

Laurel Ridge is proud to announce the opening of our Jason Foundation affiliate office. Jason Foundation, Inc. is a nationally recognized suicide prevention program which provides educational curriculums and training programs for students, educators/youth workers and parents. PSI, our parent company, has signed on as a national clinical affiliate and is implementing this program in all their treatment centers.

The mission is to build an awareness of the national health problem of youth suicide, educate about the "warning signs/signs of concern", provide information on identifying at-risk behavior/elevated risk groups, and to direct those in crisis to local resources. The Laurel Ridge Treatment Center affiliate office will make this program available to schools, church groups, youth programs, parents and teachers through specialized presentations and training materials.

Join us Wednesday, July 20th from 6-9 p.m. for our Open House to celebrate the opening of our JFI affiliate office. RSVP 491-9400 ext 2410.

For more information on the Jason Foundation, or to request training materials call 1-888-CARL or visit the Jason Foundation online at [www.jasonfoundation.com](http://www.jasonfoundation.com)

## OPEN HEARTS-OPEN HOMES FOSTER CARE RECRUITMENT EVENT A SUCCESS

"Children are the most vulnerable members of our community, and it is our duty to ensure that they are placed with quality families and receive quality care," stated Bobbi Kloss, of Heritage Children, during the second annual "Open Hearts-Open Homes" event held in the Dining Room at Laurel Ridge Treatment Center.

Responding to the continuing need for quality foster care families in Bexar County, Laurel Ridge Treatment Center and the Inter-Agency Foster Care Collaborative (IFCC) held an awareness and recruitment event Thursday, May 26th. This event, directed at families interested in foster care, included a discussion panel with representatives experienced in child welfare issues. "This event is so important, because every month it is estimated that 200 children in Bexar Co. alone need homes" states IFCC President and Program Manager of Texas Mentor, Kendall Weatherford. "We must reach out to the community to gain their support to find homes for these disadvantaged youth."

"Close your eyes and imagine this," said Lucinda Snelson, a former foster child recently adopted by her foster mother. "You are fifteen years old, you and your brothers walk home from school only to be met by someone you don't know. You have fifteen minutes to pack your belongings and leave the only home you've ever known. You are moved from home to home, your family broken up, until finally you meet the one person who is different. The one person who teaches you how to respect yourself, the person who makes you want to be more, achieve more. That person for me was my foster mom Christina Snelson"

"I want to hear more stories like Lucinda Snelson's," says Ramona Key, CEO of Laurel Ridge Treatment Center. "That is precisely why we wanted to host this event. We are all a part of the San Antonio 'village,' and if we can help raise awareness about the overwhelming need for quality foster care in this city by opening our doors to these agencies, we will."

San Antonio, Texas 78259-3509

17720 Corporate Woods Drive

Treatment Center

LAUREL RIDGE

# LAUREL RIDGE TREATMENT CENTER

## LEARNING THE ROPES...

### RENOVATED COURSE A BREAKTHROUGH IN DESIGN AND THERAPEUTIC EFFECTIVENESS

"Ropes Course is my passion," says Recreational Therapist, Mark Combs, "That's why I was so excited to be a part of the design team for our custom-made ropes course." Much needed indeed.

The new ropes course (completed October 2004) replaced the original much smaller ropes course, which had been in use for fifteen years. "Its shelf-life was definitely up," says Combs. "We've done a thorough job documenting the use of the course and when you're running 500 people a month... sometimes 5 groups at a time, you need to work on effective equipment without stepping on each other." Combs says that the new and improved course has allowed them to run the course with up to 700 people a month.

The course, which spans a few

acres, was built by a man who understands the power of an effective Ropes Course. Tim Shaw, of Performance Improvement Services, is not only a Ropes Course builder/designer but is himself an LPC Therapist. "He never builds the same course twice," laughs Combs. "So we knew exactly who we wanted to build this. We started from ground zero on the high elements courses. It was so exciting to be involved in the concept and design from start to finish; lots of great tabletop meetings at Starbucks drawing our visions on napkins."

The ropes team definitely had a vision in mind for the new course. "Our design emphasis was always therapeutic," says Combs, "tailored to our population; elements unique to Laurel Ridge. We are a part of the treatment team and

very involved in the patient's process; we always come back with great insights for the therapists."

"People don't usually get in trouble when things are relaxed and steady. They get in trouble when they are in a situation with high anxiety or stress and they have to make a decision fast. Our courses are designed to raise anxiety and stress levels, allowing our patients to make choices," Combs emphasizes. "You just can't fake it when you're thirty feet in the air."

