those who serve them"

Steven Wayne Dolliver, Editor



Child Chat is a quarterly newsletter of Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center designed to acquaint the Lake and Sumter County communities with our professional staff and their trauma-focused services to children, as well as to highlight topical children's issues.

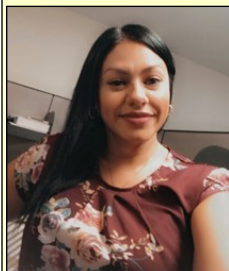
Pulse to Pubescence: A Counselor's Journey

From the Editor

What We Leave Behind

Note: Faithful readers of this quarterly publication have come to know many of our hard-working staff through our "Q & A" sessions. In this edition we introduce **Carmen Guzman**, an accomplished young professional who joined our Center Counseling Team directly from Orlando approximately one year ago. We are so very pleased to have her!

Leg • a • cy: something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past



Carmen Guzman

"My name is Carmen Elisa Guzman and I am a Registered Mental Health Counselor Intern, currently working towards Florida state licensure in Mental Health Counseling. I received my Masters degree in Mental Health Counseling from Nova Southeastern University in 2016. I was born and raised in New York and have lived in Florida for the past 20 years. My family is originally from Puerto Rico and I have 4 beautiful children. I enjoy going to the beach, spending time with my family and exploring new places."

As I write this message we are finally coming to the end of what many would describe as "the dog days of August". And, though it is still sweltering outside, I have the temerity as Labor Day fast approaches to look toward more temperate days ahead. Still, as I watch the evening news on this sultry summer evening, it occurs to me that I am far from free of the more pervasive "heat" of hot-button world events. At the Kabul airport I witness the hyperkinetic frenzy of Afghan and U.S. citizens alike scrambling for flights—desperate to escape the dawning despotism of the newly-ensconced Taliban regime. In the American West raging fires wage a scorched-earth march over once-pristine forests, threatening homes and livelihoods and offering grim testimony to climatological conditions run amok. In Texas a bold form of "frontier justice" places Roe vs. Wade on the precipice of extinction. Meanwhile, members of Congress sit on their collective haunches in gridlocked indecision as our bridges and roads crumble beneath us and the "softer" infrastructural concerns of childcare, housing, education and climate change languish, unattended. And, on the world stage COVID-19, with its insidious Delta Variant, ravages hundreds of thousands, stealing lives and rendering families unspeakable pain and grief.

Q1. Hi, Carmen. Thanks for sitting down with me today to talk a bit about your work with trauma survivors. Let's begin by finding out what caused you to choose a career in Counseling – and, even more specifically, how did you find a "clinical home" working with those who have suffered acute trauma?

I volunteered at Harbor House of Central Florida many years ago, and that was when I really found my purpose and calling in life. I was immediately drawn into the field of trauma and counseling. From that point forward, I began to pursue my degree in counseling. My journey continued in the field of Domestic Violence until 2015, when I decided to continue in the field of trauma and crisis, but to expand to all populations in crisis. I then worked as a Victim Advocate with the Orange County Sheriff's Office for almost 5 years. There, I experienced the many faces of trauma and crisis in a wide variety of situations, including homicides, suicides, tragic accidents, child deaths, drownings, mass casualty incidents, etc.

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As has always been the case, our hope for Mother Earth and those who cling tenuously to life upon it rests with our children. In the age-old tradition of humankind, we figuratively pass the torch from one generation to the next. Just as we harbor faith that our children shall enjoy greater prosperity than we, we trust that they shall find resolution to the vexing conditions that threaten our very existence on the planet. Sadly, we leave them the dubious legacies of incessant wars and racial divisions and Congressional stagnation and toxic soil and noxious hydrocarbons and profligate violence and endangered species and rising oceans and rampant diseases. Still, to some extent, perhaps it has always been this way. I am reminded of singer Billy Joel's passionate and politically-infused lyrics from his old, but still relevant, 1989 hit "We Didn't Start the Fire":

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*We didn't start the fire,
It was always burning
since the world's been turning,
We didn't start the fire,
No, we didn't light it,
but we tried to fight it...*

*We didn't start the fire,
It was always burning
since the world's been turning,
We didn't start the fire,
But when we are gone
it will still burn on, and on,
and on, and on....*



Passing the Torch

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Child Quote: "If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales." – Albert Einstein

Child Chat



Pulse to Pubescence: A Counselor's Journey (from page 1)

- Q2. Please walk us through your career to this point. Where have you worked and what “gifts” have you taken from each step in your clinical journey thus far? What are the most important things you have learned along the way?

