

A publication of  
Wheeler Clinic  
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Hartford Area

Wheeler Clinic is a non-profit behavioral health agency serving Central Connecticut and Greater Hartford. The clinic provides mental health, substance abuse treatment, community justice, early childhood, prevention/wellness and special education services to children, adolescents, families, adults and the elderly.

## HIGHLIGHTS

<b>New Directors</b>	2
<b>Family Support Center</b>	3
<b>Program News</b>	4-5
<b>Share Your Memories</b>	6

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## In Memoriam David J. Berkowitz, Ph.D.



David J. Berkowitz, Ph.D.

Energy. Vision. Commitment. These were just some of the words used to describe David J. Berkowitz, Ph.D. at a special memorial service held May 5, 2008 in celebration of an extraordinary leader and caring individual.

"David's optimism, enthusiasm and capacity to seize the day were contagious and inspirational," said Ann E. Thomas, chair of the Wheeler Clinic Board of Trustees to the gathering of 300 staff members, colleagues, friends and family. "His extraordinary contributions to the behavioral health community have fostered positive change for thousands of children and families, created a seamless continuum of strength-based services and nurtured public-private partnerships to facilitate statewide systemic change."

Dr. Berkowitz died April 5, 2008 following a courageous battle with leukemia. He received a stem cell transplant in August of 2007 at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. Although the transplant was successful, Dr. Berkowitz's immune system had been weakened and he suffered complications.

Dr. Berkowitz was committed to helping others strive for the best in themselves - whether they be employee, clinician, friend, colleague or client. "He knew it was important to not only push himself, but to help others," said Chuck Hummel, former administrator for Northwest Village School. "He understood that leadership needed to be shared."

Ken Boudreau, former chair of the Wheeler Clinic Board of Trustees, closed the ceremony with these valuable life lessons Dr. Berkowitz taught him:

- Pursue your passions.
- Never stop learning.
- Strive to get better each day.
- Once in a while, head to the mountaintop.
- Be strong and have courage.

Under his leadership, Wheeler Clinic became a leading provider of behavioral health services in Connecticut, offering the most comprehensive continuum of evidence-based intervention and treatment services available in the state. Dr. Berkowitz played a significant role in statewide development of effective behavioral health care solutions across child welfare, adult mental health, addiction and community justice domains. His leadership in the adoption of statewide systems of care within the child mental health system has had a dramatic positive impact on the care received by thousands of children. Dr. Berkowitz was at the forefront of state efforts to incorporate best practices at every level including working with the state's judicial system to establish best-practices for court-involved juveniles and adults.

Dr. Berkowitz joined Wheeler Clinic in 1977 as coordinator of clinical services for day and residential treatment. He assumed increasing responsibilities through the years and was named assistant director of clinical services for children by 1991. He became director of managed care in 1994 and positioned the clinic as a successful leader and innovator in the managed care environment.

## David J. Berkowitz, Ph.D. (continued)

When the clinic's long-standing executive director retired in 1998 Dr. Berkowitz was appointed by the agency's Board of Trustees to fill the vacancy following an extensive national search. The agency had a staff of close to 300. Today, Wheeler Clinic employs more than twice as many individuals (more than 750), and serves thousands more children and families each year.

The clinic's continuum of services has expanded dramatically and includes a full range of services for juveniles and adults involved with the court system, seven congregate care programs for children and adolescents and the most comprehensive array of evidence-based, in-home and outpatient treatment services in the state. The clinic's service area also widened under Dr. Berkowitz's leadership and now includes four of Connecticut's urban centers: Hartford, New Haven, New Britain and Waterbury as well as more than two dozen suburban towns.

Dr. Berkowitz was recently recognized by the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare as a 2008 Awards of Excellence winner. Selected to receive the Lifetime Achievement Award for Staff Leadership, Dr. Berkowitz was selected for his life-long commitment to the behavioral healthcare and disabilities communities. "As an agency leader, practicing clinician and an advocate for people with disabilities, Dr. Berkowitz was truly a public health icon. His commitment to positive change was the defining characteristic of his career," said Linda Rosenberg, MSW, president and

CEO of the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare. "The respect and affection that staff, colleagues, and consumers felt for him is a testament to his life's work. Dr. Berkowitz has transformed the lives of so many individuals and their families, caring for and helping them to find hope and to live full, successful lives."

Dr. Berkowitz's vision helped Wheeler Clinic grow and adapt to meet the changing needs of the community, and his leadership helped shape the practice of the public and private systems that comprise the mental health service structure in Connecticut and beyond. We are forever grateful.

Contributions in Dr. Berkowitz's memory may be made to Wheeler Clinic or to the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. For Wheeler Clinic donations, please use the giving form located on page 5.



## New Director of Quality and Behavioral Health Outcomes Joins Leadership Team



Sandra Cohen, MA, CPHQ

Wheeler Clinic welcomes Sandra Cohen, MA, CPHQ, as the new director of quality and behavioral health operations. Sandra oversees the various departments involved with the administration of client records, managed care insurance, outcomes, quality assurance and compliance.

