Building Stronger Family Bonds
President’s Letter
from WILLIAM M. PINSOF, PhD

Dear Friends,

Since its founding in 1968, The Family Institute has been passionately committed to fulfilling our mission – strengthening and healing families from all walks of life through clinical service, education and research. Our research and education programs continuously inform our psychotherapeutic practice. Consequently, we believe that our clients receive the very best individual, couple and family therapy. The synergy of clinical service, education and research creates a dynamic through which we not only enhance the lives of our clients but the field of family therapy as well.

Each month, we help hundreds of people live healthier and stronger lives. Last year alone, Institute therapists provided over 73,000 hours of therapy to more than 7,000 men, women and children. We strongly believe that quality mental health care should be available to all who need it, regardless of their financial resources. In the coming year, we will strive to help an even greater number of people. Please help us.

Thank you for your continued support.

With gratitude,

William M. Pinsof
President

Institute News is published three times a year for friends, donors and alumni.

Join The Family Institute mailing list and receive updates and further information on events and happenings by contacting Michelle Weil at 312-609-5300, ext. 480 or mweil@family-institute.org.

If you are interested in donating to The Family Institute, please contact Tamara Reed at 312-609-5300, ext. 484 or treed@family-institute.org.

Looking for a speaker? Email speakersbureau@family-institute.org.

If you are a member of the media and would like to speak with a Family Institute expert, please contact Cyndi Schu at 312-609-5300, ext. 483 or cschu@family-institute.org.

Questions or comments about Institute News? Email newsletter@family-institute.org.

Photos courtesy of Andrew Campbell Photography and Beth Rooney Photography.

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WE’VE CHANGED!

Check out our redesigned website!
www.family-institute.org

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter (@tfinu).

View past Institute News at www.family-institute.org/newsletter.
Mental Health Human Rights Clinic: A Personal Connection

By Cyndi Schu, Director of Public Affairs

The Family Institute is committed to strengthening and healing families from all walks of life. Through a unique program, the Institute is helping some families gain asylum in the United States.

The Mental Health Human Rights (MHHR) Clinic, a practicum in our Master of Arts in Counseling program, provides the basic right of mental health services to marginalized populations. Our therapists-in-training serve as client advocates to individuals and families, providing their attorneys with comprehensive mental health evaluations.

Damir Utrzan, a 2013 graduate of the Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy program, recalls a remark by The Family Institute’s President, William Pinsof, PhD, that “the greatest gift we can give a child is his or her family.” These poignant words stuck with Damir so much that he knew he had to become involved in the MHHR Clinic.

As a child of Yugoslavian immigrants, he remembers starting elementary school in Germany one August and being an outsider, always grouped with other refugees, not given many resources or expected to reach goals. While he learned to overcome those limitations, he notes that “the circumstances of my journey have provided me with an opportunity to trust that diversity is a means of learning, which makes that August morning in Germany an influential point of my journey.”

As the only Marriage and Family Therapy student in the MHHR Clinic, Damir could relate on a different level and empathize with those he was helping. In fact, he met with clients in the same building where he received his citizenship, recalling “it was bizarre to just walk past the metal detectors and be led to an undisclosed location within the same building in which I was once subjected to a stringent search by officials.”

Currently working toward his PhD in Family Social Science at the University of Minnesota, Damir remembers one case the most.

“In collaboration with a Counseling student, we conducted a psychiatric evaluation with a detained gay foreign national. He was detained for over a year and afraid of returning to his homeland in fear of persecution. We conducted another interview after meeting with his attorney and applied the knowledge from our respective programs in writing the affidavit. The collaboration between Marriage and Family Therapy and Counseling is exemplary of where the field of social science should head because it provided different, yet important, perspectives to the identical problem.”

Once a person is granted asylum by the judicial system, they are offered continued therapy at The Family Institute, where they receive help to work through their traumatic stress and move forward in life.

