



# Bridgewell sets 'gold' standard

## Sovner Center team provides comprehensive care

BY PAUL HALLORAN

Connie Simon's son Todd, a 37-year old man diagnosed as mentally challenged/autistic, has participated in a myriad of programs over the years. Like most parents in her situation, Simon was always in search of the perfect fit for Todd as patient, and for her as caregiver.

About eight years ago, she found it.

"After all these years, I truly found my pot of gold," said Simon, referring to Bridgewell's Sovner Center in Danvers, a facility that provides a wide range of services to people with developmental disabilities who are also suffering from some form of mental illness.

Simon is so effusive in her praise of the Sovner Center, led by Licensed Mental Health Counselor Kimberley Haley and her staff – Medical Director Dr. Sherman Fox and Clinical Nurse Specialists Lana Doughty and Liz Hunt – not only for the high quality of care afforded her son, but also the consideration given to her.

"This is truly the first place that has been able to work with me as a parent, as opposed to us walking into a room and having the doctor already writing a prescription before talking with us," she said. "When I came upon the Sovner Center, I was ecstatic."

Sovner is somewhat unique in that it provides specialty services to a typically under-served population, offering psychiatric care to people who have cognitive disabilities, according to Dr. Fox.

"This place is what Bridgewell is really all about," he said. "We open a bridge to services for the most disenfranchised population in society. Bridgewell helps advocate for those who cannot advocate for themselves."

Services provided at the Sovner Center include diagnostic assessments, medication management, and individual, group, and family psychotherapy. Patients include those diagnosed with autism, Down Syndrome, cognitive impairment, or head injury. In addition to Dr. Fox, Doughty and Hunt, there is a team of therapists who provide treatment for patients.

"It requires a different skill set, because patients are not typically able to communicate their symptoms," Hunt said. That's why there is a concerted effort to



Above, Clinical Nurse Specialist Lana Doughty confers with Todd Simon and his mother, Connie.



At left, Sovner Center medical director Dr. Sherman Fox, with Clinical Nurse Specialists Liz Hunt, right, and Doughty.

not grouped," Simon said. "That's very important."

"I don't think we would be as well respected as we are without that," Doughty added. "Sometimes we have 10 people at an appointment for one patient, and everyone has something to say. Everyone works together to achieve the best possible result for each patient."

Beyond all the treatments, medications and therapies, the staff at the Sovner Center help patients maintain the highest level of independence possible.

"It's not that long ago that the majority of these people would be institutionalized for life," Hunt said. "We help them maintain independence and be successful in the community."

That, perhaps, is the best medicine they can prescribe.

*For more information on the Sovner Center please visit our website at [www.bridgewell.org](http://www.bridgewell.org) or call 978-750-6828.*

include the caregivers in the treatment planning.

"We depend on the caregivers to give us an assessment," Doughty said. "We talk to people who work with the patients at their residential and day programs."

Dr. Fox, Doughty and Hunt agree that the single most important ingredient in the success of the Sovner Center is the team

approach embraced by all who work there.

"It really does take a village, and we provide the treatment in the village," Hunt said.

"Bridgewell supports us in allowing us to take the proper amount of time to serve our patients," Dr. Fox said, echoing the sentiments of Connie Simon.

"My son is treated as an individual, he's