

Primary Project and higher education – A bridge to the future

More and more young children arrive at school each day with social and emotional needs that negatively impact their ability to learn. These children are generally at a mild to moderate risk for later school adjustment problems, including mild aggression, acting out, shyness, anxiety, withdrawal from others, and similar behaviors that interfere with their educational progress in school.

Children's Institute's Primary Project, an evidence-based program, specifically targets young children with school adjustment difficulties and provides a cost-effective intervention that has been successfully implemented not only in the Rochester community, but nationally as well. Below you will read two different stories on how colleges are using Primary Project to train their students:

Margaret Hannah, Executive Director of the Freedman Center for Child and Family Development, William James College, Newton, MA

shares that they were introduced to Primary Project by a former State of Connecticut administrator/school psychologist when he joined William James College in 2007. He thought Primary Project could easily become a tool to train students in the School Psychology program in the use of a prevention program. His vision was that students in their graduate program would be trained as child associates and implement the program in their field sites.



They use Primary Project as one of the training domains for their first-year School Psychology students. Each student receives training in the methodology from Children's Institute and is supervised by trained faculty at William James College. Students implement Primary Project at their field site and are supported by school administrators and field supervisors.

Schools where Primary Project is implemented have found the program is truly a gift to many young students who need the extra support and relationship the program methodology brings.

In addition, their graduate students of Psychology report about the program in the following quote:

"I enjoyed the opportunity and experience of working implementing a school-based program in a school for the first time as a first year student. I especially enjoyed being able to work directly with students over the course of the year."

When thinking about the future of Primary Project, Margaret suggests that continued attention be given to updating Primary Project research and subsequent articles in the literature to stay current.

(continued on page 5)

A note from the director – *We're listening to you.*

Children's Institute is listening to our customers, donors, and community partners and making some changes.

We all know that non-profits here in Rochester and across the country are being asked to do more with less...while finding programs that work towards solving problems facing our communities. We've heard from our community partners that just having programs to address issues isn't enough, they need data to show results and have asked Children's Institute to play a critical role in program evaluation across Rochester. **We heard you – and increased our research capabilities with new technology and people.**

Children's Institute rolled out a new event last year called Kids & Trucks and will be offering this fundraiser again on September 24 & 25, 2016. We felt offering a family-friendly event for the community was important, and loved seeing young children's imaginations at work as they explored all the different vehicles. We received great feedback, including the wish that more children could experience this event. **We heard you – and reduced the admission price, and increased the number of scholarships, to make it more affordable for families from our community to attend.**

We know that some of our youngest children are starting preschool with undiagnosed issues that may impact their ability to learn. GROW-Rochester was developed to work with community partners to offer free screenings for vision, hearing, language, social and emotional, dental, and movement skills to three-year-olds in the city of Rochester. These screenings can help identify areas that may need help as well as offer recommendations and resources to parents. Many feel that these types of screenings would be valuable throughout Monroe and surrounding counties. **We heard you – and are actively looking for funding options to expand this program and screen more three-year-olds.**



We welcome your feedback and are always looking for ways to improve our communications with customers, donors, and partners like you. Whether you follow us on Facebook, e-mail us a question or request, send a note with your donation, or talk with one of us at Children's Institute when we're out in the community, please know that **we're listening – and are working on your behalf to improve the social and emotional health of young children in Rochester and beyond.**

– A. DIRK HIGHTOWER, PH.D.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Recent grant funding

Children's Success Fund of the Rochester Area Community Foundation and school districts

Predictive analytics
\$20,000

Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation

Behavioral consultation and evaluation of charter schools
\$50,000

Feinbloom Supporting Foundation (through the Rochester Area Community Foundation)

Behavioral Supports for Children
\$13,000

Greater Rochester Health Foundation

Primary Project bridge funding
\$50,000

IBM

SPSS modeler software
\$20,400

QUALITYstarsNY proposal

Training for new observers
\$20,200

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We're making the most of our space by leasing out limited amounts to other non-profits:

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION QUALITY COUNCIL (ECEQC)

GREATER ROCHESTER SUMMER LEARNING ASSOCIATION (GRSLA)

VILLA OF HOPE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

A fond farewell

“Never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world. For, indeed, that’s all who ever have.”
—MARGARET MEAD

For many, this would be a good description of Debbie Johnson and her work at Children’s Institute.

