



Building Bright Tomorrows...Today



Heal the Family Help the Child Multigenerational Service at Old Mill Center

What does a child need to thrive? There are many things, but we know that parents and caregivers are always a very important part of the equation. This is particularly true for children who grow up in difficult circumstances. A healthy and engaged caregiver is vital to helping a child learn emotional regulation, heal from trauma, or surmount developmental challenges.

Parents and caregivers establish the culture of the home, which infuses the child with a sense of safety and with values and principles to live life by. A healthy and supportive culture at home is the best foundation for a child to be able to deal with life's challenges with resilience, and become a happy and productive citizen.

Raising children, from newborns to teenagers, can be extremely challenging, even for a resilient family. How can parents and caregivers provide this support when they might not have experienced this safety and guidance themselves? How do they learn the skills they might not have learned as children?

Families who use our services may be learning healthy ways to be a family because they did not learn from experience. Parents may be dealing with other obstacles to success, such as unstable housing, joblessness, health difficulties, and mental health issues. Often, they are dealing with a combination of issues.



Grandparents as Parents Support Group offers resources to older caregivers parenting young children

Old Mill Center has services reaching many different family needs, all with the goal of bettering the life of the children involved. "Parents are the best resource their child has and they are the expert on their child," says Annie Bittner, Relief Nursery Teacher. "Sometimes parents need help remembering this, and we support them in bringing out their strengths."

In the Relief Nursery, parents might learn to use play to connect with their child, use conversation to build emotional understanding, and bond with their child through reading. Bittner works with children in the classroom and engages with parents about ways to meet their child's individual needs. "Being able to see a child in a class and at home provides the unique opportunity to really come alongside a parent as they navigate the challenges that come with raising children."

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Straight from the Director

Fall and winter is a time when many of us celebrate holidays with our family. Families come in many configurations—parents, siblings, step siblings, grandparents, uncles and aunts, cousins, and so many more. They teach us life skills and provide us safety and advice, love and acceptance. Families can be our biggest support and joy, and sometimes they can be a place where we struggle.

Our work here at Old Mill Center is always with the child and their family—whatever that family looks like. It can include birth parents, foster parents, grandparents and other important adults. If we strengthen the family, we help create a home environment where a child can grow to its full potential and thrive, even when times are tough.

We know that all parents want the best for their children but that they themselves sometimes struggle too. We provide support to parents and grandparents, as well as adult counseling and therapy, as part of our programs. We recognize that all of us need a hand sometimes.

Helping children and families succeed when they face difficult struggles is important to us all year. Thank you for allowing us to provide this support. I wish you wonderful holidays with those you love and cherish.

Bettina Schempf
Executive Director

Help and Healing



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In the Healthy Families program, families learn strategies for achieving goals. For one family struggling with frequent moves, substandard housing, and mom's depression, getting two elementary aged girls registered for school was the goal. Home Visitors guide parents through a clear process for breaking big goals down into a series of little steps that seem much more manageable, and then spend part of every weekly visit in conversation or activities that support that goal.

When mom reported that she'd successfully registered her children for school, the Home Visitor celebrated with them by delivering brand new backpacks to the little girls. Their huge grins and squeals were a powerful reinforcement to mom to continue practicing the skills related to goal setting as a means to empowering families. Now mom has experience setting a goal and attaining it, and in doing so her children are registered for school.

Juliana's Story

Juliana began attending the Relief Nursery toddler classroom in the summer of 2015. Her behavior often exhibited the effects of PTSD, including fighting, hitting, and biting other kids. The teachers recognized the need for further treatment so that she and other children could be safe in the classroom.

Juliana began working with an Outpatient Clinical Therapist to address her behaviors. Rounding out her treatment, a Skills Trainer was added to the team to work with the family

Today, more grandparents are primary caregivers of their grandchildren, and this situation can be hard for both the grandparent and the child. Since children typically come to their grandparents when they cannot be cared for by their parents, the children have often experienced pain and trauma. Often they have significant emotional needs that the adults are not equipped to manage. That's where support is vital again.

The best hope for our community's future is a healthy generation of children; and the best hope for our community's children is an emotionally healthy and resilient home life. We strive to offer programs that support this common cause.

Healthy Families is a program that offers resources and parenting support to parents of newborns, so parents can more smoothly transition into their new role. **Relief Nursery** is a therapeutic classroom for children 0-6, which also offers in-home services and other support resources to parents. **Grandparents as Parents** support group is an on-site, biweekly, 2-hour group where older caregivers have an opportunity to learn skills and find support with other caregivers facing similar challenges.

to address behaviors at home and help develop strategies for her to be successful in all settings.

Today, Juliana has "graduated" to preschool where she is able to cope with the triggers that caused her to lash out. She has learned to respect her classmates and value positive interactions. The family as a whole is healing.

Juliana and her family are an example of Old Mill Center's wrap-around approach to addressing multiple family issues such as behavioral, emotional, and social challenges, motor skill and speech delays in children, and the effects of poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, and domestic violence on families.

ITS: Horse Power

ITS is our Intensive Treatment Services program, a certified psychiatric day treatment program for children ages 3-6 who are suffering from serious emotional challenges. Our ITS children had the opportunity for a field trip to visit the therapy horses at Horse Power, an equine therapy center through Country Counseling, on the outskirts of Corvallis.

