

McLean Hospital Horizons

Spring 2004

Volume 3

Issue 1

FOR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS



RALLY students at the Curley Middle School.

RALLY Fosters Success in Life and Learning

At the Mary E. Curley Middle School in Jamaica Plain, Mass., seventh graders enjoy a break from their studies during “lunch bunch.” Students grab some pizza and cluster around tables to play games and to “check in” with the grown-ups in the room—Ryan Elliott (“Mr. E.”) and Carey Jacobs (“Ms. J.”). Mr. E. talks with students about how they might raise money to help impoverished children; Ms. J. walks quietly around the room, stopping to ask questions or to watch the games. The chatter is punctuated by laughter, pulsing rap music and the staccato *pop-pop* of the dice-rolling bubble on a game of *Trouble*.

These students are part of the RALLY (Responsive Advocacy for Life and Learning in Youth) program—an innovative model of educational and mental health early intervention under way at public schools and after-school sites around the country. Created and administered by

(continued on page 2)



*Frazier Institute
Supports Research
Page 4*

*Innovative Bipolar
Research
Page 5*



*Nursing School
Alumni Give Back
Page 6*

*The Case for
Unrestricted Gifts
Page 7*

*Family Endowment
Makes Lasting
Difference
Page 8*



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(continued from page 1)

McLean and the Harvard Graduate School of Education, RALLY seeks to develop more successful and resilient youth by identifying at-risk students, helping children thrive in school and offering the support and strong adult relationships all adolescents need.

According to RALLY founder Gil G. Noam, EdD, PhD (Habil.), the US Surgeon General found that nearly 20 percent of all urban public school children in the United States have diagnosable mental health problems, including anxiety, depression and suicidal tendencies. Yet, only one to five percent of these students receive services. Noam believes that tertiary centers like McLean can not only treat the sickest patients but also have the responsibility to bring their mental health expertise closer to the community. “We can intervene early to identify and support troubled youth. Our impact can be enormous,” he says.

Enter RALLY

The impetus to create RALLY came from Noam’s 1987 longitudinal study of 120 high-risk adolescents being treated in a residential hospital setting. Nearly two-thirds of these children developed into well-functioning adults. When asked to identify the factors that contributed to their resiliency, the young people focused on positive relationships with teachers, mentors and child care providers. Students’ academic success also contributed to their mental health.

Noam became convinced that reaching out to kids early, within everyday environments, was the key to promoting resiliency, adaptability and emotional success. He developed the idea of a “prevention practitioner”—a trained professional he describes as a “fusion of educator and mental health practitioner who works side by side with students and teachers. The prevention practitioner is not a counselor, teacher, tutor or mentor, but rather has the elements of all.”

At RALLY sites throughout the country, prevention practitioners work in cooperation with teachers, administrators, after-school providers, families, clinicians and community agencies to provide support for students. During any given day, a RALLY practitioner might work in a classroom with struggling students, meet with a teacher to develop a tutoring strategy, call a parent to discuss a troubled youth and run a boys’ group to help students deal with aggression.

A Model for Prevention

Just before lunch at the Curley Middle School, site coordinator Jacobs, a licensed social worker, meets with practitioner Yaamini Rao to discuss two students struggling with relationships at home and school. Rao and Jacobs develop strategies to support the students and plan to talk with them the next day.

The insertion of professionals *into* the classroom—where they get to know the children and teachers—is the most powerful part of RALLY. “RALLY relationships are non-threatening and non-stigmatizing. They are grounded in the everyday life of the school,” Noam says.

Since RALLY’s inception in 1994, these relationships have produced impressive results. Recent evaluations show significant improvements in RALLY students’ attendance rates and cognitive development. Teachers and administrators also report feeling supported by the program.

“RALLY practitioners have provided me with many new insights to make connections with my students. We have worked together to help students develop organizational skills, foster team building and set positive goals,” says Ronald Hobson, a teacher at the Curley Middle School.



“We live in the middle of an education and mental health crisis. Our research shows that many children in regular classrooms are as troubled as those in inpatient psychiatric settings.”

Gil Noam, EdD, PhD (Habil.), RALLY founder



Prevention Practitioner Sara Pollack

An Ongoing Need for Funds

Gerardo Martinez, principal of the Curley Middle School, first encountered RALLY as a teacher and has now made the program integral to his school mission. “These children are facing so many issues—lack of health care, violence in the home, identity crises. We need as many opportunities as possible to help them excel,” he says. Yet, Martinez worries about maintaining RALLY in the face of current budget woes. For the 2003-2004 school year, the Curley School lost \$1.2 million in state funds; Martinez cannot fund RALLY from within his budget. Fortunately, many financial backers have supported RALLY, though the need for funding continues. Support ranges from start-up and site replication money to professional training and curriculum development support. Anthony Wood, executive director of the Ittleson Foundation, says his organization was drawn to RALLY because “the prevention practitioner idea was worth advancing. RALLY has the potential for being a real model of prevention,” he says.

