

SANTA FE BOYS

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Working With Boys At the Pastoral Counseling Center

By Paul Golding
SFB Editor

Dr. David Dennedy-Frank is a Santa Fe-born psychotherapist at the Pastoral Counseling Center. In the much smaller Santa Fe of his youth, David or "Dr. David" as he is sometimes called by his clients grew up in what he calls a multi-cultural family where his Hispanic roots predominated, but mingled with some German and French influence as well. This multicultural background serves him well at the Pastoral Counseling Center where David is also the clinic's director.

About a third of the center's clients are children and adolescents and half of these are boys. Most of the center's younger clients come because of a disruption in their family, such as separation, divorce, or some kind of family conflict. Many are referred through church leaders or mental health providers, but some simply find the center in the phone book.

The majority of the children and adolescents who seek counseling are suffering feelings of depression and anxiety and some are acting out in school or at home. David notes that boys are more likely to act out their feelings of depression and anxiety while girls tend to keep them inside. He says, "There is something about male energy which needs to be appreciated; there is more action and more aggression. The challenge to a boy is how he harnesses that energy to serve him, the people he loves and his community." To help them in



Dr. David

this process, David gives his young male clients plenty of opportunities to engage in physical activity. The way he arranges his office furniture, for example, allows for a big open space where the child can engage in wrestling and boxing. A three foot high bottom-weighted plastic figure stands in the corner just asking to be punched out. And David frequently goes on walks

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Programs and Services for Boys in Santa Fe

By Paul Golding
SFB Editor

This issue of *Santa Fe Boys* looks at some of the programs and services for boys in our community. Being a boy, as the following statistics show, has become one of the main predictors of social and academic failure in Santa Fe, in New Mexico and in the United States. Boys are:

- 10% more likely to drop out of school in Santa Fe
- Twice as likely to be in Special Education in Santa Fe
- Three times more likely to be referred to the Santa Fe County Juvenile Probation and Parole Office
- Four times more likely to be suspended from Middle School in Santa Fe
- Four times more likely to commit suicide than girls in New Mexico
- 15% less likely to graduate from college or university in the United States

To help remediate this situation, outside agencies are stepping in more and more with therapy, recreation, arts and other programs aimed at boys and young men. What do boys need from these programs? What are some of the important features that the providers of these services might wish to consider when addressing the wounds that lead boys to perform in the ways these statistics indicate?

At the beginning it should be pointed out: it's not just boys who need programs and services. The alarming rates of juvenile crime **and** teen pregnancy (to mention two of the most salient manifestations of the problems of young people in Santa Fe) show that programs and services for children—boys **and** girls—are in short supply and inadequate to the demand in our community. However, for boys, in addition to the oft-cited problems of lack of funding or absence of trained personnel or appropriate volunteers, the shortage of support also seems to be rooted in the

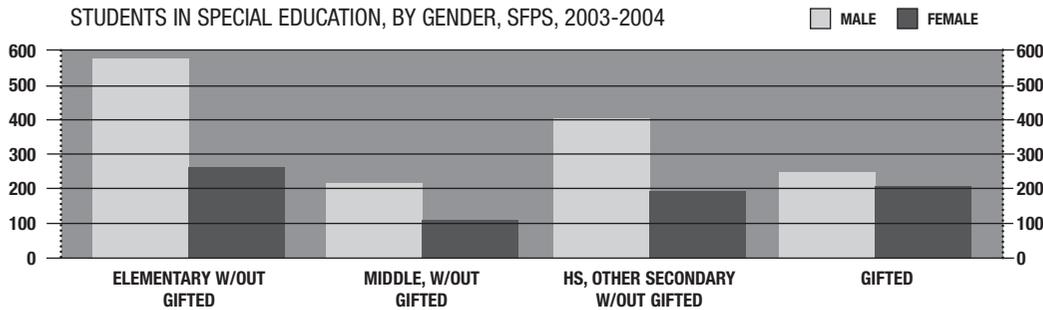
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Special Education in Santa Fe Public Schools: Boys Twice As Likely To Be In Special Education

As the chart below indicates, at all levels of the Santa Fe Public Schools (SFPS), males significantly outnumber females in Special Education (on average by 2 to 1), excluding students in "gifted" classes. ^[1]



