A letter from Peg

Dye Returns as Headliner!

The Power of CSI Programs

CSI Volunteers
Increasing Awareness & Honoring Volunteers

Dear Friends of CSI,

As you can probably imagine, I spend a lot of time thinking about children. I think about the depth and breadth of the programs Child Saving Institute (CSI) offers, which help children in our community—from newborn infants through young adults up to age 24. It’s really quite remarkable.

The months of April and May are National Child Abuse Awareness Month and National Foster Care Awareness Month, respectively. These two months are the perfect time to highlight CSI’s expertise and how children’s lives are changed through our services. In this edition of our newsletter, you will read about the Triage Center at Project Harmony, Mental Health Services, and Foster Care—just three of our services that focus on help and healing for children who have experienced abuse, neglect, and trauma.*

April is also National Volunteer Month. Even though CSI has more than 160 employees providing services to children—we know we couldn’t do it without volunteer support. Your gifts of time, talent, and treasure make a tremendous difference in what we are able to accomplish. In this edition, we also take a moment to thank our volunteers who save the agency thousands and thousands of dollars each year and allowing more funding to programs. We can never say “thank you” enough.

You’ll read about our sold out Cabaret, scheduled May 11, 2019, at the Marriott Downtown at the Capitol District.

Let’s hope that by the time this reaches your hands in April, the snowy winter will be just a memory and we’ll be enjoying the sun and spring blossoms!

See you soon,

Peg Harriott
President and Chief Executive Officer

*Please note that names in these stories have been changed to protect the children’s privacy and photos are illustrative.
Comedian Jeff Dye made quite an impression at Child Saving Institute’s (CSI) Cabaret last June, so much so that 2019 Chairs Addie and Robert Hollingsworth decided to invite him back!

That’s right. Dye will return for Cabaret 2019 on May 11 with all new material and a whole lot of goodwill.

“Jeff resonated with the audience last year,” Addie said. “His warmth, humor, and everyman image are relatable, and everyone had such a great time that Robert and I decided to go for an encore performance. This guy is hysterical! No, really. That’s why we invited him back!”

The sold-out event, presented by CSI’s Board of Directors and Guild Board, is the agency’s biggest fundraiser of the year. Funds raised from the evening support CSI’s quality programs, including parenting workshops, an emergency shelter for youth, therapy, older child adoption, foster care, and developmental early childhood education. The fun begins at 6 p.m. at the Omaha Marriott Downtown at the Capitol District, 222 N. 10th St.

Tickets and tables are available for this laughter-filled evening that includes cocktails, dinner, and Dye’s show. Tickets are $175 per person. To sponsor a table, purchase tickets, or for more information, please visit childsaving.org or call Megan Webb at 402-504-3634. Event co-chairs are Melanie and David Hecker and the honorary chairs are Ashley and Robert Carlisle.

CSI’s mission is “Responding to the cry of a child.” The agency is dedicated to the prevention, intervention and healing of child abuse, neglect, and abandonment. CSI has met the changing needs of metro area children for more than 125 years based on the belief that ALL children should have homes where hope is kindled and dreams can be achieved. 💙

To be added to the waiting list, contact Megan Webb at mwebb@childsaving.org or 402.504.3634.
Awareness Months Provide Opportunities to Demonstrate Power of CSI Programs

Editor’s Note: Spring is a time of renewal with grass sprouting and plants and trees beginning to bloom. The spring takes the earth from gray and brown to an amazing array of beautiful colors.

Perhaps this is the reason the spring months of April and May are designated as Child Abuse Awareness Month and Foster Care Awareness, respectively. Child Saving Institute (CSI) offers a variety of programs to help children whose lives are grayed by abuse, neglect, and trauma find the renewal of hope and healing. In the next few pages, you’ll read a few stories about how CSI serves children through the Triage Center at Project Harmony, Foster Care, and Mental Health Services programs. Learn more about these programs at childsaving.org.

Jasmine Keeps Sibings Calm at Triage Center

When children in the greater Omaha area are removed from their homes of origin for abuse and neglect, often they are brought to the Triage Center at Project Harmony, operated by Child Saving Institute (CSI). The Triage Center provides a safe, home-like, kid-friendly environment for children—many of whom feel sad, scared, and angry. Though children who visit the Triage Center are there for only a matter of hours, staff understand the importance of that time and their potential impact.

A few months ago, five siblings with ages ranging from 2 to 13 arrived at the Triage Center because of physical abuse. They were sad, scared, and reluctant to talk to the Triage Center and Project Harmony staff.

