



Relief Nursery success stories abound - thankfully!

'Hope' and 'Change' have been two of the key messages in our recent presidential election. For those working on creating a Relief Nursery in the Ontario community, these words are the reason for the work. Relief Nurseries make a critical difference to at-risk children – and ultimately to an entire community. Bend's Relief Nursery shares some of its success stories with us:

Joey's Story ... "Joey" is a 2-year-old with a wide smile who loves to give hugs. Joey had been in our program about a year before he was moved into foster care last fall, out of a severely abusive situation. Even though

going into foster care improves the safety and physical well being of children, the transition is emotionally traumatic. Coming to class at MountainStar and riding the bus back and forth was the only familiar aspect of his life left. For him to know that no matter where he was, the bus would find him, was something he could count on while he adjusted to his new home, and according to his foster mother, really helped with his transition. He knows when it's time for the bus, waiting at the window for it to come, and he always gives the driver a hug when he gets in.

Ruthie's Story ... "Ruthie" started in our program just before

her first birthday, under weight and withdrawn. She spent her days alone in a play pen or crib while her teen mom was in the next room with friends, occasionally picking Ruthie up to give her a bottle or change a diaper. Her parents loved her, but didn't understand the attention a baby needs to thrive and feel safe. They also struggled with unstable housing, unemployment, a lack of education and drug use. When Ruthie started, she couldn't be separated from her coat as it was her sole source of comfort. Her teachers walked, rocked and soothed her and she gradually learned to trust her teachers.
(Story continues on next page)

TVCRN and TVCC: Building a strong partnership

Abby Lee, TVCC Public Information Director

While the efforts to establish a Relief Nursery in Malheur County have moved from a dream to a soon-to-be reality, the seeds of this endeavor have been a long-time vision for TVCC President Jim Sorensen and TVCC Education Department Chair Joyce Davis.

Davis, who came to TVCC in 1998, immediately saw the need for not only a Relief Nursery, but for a training laboratory to help students gain practical experience in a supervised and mentoring environment.

"While classroom instruction is important for laying the foundational theories, it's the actual experience working with children that helps students gain skills and expertise to deal with the variety of situations they will face in their own practice," Davis said.

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Need for Relief Nurseries is real to children they serve

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Over time she ventured on to the floor to play with toys then to interact with other children. Her teacher made extra home visits to help mom learn how to play with Ruthie and educate her on safe parenting. Today, Ruthie is a gregarious 2 ½ year old who loves to come to class, play dress-up, and ride bikes.

Brian's Story ... "Brian's" family was referred to MountainStar by Child Welfare. His mother had lost custody of

her first child do to neglect issues and Brian, her second child, was removed from her care shortly after his birth for the same issues. Brian was reunited with his mother last fall and was enrolled in MountainStar's therapeutic classroom. Shortly after Brian began, the family's only vehicle broke down and Brian was not able to continue coming to class. Because of our transportation program we were able to bring Brian to MountainStar and return him home. Brian is very

small for his age and has not been gaining weight in a desirable manner. Because of his family's history, staff are very concerned that Brian is failing to thrive. It is critical that he attend class two times a week so his weight can be monitored and staff can ensure that he is eating properly. Thanks to its transportation program, MountainStar was able to continue to provide these much-needed services to this high-risk child.



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We sincerely thank the
Commission on Children & Families
for its continued support of TVCRN.

We recognize these special acts of kindness by those helping to make the relief nursery dream come true ...

- We thank the staff and parishioners of **St. Matthew's Episcopal Church** for their generous support of the TVCRN.
- A special thanks to **Wal-Mart, ITYSE Bag Enterprises**, air brush artist **Bill Closson**, and **Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution** for their generous donations that will help make our spring raffle fundraiser a definite success! (Thanks to board member **Sharon Blacketter**, too!)
- Three cheers for **Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries** for its ongoing support.
- We appreciate the **TVCC Foundation** and TVCC President Dr. **Jim Sorensen**.
- Thanks to **Sharron Kipling** (Malheur CCF Board Member), **Wendy Hill & Christine Phillips** (DHS) for their support of TVCRN.
- We thank state **Sen. Ted Ferrioli** & state **Rep. Cliff Bentz** for their time.
- We thank the **SRCI inmates** for their \$500 donation to TVCRN.



Children's bedroom suites to be raffled in spring fundraiser

The TVCRN Nursery Board of Directors has planned a raffle fundraiser for this spring. The items to be raffled off will feature both a little girl's and little boy's bedroom suite, according to board member Sara Serrano.

"These gorgeous bedroom suites will be raffled separately and all proceeds will go directly to our Relief Nursery," Serrano said, noting each suite will consist of one twin bed frame, twin bed mattress/box spring set, a bed-in-a-bag comforter set (donated by Ontario's Wal-Mart), pillows and

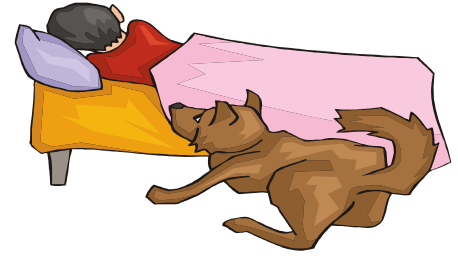
hand-crafted wooden toy boxes.

