Your support advances an achievable vision

By Maria Chavez Wilcox
Childhaven President

“A community where child abuse and neglect no longer exist.”
That's Childhaven’s vision statement, and to many people, it may appear to be an unreachable goal. But not to me.
This vision is at the heart of the work that we do with children and with their parents. Research tells us that one in three parents who abuse their kids were abused themselves as children. We also know that mental health issues and addiction are common factors in abuse and neglect.
What a tragedy it would be if we healed children of the terrible trauma they experienced only to see them reunited with moms and dads who are ill-equipped with positive parenting skills. Or left parents adrift without the resources they need to recover from their own serious problems.
This two-generation approach is increasingly the subject of research into early childhood programs like ours. Much of it is showing that engaging both children and parents not only affects their lives, it affects the generations that follow.
And it affects us as well. We all have a stake in ensuring that families have the resources and skills they need to thrive. By addressing the needs of families, we can break this vicious cycle and put an end to abuse and neglect.
I am so grateful that Childhaven supporters like you embrace and share in our vision. Thank you for caring.

Making steady strides

Childhaven supports a determined mom’s efforts to reunite her family

Peering through the window of a playhouse front door, Javier lets out a cheerful squeal as he quickly shuts the mailbox, just as his mother puts a pretend letter inside it.
“He heeeeeee!” the 2-year-old exclaims with a silly smile.

Javier (whose name we’ve changed to protect his privacy) loves few things more than making people laugh — especially his mom, his teachers and his therapists at Childhaven.

When Javier first arrived at Childhaven, he was quiet and withdrawn. Most days, he showed little interest in classroom activities. While other kids giggled and played, he kept to himself.

Born with underdeveloped ears, Javier doesn't hear as well as other kids. But with help from hearing aids and his occupational and speech therapists at Childhaven, he's made some big breakthroughs.

“Yesterday, he said, ‘Please’ and ‘Clean up’ for the first time,” boasts his mom, who’s learning sign language, which can help young children of all hearing abilities express themselves more confidently.

“Thank you, Childhaven, for teaching my daughter a lot of things and also helping me. I now feel I am much more fit for my role as a mother and am proud of my accomplishments.” — A Childhaven Mother
Meet Nell Robinson

*Parenting Skills Manager*

Every family that comes to Childhaven is navigating a new beginning. Parents, just like the children in our classrooms, are striving to heal.

Because of the tough times that bring families here, many parents fixate on the negative — the things they wish they could change about themselves. They see glimpses of their own flaws when their kids misbehave. It can be a troubling experience that sparks feelings of judgment and shame.

I remind parents that we all tend to dwell on our mistakes. No matter how many things we do right, we focus on our screw-ups. I teach parents that can help them find a more positive and hopeful frame of mind, to start noticing the things they do really well, and to build on that.

Appreciating parents

*‘You’re doing a good job’*

When Norris Frederick was a preschooler at Childhaven, he had no idea what a tough time his mom was having trying to do right by him. Today, he gets it — and gives back by hosting an annual Parent Appreciation event Childhaven.

“Parents deserve to hear, ‘You’re doing a good job. Keep it up. We appreciate you,’” says the five-time NCAA All-American track star, one of the most decorated athletes in University of Washington history.

Norris’ mom, Darlene, has proudly volunteered at all three Childhaven Parent Appreciation events, including one in late November that drew dozens of parents who were treated to lunch, live music, a raffle and photo booth.

“He loves this place,” Darlene says. “Childhaven saved us.”

Norris Frederick, Childhaven parent

Laniesha Randolph and Ryan Brown

PHOTO BY AQUILA DANIEL

PHOTOGRAPHY
It’s one of the many steps Javier’s mother is taking — with steady guidance from Childhaven and the generous donors who support our mission — to rebuild her relationship with her youngest child. She visits Javier in his classroom twice a week and picks him up every Friday for a visit before he returns to his foster family. Occupational therapists helped her master the intricate process of changing Javier’s feeding tube, which he needs because he’s not able to swallow liquids.

“That’s a big deal,” says Jessica Julius, the Childhaven child and family therapist who meets regularly with Javier and his mother. “She’s taking care of his medical needs — so well that she can help teachers if they have any trouble with it.”

