

# The Melissa Institute

For Violence Prevention and Treatment

## From the President

*A message from Suzanne L. Keeley, Ph.D.*

Dear Friends and Supporters,

This is our first newsletter, and we hope you will enjoy reading it and learning more about The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment. The Institute was established in 1996 to honor the memory of Melissa Aptman, a Miami native who was murdered in St. Louis in 1995, just two weeks before her graduation from Washington University. The mission of The Melissa Institute is to prevent violence and promote safer communities through education and application of research-based knowledge. We bridge the gap between research and direct application – to give people the information they need in order to reduce violence and to help victims of violence and their families.

It has been my honor to serve as founder and president of the Institute since its inception. The co-founders of the Institute were Melissa’s parents, Michael and Lynn Aptman and the noted psychologist, Dr. Donald Meichenbaum. Over the years, we have touched many lives and have expanded our interest to encompass many different types of violence.

Here are just a few of the highlights that come to mind as we approach our 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary year:

- Invested more than \$1,000,000 to help educators, clinicians and policymakers learn and apply violence prevention methods;
- Conducted educational workshops and conferences that have provided training to more than 5,000 professionals;
- Consulted on violence prevention with more than 50 local agencies and organizations;
- Brought Dr. Dale Willows’ Literacy Initiative to teachers of high-risk elementary students in Hialeah, Overtown and Liberty City;
- Conducted ongoing programs that address bullying and childhood aggression for more than 3,000 children in grades 5-8, incorporating the expertise of Drs. Debra Pepler and Wendy Craig;
- Shared Dr. Jim Larson’s expertise in anger management and conflict resolution with more than 500 teachers, social workers and counselors;
- Created, with support from Baptist Children’s Hospital, “Silence the Violence,” a series of conferences and workshops aimed at reducing violence in low socioeconomic status areas of Miami-Dade County, which continued over the past four years;

We hope that you share our pride in the work of the Institute, and know that it would not be possible without your continuing financial support and encouragement to make the world a little safer, one day at a time.

## SUMMER 2010

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The Melissa Institute is a non-profit organization dedicated to the study and prevention of violence through education, community service, research support and consultation. Our mission is to prevent violence and promote safer communities through education and application of research-based knowledge.

## 2010 Scholarship Winners Announced!

The Melissa Institute supports the work of young scientists with interest in violence prevention. To nurture their efforts, each year, The Melissa Institute awards scholarships to doctoral students based upon their dissertation research in the field of violence prevention. This year, we are proud to present The Melissa Institute Belfer-Aptman Scholars Award to Lydia Barhight, M.A. of the University of Delaware, for her dissertation titled

“Children’s Physiological and Emotional Reactions to Witnessing Bullying,” and Heidi Kar, M.H.S., M.A. of Stony Brook University, for her dissertation titled “Victims Who Victimize: The Association Between Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Intimate Partner Violence Among Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraq Freedom (OEF/OIF) Veterans.” Congratulations to this year’s award winners!

## ACT Against Violence Facilitator Training Sessions Offered

The Melissa Institute (TMI) is offering Adults and Children Together (ACT) Against Violence Facilitator Training sessions throughout the year. Designed by the American Psychological Association (APA), the program trains facilitators to conduct the Parents Raising Safe Kids curriculum with parents or caregivers of infants, toddlers, pre-schoolers and primary grade school students. This professional development training is for early childhood, mental health and service agency personnel who can work with families in the community on violence prevention.

TMI is one of the APA's six Regional Training Sites throughout the United States offering the ACT workshop, serving the Southeast Region. With focuses on conflict resolution tactics, parenting styles, proper disciplinary actions for children, and more, the workshop is perfect for professionals and organizations working with caregivers of children aged 0-8 years old.

This APA program was evaluated as a successful model to prepare adults to disseminate violence prevention knowledge and skills. Those who complete the course can conduct the 8-week Parents Raising Safe Kids

program, and will also have all the curriculum materials necessary to deliver the program to parents in English and Spanish. Earning an ACT Against Violence Facilitator II certificate will increase effectiveness in working with parents and children and can raise income for an agency or practice. Completing the program will grant 14 continuing education credits for the FL Board of Psychological Examiners; FL. State Board of Nursing; Miami-Dade County Public Schools; FL Board of CSW, MFT and MHC.

To attend a training session, please download and submit a registration form, which can be found in the Education section of our website.

