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the Stigma
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Mental
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Exercise
Your
State of
Mind

Healing Paws: Animal Assisted Therapy

"There is no psychiatrist in the world like a puppy licking your face." Ben Williams

Kiwi, a sweet black Labrador mix, seems like the average dog. She nuzzles against children, sits up, lies down, and even slips down the playground slide. But Kiwi has been trained to do more than just tricks. Kiwi comes from Freedom Service Dogs and has been certified for "Animal Assisted Therapy". She serves the Aurora Mental Health Center and brings healing to over 100 families.

The idea of Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) is not a new one. Therapist Margaret Charlton, Ph.D., Kiwi's owner, began using this technique in 1982. The practice has been in place at Aurora Mental Health Center for over 10 years.

The Benefits of Animal Assisted Therapy

"Animals are such agreeable friends – they ask no questions, they pass no criticisms". George Eliot

Studies have shown repeatedly that exposure to animals helps improve morale and communication, bolster self-esteem, calm anxiety, and even reduce blood pressure. At Aurora Mental Health Center's,

Intercept Center, Kiwi assists with children who have been through different types of serious, often severe trauma. These kids are two to ten times more likely to be abused than the typical population. These children are able to connect with Kiwi and learn to trust again. Kiwi helps them address issues they may have with bonding and attachment by being an anchor for the children. "In Kiwi, clients find unconditional acceptance. This gives them reassurance and helps them to cope with life's challenges," Dr. Charlton said.

Animal Assisted Therapy also benefits children with developmental disorders. Kiwi's calming nature helps the clients to relax for what Dr. Charlton calls "emotional centering." They learn to read cues given by the dogs and

put them into practice outside of the classroom. "Children learn that when they are treating Kiwi nicely she will wag her tail in what they refer to as 'happy tail'," she said. "The expressions of the dog help them to recognize when they are doing something well, and they repeat that positive behavior in their interactions with family and friends."

Requirements for the Job

Animal Assisted Therapy dogs are required to complete prescribed training and be certified by a national organization like the Delta Society or Therapy Dogs International through Assistance Dogs International. While Kiwi is a Labrador, there are no specific breeds that make the best therapy dogs. "It is not about the breed, it is about personality," Dr. Charlton said. Kiwi was chosen because of her ability to train, sweet nature, and her calm personality.

About the Intercept Center

The Intercept Center is a collaborative project of Aurora Mental Health Center and Aurora Public Schools. It is open to children ages 7 to 21 who have a developmental disability and mental health needs. The Animal Assisted Therapy program has touched hundreds of lives in Aurora and continues to provide care for those who can benefit from this particular type of treatment. To support Aurora Mental Health Center's Intercept Program, please call 303.617.2361 or email tawneybass@aumhc.org.

Intercept Center "WISH LIST"

- Art and Craft Supplies
- Paper, Pens, Pencils, Notebooks
- Water Bottles
- Event Tickets

For more information about Animal Assisted Therapy, please visit:

The Delta Society- www.deltasociety.org

Therapy Dogs International- www.tdi-dog.org



Erasing the Stigma Surrounding Mental Illness.

We have all heard the words, "Crazy" or "Psycho". These terms are still considered acceptable to describe people with a mental illness and are constantly used in the media and by the public. Why are these labels wrong? What harm do they do? Ask someone with a mental health disorder and the answer is clear.

Label vs. Stigma

Assigning a label to something is not always negative. A diagnosis, by definition, is a label and is extremely helpful in determining care for individuals with a mental illness. Negative labels "Crazy" or "Psycho" reflect the stigma that mental illness carries.

Stigma is associated with all forms of mental illness which many times causes people to misunderstand it. Do all illnesses carry stigma? Certainly not. Too often, mental illness is treated differently by society than physical illness. While most people would never think of mocking someone with heart disease or leukemia, mental health disorders are many times not held in a similar light.

The Consequences of Stigma

If you are like most people, you probably don't know just how significantly mental health issues affect you.

Stigma is a strong factor affecting access to and participation in mental health services. According to the U.S. Surgeon General Dr. David Stacher, "One in five Americans struggles with a mental illness in any given year, and fewer than half receive the right kind of treatment." Many times it is the fear of being labeled that deters an individual from getting care.

