

COMMUNITY

Playing in the sand not just for beaches anymore

By **CECILIA NASMITH**
Staff Writer

Playing in sand can be serious business — even therapeutic.

One of the premier proponents of this kind of therapy, California-based Dr. Gisela Schubach de Domenico, will be coming to Cobourg next month for a conference on Sandtray-Worldplay Therapy.

"I saw her for one day in Kingston, and I had to have her come to Cobourg — which, of course, was very complicated," said Sandra Webb, a Cobourg-based therapist with Focus On Family, who has helped to organize the conference.

Her reputation has sort of pre-sold the conference to a lot of professionals, said Mrs. Webb, with people already registered from Newfoundland, Alberta, Quebec, Labrador and New York. This will be the first three-day workshop for the renowned therapist.

"Sandtray play has been around a long, long time, but she has some very well-based theories and deals with a lot of development issues," said Mrs. Webb.

"Play therapy is unconscious. It's dealing with play.

"Lots of children and



Sandra Webb

adults aren't great at verbalizing what kind of things are a problem. With this particular method, you tell stories in the sand and, lots of times, it also gives you a medium to talk about it."

As described by the brochure, the conference may

seem like child's play.

Each attendee is asked to bring 15 toys or objects for use in a sandtray. But the intriguing possibilities of sand play become clearer when one reviews a list of optional items they might bring — four people, two

children, four animals, four vehicles, four treasures, four rocks, some marbles, two gods or goddesses, four soldiers or warriors, four monsters, two houses, structures or monuments, four cartoon characters, two figures that show strong feelings, one broken object, among others.

"Miniature images, sand and water become the field of conscious expression for the psyche, as clients create patterns, worlds and/or dramatic play processes in the sandtray," says the brochure.

"Lots of play therapists use sandtrays in their therapy," said Mrs. Webb.

"What I really found exciting about this Dr. Gisela is, she promotes and uses the sandtray with children, adults, couples and families. I found that really exciting, that she would expand it to other groups.

"Gisela has just an amazing array of objects and uses all kinds of different sands, different colours of sand and textures of sand."

Registration for the conference — to be held March 6 to 8 at the Pine Ridge Room at Northumberland Mall — is limited to 100.

For further information, call 377-1912.