



Building Bright Tomorrows...Today

Winter 2014

The Value of a Happy Healthy Childhood

Mental and behavioral health—an essential part of children’s overall health—has a complex interactive relationship with their physical health and ability to succeed in school, at work and in society. Physical and mental health affect how we think, feel and act on the inside and outside.

All children and youth have the right to happy healthy lives, and deserve access to effective care to prevent or treat any mental health problems they may develop. However, there is still a large amount of unmet need nationally and locally for children. In a recent teen survey conducted by Benton County, 15.4% of 8th graders and 20.2% of 11th graders who participated said that their emotional and mental health needs are not met.⁽¹⁾ The number of children who have behavioral and mental health challenges can only be estimated. Health disparities are particularly pronounced for children and youth living in low-income communities, of ethnic minority, or those with special needs.

“At Old Mill Center we believe that “children will do well if they can.” Removing barriers to their ability to do their best is an important part of our work.” - Bev Larson



Approximately 1 in 7 young people are currently diagnosed with a mental health disorder. Many more are at risk due to risk factors in their biology or genetics; within their families, schools, and communities; and among their peers. There is a great need for mental health professionals to provide the best available care based on scientific evidence, good clinical expertise, and taking into account the unique characteristics of the child or adolescent and their family. However, only a portion

of the youth who need services receive appropriate help from mental health professionals at this time.

Negative outcomes across many areas result if help is not available early:

Bobby (not his real name) is a 10-year-old when we first meet him. He is being physically abused by his father and often acts out aggressively at school. His behavior is a natural reaction to the abuse, but his behavior may also mark the beginning of more serious mental health issues. His teachers simply see him as a troublemaker and continually punish his behavior. Later as a teenager, Bobby drops out of school because he finds it a harsh and unwelcoming environment. He leaves his abusive home at sixteen and fends for himself. He has also begins to self-medicate by abusing alcohol and has been arrested a number of times for drunken disorderliness. By the time Bobby finally receives a proper diagnosis for his mental health issues, trauma and substance

abuse, he is in his thirties and his health problems have become deeply entrenched. Things could have been very different for Bobby if he had been referred to a professional in his childhood, received effective treatment, and if authorities had been alerted about the abuse so that it could have stopped.

Outcomes can be different if children get the help they need:

4-year-old Maria (not her real name) was removed from her home when she was only 3 and has lived in a foster home since then. Her younger sister also lives in the same foster home, but her older half-brother lives with his dad. Maria watched and listened to domestic abuse between her parents from birth. She also experienced neglect and hunger. She struggled to keep her attention in preschool and fell behind in her learning. Her foster parents asked for an assessment of her needs and her educational needs are now addressed through early intervention support. Maria also sees a counselor to help her process the thoughts

and feelings that are a result of her traumatic experiences young in life. When Maria starts school in a few years, she will have caught up to other children her age in terms of school readiness and she will be able to participate fully in school. She might still need to see a counselor to help her deal with her feelings

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Straight from the Director

Old Mill Center is proud to be part of the Benton County community and to be working with so many individuals, organizations and businesses who believe that an investment in our vulnerable children and families makes for a better community, and a better world.

We wish we could work ourselves out of a job, so our programs would no longer be necessary. Unfortunately that is not the case, but we will continue to try. As a nonprofit we need to work at a variety of levels: day to day we focus on helping our clients with specific services; at the organizational level we ensure that our different services are well coordinated, and that we partner with other agencies to provide services; at the county, state and national level we need to lobby for services that reduce pain and suffering, and focus on prevention and early intervention.

Sometimes it is fun to apply a colorful band aid to an owie, but the long-term success of our work calls for us to treat the underlying issues. Band aids don’t “fix” underlying factors like poverty, family dysfunction, or the lack of parenting education, mental health support for parents, access to preventative services, or job skills and education. To protect our children and give them the best start to a successful life, we are called on to continually provide love and support, while making the bigger world a better place.

