

Spring 2013



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Carole Soricelli, MS, OTR, Director

Whenever I sit down to write this message, normally I see a clear-cut theme of the contents of *Kidmatters*. This issue presented a challenge since there initially appeared to be no single focus. So, let's just say that my message in this issue is how eclectic and dynamic *Kidmatters*, and Trinitas Children's Therapy Services, is. Let me explain.

First and foremost, we're dedicated to the children and families we serve. Prime examples are the Disability Awareness Program that our OT and PT staff conducted in the Mountainside School District and our introduction of successful yoga programs in classrooms. We also realize that as therapists we have unique insights into the day to day needs of the children we serve. Our article on how to improve handwriting speaks to that. Additionally, we know how important it is for our children to gain a sense of control and confidence. You

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SCHOOL-BASED NEWS TURNING HEADS IN THE CLASSROOM

By: Tara Azzolino, SPT

Improving the understanding of disabilities and how their fellow-students cope with them was one of the key goals of a recent disabilities awareness program for first graders at Beechwood Elementary School in Mountainside. Physical

Therapist, Carol Sheridan, Occupational Therapist, Sherri Brandthill, and physical therapy student Tara Azzolino from Trinitas Children's Therapy Services organized the "Glad to Be Me" practice designed to promote understanding through a classroom-oriented program.

Borrowing from the Native American proverb, *Don't judge a man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins*, the program allowed children to experience both the feelings and challenges of coping with a range of disabilities. The children were able to experience what it feels like to have a visual impairment, balance deficits, and limited use and decreased sensation of the hands.

The children participated in three activity stations. First, the children put on a pair of eye glasses altered to make their vision impaired. They then they had to walk across the room,



dodging obstacles such as chairs and trashcans, and read a word written on a card that the instructor was holding. Second, the children were blindfolded and spun around 10 times by the instructor to create disorientation. With the blindfold removed, the children had to walk a straight line and became aware of what it is like to experience balance deficits. Third, the children were given a wrapped piece of candy that they had to try and open while wearing gloves or mittens. They soon learned what life is like with limited use of, or reduced sensation in, their hands.

With their new found awareness, the children expressed a richer understanding of others with disabilities. Based on their brief experiences in other students' "moccasins," they realized that not everyone can accomplish the same tasks as easily as others.

YOGA BRINGS SERENE SCENE TO THE CLASSROOM

By: Carol Sheridan, PT, DPT

How did your day start? Was it a bolt-out-of-bed-and-rush-to-get-ready kind of day? Maybe it was hurry, get dressed, grab a bite to eat, get the kids or spouse on the right track, pack lunches, check book bags, jump in the car or onto the bus or train to travel to your job. If you are lucky, maybe no one is on that ride with you and you can decompress with your own thoughts or music along the way. Or maybe, if you are really lucky, you can start your day leisurely, checking your e-mails over a cup of coffee before the daily demands of your job begin.

If you are a teacher, a classroom assistant, an administrator, related service provider or a school office worker, it's very unlikely that down time comes early in the day or, if ever, for that matter. So, we move on, conduct business and respond to those daily demands, as best we can, some days better than others.

Now, apply this hectic scenario to the children we deal with in the classroom

on a daily basis. Did they have a hectic morning? Are they ready to learn and absorb their lessons, or are they still reeling from the morning routine to get up, get out, and get going?

Chances are they are nowhere near ready to sit at a desk or table and begin their work of the day. Instead, this may be the perfect time needed to regroup, reorganize, increase focus, and get ready to learn. But, how can we do this when there is so much on the daily agenda of a school day?

In the Clark and Kenilworth School Districts, receptive teachers are engaged in a new pilot program that incorporates a Yoga routine into the school day and it's helping to calm and focus the students before academics. Created by Anne Buckley-Reen, OTR, RYT, an occupational therapist for the NYC School District, *Get Ready to Learn (GRTL) Yoga Therapy in The Classroom* uses yoga postures, breathing, and relaxation exercises to teach students to



maintain a calm but alert state for optimal learning. Ideally, GRTL should be done on a daily basis, first thing in the morning. But, when the ideal isn't workable, some teachers incorporate it after morning meetings or after lunch to help students refocus.

