

## Healing Comes to Majesta

On a typical evening at home, Majesta Mears sits curled on the couch with her sister and mother, watching their favorite TV show, wondering if the singer they are voting for will be safe or asked to go home.

Until recently such simple pleasures were not hers to enjoy. When Majesta was a baby, she was badly abused by her mother's live-in boyfriend. She was hospitalized, removed from her biological family, and eventually placed with a foster mother, who also beat Majesta.

Traumatized, angry, and distrustful, Majesta began acting out violently and destructively. She pushed people away from her with angry and unpleasant behavior. A series of foster parents and even some adoptive parents could not tolerate her difficult behavior, so she moved quickly through several failed family settings.

At eight years old, Majesta had never experienced a normal, healthy and supportive relationship. **What happens when a child of eight is unwanted, unloved, and collapsing under the experience of abuse and neglect?**

For Majesta, life finally took a positive turn. She began to see a caseworker at UCS, Janet Livingston, who would not be pushed away.

"Punishment does not work," Livingston said recently. "Majesta needed support to be able to change. I kept telling her, 'You're a good person. How can you change your actions?' and for many years she kept breaking things, sneaking out, swearing, hoarding food, failing school—every kind of behavior to test my support."

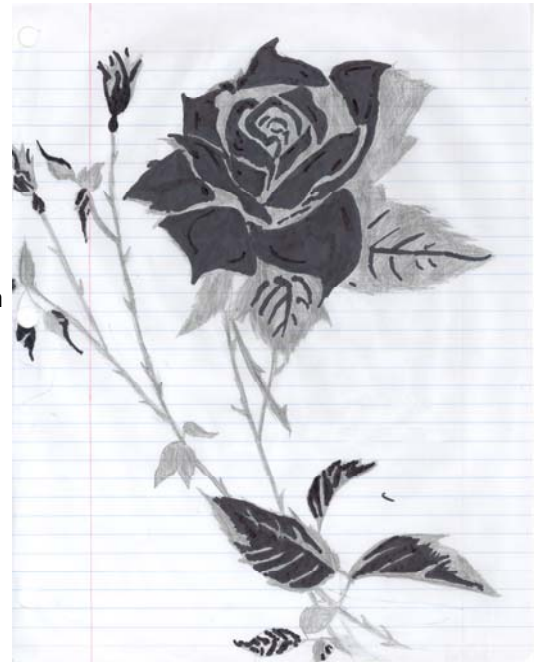
A few years after beginning to work together with Livingston, Majesta went to live with a foster family that also worked hard to be supportive. Finally, Majesta had what she never possessed before — a family and people in her life who loved her and were not going to give up on her.

They challenged Majesta to do the right things, and meted out the consequences when she didn't. Throughout, they remained positive and supportive, telling her how she could be proud of her strengths.

Despite years of difficult behavior, Majesta did change. Now in high school, she has begun to blossom. Livingston described her as motivated and actively seeking to make others happy. She loves her sister, is popular with friends, and gets great grades in school. "It didn't happen overnight," Livingston said. "But she always knew I was there for her."

Recently Majesta was even reunited with her biological mother who lives in another state. "It was a piece of her life that needed healing," Livingston explained. "She had not seen her mom since she was five years old, but they worked through the issues."

When kids have an adult who believes in them and helps them heal the trauma, they can overcome great difficulties. Today, as she flicks her hair, enjoying the evening TV, Majesta is a confident and smiling teen. No one would ever imagine how hard she's worked for that.



Artistically talented, Majesta doodled this rose on a scrap of loose leaf.

At UCS, our Specialized Children's Services provides support, guidance, and counseling to Tiffany (not her real name) and hundreds of other kids each year, helping them to address complex emotional and communication needs.

## The Executive Summary — By Executive Director Ralph Provenza

We are constantly working to be the best mental health center we can be both for our clients and for our staff. Here is some of what we were able to get done this past fiscal year:

- We **increased our psychiatric capacity** when we added Dr. Ben Marte to our team.
- We **expanded services for kids** in several schools in Bennington County.
- We held our “first annual” UCS **clinical conference** on trauma.
- We were able to **increase and expand our compensation package** for staff and contractors.
- **We added needed benefits** including a less expensive health savings account option to our health insurance plan.
- We had a very successful and fun **Bowl For Kids’ Sake** fundraiser.

