



# ST. ANN'S HOME & SCHOOL

WINTER 2008

Celebrating 82 years of helping children and families.

## New Adolescent Center, New Programming

by Cheryl Macinanti, M.Ed., CAGS, Director of Adolescent Services

WHILE ST. ANN'S HOME & School is well known for its work with latency age children with emotional or behavioral disabilities, there is a growing demand in our communities for extensive programming targeting the specific needs of the adolescent population. In order to respond to this need, St. Ann's has implemented several exciting programmatic changes in connection with the opening of our brand new adolescent center.

As St. Ann's Home & School prepares to open its new adolescent center this spring, focused efforts have been made to improve our adolescent programming throughout the agency. The motivation and commitment demonstrated by

staff members to develop and provide a comprehensive and progressive level of programming is a wonderful example of the creativity and dedication of staff. The process of developing new programming for adolescents has also involved the adolescent residents, who have become self-advocates by participating in the development of new clubs, groups and special events, both on St. Ann's Home & School grounds and in the community.

We began improving our programming by first redefining the role that St. Ann's Home Activities Department plays in scheduling weekly activities for children/adolescents living in our residential setting. Lynell Lomax, activities coordinator,



Together, Activities Dept. Staff Erica Reeder, Lynell Lomax, and Joanne Cottam bring over 32 years of experience working with children and adolescents at St. Ann's Home & School.

and her assistants, Joanne Cottam and Erica Reeder, have been instrumental in organizing, developing, and managing new and carefully selected activities that support residential treatment objectives, improve self-confidence, build healthy relationships, and educate and

connect residents to various resources in the community.

In August, Ms. Lomax started planning adolescent activities that particularly focused on cultural events, volunteer opportunities, career development, independent living

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## Embracing Ambiguity

By Kerry Gardner, LICSW, Therapist

**ENTERING THE CLINICAL** world as a therapist roughly two and a half years ago, I was tempted to believe that through my devoted efforts with clients, we could together achieve the rare but rewarding moments of great clarity and understanding. Through these moments, clients would be able to gain some powerful self-insight, a development that would activate slow

but meaningful progress.

Such a moment occurred during a session with a 14 year old female client that I had worked with for over a year. Sort of.

I remember actively, almost expectantly, listening as this typically closed-up adolescent girl let down her defenses, bemoaning her current situation—her residential

*continued on page 2*



# It's What's Inside That Matters

**AS WE APPROACH THE** opening of our new adolescent center this spring, I am excited to be near completion of this project that has been in the making for more than five years. I am also thankful for the efforts of all who have made this possible; the Board of Trustees, the donors, the staff, the bankers, the lawyers, the City of Methuen, the architects, and the contractors. Everyone involved went

that one extra step to make this happen knowing the benefit it will have to the children in our communities for years to come.

As excited as I am about our new building, I am also well aware of the fact that what really matters is the work that goes on inside our buildings on a day to day basis by our talented and committed staff. I hope this issue of our newsletter provides you with a glimpse of the programming

that we provide as well to introduce you to some of our staff. While we cannot introduce you to everyone, the staff featured in this newsletter represent the diverse skills and talents of our employees.

Once opened, you will be invited to visit our facility and to learn more about our mission. As always, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about St. Ann's or would like to help us with our mission. ■



Denis Grandbois, President/CEO

## Embracing Ambiguity

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placement of numerous years. "Why am I still living here after nearly five years? Why didn't my mother take better care of me? Where is my father?" And then, she gave me my "in" when she shifted from questions of "why" to wishes. "I wish I had a family that had a dog and that I could live there and get a cell phone." As her wish list continued into a less emotional and more material realm, I gently attempted to regain focus, "If you really could have any wish, what would it be?"

She stared right through me, appearing to really ponder this question before finally responding, "I wish that Pluto were still a planet."

