it takes a village
to raise a child...

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It Takes a Village

Imagine if you will, you have only $67 to get you to payday, still a week away.

The transmission went out on the car. The kids are hungry. You need to buy diapers. Your toddler is at risk for getting kicked out of daycare for biting. You got a call from your son’s second-grade teacher saying he’s struggling in school. And to top it off, there are rumors of lay-offs at your job at the end of the month.

When families are in crisis, it’s seldom just one thing that goes awry. It often seems to be a domino effect of problems that can set a family on the road to disaster. If you can’t make it to work, you risk losing your job. If you lose your job, you can’t pay the rent and risk eviction. If you can’t properly provide for your children, you risk losing them. Where does it stop?

It stops with Child Saving Institute and our many community partners, including supporters like you. When it comes to providing critical services for children and families, we can’t cover everything, but we have established relationships with other agencies to assist our clients when the need goes beyond our area of expertise.

When clients turn to us for help, we not only assess the needs of the child, but the entire family, because just like one would never rely on a band-aid to fix a broken arm, we know there are seldom quick fixes to the serious problems our families face.

We want the children and families who rely on us to know it will be okay. Child Saving Institute has their back and we’re so grateful you have ours.

Together we’ll see them on their way to safety, security, and success.

The New Face of Adoption

Update on Adoption Services

There was a time not so long ago when adoption was all about couples looking for a baby to complete their dream of a family.

For a variety of reasons, there are far fewer infants available for adoption these days and now Child Saving Institute’s primary focus has returned to our historical “roots”—finding loving, nurturing families for the many older children awaiting adoption in Nebraska.

For this reason, Child Saving Institute recently implemented some changes to our adoption services. To better serve areas of growth in adoption and strengthen CSI’s capacity to address the future needs of the children we serve, we are combining infant adoption, post-adoption and foster-child adoption into one larger Adoption Program.

As part of this transition, we have expanded our foster child adoption services, but will continue to offer infant adoption, home studies for foster parents and identified parents, and post-adoption support services. In addition, we will be phasing out international and embryo adoption home studies to allow us to focus our attention on core adoption services and foster child adoption. We will continue offering relinquishment counseling, foster-to-adopt home studies, and identified adoptive home studies. Pregnancy Counseling is now offered as part of CSI’s Therapy Services.

If you have questions about CSI’s Adoption Program, please contact Sarah Caldararo, Adoption Services Supervisor, 402.504.3673.

“The New Face of Adoption looks less like the Gerber baby and more like Dom, a shy and reserved 11-year-old who enjoys playing board games and reading. Dom, along with nearly 200 other children in the Omaha area, is legally available for adoption and awaiting a Forever Family through CSI’s Nebraska Heart Gallery.

Photograph by Abi Sterling

Peg Harriott, President & CEO

Peg Harriott, President & CEO
On a beautiful fall day, LilyAnne, 4, plays with her brothers in the family backyard and doesn’t seem hindered at all by her floor-length pink princess dress. It’s amazing how far this little girl who was once diagnosed as being “moderate to severe” on the autism spectrum has come in just a couple years. In fact, it was only last year that her mother, Mayra, heard Lily tell her that she loved her for the first time. It was the same age, Mayra recalls, that Adriel, now 5 and also diagnosed with a developmental disorder, uttered his first “I love you.”

Watching Mayra kiss and cuddle her giggling family—which now includes three-year-old Josiah—it’s hard to believe she is a struggling parent who frequently turns to “the village” to help her through some exceptionally challenging times. “When they were younger, it was chaotic,” she notes. “I felt like I was drowning. I didn’t know how I was going to do it,” recalling not only the children’s developmental delays, but the physically exhausting task of taking care of three little ones so close in age. “We were going through 1,000 diapers in two months, seven loads of laundry a week, and two loads of dishes a day.”

Mayra was first told that Adriel had possible developmental issues when he was 18 months old and attending the early childhood center at Child Saving Institute. “I was a first-time mom and didn’t want to hear that my child wasn’t developing as he should. I did not want him labeled in any way and simply refused to believe it.” She was still in denial when specialists from Omaha Public Schools evaluated him and confirmed he was developmentally delayed. When the pediatrician echoed the earlier recommendations at Adriel’s two-year check-up, she decided it was time to listen. After a brief grieving process, Mayra, who by that time also had baby LilyAnne to care for, immediately set to work researching community resources to assist her with Adriel’s education. She turned to OPS, Stones Worth Stepping, the Salvation Army, and eventually CSI’s KidSquad program while the children were enrolled at Educare. Most recently Mayra has added “Circle of Security” training (see page 7) to her repertoire of parenting skills with the help of her KidSquad therapist. “It helps keep me accountable and stay conscious of what I need to do to move us forward,” she says of the attachment-focused program.

These days Adriel and Lily are much more social, affectionate, and speak in full sentences, but Mayra still relies on a variety of therapeutic services to help the family. “I keep trying to help them reach their full potential,” she says passionately. “Early childhood is the foundation for everything. It’s very important to me that they’re physically, emotionally, and psychologically the best they can be. If you’re like me, you may not know what is available, but you must seek it out. I know my children wouldn’t be where they are without KidSquad and all the other services we’ve accessed.”
Fostering, new & improved: trauma-informed training

What would you do if the 14-year-old boy in your home was belligerent and damaged your property? Or the seven-year-old girl in your care expressed over-sexualized behavior?

Would you say, “Enough!”? What if these children were in Foster Care and you, like Child Saving Institute, are committed to offering these kids safety, security, and solace from a lifetime of trauma?