Chaney, age 13, expressed a sense of guilt that this was happening to her siblings. Kenzi, age 12, cried because she thought she would never see her family or siblings again. And 8-year-old Jasmine paid rapt attention to the information...
shared and relayed it to her siblings in a way each child could understand.

Jayce, age 2, clung to Jasmine’s leg and 10-year-old Bailey followed Jasmine closely during their time in the Triage Center. Jasmine acted as the interpreter to and protector of her siblings. As the siblings’ leader, she contained her emotions, not wanting to upset them further.

After playing several games, the children warmed to staff. Jasmine helped the Triage Center staff prepare lunch for her siblings. She made sure they were full before she sent them off to play. Then she ate quickly while watching her siblings closely.

Throughout their brief stay in the Triage Center, the siblings checked in with Jasmine for approval. She encouraged her siblings to play and assured them that they could trust the Triage and Project Harmony staff.

While at the Triage Center, each child participated in a forensic interview, a medical exam, and a session with a trauma therapist.

A few hours into their stay, the caseworker assigned to this family arrived at the Triage Center and talked to the children about their next step, which would be a foster placement. The siblings reacted to this news with mixed emotions, but Jasmine advised them to be glad because they could stay together.

Staff took the children one-by-one to the Triage Center closet where each received a backpack, a few items of clothing, and personal care items. Each backpack also contained a surprise chosen especially for the children by staff.

Jasmine watched her siblings receive one-on-one attention from staff and saw that receiving a backpack made her siblings happy. When it was her turn, Jasmine walked into the closet, sat down, and took a deep breath. She had provided a loving, calm presence for her siblings for hours, and staff could see her emotional exhaustion from the day’s events. As the Triage Center staff member began packing her backpack, Jasmine inhaled deeply and watched intently. Suddenly, her eyes grew wide and staff asked her what was wrong.

Jasmine picked up a pair of pants. “Are these pants brand-new?!” she asked. “No one else has worn these yet?” Staff affirmed this.

At that moment, Jasmine’s brave façade crumbled and tears spilled down her cheeks. She shared that she had never before had brand-new clothing or even clothing that fit properly because everything she wore had belonged to her older sisters. She asked if her siblings also received brand-new clothes and staff assured her that, yes, everyone had. She smiled and, for a few seconds in the Triage Center closet, she enjoyed a moment of calm.

As Jasmine accepted her backpack, she thanked staff for her clothing, their kindness, and their care. She walked toward her siblings with a little bounce of energy and a warm smile.

In the hours the siblings spent in the Triage Center, staff saw a group of frightened children relax and accept comforting, nurturing care with support and encouragement from their 8-year-old sister.

Triage Center staff were reminded that they should never forget that simple things in life—like a brand-new pair of pants—can bring happiness and calm, even just for a moment, to a child in crisis.
Child Saving Institute (CSI) provides free trauma-informed training for couples and individuals wishing to become licensed foster parents. Families who choose to foster through CSI receive around-the-clock support from caring, compassionate staff who prioritize the well-being of the child and the family. Foster homes help children find stability, consistency, safety, and love. A foster parent can help a child bloom, fully engage in school and activities and discover that it is OK to be just a kid. Sometimes children’s circumstances change and they become available for adoption. CSI’s permanency specialists then search for the right family for the child.

Tobias

Tobias entered foster care due to the abuse and neglect in his home. While he lived in foster care, his mother ended her life and he blamed himself for her death.

His father had never been part of his life, and unfortunately, Tobias had no extended family. His caseworker identified an appropriate foster family, where Tobias would have two parents and a brother. When Tobias had lived with them for nearly a year, the family started the adoption process. Sadly, circumstances changed and the family could not complete the adoption and Tobias had to move from their home. This left Tobias questioning if he was lovable or if he would ever have a family to love him. Tobias struggled with strong feelings of grief and abandonment, wondering aloud if anyone would “stick with” him. In the meantime, Tobias stayed with a family who provided respite care.

He received a referral to CSI’s Foster Care program and a Foster Care Specialist began searching for a suitable family who could meet Tobias’ needs for stability, safety, permanency, and love. The specialist identified a family who welcomed Tobias warmly, and where he would share a home with two sisters and a brother! In time, Tobias began believing he was loveable. His foster family pursued adoption and, on National Adoption Day in November 2018, it became official. Tobias is flourishing with his new family.
Mental Health Services

Child Saving Institute’s (CSI) Mental Health Services program features therapists who specialize in child therapy. It is often difficult for children, and adults, who have experienced abuse, neglect, and trauma to talk about difficult experiences. For this reason, CSI’s therapists use play therapy and other therapeutic modalities to help children tell their story.