The Santa Fe Public School system divides its special education students into 14 categories. Some of these categories are defined fairly specifically and in ways that are widely understood, such as "Autism" and "Mental Retardation." These are categories that account for comparatively few of the students in special education. Others—the categories with many more students—are broader and seem, by the definitions available in the *Federal Registrar*, to include a wide-range of possible behaviors and disabilities. For example, "Specific Learning Disabled," the category for over half of Santa Fe's non-gifted special education students, is defined in the *Federal Registrar* as:

...a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.^[2]

According to SFPS, among the specific disabilities included in this definition is Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) which, strangely enough, is also included in another category, "Other Health Impaired." Though learning disabilities are considered distinct from behavioral disorders, in fact there is a high correlation between the two, especially in the more general categories. The largest categories, including over 90% of the students in non-gifted Special Education, and their gender breakdown are as follows:

Total, excluding Gifted	1774 students – 67% male 33% female
By Category:	
–Specific Learning Disabled	987 students – 67% male 33% female
–Developmentally Delayed	203 students – 70% male 30% female
–Speech and Language Disabled	196 students – 61% male 39% female
–Other Health Impaired (ADD,ADHD)	150 students – 79% male 21% female
–Emotionally Disturbed	88 students – 77% male 23% female
–Other ^[3]	150 students – 56% male 44% female
Gifted	475 students – 54% male 46% female

Why do boys predominate in non-gifted Special Education in Santa Fe and elsewhere? Locally, the Director of the Office of Special Education, Patricia Penn notes that Santa Fe is not alone in this phenomenon. Nationally, there is more speculation, and many answers are given. Some educators contend that boys are more susceptible to some genetic disorders and are predisposed to learning disabilities.^[4] Others say that because boys misbehave more in class, they are more likely to get referred to special education programs. Why are boys more likely to misbehave? William Pollack, the author of *Real Boys*, maintains that, "Co-educational public schools are some of the least comfortable, least friendly and least productive environments in boys' lives."^[5] Author Michael Gurian in *Boys and Girls Learn Differently* says, "...although it is essential to separate learning-disability diagnoses from many so-called behavioral ones, in reality a lot of behavioral problems correlate with children (mainly males) who become behavioral problems as part of their ego reaction to their learning vulnerability."^[6] Whatever the specific reason or combination of reasons, the preponderance of boys in special education seems to be part of the bigger picture of boys doing poorly in Santa Fe schools. This is evidenced by higher drop out, suspension and retention in grade rates, lower scores on the high school competency and other tests in Language Arts and various problems associated with schools.

[1] In New Mexico's public school systems, programs for "gifted" students also fall within the category of special education.

[2] *Federal Register*, Vol. 64, No. 48, March 12, 1999, p. 12422.

[3] Includes autism, hearing impaired, multiple disabilities, mental retardation, orthopedic impaired, traumatic brain injury, visually impaired.

[4] Michelle Galley, "Research: Boys to Men," *Education Week*, January 23, 2002

[5] *CanadianParents.Com* interview with William Pollack undated

[6] Michael Gurian, *Boys and Girls Learn Differently*, Jossey-Bass Publisher, 2001, p. 247

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The editorial policy of *Santa Fe Boys* is to consider any article for publication. If you would like to contribute an article or a comment on the subjects raised here or other subjects related to boys in our community, please contact us at the addresses above.

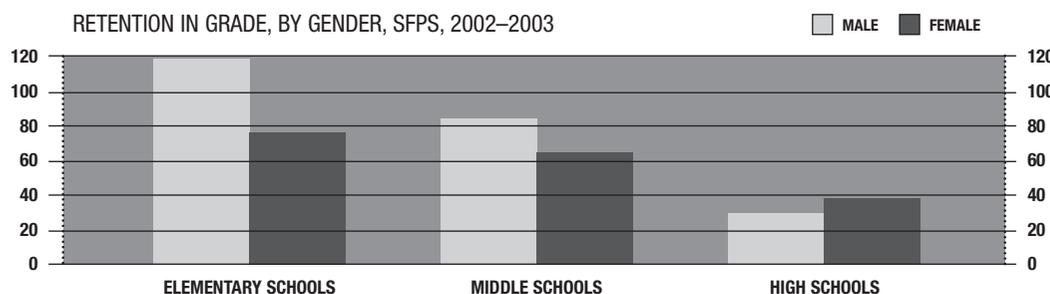
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Retained in Grade in Santa Fe Schools Boys Predominate, Especially in the Early Grades

As the chart below shows, boys are 60 percent more likely to be retained in grade in Santa Fe's elementary schools and 56 percent more likely in middle school. Fifty-six percent of those retained in high school, however, are females. Retention in grade refers to the practice of requiring a student who has been in a given grade for a full school year to remain at that level for the following school year.

