

THE UNDERSTANDING

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2 FALL 2021

PUSHING PERSPECTIVES IN A POSITIVE DIRECTION



**Playtime at
Harper's Playground**

+ Weathering the Storm

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“

Children need the freedom
and time to play. Play is not
a luxury. Play is a necessity.

-Kay Redfield Jamison

”

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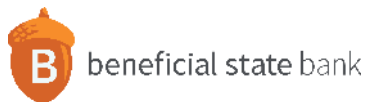
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UNDERSTANDING

PUSHING PERSPECTIVES IN A POSITIVE DIRECTION

Fall 2021

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Editorial

MITCH BLATT
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

PIA GILGEN

GRACE CORRIGAN

Contributors

SCOTT HATLEY

Photography

JUDD GIRARD

Graphic Designer

ROB KENNEDY

Subscriptions

SUBSCRIBE ONLINE

www.theunderstandingmagazine.com

Contact Us

THE UNDERSTANDING

P.O. Box 82056
Portland, OR 97282

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their efforts to break barriers, unlock potential,
and change lives in our community.**

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*Summer may be over, but
playtime certainly isn't.*

**“Play is how our kids learn
and grow, and it’s so important that
everybody is included in play.”**

- Carol McGlinn



Guess what just happened? Summer (and Summer VACATION for students)! Movie marathons, camping trips (with s'mores!), cooling off at your nearest swimming pool, visiting somewhere new...Fun, right?

Well, sadly, it's not as fun as it could be for everyone. This issue's theme is that there's a lot of laughter and play, but not enough equality of opportunity *for* it. Not counting physical barriers, people are included or excluded for reasons that are, when you get down to it, kind of arbitrary. We at *The Understanding* want to help change that, and we hope to use the power of storytelling (backed by

statistics where appropriate) to inspire you to do the same. When it comes to play, everyone should be able to join in if they so choose.

I vaguely remember a one-time event in my middle school PE class where everyone wore special goggles that made their vision blurry or otherwise impaired; I think it was for them to know how I saw, or what it was like to be legally blind.

Before third grade, I couldn't walk without a walker. To get around on the playground, I had to crawl. One day, with no prompting, the other kids in the class were crawling too.

Nobody told them to, they just did, and I remember a grand total of zero instances of being bullied over my disabilities. *The Understanding* hopes that everyone can have that sort of positive experience and feel included, if not accepted.

Mitch Blatt



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Playtime at
Harper's
Playground






Summer is a great time for play. There are even articles by psychologists attesting to play’s mental benefits—a article¹ says that “Free play is a natural part of development for humans.”

In humans, it is especially critical for children, as it is thought to bolster their social and emotional growth and provide them a means to learn as they explore the world. For both

children and adults, play can be used as a reward, an educational tool, or a means to motivate someone to complete necessary tasks. Studies show that children who are given short play breaks during their days at school return to the classroom with more focus and increased ability to pay attention and learn.

Playing, especially when unstructured, stimulates mental flexibility and creativity.” As one can imagine, lack of play can be harmful to a person’s development; “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,” and all that. As of 2012,



A child is climbing a thick black rope structure on a playground. The child is wearing a white t-shirt and blue shorts. The background is a blurred green field. The text is overlaid on a white circular shape on the left side of the image.

**“I knew then and there,
like lightning bolts, that
was it. That was the way.”
-Cody Goldberg**

municipal playgrounds are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. These ADA-compliant playgrounds incorporate “ramps and/or paved, barrier-free travel routes ... a range of accessible play options; and ... an appropriate surface beneath all accessible equipment.”²

But is this the best option?

Harper Goldberg was born with Emanuel Syndrome, and as a result the doctor told her parents Cody and April that “you should expect her to never walk, nor talk in her lifetime.” Although hit hard by that assessment, Cody says, “in the weeks and months that followed, there was a very specific moment in time where I made a conscious decision to try to find a way to change the world for her, rather than to worry about what she was going to be able to do or not. And that manifested in Harper’s Playground, when we entered the typical playground and saw the problem, and my wife suggested we should do something about it.

“I knew then and there, like lightning bolts, that was it. That was the way.”