TMI is also sponsoring an ACT Post-training seminar, which will take place on September 17. This special seminar is being planned to serve as both a reunion for ACT-trained facilitators and a chance to present updates from the APA's national ACT office. The seminar is designed for those who have completed ACT training, but is also open to all interested persons. It only requires registration and a contact information update. More details on the session are listed in TMI's schedule of upcoming events on page 8.

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### RECOMMENDED READING



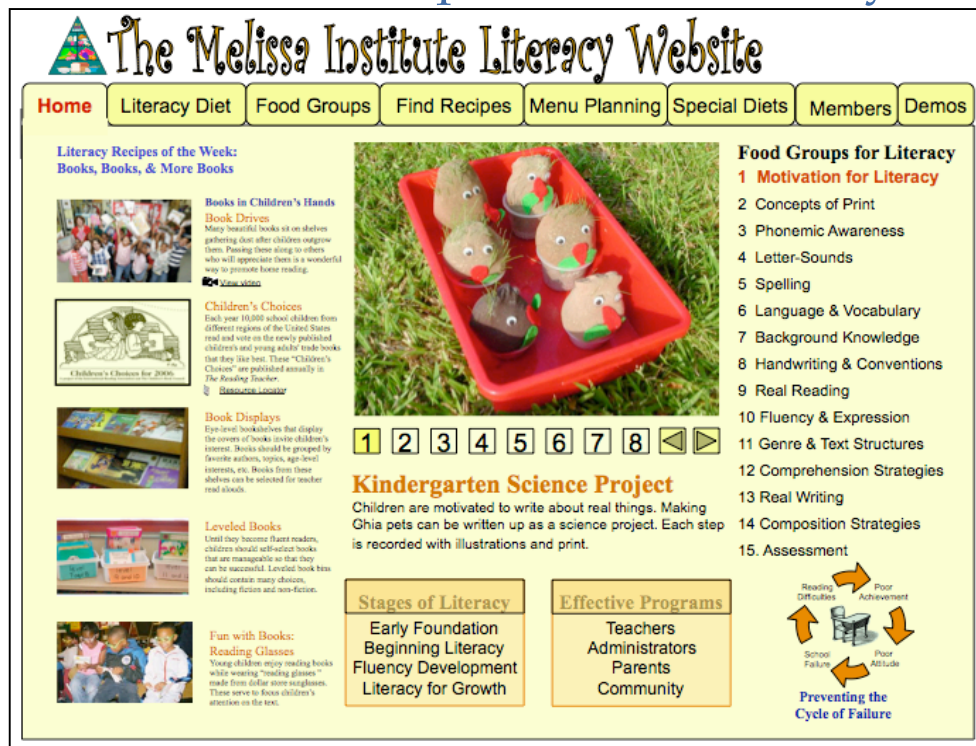
*"This initiative will save lives – the lives of potential victims, and the lives of children who are destined to go down a violent path if we do not intervene."*

Jessica Aptman, Melissa's sister, recently wrote an article that was published in GOOD magazine online entitled *Preventing Violence By Teaching Literacy*. You can read it by [clicking here](#). We at The Melissa Institute consider it a must read, not only for its factual relevancy but also for her astute insight!

Highlighting the inherent goals of our literacy website (featured on the next page), Jessica reflects on the prospect of countering violence through education with bright optimism, and in doing so fully embodies the mission of TMI.

We commend Jessica on a fabulous article, for her wonderful work in helping to spread the message of TMI and for her dedication to the goal of preventing violence in the community.

# The Melissa Institute looks to the web, teams with Dr. Dale Willows to improve child literacy



**SNEAK PREVIEW:** An early look at the home page for The Melissa Institute’s ambitious literacy improvement website. Combining the expertise of Dr. Dale Willows with TMI’s financial and organizational support, the website is expected to be completed next year.

Working with internationally acclaimed reading specialist Dr. Dale Willows, The Melissa Institute is creating a new website with the ultimate goal of improving child literacy. The site is being developed on the basis of research on the topic of literacy compiled by The Melissa Institute along with Dr. Willows’ expertise on child literacy.

Research has shown a strong link between the failure to read on level by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and the likelihood of incarceration. Our goal is to craft a vital tool in providing professional development for pre-Kindergarten and elementary school teachers who can enhance their methods of teaching children to read and write. The site is anticipated to go live in December of 2011, and will feature free open access to all site visitors.

Dr. Willows, a member of TMI’s Scientific Board and professor in the Department of Human Development and Applied Psychology

in the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto, is a celebrated expert in the field of reading. She is a specialist in both teaching reading and in remediating reading and writing difficulties that children develop.