According to the National Association of School Psychologists, retention in grade nationally is more

frequent with boys than girls. It is also often linked with learning and behavioral disorders, high school drop out rate and other deleterious long-term effects. In Santa Fe, under New Mexico statutes, whether a child is retained in grade before the eighth grade is recommended by the teacher, but may be overruled by a parent. Whether a child goes from the eighth grade to high school, however, is a decision of the schools.



Su Vida-Mental Health Programs For Youth

“While boys are encouraged to act out their feelings through aggression, girls are taught to talk about how they feel. And, boys learn to punish other people, while girls are taught to keep that hurt inside, even if it eats her up.”
James Garbarino, *Lost Boys*, Anchor Books, 1999, p. 51.

Boys and girls often manifest severe mental stress and illness in different ways, as Cornell University psychologist James Garbarino says above. In Santa Fe we have a reflection of this difference in some of the creative programs run by Su Vida, a non-profit organization founded to provide mental health services to children, adolescents and their families.

One of these programs is **Multisystemic Therapy (MST)** which mostly treats boys and their families. Reflecting the demographics of the Juvenile Justice system from which most of its clients are referred, the MST program at Su Vida is 60-65 percent boys. For all the reasons a young person winds up on probation or parole—truancy,

drug use, gang involvement etc.—he or she might be referred to the MST program by a judge or probation officer. Su Vida's MST program is an attempt to provide an early alternative from the life trajectory that many boys and some girls in our community find themselves on.

About two-thirds of the MST program's time is focused on the caregiver, who is motivated by the opportunity to remove her child from the juvenile justice system. Meetings with clients usually take place at home, school or other community locales. The first step in MST is to encourage the caregiver to define the changes desired for her child. According to clinic director Terry Sine, this usually boils down to two things: being in school and living in a safe, drug free, environment. Having defined the goals and assessed the strengths and weaknesses in the client's environment, the Su Vida therapists work with caregivers, helping them to make major changes in the way they monitor

their child, being certain, for example, that he gets to school on time and being careful to develop more substantial links to school. According to Sine, the typical caregiver in the MST program lacks confidence in her parenting skills, and consequently much of the work of the MST therapists, who are available at all times, is to teach caregivers how to hold their children accountable. This is a major task, according to Sine, requiring difficult changes in attitude and behavior for the caregiver.

Another program—this one exclusively for boys—is a residential treatment facility called **Casa de Su Vida**, a house in a Santa Fe suburb. There 10 teenage boys spend 3 months in a highly structured and intensive therapeutic environment in an effort to treat severe behavioral disorders and accompanying anti-social behaviors, very similar to those described above for MST. Like the MST program, the boys who find themselves at Casa de Su Vida are usually referred through the

juvenile justice system.

At its residential treatment facility, Su Vida tries to create a home-like environment with which to saturate boys in a behavioral model different from the one they may be used to at home. For many of the boys in Casa de Su Vida, learning the new behaviors is their last opportunity to avoid a locked facility.

While in Casa de Su Vida the boy and his parents or other family members attend regular therapy sessions with a resident therapist. In addition, resident teachers reinforce a set of skills developed at Boys Town, the 85 year old treatment center for abused, abandoned and neglected boys in Nebraska. This “Boys Town Model” rests on the belief that not only is it important to have skills, such as following directions and properly greeting people, but that attitude also counts. The model is taught with a point system. When a boy properly executes a skill, like turning off the TV when he is told, and does it with a good attitude, quickly, and without complaining, he receives points. Points in turn, are rewarded with privileges. While at the RTC the boys are given many opportunities to employ their newly learned skills. For example, they might do community service at a soup kitchen. Most residents also have a mentor from Catholic Charities who tries to stay in touch with the boy after the program.

In contrast to the MST program and the residential Casa de Su Vida and reflecting the other side of the gender dichotomy Garbarino describes above, Su Vida also offers a **Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)** program. DBT is a cluster of therapeutic approaches for those involved in self-harming behavior. It allows young people to learn, practice and generalize the skills necessary to choose behaviors other than self-harm to deal with problems. Originally developed for adults, DBT has been adapted for treating adolescents and, according to Su Vida, 80 percent of its clients are girls.