Harper’s Playgrounds are built around being three types of inviting: physically, socially, and emotionally. Designs vary from place to place, but one color you’ll see at any Harper’s Playground is green. Their heavy use of nature environs attracts

people of any age or ability status; they look like plazas, not technical- or playgrounds that might give off a “this is kid stuff” vibe. At the typical playground, Harper and kids like her who relied on assistive walking devices couldn’t get to things like play structures or slides; if someone’s hands or arms didn’t work perfectly, they couldn’t use the swings. At Harper’s Playground, in contrast, there are plenty of smooth concrete walkways so that people who need wheels can get everywhere easily, and slopes are gentle rather than steep to limit danger. The seating areas are circular so that people can talk face-to-face, and there are many “flexible-use spaces” that can serve multiple functions. The swings have comfortable restraints to assist users who aren’t able to hold onto the chains or ropes the swing is suspended from, and Harper’s Playground pioneered the merry-go-round-like Omni Spinner, a roughly circular polyethylene ride that has speed-controlling brakes and transfer points for walkers or wheelchairs. Even if a piece of equipment isn’t accessible (such as monkey bars), the smooth paths allow wheel-users to “walk and talk” with any able-bodied friends using it.

When asked about the three “inviting”s, Cody says, “The reason all of those design elements came to be in our first project was because I was able to be part of the design team and ask really important questions on behalf of my daughter Harper. I wanted the space to be all of those things for her,

even though I hadn’t really articulated them in that way. I knew I wanted her to be able to get everywhere, to do as much as possible, to feel like she was welcomed wherever she was there, and it was going to be a beautiful experience.”

His Board of Directors pushed him “to actually articulate what it is that specifically makes Harper’s Playground unique and different. And so I studied it ... for years [and] that’s how I came up with those three levels of inviting [socially, environmentally, and emotionally] as a way to describe what I was observing and feeling when I was there, and [the three levels partially came from] what I had remembered in the design process for what I had wanted to see happen. It’s very gratifying to know that being a good designer is far more a function of having empathy for the people that are going to use the space or use the thing. Good designers have to have empathy, not necessarily some sort of talent, and I didn’t know that about design until years later. In fact, I think I told somebody, ‘I think I’m a decent playground designer, because I have so much empathy for my daughter Harper.’ They told me, ‘Yeah, that’s what design is, it’s empathy.’ So that was a fun, humbling thing, to think I discovered something, and they’re like ‘yeah, that’s design 101. Welcome to the party.’”

The Harper’s Playground project has touched many people’s lives. Harper’s sister Landon wants to take over her dad’s business someday, and Cody



**“Yeah, that’s
what design is,
it’s empathy.”
-Unknown**

says that April's been supportive and tolerant of his "obsession" with inclusive design.

A member of the Harper's Playground Board of Directors, Christy Jackson, has a daughter, June, whose story is pretty similar to Harper's. Born with cerebral palsy and polymicrogyria, June wasn't able to play at the same playgrounds as her able-bodied siblings. Christy says that, "after having a disabled daughter, it became very apparent that playgrounds aren't typically inclusive. They have a ramp that you can get down, but you can't roll wheels on barkdust. You [can't get a] wheelchair onto the play structure. To me it was really important, as a parent to a child with complex needs, to allow her to go play and be inclusive with not only other children, but her siblings as well."

Inspired by her daughter's experiences, Christy's working on *Just Like You*, a children's book that hopes to help parents figure out what to say when their able-bodied children see kids like June and ask "what's wrong with her?" Christy says that "children like June are just like everybody else, they want to experience all of the same things, they enjoy having fun, going on vacation, taking a bath, doing all of these fun activities ... it might look a little different, but that's okay."

She says that, "working with Harp-

er's Playground has been phenomenal. Harper's Playground's basically just a really great sounding board for hearing out other parents and community members on how we should be better about equity and inclusion. All human beings should have a right to do the same activity, regardless of what it is. So, for us, having the ability to go to a playground where I know

"It was really important as a parent to a child with complex needs, to allow her to go play and be inclusive with not only other children, but her siblings as well." -Christy Jackson

that all three of my children can play together means the world to me, and I know that it means the world to a lot of other families."

But what does the future hold for Cody, Christy, their kids, and everyone at Harper's Playground? Christy's focusing on her book, and Cody has big plans:

Global domination of play-spaces. He wants every playground to be

an inclusive space where people of all ages, ability statuses, etc. can play together. He also hopes to go out of business because one day Harper's Playground is the standard model and there's no need for a nonprofit to push for it.

While Cody works toward global domination, there's something you can do, too. Why not check out playgrounds in your area to see if they fit the Harper's Playground model and the three "invitations"? If they do, great! If they don't, consider organizing community efforts to change that.

If you'd like a copy of Christy's book, you can buy copies at this year's Harper's Summer Soiree charity dinner. All proceeds from book sales will go to supporting Marshall Park, an inclusive playground in Vancouver, Washington. Afterwards, copies can be bought online. In the meantime, you can keep up to date by following Christy on Instagram @ChristyAJackson, or check out her website at www.christyjacksonauthor.com.

