

BUSINESS THURSDAY

B8

DOW FALLS JUST SHORT OF RECORD B10

| OUSTED HP CHAIR SAYS SHE CONSULTED OTHERS B9

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Portland Press Herald

SECTION

A new kind of coach

Q: So what is the business?

A: We help people dealing with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). The name of the business is an acronym: Advance Day by Day with Encouragement, Accountability, Support and Empowerment. We mainly work with children and their families. Usually a parent calls because a child is not organized for school or is getting in trouble. So we – I and J.J. Stuart, who works with me – go in and coach the child, setting up systems. When we work with families, I work with the children or the child; J.J. works with the parents. A lot of times, by the time we get a phone call, parents are saying, “I’m ready to kill my kid!” But we usually connect very quickly. Both of us have children – I have two who have ADHD, and J.J.’s son has it. So we can relate. We live it, we’ve been through it.

Q: How do you get clients?

A: Sometimes a pediatrician will refer parents to us. Or teachers or therapists.

Q: So you don’t counsel?

A: We can’t call ourselves counselors – you need to

Laurie Moore Skillings

Owner, A.D.D. With EASE,
1006 Forest Ave.,
Portland

CONTACT INFO: 878-2343;
www.addwithease.com;
laurie@addwithease.com

AGE: 49

HOW LONG IN THIS JOB: Two

years

PREVIOUS JOBS: Surgical technician; special education tutor at Dyer Elementary School in South Portland; professional organizer

be licensed and be able to bill insurance. We can’t say “you need to use this” – what we do is show them how to use it. We put the rubber to the road, as they say. We may be able to work on time management or keeping paperwork organized, for example, by coming in and helping set up systems and strategies that work. Whatever works for the client. Often the whole family becomes involved. Sometimes we meet with teachers. A lot of time there are other things going on (with the child), such as depression.

Q: How many kids have ADHD?

A: I think the estimate is 3 to 7 percent of schoolchildren.

It’s one of the, if not the most, recognized disorders. When I was doing professional organizing, almost 100 percent of the clients had ADD. One woman in her 30s said, “I have ADD – no one can help.” She was so full of despair, it left me really sad.

Q: Did you get her organized?

A: No. She wasn’t ready to deal with it. But she was one of the catalysts for my pursuing this (occupation).

Q: So your clients aren’t all children?

A: No. The oldest client lives in Massachusetts. She’s in her early 70s and (is) going back to get her college degree. Teachers had told her all her life that she was stupid, then she was diagnosed with ADHD five years ago. We’ve worked with some people as far away as Washington – a college kiddo, just to help get a routine going.

Q: You don’t have a sign up on Forest Avenue?

A: No, because of the shame some people feel. We also make house calls.

Q: How did you train to do this?

A: Some college, and other courses, including one with (Dr.) Ned Hallowell, but it’s been mostly on-the-job training. On the job and living it, with it and around it. So a lot of life experience. When I saw that the woman who needed the organizing had no one to help her, I got on the Internet and typed in ADHD. I had no idea there was such a thing as coaching. It led me to a few sites, and I went to one and liked what I saw. I called and talked and it turned out that the woman there was the co-founder of ADHD coaching in the U.S. – Sue Sussman, she’s a physician in Pennsylvania. We hit it off and she trained me. We did it over the phone and through e-mail. There are very few coaches trained specifically to work with people with ADHD.

Q: How long did it take?

A: Six months or so, maybe longer.

Q: Why don’t I remember hearing about ADD when I was a kid?

A: You were probably one of them! But it’s been diagnosed since the 1950s, and

Please see **SHOPTALK**, Page B11

SHOPTALK

Continued from Page B8

documented back in the 1800s. Ritalin's been available since the '50s. There's a lot of controversy over whether (ADHD) is a matter of will as opposed to a medical disorder.

Q: What do you think?

A: I don't believe that a child chooses to be chastised by teachers or anyone. I don't think it's a matter of will or won't. ... It's been recognized as a neurobehavioral disorder by the World Health Organization and others. I have it, I know. I understand it.

Q: How has business been?

A: It's been both slow and steady. For many people there's a lot of shame involved with this, so it takes a lot of courage to make that initial phone call.

Q: How much do you charge?

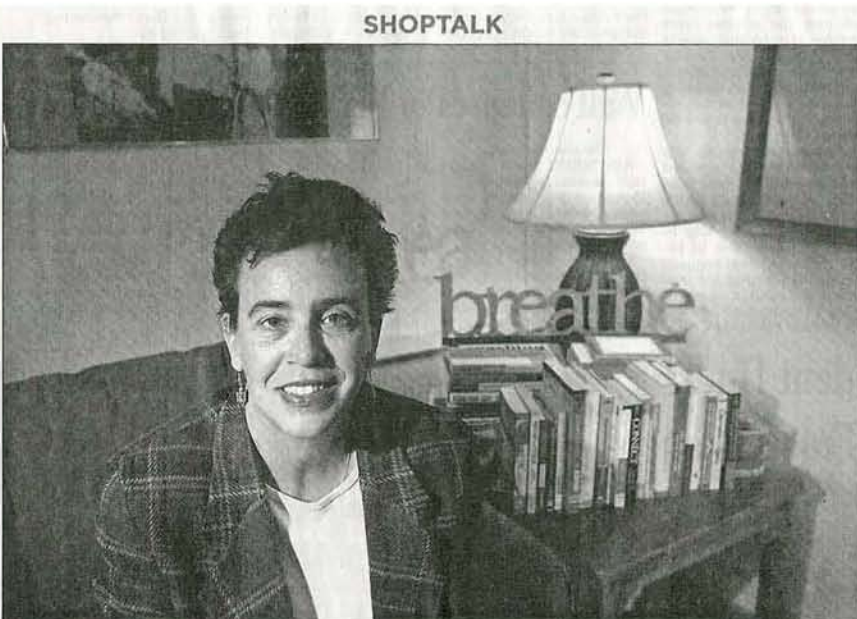
A: It depends. The fee is hourly and sometimes turns into a monthly rate, depending on clients' needs. Group coaching starts at \$50 per session (per person), so the fee is \$50 and up. Some people can't afford it; some just say "OK." It's a tough question to answer because we don't turn people away. We do have four pro bono spots, which are always filled. And there's a waiting list.

Q: How many clients do you have?

A: We have about a dozen private clients and we've just opened up the group coaching piece, which is coming along. The most people in a group is eight.

Q: What's hard about doing this?

A: I think not being able to help everyone who calls. All the jobs I've had involved helping people. ... Some people aren't ready and sometimes need to go back to a therapist. It can be ... just a tough thing. But what we do is also very rewarding when you see it click.



Laurie Moore Skillings, owner of A.D.D. With Ease, works with kids and adults with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Staff photo by Gregory Rec