A Place to Call Home

A letter from Peg

Remembering Dick Holland

Two young siblings find permanency

She’s doing what’s best for kids
Homecoming

As I write this, high schools across the area are busy with homecoming parades, football games, and dances. This special time serves as both a rite of passage for many teens, and a celebration of friendship and tradition for alumni.

But Homecoming means much more than marching bands and bonfires at Child Saving Institute. It means hugs, and bedtime stories, sitting at the dinner table, family vacations, sharing, listening, laughter, and unconditional love. It is having a family to come home to—not only after school, but for all major events in your adult life as well.

In this issue you’ll see many forms of “homecoming.” You’ll meet the Irlanda family, a couple who have traveled the world, but decided to create permanency in Omaha so they could provide a stable home for their newly-adopted children.

You’ll also meet Jessica West. Jessica first came to CSI nearly 30 years ago...as a preschooler. Now, decades later she sought out employment in our Early Childhood Education program because she still holds fond memories of her time there.

We also hope you’ll join us as we remember the incomparable philanthropist and our dear friend, Dick Holland. Dick’s large personality and generous spirit will be greatly missed in our community, but his legacy for kids lives on in our programs and our beautiful, state-of-the-art campus.

Home means different things to different people, but for kids who have suffered and survived, and finally found a safe place to land and be loved, I believe HOME is where the real story begins.

As always, THANK YOU for caring about kids.
Dick Holland

In August, Child Saving Institute and the entire community lost a dear friend with the passing of Dick Holland, 95.

Dick’s generosity extended to education, the arts, and children’s well-being—particularly those children served through CSI programs.

Dick and his wife, Mary, had been dedicated CSI supporters ever since Mary Holland served on our Board of Directors many years ago. His kindness and dedication for the kids of our community swelled as he learned about the importance of early childhood education on outcomes such as high school graduation rates.

His generosity was legendary throughout the community, but particularly to CSI. Dick not only wrote a large check to kick off the capital campaign for our beautiful building, but he regularly attended and supported Cabaret, helped fund the built-in furniture in our shelter, and helped cover low-income child care and marketing expenses for the agency.

Most of all, we will miss his big smile, hearty laugh, and huge, care-filled heart.
AJ and CC had been in and out several foster homes before being placed in kinship care with a loving aunt a couple years ago. Sadly, the aunt passed away due to illness and the children lived in three more foster homes before joining Jason and Marty’s family last fall.
A New Family in Two Seconds Flat

It’s been a whirlwind last few years for the Irlanda family. First of all, Jason and Marty, a couple for more than 10 years, were married in September 2013. Shortly thereafter they became licensed foster parents and began welcoming children into their home. And finally, in May of this year, eight-year-old AJ and five-year-old Cariña were adopted.

“It’s been an amazing journey,” Jason admits with a smile. “We went from zero to two in two seconds flat.”

AJ and CC (as Cariña is called at home) had been in and out several foster homes before being placed in kinship care with a loving aunt a couple years ago. Sadly, the aunt passed away due to illness and the children lived in three more foster homes before joining their Forever Family last fall.

Jason, or “Daddy” as AJ and CC call him, is a manager at Starbucks. “Papa” Marty is a Flag Writer in the U.S. Navy assigned to a four-star General and stationed at Offutt. He has served 16 years and plans to retire in four years. Although the past year has been a blur, given a moment to reflect Jason has some sage advice for those considering fostering...or adopting. “It is not for the faint of heart,” he says after a thoughtful pause. “It’s really hard work. If you’re not in it for the love and what’s best for the kids, you shouldn’t do it.

“It’s really about mindset: what you want and what you want for the children. With foster care it’s all about reunification and working to make that transition successful—from picking bio mom up to go to appointments, to teaching life skills to the children AND mom. With fostering, you have to reassure the children, ‘Don’t worry, we’re doing everything we can to get you back to your family.’

“But adoption is all about stability and being able to share feelings for the sustainability of emotional health. It’s saying to the children, ‘Don’t worry, you’re not going anywhere. We’re here for you.’”

The oldest of nine children, Jason always knew he wanted children, but Marty was concerned the frequent relocations required of his naval career would cause further trauma to children who had experienced frequent moves in foster care. However, when the couple moved to Nebraska, Marty, who was himself in the California foster care system and adopted at age 12, finally agreed the time was right.

It was also time for the family to move from the base in Bellevue to a home in Millard so the kids could stay in their same school. The move was only one adjustment in this busy year. AJ also “graduated” from therapy to help him adjust to being a kid, instead of an overly-vigilant older brother responsible for his little sister.

“We had to convince him that we would take care of CC and him,” Jason notes softly.