"I was impressed with Wheeler Clinic's strong dedication to best practices, evidence-based models of care, and for providing a continuum of care across a wide array of services," said Sandra. "My aim is to involve staff in performance improvement activities not only for individual programs or

departments but also those that cross services and involve opportunities for systemic changes. In a diverse system as Wheeler Clinic's, quality and compliance is everyone's responsibility and there are opportunities for everyone to contribute. I'm looking forward to eventually sharing the concepts and tools that can be utilized to guide decision making, assess a process or to implement something new to staff to incorporate into their own areas."

Other staff members were recently promoted. Wendy DeAngelo, MBA, was promoted to director of development and public relations, and Todd Raymond was promoted to director of facilities. Caroline Kester, MBA, was promoted to assistant director of business and finance. Elisabeth Cannata, Ph.D., was promoted to assistant director of children's outpatient services.

## New Family Support Center Serving Greater Hartford Youth and Families

Wheeler Clinic's services for greater Hartford youth and families continue to grow with the launch of the Family Support Center (FSC) on Woodland Street. The FSC provides a broad range of support and intervention services for troubled youth ages 11 to 15.

"The FSC reaches out to families with service needs, families struggling to cope with an adolescent who's skipping school habitually, running away or behaving recklessly. The program provides the services and supports families dealing with these issues need to get back on track," said Reese Palmer, LMFT, associate director of juvenile justice services.

"The center represents the judicial system's shift to a community-based approach. In the past, these families would have to go through the court system. Now families receive services in an environment that is much more conducive to the rehabilitation process. Probation officers refer families to us instead of referring them to the juvenile court as delinquent. We can then help these families access the mental health treatment and other supports they need. We expect to serve up to 150 youth and families each year."

The FSC incorporates the clinic's emphasis on family systems, community integration and strength-based services. Case managers facilitate ongoing communication between the

family, school, probation supervisor and other service providers. An educational advocate works with the youth, family and school to directly address both academic and behavioral challenges. Families can be referred to clinical services, including Intensive In-home Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Services or Multi-Systemic Therapy, also based at 103 Woodland Street, if needed.

"The FSC is part of a collaborative partnership with the Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division, the Hartford Superior Court for Juvenile Matters, probation, systems of care, schools and community and advocacy resources. The center is also part of the clinic's growing continuum of services for greater Hartford families. What we're building here is a seamless support system for the youth and his or her family," said Susan Walkama, LCSW, director of children's outpatient services.

The Family Support Center offers comprehensive assessment, intervention, educational advocacy, parent support, crisis response, referral, case management and psycho-educational groups for youth and families referred by the court.

For more information, call the FSC at (860) 241-0317.



The Family Support Center team (from left to right) Back Row: Reese Palmer, LMFT, associate director of juvenile justice services, Amy Rodriguez and Amy Romano, case managers. Front Row: Lisa Griffiths, LMFT, program director and Carol O'Connor, LCSW, educational advocate.

## Innovative Teaching at NVS Receives National Recognition

The pioneering educational efforts of teachers and administrators at Wheeler Clinic's Northwest Village School (NVS) have earned recognition and support from state and national groups. The school's innovative approach has garnered grants to help build valuable resources and enhance learning in a wide variety of areas.

**Getting A Grip** - The United States Golf Association (USGA) has awarded NVS a grant to help more than 100 students improve physical coordination, build self-esteem and confidence by learning the skills of golf during physical education classes at school and on the course. Hawk's Landing Country Club golf pro John Vitale will help launch the Getting A Grip program and help students learn the fundamentals of the game. An intramural golf program, the Golf Club, will offer students who develop a serious interest in the game more access to the golf course.

**Mohegan Tribe Challenge Grant** – The Mohegan Tribe has challenged NVS to incorporate themes of Native American family life, dwellings, technology, ceremonies and celebrations into the school curriculum. School administrator Michael Dietter, Ms, M.Ed. and teachers Denise Congdon, MS, and Sue Alessi, MS and senior planning assistant Eileen Fuller have met that challenge head on engaging third to sixth grade students in fun, hands-on activities including building a longhouse and giving a school-wide presentation culminating in a maple moon celebration and sinzibukwud demonstration of native maple sugaring techniques.

**Going Green** - Toyota's USA Foundation will support a school-wide recycling and composting initiative at NVS with a Toyota Tapestry Award. Students will learn about personal responsibility and their own impact on the environment as they compost food and recycle paper, plastic and metal. "The idea came about while the students were at



On February 28, classes visited the finished longhouse and listened to fellow students and Mike Dietter, MS, M.Ed. explain maple sugaring and Native American history. Below, a student builds the frame of the longhouse.

the Farmington River for the salmon restoration project," said Dietter. "Students were exasperated at the careless disposal of trash around the river. It became clear they could do more to help the environment."

For more information about NVS, please call (860) 793-3717.