¹<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/play>

²<http://accessadvocates.com/ada-compliance-for-playgrounds/>

Fall ADA Quiz

1. When did the ADA first introduce their "Standards for Accessible Design"?

- a. 2010
- b. 2000
- c. 1990
- d. 2003

2. Why is play important?

- a. It helps kids relieve stress, boosts creativity
- b. Mutual play helps strengthen bonds with others
- c. It helps adults feel young and energetic
- d. All of the above

3. Why is inclusion (the process of giving people otherwise excluded from society the same opportunities, abilities, and worthiness to take part in society as those who are included) important?

- a. All of the below
- b. It helps disadvantaged people access more resources and have better mental health.
- c. Adaptive things set up to help a disadvantaged group can incidentally help advantaged groups as well.
- d. Exposure to ideological, mental, physical, etc. differences may lead to increased tolerance or even acceptance.

Answers: a d a



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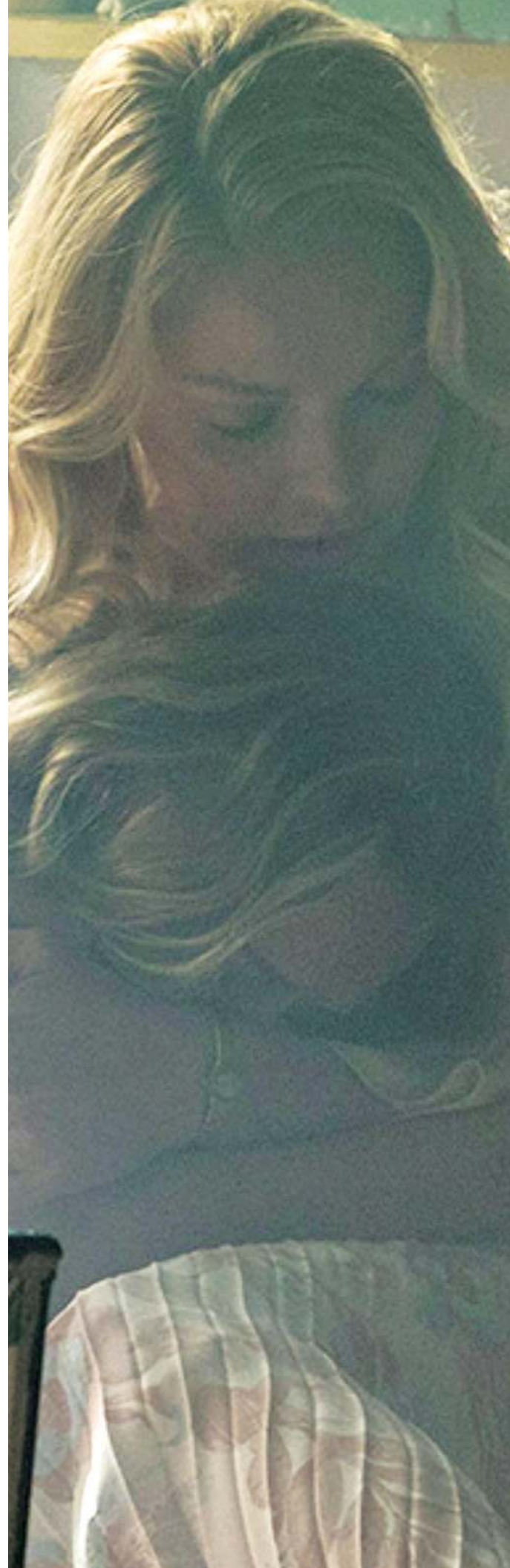
FEAR OF RAIN

Schizophrenia seems like a ripe plot device for horror or thriller movies, since the protagonist can see or hear things other characters don't. Either that, or a villain or side character can. There are a lot of movies that get it wrong, using it just as a sensational plot device, but *Fear of Rain* is one that gets it right, particularly in its depiction of societal reactions to people with schizophrenia. Rain Burroughs (Madison Iseman) isn't just afraid, she's the one others are afraid *of* and *for*.

Summary

Rain, a high school student with schizophrenia, has a horror movie-like hallucination while in a hospital. When orderlies restrain and sedate her after she panics, her mom Michelle (Katherine Heigl) says "stop, you're making it worse. Don't tie her down!" After waking from sedation (and whenever she encounters something that could be a hallucination), Rain runs through a mental checklist—"Is this possible? Could it exist here? Is anyone else reacting?" This fully works (all questions have a definite yes/no answer) qw for "I'm waking up in hospital restraints," stops at step 2 for "A cute boy is taking an interest in me," and breaks in the middle of step 1 when the boy's life is in danger (and Rain is too stressed to go through the checklist).

