



From the Playroom

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Planning underway for “60 years of Primary Project” celebration

As this school year quickly comes to an end, we take time to celebrate events with students such as moving up to the next grade or perhaps maybe even moving on to the next building for middle school. As a Primary Project team, you may be reflecting on highlights and accomplishments from the year and beginning to plan for the new school year.

At Children’s Institute we are well underway with plans for a “60 years of Primary Project” celebration this fall. Be sure to check out the article from Deborah Johnson remembering Primary Project’s history – how and when it all began. Given the rich history of Primary Project, we have encountered stories of past students that participated in the program, and are now adults. Enjoy the article by a mother and her son about how Primary Project helped him as a young student and what he remembers about his time in the playroom.

We hope that you will join us on October 26 & 27, 2017 in Rochester, NY for what will be a spectacular two-day conference at the Woodcliff Hotel and Spa. Stay connected with us through Facebook and visit our website often to check out details as they are added to this celebratory event. Don’t forget to take advantage of early bird pricing as it will only be available until June 30, 2017.

[WEBSITE](#)

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Conference Highlights



Prevention Goes a Long Way: 60 Years of Primary Project

October 26 & 27, 2017

Location: Woodcliff Hotel & Spa • 199 Woodcliff Drive • Fairport, NY 14450

Cost: \$160.00 (\$185.00 after June 30, 2017)



Keynote Address & General Session: Dr. Jodi Ann Mullen

Dr. Jodi Ann Mullen, Ph.D., LMHC, NCC, RPT-S, CCPT-S is an associate professor at SUNY Oswego in the Counseling & Psychological Services Department where she is the coordinator of the Mental Health Counseling Program and Graduate Certificate Program in Play Therapy. Dr. Mullen is a credentialed play therapist and play therapy supervisor. She is the author of several manuscripts on play therapy, counseling and supervision. Dr. Mullen was the 2008 recipient of the Key Award for Professional Training & Education through the Association for Play Therapy.

Dr. Mullen is also the Director of Integrative Counseling Services www.integrativecounseling.us in Auburn, Cicero, Oswego, and Syracuse, NY. She is the proud Momma of Andrew (13) and Leah (17).

Keynote Address (Day 1) – **Hope and healing for child helpers**

General Session (Day 2) – **Not such little losses: How to help grieving children**

children's
institute

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL AND
EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Community Update (Day 1)

Join Children's Institute for its biennial Community Update where you will have an opportunity to learn more about our programs and initiatives that address the healthy development of young children. Select individuals who have been nominated, will be recognized for their significant contributions to children's social and emotional health and inducted into the Children's Institute Coterie – a group of special friends whose contributions are ongoing and significant; whether it be intellectual property, financial property, volunteerism, or a combination of the above. Refreshments provided.

FOR ONLINE REGISTRATION, DIRECTIONS, AND MORE INFORMATION visit www.childrensinstitute.net

When It All Began



Many decades ago when I started school, life was much different than it is today. Still, some things have remained the same.

Recently I came across the web page of the elementary school that I attended in Oakland, California. The following information was provided for parents of kindergarten children: "Parents have often said that their child, upon entering school, cries and becomes easily frustrated...behaviors that weren't evident prior to the beginning of school. We feel that a student, particularly in grades kindergarten through third usually needs extra hugs, kind words, additional help, and a few less responsibilities until he or she has adjusted to the new school." Perhaps you were one of those students, or a parent of one of these children. Often as adults, we can forget how much the transition to school (year after year) requires.

Sixty years ago, two school mental health professionals, Lou Izzo (school psychologist) and Mary Anne Trost (school social worker) observed the same challenges for young school children. They understood this as a developmentally appropriate response to life changes. Together they wondered what could be done to support these kids and ease them through the transition to school. What if they could connect these children with a "caring adult" at school? And so began Primary Project.

Lou and Mary Anne reached out to a young professor at the University of Rochester, Emory Cowen. Together with their colleagues, both at the University and the Rochester City School District, they developed what was initially known as Primary Project, later became Primary Mental Health Project, and then eventually back to Primary Project. This became a first in the field of psychology, a research-based "secondary prevention" program using non-professionals in the context of a school setting. The first six years of the idea evolved at a single school beginning in 1957. It took over two decades for it to expand from New York State into other states and countries.

