

The paper for  
professionals who work  
with troubled youth



# STARR POINTS

Wayne State University School of Social Work  
Fourth Annual Dean's Diversity Lecture:

## **Dr. Larry Brendtro speaks on The Legacy of Fritz Redl and David Wineman and Current Best Practices with Challenging Children and Youth.**

Back in the 1950s a revolutionary book co-authored by two Wayne State University professors strongly challenged the tradition of punitive practices in the treatment of troubled children. More than half a century later, *Controls from Within* by Fritz Redl and David Wineman is still the foundational text for strength-based treatment practices. In March, Dr. Larry Brendtro of Starr Commonwealth discussed the legacy of his former teachers and mentors and shared important new findings from his latest book *Deep Brain Learning: Pathways to Potential with Challenging Youth* in a lecture that attracted more than 300. Drawing evidence from resilience research, neuroscience and child-rearing in diverse cultural traditions, *Deep Brain Learning* identifies key principles for building strengths with vulnerable children and outlines the neuroplasticity that enables long-term healing and change. "This year, our social work program is celebrating its 75th anniversary," says Loren Hoffman, a clinical professor in the Wayne State University School of Social Work. "The work of Larry Brendtro and Starr Commonwealth has a significant connection to the legacy of Redl and Wineman. Larry was a natural choice as speaker." Brendtro, too, notes the long history between the organizations. "Over the decades, both have collaborated to provide leading-edge research that has transformed services to troubled children and youth. This event celebrated the rich legacy of Michigan pioneers in youth work."

The National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children

## **Childhood Trauma Practitioner's Assembly July 13-16, 2010**



Question: which child of a military family is more at risk for trauma – the one whose parent is being deployed for the very first time or the one whose parent has been through several of them? The answer might surprise you. It's the second child – the one you might expect to be used to the experience and better able to adapt. Even more surprising, the trauma the child might experience – and the trauma-related behavior it can engender – may have very little to do with fear and anxiety over the deployment itself but with something else entirely.

Trauma in children is complicated. In fact, it wasn't until 1990 that Dr. William Steele, psychologist and social worker, developed the first program of its kind to assist traumatized children experiencing many of the same reactions and symptoms commonly associated with soldiers in battle. As emerging research in neuroscience confirms, trauma-related

behaviors don't respond to traditional cognitive therapies because they're not rooted in the cognitive part of the brain. The only way "in" is to learn to see the child's experience the same way the child does and, armed with proven sensory interventions, change their experience and ultimately their view of themselves not as victims but as thrivers.

This July, Starr's National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children (TLC) will continue its role as the national leader in the treatment of childhood trauma at the annual Childhood Trauma Practitioner's Assembly in Clinton Township, Michigan. The theme for this year's event is "Supporting Children of Deployed Parents: Lessons Learned – Helpful Strategies." Panel discussions, workshops and

featured speakers will focus on issues related to this very topical subject and offer practical, hands-on training and guidance in TLC's sensory intervention practices. In addition, TLC will offer its certification program for those wanting to become trauma specialists.

Caelan Kuban is program director and clinical consultant for TLC. Kuban says that while this year's theme focuses on the trauma experienced by military families, the lessons of TLC apply across the board. "TLC practices deal with issues that are common to all trauma-related experiences."

More than 300 participants are expected to attend the four-day assembly and can choose from more than 20 workshops on a wide range of topics, from early intervention techniques to school-based intervention programs to the use of music, art and even therapy dogs in reaching traumatized children. Participants can also choose to pursue Level-1 or Level-2 TLC certification in a comprehensive series of classes. "There is something for everyone at the Assembly," says Kuban, adding that CEU credits and even graduate credits can be awarded to those who qualify.

**"Rigorous, evidence-based research of TLC intervention programs has shown remarkable, statistically significant reduction of not only PTSD symptoms but also related mental health symptoms."**

*William Steele, Senior Vice President of the Starr Institute for Training and founder of The National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children.*

THERE'S A  
WAR INSIDE.  
YOU CAN  
HELP HIM  
WIN IT.

Supported by the latest advances in brain science and successfully practiced by more than 6,000 certified Trauma and Loss Specialists internationally, TLC training will help you:

- Understand the differences between grief and trauma and come to know trauma as an experience rather than a diagnostic category.
- Learn to become a "witness" to a child's traumatic experience to best appreciate the intensity of the experience and the needs of the child.
- Gain skills through trauma-specific intervention tasks and techniques that let you experience sensory interventions first-hand through demonstrated, hands-on activities.
- Discover more about TLC published evidence-based research outcomes that support the value of TLC's structured sensory programs in schools and agencies.

For more information or to register, call 877-306-5256  
or visit [starrtraining.org/tlc](http://starrtraining.org/tlc).



THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE  
FOR TRAUMA AND LOSS  
IN CHILDREN



A STARR INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING PROGRAM

## THE LONG VIEW

Dr. James Longhurst is a licensed psychologist for Starr Commonwealth. In addition to his role as Director for Montcalm Schools, Jim is involved in all case planning and clinical services for the organization. He is a member of the American Psychological Association and is a charter member of the International Positive Psychology Association. Jim is a certified lead facilitator and trainer for Starr's Healing of Racism and Glasswing™ facilitator training initiative.



