



FOOTHILLS
CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER

2020 at Foothills Child Advocacy Center • A Year Like No Other

In 2020, the pandemic added an extra layer of challenges for everyone and there was no exception at Foothills. Despite the difficulties, we were able to expand our services to help the victims of child abuse and their families because of the dedication of our funding partners and individual donors.

In early March, Mayra Cardenas came on board full-time as a Forensic Interviewer. She brings 15 years of experience helping children and families in our community. Her ability to interview children in Spanish has enriched our services immeasurably.



Even though children may speak English, they often switch to speaking the language spoken in their home or to the language in which the abuse occurred when telling their stories. Mayra also teaches our *Stewards of Children* classes, where members of our community can learn how to protect their children from abuse.

Foothills finalized its agreement with the University of Virginia Medical Center on July 15, 2020. Our Medical Director, Dr. Jeanne Parrish, has examined 25 children onsite at Foothills. She is a wonderful asset to our team, providing invaluable perspective



on the well-being of the children as we meet with caregivers and members of our Multi-Disciplinary Team to collaborate in the best interest of each child.

Since our part-time Forensic Interviewer is not currently traveling to outlying counties due to the pandemic, families are coming to Foothills for forensic interviews. This change in our operations has increased demand for onsite medical exams and family services. We are currently seeking a part-time Bilingual Family Advocate to expand our ability to serve families in Buckingham, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Nelson, and Orange and to serve Spanish-speaking families in all locations.

In 2020, Foothills added informative videos to our website and social media, making it easier for families to prepare for their visit. The videos are kid-friendly—in English or in Spanish—and help reduce anxiety for families. We also added a video on the FoothillsCAC.org home site so everyone can hear directly from our wonderful staff how they help the kids who come to Foothills.

Foothills ramped up our press coverage. Local news outlets provided a platform to educate people in our community about how to detect and report child abuse and inform local residents of the added danger with increased incidents of child abuse during the pandemic.



CASE CRACKER

In June, we installed a new state-of-the-art recording system—Case Cracker, which allows two interviewers to meet with children simultaneously, reducing the amount of time a family must spend at Foothills when they have multiple children being interviewed. The system also allows for the Commonwealth Attorney, detectives and Child Protective Services social workers to view the interview remotely and for our staff to conduct tele-forensic interviews.



ABOUT FOOTHILLS CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER

Foothills Child Advocacy Center provides a coordinated system of effective response and intervention to children who have been victimized. Our goals are to minimize trauma, promote healing, and ensure child safety. Through education and outreach, Foothills increases community understanding of the ways to prevent and stop abuse. Foothills fulfills these goals by:

Coordinating a team of 14 local government and nonprofit agencies to increase communication and mutual accountability, reduce duplication of services, and help ensure that children are safe and that their needs are met.

Conducting coordinated forensic interviews that reduce the number of times a child is interviewed and so reduces the child's trauma, while at the same time gathers accurate information that will help to keep the child safe.

Working to ensure that children receive appropriate medical care and mental health services.

Providing non-offending caregivers ongoing support to help them provide safe, healing environments for their children and reduce the risk of the child's revictimization.



COVID-19 PIVOT

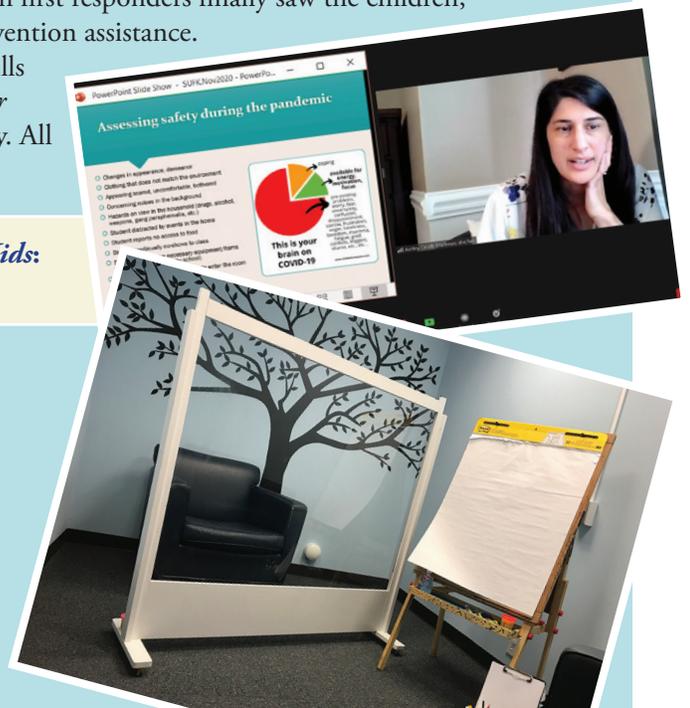
At the beginning of the pandemic, Foothills was immediately declared a first responder organization by Governor Northam and it was imperative that it remain open. The pandemic brought added challenges to Foothills and the families in our community. According to the National Institutes of Health and other industry experts, the physical abuse of children is 20 times higher in 2020. At the same time, the majority of child advocacy centers were experiencing a decrease in reported cases. Mandated reporters were not seeing the children in lockdown and when first responders finally saw the children, they were more likely to need emergency room care and/or suicide prevention assistance.