Students got to tour the barn learning about how horses start their day. Did you know that some horses do morning yoga just like people do? They also learned about what horses wear (bits, blankets, saddles, harnesses, fly masks). After the barn, the students got to interact with Chance and Chewy, two therapy horses, in an enclosed corral. The students learned how to read the horses' body language and got to help groom them. Through interacting with the horses the students were able to identify how the horses were feeling and how they might engage in some of the same behaviors when scared, startled or nervous.

After all of the activities, Horse Power provided a picnic for students, staff and families. It was a great time to relax, learn more about their program and ask questions. The visit to Horse Power's equine therapy center was a wonderful experience for our students, their parents and our staff. ITS is hoping to make quarterly field trips to build on the skills we learned on our first visit.

— by Chelsea Shay,
ITS Teacher



Program News and Notes



Getting Ready for Holiday Families! Become a Secret Santa

The holidays can be a stressful time for many families. For children in households struggling to maintain basic shelter, food and other necessities, holiday gifts and new clothing often are not possible. We think every child deserves a joyous holiday. A gift just for them can make the season feel extra-special.

Old Mill Center's Holiday Families "Secret Santa" gift program is 15 years old. It helps provide a sense of stability and normalcy, and most importantly, holiday magic, to the children we serve.

Would you like to help? We are connecting generous donors with more than 200 children in need through our Secret Santa program until December 15th.

Contact Cindy Bond, cindy_bond@oldmillcenter.org or call **541-757-8068** to become the Secret Santa for a child.

When you gift through our Secret Santa program, you make a child's holiday **truly magical!**

Our Resource Library Volunteer Spotlight

Did you know that Old Mill Center has an on-site library open to children, their parents, and our staff? Our library is generously maintained by volunteers **Shirley Wirth, Linda Jewett, and Emily Miller.**

"The door of the Old Mill Library is always open to students, families, and staff to read a book with a child or to check out a good book," says Jewett. "As your volunteer librarians, our goal is to provide a library that is inviting, efficient to use, and always a learning experience for the children. We not only want the staff to have wonderful books that will enrich their teaching curriculum but we want the children to have books that will make their imaginations spin with delight."

"We love to see children picking out books or quietly reading in a corner of the library," adds Wirth. "Over the last 4 years, we, as the librarians, have seen respect and value for the library grow and grow. We hope more and more of the OMC students, staff, and families will enjoy the wonderful books that are found in the library!"



Volunteer librarians Emily Miller, Linda Jewett, and Shirley Wirth, in the Old Mill Center library.

The dedication of our three volunteers opens up a world of possibilities to our children and their families. The library is organized and patrons can find the titles they need, whether it's a colorful book to read to an infant, or a parenting education guide for a caregiver facing challenges. Thank you Shirley, Linda and Emily.

If you would like to volunteer your time to make a difference here at Old Mill Center, contact Stephanie Fawcett at stephanie_fawcett@oldmillcenter.org or at (541) 757-8068 ext. 102. All skills welcome!

Childrens' Grief Support Group with Benton Hospice Service

Benton Hospice Service provides a free monthly meeting of learning and support for children and families who are grieving, hosted at Old Mill Center.

Children and teens participate in age-specific groups and engage in creative activities that encourage open discussion and expression, and provide valuable education about grief and loss. Parents and guardians participate in an adult group to learn more about how to support grieving children and teens.

Meetings are held the first Wednesday of every month, 5:30-7pm, at Old Mill Center. Participants must register and complete a brief questionnaire before attending.

Call (541) 757-9616 to register.



We Appreciate Your Support

Happy Birthday!

Old Mill Center turns 40 in 2017

Do you have a story or a memory of Old Mill Center to share? Are you interested in helping us plan our 40th Birthday bash? A Birthday Celebration Committee is forming now to plan a great party in the summer of 2017. You are invited to join us! **Contact: Kate Caldwell at**

kate_caldwell@oldmillcenter.org

or call 541-757-8068, ext. 144.

Help us take a great walk down memory lane!

**Our 37th Annual Auction and
Dinner is coming up!**

Join us May 6th, 2017

Wishlist

- *Wish Upon A Star: A Story For Children With a Parent Who is Mentally Ill* by Pamela L. Laskin
- Power drill
- Crafting and painting paper
- Microwave for classroom
- Clay
- Binoculars (toy or real)

A Time For Change

Jim and Doris Van Olst have been involved with Old Mill Center since its inception. In fact, their relationship goes back 53 years to Bev Larson babysitting for their young kids. A close bond was formed between the Van Olsts and Bev's vision right from the start.

Both Jim and Doris have been very active supporters of the Center lending their expertise and guidance through the years. Jim has been a member of the Board of Directors, the Auction Committee and the Fund Development Committee. They have quietly donated to funding needs and worked to encourage others to do the same. Jim and Doris have been avid supporters of our Annual Auction, often hosting a number of their friends to join in the frivolity. The Van Olsts are the consummate supporters of a cause.



Dr. Jim and Doris Van Olst

Jim and Doris Van Olst are relocating to Seattle Washington this month to be closer to their family. It is a natural progression for any doting parents/grandparents. We are sorry to see them leave our community, they have made a difference in all kids' lives. We just hope they return for a visit every once in a while. Thanks so much to Dr. Jim and Doris Van Olst for everything you do to make kids safe and healthy.

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