



The Melissa Institute
For Violence Prevention and Treatment



REPORT
TO THE
COMMUNITY
2002



As the ripple effects of the events of September 11 make their way across the country and around the world, virtually every community has been touched by the tragedy. Not only is this a difficult time for our nation, but also for each of us as individuals. The Melissa Institute is working with professionals locally and in the New York area to assist victims — particularly children who have been affected by trauma and loss. The Institute is pursuing other opportunities to support the recovery effort, and we remain committed to reducing the incidence of violence and making our communities safe places. Now, more than ever, we need your support. Our hope is for peace.



The Melissa Institute

On May 5, 1995, Melissa Aptman was murdered in St. Louis. A Miami native, she was just two weeks away from college graduation. A year after her death, Melissa's family, friends and violence prevention experts established The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment to honor her memory.

The Melissa Institute is a non-profit



Melissa Aptman

organization dedicated to the study and prevention of violence through education, community service, research support and consultation. The Institute's mission is to bridge the gap between research and direct application of that information to reduce the incidence of violence and to assist victims and their families.

When Melissa was murdered, our world was shattered and our lives forever changed. With the support of family and friends, we have turned our pain into positive action through The Melissa Institute. We know the pain of violence and its impact upon society. As underscored by the recent terrorist attacks, we also know the pain of being victims. The success of The Melissa Institute is a direct result of your generous support. Working together, we have made our society a better place for everyone, especially our children. However, the more we accomplish the more we realize how much work remains. It is only with your continuing generosity that we can maintain and expand our efforts. Together, we are making a difference.

Lynn and Michael Aptman, M.D.
Melissa's parents





Education

The Melissa Institute’s educational efforts include major conferences, seminars, training sessions and programs for youth. The annual conference, which is the Institute’s largest educational forum, is attended by hundreds of teachers and principals, health professionals, social workers, counselors, police officers, judges, religious leaders and policy makers.

• In 2000, the fourth annual conference focused on “Preventing Violence: A Life-Span Perspective.” The Institute also presented a daylong conference on school violence prevention and intervention for more than 600 principals, counselors and staff from Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

• In 2001, the fifth annual conference featured experts who discussed “Ethnic Minorities and Diversity: Implications for Violence Prevention and Treatment.” Keynote presentations were made by Harvard University violence prevention expert Deborah Prothrow-Stith, M.D., José Szapocznik, Ph.D., from the University of Miami’s Center for Family Studies, and Leonard Pitts, a nationally syndicated columnist and author.

• The topic of the sixth annual conference in 2002 is “Anger-Control and Aggressive Behaviors: A Life-Span Treatment Approach.”

In November 2001, The Melissa Institute launched a pilot project — a youth conference — to educate students and encourage youth participation in violence prevention activities. Middle school students and faculty from Miami-Dade County Public Schools Region VI learned



Above: Scholarship winner Nicole Marcus with Susan Keeley, Ph.D., President of The Melissa Institute.
Below: Leonard Pitts, syndicated columnist and author, speaks at the fifth annual conference.



*“Absolutely outstanding!
Topics were relevant
and the speakers were excellent.”*



Libby Miller (left), award winner at the 2001 Reading Conference and media specialist at Claude Pepper Elementary School with Alicia Moreyra, Ph.D., Language Arts/Reading, Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

“Each conference continues the same high level of excellence. The speakers are always dynamic, cutting edge and informative.”

about bullying, its impact on peers and positive strategies for dealing with bullying. The program, designed and led by an expert from our Scientific Board, empowers students to return to their respective schools and involve classmates in a school-wide program. We expect to expand this program in the future.

The Institute is also collaborating with Ponce de Leon Middle School, Coral Gables, to bring the nationally acclaimed, research-based “Second Step” violence prevention program to faculty and students. Students at

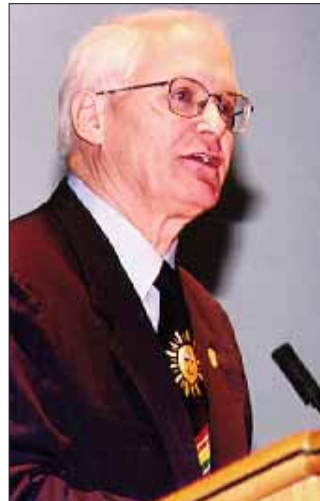
Assistant Principal Carol Brown helps Centennial Middle School students at the Youth Conference on Bullying (below).



