Between moving both of our offices, adding new staff and programs, and intensifying our community outreach efforts like never before, these past few months have quite possibly been the busiest time in Morrissey-Compton’s 32-year history. But more individuals than ever are having to face coping with learning differences, and they need our services, so we’re not about to slow down anytime soon.

This spring, besides our ongoing busy schedule of clinical appointments for clients (both established and new), regular parent education classes, and planning another session of our popular Challenge Summer School, we have two very special events occurring during the first few days in May: Our innovative Executive Function & Learning Conference for professionals—the first-ever of its kind on the West Coast—on May 8 & 9 (page 5), and Silicon Valley Community Foundation’s second annual day of online giving, Silicon Valley Gives, on May 5 (page 3).

There’s lots of information on both of these events, plus much more, inside. So turn the page to start reading all about it—and have a fun, interesting, educational, and productive spring!
Dear Friends of Morrissey-Compton,

As we enter the second quarter of 2015, it has already proven to be an exciting year for Morrissey-Compton. In February we held our Executive Function (EF) Conference for Parents, which was a big success. As you will see on page 4, the conference was well-received by participants and earned very positive reviews. Indeed, every participant completing a post-conference survey reported that they would recommend the event to another parent. On that same page, you can read about our first EF Boot Camp, designed for students in those critical middle school and high school years.

Our initiative to educate parents and professionals about EF will take another step forward this May with our EF & Learning West Coast Conference for professionals at Santa Clara University. If your child is struggling with EF weaknesses, we encourage you to pass information about this conference to his/her teacher(s), therapist, and/or tutor. Parents are welcome to attend, but the conference will not focus on home-based strategies. Turn to page 5 or visit our website for additional information.

As you will also read in this issue, we were very fortunate to be awarded a grant from the Edmund and Jeannik Littlefield Foundation that has allowed us to develop a comprehensive outreach program to Latino families with our Spanish-speaking staff. Our Half Moon Bay office, in particular, has become very busy providing a variety of services, including consultations, psycho-educational assessments, tutoring, and parent education to Latino students and their parents who otherwise could not afford these services (see page 6). The families served thus far are very grateful for this opportunity to help their children succeed in school, and have good reason to be optimistic about their futures.

Our commitment to serve any family who otherwise cannot afford services is at the heart of our mission and is the primary impetus for our fundraising efforts. An important opportunity to contribute to our scholarship fund by donating through Silicon Valley Gives is quickly approaching on Tuesday, May 5. We are so proud of our success during the very first Silicon Valley Gives event in 2014, where we ranked in the top 20 out of close to 700 participating nonprofit organizations for total day-of gifts. One hundred percent of the money we raised was used to support students and families through our scholarship fund. We owe our deep gratitude to you, our donors, for your time, effort, and dedication to help students experience academic success. Details about this year’s event are on the next page. We hope that we can count on you to help!

Also in this issue, you will see that we are accepting applications for our 33rd session of Challenge Summer School. Our program continues to evolve with the full incorporation of EF and mindfulness training along with our longstanding focus on academic instruction, building self-esteem, and developing social skills. This summer’s exciting theme is Around the World in 20 Days. This issue also highlights the benefits of early intervention and treatment for students, a listing of upcoming free parent education classes, and openings in our group therapy program for kids.

Thank you for your support, and we hope you enjoy this spring edition of our Quarterly News.

With Warm Regards,

John T. Brentar, Ph.D.
Opportunity is Knocking—Again!
On May 5, You Can Double (Triple?) Your Impact

Remember a year ago, when it seemed like every billboard in our area was hyping Silicon Valley Community Foundation’s (SVCF’s) first-ever day of online giving? And remember how Morrissey-Compton Educational Center asked for your help securing matching gifts, and we ended up doing extremely well in raising needed funds during that 24-hour period:

Do you remember how the money we raised made it possible for many individuals with learning differences to receive financial aid for our services? Remember how grateful we were (and still are) for your support?

Wait, What???
Oh, and do you remember how we later announced that because we did so well that day, we would never again have to ask you to give to Morrissey-Compton...WHOA, stop the presses! That last part never happened. As a nonprofit, regularly asking our friends to give is the only way we can keep providing our services to those who need them, but cannot afford to pay full price.

However, we can assure you that everything else we’ve mentioned so far DID happen. And of course, this year we’re going to do everything we can to try to make it happen all over again.

Will History Repeat?
On Tuesday, May 5, SVCF, with the help of sponsors, will once again host Silicon Valley Gives. This 24-hour effort offers thousands of nonprofits the chance to raise millions of dollars through a single online donation platform. During the inaugural Silicon Valley Gives event, nearly 15,000 individual donors contributed just over $8 million to charities based in three counties.

