

# McLean Hospital Horizons

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FOR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS



*Lisa Sjostrom, EdM, and Catherine Steiner-Adair, EdD*

## McLean Educators Help Girls Become 'Full of Themselves'

**S**velte supermodels wearing skimpy swimsuits. Fashion magazines touting the latest fad diets. Everywhere we turn, media images proclaim that “thin is in.” Unfortunately for many young girls and women, these messages contribute significantly to poor self-esteem and body image and—too often—to eating disorders. Says program designer and eating disorders prevention specialist Lisa Sjostrom, EdM, “We live in a culture where you are supposed to look 18 your whole life. Our beauty ideals are not realistic, but young girls will resort to all kinds of behaviors to squeeze themselves into that image.”

For between five and 10 million American females, these behaviors include starvation,

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## Full of Ourselves Proclamation

*A girl who is full of herself, in the best sense of the phrase, might say things like this...*

- ◆ *I know who I am.*
- ◆ *I know that I matter.*
- ◆ *I know what matters to me.*
- ◆ *I pay attention to what I feel and what I need.*
- ◆ *I make choices and decisions that are good for me.*
- ◆ *I take good care of my body.*
- ◆ *I stand up for what I believe in.*
- ◆ *I let people know what I think, even when I'm angry or confused or in disagreement with everyone else.*
- ◆ *I am a valuable friend.*
- ◆ *I know I can make a positive difference in the world in my own unique way.*

Steiner-Adair &  
Sjostrom, © 2003

binge eating, vomiting and laxative use—just a few of the symptoms of anorexia and bulimia. According to Catherine Steiner-Adair, EdD, a leading eating disorders educator and researcher at McLean, these painful, traumatic illnesses can be devastating—even deadly. The mortality rate for anorexia is higher than for any other psychiatric disorder among young women.

That's why Steiner-Adair and Sjostrom, with the help of the Paul & Phyllis Fireman Charitable Foundation, created *Full of Ourselves: Advancing Girl Power, Health and Leadership*, a dynamic prevention program designed to sustain girls' health and decrease their vulnerability to body preoccupation and eating disorders. Aimed primarily at healthy girls ages 9 to 14, *Full of Ourselves* emphasizes girls' personal power and their overall mental and physical well being.

According to Sjostrom, project director for *Full of Ourselves*, many prevention programs educate girls about eating disorders but don't necessarily change their behaviors. "Research shows that many programs don't prevent eating disorders and—for girls who are psychologically 'wobbly'—may actually increase their vulnerability," she says. "So we set out to create something that would help girls not only eat and exercise well, but also help them build greater psychological defenses against disordered eating. We do this by keeping the focus on power, health and leadership and off the disorder."

An eight-unit, school-based curriculum, *Full of*

*Ourselves* includes dozens of group activities that help girls explore a range of topics including body acceptance; basic nutrition; media literacy (awareness of media messages);

healthy relationship-building; emotional hunger, and weightism as a form of prejudice. Girls talk, role play, look at advertisements, draw, write—even meditate—as they gain confidence and develop a wider range of coping strategies in response to stressful situations.

"Fat is not an emotion," Steiner-Adair says. "When girls say they 'feel fat,' they are usually saying something else—like they want to feel worthy or valued. There are different kinds of hungers that aren't nourished by food. Our goal is to teach girls how to cope with, and feed, these hungers without resorting to pints of ice cream or fad diets."

**"Fat is  
not an  
emotion."**



The program also includes a “call to action” component in which girls are directed to translate their new-found knowledge into positive action at school, at home and in the world. They are asked to create their own advertisements, choose healthy foods when shopping and write to TV producers about messages they see in the media. They also learn to be leaders and educators. The program teaches them to speak out against weight and body-image bullying and to mentor younger girls.