I have worked at Domestic Violence Shelters (Harbor House of Central Florida and Help Now of Osceola County), the Orange County Sheriff's Office, University of Central Florida RESTORES Clinic and currently at the Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center. The best “gift” that I have walked away with is every person that I had the privilege to assist in their time of crisis. Each person that I have worked with showed me what true strength is and what resilience and bravery mean. I've worked with people who have lost their loved ones in the most tragic ways and still have had enough strength to raise their head up and smile. I've worked with families that have come out of the most tragic circumstances and have had the resiliency to not only keep living, but to continue to make a difference in other people's lives by raising awareness, forming organizations and reaching out to others that are going through what they survived. I have worked with the most courageous people who have had to confront their worst nightmares. I learned that tragedies can happen to anyone at any time and the most important thing you can be to someone is to be present with them in their time of need.

“...the most important thing you can be to someone is to be present with them in their time of need.”

- Q3. I know that you have made the clinical transition from working with adults to working with children. What special challenges have you faced in providing therapy to children? Perhaps in the course of your answer you could talk a bit about how you establish rapport with children – do you have some “trade secrets” for us?

Children have such a keen sense of true genuineness. They want to know if they can trust you, and they will not open up to you if they don't. Sometimes this can take a while. Prior to working with children, I thought it was the adults who may not open up right away, who may not trust you or who may avoid certain topics or conversations. I quickly learned that children not only will not speak if they don't trust you, but they will also do a great deal of avoiding. I've learned that they are extremely resilient, strong and very brave. Children don't care about how much you know about something, they just want to know that you genuinely care before they open up to you.

“Children don't care about how much you know about something. They just want to know that you genuinely care.”

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What We Leave Behind (from page 1)

However, before I tumble irretrievably down this rabbit hole of global despair, let us contemplate the legacies we may impart to our children of a far more palatable nature. Let's start by debunking a couple of popular myths though. The first myth we must cast aside is that legacies are only what we leave behind after we die. And the second myth we must jettison is the misguided notion that legacies only relate to material things—money, property and other “valuables”, I call them the “hollow inheritances”. They have no real sustaining power. After all, money shall be spent, property shall be sold and valuables shall be dealt. They shall be here today and gone tomorrow.



The “Hollow Inheritances”

Having dispensed with the myths, I would submit to you that our greatest enduring legacies to our children are intrinsic and begin with what we are doing with them NOW. We shall call them the “living legacies”. Furthermore, I would submit that it is not the material we bequeath to them that shall dominate their thoughts after we have passed. It will be the quality of the time we spent together and the lessons we taught them in the bargain. It will be the values we have inculcated through that mysterious process of “osmosis” that instill character and shape morals, ethics and fundamental principles. It will be those sacrosanct ingredients that truly make us who we are. With every word we utter and every action we take, we have the opportunity to impact our children's destiny. They, in turn, may ultimately impact the destiny of their world.

So, how do we create our “living legacies” for our children, the culmination of which might just change the world? Well, please allow me to propose some rules that might just work:

Rule 1: Be Accessible. Now, this sounds pretty easy, right? It's simply a matter of being there. Don't kid yourself. Children are very aware of those times when you are present in body only, while your mind has migrated far, far away! Therefore, to be truly “accessible” you must be fully committed to engagement. Accordingly, you must create an atmosphere that is conducive to sharing and teaching our subtle life's lessons—lessons that shall echo across the generations. I would encourage you purposely to reserve at least 15 minutes of uninterrupted time with your child every day. That means that each of you shall put aside your cell phones and turn off the television. They are the unnecessary distractions that serve only to disrupt your conversations. I believe time that you exclusively dedicate to your child sends a powerful message: **You are important to me, and I care about what you are thinking, feeling and doing. I care about you so much that I shall gladly put aside everything else in my life to have a daily conversation with you.** Naturally, there will be occasions outside of the established 15-minute window when your child shall require your attention. That's understood. However, under no circumstances, short of dire emergencies, should the dedicated 15 minutes per day be transgressed. After all, the capacity for consistency can be a most valuable to a child throughout life.

