Transformations

The theme of CSI’s spring 2017 newsletter is “transformations.” It seems fitting as spring is the season when the frozen earth transforms itself from brown and barren to lush and green. It’s also fitting as a metaphor for what CSI’s programs and services do with your support — transform. It’s also what our agency has done in its 125 years of service. Perhaps you are familiar with the following fable. I believe it illustrates well why we “Never Give Up on a Kid.”

There was a man who had four sons. He wanted his sons to learn not to judge things too quickly. So he sent them each on a quest, in turn, to go and look at a pear tree that was a great distance away. The first son went in the winter, the second in the spring, the third in summer, and the youngest son in the fall.

When they had all gone and come back, he called them together to describe what they had seen. The first son said that the tree was ugly, bent, and twisted. The second son said no it was covered with green buds and full of promise. The third son disagreed; he said it was laden with blossoms that smelled so sweet and looked so beautiful, it was the most graceful thing he had ever seen. The last son disagreed with all of them; he said it was ripe and drooping with fruit, full of life and fulfillment. The man then explained to his sons that they were all right, because they had each seen but only one season in the tree’s life.

He told them that you cannot judge a tree ... or a person ... by only one season and that the essence of who they are and the pleasure, joy, and love that come from that life can only be measured at the end, when all the seasons are up. If you give up when it’s winter, you will miss the promise of your spring, the beauty of your summer, the fulfillment of your fall.

Kids often come to us in their darkest times, and we provide shelter, care, and programming to address their needs — the first step in the process of transformation and healing. In this edition, you will read about CSI’s Emergency Shelter, our Auntys program, and a transformative outcome made possible through your help. We are forever grateful for your transformative support of children who are stuck in their winters.

As always, THANK YOU for caring about kids.

Peg Harriott,
President & CEO
Our Favorite

We’ve all had a favorite aunty in our lives. You know the one — she always brings treats and does things with you. She’s the fun one. She’s the one that bends the rules.

Child Saving Institute’s kids may never have had an aunty like that in their lives. Perhaps you were unaware of CSI’s group of caring, generous women whose sole purpose is to make sure that our kids get what they need.

Our Auntys make a commitment to the kids by making an annual tax deductible $500 gift to Child Saving Institute. Throughout the year, members help CSI clients with these funds.

“We really focus on the ‘extras,’” said Patty Tipler, Auntys member. “We provide the kinds of things that can’t be provided from a state or government grant.”

The Auntys meet six times a year over a meal to learn about issues that impact all children and how CSI’s programs address issues.

All that is required to join the Auntys is a love for children and belief in CSI’s mission “Responding to the Cry of a Child” and vision that “All children have homes where hope is kindled and dreams can be achieved.”

“What I like is that I can make a difference and stay involved but not be committed to running an event or taking on a major project,” Tipler said.

The best reasons to become an Aunty are:
• You don’t have to plan any events, dinners or meetings – you’ve been there done that;
• You learn about children’s issues impacting your children and your grandchildren;
• You have the opportunity to ask questions, lots and lots of questions, and get answers;
• You can advocate for those children’s issues most important to you;
• You pool your resources to make a significant gift to a CSI program or client(s) who needs a boost;

To learn more or join the Auntys, contact Cali Page at cpage@childsaving.org or 402.504.3661.

A Birthday Party for Others

When Tina and Zach Dice asked their kids Kaitlin and Zeb what they wanted to do for their February birthdays, they gave an amazing reply. Instead of getting birthday gifts for themselves, they wanted to collect donations for CSI’s kids.

Kaitlin, pictured, and Zeb were very happy to deliver the generous donations of diapers, blankets and other necessities given by their family and friends in honor of their birthdays. From all of us at CSI — THANK YOU Kaitlin and Zeb!
What do you do with a kid who’s in trouble — one who has been kicked out of every foster home placement, out of every other residential treatment facility in the area — when it seems there is nowhere left to turn?

In the Omaha metro area, you bring them to Child Saving Institute’s 12-bed Emergency Shelter.

One young man, we’ll call him Cal, considers the shelter his home.

