

Dear Childhaven Community and Friends,

Over the years, it has been brought to my attention that I occasionally ‘bury the lead’, especially when it involves news about myself. With that in mind, I’m going to lead with the lead: In the summer of 2022, I informed Childhaven’s Board of Directors that I will be transitioning out of my role as Childhaven’s CEO in the summer of 2023.

My heart-felt commitment to our vision and work made this a very difficult decision. After much consideration, my desire to spend more time with my grandkids (the third one is due in March), and my need to be of more support to my aging parents, made the decision for me. Of equal importance to me, this is a perfect time for Childhaven to make this transition given the team, board, and strategic plan we have in place.

My future work will be consulting with nonprofits on strategy, mergers, governance, and organizational development. I hope to be able to help other organizations transform, grow, and partner to improve collective impact in the same way Childhaven has.

### **A few reflections on the last seven years**

Shortly after I arrived at Childhaven in 2016, we did a comprehensive internal assessment, paired with an extensive external analysis of the ecosystem within which we operate. Our objective was to determine how we could maximize our impact and advance our vision that: All children are safe and healthy, thriving physically, socially, emotionally, and educationally, and that they are well-nurtured by their family and community.

As a result of this analysis, we became constructively dissatisfied with the status quo, especially the fact that outcomes, at a population level, have not been improving, particularly for low income and children of color. We looked in the mirror and asked, ‘what would we need to do differently if we truly committed to maximizing impact?’ The answer was, “a lot!”

I am very pleased to report that thanks to the combined efforts of a highly engaged Board; a world-class leadership team; a dedicated staff of professionals; loyal donors and investors; and crucial community partners, the Childhaven of 2023 scarcely resembles the Childhaven of 2016.

- We are serving over 500% more children and families and doing so in a much more holistic and evidence-based manner.
- We have gone from one to 13 service lines.
- We adopted an Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) framework as the connecting tissue between all of our programs and strategies.
- We dramatically diversified and improved our revenue sources, which enabled us to move from consistently large deficit budgets to consistently break-even or better budgets, while also increasing the compensation of all staff.
- We committed to identifying and rooting out racism in organizational policies and practices.
- We transitioned our service philosophy and communication away from an approach that unintentionally stigmatized those we served to communication that centers on each individual's strengths, potential, and dreams.

- We have formed high-impact partnerships with allied organizations and sectors such as primary health care to further embed within the community.
- We executed two successful and simultaneous mergers with values-aligned organizations, integrating Art with Heart and Renton Area Youth and Family Service into Childhaven.
- We sold our “headquarters” in Seattle to move deeper into home and community-based locations.
- We drafted and adopted an extremely bold Strategic Impact Plan (SIP) to guide our work in the coming years. The SIP includes strategies to:
  - Further strengthen our continuum of care and infrastructure
  - Expand workforce development through the establishment of a Center for IECMH Excellence
  - Lead system change efforts
  - Embrace partnerships in everything we do

Guided by a visionary plan, a very secure financial position, an extraordinary team, and a passionately engaged Board of Directors and Community Leadership Board, Childhaven is perfectly positioned for this transition. I am honored and pleased to be a part of the search committee and have every confidence we will find the right person to whom I will pass the baton. We are targeting July as the start date, with the likelihood there will be some period of overlap. I am also flexible on my own transition date and willing to continue to serve as CEO if a few months more are needed to ensure we secure the perfect applicant.

**In the end, it’s all about relationships!**

I’ve had this quote by Thomas Merton posted above my desk for most of my tenure at Childhaven--

“Do not depend on the hope of results. You may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and even achieve no result at all. As you get used to this idea, you start more and more to concentrate not on the results, but on the value, the rightness, the truth of the work itself. You gradually struggle less and less for an idea and more and more for specific people. In the end, it is the reality of personal relationship that saves everything.”

I am very proud of Childhaven’s growth and transformation, and in a very real way, I have been transformed by being a part of it. In the end, it really is *the reality of personal relationships that saves everything*, and the relationships I have made at Childhaven will be treasured forever. As I still have at least 5 months left at Childhaven, this is not a goodbye. Instead, it is a heartfelt *thank you*.

With Gratitude,



Jon Botten