

University's doctor of psychology students meet critical need for mental health services for low-income population in Oregon

George Fox University's PsyD students get on-the-job training in providing 50,000 hours of free service to the underserved and underinsured in Portland-area communities

NEWBERG, Ore. (Nov. 16, 2011) – It's only taken a year for George Fox University's Behavioral Health Clinic to emerge as a reliable provider of mental health care for the underserved and underinsured of Oregon's Willamette Valley. The numbers don't lie.

The clinic, opened in February of 2009 and expanded to include pediatric care in the fall of 2010, offered mental health care services to nearly 300 individuals this year alone. And that's only the beginning, as collectively 60 graduate students in the school's [doctor of psychology program](#) (PsyD) provided 50,000 hours of free service in 20 clinic, health and community settings in 2011, according to data released by the university's Graduate Department of Clinical Psychology this month.

Many of those hours came at the Behavioral Health Clinic. Directed by Dr. Joel Gregor, the clinic serves as an extension of the PsyD program and offers free and minimal-cost services to low-income citizens of Yamhill, Washington and Marion counties. Among the services offered are individual, couple's and family therapy; psychological, psycho-educational and neurological assessments; parenting skills training; and a parenting advice line for parents dealing with problem behavior in their children.

"We have served clients as young as 4 years old and as old as 95, and we've been able to serve a variety of cultures, including Caucasian, Native American, Latino and LGBT clients," Gregor said. "We hope to broaden our scope in the coming months."

In addition to serving as a resource for the community, the clinic offers PsyD students on-the-job training. All student therapists are supervised by Gregor, a licensed psychologist, to ensure quality care.

"If you look at the numbers, it's very obvious there is a tremendous need for these services in our area; we've continued to increase the size of the clinical staff (all doctoral students) in an effort to meet the increasing number of referrals," said Mary Peterson, chair of George Fox's Graduate Department of Clinical Psychology. "The majority of those who come to us are people who otherwise couldn't afford behavioral healthcare. For many of our clients, the economic downturn led to a loss of work and/or health insurance, while increasing their physical and emotional stress."

George Fox's addition of the clinic came at an opportune time. According to the U.S. Census Bureau data (2005), the total population of Yamhill County is estimated at

93,901, with 11,909 living in poverty. Of the more than 11,000 living in need, it is estimated more than 3,900 are children 18 years and younger (17 percent of the total population). It is estimated that 20 percent of the total population has no health insurance.

Last fall's expansion into pediatric care incorporated the addition of a bilingual pediatric call-in hour (a parenting hotline), a diagnostic program that provides assessments and evaluations, a pediatric obesity program, and parenting classes and groups.

The clinic originally opened at the university's Villa Academic Complex in 2009 and specialized in assisting low-income county residents in need of individual and couples therapy, mental health consultation, parenting counseling, and diagnostic assessment. The clinic has since moved to the Wright House, located directly across the parking lot from the complex at 501 N. Villa Road in Newberg, Ore.

For those accessing the services, the fees are nominal or waived. The clinic operates Mondays and Tuesdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. "(The clinic) coincides with our mission as a university – to serve the underserved around us," Peterson said.

Community members can arrange an appointment by calling 503-554-2368.

George Fox University is ranked by Forbes and Kiplinger's among the top Christian colleges in the country and is a [Christian university](#) classified by U.S. News & World Report as a first tier regional university and a "Best Value" school. More than 3,500 students attend classes on the university's campus in Newberg, Ore., and at teaching centers in Portland, Salem, and Redmond, Ore., and Boise, Idaho. George Fox offers bachelor's degrees in more than 40 majors, degree-completion programs for working adults, five seminary degrees, and 11 master's and doctoral degrees.

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