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Courage on the Journey

By E. Susanne Francis -Thornton, Psy.D.

Do you have "nothing less than the power to overcome danger, misfortune, fear, injustice, while continuing to affirm inwardly that life with all its sorrows is good; that everything is meaningful even if in a sense beyond your understanding; and that there is always tomorrow?" This, my friend, is a definition of courage*. Over the holidays many of us found ourselves in moments (and for some days) of courage as we dealt with family members, memories, loneliness or difficult situations and circumstances.

At Cornerstone Counseling Center of Chicago (CCCOC) we have the privilege to work with many courageous heroes. I am reminded of Annette⁺, a 55 year old woman who reports that, after 18 months of therapy, she can finally have a fulfilling intimate relationship with her husband of 20 years. When Annette came to us, she felt like a "bad wife" and was ashamed of herself as a person. Annette had never told anyone about the sexual abuse that had happened to her as a child. Now, after years of bottling up her trauma, Annette was ready to face her fear and overcome the victimization of the injustice she had faced. Annette's courageous journey with her therapist, enabled by you faithful givers who help her to afford therapy, led her to find healing and freedom.

I am also reminded of Joe, a 27 year old man who lost his job as an attorney. Joe reported that he had always struggled with his temper. However, after 11 months of job searching with a young family to provide for, Joe's temper flares became much more intense and frequent; a serious concern to both he and his wife. Joe also found himself having difficulty managing daily tasks and he grew apathetic about his hygiene and disheartened on his job search. It took Joe a while to commit to the therapeutic process, but once he did he faced the issues underlying his anger and depression. Finally Joe had the courage to own his part and do the hard work he needed to do in order to get healthy again.

What would happen if all of the Annettes and Joes that we see had the courage to make the call to come in and get help, but we did not have the means to provide them service? This unspeakable tragedy is a reality for those who are willing to begin the difficult journey toward facing their issues and moving forward, yet once there, there is no way to make the journey happen. As we all are more than aware, many more people are facing financial difficulty than just Annette and Joe. This means that there are more people in need of services who want help, but can't afford it. With so many people in need and each one of us just able to make a very small difference, how can you help? The answer is with courage! I want to challenge each of you to have the courage to provide another person the means to begin the difficult journey of facing their past and come into the freedom of their future.

On Thursday, March 26th, we will hold our 8th annual vision benefit dinner. This dinner is our largest opportunity to raise the funds necessary to make services available to clients who could not otherwise afford to receive them. With each of you joining together with each of us at CCCOC, we can make the journey to recovery possible.

Your time and talents as a volunteer, rendering skills we can't afford such as marketing, public relations, law and accounting, can make a huge difference in providing us the resources to do what we do best. Sharing generously of your financial resources and sponsoring the cost of therapy for a child, mother, couple or family gives a chance for someone who has the courage for the journey to actually start up on it.

Come out and join us in the courageous journey. Arrive early and participate in our silent auction, stay and fellowship with others who want to affect change, leave with a renewed hope that with each of us taking a step of courage, we can all achieve the ability to live a life as full as God intended.

*quote from Dorothy Brown +Names and details have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Susy Francis-Thornton, Psy.D., CCCOC's Executive Director and licensed psychologist, offers bi-lingual (Spanish) clinical services and broad experience in counseling and program development. Her goal is to assist each person in maximizing his or her potential and creating the most meaningful life possible.



Sydney's Courage

By Amanda Bull M.A., LPC

This year, the theme for our vision benefit is **Courage on the Journey**. Though one might not immediately associate counseling with courage, at CCCOC our therapists witness daily the extreme courage needed by clients to directly confront their suffering. This courage fuels the journey of change and growth. The following is

an example of one such client who showed courage in the face of immense pain and difficulty.

Sydney is a young woman who lives in a poverty-stricken inner city neighborhood of Chicago. After moving out of her parent's home at a young age, armed with just an elementary school education, she became involved in a series of emotionally, physically, and sexually abusive relationships. Amidst these relationships, she sought support through her local church and began walking with the Lord. Despite the renewal she experienced through her newfound faith and community, Sydney became easily pulled into old destructive patterns and entered into yet another severely abusive relationship.