The GRTL program is a daily classroom-based preparatory yoga curriculum that consists of a protocol, teacher/aide trainings, DVD's, and research backing from NYU. The NYU study included data collection on student's attention, ability to self-regulate, communication, and performance of skills. The results of their study show a significant change in these areas as reported in a recent article published in *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*.

As a school based physical therapist, I have provided Yoga groups in the school setting for the past three years as part of weekly classroom motor groups. I began my Yoga instruction with picture cards and visual modeling for the students and then progressed to using a Smart Board presentation in those classrooms with the technological capabilities. I always dim the lights, play quiet background music, include chanting, and demonstrate the Yoga moves with the children during the 25 – 30



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YOGA IN THE CLASSROOM *Continued from page 2*

minute sessions. The classroom teacher, assistants and I have given numerous physical prompts to help the children assume the poses.

However, after being trained in the Get Ready To Learn (GRTL) Yoga program, what we have learned has helped us achieve better results with the student outcomes. I still dim the lights, play quiet background music, chant, and demonstrate the Yoga moves. But, with GRTL all the adults participate not only for student modeling but for their own regrouping, focusing, and calming. When teachers and assistants get an emotional boost, everyone benefits. Each participant gets his/her own Yoga space, ideally a mat, but a chair or a designated spot on the floor will do.

There are only two hard and fast rules — remain quiet and stay in your Yoga space (including adults). The Yoga moves are self-initiated by the child and with repeated practice they require very little physical prompting. Yoga is a

practice, not perfection, and everyone progresses at their own rate.

The results have been very encouraging. The participants respond that they feel energized, happy, calm, and relaxed after the 20-minute practice. The children are eager to participate and are beginning to get into the routine of a quiet, calm, focused practice. These initial benefits last for 15 minutes after the Yoga practice. The research shows that with a daily routine the benefits are cumulative and last for longer periods throughout the day and may even be carried into the home environment.

Does this sound too good to be true? Is it worth the investment of 20 minutes a day to find out?

If you think your district may be interested in this integrated practice, please speak with your school occupational or physical therapist to see how we can be of help. Let's all work together to help our students get ready to learn.



Reference:

Buckley-Reen, A., Garg, Satvika, G., Koenig, K. (2012) *Efficacy of the Get Ready to Learn Yoga Program Among Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design*. The American Journal of Occupational Therapy.

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Continued from page 1

can read about how many have grown and thrived on the challenging rock climbing wall at our Springfield facility.

We like to take part in school and community programs that help our children see beyond themselves, too. The Green Vision Program at Deron School in Union has given our kids ways to expand their abilities while making a contribution to improving the environment.

As always, this issue features photos of our staff working with our children. You'll find the staff roster, map of our locations and a list of upcoming therapy center programs that we know are valuable tools and resources for our readers.

As I review this message I see that this issue really does have a focus: the integration of therapeutic strategies into everyday activities. Now, that's what I call eclectic and dynamic!



BY DEVELOPING IMPORTANT SKILLS, STUDENTS LEARN IT'S EASY BEING GREEN

Trinitas Children's Therapy Services is making an environmental and personal enrichment difference at The Deron School in Union, New Jersey. In partnership with the non-profit organization, Green Vision, Inc., students at Deron are dismantling and recycling large and small electronics for the Morris Plains, New Jersey, company. The program provides valuable skills and job training for students with autism.

Occupational Therapist Marcia Sidford works with the Deron students to help them improve their abilities so that they enhance their educational experience.

"We accomplish this by giving the students a variety of purposeful activities," says Ms. Sidford. "We encourage them to adapt continuously to more challenging learning experiences each day, to function with increased independence in domestic, vocational and community settings. By incorporating Green Vision as a therapeutic intervention, these kids have an exciting new tool for learning."

Green Vision allows the students to work on functional goals while participating in purposeful activity and learning vocational skills. It gives the students the

chance to follow directions or correctly sequence a task.

"The best part of their involvement is that they see immediate results when they are able to follow verbal or visual instruction, take apart a keyboard or organize parts in the correct recycle bin," explains Ms. Sidford. Metal and wire goes to a licensed New Jersey scrap metal facility while plastic goes to Green Vision for recycling.

Various accommodations make it easy for the kids to participate in various ways. Students who have difficulty attending a desktop activity can stand at the work tables to disassemble a computer. Those in wheelchairs work at an appropriate table. Students who have visual perceptual delays and are unable to identify letters or read well have success identifying different materials such as metal, plastic or glass or a variety of tools required for different jobs.