Dr. Willows’s program, which is serving as the foundation for the content of the literacy website, has already shown exciting results after being field tested in children with a wide range of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. These successes indicate the vast potential of this free online site to aid teachers in helping children learn to read properly, preventing them from falling through the cracks in the education system.

If you want to aid in the process of getting this promising program running, please visit <https://secure.adweb99.com/melissainstitute/litwebsitecontributions.html>. Remember: no amount is too small!

## TMI board members receive praise for work in their fields

Along with what we have accomplished and what we are working on here at The Melissa Institute, we like to keep our supporters aware of the wonderful achievements of the people who help keep TMI going. The work that they do for TMI is invaluable. We are positively delighted to have the opportunity to tip our hats and give congratulations when they are in order, especially when their efforts outside of TMI are recognized.

We are very pleased to announce that two members of The Melissa Institute's Scientific Board have been named as award recipients for their outstanding work in their respective fields. Congratulations to Etiony Aldarondo, Ph.D., for receiving the Social Justice and Scholarship Award from the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, and Dale Willows, Ph.D., for her David E. Hunt Award for

Excellence in Graduate Teaching at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education! We are so proud of what Etiony and Dale have accomplished, both in their careers and through their involvement with TMI.

Their contributions bring something special to our Scientific Board and truly enhance the strength of our efforts to eliminate violence in the community. Their roles enhance our mission, and for that we are truly appreciative.



ETIONY ALDARONDO, Ph.D.

Etiony Aldarondo is the Associate Dean for Research and Director of the Dunsbaugh-Dalton Community and Educational Well-Being Research Center in the School of Education at the University of Miami. His professional career has taken him to impressive appointments at Boston College, Harvard Medical School's Cambridge Hospital, and the Philadelphia Child Guidance Center, with his scholarship focusing on positive development of ethnic minority and immigrant youth, domestic violence, and social justice-oriented clinical practices.

Adding to his impressive resume, he has several published works and has received various accolades, including his most recent honor, the Social Justice and Scholarship Award from the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American

Community and the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota. Cited for his longstanding commitment, leadership, and contribution to scholarship and clinical practice that increases awareness of social justice challenges and their solutions in disadvantaged communities across the country, we congratulate Etiony on this wonderful accomplishment.



DALE WILLOWS, Ph.D.

Dale Willows is a Professor in the Department of Human Development and Applied Psychology, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. She is also a registered psychologist and a renowned expert in the field of the teaching of reading and remediation of reading and writing difficulties in young children.

She has published extensively in journals, authored a number of books and book chapters, and given several presentations at academic and professional conferences. Along with her professional work, she is currently helping to develop a literacy website with The Melissa Institute to improve child literacy rates worldwide (featured on page 3).

For her exhaustive work, she has received several honors, including being named as an Outstanding Educator in 2001 by three separate Canadian school districts, serving as the only international member of the National Reading Panel, created by the United States Congress in 1998, and receiving an invitation from President George W. Bush to attend The White House Assembly on Reading in 2001.

This year, she has been named the recipient of the David E. Hunt Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Acknowledged by various PhD candidates for her "embodiment of the ideal professor, teacher, supervisor, and mentor," her "energy, enthusiasm, and unwavering commitment to teaching," and for having "perfected the art of teaching and learning at the graduate level," this brilliant achievement is one that is well-deserved for Dale. We are very proud of her for it and delighted with her connection to TMI.

## Bloomingtondale's Shopping Tickets Available!

On October 20 and October 21, 2010, Bloomingtondale's will host *The Shopping Benefit*, a storewide event to benefit The Melissa Institute along with various other charities throughout South and Central Florida. *The Shopping Benefit* offers special discounts, entertainment, fashion shows, trunk shows, kids' activities, product demonstrations and more.

Once again, TMI will be selling shopping tickets for the event. This is a tremendous opportunity to donate to TMI while also rewarding yourself with great shopping discounts! Proceeds from ticket sales all go directly to TMI, and each ticket grants shoppers 15-20% off at Bloomingtondale's if used during the event. Bloomingtondale's will also be donating \$5.00 for every presale ticket used during the event. Treat yourself to some shopping and help support the efforts of TMI against violence in the community. Tickets now on sale for \$10 apiece, with presale lasting until the start of the event!

## TMI Scientific Board member Dr. Ron Slaby spearheading efforts to reduce bullying through youth violence prevention

Our very own Dr. Ron Slaby is taking a new angle on the challenge of eliminating bullying.

