

Angela's Story *by Jean Scarboro, Jumping Mouse therapist*

At Jumping Mouse, part of our mission is to nurture each child's healthy relationships at home and in the community. This is critical to helping children heal and to breaking cycles of abuse and neglect that often are passed down from one generation to the next. Angela's story illustrates the importance of advocating for our kids in the schools, at home, and in other environments that care for children. Through these efforts, we not only transform individual lives but also change how our entire community cares for kids. As always, identifying details have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Nine-year-old "Angela" was referred to Jumping Mouse by Dove House Advocacy Services, our local domestic violence shelter and advocacy organization. At the time, she was living with her mother and four younger siblings in transitional housing. Her father was struggling with substance abuse, depression, and serious legal charges. Her mother had overcome her own addiction to methamphetamines and was now sober. She had an ACE score of 7 and her mother, who grew up in a house full of abuse, had a score of 8 (see sidebar for more about ACEs).

When I began seeing Angela, she was in a school program for children with behavioral and emotional disabilities. School staff described her as noncompliant and often distracted or inattentive, and her behavior included running off school grounds and kicking and hitting teachers. Her ability to mentally and emotionally escape her body, or "space out," and her tendency to fight or run, were all adaptive behaviors, responses to a home where she often felt unsafe. At school, however, these survival behaviors were misunderstood, labeled as defiant, and isolated her from teachers and peers.

In the classroom, traumatic triggers—reminders of past traumatic events—cued Angela's body to go into survival, fight-or-flight mode. After years of life in an abusive household, the authoritative tone of a teacher could cause Angela to flee. In response, teachers would restrain her.



The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study is one of the largest investigations ever conducted to assess associations between childhood maltreatment and later-life health and well-being. The ACE score attributes one point for each category of exposure to child abuse and/or neglect. The higher the score, the greater the exposure and therefore the greater the risk of negative consequences.

THE 10 ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Abuse	Emotional abuse
	Physical abuse
	Sexual abuse
Neglect	Emotional neglect
	Physical neglect
Household Dysfunction	Mother treated violently
	Household substance abuse
	Household mental illness
	Parental separation or divorce
	Incarcerated household member

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The Affordable Care Act and Jumping Mouse

Accessibility is one of Jumping Mouse's core values. This means we're committed to providing therapy for as long as each child needs, even when families are unable to pay. Community and foundation support enable us to fulfill our commitment to many children from low-income homes, but we also bill private insurance and Medicaid, when it's available.

Our renovation is coming along and our new space will be ready in the new year! See pictures and updates on our Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/jumpingmousekids

Under the Affordable Care Act, thousands of Washingtonians will become eligible for the state's expanded Medicaid coverage, now known as Apple Health. Although some coverage takes effect in 2014, certain enrollments, including those for children, will be processed more quickly—usually during the month they are received.

To prepare for this and other upcoming changes, our Office Specialist, Candy Carter, has become an Enhanced Community Partner. Candy has been trained by the state's Health Care Authority and can help individuals with their family's enrollment process and track their applications through final approval.

"Assisting with Apple Health sign-ups is one more way to ensure that our children and families receive all the care they need and deserve," says Candy.

Since 2010, insurance payments have represented approximately 15% of Jumping Mouse's total revenue. The remainder comes from grants, donations, our annual Hearts in Bloom banquet, United Good Neighbors support, and many therapy hours donated by volunteers. Resource diversity is an ongoing priority at Jumping Mouse.

"Just as our kids benefit from supportive, nurturing relationships throughout the community, Jumping Mouse does too," says Executive Director Kris Becker. "It really does take a village, and we're extremely grateful to everyone who makes our work possible."



Jumping Mouse Children's Center

1809 Sheridan Street
Port Townsend, WA 98368
(360) 379-5109

www.jumpingmouse.org
info@jumpingmouse.org

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Kris Becker

OFFICE SPECIALIST
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Jumping Mouse is inspired by a Native American legend of a small creature who dreams of a new way. He journeys into the world beyond the familiar, with compassion and awareness. He grows, discovers his strengths, and transforms into Eagle. Like the myth, our children's center is about offering the tools that will assist each child in meeting the challenges of daily life.

Unfortunately, of all trauma triggers, being restrained was the most terrifying for Angela. It made her feel powerless, and therefore these were the times when she was likely to harm teachers. Angela often told me that she could not remember what had happened during those times and that it was scary to feel so out of control.