This newsletter gives you a flavor of our work in all these areas. Thank you for your support in the past, in the present and in the future.

— Bettina Schempf

Old Mill Center Impact and Community Support



Eva, Peter and Ramiro (22 months)

Healthy Families

Eva, Peter, and their son, Ramiro, have been receiving home visiting services from the Healthy Families program for almost two years. Eva shares that the program “helped me emotionally as a new parent, since I had no one to guide me.” In their parenting journey, Eva and Peter have juggled all of the new experiences and challenges that come along with parenting, while at the same time pursuing studies at OSU.

The family has participated in every special event and parent gathering offered by Healthy Families and have consistently kept home visit appointments throughout their time with the program. Eva says that the best part of having home visits is “getting all the information and being aware of what’s actually happening with my son’s development.”

The mission of the Healthy Families program is to promote and support positive parenting and healthy growth and development for all parents and their newly born children. ***This program is free & voluntary. For more information, please contact Medora Tuck Stevens, Program Coordinator at 541-757-8068 ext. 117.***



Integrated Preschool

The Integrated Preschool was our founder, Bev Larson’s, original innovative project to prepare children, with and without identified disabilities, for kindergarten in an inclusive classroom. Since Integrated Preschool’s beginnings over 35 years ago, volunteers and Oregon State University interns have provided a richness and diversity that is a critical component in providing high quality education for the classroom’s children.

Currently, there are eight volunteers that support the classroom each week, one Oregon State University intern and many parent volunteers that support the classroom with teaching, individual support, fundraising, fieldtrips, and project preparation. The caring hearts and special skills of our volunteers and interns are a special gift that is much appreciated by children and teachers.



Mary Fell, a longtime volunteer in the Integrated Preschool classroom, teaches Sienna Gee (age 3) to hold the scissors effectively so she can cut shapes for the classroom shape tree



‘Art from the Heart’ created by children, as shown above, will be available to purchase at our May Auction

Transition to Home School

Over the last three months, three children have transitioned from our Intensive Treatment Services (ITS) program back to their home school. This is a big leap for the children returning to their home school AND for their families.

School is a contest of will and strength for children with emotional/behavioral challenges and trauma. It is not that children do not want to be successful in school; it is that they have lagging skills or disabilities in the areas of emotional regulation, problem solving, and other executive functioning skills of the brain.

The ITS program works to support children in learning the skills necessary to thrive in a variety of environments. When a child is demonstrating success meeting their program goals, the planning begins for the return to or start at a child’s home school. Through collaboration with the child, family, home school, and community service providers, a thoughtful support plan is put into action to help the child make the transition. For up to ninety days an ITS staff person works in the new setting supporting the child and the school staff, in order to create an environment that supports success. It is an exciting time when a child is launched into a new environment with their new skills.

Volunteering at Old Mill Center

Volunteers help Old Mill Center spread its impact further. We have regular volunteers in our classrooms, managing our library, maintaining the building, organizing our annual auction, and providing child care.

OSU’s MLK Day of Service

Oregon State University students, faculty, and community members came together on January 18th to commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by participating in a day of service. Old Mill Center was lucky to be chosen as one of the local agencies to benefit from this expression of community generosity. Eight hard working volunteers showed us that teamwork goes a long way! We couldn’t do what we do for our community without people like you. Thank you!

Interns at Old Mill Center

Old Mill Center is a great place to be an intern, which may be why we’ve had so many amazing interns. This year has been no exception! Although interns are often working towards a personal goal, they are also a critical component to our volunteer program. To our current and former interns at Old Mill Center, we can’t thank you enough for sharing your expertise, desire to learn, and skills with us over the years.

With seemingly endless programs and services that we offer the community, we are unique in the number of different internship opportunities that we can offer various schools. ***Contact Kerrie Tarkinton for more information about internship opportunities.***

Impacts of Home Visits—A Service of the Relief Nursery Program

The Relief Nursery at Old Mill Center is designed to support families that have multiple risk factors for child abuse or neglect, with children under the age of six. Risk factors may include generational poverty, drug/alcohol addiction, involvement with Child Protective Services, and incarceration or other criminal activity.

