

Healing. Hugs. Hope. Since 1909.

Fall 2013

# HavenSent

## Along rocky paths to the mountaintop



By Maria Chavez Wilcox  
Childhaven President

*“Our way is not soft grass. It’s a mountain path with lots of rocks. But it goes upwards, forward, toward the sun.”*

— Ruth Westheimer, author and psychiatrist

We tell you stories of triumph in this newsletter, as well we should. Your support makes them all possible. But they’re not stories of “soft grass.”

All our children come to us along paths strewn with the rocks of abuse, neglect or maternal substance abuse.

The therapy and care we provide is the upward path toward the sun for children. The Second Century Campaign, which will secure and stabilize our funding for the future, ensures that the path remains clear. More than halfway toward our campaign goal, that mountaintop is in sight.

Childhaven Board member Bareq Peshtaz exemplified this metaphor when he recently climbed Mt. Rainier, standing at the summit with a Childhaven flag fluttering in the icy wind.



Bareq Peshtaz, flanked by guides Josh Maggard and Paul Edgren

“Any climb is a struggle, but if we persevere, we can accomplish our goals,” Bareq told me. “I was proud to share the summit with Childhaven as a way to symbolize our goal of ending the cycle of abuse and neglect.”

Loyal supporters like you and Bareq are moving our children upwards, forward, toward the sun each and every day.



L – R: Megan Frazer, Vicki Mohn, Jamie Billetdeaux

## It’s the little things

How Childhaven helps babies heal and thrive

Many babies come to Childhaven reeling from the effects of drug or alcohol withdrawal. Spending the first few weeks of life in detox is a painful and isolating shock to the system that denies newborns the warm and loving attention they instinctively crave from their mothers.

Whether from detox, abuse or neglect, prolonged distress floods babies’ systems with “fight-or-flight” hormones, essentially locking their brains in high-anxiety survival mode.

At Childhaven, we give babies a calming environment where consistent routines help them learn that if something’s wrong,

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## Actress Patty Duke will keynote Childhaven’s Celebration Luncheon



Celebrated actress Patty Duke will be the keynote speaker at Childhaven’s annual Celebration Luncheon on Tuesday, March 11, at the Washington State Convention Center. The brilliant child actress in *The Miracle Worker* and bubbly teen on TV’s *Patty Duke Show* concealed a troubled life.

Scarred by an abusive upbringing by her managers and struggling with addictions, suicide attempts and undiagnosed bipolar disorder, she triumphed to become an author, mental health activist and still-in-demand actress. Watch our Facebook page for more information.



“Hugs can do great amounts of good – especially for children.” — Princess Diana

# In My Own Words

## LaShon Lewis

*Toddler teacher at Childhaven's  
Eli Creekmore branch*

I started out at Childhaven as a substitute teacher three years ago, when I needed a break from the teenage girls my mom and I foster at home. Our kids usually get placed with us after every other option has failed.

They've all endured abuse and neglect in one form or another. It's not easy being their Auntie Shon, but it's the only kind of family I've ever known. From my great grandmother on down, we've always opened our home to the kids everyone else turns away.



I grew up with so many foster siblings, I lost count long ago. I've reconnected with some of them, who now have kids at Childhaven. It's sad, but I don't judge. Breaking the cycle of abuse and neglect is hard.

The parents in my classroom appreciate that I talk to them with respect. I ask them how they're doing. If I gauge what's going on with the parent, I can better assist the child. I try to be gentle and encouraging with the tips I share when parents visit the classroom. I jump at every chance to make them feel better about themselves. A lot of parents aren't sure if they're doing anything right.

Sometimes it's just nice to say, "You're doing a great job. Your kid's pretty awesome." That can make all the difference. It can give them hope that they can turn things around.

# Sharing the power of positive parenting with more families



Childhaven is branching out to offer our Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) classes to families beyond the Childhaven community for the first time.

This fall we are offering two three-week series of Triple P classes: one at Seattle Children's Hospital starting Oct. 20, and another at Odessa Brown Children's Clinic in Seattle's Central District starting Nov. 17.

Each 90-minute class will include a one-hour presentation followed by a half-hour Q&A. The classes will focus on topics such as how to create a positive learning environment for your child, and helping children develop self-esteem and problem-solving skills.

"We are thrilled about this collaboration," says Katharine Fitzgerald, Director of Marketing and Health Promotion at Seattle Children's. "Every time we build up a parent's confidence with knowledge and skills they can use day by day, challenge by challenge, we make a real and lasting difference for families and our community as a whole."



