



Justice Resource Institute

Lead. Educate. Change.



FISCAL YEAR 2009

A Year in Review

Lead



"We had lost all hope when our son was stuck in an Emergency Room for 15 days, I never slept...now I can sleep at night; The Susan Wayne Center has changed our lives."

Leadership is nothing new to JRI.

We have been trying things differently and innovating since our founding 36 years ago. This year, we developed several new initiatives that we believe will serve as best practices for programs everywhere.

The Susan Wayne Center for Excellence has opened in Thompson, Connecticut and is serving 15 boys and girls with mild to moderate cognitive impairment and concurrent behavioral, mental health, and medical issues. Groundbreaking in its treatment for these disorders, the program uses a trauma-informed therapeutic model with positive incentives to help students develop "pro-social" coping skills. One parent of a

student at the program recently related how important it has been to their child. "We had lost all hope when our son was stuck in an Emergency Room for 15 days, I never slept...now I can sleep at night; this place has changed our lives."

Through the leadership of the Trauma Center at JRI, a trauma-informed yoga therapy program has been started at the Meadowridge Schools. In this cutting-edge program, a trauma instructor who has experience in teaching individuals with trauma disorders leads students through sessions that provide students with greater control over their present day lives and a tool for dealing with and managing traumatic episodes from their past.

The students have responded well to this program. "The trauma informed yoga program at Walden Street School has had a significant impact on the progress and overall well-being of the students," said Kari Beserra, who runs the school. "The students have not only learned the techniques but have been able to bring the techniques and philosophies into their everyday experiences. Some students regularly use yoga prior to bed each evening, some have taught their parents so they can use the techniques at home, and some have asked for their own yoga mats."

JRI has always been about pushing the envelope, testing the boundaries and developing promising new approaches in helping the individuals we serve overcome their challenges. These new approaches, which are grounded in principle, are then rigorously evaluated to ensure their success. This process, coupled with our longstanding evidence-based programs, is an example of how we lead.

Educate



JRI's varied educational programs reached many milestones in Fiscal Year 2009.

- The **Meadowridge Schools** were granted "Full Approval" status by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- JRI continues to distinguish itself through superior facilities and physical accommodations at its schools, as this year saw renovations and improvements to the **Walden Street School, Glenhaven Academy and Berkshire Meadows**.
- Students from the **Meadowridge Schools, Pelham Academy, Littleton Group Home, Glenhaven Academy, Butler Center**, and

the **Victor School** received their high school diplomas – a major accomplishment with a population that includes students who had previously dropped out of high school.

- Eighty three percent of the graduates of the **Victor School** went on to college. The **Victor School** provides specialized education to students who are dealing with emotional and behavioral disorders including bipolar disorder, eating disorders, and Asperger's Syndrome.
- JRI clinicians have implemented innovative clinical groups including Art Therapy and Conflict Resolution at **Swansea Wood School**, Therapeutic Drama at **Pelham Academy**, and Antiviolence at **Glenhaven Academy**.

Change

We are in this business to make change. And the changes we see in the individuals we serve are the ones that we find most fulfilling.

At our **Berkshire Meadows** program for individuals with profound developmental disabilities, we see residents who have spent their lives in a wheelchair develop the skills to stand and then to walk. Similarly, we see residents who have been non-verbal gesture and then talk. Or those who are so medically compromised that they never before received exercise, and we watch them delight as they learn to swim in the pool.



Through the **Doc Wayne Athletic League**, we see teenagers whose young lives have been defined by behavioral challenges, failure at school, and acting out and dangerous behavior in the community, who for the first time experience the joy and excitement of team sports. Shortly after they get involved in the league, their academic performance improves, they re-engage with others, and their self-esteem and confidence builds. Doc Wayne becomes the impetus for change in their lives.

At **Disability Services of JRI**, we launched a first-ever international exchange program for individuals with developmental disabilities, and we see the positive changes this program can bring about in the lives of these individuals.

Through **JRI Health's Peer-to-Peer Program**, we see people who have contracted HIV emerge from the isolation, stigma and depression that can be a result of diagnosis to well adjusted, informed, purposeful and socially involved people. Many become mentors and friends to others who are newly diagnosed and also educators to those who have not been diagnosed, but are at risk for the disease.

At JRI, we inherently believe in a person's ability to change. You could say it is our whole reason for being.

The people we served changed and grew during this past year. And so, too, did our entire organization.

“His experience there has changed his life.”

A parent's letter of thanks.

The following is an excerpt of a letter from the mother of a student at a JRI program to Senior Vice President Greg Canfield. To respect and protect the student's privacy, we have changed the name.

Dear Greg,

I am contacting you because I wanted to be sure to thank JRI for having a school that could work with my son and help him develop into a more confident, more mature individual with a high school diploma. His experience there has changed his life.

John came to the Victor School in the 10th grade. As an elementary student, school testing identified him as having a Non-Verbal Learning Disability (NLD). The summer between the 7th and 8th grade, I took him to a neuropsychologist and the testing indicated NLD and Asperger's. He was doing OK in school academically, but his behavior in the classroom was becoming unmanageable for the school and repeated discipline wasn't working, it was only making the situation worse. John was being bullied and there was little to no effort made to stop it – his behavior at the time was mostly reactive in nature. He had very severe anxiety – he wouldn't let us leave a room without following us around at home, and at both school and at home, when a situation became intolerable for him, he would go to a closet and hide.

The school district finally recommended an out-of-district placement, but the school they recommended didn't seem to be a good fit for John – it was prison-like and was a mix of students from the school's day and residential programs.

John's therapist recommended The Victor School. I was very impressed with The Victor School [and] I felt confident that he would be going to a school where the staff was truly dedicated to helping students. My first impression has never wavered.

John developed a need to bully other students and there were several times that I thought he'd be asked to leave. But through all of it, I never felt that he was managed with anything else but compassion and kindness. The staff there should be commended for their professionalism and skills in working with John.



Justice Resource Institute

545 BOWLSTON STREET, SUITE 700, BOSTON, MA 02116 PHONE: 617.450.0500 www.jri.org

JRI Board of Directors

Dr. Judith Tisips, Chairperson
Robert J. Guttentag, Vice Chairperson
Andy Pond, President, JRI
Andrea Nix, Treasurer
Dr. Stephen Porter, Clerk
Kwabena Abboa-Offei, Esq.
J. Elizabeth Cremens, Esq.
Rev. June R. Cooper
Martha Mazzone, Esq.
Mary A. McCarthy
Dr. Jenny Phillips
Audrey Shelto
Adnan Zubcevic
Susan Wayne, Honorary Member