His mother is homeless and has other issues, leaving her unable to care for her son. The father and other relatives are unavailable or otherwise unable to care for him. Cal has embraced his life in the shelter and has decorated his room, just like any other teenage boy. He struggles with school, but is supported by shelter staff. He also has some mental health needs and attends therapy. He feels a sense of security in the shelter that he hasn’t known before.

“We may not know the details of their situations, but we understand the urgency of providing them with a sense of safety and security,” said Teffany Murphy, Director of Residential Services. “We know they come to us confused, scared, and sometimes angry.”

The kids who are brought to the shelter are all in crisis. The first thing shelter staff does is to provide them with some basic needs — personal items like soap, shampoo, a towel, deodorant, and, of course, a place to sleep. Most of the time, the kids arrive with only the clothes on their backs, somewhere with their meager possessions stuffed in a garbage bag.

“Kids in the shelter, and many kids in foster care, use garbage bags to carry whatever clothing and personal items they may possess,” Murphy said. “They deserve more dignity than that, so we would like to provide them with a duffle bag, basic necessities like socks and underwear, single bed sheets and art and school supplies. You can’t imagine how easily these items can be lost.”

CSI accepts donations of new luggage, underwear, socks, hats, gloves, scarves, sweatpants and sweatshirts, and all types of hygiene items including towels — or funds to purchase these items — to give to the kids who come through the shelter.

“We are so grateful to our donors for providing for our kids,” Murphy said. “Your kindness shows them that there are people who care about them. It’s one step toward restoring trusting relationships and finding hope again.”

see ‘Nowhere Left to Turn’ page 5
At left: The Royal Neighbors of Nebraska club collected donations to support the kids in CSI’s Emergency Shelter. The donations included necessities like personal care items, socks, sweat pants and shirts, and other items.

Nowhere to Left to Turn

Though everyone involved — the kids and staff — know the placement is temporary, staff members immediately communicate shelter rules with clear expectations and consequences. The staff works to develop trusting relationships with the kids, whose experiences may make them skeptical.

On average, a child will spend about 30 days in the shelter, though some have spent less than 24 hours and some have spent several months. The average age of a child in the shelter is 14, but can range from infants to age 19. In 2016, CSI provided emergency shelter to 100 children in crisis.

“They need to know that we are there for them,” Murphy said. “We are the first people to see them in the morning. We see them off to school, and we see them right after school.”

“Ultimately, we want the kids to leave our shelter to be with a family in a safe, secure home,” Murphy said, “but we want them to know we are still here for them. We want them to feel comfortable coming back to us if they’re in trouble — that they can call anytime. We want them to feel that sense of security.”

Learn more about CSI’s Emergency Shelter at childsaving.org/emergency-shelter.

Read Across America

Read Across America Day, celebrated March 2 in honor of Theodore Geisel, a.k.a. Dr. Seuss, brought lots of joy to CSI’s kids with generous book donations from Aksarben Cinema, dropped off by Colleen from Aksarben Cinema, far right. Colleen is pictured with Anna Willey, CSI events coordinator. CSI also received donated books from CHI’s Coding Department.

In addition, the Early Childhood Education Center and Spellman Early Childhood Education Center welcomed more than a dozen guest readers from Mutual of Omaha. The readers traveled among the classrooms and spent about two hours reading to the kiddos, who loved it! Mutual of Omaha also donated the books they read, along with their spectacular “Cat in the Hat” striped hats!
W
ten the Rev. A.W. Clark set out to visit the rough-and-tumble riverfront area nicknamed Ram Cat Alley the afternoon of April 7, 1892, he was intent on reforming the alcoholic men and women who frequented saloons along the street. He and his wife Sarah had secured the use of an old livery stable at 18th Street and St. Mary’s Ave., to house the people he sought to reform, determined to make a difference.

Upon arriving, however, Rev. Clark discovered a greater need among the children huddled in darkened doorways along the streets, left to fend for themselves — barefoot, dirty, and hungry.

Boys and Girls Aid Society

That day, Rev. Clark, brought a 7-year-old girl to his home and with his wife Sarah started the Boys and Girls Aid Society. When someone asked him why, he said, “I was just responding to the cry of a child.”