On seeking asylum

“If you haven’t experienced it, you can’t fully understand it.”

– Damir S. Utrzan, MSMFT

Damir continues, “The MHHR Clinic is a unique and special characteristic of The Family Institute in that it not only provides human rights advocacy, but also expands the personal understanding of clinic interns. It is one of the numerous deep-seated advantages that The Family Institute has over other graduate programs in mental health services.”

For more information on the MHHR Clinic, contact Constance Sheehan, LCSW, at csheehan@family-institute.org.
Mindfulness: Enhancing lives

By Michael Maslar, PsyD, Director of the Mindfulness and Behavior Therapies Program

Over the last few decades, researchers and therapists have realized the benefits of an age-old meditative practice called mindfulness. We can define this form of mind-body medicine as focusing awareness on the present moment in an accepting way. This simple yet effective way of getting to know ourselves, our behaviors, and our relationships more intimately can have important effects. Research shows that practicing mindfulness can have a range of physical and psychological benefits including reduced stress, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and chronic pain. Mindfulness practice can also improve relationships. Increased marital satisfaction, better communication, improved empathy and compassion, increased acceptance, better awareness of interactional patterns, a deeper sense of safety in relationships, and increased experience of unity with others have all been associated with mindfulness.

Here at The Family Institute, we offer a number of therapies that use mindfulness practice, behavioral skills derived from mindfulness, and principles based in mindfulness to help people with a variety of problems.

• **Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)** teaches people a collection of behavioral skills to address multiple, complex problems that have not responded well to other therapies, including self-injury, suicidality, eating disorders, and depression.

• **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)** helps people live life more fully in the present moment, be better able to act on important values, and be less focused on painful thoughts and feelings. ACT is an effective treatment for depression and anxiety, among other problems.

In our own research, we have found family-based DBT can help teenagers with multiple problems and their parents reduce their symptoms. In another study, groups of dementia patients and their caregivers who learned mindfulness practice showed reduced depression and stress, and improved quality of life.

Together, Mindfulness and Behavioral Therapies help to enhance the lives of individuals, families, and couples struggling to cope with intense emotions and impulsive or difficult-to-control behaviors.

For more information on the Mindfulness and Behavior Therapies Program, contact Dr. Michael Maslar at mmaslar@family-institute.org.

TESTIMONIALS

“I really like mindfulness. It helps especially when I have a lot going on, and it gives me a break from feeling overwhelmed so I can better focus.”

– Adolescent Mindfulness client

“Mindfulness keeps me from getting overwhelmed. When horrible feelings overwhelm me, I sit with them for 90 seconds and, chances are good, 90 seconds later they have changed.”

– Adult Mindfulness client
Family businesses present a complex blend of two overlapping systems: the family and the business. Participants in family businesses know the challenges of navigating the complicated relationships embedded in these two systems. Couples working together present particularly intricate issues. The Family Institute’s Family Business Program provides family businesses with knowledge and expertise developed over 40 years of studying and caring for family relationships.

Jane and Sam met on the job. Jane founded her meeting planning company after years of organizing corporate meetings for her employers. Sam managed and owned the company his father founded, with several of his siblings still working for him. The couple’s businesses were intricately related: Sam’s company was Jane’s biggest supplier, while Jane’s company was Sam’s biggest client, and they shared office space.

Establishing boundaries between business and home, setting family financial goals, dividing household responsibilities, and finding a way to grow their new relationship outside the glare of “family” and “business,” posed significant challenges for the married couple. The Family Institute provided a safe place for the couple to raise concerns about their businesses and address those concerns in a productive way. After meeting with a therapist, they agreed to set regular times to discuss business issues, assuaging Sam’s feeling of being ambushed with business complaints the moment he got home from the road. Jane was able to voice her feelings of not being treated respectfully by members of Sam’s family, and Sam was able to support Jane’s needs for more civility, especially in the workplace. They also resolved an ongoing issue about Sam’s ad hoc billing practices when Jane made it clear that her clients wouldn’t pay unless his invoices conformed to a prescribed format. Sam’s “ah-ha” moment came when he realized how his billing methods were affecting the couple’s personal cash flow.