Ponce are already active with the Ponce Explorers Non-violence Initiative (P.E.N.I.), which includes a variety of educational activities, a peace pledge and poster contests. They also have a penny drive that raises money for local organizations and have made donations to the Institute totaling more than \$1,100.

Research shows that a major contributing factor to

Left: David Lawrence Jr., gives opening remarks at the 2001 Reading Conference. Right: Deborah Prothrow-Stith, M.D., Harvard University violence prevention expert, gives a keynote presentation.



Above: Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D., speaks at the fifth annual conference.



Hundreds of participants attended the forum on school violence prevention.



Community Service

As part of The Melissa Institute's community service and outreach, programs are provided to parents on raising healthy children in a violent world and on the factors that contribute to aggressive and violent behavior. The Institute also participates in numerous health and safety fairs. It distributes thousands of free gun locks as well as gun safety bookmarks and other materials.

Students also have a vital role in making their schools safe places. That is why The Melissa Institute makes presentations to students of all ages about the warning signs of violence and gun safety.

The Melissa Institute's web site is being developed as an online center for violence prevention information. In this way, the Institute provides resources to the national and international communities. Visit us at www.melissainstitute.org.

The Melissa Institute also provided a grant to the Girls' Advocacy Project (GAP), a program for female detainees in the Juvenile Detention Center in Miami-Dade. GAP offers education, resources and support to the young women, with a long-term goal of improving programs aimed at prevention, intervention and reduction in female juvenile delinquency. The Melissa Institute provided funding for a media cart, complete with equipment and educational materials.

In addition, The Melissa Institute, Hadassah and The Miami HEAT/Miami SOL professional basketball

violent behavior is a youth's failure in school. Some 85 percent of juvenile offenders are illiterate. The Melissa Institute is committed to improving student and family literacy by providing workshops, training and consultation. More than 250 reading specialists and teachers from Miami-Dade County Public Schools attended the Institute's reading conference in 2001. The program, led by top reading experts, also recognized a local reading instructor for outstanding efforts to promote literacy with a \$500 award from The Melissa Institute.



Above left : Miami SOL mascot "Solee" delighted students at Sylvania Heights Elementary, where the Read Write Now tutoring program takes place. Left: Miami HEAT star Eddie Jones (center) is surrounded by students, faculty and tutors at the Read Write Now kick-off event. Below: He spoke about the importance of reading for success in school.



organizations are partners on the Read Write Now tutoring project, which was developed by the U.S. Department of Education. The program uses tutors to improve elementary students' literacy skills.

"Our organization is so honored to present this award to the Aptmans. Their courage, and the work of The Melissa Institute, are beautiful tributes to their beloved daughter. We all have lessons from them about creating a rich and meaningful legacy out of a terrible tragedy."

— Maureen Kersmarki, president of the Florida Society for Healthcare Public Relations & Marketing, upon presenting the Florida Hospital Association's 2001 Jack Hardy Communicator Award to Lynn and Michael.



Lynn and Michael Aptman receive the Florida Hospital Association's 2001 Jack Hardy Communicator Award.

Below: Judge Tom Petersen (right), receives Community Service Award from Judge Norman Gerstein, Miami-Dade County Circuit Court Judge.



Research Support and Awards

SCHOLARSHIPS – The Melissa Institute nurtures the work of young scientists by awarding annual scholarships to support doctoral students' dissertation research in the field of violence prevention. The \$1,500 awards are used to defray costs of conducting research. Past winners include:

- **2001 – Nicole Eldridge Marcus**, University of Miami, "Dimensions of Marital Aggression and Children's Aggressive Schemas in Clinic-Referred Families."
- **2001 – Katherine Herron**, Indiana University, "A Multi-faceted Examination of Power in Couples Experiencing Husband Violence."
- **2000 – Mark Bodnarchuk**, University of British Columbia, "Psychological and Behavioral Typologies of Men Who Batter."
- **1999 – Janine Saunders**, University of Texas at Austin, "Exposure to Chronic Community Violence in African-American Children: Kinship and Spirituality Factors."
- **1998 – Sharon Geary**, Boston University, "Violence Prevention, Social Support and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Among Urban Low-Income Children."
- **1998 – Richard Van Dorn**, Washington University, "Adolescent Offenders: Understanding the Transition from Nonviolent to Violent Offending."