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Child Chat



Pulse to Pubescence: A Counselor's Journey (from page 2)

Q4. Counselors at the Center are prepared to serve both children and adolescents. At the same time, I have found that most counselors have preferences in terms of the ages they serve. What age range would you prefer to work with and why?

I enjoy working with all ages, as each age group has its own uniqueness. The younger children sees things through their magic, child-like lenses, which is simply amazing, while the older teens are ready to embark on their journey into adulthood and are very much into technology and gadgets. I love working with older teens and discussing with them their plans for their future and what career path they see themselves on. There's so much hope and animation in their eyes when they talk about the possibilities for their future and just being able to be a part of that is very satisfying.



"I love working with older teens and discussing their plans for the future. There's so much hope and animation...when they talk about the possibilities."

Q5. At Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) is the preferred clinical modality for helping children and adolescents cope with the symptoms that are a by-product of their trauma exposure. I know that you utilized another modality when you were working with veterans and first responders in the program at UCF. What modality did you employ there, and what are the similarities and differences between that modality and TF-CBT?

While working with First Responders and Veterans at UCF RESTORES, we used Exposure Therapy (ET), Trauma Management Therapy (TMT) and Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT). I feel like the modality we use here with the Children is almost like a combination of these modalities. In both Exposure Therapy and TF-CBT, the client is asked to recite a personal narrative that recounts the traumatic event that he/she experienced. It is as detailed as the client can recollect and includes his/her feelings, thoughts and body sensations during the incident. Also, as with CPT, TF-CBT, there is a focus on thoughts and how those thoughts influence feelings and actions and how to re-frame negative thoughts. Trauma Management Therapy really focuses on reducing the emotional and physiological reactions to the trauma, improving interpersonal relationships/skills, emotional regulation and reducing intrusive symptoms. At UCF RESTORES, TMT therapy was used for our Intensive Outpatient Program participants in a group therapy setting. With TF-CBT all these are addressed throughout the modality.

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With Gratitude

It was with abiding gratitude that we recently accepted a generous contribution from the Saint Philip Lutheran Church to support our services on behalf of child survivors of abuse. Their donation derives from the kindness of many who have given to the St. Philip Endowment Fund over the years to support their subsequent donations to community providers. We at Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center shall be forever grateful for the ongoing support of our pastoral friends as St. Philip Lutheran Church who recognize the inherent worthiness of our mission "to seek truth, heal wounds and instill hope that our children may thrive in their trauma recovery and excel in life."



With Pride

In our January 2021 edition of *Child Chat*, we celebrated with our friend and colleague Angelica "Angie" Vega upon learning that she had passed her licensure examination. It was her initial step toward becoming a Licensed Mental Health Counselor in the State of Florida. Well, it now gives us immense pride to announce that Angie has completed all of her licensure requirements and is, accordingly, a full-fledged Licensed Mental Health Counselor with all of the rights and privileges appertaining. For those of you who may be unfamiliar with the licensure process, it is an arduous one encompassing the following steps: 1) graduation with a Master's degree from an appropriately accredited college or university in a license-eligible field of clinical study; 2) completion of at least **1,500** hours of post-Master's clinical direct services; and 3) completion of at least **100** hours of documented clinical supervision with a Qualified Supervisor. So, Angie, thanks for all of your hard work, and congratulations on achieving a significant milestone in your budding career! Kudos as well to LSCAC Clinical Supervisor Cathy Carter, LMHC, who served as Angie's Qualified Supervisor and provided the essential clinical tutelage and support to make Angie's dream of licensure come to fruition!



Angie Vega, LMHC



A "happy dance" for Angie

With Anticipation

At Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center we are blessed to possess a cadre of talented young counselors aspiring to become Licensed Mental Health Counselors. You have already met some of them through *Child Chat*, and we promise that you shall meet others in the months ahead. For now, in addition to newly-licensed Angie Vega (see above) may we invoke the names of in-clinic counselors Sorimar (Aquino) Gonzalez and Carmen Guzman and Sumter County in-school counselors Malika Dandridge and Daniel Pichardo. You will be learning more about their work in the future, and we know that more licensure celebrations are just around the corner!

