Dear Friends,

Fiscal year 2013 at Applewood Centers saw seeds of change planted throughout the organization, seeds that we anticipate will grow to meet the increasing needs of the children and families we serve. Although the background of funding, reimbursement design, and public policy for community mental health continues to be ever changing and challenging, we saw opportunities to position ourselves for growth. The foundation of each decision is always the mission of Applewood and the commitment to serve the children and families who are in need of our care.

In 2013, we opened a new boy’s residential program that provided more intensive services. The dedicated residential staff opened its doors again to serve the most troubled young men in our area, many already involved with the juvenile justice system and poised to go deeper into the system. Apple Blossom Residential Program for Girls continued to flourish, occasionally with a waiting list. Additionally, Residential Programming saw the growth of Cuyahoga County’s only Day Reporting Program, which provides intensive outpatient treatment for boys currently involved with the juvenile justice system.

Applewood’s Community Services division provided services to thousands of students in public schools via diagnostic and counseling services. Clinicians treated over 1,200 youth in the Outpatient program and more than 500 clients in their homes through Early Childhood Mental Health and In-Home services. School-based and Outpatient programs were consolidated onto the Jones Campus to enable collaboration between the two and ensure clinical richness across the programs.

The Gerson School continues to be the flagship program of Applewood Centers. The needs of our public school partners were identified in surveys conducted in 2012 and were launched in 2013, including more mental health services, more elective courses, and additional support staff. Additionally, the school undertook a re-branding initiative that included a sophisticated process of determining how we were viewed by our public partners, the major service needs those partners had, and how we could convey that message in an efficient and visually attractive way. The result was an innovative, fresh, and accurate presentation of the school complete with a new logo and a video that expressed the essence of the school.

As we concluded fiscal year 2013, we all felt energized by the fresh and innovative programming and ready to provide another year of service.

Thomas Bechtle
Chair, Board of Directors

Melanie K. Falls,
Executive Director
Mission
Applewood Centers fosters solutions for children, youth, and families.

Vision
Applewood Centers is a leader in improving the lives of children in Ohio by providing high quality behavioral healthcare and out-of-home services for children and families.

Commitment
- Embrace our Core Values in all we do
- Deliver high quality, results focused programs and services
- Ensure the agency’s long-term economic viability
- Develop a diverse team of skilled professionals
- Build on over 175 years of excellence in service
- Serve a diverse population reflective of our community
- Monitor and ensure desired outcomes for children
- Employ training and technology to best support excellent service

Affiliations & Accreditations
Applewood Centers is licensed and certified by the Ohio Department of Mental Health, and licensed by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and the Ohio Department of Education. We are accredited by The Joint Commission and American Psychological Association. Funding is provided in part by United Way Services; the Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County; and the Lorain County Board of Mental Health.

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APPLEWOOD CENTERS

Highlights

A rebranding initiative for The Gerson School is launched. Enrollment reaches 53.

More than 500 clients are treated in their homes through the Early Childhood Mental Health and In-Home programs.

Residential programming expands with growth of Cuyahoga County’s only Day Reporting Program.

New boy’s residential program that provides more intensive services opens.

Over 1,200 youth are treated in the Outpatient Program.

School-based and Outpatient programs consolidate on Jones Campus to enable synergies and ensure clinical richness.

Services

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES
- Counseling and Outpatient Services
- After School and Summer Programs
- School-Based Services
- Early Childhood Mental Health
- Special Needs Child Care Consultation
- Community Psychiatric Supportive Treatment
- Multisystemic Therapy
- Intensive Home-Based Treatment

RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT
- Apple Blossom for Girls and Orchard for Boys provide treatment and intervention programs in secure units for youth ages 11 to 18.
- Alcohol and Drug Treatment
- Partial Hospitalization

FOSTER CARE & ADOPTION

BILINGUAL SERVICES

THE GERSON SCHOOL
A coeducational, alternative day school for students in grades 6 through 12 who benefit from a personal and therapeutic environment. Approved by the Ohio Department of Education, the school serves a variety of students including those with emotional or behavioral difficulties who have been bullied or have poor social skills/peer relationships.
Ben was a 15-year-old sophomore who struggled in social situations, often withdrawing into the internet.