About Those Matches...
At the time of this printing, Morrissey-Compton has not secured any designated matching gifts for May 5, but believe us, we’re working on it:

How it Works
Step 1: Type the following url into your browser:
http://svgives.razoo.com/story/Morrissey-Compton-Educational-Center
Step 2: Look for the “Donate now” box on the right-hand side of the page, and follow the steps to help us reach our goals!

If you are interested in helping us motivate others to give on May 5 by putting up your own matching gift, please call (408) 396-8953 or email lyn.balistreri@morrcomp.org.

Don’t Watch the Clock!
If you’d like for us to try to secure a match by handling your online gift for you on May 5, please contact Lyn (info at left).

2014 SV Gives Stats for Morrissey-Compton:
• Online gifts: $40,265
• Designated matching gifts: $15,000
• Other matches & prizes: $16,165
• Total raised: $71,430 for our operations, programs, and scholarships!
• Ranking: #19 of 674 participating nonprofits
Executive Function Boot Camp for Teens

Under the leadership of clinicians Ashley Kinkaid Koedel, M.A. and Raymond Jones, Ph.D., four teenage students successfully completed a course that exposed them to strategies and skills to bolster both academic success and personal growth. The program focused on the executive function areas that are most important for success in a teenage population given the demands of academics, extracurricular, and familial life.

Beginning with the first session, students identified and learned about their multiple intelligence profile. Gaining insight into how they may learn helped identify and differentiate specific tools and strategies to best meet their needs. Students also learned about the importance of and how to develop goals that are specific, measurable, and achievable. Instruction and regular practice in planning, both weekly and daily schedules, was an additional focus. In tandem with guidance in planning, prioritizing was a skill that was studied and practiced at length. Organization in the form of materials management, along with strategies for effective reading and note-taking, were also addressed. Finally, practice with working memory strategies/aids and activities to work on time management were introduced and practiced.

What Did Parent Conference Attendees have to Say at the End of the Day? A Sampling:

“Great information and exposing how complex the EF concept is.”

“I rate this event ‘required reading’ for any parent that has a child with EF deficits.”

“I came away with the feeling that I am not alone. Yours sessions were very helpful and it was also helpful to speak with other parents.”

“I found all of the presentations to be very informative and relevant to the struggles my children are having at school and at home.”

“I would definitely recommend this to a parent facing these types of challenges because there were many practical, helpful strategies to address these areas.”

“I hope that there will be more conferences like this in the future!”

EF Conference for Parents

Our first-ever Executive Function (EF) Conference for Parents held on February 28 was a success! The Redwood City Woman’s Club was at capacity with close to 100 parents of students in third grade to college level. Attendees heard experts present on various topics, including the relationship between EF and learning, ADHD and EF, socio-emotional processing, and functional organization in the home for families. The most inspiring part of the day was when a panel of students diagnosed with EF challenges (left) shared candidly with the parents in the audience their experiences and how they have learned to cope.

Conference Chair Dr. Surina Basho and Morrissey-Compton would like to thank everyone who participated in the day.

Morrissey-Compton hopes to be able to offer similar events to this in the future, but we need your help.

If you would like to make a gift to support our innovative EF Research Program, please email lyn.balistreri@morrcomp.org or visit www.morrissey-compton.org/donate.php. Please reference “EF Program” in the Special Instructions.
Morrissey-Compton Brings Innovative Conference to West Coast

Dr. Surina Basho (right), Director of Research at Morrissey-Compton, is spearheading the first-ever Executive Function (EF) & Learning West Coast Conference.

The two-day conference is furthering the work of Dr. Basho’s mentor, renowned EF expert Dr. Lynn Meltzer, the editor of Executive Function in Education: From Theory to Practice and author of Promoting Executive Function in The Classroom.

Origin of the Event

Dr. Meltzer just celebrated 30 years of her Learning Difference Conference at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where experts in the EF field presented their latest research and knowledge. Dr. Basho’s vision is to bring the same kind of expertise and knowledge in EF to the Bay Area.

Expertise is on the Agenda

Dr. Meltzer will kick off the EF & Learning West Coast Conference by delivering the keynote address on May 8. Dr. Richard Guare, co-author of several books including Smart but Scattered: The Revolutionary ‘Executive Skills’ Approach to Helping Kids Reach Their Potential, will be the keynote speaker on May 9.

The conference will also feature additional speakers from across North America, including psychologists, teachers, researchers, physicians, neuroscientists, and educational specialists. The topics will include theory, research, and practice in the field of EF and learning differences.