Rain's the subject of gossip at school and tells her mom she feels like "a social currency," but she meets aforementioned cute boy (Caleb, played by Israel Broussard) in her English class. On the way home from school, she sees someone kidnap a little girl wearing red, later seeing the girl in the attic window of her teacher Dani McConnell's (Eugenie Bondurant) house across the street. Her dad John (Harry Connick, Jr.) doesn't believe that "there's a little girl in my teacher's attic" is possible, because the teacher



Fear of Schizophrenia

doesn't have kids (shooting it down at step 1), but humors her and goes to the house with her. All they find in the attic is circumstantial evidence Dani's been in the attic more recently than she says, so Rain teams up with Caleb to investigate, saying she's right, she just needs proof. They find out that the kidnapped girl's name is Malia (Hudson Rodgers). In addition to investigating, they go on several dates together. Rain doesn't tell him about her schizophrenia. He finds out about it when she tries to help her former friend Alexa (Julia Vasi) down from a panic attack, only for Alexa to push her away and shout that "just because you're schizophrenic doesn't mean the rest of us are messed up too!"

Caleb says he isn't bothered by Rain's schizophrenia, but he wishes she would've told him about it. He asks what it's like. "Number one," she says, "I don't have multiple personalities. A lot of people assume that, but it's completely different. There's a lot of voices that say the worst things that you could possibly imagine, or that I could. To be honest, it's kind of scary not really knowing if I can trust what I see or hear. A lot of people don't have visual hallucinations, just auditory ones, but I have both." She apologizes for being "weird," but Caleb says "it's what makes you you. I'm different, you're different, why should we have to apologize for that?" and that it's okay if Malia isn't real.

Institutionalization comes up several times in the movie. Rain's therapist Dr. Pangloss (Enuka Okuma) says that if Rain doesn't take her medication voluntarily, she'll be institutionalized and forced to, and wonders if the girl

in the attic is an externalization of Rain's own feelings of being confined and trapped. Rain says that's a possibility. After Rain and Caleb break into the teacher's house, Dani threatens to file charges unless John institutionalizes his daughter. When Rain thinks she hears Malia screaming, with Caleb saying it could just be a cat, Rain says if she calls the police but it turns out it is a cat, she'll be institutionalized. Late in the film, Rain tells her mom that she knows, but doesn't care, that she'll get institutionalized if she breaks into her teacher's house again.

Finding that Caleb is too perfect a match for her (being a friend, not caring about her schizophrenia), Rain wonders if he's real. Her mom can see him. But John says that Michelle died three years ago; he pretended she was still alive because he was terrified Rain would "want to go to be with her." Michelle could see Caleb, but she wasn't real. In the teacher's attic, Rain talks to a hallucination of her dying mother, saying that she isn't real, but that Malia is. The teacher tries to gaslight Rain into believing that Malia and Caleb aren't real, but they are. Some time after the rescue, Rain says to her dad that she can tell the difference between what's real and what's not for the first time, but still hears voices. She misses her mom, but lies that she doesn't see her. She lies down in bed and sees her mom there with her. They say they love each other, and Rain goes to sleep.

Rain's Relationships

JOHN BURROUGHS: John seems

tense for most of the film, like his nerves are fraying after who-knows-how-long of dealing with his daughter's condition. Late in the film, Rain gets into an argument with him about whether Caleb's real, then says "I'm not my sickness!" Her dad says she is, they all are. He asks if she's been taking her meds, but Rain says it doesn't matter what she says, he won't believe her. He tries to force a pill down her throat, she tries to take multiple (asking if he wants her to "get out of his hair"), and he slaps her. He apologizes and tells her not to say that again; he doesn't know what else he's supposed to do. Rain says, "Sorry doesn't make it okay," but this event isn't brought up again later.

MICHELLE BURROUGHS: Michelle seems to blame herself for Rain's condition, such as telling her husband that "this is my fault" one night. Her marriage is strained; on the drive home from the hospital, John says everything's fine, but Michelle says it's been a rough day (for which Rain apologizes). Although Rain and Michelle share friendly banter during the first act, Rain finds her crying while looking through happy photos of Rain's pre-schizophrenia childhood, and Michelle worries that Caleb could trigger a psychotic episode.