After his parents divorced, Ben quit his soccer team, was bullied by classmates, and began to cut classes. As his grades fell to Ds and Fs, Ben spent most of his time playing video games, and isolating himself from friends and family. He lashed out at authority figures with bursts of aggression and foul language. Ben often dreamt of dropping out of school.

Upon the advice of his school guidance counselors, Ben took a psychological assessment and was diagnosed with severe depression and social anxiety. High school graduation seemed unlikely for Ben.

After several discussions with Ben’s family, the guidance counselor suggested that Ben consider attending The Gerson School because of its positive reputation as a co-educational school and success with students like Ben.

The unique educational environment at Gerson focuses on ensuring the success of each student and creates individual learning plans to help students reach their or her maximum potential in a supportive, caring environment. Ben’s counselors thought that he would benefit from the program’s differentiated curriculum, guidance in personal development, individualized scheduling in small group settings, and class placement according to level of achievement.

Ben was initially anxious about enrolling at Gerson—doubtful that he could find a place where he would have peers who understood him and would befriend him. Yet, after a few weeks as a student at Gerson, he began to believe that perhaps this was the place for him. Ben attended individual and group counseling with the school’s mental health professionals and learned to manage his anxiety and depression.

Ben thrived in the therapeutic environment at Gerson, slowly learning to trust a few of his classmates and teachers. After several months, Ben embraced learning again and began to care about his grades. Ben also started to believe in himself. He took pride in his new ability and willingness to learn to finish what he started and overcome obstacles.

Now in his senior year, Ben is working on his senior project—forming anti-bullying groups in schools. He is looking forward to graduating and going to college for a degree in computer science.
Julia was 18 months old when she was placed in a foster home as a result of neglect and abuse. Throughout her childhood, Julia lived with many foster families. The placement always started well, but Julia would ultimately become unhappy and run away—usually back to her mother. Those reunions always resulted in disappointment and anger, as Julia’s mom was a drug user. Julia was ambivalent and conflicted between wanting to love her mother and the many reasons to hate her. “She really had a reason to run,” comments Dr. Ellen, the head of Applewood’s psychiatric team.

With each new foster care placement, new doctors were introduced to Julia, each prescribing different and/or additional medications to address her behavioral and mental diagnoses. At the age of 14, Julia came to Applewood Centers on six medications. These included two mood stabilizers, an anti-depressant, a sleep medication, an anti-psychotic, and ADHD medication. Julia was pre-diabetic and overweight. She had disruptive sleep and would wake early in the morning. She didn’t want to talk to people or socialize, and had feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and no clear idea of the future.

The psychiatry team initially removed Julia from the ADHD medication, which can cause agitation, irritability, and loud and oppositional behavior in those who are not identified as having ADHD. After one week there were no negative signs. Her thought processes were clearer, she was not as impulsive, and was able to begin to manage her behavior.

Julia also came to Applewood with the diagnosis of bi-polar disorder. While going through the assessment process, the team identified that although she had mood instability, she did not have classic symptoms of bi-polar disorder. Consequently, she was removed from one medication and the dosage of another was decreased. Meeting the criteria for depression, Julia’s anti-depressant medication was increased.

“I tell the psychiatry fellows who I supervise that working at Applewood Centers is like dying and going to heaven,” the medical director continues, “Because we have time. Time is our scalpel. We have time to take these young people off meds, assess them, and properly diagnose.”

In addition to the mental assessment, the team began to introduce an exercise program and Julia was seen by a dietician who established a plan for eating more balanced meals. She took daily walks with the staff and exercised in the gym. She was taught about sleep hygiene—where the bedroom is only used for sleeping—as well as relaxation techniques and established a “getting ready for bed routine.”