By the end of the first year, the Society had helped more than 100 children — bringing them back to health and placing as many as possible with families to love and care for them. In the summer of 1893, the Society became The Boys and Girls Aid Society of Nebraska, to help all abandoned Nebraska children, with offices in Lincoln and Kearney in addition to Omaha.

For a time, starting in 1899, the agency also offered a “Training School for Nurserymaids.”
“Rev. Clark was visionary for his time,” said CSI President and CEO Peg Harriott. “He recognized and responded to the needs of children in a frontier city where adults and kids succumbed to the hazards of pioneer life including outbreaks of the flu, measles, and smallpox. In years when crops were bad and entire families were left without funds to support themselves through harsh winters on the plains, Child Saving Institute would provide respite care so the parents could seek gainful employment.”

As was to be expected, disease outbreaks also occurred in the agency itself. For example, during the 1900-1901 winter, a measles outbreak followed by a smallpox outbreak, brought a desperate plea for funds for medicine, bedding, and clothing. In 1902, it was diphtheria. Measles hit again in 1904. And in 1913, the March 23 Easter tornado that hit Omaha did not skip over CSI. In fact, the agency took a direct hit on its southwest corner and several children lost their lives.

“That is a really heartbreaking story,” Harriott said. “The tornado hit around 6 p.m. Earlier in the day, an infant had been taken home by her new family and another baby girl was assigned to her crib. When the tornado hit CSI, the suction just pulled her from the crib and out the window. We lost six people that day — a man, a woman, and four children. Omaha lost 103 people altogether.”

Medical student Mildred Williams, an intern in the agency, set up an emergency hospital at CSI immediately following the tornado.

Before, top left, and after, bottom right: Walter Hogan was born in May 1894. He arrived at Child Saving Institute early in 1903, having been on his own for quite some time. Nurserymaids fed and bathed him and provided clean clothing. The agency always documented a child’s transformation — from his state upon arrival and again before he either returned home or was placed with a family. Walter was cared for until he was healthy, then released to the custody of an older sister found by staff members.
“The wind demon came careening over the prairie from the southwest.... With almost every tick of the clock the name of another victim was added to the appalling list of the dead and injured.”

*Omaha World Herald*
March 24, 1913

Photo at left: CSI took a direct hit from the devastating tornado. A small white mark indicates the window where a baby was sucked from her crib and into the tornado.

Photo from the Omaha Bee on HistoricOmaha.com.

CSI Milestone: 125 Years of Service

From page 6

Treating more than 50 local victims. The building was restored and by its 60th year, Child Saving Institute had helped well over 10,000 children find permanent, loving homes.

Safe Haven

For about the first 84 years, the agency provided services including a safe haven for abandoned children, adoption, and a discreet home for unwed mothers. Over the years, the agency moved several times, first in 1901 to a “commodious building” at 18th and Ohio Streets — a two-story farmhouse where, with the support of donors, they added two brick two-story wings to meet agency needs.

As the agency continued to grow, the Board of Directors made plans to construct a brand new building and purchased a lot at 26th and St. Mary’s Avenue for that purpose. In 1909, however, the University of Nebraska College of Medicine approached the agency, proposing that the new building be constructed on its campus, offering a free 99 year lease on the land. The board readily agreed. George and Sarah Joslyn donated $25,000, making the lead gift toward the building fund.

Once construction was complete in 1911, Child Saving Institute moved from 18th and Ohio Streets to 42nd and Emile Streets, where it remained for the next 50+ years.

See “CSI Milestone” page 9
As the decades passed, the needs expanded and challenges loomed for orphanages across the country. Child Saving Institute kept its focus on kids and “Responding to the Cry of a Child” remained its mission, even as it adapted and expanded services to include therapy, early childhood education, an emergency shelter, and foster care education, training, and placement. CSI continues to help children find forever homes, but the face of adoption has changed from primarily infants to older children who have become state wards.

“We are proud of the diverse array of services and programs we offer today,” Harriott said. “Our vision — ‘That all children have homes where hopes are kindled and dreams can be achieved’ — really drives everything we do.

