In September 2011, I had the great good fortune of joining the staff of Cathedral Counseling Center. My background: I received my MSW from Jane Addams College of Social Work in 1983 and a Certificate in Advanced Clinical Practice from the University of Chicago, School of Social Service Administration, where I also worked for 15 years as a field educator, consultant, and instructor to graduate students in social work. In more than 30 years in clinical social work I have practiced in a variety of settings including community mental health, inpatient and outpatient psychiatry, medical social work, and private practice.

The Counseling Center’s mission is to serve clients who could not otherwise access the level of comprehensive and professional services the Center consistently provides. As therapists, we appreciate the opportunity to see a wide variety of clients, most of whom we would never see in our private practices. Many are young adults, struggling with everything from the normal stresses of growing up to serious mental illness and very painful histories.

One such client I work with found us while doing a Web search of Loop counseling agencies with a sliding fee scale. She has a long history of childhood trauma, both sexual and physical. She raised all of her younger siblings from the time she turned 6, and, as a result, her schooling was erratic. She began a descent into drug and alcohol abuse, and other self-destructive behavior. Because this young woman is intelligent and possesses a strong survival instinct, she fought her way back from loss and chaos and, with treatment, is now rebuilding what she called previously “my lost life.” This client receives regular psychotherapy and psychiatric services and is stable and doing well.

Cathedral Counseling Center is in the unique position of helping this client and many like her due to our generous sliding scale. Our clients improve and thrive due to the staff’s high level of skill and compassion, all of whom have committed themselves to providing the highest quality psychotherapy services, while advancing the field of clinical work through education and training. I am honored to be among them.
Dear Friends,

Earlier this spring, I gave a talk to the Cathedral Counseling Center staff entitled “The Good Word.” One of the writers I used was Thomas Lynch, a funeral director, poet, and essayist from Michigan. Lynch has been in love with words since he was a boy, and he writes about his search for words that sustain him.

Words are the essential tools of psychotherapy, and we strive to use them carefully, honestly, and creatively. How do we say the hard things to clients in ways that they can understand and use? What metaphors can we glean from their imagery and build on to move the treatment along?

These questions have sparked a lively discussion among the staff about the power and meaning of words in our work.

In this issue of the newsletter, you will learn more about educational activities of the Cathedral Counseling Center and about a staff position we created to expand them. You will also meet a new clinician who brings many fine years of experience to the community.

And you’ll find out how we avoided NATO traffic by escaping to a north side artists’ studio for a retreat. The retreat was timely and welcome because this has been an especially busy spring for the agency.

Since we moved into the Garland Building in April 2007, the calls for help have more than doubled from an average of 87 per month in 2007 to 201 per month so far in 2012. The waiting list has inched up to more than 50 people a few times, and some prospective clients have had to wait for several weeks to be seen. This demand is a testimony not only to the excellent reputation and high quality of care provided, but also to the dearth of other affordable, professional mental health services in Chicago.

Thank you for taking time to learn about Cathedral Counseling Center. And thank you for supporting our mission as we help clients find the words to make sense of what they are doing, what they must discover about themselves, and what they must do.

Sincerely,

Maureen R. Kelly, LCSW
Nina Riccardi, LCSW, Takes on New Position at Center

In January 2012, Cathedral Counseling Center welcomed Nina Riccardi, LCSW, as Director of Professional Development. Ms. Riccardi may be familiar to many of you as the auctioneer at our annual gala! Nina completed the Center’s advanced clinical training program in 2000 and continued as a part-time therapist. She returns to CCC full time after her most recent post as Internship Coordinator at the School of Social Work at Loyola University Chicago. Previously, she spent more than ten years as a medical social worker in women’s health. Her clinical interests center on anxiety disorders, women’s transitions and adjustment to health crises. Nina hopes to bring creative learning opportunities to the staff and community in this new role.

This position was created to expand the agency’s education, training, supervision and consultation services. In addition to ensuring that the agency’s tradition of psychodynamic psychotherapy continues, professional development services keep clinicians up to date on current research and theory. Both newer and veteran therapists learn from one another through lively seminars, workshops, and clinical consultation. Therapists have participated in discussions about everything from Mindfulness in Clinical Practice to the Neurobiology of the Client Narrative in the past year.

Staff Explores Strengths and Challenges at Spring Retreat

The late Reverend Wilson Reed was a member of the board of directors of Counseling Center for several years after he retired. The agency recently received a generous bequest from his and Robert Worster’s estate. Because Wilson was always interested in supporting the well being of caregivers, a portion of the gift was allocated to staff development. The Center staff used these funds to hold an agency-wide retreat on May 18th. The day began with a poignant “Legacy” conversation. The panel included clinicians who built the Center’s foundation in the 70s and 80s—Carol Connell, Carrie Downs and Cindy Walls—and segued to the 90s with Shisha Amabel, Joel Susman, and Susan Melsky. Wendy Wasson and Maureen Kelly described the evolution in leadership, staffing and services over the last 20 years. Their stories were a valuable way to understand the smart, hard work that has built this agency and the importance of the continuity of its mission, especially for newer staff members.

In the afternoon, staff members worked in teams to creatively describe their experience of the Center and ideas about the future. Lots of good, serious conversation and laughter ensued. We remain grateful for Wilson’s and Robert’s support of us and our work!
Cathedral Counseling Center’s annual gala was held at the Germania Club on April 27, 2012. Over 200 supporters danced, dined, and bid on great auction items as they mingled with staff, directors, and donors.

The gala netted approximately $40,000, new friends, and a great time for our supporters—many thanks to all who made the evening a great success!
Many thanks to the friends of Cathedral Counseling Center who sponsored the gala:
Chalmers Development
Church of the Holy Nativity
The Reverend M.E. Eccles
Salli Eley
Paul Gehl and Rob Carlson
Arnold and Constance Goldberg
Philip Hale
Miriam Hoover
Nancy and Mark Kimble
Paul Kobasa
The Right Reverend Jeffrey Lee
Meridian Psychiatric Partners
Greg O’Leary
Saint Paul and the Redeemer Church
Stephan Roberts and Amy Young
Siobhan Yeh
Would you recommend Cathedral Counseling Center to a friend?

- Yes: 98%
- Not Sure: 1%
- Probably Not: 1%

“Absolutely! I am 110% satisfied with my treatment.”
“Yes, I already have. Words cannot express how grateful I am for your organization.”
“Always. I feel like my therapy has saved my life.”

Overall, how satisfied are you with the services you’ve received?

- Extremely Satisfied: 84%
- Very Satisfied: 13%
- Satisfied: 2%
- Not Very Satisfied: 1%
- Very Unsatisfied: 0%

“I feel very lucky to have access to such excellent mental health services.”
“Thank you! This has been a blessing in a time of traumatic experience.”
“I am so happy I found Cathedral! I am happier, healthier, and better off because of it.”