We congratulate Debbie Johnson on her tenure at Children’s Institute and wish her well as she moves into her next career in ministry. It’s difficult to sum up the impact Debbie’s had on Children’s Institute – she’s had an integral role in many of the accomplishments throughout the years. Since 1994, Debbie has held leadership roles and helped guide Children’s Institute through the lifecycle of a non-profit with its funding challenges, program design, staff development, and the many interactions with community members. But, if you hear Debbie talk, it always comes back to children and what we can do to strengthen our work and improve their chances for success.

As Debbie reflected on her work here, she said, “Most of all, I will miss time in the field with those who work with children, who understand the power of



positive relationships, who know the value of slowing down, and who day-by-day give children time to be children—to laugh, play, sing, and dance.” This reflects the Debbie we all know—her focus on letting children be children was a valuable addition to discussions here.

We will also miss her sense of humor and caring ways. Past and present staff and board members have shared stories that show her compassion, willingness to help others through difficult times, and inclusion. Debbie even managed to combine her love of shopping and food into running a little café in the building so staff could get something to eat in a pinch. Her opinions were strongly

held, but grounded in her belief that Children’s Institute is doing important work in this community, across the state, and nationwide.

Change is difficult and Debbie’s retirement proves that point. But, she developed a very capable team that will move forward and give Children’s Institute a fresh perspective and new ideas for growth. Many of you may have received e-mail messages from Debbie with this quote from Plato under her signature, “You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.” This is a fitting way to remember Debbie Johnson’s legacy at Children’s Institute.

Announcing Co-Directors of Primary Project

Children’s Institute is pleased to announce Shelley M. Sanyshyn and Lynn Smith as Co-Directors of Primary Project.

Together, Shelley and Lynn bring great enthusiasm for the opportunities to build on existing programs and develop new partners to support the expansion of social-emotional development efforts for children through Primary Project.



Shelley M. Sanyshyn received her Master’s in Applied Psychology and Quantitative Methods with a specialization in Counseling from the University of Baltimore in 2000. Since joining

Children’s Institute in 2008, she has been involved in many aspects of Primary Project operations, including consultation, training, national certification of programs, and coordination of New York State programs.



Lynn Smith received her Master’s in Social Work from Syracuse University in 1994. Since joining Children’s Institute in 2001, she has been involved with Primary

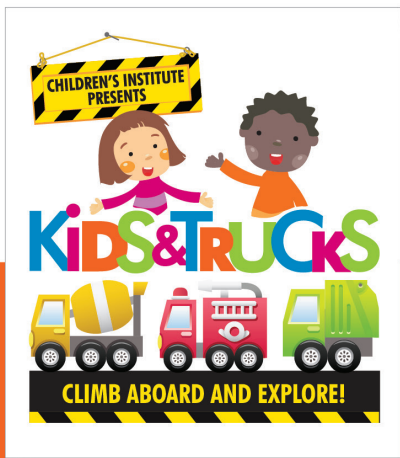
Project at a local, state, and national level providing training, consultation, and program certification. In addition to her work in Primary Project, she has also worked at providing behavioral health consultation in early childhood classrooms, as well as coordinating Coping Power, an evidence-based program for 4th-6th graders in the Rochester City School District.

Welcome aboard

Sylvia Brooks joined Children’s Institute as administrative support through the Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) at Lifespan of Greater Rochester. She retired from the New York State Attorney General’s office where she did document support functions. Sylvia is a grandmother of eight who loves to sing and is the choir director at her church.

Yvonne Moss joined Children’s Institute as our new front desk receptionist. Yvonne also initially came to us through the SCSEP program at Lifespan. Yvonne retired from the Diocese of Rochester a few years ago and brings many years of administrative support experience to Children’s Institute. Yvonne’s family includes two sons, six grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren with one due to arrive in September.