As an Outreach Worker at the Relief Nursery, I work with those families in their homes. My job is to support them in creating a nurturing family environment, so children can thrive and families are safe. Almost every day I visit a different family home and each interaction I have with them is a step towards building a partnership.

“Supporting families in their homes is a partnership that can change lives.”

One of the most amazing mothers I work with is proof of the power of these nurturing partnerships. At our first visit, she seemed very young to already have two small children and another one on the way. She shared photos from her childhood of visits to see her parents in prison, who were both serving lengthy terms resulting from struggles with addiction. But the most important thing I observed was that her relationship with her own children was loving and she was very attentive to their physical and emotional needs. This helped determine the type of family goals we would tackle together. Now six months later, she

has a healthy new baby and has completed her GED—a first step towards self-sufficiency.

One of the most important ways I support these families is by teaching them new parenting skills that utilize positive discipline strategies and clear expectations for behavior. On one of my visits, a mother of six shared that she was struggling to keep up with household chores, so we organized a family chore chart. Her children came up with chore ideas, decorated the chart with pictures, and even created a reward system. The older children now take turns with meal planning and cooking, while the younger three help clean up after dinner. Years from now when these children are grown, they will have a template for

developing systems to support a healthy home environment for their own families.

A single father with three very active children was struggling to find activities they could do together on a very tight budget. I assisted them in obtaining a Corvallis Parks and Recreation scholarship for families living below the poverty line. Now they can visit the Aquatic Center regularly and have signed up for a variety of activities and classes.

Early literacy experiences are another core component

Together we can change the future of families.

of the Relief Nursery program and we enjoy giving books away, so that families can have their own small home libraries. When I bring a new book to a family, I model interactive reading and we discuss how reading with children is directly tied to school success. The children love this story time. Many of the parents never had these nurturing interactions during their own childhoods. It is always amazing to bear witness to the bonds created when families spend time like this together.

Often the families I support are isolated and have no access to an extended family of grandparents, aunts or uncles. Other times the extended family living near them is not healthy enough to be supportive. Our goal is to connect parents to each other in nurturing ways.



Working together on Valentine's Day gifts

To do this, I refer parents to our weekly parenting groups. During these parenting groups, we provide three hours of childcare and a healthy meal for both parents and children. Parents meet in a group with a mental health professional and a parenting educator. It is an opportunity to share hardships, seek advice, and support each other in learning new parenting skills. One mother credits her group with giving her the support she needed to get a job and start school at LBCC. They even threw her a birthday party!

One thing I have experienced through my work is that caring relationships change lives! Whether I am assisting a family to access community resources or

working with them to improve their family relationships, I am acutely aware that people don't care what I know until they know that I care.

Currently, I work with 21 families and what they all share is a love for their children. All of the parents here are trying to make a better life for themselves and their children. It is our philosophy at Old Mill Center that “families do well if they can.”

Having the privilege of working with families in their homes helps establish a relationship that can have a lasting effect on the next generation of children and grandchildren. I feel very grateful to have this opportunity and I appreciate everyone whose efforts make my wonderful job possible!

— Gretchen Thielman

Relief Nursery Outcomes

Highlights from a two-year study by Portland State University: *Impact of Relief Nurseries in Oregon on Children and Families.*

Profile of families enrolled:

- 87% of parents are experiencing high levels of stress
- 50% have a history of domestic violence
- 60% of parents have mental health problems
- 45% of parents were raised by an alcoholic or substance abusing parent
- 45% of parents have current anger management issues
- 34% have a history of incarceration

Outcomes achieved:

- Increased parent employment
- Improved quality of parent-child interaction
- Increased frequency of reading to children
- Reduced number of risk factors (which can lead to child abuse)
- Improved family functioning and stability
- Increased rates of child immunization
- Significant reduction in child victims (reduction of more than 70%)
- Reduced foster home placements

Looking at Costs

\$28,000

Cost of foster care for a child for one year

Life long

Trauma from child abuse and neglect

\$3,100

Average cost per child in Relief Nursery per year

Life long

Benefit from being ready for kindergarten
Positive outcomes through nurturing parenting

Thank You Donors!