Emma Finds Out How to Be a Kid

Seven-year-old Emma lived in a small apartment with her mom Shelby and little brother Elijah, age 2. Emma’s mother had untreated mental illness and suffered abuse as a child. Children who live in homes where there is mental illness and trauma often take on grown-up roles out of necessity. Emma cooked, cleaned, did the laundry, and took care of her little brother.

Because of her responsibilities at home, Emma struggled in first grade and had trouble connecting with other kids her age. In fall 2016, Emma’s classroom teacher, school counselor, and principal expressed to Shelby their concern about what they observed. They recommended that Shelby enroll Emma in therapy at CSI.

When Emma began therapy at CSI, she held her story close and shared only snippets of their home life. The child, of course, was protective of her mom, her sole parent. Within a few months, Emma began to share more details about her life at home.

The therapist worked to help Emma understand the difference between unhealthy and healthy living environments, knowing that Emma thought her life was typical. The

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Learn about Becoming a Foster Parent

Would you consider becoming a licensed foster family for the children we serve? Please attend an upcoming informational meeting at 4545 Dodge Street, Omaha.

- Monday, June 24, 2019 | 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
- Monday, September 16, 2019 | 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
- Monday, December 16, 2019 | 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

No RSVP necessary. Just come chat with our foster care staff about the steps to becoming a foster parent. Contact Joan Cooper at jcooper@childsaving.org or 402.553.6000 for more information.
The therapist helped Emma understand that it is possible to love someone with all your heart...

... Emma’s story continued.

therapist helped Emma understand that it is possible to love someone with all your heart, but not like the way they treat you.

That winter, the Department of Health and Human Services removed both children from Shelby’s home. Fortunately, Elijah’s dad Damian and stepmother Shannon had recently returned to Omaha and agreed to care for both children.

Emma continued in therapy and shared that she felt comfortable living with Damian and Shannon, but desperately wanted her mom to get back on track so she could move home. Not too long after Emma moved in with Damian and Shannon, Damian moved to Denver with Elijah. Emma worried that she would not have a place to live, certain that Shannon would ask her to leave the home. Shannon, however, spoke with Emma’s caseworker to ensure that Emma could remain in her home. The caseworker explained that Shannon’s home was considered a kinship placement.

Shannon told the therapist that, one night shortly after Damian and Elijah left, she sat down to brush Emma’s hair. Emma turned around and told Shannon, “I can do it myself!” Shannon encouraged Emma to let her help and that all Emma needed to do was to be a little girl.
During the next year, Shannon and Emma strengthened their bond, through fun outings, baking, and actively participating in parent-child activities. Shannon’s two older daughters visited and Emma liked the girls. She declared that she was excited to have older sisters. Damian and Elijah moved back to Omaha and Emma was happy to reconnect with her little brother.

In therapy now for several years, Emma began sharing more about what her life was like when she lived with her mother. She liked the way Shannon treated her. When Emma was 9, her mother’s parental rights were terminated. One day shortly after that, Emma told her therapist that she did not want to see Shelby anymore.

Shannon brought Emma to therapy faithfully during the next year, never missing a session. She also facilitated visits with Elijah to maintain their relationship.

When Shannon had a job opportunity in Kearney near her extended family, she sought permission from the caseworker to move with Emma. Also during that time, she started the proceedings to adopt Emma, who was almost 10 years old.

Despite the move, Shannon understood the importance of continuing Emma’s therapy and drove her to Omaha weekly for nearly six months, honoring Emma’s trust in her therapist. Last summer, Emma and the therapist together determined that they could end sessions, but that she could come back if she ever needed to.


In February 2019, Shannon called Emma’s therapist to say they were in Omaha and wanted to stop by to say hello. When they arrived, Emma gave the therapist a big hug and a handmade Valentine’s Day card that read, in part, “You’re all the best things in the world.”

Emma is now surrounded by people who love and support her and where she is able to “just be a kid.”
CSI Volunteers Provide Invaluable Support

Child Saving Institute (CSI) relies on the kindness and generosity of people who care about children to provide financial support to the agency, but it also relies on the kindness of those who are equally generous with their time, talent, and energy.

“We just can’t thank our volunteers enough,” said Peg Harriott, CSI’s president and chief executive officer. “The manpower they provide allows the agency to allocate the funds we would expend on labor to programs and operations that impact children.”

In 2018, volunteers provided more than 3,200 hours of service to help CSI with sprucing up agency’s grounds, filing, sorting, coordinating, decorating, and many other projects that would cost the agency thousands of dollars in salaries.

In the Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) and Spellman Child Development Center, volunteer “grandparents” assist classroom teachers by reading to, walking with, snuggling with, playing with, and comforting children ages 6 weeks to 6 years. These grandparents know the importance of individual attention and quality time spent with a child – and CSI’s kids love them!