Life skills come into play as the work gets done. Students work on dressing skills as they learn to put on gloves, safety glasses, and tie on a protective apron. Students need to wear appropriate shoes and shoe tying becomes an important skill.



Michael Rios participates in a sorting activity with the occupational therapist.

"We may often take for granted the important daily living skill of being able to identify spatial concepts," notes Ms. Sidford. "By taking apart these electronics and putting them on top, under, inside, to the right or to the left of the correct container, students are visually able to see the importance of these concepts."

Students who have good fine motor, visual motor, and bilateral skills learn to use a variety of screw drivers, metal and plastic cutting scissors to take apart the electronics. Gross motor skills and good trunk stability are important in moving heavy pieces or recycling bins from one work station to another.

Students at Deron are benefitting from this new program by learning new skills that have applicability at Green Vision, Inc. as well as other employment opportunities.



Marcia Sidford, OTR works with Edvelin Cumbicos-Ramos on a disassembling project.

ROCK STEADY: CLIMBING WALL OFFERS FUN-FILLED CHALLENGES

By: Christine German, MS, OTR

Thanks to funding from the Summit Area Public Foundation, Trinitas Children’s Therapy Services welcomes an exciting new piece of therapeutic equipment: a climbing wall. Nadine Brechner, Chief Development Officer of the Trinitas Health Foundation, and Abby Nagel, Director of Corporate Partnerships, assisted in the grant application process.

Climbing walls are a great therapeutic tool for a pediatric therapy practice. As a therapy tool, they provide a unique motivation for children to work on a variety of skills. By interacting with a climbing wall, children can address motor planning, strengthening, fine motor skills, communication, and sensory processing skills.

Praxis and motor planning (the ability to plan, execute and monitor new and complex motor movements) is essential to learning new motor tasks. These abilities in turn help a child to perform already learned motor tasks in various environments and under different conditions. The rock wall requires children to “figure out” how to move their arms and legs to move from one grommet to the next while moving up and down or side to side.

Children need to develop adequate **strength in their core** (trunk) muscles to be able to maintain an upright sitting posture throughout the day at school and also have adequate muscle endurance to move, play, and participate in sports. Climbing is a strength building workout!

Fine motor skills (control of the small muscles of the hands and fingers) are essential for handwriting and self-care tasks. The climbing wall provides opportunities for improving hand strength, reaching, and grasping while climbing.

Sensory processing skills involve the ability to take in and use sensations from the environment and the body to successfully participate in activities. Climbing walls provide opportunities for “heavy work” and unique movement experiences that address vestibular (balance) and proprioceptive (body awareness) difficulties.

Communication and language processing skills are necessary to learn, exchange ideas and participate in conversation. Climbing activities provide a great opportunity for children to follow direction, sequence, ask or answer questions, and describe items.

One of the most common difficulties for Trinitas Children’s Therapy Services clients is **maintaining attention and focus** on an activity. In addition to working on all the other skills mentioned, children must maintain attention to the task at hand while on the climbing wall. Being off the ground and engaged in a “whole body” activity helps to build concentration skills.

Most of all, being engaged with the rock wall is fun. The importance of the **enjoyment and intrinsic motivation** that a “fun” activity provides for the child should not be overlooked. Children will work much harder and reach their goals more quickly when they are engaged in



A climbing wall offers children new and challenging ways to learn and build skills.

appropriate and enjoyable therapeutic activities.

The successful integration of the rock climbing wall into the facilities at Trinitas Children’s Therapy Services is a prime example of how the Summit Area Public Foundation “fosters philanthropy... by identifying local needs and offering donors flexible ways to make a difference in the lives of their neighbors.”

To learn more about the Summit Area Public Foundation, visit www.sapfnj.org

UPCOMING PROGRAMS: SUMMER 2013

Programs run July 1st to August 15th. Registration deadline for all programs is June 10, 2013.

SCRIBBLES TO SCRIPT

Children from preschool (prewriting) through elementary school (cursive) will learn that handwriting can be fun by participating in multi-sensory activities to reinforce learning. The *Handwriting Without Tears®* program is used to teach the children proper letter formation.

