The Hawaii Play Times

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE HAWAII ASSOCIATION FOR PLAY THERAPY
July 2008

Dear Members,

It has been a pleasure to serve on the board of directors as President of HAPT September 2007-2008. As my term draws to a close, I reflect on a few personal and professional lessons learned during this exciting and dynamic time for our organization.

When I became a HAPT member in September 2000, I had just graduated from Chaminade University with an emphasis in community counseling, never dreaming that the path would lead to working with children in the public school system. I knew so little about kids aside from having young children of my own.

Fortunately, I decided to join HAPT from the encouragement of a colleague, and attended the big APT conference in my father's hometown of New Orleans that October of 2000. I absolutely fell in love with play therapy and play therapists and decided to work diligently towards the goal of becoming an RPT-S.

Between the early millennium days and 2006, I reaped the rewards of membership, attending all the conferences, workshops, trainings, loving the hotel setting, partaking of the networking opportunities, munching on the breakfast goodies, lunches, and cookies/sodas, soaking up the presenters, paying the low registration fees, etc…. The assistance I was able to offer HAPT during those years was minimal; but the board and the conference and program committees appreciated the tiniest bit of help.

I was finally in a situation to commit to running for President-Elect in 2006. In accordance with Jungian thought, it was serendipitous that I had just completed my personal sand play process with the brilliant co-founder of HAPT Carla Sharp. Organizational leadership has been an adventurous insightful journey that facilitates self-reflection. I hope that I have grown and become a better SELF from the experience.

I will end this letter with sincere gratitude to all of the volunteers I have been delighted to work with and to learn from. The Webster definition of the word "volunteer": "A person who chooses freely to do or offer to do something without compensation or obligation." I might add in this case: "to further

the cause of promotion and education of play therapy." The following volunteers embody that definition:

Board of Directors 2006-2008:
Bonnie Coutsourakis- Past President 2006-2007
Monica Evans – President 2006-2007
Wendy De Vault – Secretary 2006-2007 and Fundraising Chair 2008
Nami Ann Dolan – Treasurer 2006 – 2008
Jennifer Takahashi – Member At Large – 2005-2006
Michelle Birdsall (formerly Kaya) – Member At Large – 2006-2008
Linda Rivera – President-Elect 2007-2008
Peggy Brandt – Secretary 2007-2008
(I have the pleasure of working with Mary Greaney as Treasurer, and Lyn Lee as Member at Large while I am in the Past President position during 2008-2009)

Conference Chairs – 2007
Gail Silva and Simone Macjiewski

Conference Committee - 2008
Rachelle Hansen, Barbara Lee, Christina Sprague, Scott O'Neal, Susha Cohen, Veronica Pahia; Registration table manned by Mary Lou Lomaka, Mary Milnor, Jeannie Teleia, Darlene Wade, Anita Trubitt; entertainment provided by Cheryl Ho.

Webmaster (and all round "would you mind doing just one more thing, including Registration Co-Chair, send out broadcast emails, do a PO run for bulk mailing…)"
Scott O'Neal

Program Chair, Pro BonoWorkshop Presenter, Interpreter for the Hard of Hearing, Play Therapy Community Outreach
Inga Park-Okuna

Program Committee Chairs
Lyn Lee
Michelle Birdsall

Nominating Committee 2006-2007
Pat Yuen (also Evaluation Chair)
Michelle Kaya

Nominating Committee 2008
Sue Bergman
Mary Milnor

CE Director and Registration Co-Chair
Anita Trubitt

* Many of the above have performed multiple positions throughout the years including President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Conference Chair to name a few. Also note that several of our HAPT volunteers and supporters have been our partners, spouses, children and relatives!

There isn't enough space to list the myriads of those of you who step up to the plate prior to and on the actual days of our conferences and workshops to assist us in any way that you can. Know that you are

highly appreciated. HAPT would not be the successful organization that it is, if it didn't have like-minded individuals who realize the value of "play is work, and work is play", in the spirit of volunteerism.

Infinite MAHALOs to all of HAPT's members.