As Angela began attending her weekly Jumping Mouse sessions, I also met once a month with her mom. Meanwhile, I also made sure that I was involved in every school meeting regarding Angela's behavioral issues. I became the second person that school staff called to discuss Angela's behavior, after they had contacted her mother.

As we all worked together, the conversation slowly shifted from how Angela misbehaved every day to how trauma had affected her. Together, we were able to include in Angela's Individualized Education Plan her trauma triggers, observable signs that she was beginning to dissociate, and methods of response that would help her feel safe while teaching her to regulate her strong emotional reactions. Between Jumping Mouse, Dove House, and the school, we created a strong safety net for both Angela and her mother.

As Angela began to feel understood and supported by the adults in her life, she was able to start exploring and making sense of her past trauma and was encouraged to make different choices. So, for instance, when she felt

herself triggered, she would ask to take a break, rather than being swept into her trauma reaction. The more she took breaks, calming herself down rather than spiraling up into her trauma, the more she was able to remain present and realize she was safe. And the more present she was, the more she was able to grow and learn.

Teachers began to report that Angela was much less disruptive and much more engaged in her learning. Her mother told me that Angela had begun volunteering to help around the house. And Angela herself began telling me about school subjects she loved, that she wanted to be a scientist when she was older, and that she was the best-behaved kid in her class. She talked about wanting to control her anger so that it didn't hurt anyone around her.

Eventually, Angela transitioned back into the regular classroom, with an educational assistant who supported her throughout the day. Eight months later, Angela was on par with her peers academically, had many friends, and no longer needed a teacher's aide at her side.

Angela also appears to be offering her siblings a new model for responding to the trauma in their lives. It is my hope that, through her work at Jumping Mouse, Angela has developed enough resilience and self-knowledge to continue making healthy choices throughout her life, in spite of the challenges she will face. I truly believe that Angela has already begun to shift her family's generational story from one of simply surviving to one of healing and thriving.

Learning about ACEs

Last month, Jumping Mouse therapists joined the teachers of Grant Street Elementary School to learn more about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) from Laura Porter, director of ACE Partnerships for the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. Based in Olympia, Laura works with communities throughout Washington as they find ways to mitigate the effects of childhood stress and improve physical and emotional health.

"ACEs are common among Washington adults," Laura explained. "Sixty-two percent have experienced at least one early adversity, while 26% have experienced three or more." Jefferson County is one of 11 areas of the state where the prevalence of traumatic experiences is "very high."

For elementary school children, a high ACE score is the strongest predictor of health, school attendance, and behavior challenges, and the second-strongest predictor of

academic setback. However, young brains that are sensitive to the effects of toxic stress are also exceptionally sensitive to positive input as well.

"It is alarming how adverse circumstances have such effects on the brain and its functioning," says Jumping Mouse therapist Steve Roe. "Yet I am hopeful for positive outcomes for children and parents, due to the same brain capacity for being resilient, changeable, and adaptable for good. Statistics can be daunting, but statistics can be overcome by the human spirit."

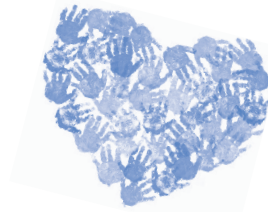
"As educators, we nurture our children's social and emotional development, as well as their academic growth," explains school principal Mary Sepler. "Understanding ACEs helps us succeed with both."

**"Statistics can be daunting, but statistics can be overcome by the human spirit."
—Steve Roe, therapist**

IRA Charitable Rollovers

Federal legislation valid through December 31, 2013 allows individuals over the age 70½ a significant tax benefit for donations made directly from their Individual Retirement Accounts. If you or someone you know has been considering a special gift to Jumping Mouse, now is a great time to act!

Gifts transferred to Jumping Mouse from an IRA do not have to be itemized. Instead, they are excluded from adjusted gross income, lowering the federal tax owed for the year. Gifts of any size up to \$100,000 can qualify for this special treatment. Learn more at jumpingmouse.org/ira-charitable-rollovers or contact Kris Becker, Executive Director, at 360-379-5109 / kris@jumpingmouse.org



Save the Date!

Our sixth annual Hearts in Bloom dinner takes place on **February 8** at the Northwest Maritime Center.

If you are receiving duplicate newsletters or no longer wish to be on our mailing list, please let us know at jenny@jumpingmouse.org or 360-379-5109.

Jumping Mouse Children's Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and all contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Donations are accepted directly to JMCC.

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Address Service Requested

1809 Sheridan Street
Port Townsend, WA 98368
(360) 379-5109
www.jumpmouse.org
info@jumpmouse.org

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