Despite my efforts to re-focus the conversation back into what I considered a more therapeutic route, the elusive moment was lost. Her walls were firmly back in their comfortable positions, and we discussed the drawbacks of having only eight planets in our solar system.

Admittedly, at first I was

fairly certain that I had failed miserably; however, eventually I realized that a moment of great clarity had occurred during that session. On that day, the moment was mine.

There is a parallel process existing between client and therapist. If she had to live

in a world of "why," then so would I. Were my client a typical teenager living in her own home, she would have to tolerate a certain level of ambiguity and be forced to navigate the often fickle world of adolescent relationships. But she would have constancy in her home, her school, and her family. She would develop into a young woman during this exciting and dynamic time of life, find her voice, discover her values (that may be different from those of her family and community), and make daily choices that

would effect her future.

But for children and adolescents at St. Ann's Home & School, life has not been "typical." A caring staff may be the one source of constancy for some of them. This particular client had already faced early trauma leading to numer-

*"If you really could have any wish, what would it be?"*

*"I wish that Pluto were still a planet."*

ous gaps in education, daily functioning, and emotional well-being. Her challenge was to make her way into the future while developing a more positive and coherent sense of self, something many of us take for granted. In a world where even scientific truths can be proven false, uncertainty was her only constancy. And I had no easy answers. I did not know where she would go, with whom she would live, or even who her father was. I could not provide defined answers to questions that most children usually

know with certainty. My role would need to be providing consistency and support, to help her develop strengths, rather than "answers."

In order to help teenage clients through this critical time as they enter the adult world, I have to embrace that uncertainty, and, in a manner, absorb some of it to ease their burdens. I have to teach them how to live with ambiguity while developing a strong sense of self. I also must show this ambiguity the respect it deserves and honor clients' well-developed defenses until they are ready to slowly find a place in their ever-changing world. Each session presents its new unknown challenges. But we deal with the ambiguity together, client and therapist, finding the features in life that we can depend on and learning to handle change. It is an exciting, demanding, and incredibly rewarding occupation and one that leaves me with one constant hope: I, too, wish that Pluto were still a planet. ■



# THE NEW ST. ANN'S HOME & SCHOOL ADOLESCENT CENTER

*Opening April 2008, our new 28,000 square foot facility!*

*New Building, New Programs, New Services, New Staff*



ST. ANN'S HOME & SCHOOL

# Making Learning an Adventure... In and Out of the Classroom

**T**HE ROPE WALK ISN'T TOO HIGH for most people, in fact not even 3 feet off the ground. For the 15 year old adolescent girl ready to take that first step, however, it might as well be Niagara Falls. But with support and encouragement, she takes that first step and makes it across on her first try, to the applause of her peers and the staff. While she feels a little worn out, she feels great that she did it; something



she never thought she would be able to do. She's proud, and rightfully so, as success for adolescents participating in Project Adventure is often measured in small yet meaningful ways.

As part of the new Adolescent Center, St. Ann's Home & School is adding Project Adventure to its adolescent programming. At its core, Project

Adventure is structured, adventure-based activities, which provides an active and experiential approach to group therapy and education. On the outside, Project Adventure is a structured, safe, and fun way to learn more about oneself and others and to help build trust, enhance self-esteem and explore problem-solving skills.

It is not, however, only an outdoor activity or program. According to Patrice Ruff, Educational Coordinator at St. Ann's Home & School, the process of introducing the residents and students to the program starts in the classroom, with structured activities that are light and fun and help students to learn more about each other.

The small setting, the lightness of the activities, and the interactive nature whereby the students might have to find out something about another student all help to impress upon the students the role of teamwork and relationships. Many of the children at St. Ann's Home & School have never really been part of a team, be that at school or at home; they've been on their own, so teaching them not only the importance of teamwork, but how to work as a member of a team, lays the foundation critical to success in the physical adventure-side of the programming.