(continued on page 4)



Original location of the Center for Community Studies, University of Rochester, 575 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY.



When It All Began

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In the mid-1970s, I had the opportunity to work in a rural school in Northern California. I had the ability to spend time with kids who were “having a hard time adjusting to school.” They often just needed a short break from the rigors of school (and for children they are rigors). I began to spend time with kids giving them emotional support through play, a natural way for children to express themselves. Then in graduate school, I read a research article about Primary Project, and I was sold. Finally in the early 1980s, I attended a workshop in Berkeley, California that was led by Emory Cowen and several months later met Lou and Mary Anne! Then working as a school psychologist in Paradise, California, I was called into my supervisor’s office and told that they had received a grant to implement Primary Project! What could be better than that? Two years later, I went to work at the California Department of Mental Health and had the honor of working with over 500 schools as the program grew over the years from an annual budget of \$250,000 to \$14 million. Over that time the school experience of more than a quarter million children was enhanced.

I have had the challenge and privilege of being a “Primary Project type of kid.” I was the one who used to go to the “nurse’s office” when things got tough. When the elementary school I attended was remodeled, the nurse’s office became the Primary Project playroom. The need for Primary Project continues to this day. In fact, I would suggest that it is needed even more than ever before. Life is more complicated today. It moves faster, the expectations in education are not always appropriate in relation to one’s development and family structures, and supports are more fractured. What remains constant is one’s need for developmentally appropriate supports through caring relationships – the time and opportunity for children to lead the play. Primary Project allows a child to make choices, experiment with alternative ways to solve problems, and explore the world through play – all in a supportive relationship. What can be better than that?

*–Deborah Johnson, Ed.D.
Former Director of Primary Project*

The past makes us who we are – celebrate it.

–AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Remembering When...



Perspectives from a mother and her son about Primary Project

As Primary Project turns 60 years old, I was asked to write about my son, Peter's experience that took place approximately 18 years ago. Peter was in the primary school at Honeoye Falls-Lima School District. At that time I was going through a difficult divorce. Peter was having a difficult time managing and coping with all the feelings he was having. Teachers and school counselors recommended him to participate in Primary Project with Mrs. McCormick. Primary Project was the start of Peter's healing that taught him coping skills.

Peter went on to graduate from SUNY Geneseo with a BS degree in Psychology. He is now working as the merchandise manager for JC Penny in Syracuse. He was able to learn the skills needed to cope with his feelings. He uses these skills even today! I keep a picture on my refrigerator from Mrs. McCormick of Peter's last day at Primary Project to always show how far he has come.



Peter and I sat down together and remembered what was important about Primary Project. He wrote: *"The feeling is much like being in a church or a place of worship. It is calm and silent. Children are able to take a moment to recollect and meditate within themselves. It's the only point of time in some children's lives when they have this opportunity while aspects of their personal and student life are spiraling out of control. Therefore, it forms the building blocks of coping mechanisms that they will use in their professional and adult lives; something the American educational system does not provide. Without this program, children do not have an outlet for creative expression and the beginnings of soul searching, which helps to develop vision for one's life. Without vision, success is impossible. This program makes success possible, it allows children to grow."*



Congratulations to newly certified schools:

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Carthage Elementary School
Egret Lake Elementary School
Golden Grove Elementary School
Jupiter Elementary School
Roberto Clemente School No. 8

Black River, New York
Carthage, New York
West Palm Beach, Florida
West Palm Beach, Florida
Jupiter, Florida
Rochester, New York

For more information on certification, contact Arlene Bobin at (877) 888-7647, ext. 266 or abobin@childrensinstitute.net.



Saturday, Sept 23

10am-4pm

Sunday, Sept 24

10am-3pm

A FAMILY EVENT!

at Frontier Field VIP Lot

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ALL DIFFERENT KINDS OF TRUCKS!
You can even crawl into the cab and beep the horn!

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\$20 / \$30 after September 22
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Sponsor children and families who otherwise cannot afford to attend this incredible event



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