We’ve also got some work to do next year, including:



- Preparing for our fourth **CARF accreditation** review, which we expect will result in three more years of highest quality certification.
  - Beginning a multi-year plan to shift from paper to an **electronic medical record**.
  - Working to increase **safety and security** for all 15 of our facilities.
  - Fulfilling our commitment to a healthy workplace with an agency wide **no smoking** policy, and providing all available support and resources to help people to quit.
  - Completing the redesign of our **website** to be more friendly and useful.
  - And last but not least, celebrating **our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary** throughout the coming year with a great look back, special events, and an anniversary gala next June.
- Of course, we will continue to provide the **highest quality** mental health and developmental services possible — with your help.



### Hawaii, Here We Come!

The Developmental Services Peer Support group organized and planned its Hawaiian-themed dance party in May at the Moose Lodge. Nearly 100 people from the community attended, including Jeff Palmer and Darlene Galippau, above. For one participant — a homebound senior in his mid-seventies — it was his first dance ever! His big smile seemed to say it wouldn't be his last.

### NSK – Head Start Soccer

*4-week program a big hit with kids!*

“This program brings families together and promotes all the right values—physical activity, cooperation, teamwork. And it’s fun!” NSK Vice President Bill Berry said.

The annual NSK–Head Start soccer clinic involves 70–80 children and their families, who take the field soon after the snows melt to get some practice with their foot on the ball.

NSK Steering Systems America supports the program for Head Start students. Here, Berry and VP Akihiro Sunoda ham it up with parents and kids, right.



Fully accredited, UCS offers community-based programs for children, adults, families, and seniors. UCS provides outpatient and substance abuse counseling, round-the-clock crisis intervention, EAP for business, job programs for clients, and comprehensive support for people with severe mental illness, developmental disabilities, and emotional and behavioral disturbances.

*Developmental Services / Outpatient Mental Health and Substance Abuse / Head Start  
Big Brothers Big Sisters / Community Rehabilitation and Emergency Services / Specialized Children’s Services*



Accredited for Quality

# Healing Trauma — Topic of 1<sup>st</sup> Annual UCS Clinical Conference

Many children and adults who come to UCS have been traumatized from violence, abuse, or abandonment.

To help people heal from trauma, the UCS Conference Series recently featured an international trauma expert, Dr. Richard Kagan, right, who practiced ways to build children’s trust, with clinicians and counselors from throughout the region. The following are some key points:

- Many adults’ personal problems are really longstanding coping patterns developed in response to traumatic stress.
- Adverse childhood experiences are the basic cause of health risk behaviors, morbidity, disability, mortality, and health costs in later life.
- A supportive group of adults can help children replace dangerous behaviors by proving to children that they are safe enough to grieve losses, to share painful secrets, and to try out new, positive behaviors.



## New!

During the winter, we rededicated ourselves to our **Mission, Vision, and Values** and created versions that are simpler and more attuned to our work.

### Mission

We help people improve their quality of life.

### Vision

We envision a strengthened community where people feel valued, empowered, secure, and purposeful.

### Values

We respect people’s dignity, accept them for who they are, and creatively help them to thrive.



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## Welcome Dr. Ben Marte — New Medical Director @ UCS

Last year, the UCS Medical Director for 10 years, Dr. Karin Mack, decided to retire. “Who will replace her big shoes?” was the common question as the search for a new Medical Director got underway.

And the answer is?... Dr. Benjamin Marte, M.D. who was delighted to take up the position, moving to the area from Moses Lake, Washington, where he was the Medical Director of Grant Mental Healthcare for six years.

Recognizing the high demand for services, Dr. Marte has shifted the UCS psychiatric department to work collaboratively with primary care doctors, scheduling complicated cases for quick access and, as clients are stabilized and treatment plans established, referring them back to the



primary physician for follow-up.

“I believe this approach will serve the community’s psychiatric needs more efficiently,” Dr. Marte said.

Dr. Marte received his Doctor of Medicine in Psychiatry at the University of the Philippines. He completed his residency in adult psychiatry at the University of Vermont and took training in

child and adolescent psychiatry at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. He is Board Certified in Adult Psychiatry by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.

Dr. Marte also brings experience in converting from paper to electronic medical records, a process he will lead at UCS, too, along with the installation of electronic prescription writing.



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### Their Greatest Advantage

Hundreds of you — good neighbors — participated in the 20th Annual Bowl For Kids' Sake! And you were phenomenal!

Together you raised more than \$26,000 for Big Brothers Big Sisters, shattering this year's goal and breaking records. It was great fun, too, bowling at Bennington Lanes on April 7.

Thanks to your efforts, more local kids will get the single greatest advantage they need to grow up successfully — friendship with a caring adult!

*thank you!*

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