Aloha,

Teresa Shigemasa, MSCP, LMHC, RPT-S
HAPT President

"Play Therapy and the Magic of Puppets" -- a review

by Lyn Lee, LCSW

Several years ago, Inga Park-Okuna was the featured speaker at HAPT's two day workshop, where participants created their own puppets and learned effective techniques for treatment.

Inga Park-Okuna, Workshop Presenter

On May 3, 2008 HAPT held its first full day seminar, with Inga returning by popular demand. "Play Therapy and the Magic of Puppets" gave over 40 participants another opportunity to create their own sock puppets. Although there were several examples on display, participants used a lot of energy, creativity and perseverance to create their own unique puppets.

They learned the all important technique of how puppets "talk". They practiced and practiced this-- not an easy skill. They learned how to hold puppets, how to cradle them, giving them personality and life.

Inga and our own Scott O'Neal demonstrated the use of a special bear puppet for the hearing impaired. In small groups, attendees participated in experiential role plays where stories were created through the use of their puppets.

Not only did participants learn how to make sock puppets, they learned therapeutic benefits. Puppets can be used in many different scenarios. They can be used to help a shy/hesitant child, a child can create their own stories, process particular issues and used in family treatment. Sometimes just having a basket of various puppets in your office can lead a child to spontaneously tell their story.

"Play Therapy Goes to Court"

~A Case Example~

by Anita Trubitt, LCSW, RPT-S

Five-year old Malia returns to her mother after two overnights with her father. She is alternately oppositional and teary. She tells her mother she "needs to find a new boyfriend" and that daddy tells her "she's gonna get him in trouble." The following weekend, when it is time to be with daddy again, she is clingy and says she doesn't want to go. Mother is torn between knowing she has to follow the court order and feeling like she is throwing her daughter to the wolves.

The first thing Malia does (whether alone or with either of her parents) when she enters the playroom is to take the wicked witch and stuff her in the small cage that she names "the jail." In a session with mother, she waves a dinosaur so close to her mother's face that I need to intervene and say I'm worried that mom might get hurt, reminding her that the playroom needs to be a safe place for everyone. In every session, she creates a scene in the sand with a mother unicorn and a big fierce bear, each seeking to possess a beautiful crystal. Whoever manages to snatch it away repeatedly buries it in order to keep it from being taken away again. Each acts aggressively toward the other. She rarely talks and when asked a direct question her usual response is "I don't know," or says with a broad grin, that she loves to eat spiders and centipedes.

Early in the therapy her father brought her to my door in his arms. She was crying. She said she didn't want to come. I asked if she wanted daddy to come with her. "No", she said. Asked if she wanted Grandma to come, she also replied "No," I said. "I cannot help children if they don't want to come so you can both go back to the car and decide what you want to do. If you don't want to come, you can stay in the car with grandma and I'll meet with daddy today." Five minutes later, he and I begin to talk and ten minutes after that there is a knock on the door and Malia, all smiles, wants to play.

In a session with her mother and mother's fiancé, they create a house of blocks that has no resemblance to a place of human habitation. No specific rooms are designated. Instead she builds two towers out of the smaller colored blocks. Mother keeps asking where her room should be and where they can put a table for eating. The child ignores her and instead takes the large green board and declares that this will be a "camping trip". A cooking pot "for marshmallows" is placed in the center, and she surrounds this with various lions, tigers and leopards, that she designates as mommy, uncle, daddy, grandma and herself.

In a session the following week with her father and grandmother (her other home), the block house is similar, in that no rooms are created and no people are placed. A similar "camping trip" is developed and eventually all the wild animals cross over into the block structure, knocking it down. Just as in her session with mom, she designates a wild animal for all of her family members in both homes.

When, toward the end of the session, I tell her I have something I want to say to her, she says she needs to go to the bathroom but I hold her hands just long enough to say "you have two houses, one for you with mommy and uncle, and another for you with daddy and grandma.. You have a right to love all of them and it isn't your fault that they don't get along. Now you can go to the bathroom!"