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD – This award recognizes an individual whose work, dedication, contributions to the community and volunteerism are consistent with the Institute's goal of reducing violence and helping victims and their families.

- **2001 Winner – Judge Tom Petersen**, retired from the Juvenile Division of Miami-Dade County Circuit Court.

EDUCATOR RECOGNITION AWARD – This new award will bring recognition and financial support to an individual who is working in the school setting to reduce the incidence of violent behavior in Miami-Dade County schools.



Consultation

The Scientific Board of The Melissa Institute has provided consultation to many agencies and organizations. Miami-Dade County Public Schools requested the Institute’s input for the implementation of an anger management curriculum for students. The Institute also has consulted with the Juvenile Assessment Center; the Miami-Dade Youth Crime Prevention Blue Ribbon Committee; Miami-Dade Public Defender’s Office; Not One More Child Death or Injury Committee; Miami-Dade County Public Schools Violence Prevention Committee and Domestic Violence Committee.

The Melissa Institute also served on the Dade-Miami Criminal Justice Council, which is responsible for allocating approximately \$2.5 million for crime prevention programs. Furthermore, the Institute offers consultation to Employee Assistance Programs and individuals seeking assistance or referrals.

Special Events

Peace and Harmony 2001 and 2002

The annual fund-raising event, “An Evening of Peace and Harmony: Music for a Better World,” draws several hundred attendees and supports the Institute’s programs and projects. In 2001, the audience couldn’t help but tap their toes to the smooth and swinging sound of jazz vocalist

Did You Know?

- According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, about 1.2 million elementary-aged latch-key children have access to guns in their homes.
- One in 12 high school students is threatened or injured with a weapon each year.
- Individuals between the ages of 12 and 24 face the highest risk of being a victim of violence.
- More than 3,500 students were expelled in 1998-99 for bringing a gun to school. Of these, 43 percent were in elementary or junior high school.

Allan Harris. Each year Lynn Aptman, Melissa’s mother, performs her original piano compositions in memory of her daughter. In 2002, the concert features vocalist Chris Calloway, daughter of jazz legend Cab Calloway.

“An Evening with Friends”

Friends and classmates of Melissa’s wanted to do something to honor her memory as well as raise funds to support the Institute. About 200 people attended the first annual “An Evening with Friends” in Manhattan and helped to raise more than \$20,000. Many thanks to event chair Rachel Wallach-Perez and the committee for their hard work, dedication and enthusiasm.



Peace & Harmony jazz vocalist Allan Harris with Lynn Aptman.



From left: Bill and Nancy Radcliffe (Co-chairs), Michael Aptman, M.D., Lynn Aptman, Claudia and Eduardo Barroso, M.D.(Co-chairs) at The Melissa Institute’s Peace & Harmony concert.

OUR VOLUNTEER BOARDS

The Melissa Institute's volunteer boards give generously of their time and expertise to help the Institute accomplish its goals. Our Boards include:

Board of Directors – Committed individuals who oversee the operation of the Institute, assist with fund-raising, plan projects and participate in community activities on violence prevention.

Scientific Board – International experts in the areas of violence prevention and treatment of victims.

Honorary Board – Distinguished citizens and community leaders who have lent their support to the Institute.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Suzanne Keeley, Ph.D., is President and a founding member of The Melissa Institute. She is a psychologist in private practice and on the medical staff of Baptist and South Miami Hospitals. She has had extensive clinical experience treating victims and perpetrators of violence.

Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor Emeritus, clinical psychologist, research director and a founding member of The Melissa Institute.

Modesto Abety, MPA, Director, Children's Services Council of Miami-Dade County.

Lynn Aptman, M.Ed., Melissa's mother, one of the founders and Corresponding Secretary of the Institute.