Portrait of a Santa Fe Boy

Ivan Cornejo

By his own description, Ivan Cornejo is a sociable and “committed” 16 year-old. When the tall and good looking Santa Fe High junior is asked to describe what he means by committed, he fumbles a little, looking for the right word. “Sobresalir,” he eventually says, i.e. excelling or distinguishing oneself. Hearing his story, one cannot help but think that a great deal is meant by this.

Ivan came to Santa Fe from Aguas Calientes, Mexico with his mother and father, three older sisters and a brother. Every immigrant probably goes through his own toughening experience and even as a fourth grader, Ivan had his. It consisted of being the lone Spanish-only speaker in the class and living with the isolation that such a status entailed, compounded by “bullying” experiences from other boys, especially intense during recess and lunch. Hearing of his son’s isolation on the playground, his father purchased a basketball for Ivan to occupy himself with during breaks. On the first day, his father’s touchingly well-intended diversion was stolen by other boys and never seen again, a memory that still brings tears to Ivan’s eyes. Other indignities that Ivan recalls had to do with having to ask other kids in the class how to get permission in English from the teacher to go to the bathroom, teasing experiences about his strange clothes, and being the object of spit balls and other harassment on the bus to school. Being the new kid without friends and speaking a different language left him at a disadvantage and

very isolated.

Gradually, as he moved into the upper elementary school grades, Ivan began to make new friends and find his way. This did not entirely exempt him from the scourge of bullying and getting in the occasional fight. Fortunately, through his participation in the school’s Mariachi band, Ivan got to know the Principal, who taught him the guitar. The principal came to understand some of the challenges Ivan was facing, and gave him leeway and support when he got in trouble defending himself from the bullies.

Middle school brought Ivan a new set of trials and temptations. In seventh grade at De Vargas, he started to “ditch,” sometimes missing four of five days of class, and to enjoy his self-rewarded freedom with a new group of friends. He says that having been the object of so much taunting in elementary school, it was refreshing to be accepted into a group that he might even have the chance to lead. When his parents got wind of what was happening, however, he was gently, but unambiguously, put back on the straight and narrow. Without raising their voices, they made it clear that he was wasting an opportunity that they, who had never gone beyond the third grade, had not had. His three older sisters also pitched in, checking his attendance record so that everyone knew what was going on. By the eighth grade, Ivan was on



track again, though he now can see how close he came to missing out on an education.

In the highly stratified world of high school, Ivan mostly socializes with others who share his immigrant background and his affinity for Spanish. One of the experiences he most enjoys at Santa Fe High is being part of ENLACE, Engaging the Latino Community for Education. Ivan, who switches easily between

languages, described the emphasis of ENLACE as promoting “convivencia,” the ability for people to be together in harmony through education. Through ENLACE he both receives tutoring from Santa Fe Community College students and also provides guidance to Ortiz Middle School students. He understands that for others following in his footsteps he is a role model and tries to impress the middle school students with the importance of education. Whereas he used to think of himself as “cool” for ditching classes, now he sees that he is “cool” in the eyes of those younger than he for different, hopefully more enduring, reasons.

Ivan thinks it important to note the abundance of material wealth in Santa Fe. He talks about the ease of buying a hamburger at McDonalds or even taking a hot shower and having constant running water. In Mexico, these are rare or unheard of pleasures, and he is disturbed by how much such luxuries are taken for granted in Santa Fe. If people do not understand the singularity of such pleasures and conveniences, can they be happier for having them, he asks.

The O’Keeffe Art and Leadership Program for Boys

By Jackie M.

Director of Education and Public Programs,
Georgia O’Keeffe Museum

The Georgia O’Keeffe Museum began its Art and Leadership Program for Boys in the summer of 2002. This followed on the heels of several years of experience with our highly successful program for girls. While I knew that the boys’ program would not be a replica of the girls’, I didn’t anticipate how the programs would diverge in order to accommodate boys.

Through the O’Keeffe Art and Leadership Program, the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum

serves youth, ages 11-13, who demonstrate that art is core to their experience. The two separate leadership programs provide learning that fosters independent thinking, problem-solving and leadership skills; they nourish and develop artistic talent and address age-related, and gender specific, social issues.