Steiner-Adair and Sjostrom evaluated *Full of Ourselves* in 33 schools with more than 1,000 participants and 1,000 non-participating controls. Their research reveals that the program is the first of its kind to effectively sustain positive changes in girls’ body image, body satisfaction and body esteem—key factors in the development of eating disorders. They have also determined that the program does not increase vulnerability to developing eating disorders and that it positively influences girls’ knowledge about health, nutrition, weightism and puberty. The curriculum will soon be published by Teachers College Press, and Steiner-Adair and Sjostrom plan to distribute it and train professionals to lead it nationwide.

None of this work would have been possible without a \$150,000 grant from the Fireman Foundation, *Full of Ourselves*’ primary supporter. According to Steiner-Adair, the Foundation’s support has nourished *Full of Ourselves* into an effective, publishable curriculum that will have an impact on girls around the country.

Publishing the program is just the first step for *Full of Ourselves*. Steiner-Adair and Sjostrom have many ambitious plans to develop and disseminate other eating disorders curricula and resources. Current ideas under development include a companion program for boys; an elementary school curriculum; printed guidelines and educational seminars for parents; a peer-led program for young women in college; national symposia for educators and researchers, and a program that uses *Full of Ourselves* to help hospitalized

patients with eating disorders transition back to the community.

Steiner-Adair says this last idea is particularly compelling because it can help girls who are in recovery stay healthy. “*Full of Ourselves* could empower girls to stay strong and counter the ‘thin-is-in’ culture when they leave the hospital,” she says.

The state-of-the-art Klarman Eating Disorders Center (see *Horizons*, June 2003) at McLean Hospital provides an ideal therapeutic environment in which to develop this transitional curriculum. According to Philip Levendusky, PhD, McLean’s vice president for Network Development, “The Klarman Center emphasizes relapse prevention and *Full of Ourselves* can offer a unique contribution. The more we can help adolescents deal with the vulnerabilities that lead to eating disorders, the more positive their outcomes will be when they leave the hospital.”

As *Full of Ourselves* expands its scope at McLean and across the nation, Steiner-Adair and Sjostrom are hopeful about the program’s influence and future developments.

“If we can deliver *Full of Ourselves* across entire peer groups around the country, we could see a profound positive environmental effect that allows girls to sustain long-lasting changes in how they view their bodies,” Steiner-Adair says. “That would go a long way toward preventing eating disorders.” ▲

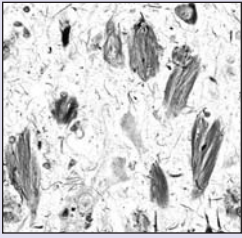


*“We live in a culture where you are supposed to look 18 your whole life. Our beauty ideals are not realistic, but young girls will resort to all kinds of behaviors to squeeze themselves into that image.”*

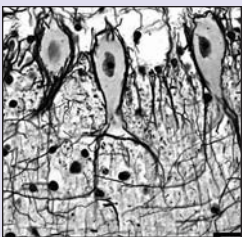
*Lisa Sjostrom, EdM*

For more information, visit [www.mclean.harvard.edu/education/youth/](http://www.mclean.harvard.edu/education/youth/)

## Brains Are Key To Psychiatric Research At McLean



*A close-up look at an Alzheimer's-damaged hippocampus. The hippocampus is located in the temporal lobe of the brain and is responsible for the creation of declarative memories (remembering what you did on Saturday night or remembering how to get home).*



*A picture of a cerebellum showing three large output neurons called Perkinji cells that coordinate unconscious muscular memories (keeping your balance, riding a bike or driving a car).*



*George Tejada, assistant director of the Brain Bank*

**T**he study of profound psychological disorders takes brains—donated ones, that is. Post-mortem research on brain tissue plays a critical role in understanding the pathology of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, Alzheimer's disease and motor disorders such as Parkinson's disease, according to Francine Benes, MD, PhD, director of the Program in Structural and Molecular Neuroscience, which includes the Harvard Brain Tissue Resource Center at McLean Hospital.

"Without the brains, we don't have the research," she says.

Fortunately, investigators at McLean have access to a large number of brains through one of the largest brain banks in the world. Established in 1978, the "Brain Bank," as it is known, acts as an international resource for the acquisition, processing and distribution of high-quality brain tissue to the neuroscience community. In Benes' lab, researchers are examining the "wiring" within the brains of donors with psychiatric disorders in order to identify what may have gone awry.