DR. PANGLOSS: In her first on-screen therapy session, Pangloss asks if Rain's been taking her medication. Rain understands that her meds make her more stable, but they make her feel "like a zombie," which means she can't paint. The therapist starts to suggest experimenting, but Rain interrupts with, "Experimenting? I'm not a lab



rat.” The therapist says Rain’s one more “misstep” away from being institutionalized. Rain says it’s not fair; “People see and hear God, no one thinks they’re nuts.” she says, but the therapist says that’s not the same thing. Rain asks why not, but the scene cuts away before we get an answer.

CALEB: Rain sees Caleb sitting alone in her English class, then he sits with her during lunch, showing off a magic card trick. Her checklist stops at step 3 since no other students are reacting to this, so she’s not sure if he’s real for most of the movie. But he’s a perfect match for her; when talking about him with her mom, Rain says that she doesn’t care if he’s real or not, because she likes spending time with him; “I finally have someone to keep me company, and he’s not hurting me or anyone else, so I don’t understand what the problem is.”

The Good

The movie realistically portrays the stigma people with schizophrenia face. Rain’s English teacher quotes another student’s essay, in which a fictional character is described as “psycho,” but the teacher then repeats the quote with more-PC phrasing. During lunch, Rain finds her former friend Alexa sitting with a group of students who make fun of Rain. A girl with braids says their table doesn’t have room for “all those personalities,” and Alexa says “careful, she might go all *Carrie* on us.” Rain leaves to eat outside, alone, and the girls gossip about Rain’s offscreen suicide attempt, the girl with braids saying Rain “just does it for attention.” Students stare when Rain spills her medication and picks it up, or act like her mental condition is contagious. Most of Rain’s depicted hallucinations are negative or distressing, but not all.

The Bad

In terms of writing, the movie is somewhat predictable. There’s a scene in the third act where a random card is chosen from a Tarot deck, and it’s the cliché Death card. For all that institutionalization is brought up, the movie doesn’t really show anything to justify this as a credible threat; due to this lack of credibility, I’m not sure if this aspect of the film is realistic. However, this could negatively influence the public’s perception of schizophrenia if viewers assume that everyone with schizophrenia has intense, dramatic episodes like Rain does. The scene where John tries to force Rain to take her medication should logically have some sort of fallout, but it doesn’t seem to. Rain’s various hallucinations (being chased by a shadowy figure through a dark forest, blood in the shower, etc.) seem like horror movie clichés; I don’t know what psychotic episodes are like, but I doubt they’re like that. In my opinion, the film’s use of “Rain’s love interest/co-investigator is ambiguously real” isn’t an accurate reflection of the reality of schizophrenia. As Rain says, it’s not common to have both visual and auditory hallucinations, so this plot element, while improving the story, doesn’t seem true-to-life.

Overall

I would give *Fear of Rain* a 4/5 for the somewhat-predictable story, 5/5 for the cinematography, and 4/5 for the depiction of schizophrenia, with a bonus point for Rain’s quote to Caleb about what it’s like for her to have schizophrenia (cutting to the heart of this stigmatized condition) and the inclusion of a benign hallucination.

Weathering The Storm

2021 

Have you ever felt caught in the middle of a “life storm,” or period of hardship, and could see no way out? Maybe it felt like your difficulty would never come to an end or you would never experience another sunny day or reach a mountaintop again.

We use many idioms in the English lexicon to describe this very feeling we all experience at various times in our lives. One idiom in particular, used frequently, is the literal and figurative word combination of “Weathering the Storm.” This idiom just so happens to be the theme of INCIGHT’s first ever virtual fundraising event on October 16, 2021. We are all living in a time where the way we have historically done things has changed, and in some cases gone completely out the window. The “Weathering the Storm” theme is in fact a metaphor for so many things we are facing or will face in the future. We know the storm has arrived already, or if survived already, that another one may be just around the corner again soon.

Everyone has had a storm to deal with at some point in their lives. For many, the pandemic has been a raging storm; taking jobs, loved ones,

relationships, friendships and even personal freedoms in its path. Others have had their lives torn apart by cancer, Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s or another of many types of unexpected conditions. It could also be the storm of tragedy, addiction or limiting beliefs. Or in the case of many of the families with disabilities served by INCIGHT and so many other organizations, it’s coming to grips with a new diagnosis. There are so many storms we face which have the opportunity to take us out if we let them.

At a simple level, it’s not so much about coming back from these types of storms. Rather, it’s how you bend with the wind. It’s how you deal with and recover from a storm and chart a new path to move forward.

