# **In Support of a Secure Future**



## A Proposal from Legacy Health

to

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#### on behalf of

### **Legacy Salmon Creek Medical Center**

#### IN SUPPORT OF A SECURE FUTURE

People often think child abuse is something that happens in other families, in other neighborhoods, in other regions—but never close to them. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Child Protective Services (CPS) and Children's Justice Center (CJC) reveal startling statistics for Clark and Skamania counties in 2010:

- 4,412 suspected child abuse reports were received by CPS, with 2,049 assigned for investigation.
- More than 3,000 reports of possible felony-level abuse were received by CJC, with 357 detective investigations completed. This included seven child fatality investigations.
- More than 1,200 registered sex offenders live in Clark County, with 80 percent of the most serious sex offenders perpetrating upon children.

National statistics reveal a case of child abuse is reported every 10 seconds. As many as one in three girls and one in six boys will experience some form of abuse by the time they reach age 18. The fact is, child abuse occurs at every socioeconomic level, across ethnic and cultural lines, within all religions, at all levels of education and in every community. Furthermore, the incidence of child abuse — both nationally and in Southwest Washington — has only increased in the last three years.



#### **CHILD ABUSE ASSESSMENT TEAM**

Legacy Salmon Creek Medical Center, founded in 2005, is committed to offering complete pediatric care for our communities. Southwest Washington's most modern community hospital is a family-centered hospital, featuring a dedicated pediatric Emergency Department and staffed with medical experts including newborn specialists, pediatric/neonatal nurses. In 2009, Legacy Salmon Creek created its Child Abuse Assessment Team (CAAT) as a division of its Children's Services Department.

**CAAT** is dedicated to protecting the welfare of the most vulnerable segment in our population – our children. This essential program acts as an entry point into a network of available resources for families where there are concerns of abuse. CAAT conducts assessments for its patients on behalf of law and social agencies to determine the presence and nature of the abuse. The program coordinates with the other organizations to ensure children have the treatment and resources they need to heal.

Physical examinations and comprehensive evaluations are conducted in a calm and secure environment to help children feel safe. Children are provided a complete head-to-toe medical check-up. The evaluations are conducted by clinicians trained in the area of child abuse assessment and our team's high level of expertise leads to more accurate diagnoses of child abuse. In addition, other childhood diseases or conditions that might be mistaken for abuse or require medical treatment can be confirmed or ruled out. This neutral, medical approach helps ensure the right diagnoses and treatment recommendations are made for the health and safety of each child.

Funding for CAAT's sexual abuse assessments is provided by Washington State Crime Victims Program. Physical abuse and neglect cases do not receive any state funding and are not reimbursable. CAAT's broader program of child abuse education and advocacy is supported entirely by philanthropic community members and organizations.

Many agencies and organizations, such as CPS and CJC, play important roles in safeguarding our children from abuse. However, the volume of reported abuse can easily overwhelm the resources of these organizations. Likewise, specially trained clinicians and social workers are required to appropriately evaluate reports of child abuse, a process that can involve challenging intakes and evaluations with children of all ages. A well-conducted examination and assessment can be the difference that leads to rapid, meaningful treatment for the victim and a criminal conviction for the perpetrator. The Child Abuse Assessment Team is a vital resource for organizations and our communities.



#### **MEETING OUT COMMUNITY NEEDS**

As the incidence of abuse continued to increase, CAAT found it was unable to meet the demand for evaluations due to staffing and budget limitations. In addition, CAAT services were restricted to sexual abuse due to lack of funding for physical abuse and neglect cases. This left an unacceptable gap in our Southwest Washington communities' response to child abuse. In 2011, Legacy Salmon Creek committed to closing that gap and expanding this essential program to include the assessment of physical abuse and neglect.

The CAAT program today engages the full spectrum of child abuse concerns in our communities. The expansion created the structure necessary for Legacy Salmon Creek to offer vital resources for children throughout Southwest Washington suffering any type of abuse, regardless of their ability to pay, by providing:

- Dedicated physician specialists
- A medical social worker with child abuse experience
- Evaluations for physical abuse and neglect an estimated volume of 288–324 per year
- Medical consult for Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat and Skamania counties, including case review and court testimony as needed
- Expanded appointment availability for non-acute sexual abuse evaluations
- Increased collaboration with Children's Protective Services.
- Improved interagency coordination of cases with Children's Protective Services and Children's Justice Center
- Community outreach to improve child abuse awareness in Clark and surrounding counties
- Ongoing education to emergency medicine colleagues for evaluation of acute abuse victims

Ultimately, there is no magic wand that will solve the problem of child abuse in our community. But by providing rapid and respectful assessments, coordinating prevention efforts between government and non-profit organizations, and ongoing community education and outreach, CAAT helps children and families in crisis onto a healing path and toward a secure future.



#### WHY PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT IS CRUCIAL TO THE FUTURE OF CAAT

The value of these services for the children and families of Southwest Washington is indisputable. However, even though the CAAT now has the capability to manage an increased volume of physical abuse and neglect evaluations, these evaluations remain completely unfunded by state or federal agencies. The ability to sustain care and provide essential evaluations will largely depend on support from our community.

Legacy Salmon Creek's operating margins are not sufficient to bear the full cost of this vital program. Health care systems throughout the United States are experiencing fiscal crises. While Legacy Salmon Creek is well-positioned to meet these challenges, our commitment to serving un- and under-insured patients puts underfunded programs like CAAT in jeopardy. And as difficult as the environment is currently, the future is expected to be even more challenging. Lower reimbursement rates from Medicare and Medicaid, an aging population and a greater number of families without health insurance will all exert unprecedented financial pressure on nonprofit community hospitals such as Legacy Salmon Creek.

**CAAT.** Two-thirds of the evaluations performed since the expansion in 2011 are physical abuse and neglect cases. The volumes are expected to far exceed initial estimations; our provider's caseload regularly exceeds 30 cases. And, with economic uncertainty creating additional stress within families, child abuse is likely to remain an ongoing threat to our community.

#### **REQUEST FOR SUPPORT**

We are asking donors to help us give the children of Southwest Washington a brighter future. Through the creation of a \$1 million endowment, Legacy Salmon Creek will have the ability to support the services needed to treat all forms of abuse, acquire specialized experts, better collaborate with local and federal agencies, and educate those on the front lines to recognize and treat child abuse.

Through your support, we will increase awareness and have the ability to assist the hundreds of children who are referred to CAAT every year. Your gift will make a positive impact and serve as a powerful endorsement of Legacy Salmon Creek and CAAT to our communities. Help us protect our community's children — and inspire the support of others — by joining with us and building this endowment.

Thank you for your consideration of support.



