125 Years
Changing to Meet the Needs of a Child

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125 Years of Change

Fall has me thinking about the changing seasons and the ways Child Saving Institute has changed over the last 125 years to meet the needs of children in our community. Over the years, the agency has Reinvented its service model regularly, adapting to changing social mores and community needs. Being ready and able to adapt is a sign of resiliency, and a strength we work to instill in the children we serve. One thing that hasn’t changed? CSI still offers children who have experienced trauma find help and hope.

When our founder the Rev. A.W. Clark brought an abandoned child to his home, his wife Sarah embraced the cause of “Responding to the cry of a child.” Together, they set out to operate an orphanage and find good homes for the children they served. Even then, however, their mission served more than just abandoned children. On page 4, read about how CSI continued to evolve over its 125 years to become the human services organization we are today.

You will read a story about James, whose challenges at school led to a referral for CSI’s School and Family Enrichment program (S.A.F.E.). At age 11, James father was not in his life and he had six younger siblings who demanded much attention from his single, working mother. He found the attention he was seeking through negative behaviors. Once our Family Support Specialist began working with James, his mother, and teacher, he learned to handle his emotions in a healthy, constructive manner.

Change is a constant in life and work, and it is no different here at CSI. In this edition, you will meet our new Chief Development Officer Andrea Richardson. Andrea brings a tremendous level of experience and skill to her role, and a fresh perspective on our fund raising events and activities.

One thing I hope will never change is our community’s commitment to kids. This is our work, and they are ALL our children. Thank you, always, for remembering our kids!

Peg Harriott, President & CEO
Helping Kids with S.A.F.E.

Fifth-grader James received a referral to Child Saving Institute’s (CSI) School and Family Enrichment (SAFE) program last school year. His teacher repeatedly sent him to the office for disrupting class, misbehaving, and sometimes fighting. When he was sent home from school or suspended, his mother Darla would have to miss work.

James lost his father when he was very young. He is the oldest of seven children, bright, competitive and headstrong. Darla was a single parent and had no support system. She often relied too much on James. She did not know how to help her son.

When CSI’s Family Support Specialist (FSS) began working with James, he expressed anger and frustration inappropriately, “losing control” and acting out.

The FSS and James read the book “Soda Pop Head,” a book about a young boy who “blows his top” when he is angry and gets in trouble at school and at home. The book explains: “Sometimes things are going to happen to you that will make you angry. It’s what you choose to do with your anger that makes the difference.” In the story, the boy’s father teaches him some ways to “relieve the pressure” of the anger before he “blows his top.”

Together, James and the FSS worked on techniques to self-calm at school and at home when he started getting angry. They identified a support system for James to turn to when he felt down. At school, the teacher found a place James could go when he was upset so he could calm himself. At home, James’ siblings knew that when he closed his door, he needed time alone.

As the school year progressed, James learned appropriate ways to handle his anger and how to resolve situations that caused the anger. After just a couple of months, James stopped getting sent to the office. Staff began reporting to the FSS and Darla that James was doing great in school, with excellent grades and a happier demeanor! The staff awarded him a select spot on the school’s Safety Patrol! By the end of the school year, James’ had completely changed, excelling in the classroom and continuing to work on controlling his own “Soda Pop Head.”

Now a sixth-grader, James started the new year with a fresh attitude. He hasn’t received a single referral to the principal’s office and is ready to have a great year. 💖
Adapting to changing times since Child Saving Institute Stays

The Rev. A.W. Clark founded The Boys and Girls Aid Society in Omaha in 1892, determined to find good homes for the abandoned, neglected, and abused children of Omaha area pioneers. Within the first year, dozens of children and families found help at the agency. Clark’s own words later came to define the agency mission: Responding to the cry of a child.

‘Day Care’

Soon after being established, the agency determined another great need — for a safe place for children to spend the day while their single parents worked.

“These were single parents who may have lost their partners to illness or otherwise been abandoned and who had to work to provide shelter, food and clothing for their children,” said Peg Harriott, Child Saving Institute’s (CSI) president and chief executive officer. “Many had no relatives in the city who could watch the kids during working hours. The agency opened its doors to these children to provide ‘day care’ for a small fee.”

As time passed and word spread about the agency, the number of infants and children abandoned at the agency increased.

“More than one infant was found abandoned on the doorstep with a note attached,” Harriott said, “pleading the agency find the child a good home. The situations for some of these parents who abandoned their children were pretty grim, and they relinquished their children to keep them from disease or starvation.”

Protection

Another growth in services came with the appearance of young women "in trouble" who had no where else to go.

At the time, families would send their unmarried and unexpectedly pregnant young daughters to the agency to live to protect their reputations. The agency would provide the young women with work in the orphanage and room and board until they delivered their babies and recoverd from birth.
“Most of these young women would then place their infants with the agency for adoption and return to their families with their reputations intact,” Harriott said.

Some of Omaha’s most prominent families adopted children from The Boys and Girls Aid Society, including George and Sarah Joslyn. Their daughter Violet was born in August 1892 and adopted as an infant. The Joslyns generously supported the agency throughout their lives, including making a $25,000 challenge gift to build a modern orphanage in 1909. In 1911 the National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) took over agency operations of what by then was known as Child Saving Institute.