The Negative Effects of Stigma

Individual

- Feelings of isolation and hopelessness
- Fear and embarrassment
- Refusal to seek treatment
- Work problems or discrimination
- Rejection by family or friends

Public

- Believe in the idea it is "all in a person's head"
- Believe a mental disorder is not a medical illness
- Stereotyping and discrimination
- Refusal to pay for care
- Fear

- ▲ One in five Coloradans needs mental health services each year, yet less than one-third of those actually receive it. For those who go untreated, the risks of dropping out of school, homelessness, substance addiction, violence, or even suicide go up.
- ▲ Untreated depression alone costs American businesses more than \$43 billion a year in lost productivity and associated health care costs.
- ▲ Total cost of untreated and incorrectly treated mental illness to American taxpayers exceeds \$100 billion a year.
- ▲ If left untreated, mental illness can destroy families, and leave many children at risk of destructive behaviors.



Erasing the stigma of mental illness is essential to helping individuals and families receive the mental health care they need. Here are some ways you can get involved...

Erasing the Stigma

If you or a loved one have been diagnosed with a mental illness, there are many things that you can do to increase awareness.

- 1. Seek Treatment:** A diagnosis will provide relief, lifting the burden of the unknown. Do not allow fear of stigma to take this from you.
- 2. Open Discussion:** Opening a discussion with the people close to you is a great way to first address the issue. Let others know your expectations. Often, people may not know how to support you, even if they want to help. Offering suggestions will set the appropriate language and open the channels of communication.

- 3. Surround Yourself with Support:** Stigma can lead to social isolation and this can increase the severity of any situation. Seek out friends, family and support groups.
- 4. Spread the Word:** There are many opportunities available to promote mental health understanding. Take advantage of them! Invite a speaker to your business, church or school.

Aurora Mental Health Center offers a Speakers Bureau, made up of individuals who present on various mental health topics to raise awareness, educate the public, and promote mental health to everyone.

If you would like more information about our Speakers Bureau, please contact Cindy Bohl at 303.617.2373 or cindybohl@aumhc.org.



UNSUNG HERO

Marlene Husson, Director of Family/Children's Intensive Services and Disaster Response Coordinator at Aurora Mental Health Center. Husson recently won the Unsung Hero Award in the business category from the Aurora Chamber of Commerce for her efforts in aiding disaster survivors. Husson helped victims of both the Oklahoma City bombing and the Columbine High School shooting. She was also a constant fixture at the Safe Haven shelter, at Lowry where hundreds of Hurricane Katrina evacuees lived after the flooding in New Orleans.



This photo was taken inside the Colorado State Capitol at the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council's annual Day at the Capitol in March. Aurora Mental Health Center's entire 2008 LEAD class was invited to attend. The LEAD program is an innovative, in-house leadership training program. Focused on Leadership, Entrepreneurship and Development, the LEAD program is available to Aurora Mental Health Center employees who are committed to advancing their professional skills and the success of the Center. Left to right: Dr. Randy Stith, Executive Director of Aurora Mental Health Center; Nancy Todd, State Representative; Suzanne Williams, State Senator; Debbie Stafford, State Representative.

Exercise your State of Mind

We all know that exercising is good for the body, but did you know it is good for the mind as well? In addition to building muscle, boosting immunity, and getting in shape, exercise can help keep you emotionally fit.

Here are 5 ways to GET MOVING and BOOST YOUR BRAIN POWER!

1. Stand Up.

Your ability to concentrate will improve with the standing you do in a day. Standing just a few extra minutes every hour will help your body to burn up 25% more calories. Good for the mind, good for the waistline.



2. Power Walking.

Power walking is a great way to get your metabolism working and burn off some steam. Walking is recommended more and more as an alternative to jogging because it has significantly less impact on joints. Power walking is great for posture, poise, and your mental health.

3. Yoga.

Yoga is well known for its relaxing nature, but did you know that the different positions of yoga move and stretch important internal organs? This helps cleanse and maintain the nervous and circulatory systems. Yoga can also develop a stronger state of mind, improve concentration, and reduce anxiety.

4. Dance, Dance, Dance.

Dancing is exercise, disguised as fun! Not only does dancing get you up, out and moving, but it is a wonderful release. Spending a night out with friends is good for your body and mind. Have two left feet? Sign up for a dance class.

5. Take a Hike.

Enjoy the beautiful mountains of Colorado and take advantage of one of our region's greatest assets. Not only is hiking good for you, removing yourself from the hustle and bustle of city life allows for relaxation and clarity. If you are looking for a hike, www.go-colorado.com features wonderful trails; listings include skill level and timeframe so you may tailor it to your ability. <http://www.go-colorado.com/Denver/Hiking/>



Rachel Nunez, Spring Luncheon Chair and Aurora Mental Health Center Board Member; Dr. Randy Stith, Executive Director, Aurora Mental Health Center; Debra Fine, author and Keynote Speaker.