“From our KidSquad and SAFE programs which help children with behavioral problems by working with them, with their teachers and and with their families, to our early childhood education centers, where developmental programming is designed to help get our kids school ready, we focus, always, on what’s best for children.”

Today, the agency is located at 4545 Dodge Street, in a 10-year-old building designed to meet the needs of children and families, with a dedicated early childhood education center, special rooms for therapy, an onsite emergency shelter for up to 12 youth, and space for parent education classes, foster parent education and training, and community meetings.

“We are very much invested in helping pares build and strengthen their relationships with their children,” Harriott said. “We are grateful to be able to continue helping children who have experienced the trauma of abuse and neglect. We wish there weren’t a need for these services, but well will be ready to help as long as there is.”

Watch your email, Facebook, Twitter, and CSI publications and invitations for more CSI history during the year-long celebration of our 125 years!

April 7, 2017, through April 7, 2018
When Child Protective Services first removed teen Maddison, 15, and Emily, 13, from their family home, Emily was angry, blaming Maddison for revealing the physical abuse they experienced at their father’s hands and breaking up the home. Their dad and stepmom encouraged that belief. It was Maddison, Emily rationalized, who snuck out, ran away, and caused problems.

Emily insisted the abuse “wasn’t that bad.” Maddison, however, had received the brunt of the abuse and for her, it was “that bad.” She was relieved to be away from her father. Their mother was not part of their lives, but their caseworker located their Aunt Stephanie, just a young adult herself, who took them into her care. Stephanie, however, just wasn’t equipped to handle teenagers, let alone one with behavioral issues. In fact, Maddison was hospitalized because of her behaviors several times.

One day when Stephanie was picking Emily up at school, she ran into one of Emily’s teachers, Janice. During the conversation, Stephanie told Janice about the stressful situation and that she just couldn’t keep the girls anymore. Janice had no idea that anything unusual was happening in Emily’s life. Though she and her husband Paul already had three teens, Janice thought they could help Emily, so they became licensed foster parents and welcomed Emily into their busy and full home.

Emily was happy with the arrangement as she could stay in her school and continue participating in sports. Maddison continued to struggle in her placements and, over the course of about two years, bounced from foster home to foster home.

Throughout that time, both girls participated in therapy individually. Emily finally began to understand Maddison’s perspective and empathize with her. Emily also realized that her father and stepmother did all they could to ensure that she continued to blame Maddison for everything. In a joint therapy session, their girls started to rebuild their relationship and, before the second Christmas away from their father, the girls learned that he relinquished his parental rights.

Janice and Paul decided immediately to adopt Emily and made special arrangements for Maddison to spend Christmas at their house. They had been having supervised visits with Maddison at their home for some time, but when Janice saw the transformations Maddison and Emily made in therapy, she decided that the sisters needed to be together again. Janice talked to Paul, and the family welcomed Maddison to their brood with plans to adopt her as well! Five teenagers under one roof! Maddison and Emily have both embraced being part of a larger family and have settled well into their new life.
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.
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.

Cabaret | Saturday, May 13, 2017
Hilton Hotel & 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 The Best of The Second City-Chicago – fabulously funny improvisational comedy. Attire is casual. Tickets are $175 per person and can be purchased online at childsaving.org/cabaret.

Omaha Gives! | Wednesday, May 24
Midnight to Midnight | omahagives24.org
On Wednesday, May 24, for 24 hours, you can help raise money to help abused and neglected kids by going online to omahagives24.org and designating your donation to Child Saving Institute! It’s our 125th year, so we have an aggressive goal of $125,000! We need just 2,500 gifts of $50 to reach the goal. Will you help?

Golf Fore Kids | Monday, June 19
The Players Club at Deer Creek | 11 a.m. Start
Don’t miss this fun Golf Tournament featuring great prizes! For more information or to become an event sponsor, contact Anna at awilley@childsaving.org or register online at childsaving.org/golfforekids.

Leave a legacy for kids! For information about including Child Saving Institute’s kids in your estate plans, please contact Cathy Tibbels, Marketing Director, at Child Saving Institute: 402.504.3663 or ctibbels@childsaving.org.