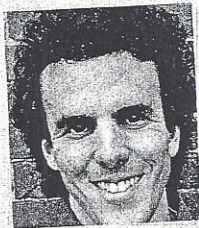


A Safe Place



By Matt Robinson

A few blocks away from the current home of the National Library of Addictions are the administrative offices of

Dr. Punyamurtula S. Kishore, the man behind this pioneering resource and support center. On the walls are posters depicting such great men as Churchill, Lincoln, and Melville. "All addicts," Dr. Kishore points out. "Addicts who made something of themselves." Such triumph over the adversity and stigmatism that seem to come hand-in-hand with addiction is what Dr. Kishore has been trying to support since even before he founded the library in 1993. In fact, it was what prompted him to found it in the first place.

Combining Many Disciplines

"As addictions involve many disciplines," he says, citing such fields as primary care, law and criminology, forensics, pharmacology, and toxicology, "we have to cover many disciplines. It all must be here." Kishore says that he was inspired to explore and involve many fields by his mentor at Carney Hospital in Milton, Dr. Hugh Fulmer. "He said that medicine is a combination of private care and public health," Kishore recalls. "It is a hybrid practice that involves many parts."

In an effort to provide himself and others with a central collection of resources spanning all of these disciplines, Kishore organized his own collection of diverse materials in an office on Boylston Street in 1993. Since then, the library has expanded from 6,000 books to its current collection of 10,000, thanks to contributions from patients, colleagues, and supporters, including Boston College, Harvard Medical School, and even Massport.

Building a Team

Once the physical library was established, Kishore began putting together a team of support staff who could help him to help his many clients, many of whom were involved in complicated situations that involved not only medicine, but also legal and public health issues. "I found some doctors and lawyers and started some medical-law forums," Kishore says, noting that he continues to keep legal and public health professionals on staff at the library and at the nearby Addiction Law Center to help those in need with those aspects of addiction. "I wanted to bring the communities together. A library is more than a collection of books," he suggests. "It is a place to meet and seek information."

In 1999, Kishore started his first groups for younger people. "They were a big hit," he says, explaining that the success of these early youth groups inspired

This is the final installment in a four-part series about addiction and its treatment. The series highlights the work of Dr. P.S. Kishore, addictionologist and founder of the National Library of Addictions in Brookline.

the current programs he runs in schools and other venues. That same year, the library moved to 11 Kent Street, the current site of its administrative offices. "We used to have the collection here," Kishore explains, "but it soon got too big, and with the help of some local administrators, we moved it to the Brookline Public Health building on Pierce Street. "Since it was in the Public Health building," Kishore explains, "we began to host programs for the public, including area families." As that site is currently undergoing renovation, the library recently was relocated to 12 Sewall Avenue.

Ambassador Program

The idea of supporting the community is an important one for Kishore. "We have studied many models of dealing with addictions," he explains, "and we have found that peer-to-peer partnerships work best." As a result, Kishore recently launched an ambassador program that allows former addicts to share their own stories of triumph with students and other groups who may need real-life examples to understand this complicated issue. "We now have about 25 ambassadors," Kishore says. "These are the people who go into the community and help turn the negatives into positives by showing others how to overcome addictions. We found that kids talking to kids left a deep impact — far deeper than other programs." The program has been especially effective at schools.

"Addiction is now a young people's disease," says Kishore. So, to get to the root of the problem, he went to schools. The first place that Kishore visited was Melrose High School. "The captain of their hockey team had died from drugs," Kishore

explains, "so they asked me to talk to the other students." When word got out about Kishore's day-long presentation, he began to field and respond to demands for similar programs from schools and youth groups all over the area.

The National Library of Addictions
12 Sewall Ave., Brookline
617-734-0993
National hotline 800-770-1904
www.nationallibraryofaddictions.org

Daring to be Different

Citing the most popular (or at least the most used) program in the country – Drug and Alcohol Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.), Kishore says that such "scared straight" programs may be effective in the short term, but that the message is quickly forgotten. In a peer-to-peer program, however, Kishore says that the long-term effect is far more profound. "We use a team model," Kishore explains, again alluding to the importance of community. "We have kids, doctors, counselors, and facilitators. The kids are the stars, but we are all here to help."

Through working with kids, Kishore has come to see an entirely new side of the addiction issue. "I am amazed to see how much they know about drugs," Kishore admits, "but it is also amazing the things they ask!" In addition to asking whether they can drink or use drugs again during or after treatment, Kishore and his ambassadors have been asked what is the "safest" drug, how much water does one need to drink when taking Ecstasy, and how can one live comfortably in a car when banished from the house for doing drugs.

"Kids don't understand," Kishore suggests. "The messages they get don't make sense and the concepts are nebulous." That is why, Kishore says, his peer-to-peer method works so well. "People do not understand how they get addicted and unaddicted," he says, "so we are trying to enlist mouth-pieces who can explain this situation and what we do in simple terms." And, unlike other programs that try to frighten or threaten people into avoiding drugs and other addictions, Kishore describes his program as "an honest program. We try to tell them the truth and to not be ashamed. It's been a big hit and a shining star in community relations!"