With no social support or job, Sydney felt trapped and isolated. She lacked job skills and felt she lacked the means to provide for herself. As her social world had deteriorated over the years of isolation and abuse, she no longer had family or friends to whom she could turn. The idea of leaving the relationship caused her to fear for her physical and emotional safety. Sydney described herself as a broken woman; years of abuse had deteriorated her belief in herself and her sense of hope.

After years of a life plagued by fear, Sydney had the courage to confront her difficulties by seeking support from her pastor and by pursuing professional counseling at CCCOC. She entered therapy deeply motivated to end this cycle of abuse. Openly sharing her story with her therapist began a process of healing for Sydney. It broke the secrecy surrounding her past and present abuse. As she began to cope with many traumatic experiences and as her confidence grew, she was able to reach out and share her story with members of her church community. Through counseling, Sydney developed a safety plan and an escape plan, empowering her to leave her abusive husband and face the uncomfortable emotions tied with leaving him. Sydney used her time in therapy to learn new skills, including job hunting strategies and ways to cope with emotions. As she resourcefully utilized her newfound support group, Sydney was able to secure a full time job and began to feel that she had regained her stability. She continues to utilize therapy as a place to gain insight into her past experiences and to deepen her confidence in her sense of who she is, as the Lord views her.

Personal Growth Group

A coed therapy group for young adults (aged 22-35) interested in a communal approach to personal growth

Do you wish to grow in communication, relationships, to address past hurts and plan for the future? The group will set its own agenda based on members' needs and will be facilitated by two therapists. It is limited to 10 people and will close after the 2nd session.

Cost is \$50/week

Begins February 10, 2009

Weekly for 14 weeks from 6-8pm

For more information, please call Hannah Im, MA (312-573-8867) or Judi Zink, MA, LCPC (312-573-8865).

Since We Last Spoke...

CCCOC has been busy over the past few months!

Eva Ponder, Susy Francis-Thornton, and Rodney Harris have offered two free training sessions on "How to Avoid Marrying a Jerk" and will offer a third on February 6th and 7th.

We've continued to partner with the Chicago Area Christian Training Consortium to provide training for students pursuing their doctorate. A seminar was led by Susy Francis-Thornton on addressing cultural differences in therapy.

Sally Hale, Megan Thron, and Susy Francis-Thornton led a training on effective discipline for fellow Cornerstone Center ministry, the Child Learning Center.

We've prioritized working with local churches, such as The Moody Church where Susy Francis-Thornton, Judi Zink, and Megan Thron presented pastoral team about client referrals.

In December we hosted the LaSalle Street Church's Café Cornerstone and raised \$350. Thanks for all your help!

Sydney exemplifies the courage it takes to empower oneself to grow while confronting emotional pain and seemingly entrenched relational dynamics. She had the courage to face the reality of her situation and to move forward into new ways of being. She daringly reached out to others for support. Sydney had the courage to obtain crucial new skills and to assert herself against the injustices in her life. As a result of her courageous journey, Sydney has regained her hope, her belief in herself, and her ability to trust both God and others.

The sliding fee scale services provided at CCCOC serve to provide help to those throughout Chicago that need it the most, yet tragically cannot afford it. Sydney's inspirational story is just one example of the many lives touched by the generous gifts of individuals such as you. We ask that you prayerfully consider partnering with us to provide healing within our community.

*Names and details have been changed to protect confidentiality.

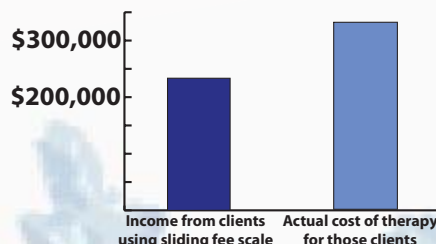
Year End Financial Update

A huge thank you to
all of our donors!
In the year 2008 we received

\$56,419.67

in monetary donations.