“Some agencies offer minimum training, but we believe there’s no quick, ‘drive-through’ option for preparing your family to welcome foster children.”

In an effort to better prepare foster families for some of the challenges they might encounter, CSI has expanded their trauma-informed foster care training. An extra week of classes allows the opportunity to share real-life examples of behaviors families have encountered, and offer ideas on how the foster parents-in-training might make connections regarding the child’s trauma history and how it affects behavior.

“We want to identify the barriers to placement and break down those myths from the beginning,” explains Child Welfare Services Supervisor Marty Nisi-McMahon. “Some foster parents refuse placements because they’re wary of what’s on the child’s report. The truth is kids in foster care are just kids, and if you make the effort to establish a relationship, set boundaries, and offer constructive, therapeutic interventions, it can be a great experience for everyone involved. We want to give them the skills to get there.

“Some agencies offer minimum training, but we believe there’s no quick, “drive-through” option for preparing your family to welcome foster children. It is a long process because there are no easy answers. We are committed to preventing disruption for these kids, because disruption is just another trauma in a long line of trauma.”

Want to learn more about fostering?
Please attend our upcoming informational meeting:
Thursday, November 5, 2015 | 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Child Saving Institute | 4545 Dodge St.

Trauma and Attachment

Experts have long known that early childhood experiences play a critical role in long-term outcomes. This is especially true when it comes to early childhood trauma. In normal childhoods attachment and nurturing allow children to explore their worlds, develop skills, and learn to regulate their bodies and their emotions, all of which help them to build an understanding of themselves and others. Attachment also allows kids to become more resilient when they have bad experiences. The love and care of family, friends, and teachers serves as a buffer to ease the pain and support healing.

When attachment systems are damaged, kids develop coping mechanisms that may not be appropriate. In turn, these behavioral problems may lead to trouble with relationships, failure in school and sometimes substance abuse.

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Circle Time

A mother and toddler sit in the living room experiencing a loving moment. The little boy crawls off his mother’s lap and toddles over to a plastic dump truck; grabbing it, he proudly returns to his mother. She expresses her interest and delight, and he leaves her again to go find another toy to share.

No doubt you’ve experienced this scenario many times and probably didn’t even know that it was teaching critical attachment skills. This simple, engaged interaction is just one of the fundamentals taught as part of the Circle of Security® curriculum many of the Child Saving Institute staff are learning and enthusiastically sharing with clients.

Circle of Security Parenting® is an eight-week program based on years of research about how to best support and strengthen parent-child relationships. With the help of a family foundation grant, several CSI therapists attended training last spring and are now sharing with other staff the specialized assessment and intervention skills they’ve learned. The results? Staff, many of whom are parents themselves, are gaining the invaluable tools and strategies they need to give their children the sense of security and confidence they need to explore, learn, grow, and build positive relationships.

Therapist Amanda Schraut, one of the staff “trainers” for the course, recalls meeting a four-year-old client’s mother for the first time. The mother and her young son had just moved into a residential rehab program, where the mother completed Circle of Security Parenting® as part of her coursework. “I didn’t share that I had been trained in it or even ask her about it,” Amanda says, “but she just offered her thoughts about it because she was so excited. She described the knowledge she gained as ‘angels coming down from heaven to help me see and understand my child’! She shared that it’s been the best part of her programming so far and that she’s had multiple ‘ah-hah’ moments.”

“It has reframed every interaction and every move I make with my son,” noted another mother whose toddler is enrolled in CSI’s Early Childhood Education Center. “I am paying closer attention to his ‘cues’ and it has helped me be a better parent.”

Schraut says she looks forward to incorporating the information into more CSI programs. “Every client could benefit from this information,” she says firmly. “It would be helpful if ALL parents could have access to this information and be able to participate in the group setting this program uses. Circle of Security® takes away some of the shame and guilt often inherent in parenting and makes it clear that everyone has the same struggles and nobody is perfect, but gives us some simple tools to do it better.”
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 call 402-504-3661 for more information about these events and how you can get involved!

Substitute Santa | Wed. - Fri., Dec. 9 - 11
Drop gifts & gift cards off at 4545 Dodge St. | 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Please help the CSI Guild provide a joyful holiday for hundreds of children and teens in our community. Donate cash, gifts or gift cards to the Substitute Santa program serving foster kids, shelter youth and struggling families. For details, visit childsaving.org or call Cali at 402-504-3661.

Radiothon | Friday, December 11
Broadcasting from Regency Court on The Mighty 1290 KOIL | 7 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Be sure to tune in for the annual Radiothon for Child Saving Institute. The program will feature heartwarming tales of the many children we serve as well as visits with special guests. Listen, call in and pledge to help us raise $60,000 for at-risk kids by 6 p.m. Please contact Mary for more details, 402-504-3664.

Cabaret | Saturday, May 14, 2016
Embassy Suites Conference Center | 6 - 9:30 p.m.

You’re invited to our biggest fundraiser of 2016—Cabaret—featuring funny and family-friendly stand-up comedian Ryan Hamilton! The fun evening will include cocktails, dinner, and fabulously funny comedy. Attire is casual. Tickets are $175 per person. To purchase tickets or for more information, please visit childsaving.org or call Cali at 402-504-3661.

Leave a legacy for kids! For more information about including Child Saving Institute in your estate plans, please contact Becky McNeil, Legacy Giving Director at Child Saving Institute: 402.504.3663 or bmcneil@childsaving.org.