Each course is easily adjustable to fit the needs of the user, whether the exercise is focused on the individual or is a group activity. "We aren't working on their team-building skills: this is pre-team focused," says Combs. "We're working on basic social skills, basic communication. Some days just getting the kids to stand in a circle is a victory."

"We talk a lot about consequences here. We had a group of kids who had all been in and out of other treatment centers and were just going through the motions, not at all dealing with what brought them here," states Combs. "So we took them on one of my favorite courses, the Mohawk Course, a grouping of trees connected by cables. We explained that they could go through the course with three "free" touches on the ground, and of course, they used their touches immediately.

"We then explained that the

(See pg. 2)





open house in concert with the Foundation Wednesday, July 20th from 6-9 pm in the Vista Room. This open house will celebrate the opening of our Jason Foundation Affiliate office here at Laurel Ridge. Consider this newsletter my personal invitation to attend. RSVP at 491-9400 ext. 2410.

- Support and Education of our community has long been our mission at Laurel Ridge and we have been given the honor of serving on a committee to promote the awareness of the network of health care and biosciences assets in San Antonio, by Henry Cisneros, Chairman of the Committee. One of the main goals of this committee, formally called the Healthcare Biosciences Corporation, will be to ensure that San Antonio's stellar healthcare network receives the proper ranking nationally and internationally. Laurel Ridge Executive Medical Director, Dr. Fernandez, and I will sit on this committee and continue to represent Laurel Ridge as a leading force in the Mental Health Field.

- This quarter, we were proud to sponsor three PSI Corporate, Division One trainings. All of you do your best every day to make Laurel Ridge stand out amongst the rest and it has not gone unnoticed.

- We continue to grow, to expand our horizons, and this growth has led us to realize the need for a Chief Operating Officer. After much screening and searching, we have found our man. Andy Mannich, from Slidell, LA will join the Laurel Ridge family June 20th. He will initially supervise the Director of Nursing, Clinical Services, Admissions and Case Management and Performance Improvement, CD and Partial. I trust that you will welcome him and make him feel at home with us.

- Part of our growth includes Dr. Fernandez' work in recruitment and, as a result, Dr. Peter Brock of West Palm Beach, Florida will join us in the very near future.

As I stated before, these are exciting times for Laurel Ridge. If you haven't already, "catch the wave of excitement" with us as we move into these Summer months better equipped to Save Lives, Heal Families and Create Hope.

-Ramona Key, CEO Laurel Ridge

### THESE ARE EXCITING TIMES...

These are very exciting times for Laurel Ridge! We are involved in many new endeavors and improving our current approaches to patient health care and I would like to take this opportunity to share with you those items in this issue that are especially close to my heart.

- Hospital Appreciation Week  
With the help of pharmaceutical companies and Laurel Ridge Staff, we hosted a luncheon in recognition of the terrific staff in the S.A. Healthcare system, giving hospital employees, physicians and support staff a small respite during the work week. I want to thank all who were involved with this event; your help in recognizing these unsung heroes is appreciated.

- Laurel Ridge Charter School  
I am pleased to announce Laurel Ridge's application for a charter school was approved for the 2005-2006 school year. We will be launching this in conjunction with University of Texas at Austin. Norma More will continue to lead this endeavor and I am confident that she will do so with excellence. All teachers will now be employees of Laurel Ridge and incorporated as part of the treatment team. We want to thank NEISD for their valued partnership with us these past years and wish them well in their future endeavors as they serve the children of San Antonio. Look for more on our Charter School in the next issue of our newsletter.

- PSI, our corporate company, has entered into an exciting partnership with The Jason Foundation, a suicide prevention program. We will hold an

(pg. 1 cont.) next time they touched the ground there would be a consequence. The next person who touched the ground received a backpack full of gear that made the journey more difficult. After that, the next time they touched the ground they got a big rock to carry. Soon, you had a group of kids whose hands were full, with no way to hold on to anyone for balance. We then took some process time to relate the backpack and rocks to the emotional baggage the kids pick up each time they are in and out of treatment. We let them know that if they didn't deal with their baggage first, they would never have enough balance to cross the cable. Pretty soon, the kids started making connections and began asking for and receiving help in passing their rocks to each other," Combs says. "That was a real breakthrough moment."

