



Women In Business

CALICO Center Supports Child Abuse Victims

BY AMY SYLVESTRY
San Leandro Times

A small office on Estudillo Avenue houses the CALICO Center, a place where children from all over Alameda County who are suspected of being physically or sexually abused are taken to be interviewed by a team of caring professionals.

CALICO, which stands for Child Abuse Listening, Interviewing, and Coordination, aims to make the investigation process

as painless as possible for the children by interviewing them in a friendly manner and then sharing their findings with police and prosecutors so the child doesn't have to go through it over and over.

The center handled over 700 cases in 2008, up more than 25 percent from 2007. CALICO's clients are 2 to 17 years old, as well as developmentally disabled adults, and 40 percent of the clients are under age 6.

CALICO, which also has an office in Oakland, opened their San Leandro branch in 1997. The group works with over 27 agencies in Alameda County, including police departments, hospitals, and the district attorney's office.

CALICO Director Victoria Gwiasda said that the center focuses on "forensic interviews" that can be used in court and hopefully eliminate the need for the child to be traumatized by having to take the stand.

A child is taken to CALICO as one of the first steps of the criminal investigation process after his or her case is referred to the group by the police or social services.

Once at the office, the child is taken to an interview room and speaks one-on-one with the interviewer while a social worker, police officer, prosecutor, and parent or guardian watch and listen without being seen in another room via video.

"What happens is, a child will come in and we'll spend sometime showing them around and then we'll begin the interview," said Gwiasda. "The pro-



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CALICO CENTER

CALICO staff Kristy Dermody, Karen Meredith, Belinda Uriarte-Roehl, Victoria Gwiasda, Cory Blassi, and Bertha Nevarez help kids talk about child abuse.

professionals are in another room watching, and afterward, we debrief them about the findings."

Gwiasda describes the actual interviews as an informal "funnel" process, where the children are asked general questions and the interviewer forms a narrative and identifies details to ask about further.

"The important thing is to ask non-leading questions," said Gwiasda. "You might start with asking a child 'Do you know why you are here?' and he might say something like 'Yeah, because of what is going on with my mom's boyfriend.' That is a lot different than asking 'What

did your mom's boyfriend do to you?'"

Because CALICO deals with children as young as two, different interviewing techniques have to be used and they sometimes ask children to use Cabbage Patch Dolls or drawings to illustrate what happened to them.

"When someone is that young, we might start by asking them to just name general body parts on the dolls like hair or nose and move on from there," explained Gwiasda.

Gwiasda said that interviewing the children in a colorful, cheerful room instead of a police station or courtroom cuts down on stress and

helps the child open up. About 85 percent of the children interviewed disclosed abuse.

After the interview, each child is given a stuffed animal and sent home or to social services. The interviewer makes at least two follow-up calls to the family or new guardian to make sure they are continuing with counseling and keep them updated on the status of the case. The interviewers are sometimes called on to testify in court, but often the taped interview is enough evidence.

"Each of us has a role in preventing any sort of child abuse," said Gwiasda.

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

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Business Owner / Insurance Agent

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Debra Butler, JD, CPCU, AMIM

Owner/President, YOU' LLC

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Lauren Clum, DC

Chiropractor

San Leandro native Dr. Lauren Clum loves helping people get well and stay well with specific chiropractic care. She cares for kids of all ages in her Oakland office, and has seen great results in helping people with conditions such as migraines, high blood pressure, thyroid disorders and chronic pain. Here's what a few patients have to say about Dr. Clum's care:

"Specific chiropractic care has had a profoundly positive effect on my life."

"My headaches are completely gone, and I don't have pain in my legs anymore."

"I've always felt safe in her very capable hands."

It's easy to learn more about how specific chiropractic can help you or someone you love. It's always free to talk with Dr. Clum, and she offers Health Talks in her office twice a month on various topics. The next Health Talk is on Thursday, March 26, at 6:30 p.m. on Sleep Health & Chiropractic. Call now to reserve a seat!



The Specific Chiropractic Center • 658-8740

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Laura Cooksey, L. E.

Business Owner

Laura had specialized in treating acne for 15 years before choosing San Leandro to open Face Reality Acne Clinic in 2005. Laura has garnered a reputation as one of the most effective acne specialists in the country. Estheticians and nurses travel thousands of miles to take the classes that Laura teaches. Her knowledge, technique and commitment to helping acne sufferers has gained wide recognition.

Dr. James E. Fulton, perhaps the foremost authority on acne, told a room full of skin care professionals that Laura was his favorite acne specialist in Northern California. She continues to do clinical studies for Dr. Fulton, confers with him on formulations and protocol, and often consults with him.



Face Reality Acne & Skin Care Clinic

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Peggy Deadder

Realtor®, SRES

Peggy entered the Real Estate business in 1988. She enjoys her work and finds no greater satisfaction than helping her clients find that "Special Home." She has experience in selling single- and multi-family homes, mobile homes, and has worked with clients involved in probate and trust sales, and has received her "Senior Real Estate Specialist" designation. All her clients receive her "Commitment to Service." For questions about buying or selling real estate, contact Peggy at (510) 886-3775 or (510) 316-6646 or email Peggy at pdeadder@aol.com.



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Terecita Dean, D.D.S., D.M.D., F.A.C.D.

Dr. Terecita Dean was born and raised in the Bahamas. As a third-world country, there were limited opportunities; and, at the age of 11, Terecita started thinking about her career goals and was determined "to make it."

Dr. Dean received her dental degree from Marquette University School of Dental Medicine and a Doctorate of Naturopathic Medicine, N.M.D., from First National University; and, has had her dental practice in the Alameda and San Francisco areas for over 15 years. She is also involved with Kids on the Move America which helps low-income youth with education and skills to prepare them for the future.

Dr. Dean is dedicated to total-body wellness and healing the body, mind and spirit. She is knowledgeable in cutting-edge technology and advanced techniques to provide maximum relaxation and detoxification. "At the Wellness Center Spa, we want you to feel wonderful and full of vitality."



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