Stories like this depict how The Family Institute works with both the family business and the family’s relationships in order to strengthen both client systems.

For more information on the Family Business Program, contact Jean Terrien, LCPC, JD, at jterrien@family-institute.org.
Bette D. Harris Clinic: Putting heart and soul into therapy
By Cyndi Schu, Director of Public Affairs

The Family Institute prides itself on offering high quality mental health care to people from all walks of life, regardless of ability to pay. To that end, the Institute houses the Bette D. Harris Family and Child Clinic at each of its locations – Evanston, Chicago, Northbrook and LaGrange Park. Clients receive exceptional counseling on a sliding-fee scale by graduate-level therapists-in-training.

Recent graduate, Jenna Zimmerman, MSMFT, saw numerous clients in the Clinic and the community throughout her time as a graduate student at the Institute. Her experience in the Bette D. Harris Clinic enhanced her education by giving her the opportunity to actively apply what she was learning in the classroom. “Learning about therapy and practicing therapy are quite different from one another, and it takes both to become a good therapist.”

A grateful family shared its experience with the Institute and Jenna, their therapist.

The family recently moved to the United States from another country. The transition did not go as smoothly as planned, and many constraints came up along the way. The family of five – dad, mom and three daughters – came to therapy when the family structure became noticeably off-balance, and the children were having difficulties within the school system. Therapy focused on helping the parents become more consistent and to establish boundaries and a routine.

“[My wife and I] got great support to re-organize our family, to change, to live in the community and be safe. Jenna’s interest gave us a sense of familiarity,” wrote the client. “Jenna [made us] think and rethink. Sometimes we couldn’t answer but just the question was enough to have an experience – personal or familial.”

As a result, the family engaged in activities together to promote communication, openness and fun. Meeting twice a week for therapy, they were dedicated and took the time to think about what was discussed, and worked toward change. The family encouraged each other to be better, improving their family bond.

“We understand now that losing family organization is easy and so difficult to overcome,” the client continued.

Jenna said, “My heart and soul goes into this work and I strive to help clients find their inner strength to lift constraints and achieve goals.”

The Clinic offers the same mental health care the Institute is known for in its Staff Practice. Clients are treated with the same respect, dignity and appreciation. Generous donations help keep the Clinic open. Each day, grateful clients pass through our doors on the way to changing their lives.

For more information on the Bette D. Harris Family and Child Clinic, visit www.family-institute.org or call 847-733-4300, ext. 263.
Rainbow Families: Promoting and guiding the LGBT community
By Aaron Cooper, PhD, Program Director, LGBT Program and Rainbow Families

The Family Institute’s Rainbow Families program offers lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals affirmative and supportive mental health services directed to their unique needs. Clinicians help to understand and effectively respond to these challenges in ways that promote an individual, couple or family’s well-being. Through the Rainbow Families program, gay men and lesbians, whether as couples or as families raising children, seek help as they face an array of thorny challenges that can require the help of seasoned professionals. One of The Family Institute’s core values is that “family takes many forms, and is not limited by the boundaries of biology and marriage.” Helping families and couples is the hallmark of The Family Institute’s mission.

Gay couples often encounter family resistance when their relationship gets serious, especially when there is mention of upcoming marriage plans. Many parents find it hard to welcome into the family their child’s same-sex boyfriend or girlfriend. Families are at risk of schism at times like this, as we see in the following illustration.

“My traditional Indian parents refused to let me bring my partner home to meet the family,” says Arnav, a 36-year-old software engineer. “It hurt both of us to be treated that way.”

The men had been together for three years when they phoned The Family Institute for help.