Minimizing Risks

Even so, Kishore admits, there are potential risks to having recovering addicts talk to their friends about addiction. "Friendships are vital to children," he explains. "The problem with that, however, is if one gets involved, it can lead to clusters of addictions."

In an effort to minimize such problems, Kishore insists that any of his clients who go out into the community as ambassadors undergo full testing (including urinalysis) before each presentation. He also has them keep track of their own progress with pocket-sized wellness calendars. "They like to tell us how they are doing," he says. "They mark each day of sobriety with a gold star!"

Developing Champions

In an effort to help the public image of the library and its patients, the folks at Regan Communications have been coaching Kishore's ambassadors in public speaking so they can appear more professional and hopefully be more effective. "Our ambassadors are wanted properties," Kishore says. "Every self-help group wants them, and we have been doing presentations in schools and at Boys and Girls Clubs all over the state." Last year, Kishore began to reward his ambassadors with further incentives, including awards for sticking with their programs and for helping his to grow. "We want to highlight what young people can do for each other," Kishore explains. Such peer support is vital, Kishore says, because many of these kids cannot

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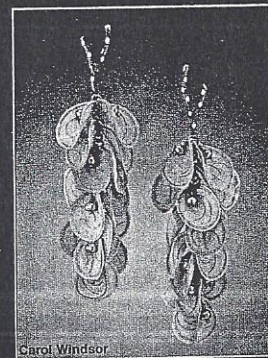
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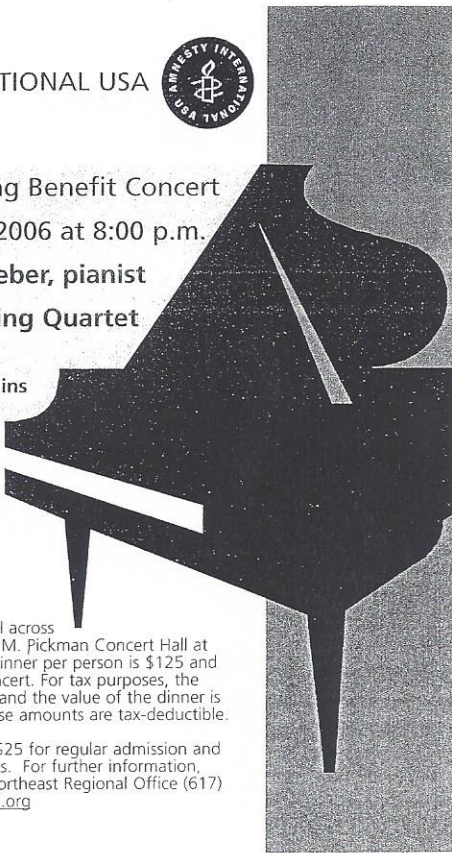
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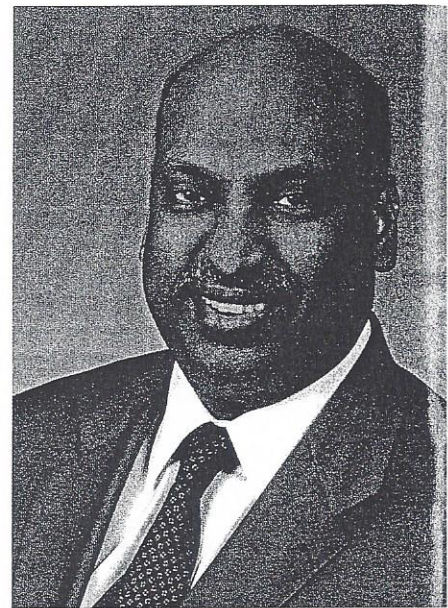


Addiction | Continued from page 15

get the help they need elsewhere. "They are hungry for information," he suggests, "and they are not getting it from their parents or schools." In addition to helping the students learn about and hopefully stay away from addictive substances, Kishore adds that the program benefits the ambassadors themselves. "Many of our ambassadors do very well," he says, noting the high rate of high school completion and employment success these recovering addicts enjoy. "For the kids, our ambassadors are champions, and the ambassadors get a lot of confidence from doing this, so it is a win-win all the way around. Being an ambassador acts as an incentive to stay sober," he suggests. "And their message really hits home and gives kids real examples, so it has a deep impact. There is a lot of passion in what they do."

Finding a Passion

Passion, Kishore says, is an important element in what he does. "People need to find a passion in order to overcome an addiction," he says. "We have found that the three most important things that help people stay sober are to have a job, to have a hobby, or to find some sort of spirituality. All of these involve passion." In his office on the second floor of 32 Kent Street is a photograph of a serene, sunlit lake. "One of my patients was living in a sober house," Kishore recounts, "when he saw an ad in the paper for a fly fishing lesson. Today, he is one of the gurus of fly fishing, and everywhere he goes to fish, he takes a picture. This is one of his pictures. This man found a passion!"



Dr. P.S. Kishore, founder of the National Library of Addictions in Brookline. Photo by John Sidlo.