Child Chat



The VOCA Fix: In the Nick of Time

When issuing a newsletter as *Child Chat* on a quarterly basis, it is all too easy to omit news that may have occurred immediately after its previous installment. Fortunately, news regarding passage of H.R.1652, colloquially called the “VOCA Fix”, shall not suffer such an ignominious fate. As context, the acronym VOCA represents Victims of Crime Act. This federal legislation, authored in 1984, mandates compensation to those deemed eligible by virtue of their abuse victimization. The funds that support this compensation do not derive from taxpayer contributions. Rather, they are the product of fines and penalties imposed on convicted federal criminals. The compensation to survivors of abuse is vital to accessing and paying for restorative services, including counseling and medical treatment. It also covers lost wages, temporary housing and property damage, among other things. It is important to consider that approximately 230,000 victims—abused children, battered wives, rape victims—received compensation through VOCA in 2019 alone.

Unfortunately, the VOCA funds were steadily depleting as we approached fiscal year 2021-22. In fact, according to the National Children’s Alliance, the regulatory stakeholder for Children’s Advocacy Centers, the funds were down by two-thirds. They fell prey to what in the legal system are called “Non-Prosecution Agreements” (NPA) and “Deferred Prosecution Agreements” (DPA). Put simply, these “agreements” involve negotiations between prosecutors and defense attorneys that often culminate in non-adjudications for the offenders. Sadly, non-adjudications translate into a paucity of contributions to the victim compensation funds. And, of course, in our world of child advocacy and child abuse mediation, that means less restorative services for our children and less ameliorative resources for our families. It also precipitates that empty feeling that comes with the knowledge that our courageous child survivors shall receive no retributive justice and no relief from the debilitating pain and suffering borne of their victimization.

But then in July, with a resounding Congressional vote of support and the swipe of a President’s pen, the VOCA fiscal crisis was averted. The “VOCA Fix” constituted a creative re-direction of funds that only a Philadelphia lawyer would be fully equipped to explain. No matter. The important thing is that H.R. 1652 creates a sustainable source of victim compensation funds to support our children and families in need. In these days of partisan politics, it is indeed compelling that the House supported the VOCA measure by a vote of 384 to 38, while the Senate unanimously endorsed the measure by a 100 to 0 vote count. Still, we should emphasize that the groundswell of support was no accident. It was engendered of months of ardent advocacy from the 924 Children’s Advocacy Centers across our nation. After all, advocacy is what we do best!

However, before we become too self-congratulatory, we need to credit our children for their full measure of self-advocacy. In a survey conducted throughout CAC “nation”, children served were asked if CAC staff truly listened to them. 98% of the children surveyed responded affirmatively, a fact we shared with members of our U.S. Congress. Judging by the final vote on the “VOCA Fix”, it would appear that they were listening, too! Kudos to the kids!



Another Happy Dance!

The Star Thrower: A Story of Faith and Hope

Editor’s Note: *The story below is a condensed adaptation of a wonderful short story penned by Loren Eiseley titled “The Star Thrower”. Dr. Eiseley, a celebrated anthropologist, naturalist, educator, author and poet, was notable for his capacity to combine astute scientific insights with exquisite humanistic sensibilities. “The Star Thrower”, in Eiseley’s unabridged version, offers a compelling message that one person can make a positive difference even in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds.*

Once upon a time, there was a wise man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach before he began his work. One day he was walking along the shore. As he looked down the beach, he saw a young child moving like a dancer. He smiled to himself to think of a child who would dance to the day. So he began to walk faster to catch up. As he got ever closer, he saw that the figure was that of a slight boy of about ten years. And, he actually was not dancing. Instead, he was reaching down to the shore, picking up something and very gently throwing it into the ocean. As the man got closer, he called out, “Good morning! What are you doing?” The boy paused, looked up and replied, “Throwing starfish into the ocean.”

“I guess I should have asked, why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?”

“The sun is up and the tide is going out. And if I don’t throw them in, they’ll die.”

