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SUMMER 2008

[www.txapt.org](http://www.txapt.org)



TEXAS ASSOCIATION FOR PLAY THERAPY

# PLAYBILL

## A Message from the President, Yvonne Garza

Greetings play therapy enthusiasts! TAPT is off to another great year. I am excited to be joining you as the new board President and grateful for the incredible group of folks I will be working with. Last year was my first year serving on the board as President-Elect and it was indeed a learning experience. I would like to thank our current Past-President Leah Miller for guiding me through the process of organizing a conference. I owe a great deal of gratitude to her for her advice, encouragement and wisdom. In my experience her "business sense" is a great asset to our board.

We are currently moving ahead to plan this year's 16th Annual Texas Association for Play Therapy Conference in San Antonio. Mark your calendar's for April 3-5, 2009. Our President-elect, Dr. Mary Morrison and her conference committee met this summer to begin strategizing and the "buzz" is that with San Antonio being a "great destination" city, this is one conference that will be surely be on your "favorites" list. The Omni San Antonio at The Colonnade is the conference hotel and is quite luxurious and at a reasonable conference rate. Our conference title this year is "Healing Hearts through Play." The key note speaker, Paris Goodyear-Brown, is sure to be a crowd pleaser. We look forward to seeing you there as we reconnect with old friends and make new acquaintances.



*Yvonne Garza, Ph.D., LMSW, LPC, Registered Play Therapist*



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**A Highlight from the TAPT Board of Directors Meeting  
September 19-20, 2008  
Friday 11:00 am to 7:00 pm and Saturday 8:00 am to 1:00 pm  
Omni Colonnade Hotel  
San Antonio, Texas**

**Ethics/Legislation Committee** .....  
**Julie Merriman**

The Senate is about to vote on broad tax relief extension legislation which includes mental health and addictive disorder parity provisions! The parity provisions are the result of long, careful negotiations and the passage by both the House and Senate of landmark parity bills (H.R. 1424 / S. 558) earlier this Congress. A vote is expected either today (Thursday, 9/18) or tomorrow.

**ACTION NEEDED:** Call your Senators to ask them to VOTE FOR the tax extenders legislation, including the mental health parity provisions.

**SUGGESTED MESSAGE:** "I'm calling to ask the Senator to vote for the tax relief extension legislation, and the important mental health parity provisions included in the legislation. American with private health insurance deserve the same parity of insurance coverage for mental and addictive disorders that members of Congress and all other federal employees get."

As always, be sure to leave your name and postal address with the Senator's staff person, and feel free to share your individual concerns regarding the lack of health insurance parity for coverage of mental health services. All Senate offices can be reached by calling the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at 202-225-3121, and asking for a particular Senator's office. To find out who your Senators are, go to <http://capwiz.com/counseling>, and enter your zip code in the space provided.

**Congress Approves Higher Ed Bill, With Loan Forgiveness Program for School Counselors**

On July 31st, Congress gave final approval to a compromise bill to overhaul the Higher Education Act. The bill, the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (H.R. 4137), was passed by the House by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 380-49. The Senate also approved the bill by a bipartisan vote of 83-8. The measure is the first comprehensive, long-term overhaul of the Higher Education Act in a decade. The bill now heads to the President for his signature. Following that, the Department of Education must issue regulations to implement the new law.

ACA is very pleased to announce that H.R. 4137 creates a new "Loan Forgiveness for Service in Areas of National Need" program. The loan forgiveness program covers 17 areas of "national need," including school counselors working full time in low-income schools (see definition of low-income school below).

To find out if the school that employs you is classified as a low-income school, you can check the U.S Department of Education's online database for the year(s) that you have been employed as a school counselor. Go to: <https://www.tcli.ed.gov/CBSWebApp/tcli/TCLIPubSchoolSearch.jsp>.

**Medicare Coverage of Licensed Professional Counselors**

Using the Talking Points below, call or email your Senators and ask them to cosponsor S. 921 and tell Senator Baucus how important it is that Medicare cover LPCs this year.

First, however, use the links above to find out if your Senator is already a cosponsor, or is cosponsoring the rural

health legislation which also includes counselor coverage language.