The Three-Tier Approach

RALLY’s unique model is based on a three-tier system of prevention—from high to moderate to low intensity. Students in the high-risk group receive the most intense services, but all students benefit from the program. Noam explains, “Most often, the aggressive, acting-out students get the services. But quiet, depressed children need help too. Because prevention practitioners are *in* school, they get to know all the kids. Intervention becomes part of the natural order of the day.”



Prevention Practitioner Emma Lever with a student.

RALLY supporters Barbara C. Boger, EdD and William P. Boger III, MD, who gave a two-year gift to help RALLY professionals develop a stigma-reduction curriculum. “Adolescence is an excellent time to educate kids about mental illness,” Barbara says. “Folding stigma reduction into a well-established program is powerful.”

Expanding the Network

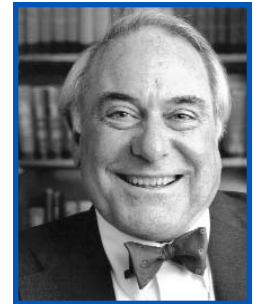
According to Noam, RALLY is much more than a “boutique” program of successful sites around the country; rather it represents a way of bridging health care, mental health and education. “Health care is no longer just about mental health *or* education *or* primary care,” he says. “If we want education reform to be successful, we need to link health, education and out-of-school time.”

Many of RALLY’s corporate sponsors, including large Massachusetts health plan providers, understand the need to connect caring for children to the greater community. Both Tufts Health Plan and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation fund local RALLY sites in order to encourage collaboration among schools, primary medical care and mental health services for children. “RALLY is an innovative model that joins two important components—school systems and mental health—and

(continued on page 7)



Barbara C. Boger, EdD



William P. Boger III, MD

Thanks to the following for supporting the RALLY program:

John W. Alden Trust

L. G. Balfour Foundation

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation

Barbara C. Boger, EdD and William P. Boger III, MD

City of Boston

Dry Family Charitable Foundation

Mabel A. Horne Trust

Hyde Square Task Force, Inc.

Ittleson Foundation, Inc.

Klingenstein Third Generation Foundation

Partners Community Benefits Program

Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust

Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation

Tufts Health Plan



Shervert Frazier, MD

Frazier Institute Supports Researchers

Shervert Frazier, MD, is a champion of research at McLean. This dedicated psychiatrist has helped raise more than \$20 million for McLean, including more than \$7.3 million for the hospital's Shervert Frazier Research Institute, which, among other goals, supports some of McLean's best and brightest young clinicians and investigators.

"I have always believed in funding innovative thinkers at the beginning of their careers," Frazier says. "The government doesn't support these young researchers and it's critical to have people out there trying new things. Seed money is the best way to bring innovative ideas to the fore."

Throughout his 30-year career at McLean, Frazier has helped launch a staggering number of successful initiatives. Twenty-five years ago, he helped build McLean's Mailman Research Center and recruited Lasker Award winning neuroscientist Seymour Kety, MD. More than two decades ago he supported the establishment of the Harvard Brain Tissue Resource Center at McLean, now the largest

brain bank in the country. He also recruited renowned investigator Ole Isacson, Dr Med Sci, whose Neuroregeneration Laboratory has produced promising research on Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases. In addition, the Frazier Institute has channeled funds to countless other ground-breaking studies—from research into brain changes underlying psychiatric illness by Francine Benes, MD, PhD, to work in pharmacology and substance abuse by Scott Lukas, PhD.

According to Bruce Cohen, MD, PhD, president and psychiatrist in chief for McLean Hospital, "Shervert Frazier had the foresight, dedication and wisdom to create the Frazier Institute, which has added immeasurably to McLean's ability to attract and support world-class neuroscientists and promising young investigators."

Because the Frazier Institute brings in unrestricted gifts for support of research in general, McLean can allocate the funds where Frazier and the hospital deem necessary.

"[The Institute] provides opportunities for collaborative work between researchers and clinicians and for innovative studies by established investigators who want to try something off the normal track," Frazier says. "It also gives the hospital the chance to invite visiting scholars and underwrite educational events. McLean's research has expanded over the years and we want to share that expertise."

Frazier first joined the hospital in 1972, after holding positions in psychiatry at the Mayo Clinic, Columbia University and Baylor University. He served as director of the National Institute of Mental Health from 1984 to 1986. Early in his career, Frazier studied the psychiatry of violence and has acted as a consultant within the state and federal prison systems. In addition to supporting young researchers at McLean, Frazier supervises residents, runs treatment teams and sees patients.