When she is gone I tell dad and grandma that I am very concerned about her oppositional behavior and aggressive play themes. I tell them that she is acting out the fight between her parents through her play. "This house that she has made is not a house at all and that tells me we all have a lot of work to do." I point out to them that while she is too young to express herself with words, she has told us through her play, by including <u>all</u> of her family members, how important all of them are to her. I tell them that "it is critical that none of Malia's important adults say anything bad about any family members or she will be seriously damaged. It is essentially the same message I delivered the week before to her mother and mother's fiancé.

This family, like most in my practice, was referred through our court, with an order for therapy for the child and parenting counseling for the never-married parents. Judges are less likely to appoint a custody evaluator because such a procedure cannot be covered by insurance (it is a forensic activity rather than a therapeutic one), and they are without the financial means to pay for such an evaluation. What many of the judges are doing instead, is giving me the authority to make recommendations that are not appropriate for a therapist. Why would they do that? Because many of them know and trust my work, and because it is expedient when they must prevail over an unreasonable number of cases every day.

For this family, a report is requested prior to the next status hearing about whether visits between the child and her father need to continue to be supervised by the grandmother, or whether it is safe for the child to begin unsupervised visits with her father. .There is currently a TRO in place that followed threatening behavior by father toward mother's boyfriend which the child witnessed.

The work with this family, then, has three tracks: (1) develop a trusting relationship with the child by providing a free and protected space in which she will find her own voice; (2) provide honest and sometimes painful feedback to the parents about how their fight is damaging their daughter and what they must do to remedy it; (3) provide the court with information that will assist the judge in making appropriate orders in the child's best interest, without over-stepping my role.

Track 1: Work With the Child

Some sessions will be non-directive and I will follow her lead, tracking her actions and reflecting her feelings. I will look for repeating patterns in her play and seek to understand their meaning, such as what the witch represents to her, and whether the bear and the unicorn resolve their conflict over the possession of the crystal. When we know each other better, I might draw a parallel between their difficulty sharing the crystal and her parents' difficulty in sharing her.

As she begins to open up about problems at either home, I will remind her that I can help with this if we all talk about it together, or that I can talk with that family member myself first. I will remind her of the confidentiality issue and that I won't share things she tells me with either parent unless I have her permission, but explain if she is being hurt, I have to tell.

I have recently begun to explore with children their understanding of (1)courts, (2)judges, (3)lawyers, (4)what they are and what they do, and (5)what advice children think judges should give their parents (Pruett, 1999). From these questions, I learn what misinformation, misunderstanding and confusion children hold about these complex issues from overhearing what their parents are saying. I'll ask a child if they would like to know what I know about this and if they say yes, I explain these concepts in the simplest possible language. When I ask them to say back to me what they heard, I know if they have it right or not.

As much as I can, while still empathizing about how sad and how hard it is to go back and forth, how scary to listen to parents fights, I give the message that grown-up problems are never a kid's fault and they will never have to choose because judges never want to talk to kids. Judges are the ones who choose where the child will live and how much time she'll spend with her other parent when parents can't decide themselves.
It amazes me to learn how many children believe that they will be able to talk to a judge and tell the judge which parent they want to live with. It equally amazes me to see how relieved they are when I tell them this won't happen.

In a nutshell, then, the work with the child is about emotional expression and healing, educating and coping

Track 2: Parenting Counseling

Lately I am much more likely to share the meaning of their child's play with the parents, in order to educate them on its importance in understanding the child. This tends to create more empathy for the child and can segue into Filial Play Therapy training for the parent(s) if they are interested and appropriate candidates.

In Malia's sandplay, I point out that when a theme is repeated week after week, it has enormous significance to the child, even if we don't yet understand what it might mean.. "This might seem like a lot of mumbo jumbo to you", I say, "but Malia might be the precious crystal over which the mommy unicorn and daddy bear are bitterly fighting." Both sets of parents seemed to understand this, just as they did the representing of every family member in the "camping" scene. I explain that young children's language is best expressed through their play and I take it very seriously, and they must too, if they are to better understand their child.

In sessions with each parent, feedback is given about the family play sessions and specific instructions about how to follow the child's lead more sensitively, how to enter

into "pretend play" with the child, how to call the child back to a task when she is wandering, and how to help her extend the play.