Target Audience

This conference is intended for professionals and will not include hands-on information for parents to use with their children. However, parents who wish to attend are welcome to do so by registering at general admission rates.

The more educators know about EF, the more students will benefit!

Parents, you’ve done a superb job of helping us spread the word about this conference so far. Space is still available, so let’s keep it going! Please continue to pass this information on to your schools, teachers, educational therapists, tutors, psychologists, and so on. Consider sponsoring a teacher, a tutor, or an educational therapist to attend. Our scholarship funds are going fast, so your support can make all the difference. Visit our website for more details.
Half Moon Bay

Supporting Student Learning in Coastal Communities
by Denali St. Amand, Ph.D., Educational Specialist

Morrissey-Compton’s satellite office in Half Moon Bay continues to support student learning in a variety of ways in our coastal communities.

Funding Supplies for Local Schools
We joined other local businesses at the Half Moon Bay’s Chamber of Commerce Education Network Night on February 25 to support our public schools, as funding is short. Morrissey-Compton donated new classroom supplies, in keeping with Network Night tradition, and gave a crisp one hundred dollar bill to Elizabeth Gardella, a kindergarten teacher at El Granada Elementary School whose name was chosen from a bowl. Elizabeth (shown here gratefully accepting her $100 bill from Denali St. Amand) is a very good match for our gift. Her students have already put the money to great use by building and decorating a plant box, and they have sprouted the seedlings so that they can grow wild flowers.

This sort of teaching and learning benefits all types of minds, and we are especially delighted to help students with learning differences develop educational skills in this creative way. They also learn to appreciate and use their learning strengths early on.

An Act of Generosity Leads to Expanding Client Base
Thanks to the $100,000 grant from the Edmund and Jeannik Littlefield Foundation that we received in 2014, 40 Spanish-speaking students have joined us at the Half Moon Bay office, with students from first grade through junior college receiving services here on the Coast. Students are enthusiastic to come for math tutoring as well as for support in developing language arts skills, for meeting challenges such as organization and time-management, and for guidance navigating specific schoolwork. Morrissey-Compton has also provided full assessments for grant recipients and has hosted two Parent Education Classes, including one in Spanish. Our bilingual staff members, Edwige Gamache, M.A., Ph.D. and Will Martinez, Ph.D. have been working very hard to facilitate for parents who speak no (or very little) English.

We value and enjoy our partnerships not only with schools, but also with the Half Moon Bay Library, local physicians and therapists, and other local businesses, all of whom work hard to support our unique coastal communities. Many thanks to our hard-working Morrissey-Compton specialists who make these endeavors a reality, with a special thanks to John Brentar, Erin Shinn, Board Member Rudie Tretten, and the rest of our Board of Directors!

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Morrissey-Compton’s 33rd Annual Challenge Summer School program is quickly approaching! We will once again hold this fun, theme-based program in the City of Palo Alto, with a half-day schedule that runs Mondays through Thursdays, June 22 to July 23. This year’s theme is “Around the World in 20 Days.”

A One-of-a-Kind Curriculum for Your Uniquely Wonderful Student
What makes Challenge Summer School so special? This program, for students who have just completed K-6th grades, is the only private summer school in the area that is not part of a year-round school. We meet the needs of our students by delivering a truly individualized curriculum designed for learning disabled and ADHD students.

Not only does the program help maintain academic skills over the summer, but alternative, research-based strategies are taught by trained special educators to support reading, writing, and mathematics achievement. Also setting Challenge School apart is its Executive Function and Social Skills curriculum, which is fully integrated into each classroom at a developmentally appropriate level.

Wait...Kids WANT to Come Back??
Our greatest goal and greatest joy is to foster self-esteem and academic confidence. For many students, Challenge School is the place where they begin to shine, discover their own learning profile, and start to advocate for themselves. Perhaps the best testament to Challenge’s success story—and to the magic of the program—is our very high rate of return each year, by the child’s own choice!

A Staff of Talented Professionals Who Truly Care
How do we do it? In addition to a director and assistant director with many years of classroom and clinical experience, our amazing staff includes special education teachers, reading specialists, speech pathologists, behaviorists, and executive function coaches. This team is able to work together to offer multi-sensory instruction, effective strategies, and one-to-one and small group instruction when needed.

Sign Up Today for Challenge Summer School 2015
by Ashley Kinkaid Koedel, M.A., Director, Challenge School; Educational Specialist, Morrissey-Compton Educational Center

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This year’s Challenge School is quickly filling up, so reserve your spot now!

For an application, visit www.morrissey-compton.org/summer_school.php or call (650) 322-5910.
In a world of conflicting points of view and varying opinions, there are, thankfully, a few pearls of wisdom supported by robust research.