Because we believe that it is necessary to provide each group of boys and girls with same sex staff in their separate programs, our learning process for the new boys program began the moment the male college and high school interns started their week of training. Indeed the young men

challenged us on the very notion that we needed a week of training. They wondered what we could possibly have to say that would take that long, especially in preparation for a short, four week program. Did reading about leadership styles help prep our staff for leadership roles they would need to assume in the program? Obviously, if there was a relationship, as we organizers thought there was, it remained hidden to our new male staff. They wanted spontaneous, direct experience. As reasonable as that may sound, this was the opposite of what we had become used to from the female staff members who wanted more

information and more thoughtful programming.

This early experience corresponded to the most significant lesson learned from our program with boys: the boys and our male interns like learning by doing. Or as Franky Kong, the boys' program coordinator notes, they exude a "why rehearse" philosophy that either assumes they already have the skills or that there will be no problem in picking them up. This seemed to be true even if they were developing skills as they worked. There was an impatient "let's get the game underway, and don't spend time going over the instructions" attitude. Given a time frame, materials, and an idea of what to do, the boys were content to place the experience within the program structure.

The girls, on the other hand, asked for a conceptual framework. They wanted a map of how the particular activity would unfold and were more comfortable with leading a process or facilitating an experience or joining in if they knew they had the skill set. Girls seemed much more open to discussion and sharing of information than the boys. Girls were interested in what the projects represented, whereas the boys were more interested in starting and doing.

In response to these manifested differences for the boys, Kong created more goal oriented programs and more of a framework to support the activeness of the boys' minds and bodies. For example, we added martial arts (Akido) with the help of Dr. Victor LaCerva as a way for the boys to experience their own bodies, and to realize the potential for using them with respect for purposes of personal space, self-defense and diffusing violence. Boys also wanted to play more active games to expend energy. Indeed, we learned that discussion of leadership skills/qualities had to be active and demonstrative. We also learned about timing with boys: they tended not to be very self-reflective if discussions were done at the end of lessons.

At the closing art exhibition, looking at the artwork as a product, as the culmination of the intensely full-bodied experience of the separate boys and girls programs, I was taken with the great difference between the two final collections. Even though the various adult artists working in the program and their projects contributed greatly to the artworks created by the young program participants, there was a visual coherency to

each collection that went beyond the individual interpretation of a specific lesson. The feeling of the work by the boys was loose, spontaneous, and fresh. In contrast, I would describe the girls' work as more controlled, refined, and deliberate.

Perhaps a useful way of looking at the boys' involvement in the program is through the lens of "play." Dr. Vera John-Steiner, Presidential Professor of Linguistics and Education at the University of New Mexico, maintains that boys on the whole tend to play more in their approach to work. If I reexamine the artwork from the perspective of playfulness, I can see that the quality I



Photo by Richard A. Shuff

Artwork from Masking the Emotions Lesson, O'Keefe Art and Leadership Program for Boys by Gabriel Melcher, ink and watercolor on paper

describe as looser, created with more abandon, could also be read as an expression of playfulness. The very nature of the projects themselves had a playful, open quality, while the girls' works in contrast seemed to express a more purposeful, thoughtful attempt to express or communicate their feelings and their sense of self.

"Play", as I use it here, is the "work" of the young child, the basis of learning in early childhood. I have often wondered why this is forgotten as students age and why the emphasis for learning comes to be measured by cognitive outputs. Yet, we all can recognize the highly successful intellectual who plays at work, who dances with theorems, who paints with inspired and

fresh language.

The boys in our program played/worked with gusto. They liked humor. They conversed in a teasing yet friendly manner. When they shared their "stories" by talking about their feelings, it was as if they were confessing or revealing aspects of themselves. Revealing puts the speaker in control – how much do I tell you based on trust and confidence? Girls in their conversations were primarily sharing with each other, only later to realize what they had revealed about themselves. Sharing, too, requires a trusting environment, but the nature of sharing is intrinsically responsive to the other and is collaborative. Revealing suggests an audience or listener but doesn't imply a conversation or discussion. Perhaps the conversation isn't necessary when one has felt truly listened to.

We used male values to motivate and frame our discussions. Values such as courage and strength are embedded into aspects of the lessons. The boys easily opened up and participated with their feelings and opinions that were expressed, if not in words, then in images or actions. Reaching the boys by working with core male values caught their attention and resulted in a creative responsiveness to the activities that suggested an application of the values.

In contrast, girls might express an opinion about values such as strength or courage but these values did not represent core issues. Thus, they would not fully engage in a conversation from the perspective of the value in the way they would engage when the theme was relationship-based.