"Every day, there's something different in my job; every day I find out something I didn't know," he says. "I've been fortunate to be able to meet young scientists, encourage their careers and visions and help them generate new ideas." ♦



Scott Lukas, PhD



*Francine Benes
MD, PhD*



*Ole Isacson
Dr Med Sci*

For more information on McLean researchers and ongoing studies go to: www.research.mclean.org



Christine Konradi, PhD

Jim and Pat Poitras Fund Innovative Pilot Study on Bipolar Disorder

Is bipolar disorder related to an energy deficiency in the brain? If so, could this deficiency be detected with a simple blood test? These questions and more are being addressed in an innovative new study by McLean investigator Christine Konradi, PhD. Konradi launched the pilot research after previous studies revealed that certain molecules important for energy production are decreased within the brains of patients with bipolar disorder, but not within the brains of those with schizophrenia or those who are psychiatrically well. According to Konradi, these energy deficiencies—or “brownouts”—could indicate a causal relationship between bipolar disorder and decreased energy transfer.

“When we found these clear markers of energy deficiency in the brain, we thought, ‘Perhaps these brownouts are happening throughout the body and will show up in peripheral tissues, such as the blood,’” Konradi says. “If so, then we might be able to detect bipolar disorder through a simple blood test and find new ways to treat it.”

Thanks to a three-year, \$400,000 gift of seed money from McLean National Council members Jim and Pat Poitras, Konradi is looking for energy deficiency markers in the blood of bipolar patients. Although still in its infancy, this research could “refocus our approach to bipolar disorder,” she says. Konradi is grateful for the Poitrases’ faith in her work. “They are taking a risk, but this research could revolutionize how we look at and treat bipolar disorder,” she says. Long-time supporters of McLean, the Poitrases are pleased to be funding Konradi’s early-stage research.

Jim agrees that supporting early-stage research helps investigators “get going” and make early breakthroughs. He and Pat chose to fund Konradi’s study because it offered a unique approach to bipolar research and “had groundbreaking potential.”

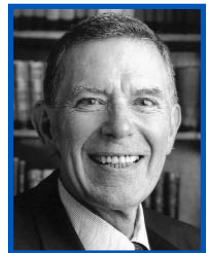
The Poitrases, who have a family member with bipolar disorder, have funded other bipolar initiatives at the hospital and believe in supporting causes they care about. They enjoy the personal interactions they have at McLean. “We’ve given before...we’re still giving,” Jim Poitras says. ♦

“We prefer to support pilot studies. McLean is the ‘go-to’ place for bipolar research and treatment. We see our support as venture capital that helps promising researchers get started.”

Pat Poitras



Pat Poitras



Jim Poitras

To give online, please go to www.mclean.harvard.edu



First Nursing School alumni meeting, 1923, Belmont, Massachusetts.

Nursing School's Past Stays Alive Through Alumni Association

Did you know that McLean Hospital was once home to one of the oldest nursing diploma programs in the country? Established in 1882, McLean's Nursing School offered students an interdisciplinary approach to patient care.

Although the school graduated its last class in 1968, it maintains a vibrant alumni association that sustains itself through an endowment fund and alumni gifts. In addition to helping alumni and their children pursue nursing-related education, the Association supports nursing-based research at McLean. Most recently, the Department of Nursing used endowment funds to support Margaret Knight, PhD, APRN, BC, in her study on inpatient seclusion and restraint rates.

Linda Flaherty, APRN, BC, senior vice president of Patient Care Services, says, "Hospitals are enduring significant financial pressures. What gets lost during these times is the spirit of clinical inquiry. It's important to focus on nursing-based research to improve patient care."

Nursing School alumnus Walter Grace, class of 1961, emphasizes the Association's role in helping alumni and their children further their nursing careers. "There's a shortage of nurses in the United States, so it is important to support those who want to enter the profession," he says.

Nursing is critical to patient health. Association Secretary Sonja Stone-Peterson, RN, class of 1967, stresses that nursing-based research can contribute significantly to helping people cope with persistent illnesses and to promoting patient health. "Nurses are there 24-7. They see the patient as a whole person," she says. "Medicine is moving in that direction; so in this way, nursing is ahead."

Yet, it can be a challenge to cultivate nursing-based research—another reason the Nurses Alumni Association is important. According to Flaherty, its grants help encourage important nursing-led discoveries.

Peterson agrees: "Science underlies the practice of nursing. We can show scientifically that certain practices contribute to patient well-being. It is my hope that we can increase the Alumni Association's revenue so that this group can continue to support nursing." ♦



Linda Flaherty, APRN, BC, senior vice president of Patient Care Services

Unrestricted Gifts Make a Crucial Difference

Unrestricted giving is an integral part of philanthropy at McLean. According to long-time donor and McLean National Council Chairperson Jeanne Robertson, unrestricted gifts “allow the hospital to make choices and fill gaps so important projects can continue.”