Preschool: (T/Th) 9 – 9:45 AM
(M/F) 1 – 1:45 PM

Kindergarten: (T/Th) 10 – 10:45 AM
(M/F) 1:50 – 2:35 PM

1st Grade: 4 – 4:45 PM (T/Th)

2nd Grade: 4:50 – 5:35 PM (T/Th)

Cursive: 5:40 – 6:25 PM (T/Th)

TYPING WHIZKIDS

Children from 1st grade through middle school will participate in functional tasks that will allow them to learn efficient keyboarding skills. From key and finger placement to speed and accuracy, children will learn this valuable skill the correct way by trained occupational therapists.

Lil Group: (Mon.) 4 – 4:45 PM

Biggie Group: (Mon.) 4:50 – 5:35 PM

SPORTS 1 STEP AT A TIME

Children between the ages of 4 and 12 have the opportunity to receive an introduction into several sports, including soccer, baseball, basketball, and kickball, in a non-competitive group setting.

Lil Group: (Th.) 4 – 4:45 PM

Biggie Group: (Th.) 4:50 – 5:35 PM

GROSS MOTOR CIRCUS

Children will enjoy this dynamic sensory-motor group taught by Ben Lipman, MS PT. Children will learn through movement and sensory exploration in our fun, child friendly environment. Ben has achieved success in the entertainment and comedy business, in addition to his expertise as a PT.

Lil Group: (Tue.) 4 – 4:45 PM

Biggie Group: (Tue.) 4:50 – 5:35 PM

SOCIAL BUTTERFLIES

Children will learn to interact socially while engaged in a combination of tabletop and movement-based activities. The highly therapeutic classes will be co-supervised by 2 licensed and credentialed therapists.

Lil Group: (Wed.) 4 – 4:45 PM

Biggie Group: (Wed.) 4:50 – 5:35 PM

LEARN TO RIDE BIKE RIDING LESSONS

Children will learn this vital childhood skill in a non-competitive environment with a highly trained therapist. Sessions are run in 60-minute periods of time. Dates and times can be organized to the client's availability. Call to schedule.

CAMP TRINITAS

Children will participate in gross motor, fine motor, sensory motor, and recreational activities during our 3rd annual half-day camp program. The program is the perfect opportunity to have children gain new skills or maintain recently-learned motor skills without a full day or even full week commitment. Sign up for as many days or weeks as you would like. Allow your child to participate in a camp directly organized and supervised by skilled clinicians in their respective fields.

(T/W/Th) 4 – 4:45 PM

(Mon.) 4:50 – 5:35 PM

Don't let the time or day stand in your way. These may be able to be changed, so call anyway.

For more information contact Manager Kevin Nelson at knelson@trinitas.org or call **(973) 218-6394**, ext. 13. Or go online at www.childtherapynj.org for class schedules.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & CONSUMER EDUCATION

10 TIPS SERIES

There are 3 workshops remaining this school year from our widely popular 10 Tips Series.

10 Easy to Make (or Adapt) Sensory Activities

4/16/13 6:00 pm

4/19/13 9:30 am

10 Easy to Make (or Adapt) Activities to Improve Listening Skills

5/21/13 6:00 pm

5/24/13 9:30 am

10 Easy to Make (or Adapt) Ideas for Outdoor Activities

6/11/13 6:00 pm

6/14/13 9:30 am

Workshops are held at our Springfield office. Parents and Education Professionals are invited. Fee is \$10 per workshop. Contact hours are provided for professionals. **Call (973) 218-6394 ext. 4012 to register.**

WRITE ON: HOW CHILDREN CAN LEARN THE IMPORTANT SKILL OF HANDWRITING

By: Kellianne K. Martin, OTD, OTR

Handwriting is a necessary skill for all school age children. For some students, it comes naturally and they do not cringe at the idea of journal time or completing a written assignment. Yet, for others a handwriting task can be quite challenging. Despite these challenges, with your help, students can successfully master handwriting. Here are suggestions for how to make the task of writing fun and not daunting.

- Warm-up of hands and body prior to engaging in a writing task.

Two to four minutes of activities like jumping jacks, chair/wall push-ups, opening/closing hands and touching thumb to each finger help prepare the young writer for the task at hand.

- Multisensory approach to handwriting instruction.