“But, young man, don’t you realize that there are miles and miles of beach and starfish all along it. You can’t possibly make a difference!”

The boy listened politely. He then bent down, picked up another starfish and threw it into the sea, past the breaking waves. “It made a difference for that one!”

The boy’s response surprised the man. In truth, the man was upset. He didn’t know how to reply. So instead, he turned away and walked back to the cottage to begin his writings. All day long as he wrote, the image of the boy haunted him. He tried to ignore it, but the vision persisted. Finally, late in the afternoon he realized that he the scientist, he the poet, had missed out on the essential nature of the boy’s actions. He now realized that what the boy was doing was choosing not to be merely an observer in the universe, but to make a difference. The man was embarrassed. That night he went to bed troubled. When the morning came he awoke knowing that he had to do something. So, he got up, put on his clothes, went to the beach and found the boy. And with him he spent the rest of the morning throwing starfish into the ocean....

You see, what that boy’s actions represent is something that is special in each and every one of us. We have all been gifted with the ability to make a difference. And if we can, like that boy, become aware of that gift, we gain through the strength of our vision the power to shape the future. And that is our challenge. We must each find our starfish. And if we throw our stars wisely and well, I have no question that the 21st century is going to be a wonderful place.



Child Chat



Pulse to Pubescence: A Counselor's Journey (from page 3)

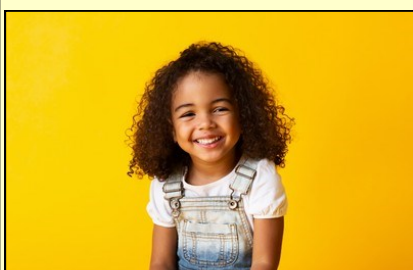
Q6. I heard that you had the profound clinical experience of working with survivors of the tragic mass shooting at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando on June 12, 2016. What made this experience unique and what was its lasting impact for you?

As a Victim Advocate with the Orange County Sheriff's Office, I responded to the PULSE shooting a few hours after it occurred. When I arrived it was absolute chaos, confusion and heartache. Families started arriving and inquiring about their loved ones. I remember us preparing a list to compile their family members' names. Hours passed with no answers. Then, we had to begin doing the death notifications for those that we knew had died. There is nothing more gut-wrenching than having to tell someone that a son or daughter has died. I remember the screams. Some fainted. Others became angry. All were mourning. The night didn't end there. It continued for days after. I went out with Law Enforcement to do more death notifications to families in their homes. At this point they had an idea, but the confirmation did not hurt any less. I will never forget that day, as it definitely made an impact on me both professionally and personally. My hair stylist and his partner died that day at Pulse. I learned how precious life is. I also learned that although tragedy will come, it cannot kill the human spirit. Orlando came together that day, and it gave new meaning to the word "united." We were resilient as a community and withstood a great tragedy.

"I remember the screams. Some fainted. Others became angry. All were mourning."

Q7. Providing therapy to children can be immensely gratifying. At the same time, the experience can sometimes be frustrating. Without betraying confidentiality, of course, would you kindly give us some examples of each type of experience – the gratifying, as well as the frustrating?

It's always frustrating when, unfortunately, children are moved around to different homes for a variety of reasons. When this happens it sometimes means that the children cannot continue therapy here anymore due to relocating too far away from our Center. That is frustrating to me, as it means they have to start over somewhere else. That means having to start over in building trust again with their new counselors. However, It is so gratifying when they are able to complete their therapy. You watch as they grow in so many different ways. It's like they are finally able to be themselves. To watch them smile, see a sparkle in their eyes, hear them say that they know it wasn't their fault and actually believe it, makes it all worthwhile.



"To watch them smile, see a sparkle in their eyes...makes it all worthwhile."

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Pulse to Pubescence: A Counselor's Journey

Q8. As has been the case with all of our counselors at the Center in the past year, you have often been compelled to adopt teletherapy as a consequence of COVID-19. Please share with us how the experience has been for you and the children you have served – "the good, the bad and the ugly" of it, so to speak.

