

Irmo-Chapin LEADER

by Jackie Perrone

Dr. Thomas Barbian

“Bringing hope, healing, and wholeness to hurting people.” That’s the stated mission of the Christian Counseling Center of First Presbyterian Church of Columbia, and its executive director, Dr. Thomas Barbian.

“We’re here to help people,” he states simply. Whether it’s addiction, family malfunction, anxiety, or any other misstep on the path of life, the center provides a willing ear and counseling to all who seek it.

Dr. Barbian brought his wife and five children to Columbia in 1997 from Simi Valley, California, to organize the center. “We have been delighted to be here ever since,” he says. “We don’t miss the traffic in Southern California. And as soon as we caught sight of Lake Murray, we knew we wanted to be there.”

This California transplant earned a bachelor’s degree in biblical studies at Vanguard University, Costa Mesa, CA; a master’s in marriage and family therapy at California Lutheran University; and a PhD in clinical psychology at Cambridge Graduate School in Los Angeles. The center offers counseling in individual and family crisis, addiction, PTSD, anxiety, or any other difficulty to all who ask. “Since we are nonprofit, we are able to keep fees reasonable and can adjust them to fit anyone’s situation.

We want to serve everyone who needs us, no matter what their circumstances.”

Referrals come from area churches, physicians, and former clients. Dr. Barbian’s goal? That no one is turned away.

That the center is indeed helping people is demonstrated in its growth over the 21 years of its existence. The downtown center at 1500 Lady Street now has three satellite offices, in Northeast Columbia, Lexington, and Irmo. His wife

Corinne is director of the Irmo branch. Their four sons all live in the Midlands, and their daughter is in Charlotte. Seven grandchildren complete the clan.

Retirement? Probably not too far away, says Dr. Barbian. “We have always been an active outdoor family,” he says. “Boating and fishing and water-skiing. I’ve developed a hobby of hunting in recent years, also. There’s a lot to look forward to in retirement, but I am not there yet.” ■