Working on an advisory panel for Cartoon Network, he is helping design a multi-level campaign that seeks to combat bullying through training children how to properly intervene in order to prevent bullying. The campaign will utilize cartoons and recognizable characters in order to teach kids a range of tactics that they can use if they find themselves as bystanders in situations in which bullying is occurring.

The campaign is also partnered with a federal agency and CNN; its federal agency officer said it might be the most comprehensive anti-bullying effort by a youth-oriented television network in history. Ranging in content from cartoons, public service announcements, the Cartoon Network website, and CNN, Dr. Slaby and the campaign's designers hope that it will provide the information necessary for kids to react appropriately to bullying situations.

Dr. Slaby has also been busy giving keynote speeches on Youth Violence Prevention, most recently at the Youth Violence Prevention Summit on May 26<sup>th</sup> in Broward County and the Bullying Prevention Conference on June 4<sup>th</sup> at Massachusetts General Hospital.

## DONATE TO THE MELISSA INSTITUTE



Visit

<https://secure.adweb99.com/melissainstitute/cccontributions.html>

to donate to TMI. Every penny counts!

## Become a fan on Facebook!



We want to be sure that you stay informed of everything that we do at TMI. We keep a regularly updated Facebook fan page for that reason. Visit it at [www.facebook.com/melissainstitute](http://www.facebook.com/melissainstitute) and click Like to become a fan!

## Join Our Mailing List



To join our mailing list to stay in contact with TMI, please send an email to [info@melissainstitute.org](mailto:info@melissainstitute.org) with the subject line reading "Mailing List."

## Melissa Institute's 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference a Success

TMI's 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference was held on May 7 at the Clarke Education Center at South Miami Hospital. The event, cosponsored by Baptist Children's Hospital and the Ganley Foundation, drew over 200 professionals. We are pleased to report that the event was a huge success.

This year's conference, which was featured in local news coverage from CBS4, focused on adolescent depression and suicide. It concentrated on identifying warning signs, assessing adolescent depression, and staging interventions to

prevent attempts at suicide.

The conference presenters included Dr. Joan Asarnow from UCLA; Scientific Director of TMI Dr. Don Meichenbaum; and Dr. Fernando Pino, a psychiatrist from Miami. Grace Carricarte participated as a representative of the Ganley Foundation along with Jordan Burnham, a suicide attempt survivor, and Ms. Suzy Berrios, director of Mental Health and Crisis Management Services for M-DCPS, who provided statistical information on the subject compiled by the local school district.

Jordan Burnham, a 19-year-

old recently featured in *People Magazine*, spoke about his struggle with depression, his attempted suicide by jumping out of a 9<sup>th</sup> story window when he was 18, his recovery and turnaround. His powerful speech was incredibly affecting and was a wonderful centerpiece to the conference.

We would like to thank all of our attendees and speakers for their part in a wonderful conference. All documents and handouts from this year's and every year's conference can be located in the Downloads section of our website.

## TMI President Suzanne L. Keeley, Ph.D., travels to Haiti to help with relief aid

On January 12, Haiti was devastated by an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.0 and an epicenter just 16 miles west of the capital, Port-au-Prince. Along with the subsequent aftershocks, the event affected an estimated three million people, causing overwhelming levels of destruction and suffering.

As the world watched in horror as the disaster and its effects unfolded, it responded with relief efforts sent to help the nation in need.

Suzanne L. Keeley, Ph.D., President and a founding member of The Melissa Institute, was one of many to contribute assistance towards Haiti's recovery. Dr. Keeley offered her consulting services and was a featured speaker at the University of Miami's free

Disaster Mental Health Essentials training sessions, cosponsored by The Melissa Institute. On May 13, she was given the opportunity to be of direct service to those in need. Dr. Keeley visited Haiti with the Living Hope Haiti Christian Mission, which utilized members of Baptist Health South Florida's medical staff in its efforts.

Dr. Keeley, who represented both Baptist Health South Florida and The Melissa Institute on her trip, worked in the children's hospital and also ministered to the mental health situation in Haiti by presenting a seminar to about 50 pastors on dealing with the trauma caused by the earthquake.

Her time in Haiti was an eye-opener, as she was thoroughly



moved by the fact that "such a beautiful country with incredibly kind-hearted and courteous people" was put into this unfortunate situation. Her time in Haiti made her realize that although the trip was a success, her efforts and TMI's work there has only just begun. She is planning a return trip in August - the first of many to provide continual care to those in need.