INCIGHT experienced its own storm over the previous year. We were humming along until one morning we woke up to a morning full of red hues. Ask any mariner about the meaning of red sky in the morning and they will tell you it’s far from any sailor’s delight. It means a storm is coming, and for INCIGHT a storm it was. We were forced to tread a lot of water, a fight requiring every ounce of effort

to survive and overcome. We needed to chart a new course for the organization, and with rapid haste. Our new course necessitated both short-term and long-term thinking and strategies.

In the short term, we bailed from our ship and jumped into life rafts. Unfortunately, the crew of INCIGHT’s ship could not all fit into the same life raft. Amongst the many rafts, we were forced to leave a few behind in the safety of other ports. These individuals understood their journey with INCIGHT had come to an end, but they confidently looked toward their new horizon. The remaining crew of team members were fortunate to attach themselves to a new ship in a partnership with Hood-to-Coast. They have provided us shelter from the storm as well as a place to land to get back on our feet and focus on charting the organization’s longer term course.

It’s easy to look back to see where you have been in the past, but looking into the spyglass of your future is impossible if you don’t have a plan to lean on. This is as true in one’s personal life as it is in their professional life. We found ourselves in this boat; coping with a reduced staff, smaller

office space, restrictions on in-person events due to COVID and our overall need to have a path forward. A logical path forward was engaging the necessary work of a strategic planning process to build our ship's new course. We hired Eugene Wallace and Family Business Advisors to lead us through this exercise and be our strategic partner for the future. It meant strengthening our ship's foundation by further clarifying our vision and mission, establishing core values and developing strategic initiatives to coalesce in driving the organization's propeller.

We battened down our proverbial hatches the past year, and we believe we will be back stronger than ever. Our leadership team is confident we can weather whatever's ahead for the organization. Will this be the end for us on the storm front? Not at all. There is most certainly another storm just ahead of us and around the corner. What I will say is this: while we may not be perfectly ready for the next storm, our team will be ready to react, innovate and chart a new course if necessary to confront the storm.

Every circumstance is different for everyone and no one storm is the same. Still, to every problem there is a solution. You don't have to let your boat sink. What is called for in many circumstances involves stepping back to regroup, taking time to set a course forward, rolling up your sleeves and moving full speed ahead. Adopt this mindset and you should have all you need for "Weathering the Storm".

Cape Meares
Tillamook County, Oregon



What Kind of Boy is Jack?

You know that famous scene from *The Shining* where Wendy finds pages upon pages of “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy”? Well, it’s true. Too little play can make a person bored and boring (like the cliché personalityless pencil-pusher); conversely, “all play and no work makes Jack a mere toy”; too little work and you never get anything productive done. But there are times, particularly with lockdowns, where work and play bleed into each other.

Think work being fun is as possible as fire being wet or dividing by zero? *That* would be one of those things that *isn't* true. Here are 6 tips for blending work and play!

Tip #1: Listen to Music

Sometimes I like to put on earphones and pull up a YouTube video of either music or an entertaining video. Not something distracting, but not white noise either, just some background noise to keep stimulated. If the workplace is too noisy for you to focus, listening to music in headphones can give you something to focus on. Going from focusing on “work + background chatter + stimuli a, b, c...z” to just focusing on “work + music” will help conserve mental energy. Listening to music you like triggers dopamine, norepinephrine and serotonin, helping you relax and be in more of a “team-player” mood when interacting with coworkers. Just make sure you pick some familiar tunes, anything unfamiliar would be more appealing than routine work tasks.

Tip #2: Go for a Walk

If you usually work a desk job, see if you can take a walk break. Moving around gets your blood flowing and helps prevent muscle stiffness, and a change of scenery or routine can help you get inspired—part of “increased blood flow” is increased blood flow to the brain. Thanks to smartphones and

bluetooth headsets, this can be done at any distance apart. Just make sure to watch for cars if you’re crossing the street.

Tip #3: Don’t Be Afraid to Befriend your Coworkers

Seems like time flies when you’re having fun, and if you like hanging out with people, socializing can be your idea of fun. To make the workday less boring, consider taking some time to chat with coworkers about non-work activities (but probably not religion or politics, unless you’re sure the conversation will stay civil).

Tip #4: Try Setting Up a Company Happy Hour

I know from experience that work can be stressful. I also know from experience that in-person happy hours were helpful (before COVID got in the way, anyway). They dovetail with Tip #3 and give everyone a chance to unwind. Virtual happy hours can be fun too, even if we aren’t seeing each other in person.

Tip #5: Ask Yourself Why You Wanted This Job

Chances are you applied for the job



you’re at because something attracted you to it. Remember how excited and pumped-up you felt after getting hired? You’re not just doing the thing you’re interested in, *you’re getting paid for it!* Sounds pretty fun and awesome, right?