You can find out who your Senators are and email them by visiting the ACA internet legislative action center at <http://capwiz.com/counseling> and entering your zip code in the box indicated. Or you can contact your Senator by calling the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121 and asking for his or her office.

Letters and emails should be addressed as follows:

The Honorable {full name}  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

### **SAMPLE TALKING POINTS:**

- Medicare recipients needs better access to quality mental health care.
- Seniors have the highest suicide rate of any demographic.
  - o Over 70% having seen their physician within a month of committing suicide.
  - o The current system is not working.
- Covering LPCs and MFTs will add over 150,000 providers to the Medicare program and cost only \$200 million over five years.
- Ask him/her to cosponsor S. 921 and tell Senator Baucus to include its provisions in the upcoming Medicare legislation.

Peter Atlee  
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## CHAPTER SPOTLIGHTS

### Alamo Chapter

My name is Phronsie Kelly-Zion and I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Registered Play therapist – Supervisor. I live and work in San Antonio and am employed as a school social worker in the Judson ISD. I love play therapy and am happy and pleased to be able to use my play therapy training almost every day in my work and also in my life. My primary theoretical orientation is best described as “prescriptive eclectic” as I match the intervention to the child’s issues and needs. I love Adlerian PT and am also well trained in sandtray, but I continually strive to learn new ideas, theories and techniques. I am currently exploring Gestalt PT and am excited to learn more about this method. I have been a member of TAPT and the Alamo Chapter for about 10 years and have held a variety of board positions in both groups. I am a past editor of the TAPT newsletter. I love my work with children and their families and also enjoy supervising other play therapists as they grow and learn. Currently, I am in the final stages of a book project, Play Therapy for Very Young Children, that I am working on with Charles Schaefer, Judy McCormick and Akiko Ohnogi. This is an edited text, due to be released this September, focusing on play therapy with 0 – 3 year olds. I was happy to attend the recent TAPT conference in Dallas where I enjoyed many good presentations and lots of sharing with other amazing Texas play therapists. We are lucky to live and practice in an area with lots of play therapy expertise and training opportunities. For fun and relaxation, I love to travel, read and work outside in my yard. I am also expecting a child, a daughter, through international adoption.

### North Texas Chapter

NTC-TAPT spotlights Sandy Scholls. Sandy plays at Arlington Family Counseling. She is the chapter treasurer. As a Registered Play Therapy Supervisor, she has provided supervision for many professionals seeking the Registered Play Therapist designation. She has given many hours in support of our chapter.



### Far West Chapter

The Far West Chapter of the Texas APT wishes to spotlight Emily Stuessy, M.Ed., LPC-S, RPT-S, as our member to recognize for her contributions to our chapter and to the use of play therapy as a whole. Emily has been studying and practicing play therapy for the last twenty three years. She became a RPT-S in 1994. She is currently the Executive Director at the Jewish Family and Children’s Service where she has worked diligently to promote play therapy and the betterment of child mental health. She has contributed to play therapy over the years as a presenter, supervisor, founding member and board member for the Far West Chapter and as an instructor at the University of Texas at El Paso. The Far West Chapter is proud to have Emily Stuessy as a member of our chapter and our community.

## San Houston Chapter

**Kathy McDonald** is an elementary counselor with 15 years of counseling experience. She has advanced training in crisis response through the National Organization of Victim's Assistance and has presented on trauma reactions at TCA and ACA. Currently, Kathy is a doctoral student in the



counseling program at SHSU and is researching the role of therapy animals in enhancing the therapeutic relationship between elementary students and the school counselor. She will be presenting results from her pilot study at the TAPT conference in April of this year. Kathy combines her interests in animal-assisted therapy and the mitigation of childhood trauma by using therapy pets in a play therapy setting. She finds that the addition of animals encourages personal interaction from reluctant clients and adds a natural dimension to the therapeutic milieu.

You'll often find Kathy accompanied by one of her therapy pets Winston (seen in the photo) and Lucky Bunny.