Our **Holiday Children** project paired up 198 children aged birth to 18 with generous donors in our community. **Thank you for your generosity.**

Businesses & Organizations

Aspire Design Salon & Julee Tierce
The Clothes Tree
Corvallis Country Club
Georgia Pacific
GSRMC Ambulatory Infusion
GSRMC Inpatient Pharmacy
Hayes and Associates Inc. & Christine Snow
Holiday Inn Express & Lyndsay Bodfield
OSU Pharmacy Department
Paragon Realty LLC & Kristen Hiner
PEO Corvallis Chapter AR
Performance Health Technology & Tamra Perry
Phi Delta Chi
Philomath Pharmacy
Pi Beta Sigma
Zooeys
7th Gear Motorcycle Company

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Courtney & Justin Lowther
Sierra Lowther
Mickey McCreary
Ann Marek
Emily Miller
Wanda Mittag
Craig & Sue Moser
Kristin Moser
Rachel Murray
Amy Nystrom
Stacey Olstad
Stacy Ramirez
Susan Schmidt
Rhonda Stansell
Shannon Starwalt Family
Susie Truscott
Shirley Wirth
Mike & Mardel Wolf

Individuals

Drs. Jayne Ackerman & Mary Jane Gray
Diane Bateman
Mardi Bilstrand
Evelyn Brabham
Carole Boersma
Gloria Chaves
Malinda Choitz
Mary Conner
Sue Cook
Patty Dale

Thank you, too, to **Starker Forests** for donating three beautiful trees for our facility and to **Roger** and **Patricia Blair** for donating more than 25 small trees for the homes of our client families.

Wish List

- Hot Wheels Cars
- Child-Size Soccer Goal, Net & Soccer Balls
- Small Basketball Hoop & Balls
- Foam Blocks
- Plastic U-Safety Locks
- Small Microwave



27th Annual Fireside Recital Series

Sunday, March 16, 3 PM

Exotic music of France, Russia & Spain

Hear delightful piano music of Chabrier, Debussy, Ravel, Granados, Albéniz & Balakirev performed by Dr. Matthew Goodrich, who recently joined the OSU Music faculty.

Tickets \$65 including: performance, appetizers & wine



Luau Party Surf's Up for Kids

34th Annual Dinner Auction
Friday, May 9

Sponsorships • Ticket Sales • Donations

Contact: Jerilyn Opoien

jerilyn_opoien@oldmillcenter.org • 541-757-8068

Presented by:



MARKET OF CHOICE®

Summer Program

Come join our summer program and learn to increase your social skills, resolve conflicts without aggression, and increase your problem solving skills—all while building a structure made of mud and straw.

As a team, we will build a cob structure from design through completion.

July 14 – August 1
8 am – 12 noon

Designed for children ages 5-11

Contact us to find out more details, or if you are able to provide scholarships for children to be able to attend the program.

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OSU



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around her birth parents and siblings, since she has not been able to return home yet.

Innovation and prevention are important

When programs and services engage families, schools and communities, the critical social supports that can guarantee lasting well-being for children and youth are provided. Innovative solutions to close the gaps in mental health services are under discussion by the local community care organization and its many partners. These investments are crucial. As the examples above demonstrate, early intervention does not only relieve the pain for children and their families and allow children to flourish, it is also an important preventative investment that will save more costly interventions later. Community funding and support allows Old Mill Center to contribute in this important work.

(1) Oregon Health Authority website: <https://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/Surveys/OregonHealthyTeens/Pages/index.aspx>