We are so grateful for all of
your help and support!



We gave away **\$96,521**
in non-reimbursable services to clients
utilizing the sliding fee scale in 2008.

The Journey- How You Can Help

Interested in learning how you can help CCCOC? Visit www.chicagocounseling.org and click on the "journey" icon. Once you see this picture, trace your mouse along the path to see specific client stories and learn how you can help to sponsor their therapeutic journey.



CCCOC's philosophy is built around three firm commitments. The first is to Christ and His Kingdom, holding Scripture as the authoritative and truthful revelation of God, as well as maintaining a deep respect for people and their personal faith, no matter what their spiritual background and walk of life. Secondly we are committed to the highest standards of professional and ethical conduct. Finally, we commit ourselves daily to compassion, helping all persons reach emotional healing.

Our Board of Directors

Board President, Phyllis A. Nsiah-Kumi, MD
University of Nebraska

Past President, Jennifer L. Merck
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Board Treasurer, Carolina Reyes, MBA
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Board Members

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David L. Bea & Associates

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E. Susanne Francis-Thornton, Psy.D.
Executive Director

Andrew Ballew, MA
Therapist

Jane Braun, Psy.D.
Therapist

Amanda Bull, MA, LPC
Therapist

Nicole Gilbertson, MA
Therapist

Rodney Harris, Psy.D.
Therapist

Sally Hale, MA, LPC
Therapist

Andrés Herrera, MA
Therapist

Hannah Im, MA
Therapist

Eva Ponder, MSW, LCSW
Therapist

Megan Thron, MSW
Therapist

Amber Williams, BA
Therapist

Judith Zink, MA, NCC, LCPC
Therapist

Matthew Frantz
Marketing and Communications Coordinator

Carolyn Groenewold
Office and Human Resources Manager

Our 2009 Wishlist

Looking for a way to help but feel unable to donate monetarily? CCCOC would greatly appreciate gifts of other kinds including:

- Hotel Stays
- Airline Miles
- Children's Games/Toys
- Books/Training Materials
- Professional Volunteers

Who's New at CCCOC?

January is a time for new beginnings and Cornerstone is not exempt. This year we welcomed four new members to the CCCOC team.

Jane Braun, Psy.D., is a new practicum student at CCCOC. Along with being an established neuropsychologist, Jane will provide the Center assistance with individual and school group counseling.