"If we can learn more about these neural circuits and develop drugs that target specific aspects of the molecular machinery, we stand a good chance of developing novel treatments," Benes says.

Although many aspects of the Brain Bank are funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), researchers in Benes' lab still require a great deal of support in order to conduct their state-of-the-art molecular and cellular studies.



*Timothy Wheelock, assistant director of the Brain Bank*

“It’s costly to run cutting-edge experiments and difficult to secure federal grants for ‘high-risk’ research,” she notes. “Private funding from donors gives us the special edge we need to generate sound preliminary findings. Then we can go to the government.”

At the Brain Bank, brain donations are “community-based,” meaning they come from individuals who are representative of the general population, but who have psychiatric disorders.

“For this, we are dependent on family members,” Benes says. “We rely on families in the community to think about us at a difficult time—when they are in mourning—and to move ahead with brain donations. It takes a very special person to make that call.” ▲



**T**he Hassenplugs of Rock Hill, S.C., are one family who thought ahead about brain

research and donation. Years ago, Louise and Fred Hassenplug learned about the McLean/Harvard Brain Tissue Resource Center, and Fred, who had bipolar disorder, signed up to be a donor. When he died in March, 2001, Fred’s brain went to the McLean Brain Bank. A year earlier, the Hassenplugs had also secured a brain donation from a family friend who had died.

Louise Hassenplug can think of no better way to support the advancement of psychiatric research and treatment. She has also contributed financial support to the Brain Bank for more than 10 years because she sees “exciting things happening there. I will do anything I can to help,” she says.

In fact, Louise has done a great deal, not only in support of McLean but also in educating the public about mental illness. For seven years, she served on a South Carolina commission that examined mental health practices within the state. As the first family member of an individual with a psychiatric

disorder to be appointed to the commission, Louise says she “brought a perspective that was very different.” So different and so beneficial that South Carolina’s Department of Mental Health established the Hassenplug Award in her honor. The award goes to individuals and organizations that have made great strides in helping those with brain disorders.

“It is so important for people to understand that the brain is a physical organ, just like the heart or liver,” Louise says. “The public only sees the disruption caused by psychiatric

disorders. They don’t see them as disorders of the brain.”

Louise is hopeful that with more research and more support of places like the Brain Bank, patients, their families and the general public will better understand mental illness. “When I look back on when Fred and I were married 40 years ago, we didn’t know much at all. Now there are so many wonderful medications that can help. Research is the future for people with psychiatric illness,” she says. ▲



*Fred and Louise Hassenplug*

*“Now there are so many wonderful medications that can help. Research is the future for people with psychiatric illness.”*

*Louise Hassenplug*

*For more information:  
[www.brainbank.mclean.org](http://www.brainbank.mclean.org)  
1 800 brain bank*

# Johnson & Johnson Supports Rising McLean Investigator



*William Carlezon, PhD*

*“My research challenges traditional thinking.”*

*William Carlezon, PhD*



*Ted Torphy, PhD  
Johnson & Johnson*

**W**hen corporate philanthropists support brilliant young investigators, pioneering discoveries often arise.

Such has been the case for William Carlezon, PhD, a bright young star at McLean who has developed an innovative molecular model of depression. With a \$232,000 unrestricted grant from Johnson & Johnson, Carlezon has explored his theory that depression—widely thought to be caused by low serotonin levels in the brain—is more closely related to a gene called dynorphin. By manipulating a chemical called CREB, which activates the dynorphin gene, Carlezon can turn depressive symptoms “on” or “off” in animals. His discovery could lead to innovative ways to treat mood disorders.

Although anti-depressant drugs increase serotonin, the increase does not necessarily mean that low serotonin levels cause depression. “A mood disorder is like a house fire; just because you can put the fire out with water doesn’t mean a lack of water caused the fire,” Carlezon says. “We need to look at what made the house catch fire in the first place.”

