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*Peg Harriott,
President & CEO*

At CSI, it's a big year for the "Class of 2012." This past May, nearly 30 children graduated from the Pre-K classes in our Early Childhood Education programs at CSI and at the Spellman Child Development Center, managed by CSI, on the College of Saint Mary campus. These youngsters are now Kindergartners in schools around the community.

We are also proud of the eight graduating teens in our Independent Living Skills program who started community college this fall.

We're always doing our best to help the children, youth and families we serve to develop the skills and tools they will need to be successful in life. In our toddler room, we help them learn to identify their feelings and then express themselves in a way that doesn't hurt themselves or others. In our preschool classrooms, we not only focus on school-readiness, but learning how to make and maintain healthy relationships and developing social skills.

In our Independent Living Skills program, we work to teach foster youth all those things that parents typically impart to their children on an informal, daily basis. Foster youth, because of family dysfunction and frequent moves, may not have the foundation of information on money management, budgeting, filing tax returns, applying for jobs, etc., other kids have. As a result, youth aging out of the child welfare system face a much greater chance of poverty, substance abuse, unemployment, incarceration and homelessness, but with CSI's help, and your help, we are able to prepare them for life on their own.

We also work to teach young parents the skills they need to raise happy, healthy kids. Our classes focus on positive parenting skills as well as positive life skills, covering everything from healthy communication skills, child development, stress management, literacy and promoting self-esteem.

With your help and support, CSI's children and families are better prepared to recognize life's gifts—as in appreciating the laughter of children—and face life's challenges. As the saying goes, "Life is a journey," and we couldn't be more pleased that you're our traveling companion.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peg Harriott". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gym Class Hero

He swims, bikes and runs for CSI's kids!

The tweets started coming in last summer. Slowly at first, and then appearing almost daily—sometimes even multiple times a day. Who was this young athlete so passionately encouraging CSI's kids to have hope? He is Adam "A.J." Fitzhenry, 28, a paramedic and EMT from Lafayette, La., who also happens to compete in one of the world's most grueling competitive sports—the Ironman Triathlon.

The Ironman consists of a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike race and a marathon 26.2-mile run, raced in that order and without a break. In order to compete at this level, A.J. follows a strict regimen, training 3 to 8 hours a day.



I'm proud to swim bike run for the foster kids @ChildSaving! They motivate me, inspire me and challenge me. DO IT FOR THE KIDS!

A.J. admits he wasn't always such an avid athlete. After gaining weight in college, he decided to get in shape and made it his goal to run a marathon. He started training—slowly at first, then realized he enjoyed long-distance running. After running his first marathon, he was hooked, and was ready to explore other endurance sports. While on a business trip to Louisiana, he met Terry Butts, a world-renowned strength and endurance trainer. A.J. was so impressed with the coach, he moved to Louisiana—a move that also offered milder weather allowing for a longer training season.

A.J. not only tweets for the foster kids, he also raises money for CSI's programs by encouraging his triathlete colleagues and Facebook friends to give up a coffee and give \$5 to the kids on Fridays. It is an idea that came from his mother, Cathy Fitzhenry, who, with A.J.'s dad, had served as a CSI mentor and admired the agency's work. "My grandfather was a foster kid in Chicago," A.J. notes, explaining his family's passion for at-risk kids. "He was one of the biggest role models of my life. He lived the American Dream—coming from nothing and turning it into a success story. Through his example and my mother's mentoring work, I know we all need help and support in our lives—especially the kids.



RETWEET if you want the kids under the care of @ChildSaving to know you care about them and are praying for them! DO IT FOR THE KIDS!

"And working for their behalf helps me, too. A lot of time you can get frustrated, get down, when you put so much work into the training and then not get the results you'd like. But then I think about the kids living in the shelter, and I step back and think, 'At the end of the day, I'm really fortunate. I have it good.' I take a breath of fresh air and think about the kids and they help me keep it all in perspective."

To follow A.J. on Twitter, go to twitter.com/SwimBikeRunNow

Ready to Launch

This year, CSI's Independent Living Skills (ILS) program has eight students attending college. It is an unusually high number, no doubt in part due to the ILS team's diligence in getting the kids enrolled and helping them secure housing.

