

# ST. ANN'S HOME & SCHOOL

SPRING 2013

Celebrating 88 years of helping children and families.

## Talking a Good Story

*Former student speaks volumes about hard work and determination*

### ON A SCHOOL DAY NEARLY

sixteen years ago, Barbara got the call... her son William, a third grader, after having a rocky spring and summer, was having what would eventually be identified as a full-blown manic attack. For Barbara and her husband Harold, frightened just doesn't describe how they felt.

Because of this episode, William went directly to a mental health facility specializing in children with mental health needs. William was stabilized, taken off the medication that likely fueled the mania, and was released to go home with his parents. The incident, while traumatic to all involved, started the

process of correct diagnosis and a path forward. William was fortunate to be referred to the service of an excellent child psychiatrist who evaluated him and recommended a full neuropsychological evaluation. The result was a dual diagnosis of Aspergers Syndrome accompanied by juvenile bipolar disorder. For William's parents, this was both good news and bad; good because they then knew what was going on with their son and what was behind his behavior—bad because like all parents, hearing their child had a health issue, not to mention a mental health issue, was very difficult.

Barbara responded like she has always done when

confronted with the unknown; she looked it up, researched it, and read all she could. When she began reading the book *Thinking in Pictures* by Temple Grandin, Barbara said she "could not finish it." She was afraid that just as Grandin admitted to not having the typical feelings of empathy, caring, and what most of us would call 'love' for others, her son would not either. After a six-month period of teasing out the right medications and doses, William was in a much better place. And so goes their journey.

In his school, where he received additional support and accommodations, it was quickly clear that not all of William's special needs could



William XXXXX

be met within his public school system. With the full recommendation of the school district, Barbara and Harold were given 3 to 4 special

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## DBT: A Complement to Traditional Therapy

*Therapists add another treatment modality*

### ON A RECENT AFTERNOON

at St. Ann's, residential therapist, Kate Tahmoush, LICSW, together with staff from the unit led a group of residents through a series of exercises aimed at helping them to relax, breathe slowly and focus. They closed their eyes and were asked to imagine being on a beach. Many of the children, adolescents, and young adults receiving treatment at St.

Ann's often find it difficult to focus on anything peaceful and calm, instead focusing on the negatives. On this day, the focus of the group was on learning to acknowledge, and accept, that it is possible to bring two opposites together, such as both positive and negative thoughts, and that both thoughts can coexist. This is an example of mindfulness, one DBT related technique often used along

with more traditional therapy.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy, or DBT, originally developed by Marsha Linehan of the University of Washington, is a form of psychotherapy that emphasizes the development of four skill sets: mindfulness, interpersonal effectiveness, emotion regulation and distress tolerance. Initially developed to address and treat self-harming behaviors

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# Success, Training, and Tradition

## OVER THE YEARS ST. ANN'S

Home & School has been in operation, we have had literally thousands of children, adolescents and young adults come through our doors. When they move on, we often don't know what kind of success they may have had in life.

Sometimes, however, we do know. In this issue, you will read a wonderful success story about a young man with Asperger's who attended our Day School and has gone on to not only attend but graduate from college. Quite a story.

Also, recently six of our residential therapists attended a three-day specialized training on DBT or Dialectical Behavior Therapy. Each of them has brought aspects of DBT into their own therapy process and find it a beneficial complement to traditional treatment.

Lastly, all the residents are looking forward to some time away this summer at The Cape House, donated for the 28th year by the New England Food Foundation. We must rely on donations—your donations—to keep this tradition going



**Denis Grandbois, President/CEO**

and hope the residents can count on your support as we continue to do our very best to take care of this vulnerable population and give them the very best chance of success. ■

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# Talking a Good Story

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education schools to visit. Both felt that St. Ann's had the best "feel" and the best fit for William. One of the things that impressed them about St. Ann's was the focus on learning. Barbara stated it was clear that "all the behavioral systems were designed to keep the children in the classroom and to support the return to class when it was necessary for them to leave temporarily." She added that "St. Ann's provided a safe place for William;" it provided him external controls until he was able to develop his own internal behavioral controls. "St. Ann's staff were amazing, operating like a well-oiled machine." Barbara and Harold felt the relief because "at St. Ann's William was no longer the exception to the norm."

In the ninth grade, after nearly 6 ½ years at St. Ann's, the staff recommended that William find a high school placement better tailored to his specific neuropsychological requirements of his Aspergers.