## TMI Scientific Director Don Meichenbaum, Ph.D. is University of Miami School of Education's Distinguished Visiting Professor

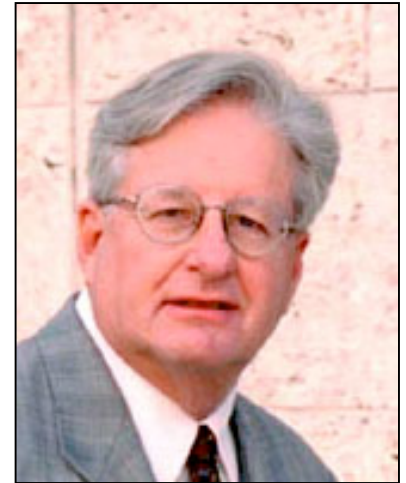
One of the nation's most distinguished psychotherapists, Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D., is working closely with University of Miami School of Education faculty to prepare grant proposals and applications. Known for his leadership in the prevention of violence and treatment of victims of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Meichenbaum is also a guest lecturer in undergraduate and graduate courses in clinical psychology.

"The work I've done on stress inoculation training has been employed on a preventive basis for a variety of populations," said Meichenbaum, who is a distinguished visiting professor in the Department of Educational and Psychological Studies (EPS). He is also involved in stress prevention initiatives with U.S. soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, including the creation of iPod videos that veterans can download from [www.WarFighterDiaries.com](http://www.WarFighterDiaries.com) and play on an as-needed basis.

"Dean Isaac Prilleltensky is interested in bringing that kind of technology and platform to the School of Education," said Meichenbaum. "We would like to create a similar downloadable program for school administrators and teachers that would help them improve the quality of education and reduce violence in the schools."

Meichenbaum was voted one of the ten most influential psychotherapists of the century by North American clinicians in a survey reported in *The American Psychologist*. He has given programs on PTSD and other clinical topics throughout North America, Israel, Japan, and the former Soviet Union. Among his many publications, the book, "Cognitive Behavior Modification: An Integrative Approach," is considered a classic in its field.

Meichenbaum, who retired recently after a long career at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada, also serves as director of The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment, based in Miami. The



DONALD MEICHENBAUM, Ph.D.

Institute is designed to bridge the gap between scientific findings and public policies and clinical and educational practices.

"We have been working to strengthen the relationship between the School and the Institute," Meichenbaum said, noting that three faculty members - Etiony Aldarondo, Guerda Nicolas, and Prilleltensky - serve on the Institute's scientific board.

Meichenbaum added that The Melissa Institute has undertaken a major project to reduce school violence through improvements to student reading comprehension. "The level of youth violence correlates negatively with the level of reading comprehension," he said. "The lower the reading ability, the higher the level of aggressive behaviors. This underscores another connection between The Melissa Institute and the School of Education."

As Meichenbaum said in a recent interview, "I cannot think of a more important problem to focus my attention on than the reduction of violence."

(Editor's Note: Story reprinted from the Summer 2010 Perspective Newsletter of the University of Miami School of Education)

## Schedule of Upcoming Events

### **ACT Against Violence Facilitator II Training**

- June 28-29: Victor E. Clarke Education Center at South Miami Hospital (6200 SW 73 Street, Miami, FL 33143)
- July 28-29: Baptist Hospital (8900 N. Kendall Drive, Miami, FL 33176)
- August 12-13: Baptist Hospital (8900 N. Kendall Drive, Miami, FL 33176)
- September 29-30: Victor E. Clarke Education Center at South Miami Hospital (6200 SW 73 Street, Miami, FL 33143)
- October 28-29: In Spanish - Victor E. Clarke Education Center at South Miami Hospital (6200 SW 73 Street, Miami, FL 33143)

### **ACT Post-Training Reunion and Update**

- September 17: Victor E. Clarke Education Center at South Miami Hospital (6200 SW 73 Street, Miami, FL 33143)

### **13<sup>th</sup> Annual Children's Health Day**

- October 24, 1-4 PM: Baptist Children's Hospital (8900 North Kendall Drive, Miami, FL 33156)

### **TMI Annual Conference (Topic TBA)**

- May 6, 2011: Victor E. Clarke Education Center at South Miami Hospital (6200 SW 73 Street, Miami, FL 33143)

For more information on any of the above events, we ask that you direct all inquiries in an email to [info@melissainstitute.org](mailto:info@melissainstitute.org) with the name of the event in question in the subject line.

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## THE MELISSA INSTITUTE

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