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## Juvenile Risk Reduction Center Expands Services for 16 and 17 Year Olds

Last year's successful Raise the Age campaign spurred Connecticut's legislature to change state law to recognize youth under the age of 18 as juveniles. Sixteen and 17 year olds, currently considered adults by Connecticut courts, will be referred to juvenile courts which have greater access to appropriate treatment and support services for teens. The shift in policy will be fully implemented by 2010.

Wheeler Clinic's Juvenile Risk Reduction Center (JRRC) has expanded its services and staff to accommodate this new group of clients in anticipation of this shift and with additional funding from the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch.


Lisa Persaud, Psy.D., program manager for the JRRC said, "We will continue to provide services appropriate for our 12 to 15 year old clients and have added two new group programs designed to meet the more complex needs of 16 and 17 year olds. The program expansion allows us to provide a more comprehensive continuum of care for youth referred by the New Britain Superior Court for Juvenile Matters."


For more information about the JRRC, call (860) 348-1677.



## Support Families and Children in Your Community

Please join us in our efforts to help more families and individuals in the community by contributing to Wheeler Clinic. Simply fill out and mail the form below along with your tax-deductible donation. Thank you for your support.





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*Thank you!*

## New Case Management Model Serves Needs of Women

Wheeler Clinic's Alternative Incarceration Center and Adult Risk Reduction Center, in partnership with the New Britain Probation Office, have adopted a new gender-responsive, evidence-based case management service for women. The Women Offender Case Management Model (WOCMM), developed by the National Institute of Corrections, is funded by the Connecticut Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division. The program is designed to reduce recidivism, create a wide network of support and increase the health and well-being of women and their families.

"The model enhances standard case management, shifting it into a dynamic process that works collaboratively with the client to define individual needs and strengths," said Michele Macumber, MA, CCDP, program director of Wheeler Clinic's Alternative Incarceration Center.

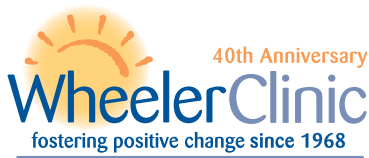
WOCMM provides a comprehensive service that incorporates all aspects of a woman's life - her vocation, family, social and personal needs. It is unique in its "team" approach, as client, probation officer, resource advocate, and group facilitator work closely together to build community supports from a variety of areas including teachers, clergy, and health professionals. One example is the program's contract with The Hartford Diaper Bank, a diaper supply house for needy families. The AIC community service crew transports hundreds of diapers to the clinic's 75 North Mountain Road site each month for distribution. Qualified families receive



Emily Zarotney, MA, Women's Offender Case Management resource advocate for Wheeler Clinic.

20 diapers per week per child. "It has been very well received by our clients," said Lisa Petachi, MS, Adult Risk Reduction Center program director.

Sharlene Croteau, LCSW, associate director of community justice services said, "We hope to build a strong network of community supports for the clients, and in turn help build the community's capacity to work with women offenders striving to change their lives for the better."



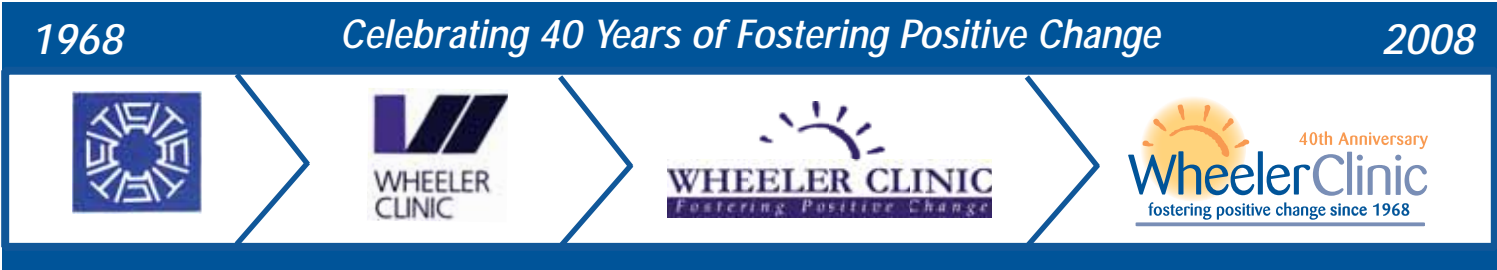
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June 2008

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Has Wheeler  
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Your Life?  
  
Tell Us About It.

We've come a long way since Bertha Wheeler's legacy to establish community-based health services for Connecticut residents. For the past 40 years, Wheeler Clinic has worked to keep her vision alive by providing the highest quality behavioral healthcare for children, adults and families.



If you have special memories of the clinic's early days, or a testimonial about your experience



with any of our programs or services, please share them with us for our 40th Anniversary Celebration. Some stories will be chosen to appear in our 2007-2008 Annual Report.

Contact Lisa Dietrichson at (860) 793-4404 or e-mail her at [ldietrichson@wheelerclinic.org](mailto:ldietrichson@wheelerclinic.org). We look forward to hearing from you!