

# Operants

## A Newsletter of the B.F. Skinner Foundation

Second Quarter 2007, Vol. I



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### **The B.F. Skinner Foundation Scholarship for Graduate Student Re- search in Florida**

In 2006, the B.F. Skinner Foundation established a scholarship for graduate student research in Florida. The first scholarship winner was Jeanne Donaldson, a student at Florida Institute of Technology.

Under the direction of Dr.

Matt Normand, Ms. Donaldson began conducting a study on increasing physical activity with overweight and obese adults. The \$500 scholarship award allowed her to purchase five heart rate monitors that recorded calorie expenditure. These monitors allowed Ms. Donaldson to use calorie expenditure as a dependent measure for physical activity.

Ms. Donaldson has just completed her first year in the Applied Behavior Analysis Master's program at Florida Institute of Technology. Currently, she is working extensively on her the-

sis, the experiment made possible by the B.F. Skinner Foundation Scholarship.

This summer, Ms. Donaldson is hoping to begin working on additional projects using heart rate monitors, with a concentration on increasing physical activity in children. Also over the summer, Ms. Donaldson will begin her intensive practical training with the University of Florida's Behavior Analysis Services Program, which trains foster parents on a set of behavioral parenting tools.



Jeanne Donaldson

The B.F. Skinner Foundation is pleased to announce that this year, the scholarship amount has been increased to \$1,000. We look forward to supporting future graduate student research projects.

For criteria and submissions procedures, please contact:

FABA Skinner Foundation  
Scholarship  
c/o 550 St. Johns St.  
Cocoa, FL 32922  
[kwbehavior@aol.com](mailto:kwbehavior@aol.com)

### **The B.F. Skinner Foundation welcomes its newest Board Member - Dr. Allen Murphy**



In January of 2007, Dr. Al Murphy officially joined the B.F. Skinner Foundation as a board member. Dr.

Murphy received his B.S. from Penn State, a master's from C. W.

Post College, and a Ph.D. from Florida State University. He served as a consultant at residential facilities for the mentally retarded for 10 years followed by 9 years as the consulting behavior analyst for exceptional students in a public school district.

Dr. Murphy's current position is as Associate in Psychology and Coordinator of Applied Placements at Florida State University - Panama City where his main duties are within the master's program in applied behavior analysis.

Dr. Murphy served as the Florida Association for Behavior Analysis' Conference (FABA) Program Chair from 1995-2005, as its President in 2002, and as Executive Director since 2006.

Since 1994, Dr. Murphy has been involved in marine turtle conservation. He is the co-founder of the South Walton Turtle Watch, recognized as the 2000 Volunteer Organization of the Year by the Florida Wildlife Foundation.

All of us at the B.F. Skinner Foundation look forward to working with Dr. Murphy. Please join me in welcoming him to our organization!

### **Suzanne Letso and the Connecticut Center for Child Development**



Suzanne Letso

The Connecticut Center for Child Development, Inc. (CCCD) is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals with autism, Asperger's Syndrome, and other pervasive developmental disorders throughout their lifespan. Instructional methods are based on applied behavior analytic learning principles.

Suzanne Letso is the co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of the CCCD and its subsidiary, The Institute for Educational Planning. In addition to her work at the CCCD, Ms. Letso also provides consultative services to assist in the development of new educational programs for individuals with disabilities. She is a board certified behavior analyst, holds a Master of Arts degree in leadership from Duquesne University, and is the parent of two children, one of whom is her 17 year-old son with autism.

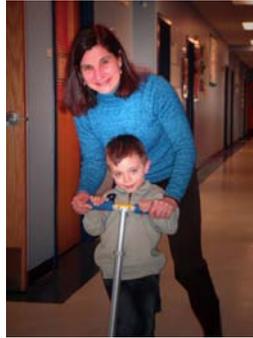


Letso working with young students at the CCCD

I recently had the chance to speak with Ms. Letso about her work at the CCCD. She and her husband, as well as another mother of a child with autism, founded the CCCD in 1995. Their dream was that one day, effective, science-based treatments for all people with autism would be readily available regardless of age, severity of condition, income, or place of residence. From the beginning, the organization's mission has been to improve the lives of individuals with autism by providing educational opportunities utilizing empirically validated teaching strategies, to advance the field of behavior analysis, and to promote effective autism treatments.

Letso described the beginnings of her organization: "CCCD began at my kitchen counter, with a card board box in my dining room as my filing cabinet, and a post office box as our official address. Today, we operate 8 programs based on behavior analytic learning principles including a private school

program for children 3 -21 years of age, a diagnostic center, and a professional training initiative; and are poised to open a 9<sup>th</sup> program which is a behaviorally based school program for children with high functioning autism and Asperger's Syndrome. We recently purchased 4.57 acres of land and are in the process of building a much larger facility that is slated to open in January 2008. This new building will not only enable us to enhance our current programs, but also to continue to expand our offering of services."