Tip #6: Gamify It

There are a few studies¹ and articles² on the web which have shown that adding a few game elements to therapy, like point scores and rewards or “level-ups,” can boost client engagement and motivation. I’m not 100% positive on this, but I think that the same could work for, well, work. Set up point systems where each task is worth X number of points and reaching Y number of points nets you some kind of prize (just make sure that the competition stays friendly).

¹https://journals.lww.com/pedpt/Fulltext/2017/01000/Gamification_in_Physical_Therapy__More_Than_Using.27.aspx

²<http://gamertherapist.com/2011/02/19/the-gamification-of-psychotherapy/>

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RELAYS



THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

Maybe you've heard the old adage,
"It takes a village to raise a child?"

BY **SCOTT HATLEY**
PHOTOGRAPHS PROVIDED BY **SUNSHINE DIVISION**

Maybe you've heard the old adage, "It takes a village to raise a child?" Well, in a slightly different way, this saying can be adapted to fit Sunshine Division, a nonprofit established in 1923 that serves the four counties of metro Portland, Oregon. It has, in fact, nearly taken a village to raise the issue of hunger and individuals in crisis and dramatically increase the footprint of this organization the past five years.

The Sunshine Division was originally started by Portland Police Bureau members and volunteers from the community to deliver holiday food boxes. During the pandemic, they have further quadrupled the number of people they can help. To paint this picture, in 2019 Sunshine Division was serving 1,300 individuals per month. Fast forward to 2021 and they have exponentially grown to now serve 1,300 per week.

This level of success could not have been achieved without the strong private partnerships already in place, along with the fortunate set of circumstances fate brought their way around their involvement with the Winter Wonderland event each holiday season.



**Photos Right, Safeway employees
volunteering to package food boxes. Pho-
to Below, Portland Police Officer
delivering a food box to a family in need.**



"If you told me two years ago, that we are going to distribute somewhere in the neighborhood of 7 million meals to 265,000 households in under two years, I would

have chuckled," said Kyle Camberg, Sunshine Division Executive Director. "I wouldn't have thought that was possible and yet here we are, and I'm very proud of that."

Sunshine Division, which will celebrate 98 years of operation in December, is a shining example of what can happen when the right for-profit business partners link up with a non-profit to achieve mutually beneficial goals in serving a community need. Without the Murdock Charitable Trust, a local foundation, Sunshine Division could not have purchased the Winter Wonderland event from the previous owner Global Events. Without the partnerships with Safeway-Albertsons, their foundation, and Hood-to-Coast Relay, they wouldn't have had the strong business plan, logistics or sponsors in place to secure the organization-changing grant needed to purchase the event. The result? The Winter Wonderland event has turned out to be an amazing success for the organization,



raising one million dollars during the 2020 holiday season alone. All these partners saw the vision of the event and realized they could help elevate Sunshine Division in a dramatic way. And elevate, it did!

"The event's been so popular that it actually allowed us a few years ago to open up a second [distribution] location," said Camberg, "It was always the hope it would be successful and we would raise a lot of money from it."

What does this partnership look like, you ask? Aside from significant financial support and being the largest donor of food, Safeway-Albertsons has provided warehouse space in a vacant grocery store for Sunshine Division to operate out of. Moreover, it was a \$200,000 gift from their foundation which started the home delivery program, originally a 10 week

pilot, in response to the pandemic. This is where Hood-to-Coast Relay enters the picture. Known for organizing and executing endurance race events, they provide the logistical backbone for Sunshine Division to make home deliveries during the holidays and throughout the year, including 65,000 deliveries in the past 18 months.

"Not only do we need to raise money like any charity, but we also have to collect food and we also have to get volunteers to help us execute our mission," said Camberg, "so it's critical that we have partners like Safeway and their foundation."

The margins for people are so much smaller than they ever used to be. When impossible situations turn into impossible decisions, Sunshine Division is there with support through its simple mission to "provide free emergency food and clothing to anyone in crisis." They do this by offering food assistance six days a week at their warehouse locations. They also provide no-cost, bulk food and food boxes to 20+ local hunger relief non-profits serving Clark, Clackamas, Washington and Multnomah counties. 90% of the product distributed is donated to Sunshine Division, with the organization buying the remaining 10% of the food. They rely solely on do-

nations to fund the collection and distribution of food and clothes.

