



# Building Bright Tomorrows...Today



## The Healing Outdoors

Todd Embree is the therapist in Intensive Treatment Services, our psychiatric day treatment program for young children facing emotional challenges. He has a background in counseling and wilderness therapy, and integrates his experience in nature therapy with his work at Old Mill Center. The 4-7 year olds he works with are taught safety and behavioral expectations so that they can join him and other classmates on outings into the woods as “Guardians of the Forest.”

As “Guardians of the Forest,” children may look like typical kids playing in the woods,

but they are also learning important skills for building mental and emotional health. They take on the role of caregivers of the forest and its inhabitants, building forts and learning to care for and respect the ecosystem.

*Children may look like typical kids playing in the woods, but they are learning important skills for building mental and emotional health*

Studies are showing that spending time in nature can reduce anxiety and depression, and even result in calmer pulses and lower levels of cortisol (a stress hormone). We’re learning that nature time can be soothing and nurturing—and even reduce barriers to learning and emotional processing.

*Continued page 2*

## Straight from the Director

Summer is a wonderful time in Oregon. With schools out, the daily routines of children and families change. Many children appreciate that they can sleep a bit longer. Outside play dominates many children’s day and they reap the benefits of it. Did you know that outside play improves vision, promotes social skills, increases attention span, reduces stress and provides Vitamin D? Yes, we need to protect their skin from the sun, but then they are ready to go.

I love seeing children and families in our parks, on the streets of safe neighborhoods, on the many sports fields around town, and in the forests around us. To balance out the outside play we have our libraries, indoor activities at the pool, and the many programs offered by organizations and churches. I hope that each child is able to participate either for free through scholarships or reduced fees. As I write this I realize that I have not included screen time in my list – hopefully it is reserved for cold and wet days or shared family time.

What children do during the summer gets them ready for the next school year and helps them succeed academically later. Let’s all make as much family and play time as possible during this summer.

Wishing you a wonderful summer season.

**Bettina Schempf**  
Executive Director

## Benefits of Nature Therapy

- lowers blood pressure and increases physical health
- access to natural playscapes encourages self-determination, problem solving, and creativity
- reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety in adults, and can relieve symptoms of attention disorders in kids

Data from [www.childrenandnature.org/research](http://www.childrenandnature.org/research)  
View of Old Mill Center from Sunset Park boardwalk

# Help and Healing

## The Building Blocks of Community in Our Relief Nursery

### “Help Tallen!”

Play can be a key element to what a child learns about social interactions. In our therapeutic classroom, we model ways for the kids to make safe choices. One way that we model safe behavior is to narrate what a child is doing and add the executive thinking that the child has yet to develop.

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*Our class has three rules:  
be safe; be kind;  
be helpful*

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For example, while riding bikes with his classmates, Tallen fell off of his bike. This

boy could be described as very independent; he usually prefers not to receive help from others. As I offered to help him untangle from the bicycle, another child on a bike came along and did not stop for his fallen friend--in fact he biked over Tallen's foot!

Our class has three rules: be kind, be safe, and be helpful. I explained to Tallen's peer that in order to be helpful we must stop for those in need. Tallen sprang up and continued riding his bike. This time Tallen *pretended* to fall, often forgetting to bring his bike down with him. Once on the ground, he would say “I need help.”

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*“I need help.”*

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When adults offered to help, he would refuse and point to a peer, “I want him/her to help me.” After a peer would help Tallen get up, he would repeat this process over and over.

Through play, Tallen has learned how to accept help from others. Tallen's peer also learned the importance of stopping to help a friend in need. These life skills are essential because they foster the notion of utilizing your resources. Developing these skills also helps build healthy friendships--and a healthy community.



*Christina Wright is  
an assistant  
teacher in our  
Relief Nursery  
preschool.*

*“Help Tallen!”*

## The Healing Outdoors

*Continued*

Time spent in the woods serves important functions in other ways as well. The power balance between adult and child can be restored when in nature. The children rely on Embree's expertise and guidance while they are outdoors, and their desire to participate in outings can help them be more open to trust and learn to build relationships. “I have found that nature is like a partner in helping me help others,” Embree says.

People cannot control nature; it presents challenges and obstacles that require problem solving and coping abilities to overcome. With children by his side, “I have to cope with whatever weather and other variables come up and, essentially, model coping. This seems to balance the relationships [with the children] and build trust more quickly.” As Embree cautiously picks his way through a trail, carefully moving aside spider webs and pointing out thorny branches, it is easy to imagine him leading a troupe of children into the wilderness and modeling safe exploration, consequences, and respect for nature.

When he's not working, Embree also seeks the outdoors for its calming power. “I found I had more ability myself to regulate and recover from being in and around intense emotions.” And he found he could maintain sustained emotional depth with the children even better when he spent time in a wilderness setting himself.

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*Nature is like a partner  
in helping me help others*

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“Before and after work I can receive some of the same restorative benefits that I had on wilderness trips,” he says. “I wonder about how much this could benefit parents, too.”