**Sarah Kinsworthy** is currently a doctoral student in the Sam Houston State University Ph.D. Counselor Education program and is employed at the SAAFE House in Huntsville. Sarah has worked in the field of counseling doing rape crisis intervention, play therapy, individual and couples counseling, and chronic stress/pain



management. Sarah is working on publishing her qualitative research on RPT-S terminology of basic play therapy skills, and has published an article on filial therapy. She continues to do research on filial therapy with Hispanic parents as well as filial therapy with victims of abuse. She currently serves on the TAPT board as student director, and has received many awards in the counseling program to include Play Therapy Student of the Year.

Sarah works hard and plays hard, she enjoys spending her weekends on the lake riding her jet ski.

**Sarah Monakes Brand** is a Licensed Professional Counselor and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist Associate. She has received a Bachelors of Arts in Biology and Psychology from Coker College (Hartsville, SC), a Masters of Arts in Counseling from Sam Houston State University, and is working towards completing a Ph.D. in Counseling at Sam Houston. Sarah has conducted research on intercultural couples and sand tray therapy with adult male offenders. Being Persian-American, Sarah is fascinated by other cultures and how cultural factors influence communication patterns between individuals. She is currently employed with Kingwood Pines Hospital, a psychiatric hospital, where she provides therapeutic services to patients ages 3 and up. Sarah has most recently begun working private practice where she offers play, individual, and family therapy services.



When not at school or work, Sarah can be seen walking her miniature Daschunds (Fiona, Furgy, & Felix), exercising, spending time with family, or traveling.

## Investigating the Efficacy of Play Therapy with At-Risk Black-American Children Enrolled in Head Start: A Pilot Study

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**Angela Sheely-Moore**  
**Sue Bratton**

*Dr. Angela Sheely-Moore is Assistant Professor in the Counseling and Educational Leadership Department at Montclair State University and former Assistant Director of the Center for Play Therapy in the Counseling Program at the University of North Texas. Dr. Sue Bratton is Associate Professor and Director of the Center for Play Therapy in the Counseling Program at the University of North Texas. This research was partially funded by a grant from the Texas Association for Play Therapy and the UNT College of Education.*

An exhaustive review of the literature for the second author's meta-analysis of 93 outcome-based studies investigating the effects of play therapy found no studies focusing on the effects of play therapy with Black-American children (Bratton, S., Ray, D., Rhine, T., & Jones, L., August, 2005). Baggerly and Parker (2005) also highlighted the disproportionate amount of play therapy research focusing on Black-American and proposed "racial marginalization" (p. 389) of this population. Historically, Black-American families have under-utilized mental health services in community settings, and the review of literature shows that the counseling profession has been slow in addressing the unique needs of this population, particularly the needs of young children and their families. Research that not only investigates interventions targeted to respond to the needs of this population, but that is also sensitive to the developmental needs of young children and that can be administered in a setting that is readily accessible, is much needed in order for these children to receive help as early as possible.

This pilot study is designed to examine the effectiveness of a school-based play therapy program for three to five year-old Black-American children enrolled in Head Start and identified as at-risk for school success due to social-emotional and behavioral difficulties. Employing a pretest-posttest, control group design, this study investigated the impact of 12 to 15 weeks of child-centered play therapy on the internalizing and externalizing behavior problems of Black-American children referred for school counseling by their parents or teachers. This pilot study included 12 primary school-aged children ranging in age from 3 to 5. The six participants in the experimental group received weekly, 30-minute play therapy sessions (based on child-centered play therapy methodology) for a minimum of 12 weeks. The six participants in the wait-list control group received no treatment intervention until after the completion of the study. Because of the small sample size and the need to control for age, true random assignment was not utilized; however children were assigned to treatment and control groups by random drawing within age groups. Treatment providers included two doctoral-level research assistants with a master's degree in counseling and advanced training, coursework, and supervision in child-centered play therapy. All play therapy sessions were conducted in a specially equipped playroom located at the participant's school setting, that included toys recommended by Landreth (2002) with the addition of toys that were selected for their cultural sensitivity.