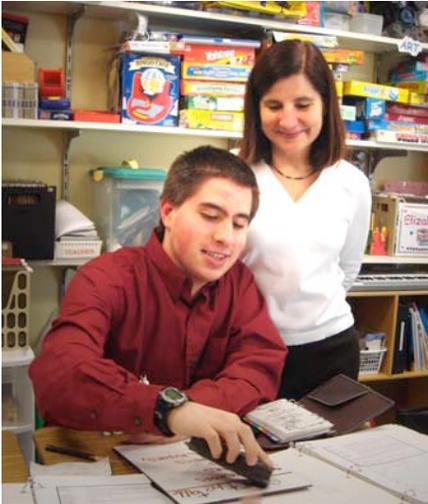


Letso and student at the CCCD

Currently, the CCCD provides services to over 60 children and their families and maintains a ratio of 1.5 teachers to every student. The Center's long-term goal for students, including Letso's son Tyler, is an adult life in the least restrictive environment possible. The CCCD has been collaborating with a local agency that designs and runs "customized" residential settings for adults with autism. "They have the experience and manpower to operate residential placements, and we bring our

expertise in ABA, autism, education, and staff training to the relationship. We hope to have our first home for five young men with autism operating by September, and a second, designed specifically for two of our students who are twins, is underway," said Letso.

The CCCD also offers life-long transition and follow-up educational and consultative services for the students who are able to "graduate" and lead relatively independent lives. Each student is different, however, and it is important not to measure success solely by the student's ability to achieve independence. Letso explained, "Some of our 'best outcome' students have lost their diagnosis and returned to a regular education setting with little or no support. However, these kids represent only a small percentage of the children we serve. At CCCD we actually do not define success by that gold standard of complete remediation of autistic symptoms, although it does happen for a segment of our students. Many of our children are significantly challenged by their autism, and like my son, when they get older receive a dual diagnosis of both autism and mental retardation. Every new skill these children learn is hard won. It would be a disservice to these kids, their teachers, and their parents to only measure their success with the yardstick of recovery."



Letso and her son, Tyler

For more information, or to contact Suzanne Letso and the CCCD, please visit [www.cccdinc.org](http://www.cccdinc.org)

CCCD  
925 Bridgeport Avenue  
Milford, CT 06460  
Phone: 203-882-8810  
Fax: 203-878-9468  
E-Mail: [info@ccdinc.org](mailto:info@ccdinc.org)

### President's Column By Dr. Julie S. Vargas



The B. F. Skinner Foundation held two events at the annual convention of the Associa-

tion for Behavior Analysis in San Diego at the end of May. The first was a reception, an event we almost always hold at the annual convention. The second was a new venture: An auction, our first at an ABA convention.



Terry Knapp

The reception was so crowded and animated that we forgot to take any pictures. But we did take a few at the auction. The auction was held at the beginning of the evening of dancing known as the "Expo". People were slow to arrive until the band began playing. Soon the room filled, and the organizers got the band to pause for the auction.

Items were projected onto a screen. I introduced each item, and Michael Fabrizio auctioned them.



Jose Martinez-Diaz and student

Sporadic dancing and music made for a less than ideal auction setting, but Michael managed to carry it off remarkably well. Many friends were among the audience, and the winners were pleased with their items.

One third of the "take" will go to the Society for the Advancement of Behavior Analysis, the non-profit arm of the the Association for Behavior Analysis (our sponsoring agency for the auction.)



Greg Stikeleather, winner of the autographed *Verbal Behavior* book, talking to Dave Palmer

## Volunteer Support

You can support the B.F. Skinner Foundation by contributing your time. The Foundation is looking for a volunteer in the Boston - Cambridge area, no more than a half hour traveling distance from its office. (Address below.) We're looking for someone:

- 1 - with a background in Skinnerian behavioral science
- 2 - who can be with the B.F. Skinner Foundation for at least two years
- 3 - who can help part-time up to 20 hours a week (or more)
- 4 - who is willing to learn new things
- 5 - who is literate in Apple/Mac applications

There is no age limit. We can sort out hours and days. The volunteer must overlap with current staff, but otherwise the volunteer would work on her or his own.

Address:

B.F. Skinner Foundation  
12 Arrow Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
617-661-9209  
617-218-9906

## 4th International ABA Conference to be held in Sidney, Australia from August 12 - 14, 2007



To promote behavior analysis outside the U.S., ABA International annually holds worldwide conferences. In the past, conferences have been held in Beijing, China (2005); Campinas, Brazil (2004); and Venice, Italy (2001).

This year, ABA is pleased to announce its 4th International Conference in Sidney, Australia. The opening reception will be held on Sunday, August 12, and the conference program will be held from August 13 - 14. All events will take place at the Hilton Sydney.

For more information, please refer to ABA's website, <http://www.abainternational.org/sydney/index.aspx>

## Letter from the Editor



Dear Reader,

Summer has arrived, and with it begins the season of Association for Behavior Analysis Conventions! In May, ABA's annual convention was held in San Diego, California. Coming up in August, the International Conference will be held in Sidney, Australia. In September, the Florida Association for Behavior Analysis will be holding its 27th Annual Meeting in Jacksonville, Florida. The B.F. Skinner Foundation looks forward to reporting back about each of these wonderful conventions.

I would like to thank Suzanne Letso for her inspiring interview about her work with the Connecticut Center for Child Development. I encourage you all to keep in touch with her Center, as it is constantly growing and expanding.

I would also like to welcome Dr. Al Murphy to the B.F. Skinner Foundation's Board. We look forward to working with him closely.

I hope you all have an inspiring summer. Thank you for your continued support of *Operants* - I look forward to hearing from you all with news, suggestions or concerns.

-- Elizabeth McGlinchey, Editor