Prompts like auditory suggestions such as saying the steps needed to form each letter or singing a handwriting song needed to form each letter, visual actions like forming letters in the air, or kinesthetic approaches that use tactile materials such as sand, shaving cream and gel bags all have value in early instruction.

- Maintain communication with the novice writer during the exercise.

Use key words consistently during handwriting instruction. Use a “space man” stick, pointer finger on the helping hand, or a silent verbal cue of “leave a space of nothing” to assist with spacing between letters and words.

- Proper writing posture at the desk.

Students should be encouraged to sit

upright, with two feet on the floor, chair pulled in and their helping hand on the paper. Use of a slant board or a large 3-ring binder help students maintain an upright sitting posture.

- Help orient the student to the task of writing.

Tilt the paper to the left for a right handed student and to the right for a left handed student.

- Provide a visual model of the expected appearance.

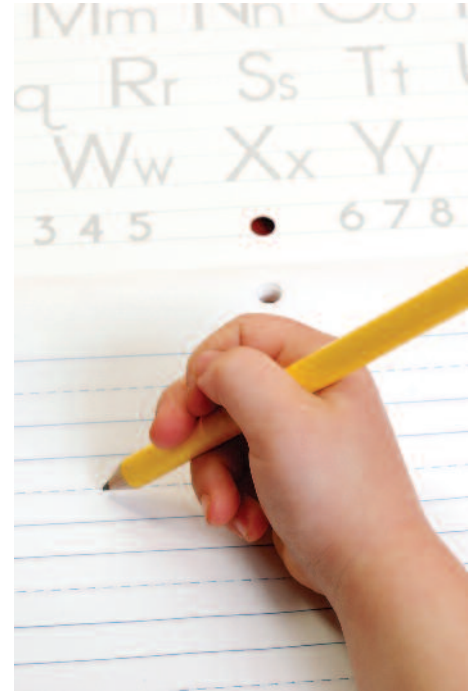
Present a model for letter formation and size and encourage regard for lines/margins and spacing between letters/words. Provide a visual cue for where to start and end on a writing line, i.e., green line going down the left side of the paper and a red line going down the right side of the paper

- Use the right materials.

Use a pencil grip or small golf-size pencil for students who have difficulty gripping the pencil correctly. Cut a file folder into three or four sections to assist students who appear to be easily visually distracted or tend to lose their place frequently. Put the paper inside the folder and open one section at a time until the assignment is complete. For students who have difficulty maintaining written work on the designated lines, try different types of paper (raised line paper, highlighted line paper or graph paper).

- Urge students to take charge of their handwriting.

Encourage students to self-check for quality in their writing: legibility; correct



punctuation; proper use of capital letters; finger spacing between letters/words, and regard for writing line.

- Stress that time and care are key components to handwriting.

Remind students to slow down... writing is not a race. Target one handwriting challenge at a time: letter formation, size, spacing or regard for the writing line.

So, the next time you spot a student struggling with handwriting and having difficulty completing written assignments, just take a moment to see if these modifications may help the student. The time you take now to educate a novice with a pencil or pen will help create a greater comfort level with the task and, ultimately, a more successful student.

HONOR ROLL:

The Staff of Therapy Services
(includes employees and contractors)

Administration

Carole Soricelli Director
 Sherone Lewis Business Manager
 Teresa Paniss Administrative Assistant

Occupational Therapists

Jennifer Agresto Sr. Occupational Therapist
 Kristen Asencio Sr. Occupational Therapist
 Sarah Bauer
 Ellen Benson
 Cheryl Borenstein
 Sherri Brandthill
 Stacie Carroll
 Megan Cohen
 Regina Datria
 Daniela DiLauri
 Carolyn Driscoll
 Robin Edwards Sr. Occupational Therapist
 Gina Errico
 Jillian Gergely
 Christine German Sr. Occupational Therapist
 Melissa Guerrizio
 Peggy Gurock
 Beata Hertel-Kiszkiel
 Jami Hughes Sr. Occupational Therapist
 Tracey Hunsinger
 Jill Leon
 Nicole Lepore
 Janet MacNamara
 Kellianne Martin
 Kevin Nelson Therapy Center Manager
 Kristine Parente
 Valerie Pessirilo
 Melanie Piccolo
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 Donna Riddell
 Rebecca Seidman
 Marcia Sidford
 Magda Svorec
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 Melissa Vastola
 Patty Vesper OT Coordinator
 Lisa Walker
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 David Yamasaki Program & Clinical Coordinator

