

# F.A.C.T. helps victims of crime

By Donna Gavin  
Emerald Contributor

Returning Vietnam veterans challenged medical and social care workers with a host of symptoms now defined as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Since then, violence within families, neighborhoods and cities threaten to match the human toll associated with war.

Like the Vietnam vets, crime victims may unconsciously submerge their reaction to the trauma until stress builds to acute levels long after the event.

PTSD, the body's emotional response to a traumatic event, is now recognized as a treatable condition in both children and adult victims of crime and abuse.

Christian Family Services has recently developed a program called F.A.C.T., Families Affected By Crime and Trauma, to help crime and abuse victims cope with PTSD.

Dr. Debra Alexander, clinical director of F.A.C.T., has 10 years experience treating victims of violent crime in New York and California and is author of several books used in the treatment of PTSD.

Because crime denies a victim any chance to prepare for the event, the resulting stress can retard a child's development and immobilize an adult. According to fact sheets written by Alexander, PTSD includes "three predictable" phases that must be experienced if the victim's treatment will be successful:

- "Impact," the initial phase, includes shock, disbelief and denial. Confusion, forgetfulness and indications of having lost control can lead to people's feelings that they are going crazy.

- "Recoil," the next phase, is marked by anger, self-doubt and "what-if" questions that might lead to recurrent nightmares and other disturbances.

- "Recognition," the third phase, brings an understanding of the event and the re-ordering of thoughts and feelings that can halt the turmoil and allow acceptance and healing.

Alexander said adults and children react differently to trauma. One family member's PTSD can spread like ripples in a pond to include and be compounded by others in the family who may not have experienced the stressful event.

Adults, busy with their own trauma, might not recognize a child's signals of distress. Adults of-

ten find it difficult to believe that children "apprehend disturbing events in complex ways." And yet, research has shown that exposure to violence can cause changes in a child's brain stem.

A client's treatment plan might employ play therapy, or individual, group or family therapy with a treatment period usually taking from 10 weeks to two years.

The agency, which is licensed by the state of Oregon, works with each client to set specific goals and to plan and regularly review the course of their treatment.

Clients may receive assistance with the basic hourly fee through private insurance, victims' assistance, or arrangements made on a sliding-fee scale.

F.A.C.T. clients comprise victims of sexual abuse, child abuse and violent crimes of all types. The agency receives support from contributions that provide scholarships to needy clients.

Alexander said there is always a waiting list for the scholarships, and most of them are children. Anyone desiring to help victims of abuse and crime can best do so through donations to the scholarship fund.

The professional staff of Christian Family Services includes Linda Beal-Blandy, a licensed clinical social worker, with a background in critical incidence de-briefing, and Loraine Gorr, a counselor who works with all ages.

Lawrence Bixler, a retired professor of psychology and counseling at Northwest Christian College, started the agency in 1964 to fill a need for practical education that would also help people. Over the years, the agency has changed counseling focus several times but has never been affiliated with any religious group or denomination.

Christian Family Services is still helping people. The agency recently moved to 2294 Oakmont Way in Eugene. The staff and board of directors of Christian Family Services, who are drawn from the community, are committed to serving children and families regardless of race, creed, marital status, family relationships or religion.

Executive Director Kathryn Wilson looks after program development, fiscal development and fund raising. Initially a consult for the agency, Wilson said she was willing to undergo the hiring process to become a part of the staff because "they caught my heart. Their work is great work."



Photo by Michael Shindler

Neal Skorpen (left), Michael Russell and Kraig Norris are just a few of the University cartoonists featured in the compilation Panels.

## Comics immortalized in cartoonists' 'Panels'

Move over Garry Trudeau.

For years, University cartoonists have answered the call and turned out panels, strips and caricatures for campus publications like the *Oregon Daily Emerald*, *Student Insurgent*, *Oregon Commentator* and *Oregon Voice*.

Now, for the first time ever, the disparate artistic works of 12 University cartoonists has been put under one cover — *Panels: UO Cartooning 1991-92*.

Michael Russell, a 1992 University graduate and creator of the comic strip *Hudson Van Curen*, edited and designed the book.

"I had nowhere to put my cartoons," Russell said. "I saw a compilation of cartoons and decided to get a bunch of artists together."

"It was successful beyond my wildest dreams," Russell said. "Everybody I asked wanted to be in the book."

Besides Russell, contributing cartoonists include Conser, Teresa Knezek, Kraig Norris, Bryan Pritchett, Dennis Rodmond, Wayne Shellabarger, Neal Skorpen, A.C. Smid, Jaimie Trueblood, Adrian Wallace and Vernon C. Wallingford III.

The strips come from all sides of the political spectrum but have one thing in common — a job at Eugene's lifestyle.


*Panels* is available in Portland at Powell's Bookstore, and in Eugene at the University Bookstore, Smith Family Books, Emerald City Comics and Marketplace Books for \$7.

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