Telehealth is a great option for those that cannot physically come to the center or due to sicknesses or illnesses, such as the pandemic. However, it does come with its challenges. It does not allow the hands-on therapeutic activities that we can engage in if we were here at the office. We have the option of using so many different tools here especially with our Art Room. However, with Telehealth it becomes extremely limited and considering our young population, it is easier for them to get distracted and bored on Telehealth. It usually works better with some of our older teens. At the same time, it is a saving grace, especially during this pandemic, because it has helped to minimize breaks in therapy due to being in quarantine.



Teletherapy: Kids Counseling in "Cyber Space"

Q9. Let's pretend that you have climbed the ladder in your clinical career and are now serving in a Clinical Supervisor capacity in a trauma-focused program working with children and adolescents. In that capacity you are interviewing candidates for a vacant Counselor position. What personal and professional qualities would you seek in the candidate you ultimately select (You realize that this is a sneaky way of getting you to talk about yourself, don't you? ha! ha!)?

I think that one of the first things I would ask is "Do you enjoy working with children?" You have to love the population in order to be able to work with them because, as I mentioned earlier, kids can truly tell if you are being genuine or not, and building that relationship is what is going to help the success of therapy. The other things can be learned, such as the specifics of the TF-CBT modality. Another great quality to have as a children's therapist is being creative. Creativity will help you find a way to help a child make the connection. Some children are reluctant to engage in therapy or might find it boring if they just sit there and talk for an hour or listen to you talk. Being creative and finding novel ways to help them engage is very important when working with a younger population. I think advocating as a counselor is also an important quality. Sometimes this can be done simply with psychoeducation to care givers or other agencies involved in the child's case.

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The gift of creativity is an essential element in therapy with kids.

Child Chat



Pulse to Pubescence: A Counselor's Journey (from p. 4)

Q10. Everyone in this field recognizes that working with child survivors of abuse can be tough – so much so that we acknowledge the existence of “vicarious trauma”. The American Counseling Association defines vicarious trauma as “the emotional residue of exposure that counselors have from working with people as they are hearing their trauma stories and become witnesses to the pain, fear, and terror that trauma survivors have endured”. It seems that every Counselor I know in this specialized clinical field has activities, techniques and “coping strategies” that assist them in addressing the issue of vicarious trauma. What are yours?

Vicarious trauma is very real and can sneak up on you when you least expect it. I think it is important to process the things that we see and are exposed to when working in the field of trauma. Staffing helps and talking about it with supervisors and co-workers just to process the situations we work with and our feelings about it. Personally, I find that working out, even if it just going for a walk in the park across the street during lunch, is helpful to clear my mind and appreciate the beauty of the world as we have to witness the ugliness of the world in our field. I also have a strong, spiritual faith that helps me get through as well as a very supportive family. I try to take advantage of days off to focus on me and just enjoy my family.

Q11. Ok, let's change roles for a moment. You are now the person asking the questions, but you are also actually interviewing yourself! So, feel free to ask yourself the questions that I neglected to ask (and provide the answers too, of course!)...What else do you want us to know about you and your work – past or present?

When I worked as a Victim Advocate, I was a First Responder. As such, I responded directly to the scene of crimes and tragedy along with Law Enforcement. When I walked in, I always felt privileged and honored because I knew I was about to be a part of a life-changing moment in someone's life. Unfortunately, it was also somebody's worst nightmare. It was a privilege being able to be with them to assist in any way I could, whether it was to make phone calls on their behalf, to hold them, to provide direction and guidance or just to be a liaison between Law Enforcement and families. I knew that every moment counted. I still feel the same way today. Every moment counts. No matter what you do. No matter what population you work with. When you work with people, every single moment counts....

“Every moment counts. No matter what you do. No matter what population you work with. When you work with people, every single moment counts....”

From the Editor: “Thank you, Carmen, for such an insightful and thought-provoking interview. I wish you continued good fortune with the life-changing work you do with children to promote their trauma recovery. Keep up the good work!” - Steve

Welcome to the Board!

