



FOOTHILLS CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER

## Annual Letter

December 4, 2009

Dear Friends,

Recently, I saw an adorable 5 year old girl in my office who had a concerning injury that suggested neglect or abuse. I called child protective services (CPS) even though I was concerned with what would happen to the family by making the call. Would, in fact, this child's life be improved, and would she be safe from further abuse? Or instead, would contacting CPS create further problems that would haunt her and her family down the road? Would someone work individually with the family? Would there be a need for mental health therapy? Who would coordinate follow up? Would this child be subjected to multiple interviews that would worsen the family stress and therefore actually hurt the child in the long run? You can imagine that with all of these questions some physicians hesitate to make that first call.

Addressing this anxiety is at the heart of the Foothills Child Advocacy Center. We strongly believe that we will get it right. We will protect the child, bolster the family unit, and in the process improve the social network around them. For the last three years, thanks to your help, we have been serving the greater Charlottesville/Albemarle County area by providing a child-friendly, coordinated approach to the investigation of child sexual and physical abuse. Since we last wrote to you, with the help of the multidisciplinary team, we have reviewed over 130 cases of child abuse and performed over 100 forensic interviews. We bring together police officers, social workers, commonwealth's attorneys, mental health care professionals, health care professionals, and many others, to review these cases to ensure the investigation is progressing and that the child and their family are receiving the services they need.

The forensic interview is the foundation of the process. Through grants and fundraising we are able to retain a full-time forensic interviewer who guarantees that children will be interviewed with the care and caution that they deserve, in a way that minimizes stress but maximizes our ability to use their words to prevent further child abuse and restore safety to their family. We do this in a special and safe location that gives children a sense of security in a trying time.

As you may have seen in our newsletter, our location has changed. Although we remain organizationally independent, we decided to rent space from Children, Youth and Family Services, Inc. in their new building on E. High Street. This is a wonderful option for us as it allows us to control overhead. However, our long term goal remains to have a free standing structure in the community where we can provide a safe and child-friendly environment in which to not only interview victims of child abuse but also coordinate their overall care.

We have been stable and committed as a staff and a Board for the past three years, and we are excited to move to a new place, both figuratively and literally. We hope to be able to apply for full membership in the National Children's Alliance this spring, and we look forward to locating a permanent home for the Center in the area. With grants from the Virginia Department of Health and Human Services, Family & Children's Trust Fund of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson United Way, Bama Works, and the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation, the Foothills Child Advocacy Center has been able to provide a unique and important service in our area, **but to move forward we need your support.** We have set a lofty goal of \$50,000 this year and look forward to identifying donors who wish to make substantial commitments to help meet our financial goal and to help us to grow as an organization.

On behalf of the staff and Board of the Foothills Child Advocacy Center, I thank you for your support in any way that you can give – and the children of our community thank you.

Sincerely,

Rob Trundle, M.D.

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Please check our website. Online donations will be available soon.