Though Kishore's administrative offices are in an office building, all of his practice offices are in converted homes. "I want to present a non-clinical atmosphere," Kishore explains. "I want this to be a comfortable place where people can come and learn at their own pace." Most of the offices are furnished with comfortable chairs that are arranged around circular tables. "We have no power structure here," Kishore says. "We are very user friendly and conversational. We want to work with the patient to help them find what they need."

Help for All

In yet another effort to build community, Kishore hosts regular support groups at 32 Kent Street, including meetings for women and families. "We want to be a place where people can come for help," he says. "That is what we want the library to be, and that is what we want this place to be as well." On the top floor, Kishore and his colleagues prepare a newsletter that deals with the latest research and means of support for their many clients. "We started out with just word of mouth," he recalls, "but now we have other ways of getting the word out about what we are doing."

Though his main office and the library are both based here in Brookline, Kishore stresses that his programs are available to anyone, anywhere, at any time, and that he is not averse to the idea of expanding the program to

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federal government, and then work with, not against communities to create the mix of housing they need to maintain a balance.

Deb shared a story of her visit to Springfield, a city that has been in crisis and continues to need help. "I went out to see Mayor Ryan in Springfield. Mayor Ryan is 78 years old and was previously mayor in the '60s. The mayor has 11 children and 33 grandchildren. He is back in office because he loves his city and wants to make sure there is a future there. He and I have the same values, care about the same things. I said to him: Mayor Ryan, I am not here to tell you what I can do for you, but to ask you, what *can* I do for you? The mayor welcomed that approach."

A Bridge to the Corner Office

Deb Goldberg promises to be the lieutenant governor who will work with all the mayors, councilors, and selectmen throughout the state. She will be their bridge to the corner office and the legislature. She understands the pressures of balancing balls in the air, and knows it is at the hometown level where the rubber meets the road. She will give them the support they need locally while being the right arm to the governor in getting Massachusetts moving again.

Finally, when you ask Deb why she wants to do this, she gives you a warm smile and says, "I am truly about people. As I travel the state, the problems are all the same. Massachusetts is a wonderful place and we can have a positive future. I am doing this for my kids, your kids, and all our grandchildren. This state and the people in it have been great to my family and me, and I really look forward to making a difference!"

other communities, just as he has expanded his private practice. "It is our hope to open sister institutions in other sites that duplicate our efforts in a consistent way," he says. "We do not want to see only people in Brookline. We want to see all people."

Financing the Program

Of course it takes money to expand resources and services. As far as funding goes, Dr. Kishore says that about 80% of the Library's \$100,000 annual budget comes from his practice. "We take all the cases we can," he says, listing such expenses as rent, staff, travel, and supporting the ambassador program, "and we do a lot without asking for anything in return, but we get some help from medical companies and private donors." The fact that a parent of a patient recently donated \$5,000 seems to say that Kishore's programs work and are appreciated. "We are making a difference," he says, "and people want to help us help others."

Among the many services that Kishore would like to expand is the library's national hotline (800-770-1904). "We want to be here for people," he says. "We do not want to be like other support groups that simply direct clients to other places. We want to be able to take their calls and help them right away!"

Weapons of Mass Destruction

Even though he does all he can to help as many people as he can, Kishore is frustrated by the fact that, due to the nature of the issues with which he deals, he is often unable to reach all those he might otherwise. "Addiction is a silent epidemic," he says. "Many people are afraid to talk about it or to ask for help." As a result, drugs and alcohol often lie under the surface, undetectable to even the most watchful and determined eye. "Drugs are like weapons of mass destruction," Kishore suggests. "We are basically dealing with bio-terrorism." In fact, Kishore points out, many of the same countries who are currently threatening our national security are also threatening our national health. "Over 80% of heroin comes from Afghanistan," he says, "a great deal of Ecstasy comes from the Middle East and Eastern Europe, and most internet pharmacies are based in Bulgaria and Bangladesh. Even Canada and Mexico are involved," Kishore says. "Our great society is being sullied. We need to latch down our borders because we are literally surrounded and being infiltrated every day!"

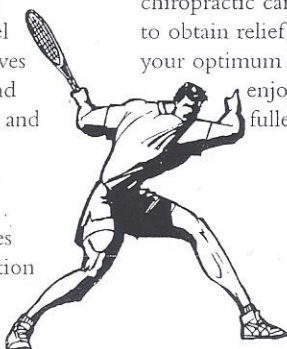
A Silent Cry for Help

Even though community may not always be beneficial, Kishore says, it appears to be the best potential source for help. "You can't lock this problem out," he says, "and you can't just throw money at it. If a man is drowning, throwing money at him will not help. You have to get in the water and haul him out. That is how you help!" Unfortunately, many of those who are "drowning" in addictions do not like to cry out for help. "We need to respond to a community that doesn't like to ask," Kishore says, "and we need to offer them a safe place so that they will at least be encouraged to do so." Unfortunately, there are few such places. "There is no such neutral ground anywhere else," Kishore observes. "People can't go to the doctor or the police when they have these problems. They need a place where they can seek help. That is what I strive to provide."

Matt Robinson is a freelance journalist from Brookline who also teaches boxing at BHS. He can be reached at mattheusrobinson@mac.com.

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