There is a huge educational component to this track that includes how to keep the child out of the middle of the parental conflict and how damaging to the child when they cannot do this. Material that I created for the KIDS FIRST program (Trubitt, 2004) is given to parents and outlines social-emotional needs at different stages of development, and how children respond to on-going parental fighting in each of these stages. It includes a number of suitable parenting plans for each stage.

The primary goal in work with the parents is to help them to separate their needs and feelings from those of their children and to accept the importance of both parents in their children's lives. The single greatest gift they can give their children is their permission to love their other parent.

Track 3: Writing a Report

The court order for Malia states that I am to serve as her therapist and to submit a report prior to the next hearing. In it I am asked to summarize the status of her therapy and to make a recommendation as to whether visits with her father should continue to be supervised by her grandmother.

The report will describe the child's current functioning and needs, the ability of each parent to meet her needs, and the quality of the parent-child relationships. I will state that I see no indication of any fearfulness or hesitancy in Malia toward her father. I will also remind the court that my role is not an investigative one and that it is therefore not ethically appropriate for me to make recommendations about custody or visitation questions. It will be the judge who can use the information I provide to make appropriate orders for the child's best interest.

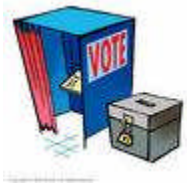
References

Pruett, Kyle, M.D. and Pruett, Marsha K., Ph.D. "Only God Decides: Young Children's Perceptions of Divorce and the Legal System". *Journal of American Academy of child Adolescent Psychiatry. Dec. 1999.*

Trubitt, Anita. *Play therapy Goes to Court, 2nd Edition: Implications and Applications in Contested Child Custody.* Self-published, 2004.

Anita Trubitt will be our presenter at HAPT's Annual Workshop on September 6, 2008 (Saturday) at Tokai University. The above case example is a representation of how she works with children who live in two homes. Flyers/registration forms for the workshop will be sent out very soon! Hope to see you then!

The Results are In…



Each year the Nomination Committee, along with HAPT's Board of Directors, actively seeks new candidates to run for office on HAPT's Board. This year's Nomination Committee (Sue Bergman and Mary Milnor) took on this task. In order to be a candidate for any of the positions, the person must have a current status as a Professional member of HAPT (APT has 2 categories of membership: Profession and Affiliate—the latter which comprises of students, etc.). The member must be willing to make a one-year commitment (with the exception of the President Elect position which is a three year commitment). Following the results of the elections, the incoming board members are invited to attend the Annual Planning Meeting (two days of intense planning during the summer prior to the start of their term). Here are the results of the 2008-2009 Elections:

- **President-Elect: Nami-Anne Dolan, NCC** (She has served as both Conference and Program Co-Chair and as HAPT's Treasurer in during the past 2 years)
- **Secretary: Peggy Brandt, M.Ed., LMHC** (She has served as HAPT's Conference Co-Chair in 2006 and HAPT's Secretary this past year)
- **Treasurer: Mary Greaney, MFT** (She has served as Vendor Chair for two of HAPT's past conferences)
- **Member-at-Large: Lyn Lee, LCSW** (She has served as Program Co-Chair and volunteered for HAPT in other capacities)

Congratulations to our newly elected board members!

To Charge or Not Charge --The Results

At the May 3, 2008 semi-annual membership meeting, the represented members (including votes that were mailed in by those professional members who could not attend the meeting) were included in a very important vote. The members voted on whether HAPT should start charging for its workshops. President Teresa Shigemasa opened the floor for discussion. Members discussed pros and cons to charging members a small fee to attend HAPT's workshops. The results concluded that members are in agreement that charging a small fee is reasonable. Members will pay a small fee to attend workshops starting at September 6, 2008 training.

Interested in FUNd Raising?

Here's a great opportunity to use your creative skills with HAPT. We are looking for an enthusiastic, hardworking person to be our Fundraiser Chair. Unfortunately for us, our previous Fundraiser Chair, Wendy DeVault, has moved off island. She did a wonderful job developing and conducting our first annual Silent Auction that was held at our February 2008 conference. Items auctioned off ranged from unique play therapy toys, supervision opportunities, and even an Advanced Play Therapy course by Carla Sharp. The silent auction brought in approximately $900, which was beyond our expectations!