### Cultivating care and concern for others

Kids come to Starr Commonwealth's programs with a variety of issues to be addressed – educational problems, emotional instability, behavioral and social problems, etc. A thread that runs through many of them is that they exhibit a high level of self-centeredness. Although not true for all, showing care and concern for others is typically not a strength area.

But we also know through research that the development of moral behavior, including empathy, justice, and altruism is not only influenced by one's environment but also has biological roots – we are hardwired to show care for others! But, without sufficient teaching, modeling and reinforcement, this vital aspect of human behavior is not learned which leads to behavior that neglects the needs or feelings of others.

It makes good sense then that a significant part of the treatment process focuses on helping others. Earlier in my career I had the opportunity to interview and assess perhaps a thousand youth who were referred to our residential treatment program. After they had a chance to understand what the program was like, I would always conclude by asking them, "Are you willing, able and ready to help others?" as well as inquiring about their readiness to work on their own problems. A "yes" response (which they gave 99% of the time...with some encouragement at times) signaled the beginning of a contract that if they fulfilled their part, we would do everything possible to help them get back to their home, school and community as soon as possible.

Providing service learning opportunities for these youth impacts the way they see themselves and their world. Recently, I interviewed several youth from our residential program in an attempt to better understand how service learning projects have affected them. Here is a summary of some of their comments to me:



- Manny, a student in our residential program for youth who sexually offend, says that his involvement in providing food to the homeless in a neighboring community "gave me a reality check and shows that if you care, you can come into knowledge about what you were sent here to do. At first I just did it to get it over with – I didn't care. But when we got back to the cottage, the staff had us talk about how it made the people feel. Another student helped me to see that what we did was making a difference in their lives."
- Eddie, a student in the Montcalm School program, says that his experience in helping the athletes in Special Olympics in Mount Pleasant, Michigan "is a great feeling. It gives me a great sense of accomplishment – the idea that I helped someone. When we encouraged them or congratulated them I could see the happiness in their faces. I look forward to going again this summer."
- James, also from the Montcalm program, says "I have a different look on how I view things and the way I come across. To me, helping others is life changing...I feel good about myself...and after doing it for awhile (helping others) it becomes a habit – it transforms me and changes my mindset."
- Charlie, from the program for youth who sexually offend, simply says "At first I didn't like it. But helping others has changed me. When you help others, good things happen."

Service learning is just one component of helping our youth at Starr expand their capacity to consider and experience the reality of others as they interact. But showing care and concern is not just a way to successfully complete the program. Starr's emphasis on helping others is not merely an activity for the youth but aims at positively affecting their moral behavior. It is so important to the treatment program that all students returning to their homes, schools, and communities from residential care are measured at 3-, 6-, 9- and 12-month intervals as to their continued involvement in volunteer and community activities. As Manny states, "I have a different attitude. It showed me that hurting people is not good...it is a chain reaction so if I hurt someone, they will too. But if I help someone, they will too. Helping others brings me happiness."

*Starr Points is a quarterly newsletter published by Starr Commonwealth, an internationally recognized leader in transformational programs for children, families, schools and communities. Founded in 1913, Starr's treatment philosophy is rooted in seeing something good in every child, which serves as the guiding principle in its strength-based approach. Starr offers a full spectrum of community-based early intervention and prevention services along with specialized residential programs. Through the Starr Institute for Training, parents, clinicians, educators and childcare professionals now have access to Starr's highly successful and innovative techniques aimed at bringing out the best in every child. For more information, visit [www.starr.org](http://www.starr.org).*

#### Starr Commonwealth Programs

##### Albion, Michigan

Juvenile Justice (residential)  
Sexually Reactive Youth (residential)  
Abuse/Neglect (residential)  
Alternatives (substance abuse, residential)  
Montcalm Schools for Boys and Girls

##### Battle Creek, Michigan

Day Treatment  
Intensive In-Home  
Starr Life Skills  
(supervised independent living)  
Foster Care  
Juvenile Diversion Program  
Daytime Curfew  
Suspension Center  
Credit Enhancement Program

##### Columbus, Ohio

Sexually Reactive Youth (residential)  
Transitions (supervised transitional living)  
MyPlace Independent Living  
Ohio Families First  
Treatment Foster Care  
Community-Based Treatment Center

##### Detroit, Michigan

Alternatives  
(substance abuse, community-based)  
New Boundaries (residential transition and reintegration support)  
Starr Life Skills  
(supervised independent living)  
Transitions (supervised transitional living)  
Foster Care

*For Michigan referrals, please call toll-free 800-837-5591 or e-mail [michintake@starr.org](mailto:michintake@starr.org)*

*For Ohio referrals, please call toll-free 866-289-9202 or e-mail [ohiointake@starr.org](mailto:ohiointake@starr.org)*

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