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~ Peg Harriott, CEO

**Nursery Maid Training**

CSI partnered with the University of Nebraska Medical College (UNMC) to provide training for “nursery maids” who cared for CSI’s infants. UNMC doctors would make rounds at CSI and the nursery maids would provide nursing care for ill infants and children. At times, adoptive parents would bring their babies back to the agency to recover from illness or “failure to thrive.” When health was restored, the babies would again go home with their adoptive parents.

Early on and through much of the 20th century, the agency also provided care to children of single parents who faced hospitalizations and long recoveries and who didn’t have support networks available. CSI did not turn children away, whatever the cause of their appearance at the agency doorstep.

see ‘Adapting’ page 6
As societal mores continued to evolve, CSI adapted to the changes, adding programs and services. By the 1960s, the demand for infant adoption reached a peak, meaning decreased need for CSI’s cradle care service in the orphanage. In addition, single women began choosing to raise their babies, fighting for social acceptance. These factors, along with the increasing number of foster care homes, led CSI to close its orphanage and change its focus to offering home studies for adoption, therapy, classes to license foster care providers, and single moms assistance and education to balance parent and work responsibilities.

CSI created an innovative program to serve these single mothers, developing a special apartment building to house them and their children. The site included a childcare facility and space for individual and group counseling and life skill lessons.

“It was a unique opportunity for the young mothers we served to live in community with other women of common experience,” Harriott said. “That program existed for fewer than 10 years, as societal norms continued to shift and the stigma around single motherhood decreased.”

Today, CSI offers 14 programs and services to children and families in Omaha: Foster Care, Adoption (NebraskaHeartGallery.org), Post-Adoption Services, Independent Living Skills, Triage Center at Project Harmony, In-Home Services, Teen and Young Parents Program, Pregnancy Counseling, School And Family Enrichment (SAFE — offered in Omaha and Millard Public Schools), Therapy, Emergency Shelter, Early Childhood Education and Child Care, KidSquad, and Pediatric Social Work (in three low-income medical clinics).

“Our mission remains ‘Responding to the cry of a child.’ Though how we respond has changed over the years, we have continued to focus on the prevention and intervention of child abuse and neglect right here in the Omaha metropolitan area,” Harriott said. “Child Saving Institute has helped children who have experienced neglect and abuse find hope and healing for 125 years. I believe CSI will continue serving kids for the next 125 years — though the ‘how’ will likely change several times in that time span based on our community’s needs.”
Richardson Joins CSI as CDO

Andrea Richardson joined Child Saving Institute (CSI) as chief development officer in May, bringing more than 20 years of fundraising experience and leadership to her role. She has spent her career working for a variety of non-profit causes, including education, healthcare, and human services.

“What moves me about Child Saving Institute is that though we may be in the kids’ lives for less than a year, we can help them make changes that last a lifetime,” she said.

Most recently, she served as the chief foundation and strategy officer for Shenandoah Medical Center (SMC) in Shenandoah, Iowa. Before joining SMC, Andrea worked abroad for a few years, including a year at Angkor Hospital for Children in Siem Reap, Cambodia, and six months in Tanzania working on behalf of Grassroots Tanzania and the Bishop Stephano Moshi Medical Center.

Before her fundraising career, Andrea worked in television and film. With a bachelor’s degree in film from San Francisco State University, she moved to Los Angeles where she worked as a production assistant on the 1990s television series “Coach” and “The Delta Burke Show.” She then joined Buena Vista International’s publicity department. After experiencing the 1989 San Francisco and 1994 Los Angeles earthquakes, she moved to New York and took her first fundraising role as a volunteer with the Literacy Volunteers of Westchester County. It was a pivotal experience that led to a career filled with passion for nonprofits and their missions.

Help Make the Season Bright for Our Kids!

Substitute Santa is scheduled Dec. 6-8 this year. New items have been added to the gift list, including: Finger paint, Color Magic sets, puzzles, dress-up clothes, pop-up tents, play kitchen food, infant/toddler push toys/ride-on toys, diapers, wipes, infant toddler learning toys, diaper bags, baby wash/lotion, duffle bags, and wallets/billfolds. We also need personal hygiene items like shampoo/conditioner, deodorant, body wash, and toothbrushes and toothpaste. To see the full list, visit bit.ly/SubSanta. Contact Cali at 402.504.3661 or cpage@childsaving.org with questions.
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 Cali at 402-504-3661 or cpage@childsaving.org for more information about these events and how you can get involved.

PurseOnalities | Thursday, September 28, 2017
Hilton Hotel & Conference Center | 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

It’s Tea Time! You’re invited to come for a silent auction featuring fabulous purse packages, boutique shopping, a fabulous meal at PurseOnalities 2017! Featuring comedienne and author Alison Larkin (“The English American”), you will laugh and relate as she talks about her life and her journey to discover her birth parents. Tickets are $75 per person and can be purchased online at bit.ly.com/PurseOnalities.

Substitute Santa | Wed. - Fri., Dec. 6 - 8
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.

Cabaret | Saturday, June 2, 2018
Omaha Marriott Downtown at the Capital District | 6 - 9:30 p.m.

You’re invited to our biggest fundraiser of 2018 – Cabaret! The fun evening will include cocktails, dinner, and fabulously funny comedy. Attire is casual. Tickets are $175 per person.

Leave a legacy for kids! For information about including Child Saving Institute’s kids in your estate plans, please contact Steve Schmidt, Legacy Giving Coordinator, at Child Saving Institute: 402.504.3634 or sschmidt@childsaving.org.