One such pearl highlights the importance of early intervention when it comes to improving the outcomes of students with learning disabilities. In other words, if a parent or educator suspects something may not be working as it should, then there is real value in understanding the child's learning profile, identifying the possible presence of a learning disability, and providing appropriate instruction or intervention to capitalize on strengths and bolster areas of need.

Example #1: Dyslexia
Take dyslexia. There is abundant research linking reading challenges to poor school outcomes, such as low self-esteem and decreased graduation rates. In turn, intervening early can prevent a snowball effect of hurdles and obstacles later in school.

As we frequently see in our Morrissey-Compton Educational Center offices, some bright and highly motivated students can push past their core reading weaknesses and memorize words for a while, possibly up through middle or even high school. However, as demands increase in complexity, even these students can hit a wall and begin to experience unnecessary frustration in school.

Dr. Sally Shaywitz authored *Overcoming Dyslexia: A New and Complete Science-Based Program for Reading Problems at Any Level*. In this helpful resource, she outlines clues to watch for that may indicate potential reading difficulties for a child. For example, children who struggle to learn nursery rhymes (e.g. recognizing and producing rhyming words) and pronounce words may have more difficulty working with sequences of sounds when faced with reading words. Another clue pertains to making the leap to print. That is, children who have trouble recognizing or naming individual letters may be more challenged with learning to read. A family history of learning disabilities can be another potential predictor of the presence of a learning disability, including, but not limited to, dyslexia.

Example #2: Autism
Autism is another example of a learning challenge that, when addressed early through a variety of treatments, can markedly improve a child's developmental trajectory. In fact, new scientific knowledge is allowing for the diagnosis of autism at younger ages, giving families the opportunity to get support for their child earlier and earlier. This is critical so that when the child is school-age, he or she is better equipped to meet the social, behavioral, and academic learning demands in a school milieu.

What to Look For
In light of the fact that intervening early has such positive effects on long term outcomes, we encourage parents and educators to be mindful of red flags for learning disabilities, such as
those mentioned by Dr. Shaywitz. Other red flags for preschool and early Kindergarten students can include, but are not limited to, difficulty with:

- Following directions
- Articulating ideas on par with peers
- Telling a short story
- Learning the alphabet
- Making letter-sound associations
- Using an appropriate pencil grip when drawing and writing
- Forming letters on the page and using appropriate spacing between words
- Memorizing colors, shapes, etc.
- Sequencing events, days of the week
- Basic number sense

**How We Can Help**

Morrissey-Compton Educational Center offers comprehensive educational evaluations to:

1. Help identify individual strengths and areas of need;
2. Rule in or rule out a potential learning disability;
3. Generate individualized recommendations for home and the classroom; and
4. Provide information regarding which evidence-based program(s) would be best suited for the child.

We conduct such evaluations with children who are in pre-Kindergarten, or who are about to start school, all the way up to college students. Even if a young child does not meet full criteria for a diagnosis at the time of the initial evaluation, families walk away with tools and programs to build skills and, ideally, prevent greater difficulties down the line.

**On Another Note... Please Help Us Help Others!**

As you may have seen in our first-ever Annual Report (which you should have received recently), Morrissey-Compton has put out a call for stories about past and current clients, as well as help reconnecting with those who we treated several years ago. And we really mean it, we want to hear from you! The more we know, the more we can spread the word about how we’ve helped others—and continue to do so for years to come.

If you would like to share a personal story with us about how Morrissey-Compton helped you or your child, or if you know of any current addresses of past clients who have grown up, please contact Lyn Balistreri at lyn.balistreri@morrcomp.org or 408-396-8953.
Who are these Famous People?

Some people may think that having a learning difference can give a person a disadvantage in life, but these individuals overcame their learning difficulties to lead exceptionally successful lives. See how many you can recognize. The answers (see bottom of page) may surprise you!

1. He was born with a very large head and people told his mother that he was abnormal. She disagreed and sent him to school. His teachers thought he was mentally ill, so she withdrew him from school and taught him herself. More than 100 years later, several of his inventions are still used by us every day.

2. As a child, he was labeled “slow.” He was a clerk in a village grocery store, where he suggested putting slow-moving merchandise on the counter and selling it for five cents. This idea was so successful that it was continued with new goods. He later became the principal founder of a chain of five-and-ten cent stores.

3. This movie star has been diagnosed with dyslexia and learns his lines by listening to a recording. Several of his movies are among the top-grossing of all time.