Tracey Sheehan joined Children’s Institute as a financial analyst. Tracey is a life-long Rochesterian whose family includes her husband and two grown sons. Tracey previously worked for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society and enjoys gardening and ushering at local theater productions.



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Continued from page 1: Primary Project and higher education – A bridge to the future

Mary Anne Peabody, Assistant Professor of Social and Behavioral Sciences, University of Southern Maine, Lewiston, ME stated that approximately twelve years ago, the state of Maine offered seed grants to elementary schools interested in focusing on prevention efforts. At that time she was a practicing play therapist in an elementary school counseling role and found the concept fascinating, so she signed on to be one of five pilot schools. She attended a presentation by Debbie Johnson and the rest is history. **“I’m not always sure if Primary Project found me or if I found Primary Project...but the program and those who work with it have greatly influenced me.”**

Mary Anne is no longer in the K-12 school system, but now works in higher education. However, the University she is affiliated with was one of the initial Maine pilot schools for Primary Project

using undergraduates as child associates. Students participated in a credit bearing course called Healthy Learners based on an adapted model of Primary Project. That course has been taught every few years and she is now one of the faculty scheduled to teach it.

Mary Anne notes that undergraduate students enjoy the opportunity to learn about the “culture of schools,” the “culture of childhood,” and the role of play in healthy child development. **“I believe in Primary Project. It has all the components of what I feel is vital to healthy child development. It was, is, and forever will be, core to how I teach students, parents, basically anyone who cares for or influences children. Everything I believe about what children need and deserve is represented in the core components of Primary Project.”**

In looking toward the future of Primary Project, Mary Anne would like to find “new energy”... couched in the forward movement of social-emotional programming. She would also like to see Primary Project expanded into new geographic areas while additional research is started and findings published in the scholarly literature (research and practice articles/journals). Finally, Mary Anne sees new opportunities for Primary Project in alternative models such as Universities, after-school programs, homeschooling, and parenting extensions.

Children’s Institute has built a legacy with its Primary Project program over the past 59 years and is proud that it has reached over 1,000,000 children throughout the nation. Through the work of colleges like these, new educators will have the tools to continue that legacy.



Ticket fund – Help send families of limited means to Children’s Institute’s Kids & Trucks event this September by donating to our ticket fund. You can donate online at www.childrensinstitute.net or mail in a check – your gift will allow more children to climb aboard and explore. You’ll get a tax deduction while supporting local children’s excitement and imagination at work.



The 2014-2015 Annual Report – See the Difference has been selected as a winner in the Graphic Design USA / 2016 American In-house Design Awards. For more than five decades, Graphic Design USA has sponsored competitions that spotlight areas of excellence and opportunity. In 2016, nearly 6,000 entries were submitted; a highly-selective 15 percent were recognized with a Certificate of Excellence. Congratulations to our in-house designer, Mary Maiolo, and her team!

Board and staff activities



Kim Avery and our team of master trainers provided training sessions to early care and education providers across NYS. As part of the QUALITYstarsNY quality improvement process, teachers, directors, and family child care providers are learning to use observation tools to improve their programs for young children.



A team from Children's Institute participated in United Way's Day of Caring by helping the Community Place of Greater Rochester set up an arts and crafts space for children with special needs. We love projects like this that help children use their creativity!



Nearly 550 people attended the RBJ 2016 Financial Executive of the Year Award event. **Terry Hartmann**, director of finance and operations, was a finalist in the Small Non-Profit category.



Board member **Dianne Cooney-Miner** spoke at a Fairport Area Branch AAUW event about a variety of local initiatives intended to address issues of health, poverty, and reading readiness.

Melissa Reynolds Weber and members of the Research and Program Evaluation area were published in the *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*. Their article examines the manner in which the Teacher-Child Rating Scale items combine to describe factors associated with children's school adjustment. This impressive piece is part of ongoing efforts to make assessment valid, reliable, and useful for those working to help children succeed.

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News & Views

SUMMER 2016

A publication of Children's Institute, Inc.
www.childrensinstitute.net

Editor: Cindy Harper
Design and production: Mary Maiolo

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