The seminars are open to any King County family looking for extra parenting guidance. To learn more visit [www.childhavenparentingskills.org](http://www.childhavenparentingskills.org).

# Delighting babies' senses with Nurturing Pathways

Childhaven has always weaved music, movement and other sensory experiences into the therapy and care we provide to our children. Now, we're literally dancing our little ones toward emotional health.

Nurturing Pathways is a creative dance program that's all about engaging multiple senses. During nursery rhyme exercises, teachers sing *I'm a Little Teapot* while rolling babies around on a bouncy ball, which helps them build up balance and muscle control.

"The melody engages them on an auditory level. Combining the melody with the words, bringing music and language skills together, doing exercises with the body at the same time — it engages the brain on so many levels," says Nurturing Pathways instructor Megan Frazer, who has volunteered to work with our teachers.

Babies take gentle tummy-time rides on sheets, developing the eye tracking that will help them learn to read. They sway back and forth in stretchy swings that envelop their little bodies. They play peek-a-boo with scarves their teachers sweep over them, head to toe — all with the sweet sounds of music filling the classroom around them.

"It's amazing to do these exercises with our babies — to watch their progress day after day as they learn to expect what comes next and what movements coordinate with the different rhythms," says infant room teacher Jamie Billetdeaux. "It's such a great way to tie in everything that we do."



## It's the little things

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someone's here to make it better as quickly as possible. With two teachers to every six infants, along with the helping hands of volunteers, babies get lots of one-to-one attention.

Everything we do is guided by research showing that the simple acts of holding babies close, making eye contact, talking to them and using gentle touches from head to toe activates their nervous system and does wonders for their developing brains. (See a related article about our Nurturing Pathways program on this page.)

Positive experiences that meet babies' physical and emotional needs simultaneously — like feeding while nestled in the arms of a calm adult singing a sweet, quiet song — foster healthy brain development.

"From birth to age 5, the structure and wiring of the brain are constantly reaching out, forming connections between nerve cells that are critical to the brain's ability to send and receive signals," explains Todd George, Program Director at Childhaven's Broadway branch. "Every experience we have creates another connection and another connection and another."

Negative experiences can stunt brain development by preventing those connections from completing the journey from one synapse to the next.

"It's like taking a trip but never getting to your destination," Todd explains. "You blow a flat tire and never get where you're trying to go."

As we work to help children heal and thrive, we invite parents into the classroom to experience how joyful it can be to bond with their babies. Sometimes, all it takes is seeing their children smile.

The turning points that parents experience can be as rewarding as the children's, says infant teacher Vicki Mohn.

"When parents feel successful in the classroom, they come back and forge a better relationship with their child."





# Monique

For her first few months at Childhaven, baby Monique cried nonstop. She was so easily over stimulated, any little noise would trigger a wave of tremors in her arms, hands and head.

“She seemed scared — always wanting to know what was happening,” her teacher recalls.

Monique was born with methadone coursing through her body. The drug helped her mom kick heroin, but spending the first few weeks of life detoxing overwhelmed Monique’s fragile, little system.

Extreme anxiety is a common side effect of methadone exposure in newborns. Monique’s teacher worked patiently with her, seizing every opportunity to help her calm down as soon as she started to get worked up.

Gradually, Monique began settling down more easily. When she cried, someone was always there to figure out why, then feed her or change her or play with her or set her down for a nap. She ventured out and started playing with toys on her own, then making friends with other babies.

Once she learned how to soothe herself, she started gravitating toward younger babies when they got upset. She would sidle up to them, rub their heads, kiss their foreheads, pat their backs — anything to make them feel safe and loved, just like Childhaven made her feel.

## A true believer supports the Second Century Campaign

“I remember the first time I toured Childhaven. There were very small classes and the kids got so much individual attention. You could just see they were flourishing. In the babies’ room, the teachers held and cherished each baby as if they were the teachers’ own. The care and compassion was tangible. It was easy to make the decision to donate year after year.

“I believe in Childhaven’s mission of breaking the cycle of abuse and neglect to allow children to grow into caring, responsible adults.

That benefits our entire society. The Second Century Campaign is ensuring that this mission goes on and on. And by remembering Childhaven in my will, I feel like my support will also go on and on.

“I’d encourage everyone to take a tour. You’ll become a believer in Childhaven, too.”

— Lynn Manley, longtime Childhaven donor



Childhaven™

second century

C A M P A I G N

**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.*



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