4. This boy could not talk until age four and did not learn to read until he was nine. His teachers considered him to be mentally slow, unsocial, and a dreamer. He failed the entrance exams to attend college, but finally passed them after an additional year of preparation. He lost three teaching positions before becoming a patent clerk and, eventually, the world’s most famous theoretical physicist.

5. He had extreme difficulty taking notes in class, flunking English two times and struggling in foreign language classes. He did not have a name for his disability until he was 58 years old and his son was diagnosed with Dyslexia in elementary school. Yet he started his first brokerage office with the belief that the stock market should be open to everyone (at the time, it wasn’t). He not only founded an extremely successful company, he revolutionized the financial industry.

6. This famous singer and movie star has a math disability. She cannot remember phone numbers and says that she is incapable of balancing her checkbook.

7. As a child, he was slow in completing his lessons at school, yet went on to become a well-known movie producer and cartoonist.

8. This woman was a prolific writer of mystery stories and novels. None of her manuscripts are available in her own handwriting—her learning disability prevented her from being able to write fluently. During her entire career, she dictated all of her material to a secretary/transcriptionist.

9. When this WWII general was 12 years old, he could not read. He had difficulty reading during his entire life. However, he could memorize entire lectures, which was how he made it through school.

10. This TV host and sports analyst won four Super Bowl titles in a six-year period and led the Pittsburgh Steelers to eight AFC Central championships. He struggles with maintaining his focus and has a diagnosis of ADHD.
Recognizing and Treating Depression in Adolescents (Ages 12-17)
Will Martinez, Ph.D.
Tuesday, Apr. 28, 6:30 to 8pm
This talk will provide an overview of major depression and dysthymic disorders. Learn about the causes of depression in adolescents and factors that contribute to its maintenance.

Parenting Anxious Children (Ages 5-10)
A. Cassandra Golding, Ph.D.
Thursday, May 7, 6:30 to 8pm
An overview of obsessive-compulsive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, separation anxiety, social anxiety, and panic disorder in children, plus causes and continuance factors.

Parenting an Emotionally Sensitive Child (All Ages)
Erica Ragan, Ph.D.
Wednesday, May 20, 6:30 to 8pm
Difficulties regulating intense emotions can lead to increased anxiety, depression, and conflict with parents, teachers, & peers. We will discuss emotional sensitivity in children and teens, and the ways in which parents can help children learn ways to self-soothe more quickly and effectively.

Recognizing and Treating Depression in Adolescents
William Martinez, Ph.D.
Wednesday, May 6, 7 to 8:30pm
Learn about causes of depression in adolescents and factors that contribute to its maintenance, and explore the role that parents can play in supporting their teenager.

Manage YOUR Stress and Help YOUR Child (All Ages)
John Brentar, Ph.D.
Tuesday, May 19, 7 to 8:30pm
Learn stress-reducing strategies that will help you, as well as your child or teen.

ADHD Series: Redwood City
Janet Dafoe, Ph.D.

ADHD and Executive Functions (Grades 6-12)
Saturday, Apr. 18, 12:30 to 2:30pm
Children with ADHD often have difficulty starting assignments, following directions, organizing projects, writing reports, remembering supplies, and turning in homework. This class will offer strategies to help your child become more organized and to understand his learning style.

Behavior Plans for ADHD Children: Managing Problems and Increasing Desirable Behaviors Using Rewards Instead of Punishments (All Ages)
Saturday, Apr. 25, 12:30 to 2:30pm
Rewards and consequences can be used to reinforce behaviors that you expect, while decreasing problematic behaviors. Learn how to set up an effective behavior plan, used to teach and maintain many kinds of behaviors such as doing homework and getting along with siblings.

Classroom Accommodations and IEP Goals for EF Difficulties (Grades 4-12)
Saturday, May 23, 12:30 to 2:30pm
One of the hallmarks of ADHD is having difficulty with executive function (EF), which was discussed in a previous class. Learn about specific accommodations and goals for specialized instruction obtained through IEPs. Class content will apply to any child with EF weaknesses, not only those diagnosed with ADHD.

Advocating for Your ADHD Child at School (All Ages)
Saturday, May 16, 12:30 to 2:30pm
Learn how ADHD impacts children in the classroom and what services and accommodations will enable your child to succeed. Understand your legal rights and how to move effectively through the complicated process of assessments and meetings.

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Bring a Speaker to Your School, Parent Group, or Other Organization
We offer a variety of subjects for you to choose from, or you can request topics customized to fit your needs. Contact Sue Garber at (650) 322-5910 or sue.garber@morrrcomp.org.
It is the mission of the Morrissey-Compton Educational Center to enable children and adults with learning disabilities and school-related difficulties to achieve their goals by providing the highest quality diagnostic and intervention services in a supportive environment.