To find the children during this time, we needed to get creative! Foothills launched a new initiative as part of our mandated reporter *Stand Up for Kids* training. We added practical tips for detecting child abuse virtually. All of our trainings were held online.

Over 27 agencies and nonprofits attended Foothills *Stand Up for Kids: Pandemic Edition, How to Detect Child Abuse Virtually* training.

To keep everyone safe at Foothills, we added the following ...

- Plexiglas Screens between the children and the interviewers
- See-through Masks
- Social Distancing Family Room
- HVAC Scrubber
- Washable Toys/Washer/Dryer
- Tele-Mental Health



NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Foothills New Executive Director, Cynthia Hurst, began work on March 23—one week after the COVID-19 lockdown. Ms. Hurst is an experienced nonprofit executive with over 20 years of experience as a director, development director, and fundraising consultant. She has managed a variety of organizations and has focused on forming strategic alliances with community partners and developing innovative paths to achieve organizational goals.

“We are delighted to bring someone with Cynthia’s experience and skills to lead Foothills at this most challenging and critical moment in time, and we appreciate the energy, creativity and passion she has brought to supporting the organization’s critical mission since her first day on the job in a turbulent and very disrupted environment,” said Lisa Brook, Chair of the Foothills Board of Directors. Cynthia immediately stepped into directing operations for Foothills including establishing remote operations, stabilizing financial resources, maintaining community partnerships and ensuring the continuity of essential services to children and families who find themselves in crisis involving abuse during the ongoing public health emergency.



“Foothill’s services are more important than ever as children are facing new challenges while at home in increasingly stressful circumstances. I appreciate the opportunity to lead the organization as we work with our community partners to minimize trauma, promote healing and ensure child safety,” said Hurst. “It is also important to state clearly that Foothills Child Advocacy Center stands with our brothers and sisters suffering from the everyday trauma of being targeted due to the color of their skin.” Cynthia has served as the Director of Development for the International Campaign for Tibet and as the Acting Executive Director for the Charlottesville-Albemarle SPCA during that organization’s search for a permanent executive director among other positions. She also founded and led a consulting company with over 25 nonprofit clients, providing expertise in the areas of executive coaching, fundraising, strategic planning, new program development, and board and staff development. Cynthia is focused on growing Foothills’ financial resources and expanding its child abuse prevention programs.

“My family could not have gotten through the whole painful experience if it had not been for Foothills. From the minute my daughter and I walked into your building to meet with your staff, we felt safe and welcomed.” - Grateful Parent

DEMOGRAPHICS



Number of Children Served: 232



Female: 166



Male: 66



White: 135



Black/African-American: 42



Latinx: 38



Multi-racial: 10



Asian: 4



Other: 3



Sexual Abuse: 131



Physical Abuse: 58



Neglect: 75



Other: 54



Witness to Violence: 26



Adults Trained: 559

Foothills’ core trainings are *Stand Up for Kids* and *Stewards of Children*. Child abuse awareness trainings are offered regularly to the public and are also conducted for private groups. In 2020, 559 adults were trained by Foothills staff.



Meet the Foothills' Board of Directors

We Welcomed Three New Board Members in 2020.



Cali Busch, CPA, Secretary

Cali Busch joined Foothills board of directors in April. She currently works as a Senior Revenue Accountant at CFA Institute. Cali jumped in immediately serving on the Finance Committee, where her skills are maximized. She also took on the responsibility of board Secretary in June and is doing a great job helping us keep on track in these critical areas.



Varinia Garcia Anderson, M. Ed.

Varinia Garcia Anderson, M.Ed. joined Foothills board of directors in May. She is a bilingual therapist at The Women's Initiative and brings a wealth of experience working with underserved people in our community. Vari serves on Foothills' Fundraising Committee to help us ensure we have the resources we need to serve all the children and families who come to our door.



Mark Mendelsohn, MD

Mark Mendelsohn, MD re-joined Foothills CAC board of directors in December. He previously served as Foothills' first Medical Director and is focused on helping the organization grow its child abuse prevention program. Dr. Mendelsohn has been a board certified pediatrician since 1989. He has a broad range of experience working with children, as he directed a diagnostic referral clinic and international adoption clinic at the University of Virginia. He currently works as a pediatrician at Blue Ridge Medical Center.

Lisa S. Brook, J.D.
MichieHamlett PLLC

Todd Cabell, Treasurer
Chief eCommerce Officer, Crutchfield Corporation

William Click, Chair
Assistant Director of Finance, UVa Housing and Residence Life

Lee Cilimberg
Albemarle County Retired Executive

Reza J. Daugherty, MD, FAAP
Chief of Pediatric Medical Imaging, UVa Health System

Carlton Gregory, J.D.
Assistant General Counsel, Virginia National Bank

Katherine A. Ralston
Retired, Director of the Albemarle Department of Social Services

Emily Talley, Vice Chair
Senior Fellow, Virginia Tech Center for Leadership in Global Sustainability

Lee Wietz, CFE
Virginia Bureau of Insurance, former Law Enforcement Officer, Charlottesville

Susan Wilkinson, MBA, CFP
Wilkinson Wealth Management

Melvin Wilson, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology, University of Virginia

Foothills Child Advocacy Center
1106 East High Street, Charlottesville, VA 22902
434.971.7233 • www.FoothillsCAC.org • Like us on Facebook!