Robertson explains that unrestricted gifts can be used in many ways—to launch a unique initiative, to set up and maintain key equipment or to support aspects of research or investigators’ salaries not funded by grants.

Unrestricted gifts also help the hospital minimize the pinch caused by decreased public funding. “Everyone is feeling the effects of government cutbacks. But the bottom line is that the hospital still has the same programs and, of course, we don’t want to have to cut back valuable programs,” Robertson says. “The need for unrestricted funds that can be allocated where they are needed most is greater than ever.”

Robertson emphasizes the importance of annual giving—most of which comes in the form of unrestricted support. “With annual gifts, donors and the hospital develop a partnership,” she says. “This continuing base of support is so valuable because it helps us fill special needs within the hospital. Even a small amount of money can make a crucial difference.”

Robertson can list many ways that unrestricted and annual gifts have benefited McLean—from helping to launch new patient programs and providing salary support to bridging a gap in a research budget. Her own unrestricted gifts have been used in McLean’s Brain Imaging Center. A supporter for nearly two decades, Robertson wanted to give back to the hospital that has treated her twin sons for many years. Of her decision to give annual unrestricted funds, she says, “I believe in McLean. I want the hospital to use the money in whatever way is most useful.”

For more information about unrestricted and annual giving, please contact the Development Office at 617/855-2191. ♦

RALLY *(continued from page 3)*

can extend beyond school walls to involve all those concerned with the welfare of children,” says Andrew Dreyfus, president of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation. “By putting services right in the classroom, RALLY helps kids *before* a crisis occurs.”

RALLY’s flexible approach is one of its greatest strengths. According to Noam, “the program offers a form of best practices that can easily be replicated. It creates a system of individuals who help take care of our children’s educational and psychological well-being in a time of great uncertainty.”

The half-hour lunch bunch break has almost ended. Students’ easy laughter ripples through the RALLY room. While perhaps troubled, these young people seem to have found a safe haven at school.

At one table, two boys joke and jostle one another as they finish a game of *Trubble*. When asked about RALLY, they pause. The game’s dice-rolling bubble is silent.

“RALLY is like a reward,” one boy says.

“Yeah,” his friend echoes, “a reward for the soul.” ♦



RALLY students play games during their lunch break.

Horizons

Spring 2004

Horizons is published by the McLean Hospital Development Office
115 Mill Street
Belmont, MA 02478
Telephone: 617/855-3475
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Catharine Cook
Associate Director of Development/Editor:
Jay Livingston
Design: Valerie Bessette
Copy: Leslie Goldberg
Photography: Thomas Kates and Jeff Thiebauth

Published: Spring 2004
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Growing Family Endowment Makes a Difference

When Andrew Merrill—a young man with bipolar disorder—died in 1990, his family wanted to create a legacy for him at McLean, where he had been a patient for many years. They started small, establishing the Andrew P. Merrill Research Fund in lieu of flowers.

Andy's brother, Joe, says that while the family was "willing to make a long-term commitment to the fund, [they] were concerned that it might never amount to much."

Now, after 13 years and many modest but consistent gifts from family and friends, the endowment has grown to more than \$225,000 and offers significant support to young researchers investigating bipolar disorder. Most recently, it has been used to help fund the work of Robert Irvin, MD, who is using MRI methods to study brain changes associated with manic-depressive episodes. The fund has also supported the work of Franca Centorrino, MD, who is conducting clinical trials of promising new treatments.

"It was important to us to encourage young doctors to go into psychiatry and do research," says Andy's mother, Helen Merrill. "Andy struggled with almost every drug he took. We felt that with more research, more drugs would be in the pipeline to help people like him."

Clearly, those who know the Merrills agree. Each year, family friends donate to the fund. The family's rental cottage in Maine also generates gifts, as occupants are asked to donate to the fund in lieu of paying rent. Andy's family members, including his parents, siblings, aunts and uncles, give regularly to the fund.

Helen Merrill says, "Every year my grandchildren ask me, 'Granny, what do you want for Christmas?' And every year I say, 'Give to Andy's fund.'"

While the gifts—and the number of people giving them—are not large, Joe Merrill feels that it's the consistency of giving that matters. "This kind of fund, even if it starts small, can ultimately make a lasting difference," he says. ♦



The Merrill Family in the late 1970s. Andy is the second from the right in the second row.

Learn more at www.mclean.harvard.edu

McLean Hospital is the largest psychiatric affiliate of Harvard Medical School.



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