With his home school district's assistance he transferred to a special education high school program designed for kids like him who had neurological learning and behavioral challenges. He spent four terrific years there with another talented therapeutic staff and passed the MCAS tests in his second year. William returned to his home school district to complete a second senior year and graduated with the class of 2008. William's parents, along with the out-of-district coordinator, felt he was not quite ready for life as a college student, so he applied to and was accepted at Thames Academy, part of Mitchell College in CT. For the next year learning focused on identifying and mastering the skills needed to attend college, ranging from academics to practical social skills such as living with a roommate. He flourished.

Fast forward... William graduated from Lasell College in Newton, MA this May with

a B.A. in Communications and a concentration in Sports Broadcasting. He hosts a weekly radio show streamed from the college and worked for a local cable channel filming Lasell games, editing the footage and doing the play-by-play voice overs for broadcast. This year, he worked for the Harvard University Athletic Dept. editing game films for the coaching staff and working during games as a member of the events staff. His mother credits William's hard work and determination as the reasons for his success, as well as the terrific learning environment that began for him at St. Ann's. He loves to return to visit the staff who welcome him enthusiastically and marvel at his now 6' 2½" height!

William's mother also says we should not be surprised to see and hear more from William in the future, perhaps on ESPN with whom he is having discussions. Talk about communication! ■

# UPS Delivers for St. Ann's

**ON A RECENT SUNNY FRIDAY,** ten members of the UPS team from the Chelmsford, MA facility came to St. Ann's as part of their Neighbor-to-Neighbor campaign. One group took on the job of re-painting the lines in the front parking lot while the second group sanded and re-varnished the barn doors in the Adolescent Center gym. The group stopped for a photo with St. Ann's President & CEO, Denis Grandbois (rear, center).



We invite you to get involved

Support from the community is vital to our mission here at St. Ann's Home & School. For 88 years, we have helped children and adolescents in need through our residential facility and Chapter 766 Special Education School. Proud of our past, today, with our new Adolescent Center, we build for the future to ensure the growing numbers of children and adolescents in need can get help in a caring, warm environment. The children of St. Ann's Home & School need your help and support more than ever. To learn more about ways to give, please contact the Development Office today.

**John J. Rice, Director of Development at 978-682-5276, ext. 205 or [jrice@st.annshome.org](mailto:jrice@st.annshome.org) or visit our web site at [www.st.annshome.org](http://www.st.annshome.org). Thank you!**

# Activities: An Important Element

## Activities Department Gives an Outlet

**ON ANY GIVEN DAY,** or night, here at St. Ann's you will see residents taking part in many different activities. Together with unit staff, the Activities Department plans and coordinates pretty much

something for everybody. From shooting hoops in the gym to getting ready to open the Thursday bagel shop to maintaining the school garden, the Activities Department helps keep them busy! ■



A day at the beach.



Getting dirty in the garden.



Piñata time.



Outdoor games.



Snowtubing fun.

## DBT: A Complement to Traditional Therapy

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and thoughts in adults with borderline personality disorder, DBT is now being used effectively with adolescents exhibiting similar self-harming behaviors as well as those with pervasive emotional dysregulation, those with severe and often chronic symptoms and other co-occurring psychiatric illnesses, such as depression and anxiety. DBT is an evidence-based practice (EVP), meaning that it has been clinically tested for its effectiveness

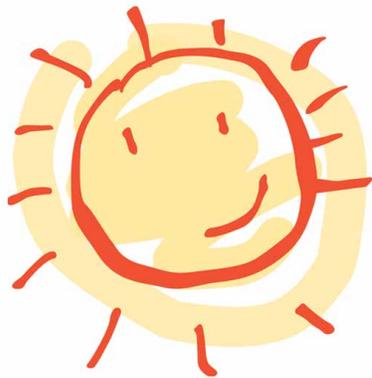
in adolescents and adults. Treatment components also include classroom-based DBT skills groups, individual DBT, group therapy, skills coaching, and when available, parent guidance. Additional treatment components, at the residential level of care, involve proactive case management, psychopharmacology (medication) evaluation and treatment, milieu therapy, and recreational therapies.

Recently, six therapists from the residential program

attended a 3 day-long training on DBT, and all of them have included components of DBT into individual and group therapy with their clients.

According to residential therapist, Kate Tahmoush, residents often present with multiple problems and can find it difficult to move away from negative thoughts/behaviors as it may be difficult to include any positive ideas or thoughts alongside these negative ones. In combining various DBT-based techniques,

such as mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation and interpersonal effectiveness, with traditional individual and group therapies, residents gain new skills that help enhance their ability to seek and find a balance between the negative thoughts and feelings and bring often overlooked positive aspects more to the surface. For more information about DBT at St. Ann's Home & School, please contact our Admissions Department. ■



# ST. ANN'S HOME & SCHOOL

SPRING 2013

Celebrating 88 years of helping children and families.

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\$100    \$75    \$50    \$25    Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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