The Behavior Assessment System for Children-Parent Rating Scale (BASC-PRS) and the Teacher Rating Scale (BASC-TRS) were administered to parents and teachers of all participants pre and post treatment, along with exit interviews to determine the overall effectiveness of play therapy. The researchers are currently expanding the study to include more subjects. Data will be statistically analyzed using repeated measures ANOVA. Preliminary review of the existing data revealed that according to teachers' report, participants in the experimental group demonstrated an overall decrease in internalizing behavior problems. The average change score for the experimental group was 5, compared to -2.4 for the control group.

The BASC-TRS consists of the following subscales: Hyperactivity, Aggression, Anxiety, Depression, Somatization,

Attention, Atypicality, and Withdrawn. Based on teachers' report, all participants in the experimental group demonstrated an increase in the Social Skills subscale, with an average change score of 4.33. The average change score for the control group was -0.66. Note that socialization is one of the major goals of Head Start.

Specifically, teachers reported less problematic behaviors in Anxiety, Depression, Atypicality, and Withdrawn subscales, with average change scores of 7.33, 8.83, 6.33, and 0.83, respectively. In contrast, teachers reported an increase in problematic behaviors for the control group in Hyperactivity, Aggressive, Anxiety, Depression, Somatization, Atypicality, and Withdrawn subscales. The average change scores as reported by teachers were -0.66, -6, -2.2, -4.5, -0.5, -10.66, and -7.33, respectively.

Post-interviews were also conducted by investigators to determine the overall effectiveness of play therapy. Teachers reported on the positive effects of play therapy:

"Play therapy was invaluable to this child. He had been traumatized with Katrina and was very scared of change and people. He is now more relaxed, but still has issues with strangers and at times other races – less clingy, easier transition, more confidence."

"She seems happier and is definitely less clingy. Before play therapy she was much more moody and often chose to isolate herself from others. Now she involves herself in all aspects of the program."

"My children seem to communicate more since the play therapy began – they are less clingy and seem to understand better."

Based on preliminary results of this pilot study, play therapy shows promise as an effective treatment modality that benefit at-risk Black-American preschoolers enrolled in Head Start. However, additional research is needed to conduct a study with a larger sample size, more stringent methodology, and quantitative analyses.

## References

Baggerly, J., & Parker, M. (2005). Child-centered group play therapy with African American boys at the elementary school level. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 83*(4).

Bratton, S., Ray, D., Rhine, T., & Jones, L. (Aug. 2005). The efficacy of play therapy with children: A Meta-analytic review of the outcome research. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 36*(4).

Landreth, G. (2002). *Play therapy: The art of the relationship*. (2nd ed.). Muncie, IN: Accelerated Development Inc.

## Tribute to Dr. Tom Hoeffner

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Dr. Hoeffner, a dear friend and colleague, died unexpectedly last summer while on vacation with his wife, Marilyn Ross and son, Christopher. While some of you may not have known Tom, his involvement in the early years of TXAPT laid the foundation for the great organization we have today. He served as Director-at-Large from 1996-1998 and Newsletter Editor from 1996-2002. As a co-coordinator for the Texas Challenge project, he challenged play therapists to volunteer time in schools. Tom was methodical and very thorough when working on the board and never lost sight of the reason for our existence or the over-arching goals of the organization.

Tom also served on the Hill Country chapter board in the early years, including a time as President. Musically talented, he played guitar at our winter retreats, leading us in such silly songs as Tony Chestnut.

Adolescent clients at Shoal Creek Hospital in Austin, where he worked prior to moving into private practice, began to dress like him, walk like him, and wear glasses like his. He understood and affirmed children in their

play, used embedded language to facilitate change, and talked to their parents in ways which helped them to see the needs and also the exciting wonders of their children. He constantly thought about way to increase the connection with his clients and also to teach the techniques of play therapy to others so that they could have the same passion that he had win working with children. At home, this found creative expression in his total dedication as a father.

It is true that we can't understand the present without examining the past. If you did not know Tom personally, my challenge to you as TAPT members is to talk to any "old timers" in your chapter about him. We are enriched for his activity in our lives ... we remember him with warmth and know he leaves a void in the lives of children left untouched by his care.

Denise Hall, MN, RN, CNS, RPT-S