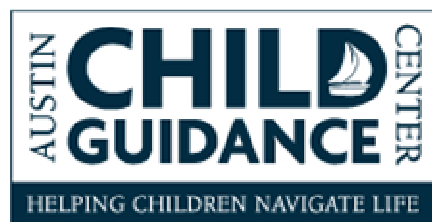


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The Lookout

**Austin Child Guidance Center's
E-Newsletter**

April 2010

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Greetings!

The mission of Austin Child Guidance Center (ACGC) is to improve the mental health of children and their families through early intervention, diagnosis, and treatment to help them develop the emotional skills for meeting life's challenges. A multidisciplinary team of psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, marriage and family therapists, and professional counselors provides individual, family, and group therapy; psychiatric and psychological services; parent education; community presentations and consultations; and training of current and future mental health professionals.

Donald J. Zappone, Dr.P.H.
Executive Director

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Happy Spring!



Thank you, Dr. Kevin Stark and Dr. Jane Gray!

On Friday, March 5, 2010, Drs. Kevin Stark and Jane Gray presented ACGC's 27th Annual Children's Mental Health Seminar at The University of Texas at Austin's Thompson Conference Center! We'd like to thank Dr. Stark and Dr. Gray for sharing their expertise with the Austin community so that we can all strive to provide the best quality services to our clients.

Program Spotlight: Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Project

ACGC's Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Project improves the social, emotional, and behavioral health of Austin's youngest population - children ages 0-5. We know that children who have healthy, solid skills for regulating their emotions and interacting with peers and adults are much more successful in the academic realm of their lives. Mental health and physical health are also closely associated, with positive mental health often inspiring healthy eating and exercise habits, and vice versa.

The goal of the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Project is to equip with the emotional skills necessary for entering Kindergarten. Two ACGC social workers, Melanie Walter-Mahoney, LMSW, and Audrey Gonzalez, LMSW, along with 3-4 masters level social work interns, work with up to 8 high-risk, high-needs Austin-area child development centers to provide training in early childhood social and emotional development to child care center staff, directors, and parents. Every year, the project reaches over 500 individuals!

Staff and parent trainings include topics such as "What is attachment?" and "What is infant mental health?" The social workers lead parent support groups at select centers, as well as "Mommy/Daddy and Me" lunch groups that seek to enhance parent-child attachment. The social workers consult with child care center staff on issues such as routines in the classroom, special accommodations for students with special needs, and effective communication with children. Individual, group, and family therapy is also offered to children and families enrolled in the centers.

This project is possible through the very generous support of the following organizations:

United Way Capital Area - Success By Six
Dell Foundation
Seawell Elam Foundation
St. Luke's Episcopal Health Charities
Build-A-Bear Workshop Bear Hugs Foundation

For more information about *the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Project*, [visit our website](#).

A Belated Christmas Story

The complete selflessness of Austinites amazed all of us at ACGC once again this year, as eight community groups generously donated Thanksgiving meals and Christmas gifts to eight families receiving services at ACGC. Below is a wonderful account from Anne Minor, LCSW, ACGC social work supervisor, regarding the experience of participating in 2009's Adopt-A-Family initiative:

"We are fortunate at ACGC to witness the generosity of others routinely and especially during the holidays. Each December we have individuals and organizations that come forward to offer to sponsor a family in need, with holiday gifts and food. This past December I was fortunate to have encountered one such group.

Home Slice Pizza volunteered to support a seven-member family that was receiving services at ACGC. The children were excited by the news of possible gifts and sat in our waiting area composing Christmas lists with the assistance of volunteers.

As the holidays approached I contacted Home Slice Pizza to coordinate the drop off

of presents. While I was thanking the manager, Jenn Morton, and Home Slice staff for their generosity, they informed me that this had been 'the most wonderful thing they had done as a group.' They had typically exchanged white elephant gifts which ultimately 'ended up collecting dust in the living room for a year.' Jenn reported that the entire staff had been uplifted by the desire to make Christmas special for this family. The effort began with staff contributing to the purchase of gifts then, Jenn reported, 'Our customers joined in and began bringing in contributions.' According to Jenn, 'This truly touched us in ways that we didn't expect.'