Old Mill Center is surrounded by nature—woods, wetlands, Bruce Starker Arts Park, SAGE community garden, and Sunset Park. We have outdoor play spaces for our Relief Nursery and Integrated Preschool. With rain gear on hand, our children explore and play outdoors no matter the season. Next time you're in our area, we hope you'll take a moment and connect with the surroundings. They are beautiful, and they just might make you feel better.

*To learn more about the benefits of nature, visit [www.childrenandnature.org/research/](http://www.childrenandnature.org/research/)*

## Program News and Notes

### Art in the Preschool Class **Volunteer Spotlight**

*Valerie Stanik has volunteered weekly as an art instructor to Old Mill Center's preschool children for over five years.*

I never cease to be amazed with the paintings created by these children when given a chance, a little instruction and good materials. I appreciate greatly that the preschool age group is still very honest about their feelings, and freely express enthusiasm or disappointment toward art...and life.

I have seen the buds of art therapy peek through when a child relates a story about their finished piece which seems more about their current feelings than the actual piece. I have seen black and white thinking --for instance being forced to commit to a dreaded art career just by being sent to an art lesson when they actually aspire to a body guard profession--become color, with the realization that one can grow up and be both an artist *and* a body guard. All in the span of creating one painting.

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*Young children need to  
nurture--with our help--  
their inborn creativity.*

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I treasure children. I strongly believe that young children need to nurture, with our help, their inborn creativity. I see that encouraging the use of their minds creatively will not only contribute crucially toward their own ability to thrive in this world, but to think in ways unique to their natural gifts.

### Hello from **Linn County!**

In 2014 Healthy Families of Benton County & Healthy Families of Linn County merged to become Healthy Families of Linn & Benton Counties. With an increase of funding from the Early Learning Division, both counties were able to hire more home visitors. This was very good news for us and the counties we serve.

While Benton County was able to squeeze additional people into what room there was available at Old Mill Center, there was no room at all at the Linn County site for additional staff. A search was on to find a place that could house four home visitors, a supervisor and all of our equipment. After a two month search, a suitable office space was found.



*Old Mill Center's new Linn County office*

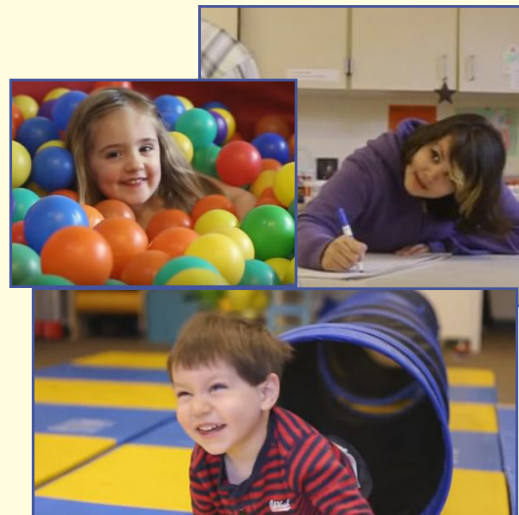
After another two months of furnishing the new office with used equipment, we think we are about done. We are pleased with our new place and would be happy to give tours!

The Linn County branch is now located at **1113 Hill St. SE Suite K** in Albany, between the Boys & Girls Club and Papa Murphy's.

*Kathy Pecchioni-Graham is the Supervisor and a Home Visitor for Old Mill Center's Linn County Healthy Families.*

### **Therapeutic Spaces**

Old Mill Center has on-site facilities for both art therapy and movement therapy for the children and families we serve.



### Join us at **Clodfelter's!**

**Support Old Mill Center**

**Every Sunday evening  
in September**

**enjoy a hearty plate of  
Clodfelter's tangy  
spaghetti dinner  
crisp salad, and bread**

**Proceeds benefit  
Old Mill Center**

**1501 NW Monroe Ave**

**September 4, 11, 18, 25**

# Many Thanks to Our Supporters

## Annual Auction Magic!

May 7th, 2016 - Our 36th Annual Dinner and Auction was a great success thanks to our sponsors, donors, committee members, volunteers, and attendees. Thank you also to all who donated items, experiences, and gift certificates for our silent and live auctions.

Thank you to all who helped make magic happen for the children and families we serve. It was truly "An Enchanted Evening."

Mark your calendar for next year's dinner and auction: May 6th, 2017!



## Fireside Recital Series

Our Fireside Recital Series is a collaboration between Old Mill Center and the OSU Piano Program director Rachelle McCabe.

We had another unique series, with three distinct programs offering a variety of music styles, topics and performances. Highlights included a collaboration with noted local author Kathleen Dean Moore, a feature of the OSU Music Program's students performing works by Haydn, Rachmaninoff and more, and a performance by McCabe and her College of Music colleagues.

Thank you to Dr. Jayne Ackerman for sponsoring the series once again, and to Rachelle McCabe for presenting such wonderful music. Contact Kate Caldwell at [kate\\_caldwell@oldmillcenter.org](mailto:kate_caldwell@oldmillcenter.org) for more information about the 2017 Fireside Recital Series.



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