The proceeds from the fundraising will be used to benefit the membership and possible scholarships of some kind for students or others who may be financially challenged. If you would like to assist in this exciting adventure please contact Linda Rivera, Psy.D, President Elect, at president-elect@hawaiiplaytherapy.net.

UPCOMING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Save the Dates!

"WHAT CHILDREN'S PLAY CAN TELL US ABOUT THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL DIVORCE: HOW WE CAN RESPONSIBLY USE PLAY IN ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT OF A CHILD CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE"

with Anita Trubitt, LCSW, RPT-S
September 6, 2008 (Saturday) at Tokai University
Earn 6.0 CE credits of play therapy training
ONLY $10 for members & $70 for nonmembers

"BEGINNING PLAY THERAPY"

The cycle begins again: with Carla Sharp, APRN, RPT-S.
Starts 9-13-08 to 11-15-08 with new and expanded content. 8 classes on Saturdays 1 to 4pm until 11-15-08. Sign up for one year of classes and save. Contact me about the Play Therapy Training Package at carla@carlasharp.com or 261-0066.

"THE EFFICACY OF SANDPLAY THERAPY AND ITS INTEGRATION WITH OTHER FORMS OF PSCYHOTHERAPY"

with Alexander Von Gontard, MD (Child Psychiatrist and Pediatrician)
Nov. 10, 2008 (Evening Lecture) 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm (exact time subject to change) Unitarian Church

"SANDPLAY THERAPY AND SPIRITUALITY IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS"

with Alexander Von Gontard, MD (Child Psychiatrist and Pediatrician)
November 11, 2008 (Veteran's Day) 9:00 am to 5:00 pm at Unitarian Church

Dr. Gontard will explore spirituality in children and how the numinous is touched during the sandplay process. Details to be announced later. Presented by Sandplay Therapists of Hawaii
For more information please contact Carla Sharp at carlasharp@hawaii.rr.com

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOMED:

As always, we welcome contributions to the newsletter: review of play therapy literature; tips or techniques you have found helpful; resources; upcoming trainings related to play therapy; letters to the editor, etc. Please send them to the Member-at-Large on the HAPT website.

FAREWELL EVERYONE!

This is my final newsletter as my term of Member-at-Large ends in September. It has been a great experience being on the board for the last 5 years. I will start a new adventure and chapter in my life as a Mommy this month so wish me luck. Lyn Lee will be our new Member-at-Large and I know she'll do a great job! Her term begins in September 2008. Thank you for all your support and contributions the past couple of years!

REMINDERS:

If you received this edition of the newsletter by regular mail and prefer to receive it by email, please send your name and email address to Ewabgirl@yahoo.com To ensure that you receive all HAPT news in a timely manner, please inform us of any name or address changes. Mahalo! ☺

To those of you who received this newsletter via email and do not wish to receive future email from HAPT, please type "Remove Me" in the subject line and return the email.

As a reminder, past editions of our newsletters are available for viewing at our website: www.hawaiiplaytherapy.net .

CONTACTING HAPT:

Please visit us on our website at www.hawaiiplaytherapy.net. We can also be reached by writing to P.O. Box 176, Pearl City, HI 96782, or emailing members of the HAPT Board of Directors.

HAPT 2007-2008 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(Left to Right: Michelle, Nami, Teresa, Linda, Peggy, and Monica)

Teresa Shigemasa, President, (president@hawaiiplaytherapy.net)
Linda Rivera, President-Elect, (president-elect@hawaiiplaytherapy.net)
Peggy Brandt, Secretary, (secretary@hawaiiplaytherapy.net)
Nami Ann Dolan, Treasurer, (treasurer@hawaiiplaytherapy.net)
Michelle Birdsall, Member-at-Large, (ewabgirl@yahoo.com)
Monica Evans, Past President, (past-president@hawaiiplaytherapy.net)