Coming back to looking at the artwork, I commented to Professor John-Steiner that much of the work from a boys' painting project conducted at a middle school seems to display images that co-mingle masculine and feminine symbols (iconography). For example, a representation of strength consisted of a rose growing in a dry desert landscape and the theme of courage was depicted in a painting of the Virgin of Guadalupe with the silhouette of Michael Jordan superimposed onto the Virgin. John-Steiner responded that studies have shown that creative individuals tend to be more androgynous. Androgyny and the arts might be a topic for another discussion.

Mentoring the Young Men Project at Capshaw Middle School

By Nancy David
Capshaw Middle School Wellness Counselor, LMHC

The Mentoring Young Men Project developed from my personal observation that the emotional needs of middle school males have been underserved in the school environment, as well as in the larger community. Conversations with male colleagues helped confirm that my goal of offering a group framework for boys at Capshaw, facilitated by adult males, would be a worthwhile addition to the services we provide at the school. Initially, we had 6-week sessions which have expanded to 12-week session with the boys. Currently we serve about 20 young men a year. Though designated for young men who are “at risk” for violence, pregnancy, and alcohol/substance abuse, in reality, since I believe all teens are at risk, the project is open to all 8th grade males. While SASS (Self Awareness and School Support) has been a strong program for the 7th and 8th grade females at Capshaw for more than 10 years, there had not been a specific parallel program which has focused on the needs of the male students until this program began two years ago.

A major element of the effort is for these middle school young men to be in the company and care of older males who share similar concerns and questions as to what it means to be “male” in our culture. Puberty is often a time of confusion and is even more intensified by the mixed cultural messages boys and girls receive about gender roles. Sexualized violence has become an acceptable norm for teens, reinforced primarily by mass media through advertising, music videos, and TV. I think that older males can help be a positive antidote for these negative cultural messages as powerful mentors and healthy models for young men through this transition period. Since many of the participants do not have father figures or healthy adult males in their lives, this kind of male facilitation is of even greater value.

An important component of the project is the group sessions which focus on emotional support. Frank Walker, an independent counselor, is the lead facilitator for the group. With his many years of experience working with troubled teens in the community, Frank has facilitation skills which provide important emotional boundaries for the young men to more safely explore who they are.

Frank co-facilitates the group sessions with Jesús Gonzales, the Santa Fe coordinator for the NM Young Fathers Project, a support organization for young fathers. Jesús is able to serve as a role model, sharing his experience as a former troubled teen and a responsible father. In addition, two young fathers from the NM Young Fathers Project, who are trained to help facilitate the group, serve as Peer Educators. These young fathers share their experiences and challenges as teen fathers with the younger 8th grade males.

Another important component of the group is the hands-on creative part of the project. The exact nature of the project changes from group to group, but always strives to challenge the group members to express artistically who and/or what are their allies and obstacles and who they are in a dynamic, active process of creation. In the first group this effort resulted in a rock path on school grounds. The second group created murals in the main Capshaw hallway, and the most recent group collectively wrote and performed a short play. The current group will record a CD, with Jesús’ expertise and knowledge of computer software. Individually and in small groups, they will create hip hop songs about their lives.

We realize the importance of helping the students achieve academic success, in addition to the group sessions and hands-on creative work. Since many of the current participants are in danger of failing 8th grade, each student is encouraged to find a personal “study mentor” who will check in with the student a few times a week, inquiring about homework and school related topics. According to research, this kind of personal attention to academics from adults empowers the student to be more accountable and responsible for his success or failure at school.

The Mentoring the Young Men Project continues to be a work in progress. With renewed financial support from the community, we will continue to serve a small group of young men at Capshaw and perhaps even expand this project to benefit more young men in the Santa Fe community in the future. While it may be a lofty goal, I think all would agree that when our young men learn to explore their lives with confidence and connection to themselves and others, everyone benefits.

For further information contact Nancy David, 920-6164.

Working with boys, continued from page 1

outside the office while he and clients talk. The important thing, according to David, “is not only for the boy to act out the feeling physically, but also to talk about it. If you just act it out, then you do not feel it. On the other hand, if you keep it inside then it does not go anywhere. Children need help in understanding how they feel, especially when the feelings are painful for them.”