“Our therapist helped us figure out how to honor my parents without compromising my own values, or the dignity of my relationship,” he says. “I know we couldn’t have done it alone.”

In the Rainbow Families program, the Institute guides individuals, couples and parents through these uncharted waters, coaching them about how to navigate the world of marriage and how to support their children’s needs.

For more information on Rainbow Families, contact Dr. Aaron Cooper at acooper@family-institute.org.

Giving Back: Helping the Institute help others
By Tammy Reed, Director of Development

“Giving back is so important to me. Had someone not done it for me, my life would be very different.”

“We are paying it forward. The Family Institute made a tremendous, positive difference in our family’s life. It is only right that we do what we can to help the Institute do that for someone else’s family as well.”

“I want to support the work of The Family Institute because it’s the right thing to do. So many people, so many families, could benefit from their knowledge and truly need their help. I want to do my part to make a difference and this is one of the best ways to do so.”

These are just some of the words we hear from donors as it relates to their philanthropic support of The Family Institute.

The Institute is committed to strengthening and healing families from all walks of life as evidenced by the caliber of our clinical services, our education programs and our research endeavors. As expressed in the sentiments above, The Family Institute is breaking down barriers and making a significant difference in the lives of those who walk through our doors. Every day we see our impact reflected in the faces of those we serve. Families, individuals and couples, each from diverse backgrounds throughout the Chicagoland area, receive the comprehensive and integrative counseling care that defines the heart and soul of who we are and what we do. We are particularly proud of the work done through the Bette D. Harris Family and Child Clinic. Last year, the Institute provided more than 16,000 sessions through the Clinic at an average fee of $11. At the Institute, all families find pathways to healing and health, regardless of ability to pay or access to insurance.

Philanthropic support is critical to our efforts. It is in part because of this support that the Clinic has never turned anyone away due to an inability to pay.

Please consider making a gift to The Family Institute today so we can continue to help families lead happier and healthier lives.

DONATE TODAY!
Simply return your gift in the enclosed envelope or give online at www.family-institute.org/donate.
The mission of The Family Institute at Northwestern University is to strengthen and heal families from all walks of life through clinical service, education and research.

An affiliate of Northwestern University, The Family Institute is a unique, innovative not-for-profit organization, governed by its own independent Board of Directors and responsible for its own funding. We have four staff practice locations, including Evanston, Chicago, LaGrange Park and Northbrook. For more information on our staff practice, please call 847-733-4300 or visit our website at www.family-institute.org.

**NOW AVAILABLE:**
**Career counseling at The Family Institute**

- For recent college graduates unable to establish a meaningful career path
- For mid-career men and women dissatisfied with work and considering a change
- For those unemployed and seeking guidance about ways to move forward

In five sessions or less, our career counseling professionals assist men and women in leveraging skills and interests toward a satisfying and rewarding career path. For more information, contact Dr. Fran Giordano at 847-733-4300, ext. 208 or fgiordano@family-institute.org.

**Circle of Knowledge Events**

- **October 29, 2013**
  - Love & Happiness: Relationships in the African American Community
  - Victory Apostolic Church, Matteson

- **November 14, 2013**
  - Sex, Power & Love: A marital triangle
  - Northmoor Country Club, Highland Park

- **February 2014**
  - Intimacy and Love in the African American Community
  - Location TBD

If you are interested in more information about our upcoming events, please contact Michelle Weil at 312-609-5300, ext. 480 or mweil@family-institute.org.

**LOCATIONS**

**Bette D. Harris Center–Headquarters**
618 Library Place
Evanston, IL  60201
847-733-4300

**LaGrange Park**
335 North LaGrange Road
LaGrange Park, IL  60525
847-733-4300

**Millennium Park**
8 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 500
Chicago, IL  60603
312-609-5300

**Northbrook**
666 Dundee Road, Suite 1501
Northbrook, IL  60062
847-733-4300