These days AJ’s main primary responsibilities involve caring for the family’s dogs, Lealani and Kai, and most importantly, having a happy childhood.
At CSI, we believe in Happy Childhoods. And that means for ALL children.

Wise and nurturing Grandma Rose provides kinship care for her daughter’s four young children as well as a loving home for her adult son and his three children.

Nine people living in a small-but-tidy home with only one bath, three bedrooms, and, thankfully, a big yard!

Rose tries hard to provide for the children but, as you can imagine, there is NO room in the budget for extras. Christmas is a struggle for this dedicated grandma who works the second shift, 2 to 11 p.m., Monday through Saturday, at a manufacturing job. She is proud that 9-year-old Nevaeh played soccer on a local league this summer and 11-year-old Jordyn is learning clarinet in his elementary school band class. But when it comes to talking about the holidays, worry shows on her face.

Rose says firmly, “Family should always take care of family.” And that’s exactly what your holiday gifts help her do. Your contribution to the Child Saving Institute Substitute Santa program allows families like Rose’s to have a happy holiday.

CSI GUILD SUBSTITUTE SANTA EVENT
DECEMBER 7 - 9 | 10 A.M. - 3 P.M.

Here’s How it Works:
As a CSI Substitute Santa, we ask that you please:
• Shop from the Substitute Santa wish list on the following page;
• Bring or mail your gift cards to CSI, attn: Cali, 4545 Dodge, 68132, by December 9;
• If you choose to purchase gifts, please bring your gifts to CSI unwrapped with all tags intact from December 7 - 9, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. (Gifts must arrive by December 9 to allow our staff sufficient time to “shop” and distribute them to the families before the holidays);
• Complete and return a gift donation form so you can be thanked for your donation;
• Visit CSI’s website to make an on-line donation: childsaving.org.

Your contribution to the Substitute Santa program allows families like Rose’s to have a happy holiday. Thank you for your support and for being part of our CSI family this holiday season and all year long.
A Place to Call Home

If you would like to make a difference for kids this holiday season, please consider donating Gift Cards. Gift Cards are easy to buy, easy for CSI to store, and they help ensure equity among the children and teens CSI serves. Cash donations are also always appreciated and allow the staff to purchase clothing and other essentials for kids—especially hard-to-shop-for teens.

Gift Cards (e.g. Visa, MasterCard, Target, Walmart) $10 - $25 increments (Gift Cards provide flexibility and allow staff to shop for the recipient’s “dream” gift!)

Movie Passes (Special outings are so important to CSI’s kids!) // Arts & Crafts Supplies (e.g. sketch pads, drawing pencils, craft kits) // Tonka Trucks and Hot Wheel Cars // Building Toys (e.g. Legos, Lincoln Logs, Erector Sets) // Ethnic Baby Dolls // Board Games (for ages 8 yrs+) // Board Books for Infants and Toddlers // Hoodies, Sleep Pants (teen/adult sizes, especially XXL) // Sports Equipment (footballs, soccer balls, basketballs, etc.) // Electronics (Family oriented/kid friendly games and accessories for Wii game system)

Back Home

Jessica West still has fond-but-faded memories of playing with her fellow preschoolers while attending child care at Child Saving Institute. Now, 30 years later, she finds herself back in the Early Childhood Education Center at CSI in an administrative role.

Jessica called CSI’s HR office to ask about positions in the child care last November, and joined the team in December. As the program Administrative Assistant, she spends time each week at both the CSI campus and the CSI-managed program at the Spellman Child Development Center on the College of Saint Mary campus.

Jessica, who plans to pursue a law degree someday, is the proud mom of Roncalli High School Senior, Taylor. When Teylor is done studying photography at college, she will return to school and eventually hopes to work in the juvenile justice system. It is this love of children and doing what’s best for kids that motivates her every day.

Squeals and giggles can be heard from down the hall. Jessica smiles and says, “Now THAT is a constant reminder of why we all work here at CSI. It’s the best part of my job.”

Substitute Santa Gift Wish List

If you would like to make a difference for kids this holiday season, please consider donating Gift Cards. Gift Cards are easy to buy, easy for CSI to store, and they help ensure equity among the children and teens CSI serves. Cash donations are also always appreciated and allow the staff to purchase clothing and other essentials for kids—especially hard-to-shop-for teens.

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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.

**Substitute Santa | Wed. - Fri., Dec. 7 - 9**
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.

**Radiothon | Friday, December 9**
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.

**Cabaret | Saturday, May 13, 2017**
Embassy Suites Conference Center | 6 - 9:30 p.m.
You’re invited to our biggest fundraiser of 2017—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 Cathy Tibbels, Legacy Giving Coordinator at Child Saving Institute: 402.504.3663 or ctibbels@childsaving.org.