

IN REVIEW

Riverside Guidance Center Program Tapped to Coordinate Domestic Violence Prevention Grant



We have all been horrified by evening news stories of women killed by their abusers. As part of a national effort to address these grim statistics, Riverside is delighted to announce that the Guidance Center's Children with Voices: A Child Witness to Violence Program has been selected to coordinate services for a \$380,000 federal grant from the Department of Justice's Office of Violence Against Women.

The grant will be administered

through the City of Cambridge's Police Department. The goal of the program is to reduce and prevent domestic violence homicides and hold offenders accountable by refining and tightening existing relationships between police, courts, and community providers in the communities of Cambridge, Arlington, and Belmont.

Children with Voices: A Child Witness to Violence Program is one of the Guidance Center services that became part of Riverside with the recent merger of our two organizations. The program focuses on enhancing and facilitating services for child witnesses of domestic violence and their caretakers.

As coordinator for the grant, the program is charged with putting together a Domestic Violence High Risk Assessment and Response Team made up of representatives from all three police departments, the courts, community shelters, batterer intervention programs and other community providers. The Team will identify high risk cases of domestic violence, coordinate protective services, and provide training to all of the police officers in the three communities involved. *[Continued on page two]*

Our Donors Have Real Holiday Spirit

Every year the holiday hoopla seems to begin a little earlier – with Santa making his first appearance before the Thanksgiving turkey has even been digested. Imagine what it would be like to be a parent watching the holiday excitement mount while knowing that, this year, there would be no gifts for your children to open. Fortunately, because of an outpouring of generosity from local companies, individuals, schools and religious organizations, that didn't happen for more than five hundred of the people Riverside serves – people who would otherwise have spent a very bleak holiday season.

We want to thank everyone who participated in this year's "Light up the Holidays" program. A special thanks goes to the Needham Bank which, in addition to participating in the program, also provided "Stockings of Joy" for their patrons *[Continued on page two]*

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At a press conference to announce the program, Gerry Leone, Middlesex District Attorney, explained, “We know that combating domestic violence requires a comprehensive approach and that means coming together like we have today, working on the front end to prevent tragedies before they occur. Dr. Ilana Amrani-Cohen,

Director of Children with Voices, added, “We are fortunate to work with community partners who embrace cutting-edge interventions and innovative practices which bring safety and security to families.”

Riverside is proud to be part of this important effort.

George Birk’s Story is National News

In the blink of an eye – the moment of impact between a 13-year old boy on a bicycle and the hood of a car – life changed forever. A year and a half of rehabilitation followed weeks in a coma. The boy, now with permanent brain damage and partial paralysis, had to relearn the most basic skills: how to manage a knife and fork, walk and talk.

Fast forward close to forty years, George Birk, the boy on the bike, is now 51 and the long-term effects of his injury are still evident in his halting speech, memory issues and careful walk. But, with the help of Riverside’s Crossroads Clubhouse in Hopedale, George has made a life for himself in the community – with his own apartment and a part-time job he enjoys, keeping the parking lot of a local cancer center clean.

He’s also discovered that slow speech is no deterrent to being heard. When he realized that the survival of Crossroads, one of three “clubhouse” programs Riverside operates, was being threatened by proposed state budget cuts, he realized he had to speak up. He joined the grassroots advocacy effort organized by the Massachusetts Clubhouse Coalition – joining hundreds of others at a state-house protest and speaking directly to legislators. In fact, George’s ability to articulate the importance of the services he receives led him to be featured in an article about the budget crisis for mental health services that ran in the Atlantic Monthly, a national magazine!

Val Comerford, Director of Crossroads Clubhouse, believes that George’s deliberate speech, combined with his sense of humor, actually made people sit up and listen. “In order to understand what he’s saying, you really need to pay attention. And, when you do, you can’t help but be engaged by George. He can really explain how these services make a difference to him and he has the power to defuse even the tensest situations with humor,” explains Val.

It seems as though the power of George’s voice, and the voices of many others, did make a real difference. Governor Patrick did not include Clubhouse closure in his recommendations for ways to remedy the enormous budget gap that the state was facing. Of course, it’s too soon to tell what the future will hold for clubhouse funding. But, one thing is certain, George Birk is ready to stand up and speak out.

[Holiday Spirit continued from front page]

to fill with toiletries, small toys, and other useful items that were distributed to grateful recipients. We also want to thank Boston Cares, a non-profit volunteer agency in Boston, which provided gifts through its Frosty Friends program to children served by Riverside’s programs at the Guidance Center.