Applewood’s psychiatry team believes that a part of their job is to get to know the client over time. They want clients to know they can laugh together and trust one another. “My job is to really listen and respond scientifically and let them know we’re a team,” says the medical director. Through individual and small group sessions, Julia slowly moved towards being able to accept that she can love her mother and hate what she does at the same time.

“When Julia left Applewood Centers, she was ready. Really ready,” said the medical director. Julia left Applewood on one anti-depressant and one mood stabilizer. She is doing well in school, has lost weight, and is no longer pre-diabetic.

And Julia’s position on foster care now? “I don’t just need a home. I want a family. A family who will come to my wedding. That’s the connection I want.”
Applying to design school was never a dream, let alone a reality for 17-year old Corrine. Before coming to Applewood Centers, she had no plans for the future aside from going to prison like her father.

Corrine came to Apple Blossom Residential Program for Girls after being in four different foster homes and one residential facility in just one year. She was becoming increasingly aggressive and self-harmful. Corrine was assautic towards staff and peers, and would often cut herself. She had a long and extensive history of being physically and sexually abused by members of her biological family and neighbors. Her biological family starved her and locked her in her bedroom for days on end.

When Corrine arrived at Applewood, she was malnourished and seriously underweight. She was sad, withdrawn, angry, and felt worthless. Corrine’s prognosis was poor, and her chances for survival looked bleak.

Corrine was defensive and aggressive when she came into the program, and convinced that yet another facility would fail her. A multidisciplinary team immediately put a plan into action with a first step to start Corrine on a path to becoming physically healthy. The nutritional team at Applewood developed a dietary plan and worked with the doctors to ensure that she was physically up to the challenge of changing her life.

Corrine had never seen an eye doctor until she came to Applewood. She was prescribed glasses, which dramatically improved her performance in school. To Corrine’s—and her staff’s surprise—she found she had a knack for art and writing. She started to gain weight, eat and sleep better, and even began participating in yoga and Zumba classes offered to the Applewood clients.

As she started to feel better physically, something changed emotionally as well. Corrine began to believe that the people caring for her actually did care about her. More importantly, she started to believe in herself.

Corrine had her challenges. She struggled to get along with peers and was easily frustrated with the structure of the residential program. However, the staff never let her despair. She participated in group therapy programming that focused on teaching her to be “mindful,” as well as to meditate and express herself assertively, instead of aggressively.

Corrine’s team focused on processing her trauma and sense of loss regarding her family. A journal, which started as an outlet for Corrine’s feelings and to build on her writing talent became the vehicle for the therapists to help her heal. That one journal turned into volumes of her past, thoughts, feelings, and most importantly, hopes for the future. Hope was a concept that was new to Corrine.

Corrine’s progress was supported by more than her individual and group therapists. It also came from the staff who became surrogate moms and dads, and surrogate big brothers and sisters committed to helping Corrine make positive changes in her life in order to be successful. Through Applewood’s residential Summer Camp program, Corrine was introduced to fashion design. Her talent for art found a new outlet and over the summer, she gathered sketches and ideas into a portfolio, and learned the basics of sewing and mending.

Corrine recently transitioned into an independent living program and completed her financial aid applications for colleges in the area. At the top of her list is a local design school where she’s considering a career in fashion.

A Message from Corrine

“I’ve learned that life is what you make it. It’s not about how cool you are or how pretty you may be. It’s how you become successful in life and what you do in your life. I also learned rushing to get out of treatment doesn’t help; it’s rushing you back to another facility. Applewood shapes you if you want it to. I’m not just a person who changed overnight—it took time. It took years for me to want to change inside. I think Applewood saved my life and my future.”
The following individuals, corporations and foundations contributed to Applewood Centers between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2013. Thank you for your support and trust as we help children, youth and families manage life’s challenges. We make every effort to ensure our donors’ names and contributions are reported accurately. If you believe we have made an error, please accept our apology and call the Development Office at (216) 320-8512, and we will be happy to correct our records.

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