

Michael Conner Receives First Annual PEC Award

By Sandra Shulmire, PsyD, PEC Committee

Dr. Michael Conner received the Oregon Psychological Association's first Public Education Award at the Annual Conference in Eugene this May.

Mike Conner was a common-sense engineer and forester who decided that he wanted to become a psychologist. Nearly 20 years later, Dr. Conner has become a highly experienced and pioneering psychologist. Over the past 15 years he has learned a great deal about children and families by working in law enforcement, crisis centers, residential treatment, outdoor youth programs, hospitals, primary medical care, ERs, mental health clinics, and a research institute. Dr. Conner has a private practice in Bend where he works with adults, families and at-risk youth. He not only works with individuals and families, but he has worked with generations in families and even entire neighborhoods. He loves any opportunity to talk with people about psychology, children and families. His passion has always been to educate and inform the public and consumers about psychology and mental health.

He has recently focused on educating the media and public regarding the effectiveness of psychological services as an alternative to or necessary component of medication interventions. During the past year, in Central Oregon, Dr. Conner was quoted in four significant behavioral health newspaper articles on youth, *Youth Suicide, Polypharmacy and Kids, Online Screening for Youth at-Risk, and "Greentime" - Outdoor Activities to Help Manage Symptoms of ADHD*. During the past nine years, he has educated Oregon reporters, consulted with and been quoted by the *Oregonian* on Parenting, Suicide Pacts, Suicide by Cop, School Violence, and Police use of Force on Mentally Ill people. Dr. Conner has been featured on each of Portland's television news stations on subjects related to community mental health and safety.

In 2004, Dr. Conner and a team of parents, programmers and health care professionals developed a revolutionary computer system for parents that operates on the Internet. The system, called StepOne for Parents, allows parents to screen and find referrals for their children who may have behavioral, emotional and mental health

problems. His current project, called StepOne for Safety, is a computer system that promises to provide an incredibly powerful and inexpensive solution to the school safety problem in the U.S.

Dr. Conner is known in national media. He has been quoted and helped shape stories in *Cosmopolitan, Money Magazine, Parents' Magazine, and the New York Times*. He was a guest on the nationally syndicated Montel Williams show three times talking about intervention programs for youth. He is regular guest of Kristi Miller on Good Morning Central Oregon. In 2006, he finished his book, *"Crisis Intervention with Adolescents: A Guide for Parents and Professionals."* This book is the first and only comprehensive book on the subject written for parents.

Dr. Conner is a volunteer member of the Steering Committee for the Youth Suicide Prevention Coalition in Central Oregon which works with local schools and community service organizations. He has presented information on mental health concerns to the Deschutes Country Commission on Children and Families. He has been interviewed on more than a dozen radio talk shows concerning psychological issues, providing input to Portland, Bend and Vancouver area stations and to national programs.

Since 1997, Dr. Conner has developed and maintained seven professional and consumer education websites sponsored by Mentor Research Institute, each of which meets a specific public or professional education purpose. These sites are:

www.MentorResearch.org,
www.StepOneforParents.org,
www.OregonCounseling.org
www.CrisisCounseling.org
www.HelpforParents.net,
www.WildernessTherapy.org
www.OutdoorTherapy.org.

On these sites he has published and updated more than 30 public information handouts and web articles on psychological services, screening, behavioral and mental health problems, suicide and violence prevention, psychiatric medications, finding help and consumer protection. His handouts were among the very first widely published on the internet and

have been used by universities, health care agencies, EAPs and information web sites internationally. Several of his handouts have been translated into Hebrew and Italian. His handout on surviving and coping with traumatic events was widely re-published and distributed by health care agencies in New York City area immediately following 9/11.

Dr. Conner is a co-creator of the "Oregon Flood Recovery Coloring Book" published in English and Spanish. The coloring book was revised again and published on the web as a resource for survivors of Hurricane Katrina. For the past six years Michael Conner has been writing monthly articles for the Central Oregon Family News Magazine on a variety of topics including Parenting, Crisis Intervention, Mental Health Problems, Finding Help and Psychiatric Medications. He has also presented talks to the public on these topics at Bend area churches and athletic clubs. During his December, 2006 trip to Portland's sister city, Taipei, in Taiwan, Dr. Conner provided 20 hours of training to professionals and nearly 80 hours to the lay public on crisis intervention approaches for adolescents. He was invited to present to the Taiwan National University School of Social Work in the spring of 2007.

The Public Education Committee is very pleased to honor Dr. Conner for his great work in "giving psychology away!" For more information about the award, the PEC and the activities we're encouraging, contact Sandy Shulmire at 503.645.2944, or sandyLou29@yahoo.com.