David points out that 60 to 70 percent of the boys he sees do not have fathers in their lives. When he first started practicing, this figure was much lower, about 30 percent. Boys have a lot of sadness and hurt about their father’s absence and often do not understand how to take it. David notes that what happens in a family is always more complicated than it seems at first. Often, boys come to ask themselves tough questions. Why did it happen to me? Is it a rejection of me? Does it mean that I will be the same when I’m a father?

For the younger boys, coming to terms with the feelings around such father loss may require being able to talk to their dads. When these boys open up to David, he notes there is a tendency for them to want to use what he calls the “parental voice.” For example, a boy might want to tell his dad that he would like him to stop drinking. David, however, encourages a boy to find his own, child voice and say: “Dad, I need you back in my life,” or even more simply “I need a Dad.” By doing so a boy is both expressing and is in touch with the pain he experiences around his father’s absence, even if his father may not be able to respond. “If you can change the inner world, then the outer world will follow,” Dr. David says.

For an older boy, the process of therapy and the exploration of feelings about father loss help a young man learn that he can make different choices than his dad. Once a boy has begun to develop the skill of talking about his feelings and needs, he can approach other men—a grandfather, stepfather or teacher—and seek what he wants in terms of male connection. For some boys, learning how to talk relationally with peers can also be very healing.

What is most lacking in the treatment of boys? David says that there is first and foremost a shortage of therapists, especially male therapists, and points out that there is a waiting list in his office for new, young patients. Also, parts of the family structure are often missing—most often the father—and so dealing with the missing family pieces becomes an important part of therapy. Lastly, therapy needs more bi-lingual and multi- culturally sensitive staff. David, who speaks from considerable personal and academic experience on the subject, notes

that it is important that therapists be able to understand the articulated and unarticulated dimensions of feeling behind what is being said.

The key to the work of David Dennedy-Frank and his colleagues at the Pastoral Counseling Center is to provide the opportunity to let the inner boy's voice be expressed and heard. David says they are successful when they can get a boy to ask himself different questions about his life, to understand that he has different choices than the ones that he took with him to the center the first time.

The center, a non-profit, private psychotherapy practice of nine therapists, views the opportunity for healing and achieving wholeness through the use of psychotherapy as a potentially sacred journey. David Dennedy-Frank points out that the center's therapists do not promote spiritual issues. If, however, these issues are manifested in the process of therapy or are brought to therapy by a client, the clinic's practitioners are able and willing to explore them. Begun in 1993 by a Franciscan Sister, the Pastoral Counseling Center has maintained an ecumenical character both in terms of the religious backgrounds of its therapists and clients and in its sources of support, which include Catholic and Protestant Churches, as well as private foundations, insurance and fees. The Pastoral Counseling Center can be reached at 988-4131.

Programs, continued from page 1

wide-spread cultural attitude that boys are self-sufficient and can take care of themselves. A good example of this belief is described in the article about how boys with speech disorders often go untreated. In spite of the ubiquity of this attitude, the roots of our notions of male self-sufficiency are seldom examined. In an effort to highlight these notions, William Pollack, the author of *Real Boys*, has described what he calls the three myths about boyhood. The first of these is that "boys will be boys" i.e. nature controls boys and not much can be done about it or about how boys behave. The second is that "boys should be boys" i.e. boys should live by the Boy Code, be tough and independent regardless of what they really feel. And the third is that "boys are toxic" and therefore should not be given much hope or leeway. In short, it seems that boys have often been thought to be invulnerable; their rightful place is in sports, a room in the county detention center, a place on the bench outside the principal's office or in a special ed class. This situation clearly merits renewed and more serious attention.

Increasingly, what is taken as indifference and the appearance of invulnerability in boys is understood to be the inner disconnection that

many boys experience. Those who wish to understand boys know this comes from a set of outdated and dysfunctional gender stereotypes affecting how we raise boys. This "Boy Code", as Pollack calls it, has its roots early in life, separating boys from their parents too soon, before most boys are emotionally prepared for it. It persists with the ideas that get passed along to boys about "keeping a stiff upper lip," "not showing feelings," and "acting real tough." Perhaps the worst effect is that the Boy Code makes them feel ashamed of themselves. "By the time boys reach school age, years of training teach them that neither their mother nor their father will respond warmly to their expressions of emotions. By elementary school, most boys know and honor the Boy Code even if it deeply hurts them." (From the web site www.SupportingOurSons.org.)

