



Without Walls

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Spring 2009

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On Saturday April 25, 2009 the clients of the Refugee Youth and Family Program of Pinellas County spent the day celebrating Earth Day by giving back to the environment. RYFP clients, working with students from Eckerd College's Department of Environmental Studies, met on Eckerd College's campus around 10:00 AM. Clients began the day by learning about environmental volunteerism and why it is

important to give back. Brian MacHarg, the Director of Service Learning for the college, highlighted what we can learn from the environment in which we live. Realizing how important the plants and trees are that inhabit the same planet that we do reminds us to always think of our neighbors and just how many other living things surround us in our daily lives.

After their talk, clients were placed in teams with Eckerd students and spent about an hour and a half planting over 50 trees around the back edge of the college. Local species of trees were donated by several nurseries in the Tampa Bay area and clients enjoyed learning about the many species they planted and the proper way to care for them. Each client had the opportunity to plant, water, and get mulch for a tree. Their student counterparts talked with them while working about the importance of each part of the process. After the planting clients had time to walk around the wooded area they had help plant and take in the scenery and the full effect of their work.

The Earth Fest activities also included a festival on the college campus earlier in the week and a showing of the new documentary Taking Root: The Vision on Wangari Matthai. The festival gave students and community members alike the chance to learn more about the work of the RYFP/FCST programs. Many new volunteers signed up to be a part of the amazing work here and several of these volunteers were the students who participated in the tree planting. The documentary, which followed the planting, focused on the work of Wangari Matthai, founder of the Greenbelt Movement in Kenya. Originally designed as a movement to reclaim the forests of Kenya, Greenbelt has expanded to work on promoting mental health therapy, human rights, and democracy to the whole globe. It's focus on individual empowerment and each person's ability to heal their wounds and find purpose in caring for the Earth made it the perfect match for our work here at the Florida Center for Survivors of Torture.

*To science,
not even the
bark of a
tree or a
drop of pond
water is dull
or a handful
of dirt banal.
They all
arouse awe
and wonder.*

Jane Jacobs

Sociologist and
urban activist

FROM THE CEO

A client from East Asia who is a torture survivor asks, "Why me? I am a good person; I come from a good family that does good things for other people. Why did this happen to me?" We can respond to this question by reaching out to support these brave and courageous new Americans. As Jane Addams says, "The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life". The Florida Center for Survivors of Torture, in concert with our partners and the members of our provider network, helps torture survivors move from "the precarious and uncertain" to a place where they can once again thrive. The transition process for New Americans who have suffered persecution and torture is filled with many challenges – language barriers, employment, education, trying to understand a new culture while maintaining their own identity – as they adapt to their new lives in the United States. These issues were addressed in our conference, *Adapting to a Changing World: Promising Practices in the Acculturation Process for Refugees* held at Florida International University in Miami earlier this year. Renowned national experts on refugee immigration, mental health, education and social services presented at the conference with the keynote speech presented by Dr. Richard Mollica of Harvard University's Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma. Through our work and those of our partners, we empower New Americans to rediscover, in Maslow's words, their "...will toward health, an impulse towards growth, or towards actualization". And, hopefully, they may once again experience the "awe and wonder" of our world that Jane Jacobs sees in our natural environment, for how else can we attain our vision of *a world in which every person enjoys human rights and every community torn apart by crisis is given the opportunity for healing and hope.*

Michael Bernstein, CEO and President

The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life.

Jane Addams

Social reformer and
Nobel Peace Prize
recipient

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF "CENTER WITHOUT WALLS"

- ⇒ **Global Refugee Spotlight:** Iraqis
- ⇒ **World Refugee Day:** [June 20, 2009 Scheduled Events](#)
- ⇒ **2009 Trainings:** [National Partnership for Community Training schedule](#)
- ⇒ **UN Day in Support of Victims of Torture:**
[Florida Center for Survivors of Torture activities](#)

EXPERTS AND PROVIDERS SHARE BEST PRACTICES IN ACCULTURATION

Gulf Coast Jewish Family Services, Inc. in partnership with the Department of Children and Families, Refugee Services, sponsored a 1-day conference: ***Adapting to a Changing World: Promising Practices in the Acculturation Process for Refugees*** in Miami, Florida on January 28th, 2009.

Renowned national experts on refugee immigration, mental health, education and social services presented on best and promising practices as they apply to refugee resettlement and other social services that play a critical role in the acculturation process that refugees and asylees undergo as they adapt to their new homes. Over 2230 attendees, including social services providers, refugee services providers, educators and academics, legal providers, mental health professionals, trauma counselors and those interested in research and policy also learned techniques for improving service effectiveness and had the chance to network and share information on resources available to their clients. The ultimate goal was to foster collaboration among providers in order to empower refugees to access the services and support they need.

Secretary George Sheldon (DCF) opened the conference with welcoming remarks. Hiram Ruiz, Director of Refugee Services (DCF) discussed the state of Florida's refugee resettlement and related supportive services. The senior most representative from the United Nations on Resettlement, Larry Yungk, (UNHCR), provided a global perspective of current refugee issues.

The keynote Speaker was Dr. Richard Mollica, MD, MAR, Director of the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma (HPRT) of Massachusetts Hospital and Harvard Medical School. He is also the co-founder of the Indochinese Psychiatry Clinic (IPC). Over the past two decades HPRT and IPC have pioneered mental health care of survivors of mass violence and torture.

Florida has a long history of welcoming refugees. Upon arrival in the United States refugees and asylees seek to create a new life in our country through the process of acculturation. The transition process for New American is filled with many challenges – language barriers, employment, education, trying to understand a new culture while maintaining their own identity – as they adapt to their new lives in the United States.

THE VOICE OF HOPE

I have really enjoyed participating in the Permaculture program. With this program I am going outside and working on my peanuts and with my pots; without this I would be sitting inside doing nothing. With this type of program there is no pressure, it is not like going to a doctor's office and sitting there waiting. I can go out with Matt and Alyssa and work on my plants for a little while and then take a break. If I want to talk about things I can and if not we can talk about our plans for the plants. I like to see things grow and look forward to showing the other clients how to do it. I think this program will be very good for people like me. For a long time I was separated from other people and I forgot how to behave around others sometimes. If people who have been through things like I have can come together and work on a project like a garden we learn how to work with others again and help one another find solutions for our problems. We have to work together and heal together. It may be a little too soon to tell but wait two or three months when the flowers come in and it will be very successful.

FCST Client



We at the Florida Center for Survivors of Torture envision a world in which every person enjoys human rights and every community torn apart by crisis is given the opportunity for healing and hope.

Our mission is to provide client-centered, holistic services with the goal of helping survivors regain their sense of well being and autonomy. You can assist them on their journey to restoration by becoming a part of our service network, volunteering, or making a cash or in-kind donation. For more information on how you can help, contact us at any of the locations listed below



All the evidence that we have indicates that it is reasonable to assume in practically every human being, and certainly in every newborn baby, that there is an active will toward health, an impulse towards growth, or towards actualization.

Abraham Maslow

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PROGRAMS

KEY PARTNERS

- Florida Center for Survivors of Torture:
fcst@gcjfs.org
- Refugee Youth and Family Program
- VOICES: interpreter@gcjfs.org
- National Partnership for Community Training: partnership@gcjfs.org
- Haitian Family Program
- Volunteer/Internship Programs

- Church World Services — Miami
- Lutheran Services Florida
- Catholic Charities of St. Petersburg
- Jewish Community Services of South Florida
- University of South Florida
- NOVA Southeastern University

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