Just sit with Mark Combs, who is no stranger to breakthrough moments on this course, for five minutes and his passion for the Ropes Course and the patients at Laurel Ridge become evident. When asked if there are any plans to expand on the Ropes Course and its therapeutic activities, Mark adjusts his ball-cap, looks into the morning sun and says with a grin, "I'm already working on it."

### FOR YOUR INFORMATION

As an employee of our organization, there are certain moral, ethical, and legal standards that you are expected to uphold. By adhering to our standards of business ethics and reporting violations of law or company policy, you can ensure that your conduct reflects our values of integrity, honesty and respect. With your commitment to these values, we can fulfill our mission of providing quality healthcare to the people in the communities we serve.

To assist and encourage the prompt and full reporting of suspected violations without fear of retaliation or to seek guidance on a particular ethical issue, you may call the toll-free ValuesLine. The ValuesLine is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and is maintained by an independent company. Your anonymity will be protected.

The toll-free Values Line  
800-273-8452

## CELEBRATE CULTURE...

### Fiesta Float Parade 2005

"Our Fiesta Float Parade is all about celebrating culture," says Recreational Therapist Leticia Gonzalez. "We are not celebrating San Antonio culture, we are celebrating the cultures represented by our population here at Laurel Ridge. We have such a diverse group of people both culturally and generationally and it is important for us to have a time to come together and share who we are."

The Fiesta Float Parade—a seven year tradition—takes place every April, with each treatment unit creating a "float" out of given materials and parading them around the campus on a pre-determined route. "We give each unit a cardboard refrigerator box and materials like construction paper, yarn, tape, glue..."



says Gonzalez. "Their mission is to work together, decide on a theme for their unit, and create a float that will be judged on creativity, theme, use of materials, and patient involvement."

"It really is great fun. We have some of the staff participate as judges and we give out prizes for first, second and third place. These floats are so impressive.

Its hard to believe that these things used to be cardboard boxes," says Gonzalez. "This is great for the kids; they get to showcase their talent."

This event is well attended by both residents and staff. "Everyone really gets into the spirit of the day. We even had a group do a presentational dance as they passed the judges table," laughs Gonzalez. "The prizes are always something the unit needs: a new set of games, basketballs, recreational equipment."

As with all activities at Laurel Ridge, Fiesta Parade has a strong therapeutic element. Gonzalez is quick to point out that this activity is about putting an emphasis on the whole of the group; it is not a self-focused activity. "They have to work together, develop compromise...and with twenty kids, that's a big deal," says Gonzalez. "Teamwork, creativity, expressing how you feel, that's what Fiesta Float Parade is all about."

## SO, WHAT IS PARTIAL ANYWAY?

### PARTIAL HOSPITALIZATION PROGRAM HAS HIGH SUCCESS RATE

The Laurel Ridge Partial Hospitalization Program, Partial for short, is a day program offered as an alternative to 24 hour inpatient hospitalization for patients in need of intensive psychiatric treatment. Patients receive a full day of counseling, activities and treatment before going home evenings so they may identify, develop and practice lifestyle changes integral to their continued recovery.

"These are the people who do not meet the criteria for acute care but if they don't get help fast, their situation might decline and they could very well end up hospitalized," says Program Director, Charlie Stirk. "We get them the therapy and treatment they need during the day and they apply what they've learned here when they go home to their families at night."

The Children's and Adolescent Partial Programs are designed for children's ages 4-12 and 13-17

respectively. The programs run from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; with supervision available from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. In addition to close supervision, patients receive therapy, participate in therapeutic and recreational activities and receive positive reinforcement for adaptive behaviors. For those in school, a one hour study time is built into the day so that students may continue in their education.

Patients in the Adult Partial Hospitalization, ages eighteen and up, receive group therapy, recreational therapy, adult education, leisure activities and attend family meetings twice a month. Typically, individuals in this program have stressful family or work environments, and need a highly structured program in order to disrupt destructive behavior.

"We do not just want to treat these patients and then toss them back into the world without any support,"

says Stirk. "Our goal is to provide a continuum of care both here, in their family interactions, and with the physicians and therapists they will see in the community. We work closely with support groups in the community, so that when patients leave our Partial program, they can integrate back into the community while we are still supporting them. Otherwise, we'll see them again and again without any real success."

And success is what this program is all about. "In all areas of our program, we have doubled in population since this time last year," says Stirk. One might be tempted to think that this increase is a symptom of "revolving door" syndrome, with patients cycling in and out of these same treatment centers. "Not so," says Stirk. "Our success rate is very high. Of the patients who complete the program, 90% do not have to return to an in-patient setting within a year. We really like those numbers."