When the children's mother picked up the gifts at ACGC, she was 'blown away.' The children wrote thank you notes to Elf, who had signed each package. I was deeply touched by the joy expressed by the staff at Home Slice Pizza and by the family who sincerely appreciated this act of kindness shown by strangers. It was my great gift to be a part of this touching event."

We thank Home Slice Pizza and ALL of the individuals who supported ACGC clients this past holiday season!

Client Success Story

ACGC is committed to providing high-quality, professional mental health services to Austin/Travis County children and families, regardless of their ability to pay. Common presenting problems are disruptive behavior, trauma, depression, anxiety, and parent-child relationships. With each e-newsletter, ACGC shares a story about a recent client's success in therapy.

Five-year-old Erica came to ACGC. At that time, Erica was living with her grandmother and biological mother. Her mother has a history of multiple incarcerations as well as substance abuse; she has been an inconsistent presence in Erica's life. Two recent stressors in Erica's life were meeting her biological father and his parents for the first time, and her mother's departure from the home to attend residential drug treatment.

Erica's grandmother described behavioral problems at home and school. When Erica got angry at school, she would stand on a chair and yell at her teacher. Erica's grandmother reported that Erica also yelled at home and refused to complete homework.

During family therapy with Erica, Erica's grandmother, and Erica's mother, the ACGC therapist encouraged emotional expression through art and play. Erica responded to therapy "homework," such as telling her grandmother and mother the feelings she experienced during the week. Psychoeducational games and role-play helped Erica learn to express her anger in healthy ways. Erica's grandmother is learning to assist Erica in this area by using supportive communication techniques. In addition, Erica's mother has begun to initiate regular play times with her daughter.

Erica's grandmother reports that Erica's behavior at home and school is improving. Erica receives fewer negative reports from teachers and her grandmother rewards her improving grades with special outings. The family has been pleased with the changes they have seen thus far and look forward to learning more tools as they complete their therapy at ACGC.

To learn more about ACGC's [services](#) and [sliding fee scale](#), visit our website at www.austinchildguidance.org.

United Way Day of Caring: Help ACGC's Garden Grow!

On Friday, April 23, join us for the United Way Spring Day of Caring. We will meet at 9am at United Way Capital Area to kick off this spring work day in ACGC's Children's Healing Garden. Around 10am, we'll head over to ACGC to begin trimming, mulching, weeding, and spreading granite. We'll work into the afternoon, but stay as long as you are able. ACGC will provide tools, but be sure to bring your own sunscreen and water! If you're interested in helping out, please contact Laura Whitekettle (whitekettle@austinchildguidance.org) or Sarah Jones (sjones@austinchildguidance.org). You can also sign up on the United Way Hands on Central Texas Website (www.handsoncentraltexas.org).

Thank YOU, Supporters!

YOU MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE

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HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Ever wonder what your donation means to the children and families at ACGC? When you donate, here is what you do for our community's children and youth who are experiencing emotional and behavioral problems such as abuse, neglect, school phobia, trauma, grief and loss, divorcing parents, and depression:

- \$80 - 8-week ADHD parent education course for one family
- \$100 - therapy session for one family
- \$350 - one 2-hour psychiatric evaluation for one child
- \$750 - one 6-hour psychological assessment for one child
- \$1,000 - ten therapy sessions for one family

Donating online is easy - visit our website at www.austinchildguidance.org and click on the red **Donate** button. Donations can also be sent to Austin Child Guidance Center, 810 W. 45th Street, Austin, TX 78751; or you can call us at (512) 451-2242.

Don't forget to link your Randall's card to Austin Child Guidance Center - our Good Neighbor Number is 407. A percentage of Randalls' sales will be donated to ACGC.

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