



## The Bridge's Early Childhood Behavioral Health Program

As we prepare to celebrate our second "birthday", the staff of The Bridge's Early Childhood Behavioral Health Program would like to reflect the progress the program has made over the past two years and the plans for the future.

### The Program's "Toddler" Years

The Bridge's Early Childhood Behavioral Health Program became fully operational two years ago in September 2006 providing mental health services to children aged five and younger and their families in Palatine township. Since that time, the program has served 60 families with individual play and family therapy for concerns related to behavior, social-emotional development, and parenting. Many of these children were referred from the local schools, daycares, and pediatricians.

In addition, a group parenting course, called *Parenting Through the Early Years*, was offered this past year to parents of preschool and kindergarteners. The course is based on a filial therapy model where parents are taught the same relationship-based principles and skills that child therapists use with children such as reflective listening, structuring, and therapeutic limit setting.

The staff has also attended many trainings in order to ensure expertise in best practices for working

with this population. These trainings included: practitioner training on the manual used to diagnose mental health and developmental disorders of infancy and early childhood and both the state and national conferences on play therapy. Furthermore, two of the therapists recently became certified to provide services under the State of Illinois' 0-3 Early Intervention Program.



### As We Grow Up...

The Early Childhood Program has big plans for its third year. One of the initiatives is to make the Rand Road office more accessible for play therapy in order to better serve the families of young children in the north-east area of Palatine. At the Quentin Road office, there are also plans to evaluate and readjust the play materials in the existing play rooms.

The program plans to ex-

pand the groups offered to include a group for young mothers and their infants/toddlers focused on developing parenting skills and attachment.

In addition to in-office services, the program staff will be available to provide consultation and workshops at the local preschools and daycares on how to identify children at risk of developing social-emotional delays so

that they can provide appropriate and timely interventions.

Furthermore, the program intends to begin forming relationships/partnerships with other service providers in order to meet strategic plan goals of sustaining and expanding the program once initial funding is expended.

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Volume 1, Issue 1

September 1, 2008

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#### To access services:

If you are a provider interested in making a referral or a parent interested in initiating services, please contact Jamie Mazer, LPC by calling (847) 485-3072.

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#### Birthday Wish List

- Monetary donations in order to reach the program's initial fundraising goal of \$500,000
- A shelving system and installation for the playroom
- A portable DVD player for training and parenting groups
- Toys designated for children under the age of five that promote imaginary play such as dress-up clothes and a toy cash register



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The Bridge is a nonprofit agency serving children and families in the Northwest Chicago Suburbs for over 40 years.

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