If we look deeper into the three myths cited above, i.e. if we can see beyond how the Boy Code molds our boys, we can replace the myths with three truths. First, in addition to nature and testosterone a boy's behavior is shaped also by how he is raised. Second, there are as many ways to be a boy as there are to be a girl, i.e. masculinity can be diverse, and third, boys can be as feeling and as empathic as girls.

There are in our Santa Fe community three factors that aggravate the Boy Code: poverty, alienation, and male-absence. The Boy Code exists across class, but poverty nonetheless exacerbates an already bad situation. As one service provider in Santa Fe said with regard to children who are severely stressed, "Most kids, unless they can afford it, don't get attention until they enter the legal system or are in child protective services." With over half of the children in public schools on free and reduced lunches—a good indication of high levels of poverty—it is likely that a lot of boys are not getting the remedial attention they need. Additionally, alienation abounds among many youth in Santa Fe. Whether it is because of "stereotyping" as many boys themselves call it or whether it comes from other causes, many

young males have the idea that the system will not work for them. They are, in a sense, doubly alienated—disconnected from both their own inner worlds and disassociated from the society at large. Finally, there is father-absence and the absence for boys of good same sex role models. With a state-wide reported 46% of births to single mothers, this is a major aggravating factor for boys. Poverty, alienation and male absence combine to put stress on many of the families and children of our community, resulting in a strong effect on boys.

After presenting the dire situation of many boys, I would like to examine some of the features that providers of programs and services might consider in order to heal the wounds of many young males. Here are three areas that I would recommend to facilitators of programs attempting to help boys:

1. Go beyond the outward behavior and attempt to **meet the inner boy**, through connection, first and foremost, and through activities that engage boys. Connection with boys can require overcoming years of conditioning that teach a boy to distrust closeness. Often, what Pollack calls "action talk," i.e. engaging in activities like hiking, throwing a baseball, walking or simply driving with boys, while at the same time attempting to connect verbally and emotionally, helps in reaching a boy.
2. **Create emotionally safe spaces**, places where boys can express their own thoughts and opinions in an open and genuine way. This will help reduce some of the shame-based hardening that boys experience. If the groundwork has been laid properly, boys—individually and with groups—can be both challenged to be more open and assured they are safe to be so.
3. Acknowledge and try, at least partially, to **fill the male absence** that many boys experience. This can be accomplished by providing mentors or looking for a male relative to support a boy. It can be promoted by male discussion group leaders and male staff (such as male teachers) who are aware of their own boyhood struggle and the longing which they may have worked hard to overcome.

He's Just a Late Talker

"A girl with language delay was 60% more likely to be referred to audiology than a boy," concludes a study in the February 2004 issue of the journal *Pediatrics*. Dr. Laura Sices, lead researcher of the study, is quoted in the *New York Times* as saying: "There's a kind of a sense when you see that in a boy that he'll catch up, that he's just a late talker." However, the study also notes that disorders involving serious speech problems are twice as likely to be found in boys as girls and that because of the attitude that "he's just a late talker," many boys are losing out on the possibility of early detection and treatment that can lead to more successful resolutions of the underlying problem.

For further information: Laura Sices, MD, et al, "How Do Primary Care Physicians Manage Children With Possible Developmental Delays? A National Survey With an Experimental Design," *Pediatrics*, Vol. 113, No. 2, Feb. 2004, pp. 274-282.

SANTA FE BOYS

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Scholarship Opportunities for SFPS Teachers provided by the Santa Fe Boys Fund

Boyhood Advocacy Training for Teachers

June 16-18, 2004 in San Francisco, California

Featuring Dr. William Pollack, author of *Real Boys*
Also including Dr. Brian Kleis, child and adolescent psychiatrist
And Ellen Dodge, M. Ed., communication specialist and teacher

Issues to be addressed:

- The Emotional Life of Boys: Boys and Self-Esteem
- The Social Life of Boys: Boys and Their Relationships
- The Cognitive Life of Boys: Boys and School
- The Physical Life of Boys: Boys and Play
- Partnering with Parents: The Home/School Connection

Scholarships will cover all expenses of attending the training—tuition, airfare, room and board, & ground transportation.
For more information and application, contact: Santa Fe Partners in Education, 474-0240 or Santafeboys@comcast.net.

Deadline for receipt of applications at Santa Fe Partners in Education: May 3, 2004.

Conference organized by Supporting Our Sons, a national non-profit advocacy and educational organization for boys and parents located in Palo Alto, California. More information is available at www.supportingoursons.org