We wish to recognize our newest Board members and welcome them to the Center Team:

Brittany Fugate was born and raised in Leesburg and attended The Villages Charter School. In high school, while serving as President of Interact, she became involved with Haven of Lake and Sumter. The passion for giving and serving those in need that she nurtured there has continued to grow through her adult years. Brittany and her husband and three children reside in Oxford. She currently works for The Villages, where she occupies a management position leading a team that has planned, developed and now operates the new Loft at Brownwood. Jill McDowell, LSCAC's dear friend, and current Board Member Katie Stradinger enthusiastically supported Brittany's candidacy for Board membership. Among her other laudable qualities, Brittany brings an uplifting energy and heart for giving to the table. Welcome to our Center Team, Brittany!

Angela Ugarte is a long-time resident of the Lake/Sumter area, currently residing in Oxford with her husband and two daughters. She brings to our Board a background in Nursing and has served in many responsible positions in our community over the years. Currently, Angela serves as an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) on fellowship at Villages Institute of Plastic Surgery. Angela's busy schedule has not allowed a lot of time for community service; however, she has a special place in her heart for abused children and wishes to affiliate with an organization as our own which is committed to serving children in need. We welcome Angela's empathy and passion for children, and we thank Board Member Jacqueline Summers for bringing her to our attention. It's nice to have you with us, Angela!

Christmas Already?

We know, we know...it sneaks up on us, doesn't it?! Since this shall be the last edition of our quarterly newsletter before Christmas 2021, we would ask your support on behalf of our kids to make this year's holiday an especially memorable one. Therefore, in the spirit of giving that typifies the season, **we seek your kind donations of new and unwrapped toys, stuffed animals, games and clothes for children 17 years and younger.** You may recall that in addition to the children we serve at our Center, we present gifts to all of their siblings as well. So, it really does “take a village” to ensure that we have enough gifts on hand at our annual holiday party to have “multiples” for every child. You have generously risen to the occasion in the past, and we know you will do so again—for the children! You may kindly drop off your donations to our office at:



**300 S. Canal Street
Leesburg, Florida**

As always, our most sincere thanks!



Thanks to Frank

We are so fortunate to have wonderful friends in our community who thoughtfully spread the word about the life-altering services we provide to traumatized children in Lake and Sumter Counties. In that vein we are most grateful for the kind and informative article Journalist Frank Stanfield authored on our behalf in the August 29 edition of the Leesburg Daily Commercial. If you have not had the opportunity to read Mr. Stanfield's finely-crafted piece, we heartily encourage you to do so. It is a gift—thanks again, Frank!

Child Chat



What We Leave Behind (continued from page 2)

Rule 2: Be Historical. One of the most critical factors in creating an ever-lasting legacy is helping our children discover where they come from. While we do not wish for them to live in the past, we do wish our children to recognize and identify with the rich cultural heritages that, at least in part, define them. Getting to know your roots is a potentially fun and adventurous endeavor. So, be a part of the journey! Collaborate with your child on an internet search utilizing ancestry.com that could illuminate several generations of family history. Your child may discover that all of his/her emerging aptitudes, interests and skills resonated with ancestors who built their careers and lives on the very bedrock those personal assets provided. Knowledge of our ancestors brings color, texture and context to our children's lives. Furthermore, it serves to bring them closer to answering that ominous existential question that occupies the thoughts of young and old alike: *Whom am I?*

Rule 3: Be Personal. It is wonderful to provide your child with historical context for his or her life, but ancestral context will only go so far. It is equally important that your child learns your history—the wins, the losses, the joy, the pain and the lessons that matured and sustained you along the way. I think our children often forget that we were once young and have had many of the same experiences that they are having. We must bare our souls that our children may summon the courage to bare their own. Children need to know that just as they are not perfect, you were not perfect. They need to hear that you faced the same challenges, made similar mistakes and lived to tell the tale. It's ok to admit that you got cut from your high school basketball team or the cheerleading squad. It's alright to admit that you did not get straight A's or to acknowledge that your Senior Prom date cancelled on you. Let your child know that you did not get accepted to that vaunted Ivy League college, and that is why you earned your sheepskin from State. You need to share with your child that no one is either quite as good as his best day or quite as bad as his worst. Teach your child that character resides somewhere between our triumphs and our tragedies and that humility derives from accepting each fate with an equal measure of grace. As your child comes to know you, including your human frailties, vulnerabilities and insecurities, he/she increasingly develops acceptance of self.