CSI offers young parents the opportunity to participate in educational classes on-site each month during the school year, offering free childcare to participants. CSI utilizes volunteers to provide this service to children ranging in age from newborn to early teens.

Each spring, summer, and fall, volunteers help CSI’s part-time maintenance employee Fred Strohl care for the ECEC Nature Playground, the agency grounds, and other projects as needed. Volunteer teams from Lindsay Corporation, Kiewit Corporation, First Data, First Christian Church, Gavilon, Koley Jessen, and My City Church provided more than 210 hours of grounds work to CSI in 2018.

Nancy Berg, an application analyst with First Data, has volunteered at CSI for several years. Nancy has worked on the grounds, supported Substitute Santa, and helped in other ways.

“Volunteering at CSI has been such a rewarding experience,” Berg said. “Even though I don’t work directly with the kids, I believe in CSI’s mission and purpose, and I know that what I am doing is helping. Every time I leave CSI after volunteering, my heart is full, and I know that I am making a difference.”

For the fourth consecutive year, a team of 10 people from Mutual 1st Federal Credit Union spent a total of about 30 hours decorating CSI for the winter holiday season.
They transformed the lobby into a winter wonderland with snowflakes on the floor and windows, garland on the staircase, and blow-up polar bears near the elevator. It provided a wonderful sense of fun for guests and staff.

The AUNTYs group comprises women who pool their resources to serve unmet and/or unexpected needs. In 2017, Aunty’s funds provided books for the Pediatric Social Work program to share with clients. According to Chief Development Officer Andrea Richardson, the AUNTYs group enjoys providing “extras” to help CSI’s kids.

CSI’s Guild Board provides countless hours of planning, coordinating, and hosting incredibly fun events including PurseOnalities and Cabaret. Each year, the Guild’s fundraising efforts raises more than $100,000 for CSI’s kids! Read about Cabaret 2019, scheduled May 11 at the Marriott Downtown at the Capitol District, on page 3 of this newsletter.

Child Saving Institute’s all volunteer Board of Directors meets bi-monthly to ensure the agency remains true to its mission, vision, and values. The board comprises business and community leaders from across the metropolitan Omaha area. The members of the Board of Directors introduce CSI to funder opportunities, volunteer at events, attend events, raise money for events, provide speaking engagements to CSI youth and hand out candy at the agency on Halloween!

CSI also provides opportunities for practicum students, interns, and service-learning. Each year, CSI welcomes the chance to participate in the education of college students pursuing social work or a related field.

To join the amazing people who volunteer for CSI, contact Anna Willey at 402.504.3664 or awilley@childsaving.org. Visit childsaving.org for more information about volunteer opportunities. ❖

CSI thanks all past and future volunteers for helping to make the world better for kids!
How You Can Help

Don’t miss out on a moment of the fun and philanthropic opportunities we have planned for you in the coming months! Visit our website,.childsaving.org, or contact Megan at 402-504-3634 or mwebb@childsaving.org for more information about these events and how you can get involved.

Kids4Kids Dodge Ball Tourney | Saturday, May 4
Aspen Creek Middle School, 18414 Summit Dr., in Gretna | 10:30 a.m.

Kids4Kids will raise money to benefit children who receive services through Child Saving Institute at its second annual dodge ball tournament. The tournament will run three age divisions, each with 12 teams at maximum: elementary (grades K-5); secondary (grades 6-12); and adult. Teams comprise six to eight individuals. Check-in begins at 10:30 a.m. Registration is $100 per team. Make your team reservation at bit.ly/CSIKids4Kids.

Cabaret | Saturday, May 11
Omaha Marriott Downtown at the Capitol District | 6 p.m.

This cabaret is not to be missed! Cabaret 2019 — Omaha’s biggest fundraiser of 2019 – 2020! The fun evening will include cocktails, dinner, and fabulously funny comedy! Make your reservation at childsaving.org.

PurseOnalities | Wednesday, October 2
Hilton Omaha, 1001 Cass Street | 10:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Child Saving Institute’s Guild Board will host its annual PurseOnalities luncheon. Guests will enjoy boutique shopping and a fantastic silent auction featuring some of the season’s most desirable purses in fun packages, followed by a scrumptious luncheon and a keynote address. Funds raised benefit the kids and families served by Child Saving Institute!

Save the Date

Leave a legacy for kids! For information about including Child Saving Institute’s kids in your estate plans, please contact Cali Page, Legacy Giving Coordinator, at Child Saving Institute: 402.504.3661 or cpage@childsaving.org.