According to Cheryl Macinanti,



**Chosen to be the Site Coordinator for Project Adventure, Peter Hemmerdinger is undertaking an extensive six-week Certification Training Program through by Project Adventure in order to administer the program here at St. Ann's Home & School.**

Director of Adolescent Services, "behavioral management through adventure-based programming improves self-esteem, empowers children to discover their individual strengths and talents, increases their range of communication skills, and develops a sense of accomplishment, improving overall behavioral and academic functioning." Ultimately the goal is to reduce the need for physical interventions, decrease the number of hours children spend out of the classroom, improve successful behavioral outcomes, and expedite both academic and behavioral progress.

For more information about Project Adventure, please visit their website, [www.pa.org](http://www.pa.org).

## Activities and Community Action

**IT'S THURSDAY EVENING ABOUT 7:30** pm and the Teen Center at St. Ann's Home & School is "hopping." While some of the adolescents dance to the music, others are writing their own lyrics to popular songs, while others sit nearby and talk about future activities they might like to do. Led by a dedicated and highly skilled team, the Activities Department at St. Ann's Home & School works to bridge the gap for the children and adolescents between St.

Ann's Home & School and the community in order to help prepare each child for the day when they transition out.

### **Q. Tell me about the variety of activities available to the children.**

**A.** We offer sports teams — softball, basketball, floor hockey, arts & crafts, a photography club, swimming lessons and general swimming, exercise programs and personal training at the local gym, a science club, music committee, a sewing

group, newsletter group, scrap booking, a mentoring program, a recycling/re-use group and various organized group games. We also take trips, go to the mall, go to movies and go bowling. We research and put together programs and activities to meet the social, emotional, developmental and physical needs of a wide variety of children and adolescents.

### **What is your role?**

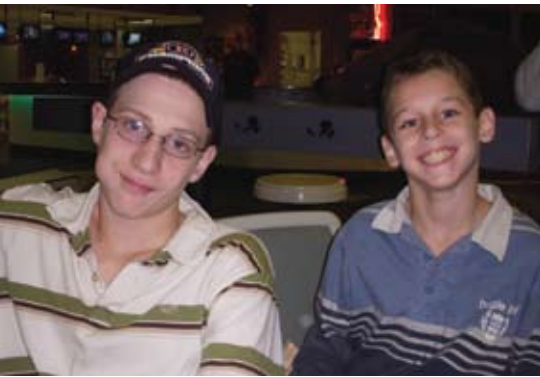
In addition to our research and plan-

# Leadership Program Hits Home

IT'S A WEDNESDAY EVENING AND if you didn't know, you might think you were listening to a group of parents talk about their children.

"I don't understand why he acts that way"... "How come she seems to never do what I say?" Perhaps you might hear something along the lines of, "I had that same thing happen with me; maybe what I tried would work for you," or "I used to act just like that when I was younger too."

No, it's not a parent group like you might think, rather, it's a meeting of Peer Leaders in the Leadership Program at St. Ann's Home & School



Having fun both in and out of school.

talking about situations, behaviors, good and bad, and other aspects of their time with their "Little Buddies."

Developed as a sort of "mentoring" program, the Leadership Program

matches younger children, or Little Buddies, with an adolescent, or Peer Leaders, bringing them together for group activities, off-campus trips, and general fun in order that each can help the other to learn more about themselves and others. According to David Butterfield, who oversees the Leadership Program with help of staff and other departments, while both the younger buddies and Peer Leaders benefit from the interactions, it is the Peer Leaders themselves who seem to gain insight into their own past behaviors and how to help their Little Buddies overcome their own issues and concerns. Mr. Butterfield adds that, "one day I had a Peer Leader come to me after time with his Little Buddy, and tell me he now understood how he behaved earlier on, and how he was sorry he had put me and other staff through his behaviors. What a moment for him in his growth here at St. Ann's Home & School," he adds. "I was pretty proud of him."