We are grateful to everyone at the following companies and organizations who shared their holiday spirit with someone less fortunate:

The Bulfinch Group

Concert Pharmaceuticals

Edgewater Technologies

Emmanuel Episcopal Church

Health Care Management Council

Meditech

Mercer

Our Lady’s Academy

Roxbury Latin School

Temple Beth El

Temple Shalom of Newton



Heather Percy, Family Support Worker, Guidance Center, with gifts from Frosty Friends

Banking on Riverside: Local Banks Show Their Support



(l-r) Chris Eigsti, Branch Manager, Needham Bank's Dedham Branch, Scott M. Bock, Riverside President/CEO, Mark Whalen, Executive V.P., Needham Bank

Two recent events highlight the ways in which Riverside and our Guidance Center programs are recognized by the business community as central to the health of the communities we serve.

As a result of a nomination submitted by the Needham Bank, Riverside was awarded a \$1500 community grant from the Massachusetts Bankers Association Charitable Foundation. Riverside was one of 25 non-profits in Massachusetts to receive an award this year. We have a longstanding relationship with the Needham Bank, which has been a major supporter of our fundraising efforts and has partnered with us to help create housing opportunities for the people we serve.

And, in Cambridge, the people have spoken, with the Guidance Center

selected as the city's favorite charity according to a contest facilitated by East Cambridge Savings Bank's Massachusetts Avenue location in November. As the winning charity, the Guidance Center received a generous donation for services to children and families!

We applaud the community spirit of the banking community and are grateful for their generosity. We also want to thank the other financial institutions who supported our efforts this year: Bay State Federal Savings Charitable Foundation, Boston Private Bank & Trust, Cambridge Trust Company, Citizens Bank, Cambridge Savings Bank, Dedham Institution for Savings, North Cambridge Co-operative Bank, The Savings Bank, TD Bank, and The Village Bank.

Congratulations to:

Elizabeth Whitney, Clinical Director for Riverside's Community Living Services Division and Daniel Fisher, Riverside Staff Psychiatrist and Executive Director of the National Empowerment Center, presented two workshops on "Building Community through Recovery Dialogues" at the national Alternatives Conference held in Omaha, Nebraska.

Riverside Trauma Center on the successful training the program co-sponsored with the Needham Suicide Prevention Coalition that was attended by more than 50 mental health providers from around the area. Doug Jacobs MD, founder of Screening for Mental Health Inc. spoke on the topic of "Best Practices in Suicide Assessment."

Oh, How We've Grown: New Year, New Numbers

The past year has brought remarkable growth to Riverside with the addition of new contracts and our merger with the Guidance Center. Here are some remarkable quick facts about our impact on the communities we serve:

- More than 15,000 children, adolescents and adults came to us for help
- Our core service area includes 70 communities with a population base in excess of 1.3 million people
- We now offer more than 80 programs to meet community needs

We look forward to the challenges and opportunities the new year will bring.

Why I Believe in Riverside:

Michael Broad Cares about our Work in the Community



Like many people, I have friends and family members who use mental health services. And when I worked at the Attorney General's Office as a young lawyer, my clients included the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Mental Retardation. So when I happened to meet Scott Bock about 20 years ago, I was very interested in the work that Riverside was doing . . . and very surprised to find out that there was an organization that I had never heard of doing such great work right here in my own community (Newton).

Soon after, I discovered that a friend was renting half his two-family house to Riverside as a community residence. I met his tenants and also met Don Hughes, who is now Associate Division Director for Clubhouse and Employment Services in Riverside's Community Living Services Division. At the time, Don was Riverside's contact for my friend's rental and he introduced me to the clubhouse system. I was so impressed with everything Riverside was doing that, eventually, I asked Scott if there was a way I could help, and ended up on the Board of Directors. I'm proud of the excellent services Riverside provides and especially of the Riverside employees who work so hard to make the organization what it is!

Michael first joined Riverside's Board of Directors in 1990 and now serves as a member of the Executive Committee. A graduate of Amherst College, Harvard Law School, and Bentley's Master Financial Planning Program, he does financial planning and legal work, mostly on behalf of individuals and families. Michael and his wife, Grace Massey, have lived in Newton for 25 years and have 1 son, 1 daughter, and 2 cats.

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