The girl's bedroom theme is delicate butterflies, flowers and lady bugs. TVCRN board member Sharon Blacketter donated the twin frame, made from unique scrolled-iron metal. The toy box will have artistic airbrushing designs to fit the theme.

The boy's bedroom theme is all about sports. The twin bed frame, donated by ITYSE Shopping Bags, is made of wood with custom-designed airbrushing art work by Bill Closson, a correction officer from Snake River

Correctional Institution. The bed frame will feature soccer ball, football and basketball designs. The boy's suite also will have a hand-crafted toy box featuring designs in the sports theme.

Raffle tickets will be sold for \$5 each or three for \$13.



What is a Relief Nursery?

Treasure Valley Children's Relief Nursery is a strength-based program modeled after the 25-year-old, highly successful Relief Nursery, Inc. located in Eugene, Ore. We will serve families with children between 6 weeks and 4 years of age, who are at risk of child abuse or neglect.

Our goal is to help families succeed by providing the following services:

Therapeutic Classroom Program

When an infant or toddler's world is highly chaotic, that child needs a safe, predictable, empowering environment. This is what the Relief Nursery offers: A place where at-risk, distressed



infants and children can thrive. The majority of children will receive therapeutic support, because they are experiencing social, language, intellectual, emotional and physical delays. If not dealt with at an early age, these problems impact their ability to learn in school, function independently and develop positive relationships.

Outreach Program

An Outreach Program provides crisis intervention and ongoing services for high-risk families.

5 Core Services

Families served by Relief Nurseries are eligible for: 1) Parent support and referral, 2) Parent skills training classes, 3) Home visits, 4) Respite care, and 5) Basic needs support.

Why do we need a Relief Nursery?

Unfortunately, there is a need in our community. In 2007 in Malheur County, 244 children were victims of child abuse or neglect – that's nearly 30 children per 1,000 children in our county! Sadly, this rate was 91 percent worse than Oregon's average. And, nearly 50 percent of these victims were under the age of 6. Add to this the fact that 173 children in the county have been in foster care at least once during the past year.

TVCRN is unique

TVCRN has created a powerful collaboration with Treasure Valley Community College. Teachers today need to have experience and training in the observation, assessment, and treatment of children and families of neglect and abuse. A Lab School will be placed in the Relief Nursery to provide specialized training to TVCC Early Childhood Education majors in therapeutic intervention. *(See the story that begins on Page 1)*

TVCC lab is example of community collaboration

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When President Sorensen came to the college in 2000, the two began collaborating on designs and curriculum to develop a developmentally appropriate early education lab for TVCC students. With the budget cuts community colleges faced in 2001, the project was shelved until proponents of the Relief Nursery approached the college and a partnership was immediately realized.



Davis' work has been helping people develop the skills to raise healthy, happy children and to make communities better by strengthening family relationships. Having taught at universities and colleges in Florida and Arizona, she has been a long-time advocate of establishing a Relief Nursery because she knows the value of intervening early with at-risk families and children.

For Davis, locating the Relief Center on TVCC's campus is the perfect synergy between meeting a community need and providing high-quality instructional opportunities for students.

The TVCC Lab School will provide a one-way observation area attached to the Relief Center Nursery. As children play and learn, students can observe best-practices and evaluate intervention techniques. Currently, TVCC students participate in

classroom observation directly in early childhood classrooms, but having a non-intrusive way to observe the classroom has many advantages.

"Having what would essentially be strangers in the classroom doing intense 'watching' can be very disruptive and uncomfortable for children," Davis said. "The risk that the observation could be disruptive for the children is not worth the educational value the observation could provide."

An enclosed observation booth, attached to a college classroom is a perfect solution. On one side of the wall children will play and be taught by highly trained teachers, and on the other side—separated by a one-way mirror and sound proofing - TVCC students will don headphone to observe the children interacting with others

In addition to not disrupting the children, Davis cites the ability to immediately discuss observations and to conduct teaching in the adjacent TVCC classroom as advantages to having the observation room and classroom linked. In addition, the opportunity to have the TVCC students be able to observe best practices with an especially at-risk population is unique. TVCC students will be expected to adhere to strict ethical guidelines and confidentiality and privacy of the children in the center will be protected.

"Our students will have the advantage of seeing intervention techniques and then be able to apply and evaluate those based on their curriculum, Davis said. "This experience will help us train highly qualified teachers who will be better able to handle situations in their own early childhood classrooms."

President Sorensen adds, "This combination of a classroom lab and a Relief Nursery is earmarked to become a national model – a one-of-a-kind approach," he said. "TVCC is proud to partner with the Treasure Valley Relief Nursery to bring a much-needed service to our campus and our community."

While specific space on campus is still being determined, and much of the next steps depend on the ability of TVCRN to obtain additional construction funds, the commitment between the two entities remains strong.

For Davis, the sooner the TVCRN is established on TVCC's campus, the better – for TVCC students and for the at-risk children in our local communities.