Aurora Community leaders and businesses team up to support Aurora Mental Health Center at the 4th Annual Spring Fundraising Luncheon

Living Live to the Fullest – Live. Love. Laugh. Achieve.

CBS4 News' Ed Greene and keynote speaker Debra Fine, author of the best selling book *The Fine Art of Small Talk* came together May 9, 2008 to raise awareness and funds to support the Aurora Mental Health Center's mission of providing quality mental health care and programs that help people of all ages live full, productive, and happy lives.

"Raising awareness for mental illness is critical to the health

of our community," said Dr. Randy Stith, Executive Director of the Aurora Mental Health Center. "I would like to thank the businesses and individuals that support our mission." Aurora Mental Health Center has been recognized both nationally and locally for excellence in mental health services. In addition to children and adult inpatient and outpatient services, the Center provides counseling for families, teens, couples, adults, and many other programs.

Keynote speaker Debra Fine gave her fast-paced interactive and entertaining presentation, "The Fine Art of Small Talk." She covered insightful and informative conversation tips and techniques on how to strike up conversation and keep them going, avoid conversation "killers," exit conversations with grace, develop business relationships, and come across as composed and self-assured when talking to people at meetings, presentations, and seminars.

The Gold Level Sponsor: Citywide Banks The Silver Level Sponsor: Metro Community Provider Network

The Bronze Level Sponsors:
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Aurora Public Schools
Colorado Access
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Community College of Aurora Foundation/Community College of Aurora
Community First Foundation
Community Reach Center
EON Office Products
First Bank of Aurora
IMA of Colorado
La Cueva Restaurant
Wal-Mart
Westerra Credit Union/Aurora Sentinel

Mission Statement

Aurora Mental Health Center is committed to creating healthy and secure communities by providing the least restrictive service that ensures quality, appropriate, and efficient care.

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Sue Spiller, Secretary
Ruth Ryan, Treasurer

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Donate Your Event Tickets, Goods, & Services

Aurora Mental Health Center is always accepting donated goods, services, and event tickets to help supply materials for our programs and to provide some of our clients with endless memories.

We are currently seeking donations for:

Art Supplies and Craft Items: Contribute any art supplies or craft items to supply children and adults with therapeutic services.

School Supplies: Contribute school supplies such as writing paper, pencils, notebooks, glue, scissors, etc. to our therapeutic schools.

Tickets for Attractions: Donate your tickets for attractions, sporting events, festivals, concerts, plays, museums, and so on to give a child, family, or adult an experience of a lifetime.

Call Tawney Bass at 303-617-2361 if you would like to donate. Or visit us online for a donation form to mail along with your contribution: www.aumhc.org/donations-goods-services.html.

All donations are tax deductible.



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Aurora Vistas Foundation 16th Annual Charity Golf Tournament

Since 1987, the Aurora Vistas Foundation has been raising awareness and funds to support Aurora Mental Health Center's programs for children and their families. Every year the Aurora Vistas Charity Golf Tournament successfully raises funds to help provide mental health treatment and innovative programs that help Aurora children and families in our communities.

More than 3,900 children in Aurora suffer from a mental illness and many do not receive proper treatment due to their inability to pay or lack of alternative funding. The Annual Charity Golf Tournament raises much-needed funds so that the Aurora Mental Health Center can provide those who cannot pay with the treatment they need. Without these programs, children and families may not learn the life skills they need in order to cope with mental illness and survive in today's fast-paced world.

All are invited to join Aurora Vistas Monday, August 11, 2008 at Murphy Creek Golf Course for a continental breakfast, a fun morning on the green, and a barbecue lunch filled with awards, prizes, and a silent auction. To learn more about sponsorship and player registration, please contact Tawney Bass at 303.617.2361.

New Online Feature for Aurora Mental Health Center

Aurora Mental is now accepting online donations through PayPal. If you would like to donate, visit our website at: www.aumhc.org/donations.html.

Donations

Aurora Mental Health Center is committed to helping thousands of people in Aurora, Colorado live full and productive lives. As a private nonprofit organization, the Center relies on public funding and community donations to provide the quality services necessary for individuals to start recovering from mental illness.

No matter what the amount, your donation will go directly toward helping children, adults, and families receive the professional services and care they need to continue learning, developing, enjoying life, and being productive in our society. And in some cases, you'll be helping someone who cannot afford treatment receive the care they desperately need in order to become a healthy, stable individual.

You will make a difference in our programs, your community, and someone's life. **Ways to Donate:** (all methods are secure and tax deductible)

- Make a donation online via PayPal. Your gift can be made in honor or in memory of someone special.
- Make a donation online via PayPal.
- Download our mail-in form.
- Call 303.617.2361 to give your donation.

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