One way you can help or get involved with Sunshine Division is to buy a ticket to experience the 28th annual Winter Wonderland at Portland International Raceway. Recognized throughout the Pacific Northwest as the "Largest Holiday Light Show West of the Mississippi," over two million visitors have attended since the event's beginning. Want to bring your car, truck, minivan, motorcycle, Winnebago or limousine? All have been sighted along the two-mile oval over the years. So pile into your vehicle, turn the car temp up to 70 degrees (or whatever is comfortable), tune the radio to your favorite holiday music channel and enjoy the drive-through light show, complete with 285 different light displays, all from the comfort of your own vehicle. It's especially magical for little kids and families with the blinking lights, tunnels and fully animated scenes, and all the proceeds go directly to Sunshine Division.

What really excites Camberg and his team is knowing there's more they can do, and more they will do. Looking ahead to 2022, Sunshine Division is working to secure their own building location to store their shelf-stable food, package food boxes and further distribute them out of. Through continued partnership and innovation, Sunshine Division has the opportunity to keep raising the bar of what's possible for serving individuals experiencing a crisis in their life. The sky truly is the limit as they work to meet current demands and build toward the future.

In our Next Issue

The Winter season gives good excuses to get together with friends and family, but feeling like you belong and are included is important all year round.

In her book *Dare to Lead: Brave Work, Tough Conversations, Whole Hearts*, Brené Brown said, “People are opting out of vital conversations about diversity and inclusivity because they fear looking wrong, saying something wrong, or being wrong. Choosing our own comfort over hard conversations [...] corrodes trust and moves us away from meaningful and lasting change.”

In the spirit of curiosity and pushing perspectives, *The Understanding's* upcoming Winter issue will delve into those topics, have these vital conversations and ask what it means to be inclusive and promote feelings of belonging. To start off, why not take a look at some adaptive Winter sports?



DREAM Adaptive Recreation Participants in Whitefish, Montana.



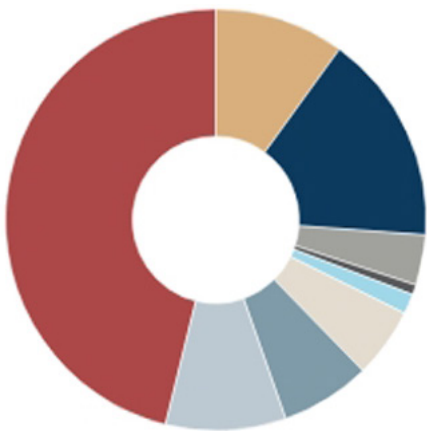
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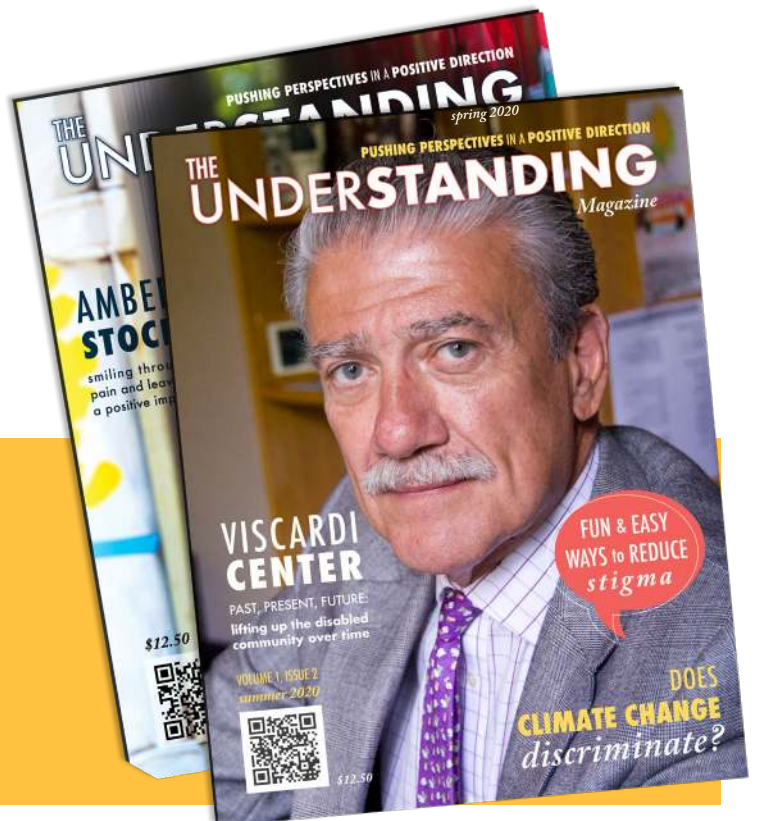
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