Occupational Therapy Assistants

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 Christine Henning
 Aida Mendez-Boud Elizabeth Coordinator
 Nancy Viglianti Sr. OT Assistant

Physical Therapists

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 Nathalie Haughey
 Marc Helder
 Benjamin Lipman Sr. Physical Therapist
 Carol Olsen
 Gerard Power Sr. Physical Therapist
 Maria Samadjopoulos
 Carol Sheridan PT Coordinator
 Karen Valenti
 Jolanda Weinkauff
 Lisa Yuschak Sr. Physical Therapist
 Jackie Zaffarese

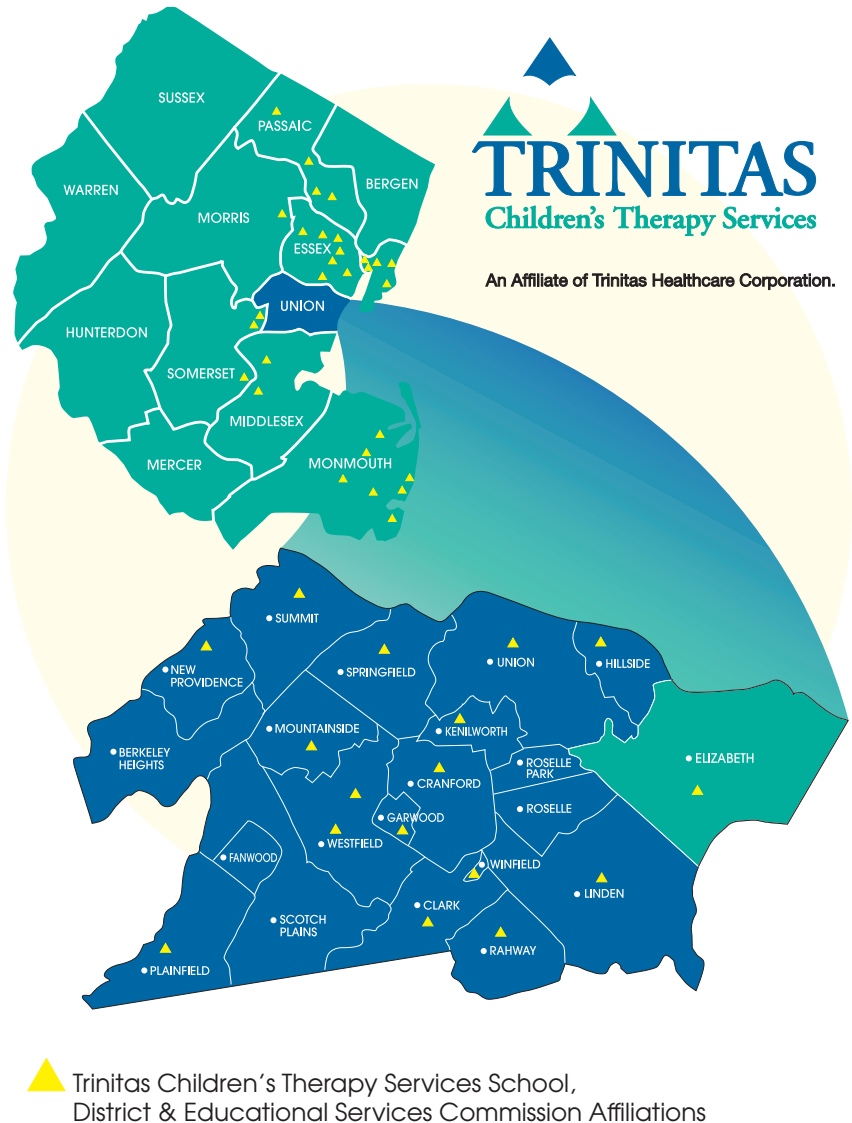
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Kristen Healy
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Applied Behavior Analyst

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Where We Are



Kidmatters

is a publication of Children's Therapy Services, a program of Trinitas Healthcare Corporation. To learn more, call (973) 218-6394, or visit the offices of Trinitas Children's Therapy Services, located at 899 Mountain Avenue, Suite 1A, Springfield, NJ 07081

Visit us at www.ChildTherapyNJ.com or www.TrinitasRMC.org

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