With Johnson & Johnson’s support, Carlezon’s research may help investigators understand what fuels the mood disorder fire. Through its Focused Giving Program, the company grants \$2.5 million a year to academic investigators doing basic biomedical research that promises to provide breakthroughs or advance the understanding of disease origin. The program also gives Johnson & Johnson access to biomedical research worldwide and encourages liaisons between investigators and the company.

According to Ted Torphy, PhD, corporate vice president for science and technology for Johnson & Johnson, “Johnson & Johnson is supporting Dr. Carlezon because he is doing good work. His research is new, interesting and scientifically valid.”

Johnson & Johnson has offered Carlezon a lifeline of support that he may not have found elsewhere. It is typically difficult for relatively new investigators or those pursuing a novel approach to obtain federal and drug company funding.

“My research challenges traditional thinking. The government and drug companies are often reluctant to fund ‘high-risk’ endeavors,” Carlezon says. “But with high risk comes high yield. Our research may lead to major advances in the treatment of depression.”

Carlezon says further research is needed to unravel exactly how the dynorphin gene mechanisms trigger depression and what drug therapies might be effective against them. These kinds of studies—which occur on a much larger scale and use human subjects—are prohibitively expensive. Yet, if Carlezon can show additional positive results with his CREB studies, he will be more likely to obtain federal or pharmaceutical funding.

“We think we’ve discovered something special. Now we will be seeking funding to take the next steps,” he says. ▲

For more information on McLean researchers and ongoing studies go to: [www.research.mclean.org](http://www.research.mclean.org)

# New Strick Fellowship Attracts Young Child Psychiatry Researchers



Mary Ahn, MD, Gertrude Strick Fellow

**T**he field of child and adolescent psychiatry has gotten a boost with the new Gertrude Strick Clinical Research Fellowship in Pediatric Psychotic Disorders. The fellowship supports dedicated research time for a junior child psychiatry investigator at McLean. Funding for the fellowship was provided by the family of Strick's son, Frank Katz, through the Katz Family Foundation. Just as Katz's late mother was "an inspiration to others," the family hopes the fellowship named in her memory will encourage young doctors to specialize in child psychiatry by supporting both their research and clinical activities.

"Child psychiatry is, financially, one of the least attractive fields to graduating medical students," Katz says. "Yet, with major advances in medications, therapies and our understanding of the brain, there are also incredible opportunities. Unless people step up to the plate to support interested young doctors, these opportunities will be lost due to lack of funding."

Katz is no stranger to psychiatric illness; his daughter was a patient at McLean. "The care we received at McLean has been state-of-the-

art," he says. "But that's not always true as you move away from the major research centers. By attracting bright young people to McLean, we also hope to spread high-quality practices if and when these doctors move to other cities."

The Strick research fellowship is particularly significant because it helps young investigators balance their time between patient care and research—a task that has become increasingly difficult due to funding limitations. Private donors

are one of the only sources of financial support for fellowships, which help develop experienced child psychiatry researchers and clinicians for service where they are most needed.

"The Gertrude Strick Clinical Research Fellowship is truly a gift," says Jean Frazier, MD, director of McLean's Child Psychiatry Outpatient Program and director of the Child and Adolescent Psychotic Disorders Research Laboratory. "It gives a deserving junior faculty member the funding for protected research time, which is not common in most academic centers. The fellow can take time to develop research ideas rooted in clinical practice. This approach often has the highest clinical relevance and yield."

For the Katz family, McLean is the right place to nurture these individuals because of the hospital's excellence in teaching, research and clinical care.

"McLean has exceptionally qualified and caring doctors to mentor young students, magnificent laboratories and facilities for research, and a population of patients who are willing to participate in investigations. For us there is no better place to put our support," Katz says. ▲

## Horizons

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The pursuit of progress in research, treatment and training requires a partnership between McLean and those who understand that philanthropy is an investment in quality of life. A brighter future for those with mental illness depends both on the work of dedicated scientists, who invest their lives in search of greater understanding and improved treatments, and the generosity of individuals who support that research.

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