Last year on her birthday, Javier’s mom graduated from an intensive drug and alcohol treatment program and has consistently achieved her goals in follow-up treatment. She’s working on a parenting plan with Javier’s father so they can focus on being there for their son — each in their own way — once he’s able to move out of foster care and back home with his mom, big brother and big sister.

“It’s so grateful for Childhaven,” Javier’s mother says, “for everything they’ve done to help me get my family back together again.”
Kai

Kai developed a reputation in his class for giving the “best hugs ever.” But when he first came to Childhaven, he would scan his classroom with watchful eyes... then zero in on a classmate and pounce!

“Owie, that hurts! Be gentle with me,” a fuzzy tiger would say to a lion.

In time, Kai used his words more instead of his busy hands. When he’d ask his friends nicely for a toy, he found they’d share with a smile. Eventually, Kai gave up his panther-like pouncing and delighted in playing silly games with his friends and teachers — and seeing their faces light up when he gave fun-loving hugs.
Words of inspiration and hope

Bestselling author and advocate to keynote our annual spring fundraiser

During her nine years in foster care, Ashley Rhodes-Courter lived in 14 different foster homes. Every day, she clung to the hope of reuniting with her mother and little brother. But time and time again, her mom’s struggles with drug abuse dashed those hopes.

In her New York Times bestseller, Three Little Words, Ashley shares her painful story of survival through years of upheaval and suffering. It’s an unforgettable memoir that speaks to the amazing potential for healing and growth that we nurture in the children at Childhaven.

Ashley will inspire guests at our luncheon on March 11, recounting her grueling journey through a troubled childhood marred by abuse and neglect to the loving home where, at last, her adoptive parents made her feel safe, supported and loved.

Three Little Words started out as an essay, which won a writing contest for high school students and was published in New York Times Magazine. It became a sensation when it was published in 2008, and is being made into a movie.

Ashley’s story, her education and personal experiences give her a unique perspective on the work we do at Childhaven to give children and families the support they need to start over and thrive together.

“Broken promises crippled me for years,” Ashley writes in Three Little Words. “As [my adoptive parents] kept their pledges to me, my faith in others expanded… until one day, I not only felt safe, I did not want to leave.”

Today, Ashley is an internationally recognized speaker, a social worker and advocate who has fostered and adopted her own children.

Celebration Luncheon: Join us March 11!

Come revel in the amazing strides that our children make because of your support, and connect with other Childhaven champions at our annual Celebration Luncheon at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 11, at the Washington State Convention Center. Visit us online at childhaven.org/luncheon to register. Better yet, be a table captain and invite nine of your friends, family and co-workers!

For more information, contact Danielle Thompson at daniellet@childhaven.org or 206.975.4806.
How a different approach to court gives families a better chance of success

Standing face to face with a judge, no attorney as an intermediary and with a team of advocates in their corner, many Childhaven parents are improving their chances of reuniting with their children.

It’s called Family Treatment Court (FTC), and by many accounts, King County has one of the most successful such programs in the nation.

Parents with substance abuse problems who are referred to the child welfare system for abuse or neglect can opt into FTC. There, they find increased support — from chemical dependency counselors, mental health therapists, Childhaven and others ordered by the court to collaborate on the parent’s treatment plan — along with more personal responsibility for their own success.

“It’s a completely different experience from regular court. Parents feel like the court is there to support them and is rooting for them to succeed rather than being there to judge.”

Todd recently was appointed to the Advisory Council for FTC. Childhaven is one of very few nonprofit organizations to be asked to lend its expertise to the court.

“You can secure the future of Childhaven

In Childhaven’s 105-year history, we have never been more certain that our healing care for children fills a critical need — for the children and families we serve and for our entire community.

Our Second Century Campaign ensures that will be here for another 100 years and beyond. The campaign will raise $12 million from new and loyal donors to protect and strengthen our core services and also create an $8 million endowment to further secure our mission.

Learn how you can play a significant role in the campaign today by contacting Dawn Griffey Petricciani at 206.957.4808 or dawng@childhaven.org.

Our vision is a community where child abuse and neglect no longer exist.

Our mission is to forever end the cycle of child abuse and neglect by healing its youngest victims with scientifically proven therapeutic care, preparing them to be successful learners, supporting their families, and laying the foundation for lifelong loving relationships.

Childhaven is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

To respect the privacy of the children and families we serve, we may change their names in articles, hide or obscure their faces in photographs, or use stock photos.