Michael Aptman, M.D., neurologist, Melissa's father and one of the founders of The Melissa Institute.

Robyn Cassel, Esq., Treasurer of the Institute.

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Remi J. Kajogbola, MBA, Vice President, Corporate Sales & Marketing, Cardinal Health.

Atlee Wampler, Esq., President, Wampler Buchanan Walker Chabrow & Banciella, P.A., former U.S. Attorney, Southern District of Florida, Recording Secretary of The Melissa Institute.

Executive Director -
Christine Kotler, M.A.

SCIENTIFIC BOARD

Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D., is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Clinical Psychology at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, and one of the founders of cognitive behavior modification. He has lectured worldwide on the impact of violence and has published the *Clinical Handbook on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder*. In a survey reported in the *American Psychologist*, he was voted "one of the 10 most influential psychotherapists of the century." He is a founding member of The Melissa Institute.

James Larson, Ph.D., is Professor of Psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and Coordinator of the School Psychology Training Program. He is a leader in school violence prevention and has developed videotape training programs for children and adolescents. His training manuals and materials have been widely used. He is also an expert in parent management training programs.

Clifford O'Donnell, Ph.D., is Professor of Psychology at the University of Hawaii and Director of the Community Studies Program. He is an authority on childhood aggression and violence, and he has addressed the issue of gun violence and youth. He has also developed culturally sensitive community programs for youth and their families.

Debra Pepler, Ph.D., is Professor of Psychology at York University, Toronto, Ontario, and the Director of the Judy LaMarsh Center for Research on Violence and Conflict Resolution. She is a leader in the area of the developmental correlates of childhood aggression, victimization/ bullying and an expert on school-based interventions. She has also studied domestic violence.

Barbara Hanna Wasik, Ph.D., is Professor of Education at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and Director of the UNC Center for Home Visiting. She is a pioneer and leading authority in the area of home visiting. Her book *Home Visiting: Procedures for Helping Families* is a classic in the field. She has consulted internationally on home visiting and early intervention programs.

You Can Help

With your contribution, The Melissa Institute will continue to provide education, community service, research support and consultation. Individuals can provide financial support through general contributions or by earmarking their contributions to support a specific project. A donation is also a unique way to honor special people and mark special occasions, such as birthdays, anniversaries and holidays. Please join us in making our world a safer place. Together, we will make a difference.

Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution in the amount of \$_____ or

I would like to pledge the following amount:

- \$10,000+ to be a Founder.
- \$5,000 - \$9,999 to be a Fellow.
- \$2,500 - \$4,999 to be a Patron.
- \$1,000 - \$2,499 to be a Benefactor.
- \$500 - \$999 to be a Sponsor.
- Other: \$_____ to be a Friend.
- I am interested in helping by donating stocks, property or other assets.

Payment enclosed. Please make check payable to:
The Melissa Institute
c/o South Miami Hospital
6200 SW 73 Street
Miami, FL 33143

- or
- Bill the full amount of my contribution or
- Bill me in the following manner:

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*“This is my third conference
and each time I attend I come
away feeling empowered and
more knowledgeable.”*

Conference attendee

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Judge Cindy Lederman, Administrative Judge, Juvenile Division, Miami-Dade County.

Carrie Meek, United States Representative.

Alex Penelas, Miami-Dade County Mayor.

Leonard Pitts, Syndicated columnist.

Arthur Teitelbaum, Southern Area Director, Anti-Defamation League.

Cynthia Wolman, M.Ed., former early childhood educator and board member, Aranon Corp.

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A special thank you to the many supporters of The Melissa Institute. Your contributions, both financial and in services provided, are genuinely appreciated.

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Safety Tips

Kids



Illustration: Karen DeSouza, Age 11

Love your kids.
Lock your gun.

The Melissa Institute
For Violence Prevention and Treatment

The Institute has distributed more than 100,000 gun safety bookmarks throughout South Florida, including at Barnes & Noble bookstores, Miami-Dade County schools, day care centers, the Million Mom March, at health and safety fairs, hospitals, pediatricians' offices and many other locations. They are available in English and Spanish.

Even if you don't own a gun:

Talk to your children about guns.

Ask parents of your children's friends if they have guns at home and how they're stored.

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