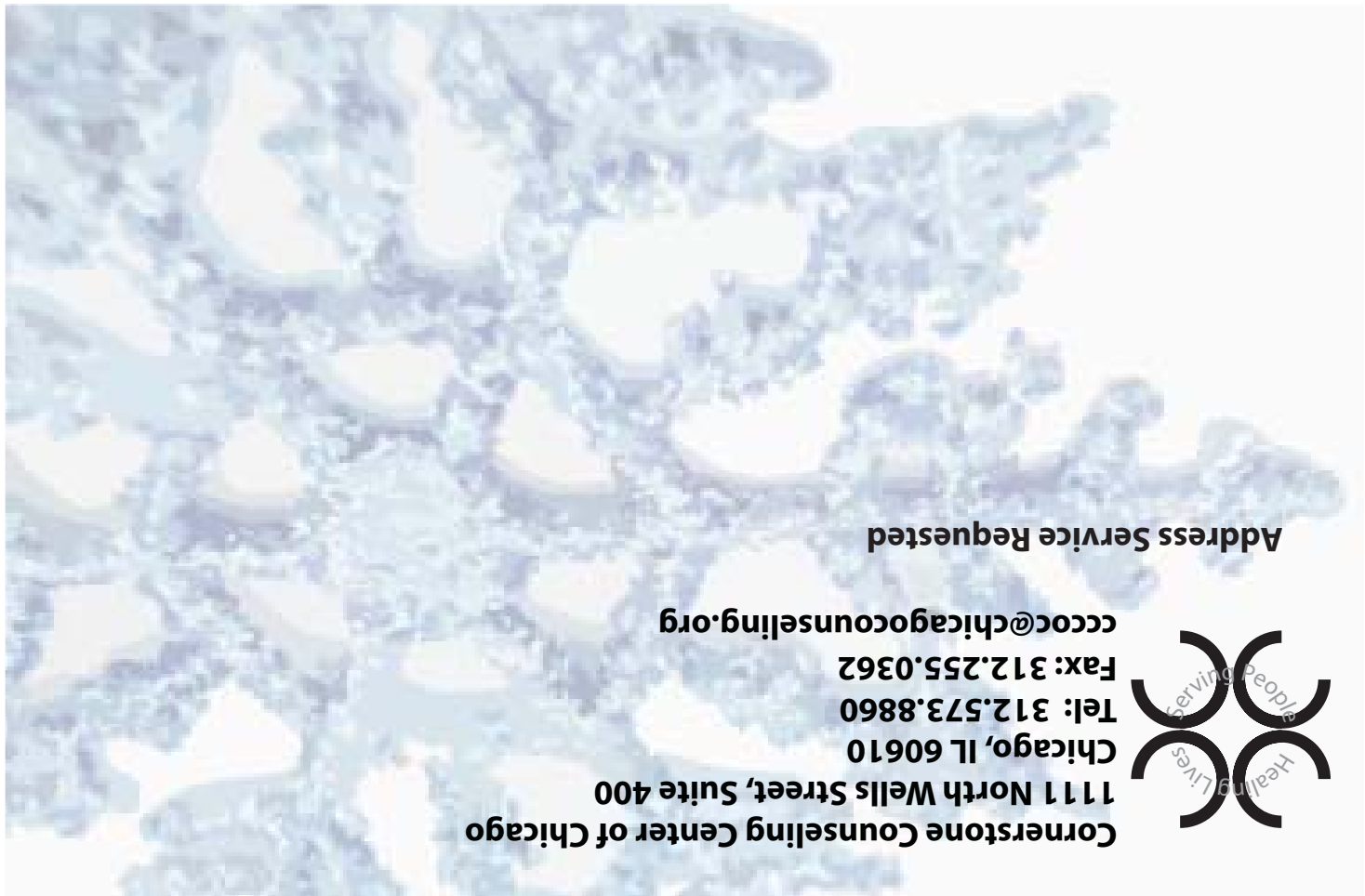
Andrés Herrera, MA joins CCCOC as a fee-for-service therapist. He is our fourth bi-lingual (Spanish) therapist and will be counseling groups and individuals.

Matthew Frantz, one of our fall 08 BA interns, started full time as our Marketing and Communications Coordinator. He will also be leading school groups.

In February, Jon Bull is coming on staff as our new Development Director and will be assisting CCCOC by reaching out to our donors and researching potential grants.

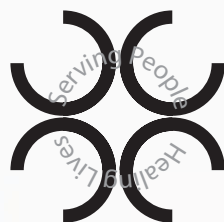
Goodbyes

On December 7th, we said farewell to board members Nathan Schuch and Erin Alexander. We offer them our sincerest thanks for their hard work, dedication and continued support of CCCOC.



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Courage on the Journey

Cornerstone Counseling Center of Chicago's 8th Annual Vision Dinner & Silent Auction

Thursday, March 26, 2009
5:00 pm

Holiday Inn Mart Plaza

Help provide courage and support to those in need



Participate in our silent auction for a chance to win great gifts!

Donate to sponsor a specific client!

RSVP today by visiting www.chicagocounseling.org, or by calling 312-573-8860 by March 20th.



Michelle McKinney Hammond, our guest speaker, is a best-selling author, speaker, singer and television co-host. Michelle's underlying message is "get yourself in spiritual order and your natural life will come together." Her passion is to give relevant and workable solutions to people's questions based in timeless

spiritual truths. She seeks to share solid, effective principles that will help others navigate through the journey of life and reach the ultimate destination of living and loving to their fullest potential.