



HISTORY OF JUMPING MOUSE CHILDREN'S CENTER

Jumping Mouse Children's Center came into being in 1999. Its predecessor, Bergita House, was closing without any expectation that a non-profit would go forward. Dott Kelly became Executive Director of a new therapy service. She renamed it *Jumping Mouse Children's Center*, after a Native American myth that symbolizes the courage and transformative work that children do while in therapy. Catharine Robinson came on board from having been a volunteer therapist at Bergita House. Catharine took up the financial administration of JMCC, while Dott was its spokesperson, grant writer and training supervisor. Both were also part-time therapists.

The birthday of Jumping Mouse is September 1, 1999. It opened in a shared space with a private therapist and four board members. The first goal was to secure a financial base. In that effort, as in many non-profit beginnings, Jumping Mouse was very organic. It didn't, for instance, create its strategic planning in its beginnings. It identified its mission: to serve children in long term creative therapy in which the child directs the focus, while the therapist provides unconditional attention and a paced and reliable environment.

What drove Jumping Mouse into creation is an ongoing belief that children are often not seen as being persons in their own rights. In crises, the adults receive services. I have often been told that when a young child has witnessed abuse, that child won't remember what they witnessed. This is not true. Children are absolutely permeable to their environments. They absorb others' feelings and actions. They will not narrate those memories in a discussion. They will act them out in behaviors that draw negative attention to them in an effort to comprehend what they are feeling and what they have seen. Children are "meaning-makers". Adults who interact in children's worlds have the opportunity to encourage

'meanings' that acknowledge children's experiences and help make them real and valid. To provide services whose aim is to mend young children from the inside out is an uncompromising preventive activity. Jumping Mouse relies on a more homeopathic paradigm which focuses less on the symptoms and more on the interconnected systems within and between each human being. Wounds heal when new attitudes and self-concepts form and attach to existing perceptions, eventually decreasing the controls and resolving the damaged concepts. What is so exciting in this work is witnessing the numerous and unique pathways children create toward healing.

There has always seemed to be an invisible Caretaker to the work at Jumping Mouse Children's Center who shepherds into reality what dreams demand. Board members stepped forward with the right balances in temperaments at the right times.

Jumping Mouse has trained master level interns from University of Washington, Seattle University, and Pacifica University. Our training program allowed our services to remain untypically inexpensive. Our primary focus remained our services. To that end, Quimper Unitarian Universalist Fellowship supported our program by offering space during the week in their building.

In 2002, Rotary stepped in as a primary and sustaining support. Their group financed the internship training program which gave us the ability to sustain training and provide free slots every year. Our interns have served more children than our paid staff.

In early 2004, we had run out of space and were turning away numerous families. It was time to enlarge our dream. We agreed to look for a home. We were clear that this space needed to be close to the environments in which children spend much of every day. A house came on the market that month which was badly in need of repair and care. That need for care put the price tag within our reach. We signed a loan to buy the house in August, 2004. Volunteers came in ones and twos, and in groups. So many community members came to help that to begin to name any person means we'll surely leave someone out. Much of the professional labor was donated. When we were clear about our needs and hopes, we received the responses we needed. Space had been our limitation. As we looked at a much larger space, we realized that our entire organization would need to stretch and change.

A crucial aspect of growth in a small non-profit is its transformation from an individual's vision to an ongoing community-propelled agency. The vision is its core: its structure depends on many people who sustain a changing form in which the mission occurs. The year 2006 had been that transformation, of hunting for the means with which to hire an Executive Director, and of stabilizing Jumping Mouse financially. The vision has remained deeply intact. We have more than doubled our capacity to serve children, and paid off the mortgage loan in March, 2006.

Dott Kelly
Clinical Director