After each get-together or outing, the Peer Leaders come together, maybe over pizza, and talk about their experiences and time with their Little Buddies. Staff help guide and facilitate the discussion, but it is really the insights, ideas, problem-solving and thinking skills of the Peer Leaders that shine through at such meetings. Sometimes a child will have a problem or an issue to bring up; often, however, they



Learning from each other can make you smile.

share something new that worked for them. "Try to find out more about what she likes to do on weekends," or maybe, "what does he like to do when he goes home on a weekend?" It helps to make you both more comfortable when you have something in common.

Our hope, says Mr. Butterfield, is that the younger ones learn appropriate behaviors from the Peer Leaders as role models. Ultimately, he adds, "we'd like to see the older children and adolescents learn about themselves and others through the program and be able to bring those skills with them when they leave St. Ann's."

For more information about the Leadership Program, contact David Butterfield at 978-682-5276.

ning, our role includes being good role models, facilitators, teachers and friends with the residents.

## What is the Community Action Club?

The Community Action Club bridges the gap for adolescents between their life here at St. Ann's Home & School and the communities they will eventually be returning to.

## What does the Community Action Club do?

We have gone to visit U. Mass Lowell to learn about what they have to offer.

We run a scavenger hunt where the adolescents have to locate important places in the community such as the local library, registry of motor vehicles, town hall, and hospital. This helps the community become more "user-friendly" for the adolescents.

## How do the activities and Community Action Club help the children and adolescents?

Overall the programs, clubs and activities help to build and reinforce qualities important for the development of the

healthy adolescent, like good sportsmanship, respect for others, making good decisions and choices, understanding and accepting consequences of one's behavior, increasing self-esteem, learning to work as a team, having understanding, patience and compassion for others.

## What's next?

We have a first aid class in our short-term plan as well as bringing the Project Adventure, adventure-based learning, on board when the new Adolescent Center opens in April 2008.

# This Year, Give the Gift That Will Endure...

This year, St. Ann's has something exciting about to happen. To meet the rapidly expanding needs of today's adolescent population, we have undertaken our first building expansion project since opening our doors on Christmas Eve, 1925. Scheduled to open spring 2008, our new 28,000 sq. ft. facility will have space to serve adolescents in need of intensive services, and includes modern classrooms, a science lab, computer facility, a full-size gymnasium, and an adventure-based behavioral education program.

In addition, our outdoor amphitheater will allow for programs and entertainment for all, and will include a limited number (up to 192) engraved 12" x 12" pavers which are available to our community of friends and supporters.

## Honor that special person in your life with the gift that will endure

A wonderful and lasting **TRIBUTE** for a loved one, mother, father, child, teacher, coach, or to offer your support to our mission.

A limited number of these engraved pavers will be available. Each paver is 12" x 12" **and includes three lines of engraving** with up to 15 characters per line, including spaces.

Up to two additional lines of engraving with 15 characters each, including spaces, are available for an additional \$25\*. If this is a gift, upon request a card will be sent to the person you select.

Pavers to be set in the spring.



## ENGRAVE AN ENDURING MEMORY

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

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Number of Engraved Pavers @ \$150: \_\_\_\_\_

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**(Please make checks payable to St. Ann's Home)**

Please charge my  Visa  MC  AMEX

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**Return with your payment to:** Development Office, St. Ann's Home & School, 100A Haverhill Street, Methuen, MA 01844. If this is a gift, please tell us who to send the gift notice to.

**Call the Development Office at 978-682-5276, ext. 205 with any questions.**

# New Adolescent Center, New Programming

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skills, community resources, and self-awareness. Some of these initiatives include the creation of "The Community Action Club," which helps facilitate residents' involvement in community-based resources. Other activities include "In The News," a newspaper run by St. Ann's adolescents, a photography club, yoga classes, a science club, cooking groups, swimming lessons, memberships to the YMCA and Latitudes Gym, and fall and winter dances. We have also added "Family Movie Matinees," which are held at St. Ann's Home on Sundays for residents and their families.

