

eaten by mice and silverfish. Those boxes have come with him every time he's moved to different places throughout the years. David's lived in Port Ludlow for twelve years now, sharing a house with his mom. His brother and sister-in-law live on Whidbey Island. Still, some of David's boxes haven't been opened in years. He said they're probably breeding in the garage and the closets when he's not looking.

When I asked him what he'd do differently, if he could wave the magic wand of time, he said he would've explored more, maybe walked across the Golden Gate Bridge like all the tourists do. He misses California, his friends and the sun. He wants to take a road trip down Highway One when he has more time. He wants to learn how to cook exotic meals using recipes clipped from *Sunset Magazine* like his father used to do.

Maybe when he retires. Then he'll drag out those boxes full of sheet music and get back into his piano. Until then, he wants to tell stories, maybe even do some standup comedy. His friends tell him he's pretty funny. I know he had me laughing!

Interested in swapping stories? You can find these and other stories online at *plvoice.org*. Our little town is an eclectic mix of wonderful and interesting people. Every one of us has a great story, so let's sit on the porch and have a conversation. We can share a cup of coffee, or tea, if preferred. Drop me a line at *sports@plvoice.org*. Looking forward to hearing from you!

A Big Help for Little Kids: Jumping Mouse Children's Center

Without saying a word, Arthur showed his therapist the physical abuse and neglect that had sent him into hiding on the inside while activating his guard on the outside. He hid to stay safe. To be found would be to face the terror that had created a sense of homelessness within himself.

Through symbolic play and through testing boundaries in relationship, Arthur revealed this terror to his therapist. In time, Arthur built the courage to face the terror together with his therapist and come out of hid-

ing, and his eyes filled with delight.

Fortunately for Jefferson County, a nonprofit children's mental health agency has been working since 1999 to help children like Arthur find a safe home in themselves and with others. This is the story of that agency and how, after facing its own challenges, it got back on the upswing.

Jumping Mouse Children's Center was dubbed in honor of a beautiful Native American folk tale about a small mouse who transforms through courage and compassion, a mirror of the center's therapeutic philosophy. The Center was founded by Port Townsend child therapist, Dott Kelly, who ran the institution until her retirement in 2018. Then, the Center's long-time development director also left.

"That," notes Jumping Mouse's Executive Director Jeff Cain, "was a big drain for a little organization."

Then COVID hit.

"On top of the loss of key executives, the pandemic exposed weaknesses in the organization," says Cain. "By 2024, the Center was in a tight spot."

Fortunately, the Center's Board of Directors rallied around to make some necessary changes. First, long time therapist and supervisor, Selena Sena-Hopkins, was tapped to take over the Clinic Director role. This change helped expose the need for an Executive Director. Cain, who had been working with the Center on a consulting basis, moved into that spot.

Those additions, plus an extensive community-based fund-raising program, helped get the Center back on its feet. Today, Jumping Mouse is ready for growth, aided by three key going-forward strategies:

- #1 - Stabilize the organization;
- #2 - Recover the programs and practices that were lost in the downturn; and
- #3 - Sustain Jumping Mouse as a place that sees the County's unseen children.

Sustainability is critical. As explained by Sena-Hopkins, "We are an organization focused on depth, not growth. When a child comes to Jumping Mouse, see that child for however long it takes to repair trust."



That sometimes stretch into years.

As for recovery, Cain notes that in rural Jefferson County the need for child therapy is great but access to qualified

therapists is scarce. Thus, he says, “The Center’s internship program is essential for training qualified therapists, and it had ended. We’ve brought it back, and three interns start this fall.”

Jumping Mouse is also restarting a separate therapy program for parents who are seeking more intensive support and meaningful change as parents. The agency continues to maintain its Port Townsend facility, which is practically next door to Salish Elementary. It also provides services in both the Chimacum and Brinnon schools.

And finally, there’s that first strategy: Stabilizing the Center.

This takes us to the bottom line: Money.

Cain believes the Center will see 95 children in 2026. To put that in terms of dollars and cents: One year of therapy for just one child costs \$11,500. This means Jumping Mouse must raise \$1,200,000, a big nut for a small organization.

Some funding for the Center comes from insurance, mainly Medicaid, and Jefferson County. Additionally, a number of local organizations, such as the Port Townsend Rotary Club, the Quimper Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, and the Salish Sea Fellowship, to name a few, provide support.

Cain and Sena-Hopkins also noted the tremendous support for Jumping Mouse in 2025 from the Jefferson Community Foundation. “The JCF raised community awareness and facilitated engagement with our mission—they identify community needs and pair them with donors and the organizations doing the work, like Jumping Mouse,” they added.

The agency raises the balance of its budget from what Cain calls fellow advocates.

“We are advocates standing in the gap between children’s mental health needs and accessible therapeutic services,” Cain says. “So we are always interested in meeting people who hear a like calling to serve and contribute as advocates on behalf of children.”

To that end, on every second Monday at 4 p.m., Jumping Mouse holds an open house so people can learn more



about the organization, see its astonishing therapy rooms, and ask questions. We hope that this article will inspire at least some of our readers to attend. The next Monday open house will be on June 8—and you can email Cain at jeff@jumpingmouse.org, if you would like to attend .

(To learn more about the Jumping Mouse Children Center go to jumpingmouse.org. For a lovely rendition of the Jumping Mouse tale, go here: childstoryhour.com/storiesnative2.htm

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