Rule 4: Be Purposeful. When your child sits with you to talk, you should not necessarily expect an orderly and linear conversation. That is because children are often confused, uncertain and distracted. They are growing into their bodies and, just as importantly, they are growing into their minds. On the latter score your child shall look to you for support and guidance as he/she ponders decisions at critical junctures. Whatever the decision-making process, it should begin with a vision that inspires a plan. So, be purposeful. Show your child how to convert those "visions" into manageable plans. If your child's plan is to attend college, then discuss the requisite "legwork"—good grades in high school, participation in extracurricular activities, consideration of a major that accords with his/her aptitudes and interests, researching schools with demonstrated excellence in that major, researching the cultural benefits of each school, and researching graduation rates and post-graduation placement rates. It is not especially important that your child's plan is to attend college, but it is vital that your child has a plan. Teach your child how to formulate short-term and long-term goals and how to develop pros and cons lists in making essential decisions as conditions dictate. Your "legacy" in this life-defining proposition shall be manifold. Your child shall one day in retrospect recall 1) the initiative you took to learn his/ her interests and aptitudes; 2) the plan you together forged to secure his/her future; 3) the investment you made in making his/her dreams a reality; and 4) the abiding love you dispensed in the process.

What We Leave Behind (continued from left)

Rule 5: Be Constant. We likely all have heard the parables describing how great people have fallen short of their quests many times before realizing success. Thomas Edison self-admittedly "failed" an estimated 99 times before he invented the light bulb. Visionary Walt Disney was fired from the Kansas City Star because his editor felt he "*lacked imagination and had no good ideas.*" Acclaimed author Stephen King's blockbuster novel Carrie was rejected by thirty publishers and once relegated to the trash. A television producer infamously declared that media personality Oprah Winfrey was "*unfit for television.*" Author J.K. Rowling suffered the humility of having all twelve major publishers reject her original Harry Potter manuscript. What a tragedy it would have been for us all had these illustrious personages abandoned their dreams! Thus, I encourage you to be a role model for your child by not abandoning your own dreams and being true to who you are. Tell your child about your dreams and about the importance of commitment and dedication and constancy and "stick-to-it-tiveness". But, **show** your child your resolve by taking the lead and setting the example by never giving up. Your strength of will shall be a beacon for your child's life. In his influential book It Worked for Me: In Life and Leadership, quintessential leader Colin Powell promulgated 13 rules for success. One of those rules reads, "It can be done." I would only add one small edit: "It can be done, *but only if we stay the course.*"

Lessons Learned, Legacies Preserved. A mere two weeks after my mournful trip down that rabbit hole called the evening news came the fateful day.: September 11. "9/11" shall forevermore be remembered as a day of abject tragedy, grief and loss. I still recall the haunting vision of our iconic twin towers crumbling in New York and the horrific news of hijacked planes crashing into an ironically "defenseless" Pentagon and plummeting into a serene rural field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Lives lost, families ripped apart, and a country's fragile sense of security shaken. Still, as I watched the tributes on the twentieth anniversary of those unspeakable attacks on our shores, I found my spirits buoyed by the heart-felt words of those who were left behind. Many of them came from children who, nestled in their mothers' wombs on that awful day twenty years before, had not the sweet opportunity to know their fallen heroes. They know them only through others' memories and the impassioned stories that keep those memories alive. Others who had enjoyed the good fortune of times shared, memories made and lessons learned spread their own legacy to the viewers that day: the legacy of love eternal.

I could not help but think of the legacies those we lost had left us all—perhaps, most significantly, their children and our own. Who could doubt their courage as they faced their final moments, unsuspecting citizens headed to work at "the towers" on a crystalline morning and first responders who were "just doing [their] jobs"? The words bravery, honor, valor, commitment and dedication barely do justice to their memories. I learned that day that these qualities indeed live on in the work of **sixty-five** children of first responders who were lost on 9/11. They now serve as New York's finest and are called "legacy employees" — such a proud title and such a glowing tribute to their loved ones!

It is a comfort to know that children of such virtue and character carry on the tradition of their departed parents, protecting others and saving lives. Children as these carry the hope of a new generation—a generation whose collective conscience might well save us from ourselves and extend our legacy...on, and on, and on, and on....