In our ongoing effort to continue to provide strength-based services, St. Ann's Home developed a Leadership Program, which gives older residents the opportunity to mentor younger peers in the agency. Older residents, who are called "peer leaders," have the opportunity to provide guidance, support and role modeling for children who may not otherwise have a visiting resource. Peer leaders meet with staff members twice a month to organize, plan and



**Cheryl Macinanti, M.Ed., CAGS, Director of Adolescent Services has been at St. Ann's Home and School for over 14 years, and brings a multitude of experience with adolescents to the new programs.**

participate in special activities designed for their assigned "little buddies." This mentoring program has created a significant contribution to the social and emotional well-being of all children involved, and the skills acquired by peer leaders will transcend into adulthood.

With the opening of a new state-of-the-art gymnasium, St. Ann's Home & School will introduce an organized athletic program where children/adolescents will be able to participate in sports as a member of a basketball, volleyball or floor hockey team. Residents will use sports as a venue for developing values

associated with team-building, goal-setting, self-discipline, and self-confidence.

Finally, St. Ann's Home & School is in the process of expanding upon its therapeutic programming by implementing Project Adventure in conjunction with the broad range of clinical services already provided to children in St. Ann's residential treatment programs. Project Adventure takes an active and experiential approach to group therapy and education. St. Ann's will infuse adventure-based programming and counseling into its behavior management practices, with the goal

of improving behavioral and academic functioning and, ultimately, accelerating the stabilization process for the high risk children we treat daily. Adventure-based activities are often used to promote a safe and supportive learning tool for children who have suffered significant trauma and recurrent failures in their lives.

Invariably, individual residents participating in these activities come to St. Ann's Home & School with a wide range of existing limitations, knowledge and abilities. Our goal is to provide new and diverse experiences, clinical support and opportunities to enhance the strengths within these adolescent residents and prepare them for the next chapter in their lives.

Adolescence is a tumultuous and important time as children begin the long transition to adulthood. For those experiencing the added challenges associated with emotional/behavioral problems, mental health and/or learning disabilities, St. Ann's Home & School offers a comprehensive continuum that supports the many facets of this journey. ■

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## We invite you to get involved

Support from the community is vital to our mission here at St. Ann's Home & School. For 82 years we have helped children and adolescents in need through our residential facility and Chapter 766 Special Education School. Proud of our past, today, with our new Adolescent Center, we build for the future to ensure the growing numbers of children and adolescents in need can get help in a caring, warm environment. The children of St. Ann's Home & School need your help and support more than ever. To learn more about ways to give, please contact the Development Office today.

**John J. Rice, Director of Development at 978-682-5276, ext. 205 or [jrice@st.annshome.org](mailto:jrice@st.annshome.org) or visit our web site at [www.st.annshome.org](http://www.st.annshome.org). Thank you!**



# ST. ANN'S HOME & SCHOOL

WINTER 2008

Celebrating 82 years of helping children and families.

NEW ADOLESCENT CENTER OPENING APRIL 2008

## JOB FAIR

Thursday, March 6th, 2008 - 3 pm to 7 pm

St. Ann's Home & School, 100A Haverhill Street, Methuen MA

We have both current and anticipated openings for Child Care Counselors, Licensed Therapists, Special Education Teachers and Teachers Assistants, Behavioral Management Counselors.

St. Ann's Home & School offers a competitive salary and benefits package, including health and dental insurance, and tuition reimbursement.

If you or someone you know would enjoy working with children and making a difference in their lives, come work in our therapeutic milieu or special education school.

**For further information or if unable to attend, contact Stephen Steiner at 978-682-5276 ext 187 ~ e-mail [ssteiner@st.annshome.org](mailto:ssteiner@st.annshome.org)**

## NAMING OPPORTUNITIES

The Development Office wishes you to know that **Naming Opportunities are available in the new Adolescent Center beginning at just \$150.** Contact the Development Office for details and availability.

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ST. ANN'S HOME & SCHOOL



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