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LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO THE FLORIDA CENTER

This is my first article in a series of weekly articles that will be dealing with many different kinds of issues that have to do with the human spirit and our need to live life to the fullest. It will deal with peoples' emotions and how they can use their minds to their best advantage. I am asking readers to send feedback as well as requests for me to deal with particular issues in future articles. Some of the topics that I will be addressing are dealing with anger and guilt, building self-confidence, ways to limit worrying, stress management, understanding depression living in an unsafe world, learning how to relax and, believe it or not, how to deal with the mental side of the game of golf.

For today's article I have chosen to write about the future opening of a new Agency in the North Port Community called The Florida Center for Child and Family Development. This Agency has its main office in Sarasota with a satellite in Venice and in the wisdom of our Community Leaders, they will now have another satellite in North Port. The building is in the process of being built and is located on Pan American Boulevard. I have been privileged to become involved with The Florida Center since 2005 when I interviewed the Marketing Director, Lucy Nicandri on my radio show at WSLR in Bradenton and later met Peter Howard who is the Agency's President and CEO. My purpose in this writing is to support their entrance into our Community of North Port in any way that I can. Future articles on The Florida Center will focus on the human elements of helping children and their families.

The Florida Center is nationally accredited and provides quality services and programs dedicated to the development of young children, their families and our community. These programs include speech, occupational and physical therapy as well as mental health services. More than 400 children have participated in their Early Childhood Education Program and over 9,000 developmental therapy services are provided for children aged from birth through eight years. Over 550 families were served in a year through the Healthy Families Program and over 400 parents and professionals on a statewide basis were trained on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder. In addition over 19,000 mental health counseling sessions were provided to children and families in the period of a year.

Although statistics may tell a great deal about their programs and services, what meant more to me was being able to tour the Venice facility with my wife under the guidance of Jennifer Horton-Clark who heads up that satellite and who will be serving in the North Port facility as well. We met many of the children, their teachers, therapists and volunteers and came away with a tremendously warm feeling and a sense of gratitude for everything that was being done for them. The children were developmentally limited but their hearts were full of love. I can't remember receiving that many hugs ever before and enjoying every minute of the experiences. The progress that was noted by those working with these children was very positive, imaginative, constructive and enlightening. All of the programs had some therapeutic value associated with them and the progress was carefully gauged so that children could be moved into different groups as their progress continues.

But there is always a catch. The Agency is dependent upon contributors such as yours to help fund and support it in order to provide the vital and ongoing programs and services for the community-at-large especially during these changing economic times. Welcoming The Florida Center into our Community would best be served by your considering a donation. With Christmas nearly upon us, this would be an excellent time to extend our hearts to the children and families served by this Agency with a generous contribution. You can donate online and learn about the many programs that the Agency offers by going to the following internet address:

http://www.thefloridacenter.org/donation_new.cfm. You can also donate by phone by calling 941-371-8820 or toll free at 800-587-1385 with Extension 1069 serving both numbers. Finally, you can donate by mail at the following address: The Florida Center for Child and Family Development, Accounting Dept., 4620 17th Street, Sarasota, FL 34235.

A Brief Biographical Sketch

After an over 40 year career as a professional psychotherapist and Director of The Sports Stress Clinic in Amherst, NY, Charles Bonasera came to Florida and decided to use the benefits of his previous professional experiences in his new roles of Consultant in Life Management and Business Coaching as well as his expertise as a Motivational Speaker. He once again became involved with athletes in different sports training them with his techniques to help them develop and maintain focus as well as staying in their zone. Much of his training methods are derived from the CD collection he developed under the heading of WIN-WIN SECRETS as the President of Personal Identity Controls. This collection consists of thirty-six programs dealing with vital issues in the management of stress.

Another role that he adopted to add to his professional career was that of Author. Early in the 1980's he wrote Guide to a Life Management Process which he has re-written as a workbook to successfully help people manage their stress which includes his own Working Model. As a result in his interest in golf and realizing that it was

essentially a “mind game”, he wrote The Mental Side of Golf which can benefit the beginner as well as professionals playing the game of golf.

He then compiled over five-hundred sayings that he had developed in the course of his professional career as stimuli to help people change patterns in their lives entitled How to Stay Well and Live Life to the Fullest. This was followed by a book documenting case studies around disruptive life patterns including ways to change them under the name of How in the Hell Did This Happen to Me? Both his personal involvement in sports as a participant, coach, manager and in his role in officiating, inspired him to write a primer for parents and coaches entitled The Legend of Little League.

Charles invites you to view his website at www.charlesmbonasera.com as well as to write with your comments and questions to his e-mail address (charles@charlesmbonasera.com). He would also be very happy to communicate with his readers by telephone should they desire. His professional motto is “seeking alternative methods to happiness” and wishes those touched by his words to practice the three secrets to a happy life: “enjoy life and enjoy it thoroughly ... develop and maintain a sense of humor ... bring as much love into your life as possible.