However, the students have a challenging road ahead. Statistics show that only a small percentage of youth who "age out" of the foster care system will graduate from college.

Josh and Jake's efforts to attend college are supported and encouraged by CSI ILS Specialist Meghan O'Brien who works with these teens and other state wards to help them acquire the skills they will need to succeed in life.

Most 19-year-olds are unprepared for the realities of living on their own—especially those youth who haven't known consistency, nurturing and compassionate support. Meghan and her fellow ILS workers teach the youth how to plan and manage their time and money; how to utilize available resources and complete applications to find housing, transportation, and employment; and how to learn to make educated life choices concerning nutrition, healthcare, parenting, and sexual responsibility. Most

important, Meghan says, is to teach the young people how to create and maintain appropriate support networks.

"They need to know where to turn for help, and they have to learn to ask for help when they need it. Whether it's family or individuals with whom you've created a family-like relationship, you have to learn to communicate and mend fences and keep working on relationships. I keep telling my kids, you have to keep connections—whether with teachers, family members, coaches, mentors... So when we step out, the attorney steps out, the State steps out, you have a support system to help you make life's tough choices."



JOSH

When we visited with Josh the last week of August, he was like any other 19-year-old heading off to his first year of college...Almost.

Although he was attending freshman orientation and moving into a dorm room, Josh's journey to college wasn't typical—but it is typical of many of the youth CSI serves. You see, Josh is a survivor. He survived jail, drug addiction and the child welfare system.

Josh is attending Metro Community College with help from the \$2,500 Christine Parker Memorial Scholarship from the CSI Guild. In addition to an art class—he loves to draw and paint—he will also be taking general studies classes. His tattoos peeking out from beneath the sleeves of his t-shirt, Josh shyly confesses he'd like to use his artistic talent to be a tattoo artist himself some day. But that might have to wait until he completes a stint in the army—he also planned to speak to a recruiter later in the week.

Previously a ward of the state, Josh had witnessed a chaotic home life before going to live with a relative while his mother was incarcerated. The trauma and frustration of his situation resulted in his acting out and fighting, a repeated behavior that landed him jail. Last fall, Josh made a conscious effort to make positive changes in his life. He was determined to get out of the system and start making better choices—a decision that resulted in his quitting drugs, tapping into his spirituality, finding a part-time job last summer, earning his GED and enrolling in college. His hard work paid off. His criminal record was sealed, and he is now able to move forward with a clean slate and the option for a brighter future.



JAKE

Rail thin with a mop of dark hair and an engaging grin, you'd never guess Jake is a college freshman—he looks barely old enough to drive. But at 19, he is no longer a ward of the state, his mother is dead, and his dad isn't in the picture. Like Josh, he is also studying graphic arts at Metro Community College, but the one thing that sets him apart from most of his classmates... this baby-faced teen is a dad.

When Jake was three, his little sister, Sarah, with whom he shared a birthday, died. His mother passed away shortly thereafter. (Jake's baby, now four months old, is named for his little sister.) The ensuing years found him in and out of foster care, staying in group homes, and living with other relatives. Most unsettling, Jake's father petitioned the court to re-establish custody when he was 18, but two weeks later kicked his son out after an argument, leaving Jake literally homeless for a few days.

Jake started participating in CSI's ILS program in February 2011. He says he appreciates all that he's learned, and hears Meghan's voice in his head "all the time" when he's trying to make choices. "When I grew up, I didn't get much help from my parents and they weren't really around to teach me things. ILS is kind of like a parental system; they teach you things like cooking, taxes, budgeting and stuff. They teach you how to do things right instead of wrong."

"Jake hasn't had an easy life," Meghan says. "The first 18 years were really difficult, and the last year has been particularly trying. That's where ILS comes in."

And that's where you come in. This program is only possible through the gifts of caring people like you. Thank you for helping Josh, Jake, and all of the youth working toward self-sufficiency. **They couldn't do it without you.**



Your support in action

We caught up with Shauntia Schweigart at her workplace, Apex Foster Care, where she serves as a Foster Care Specialist. A May graduate, Shauntia earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology with a minor in Criminal Justice from the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg. She hopes to begin graduate school as soon as she saves up some money so she can pursue her dream of becoming a marriage and family therapist.

Shauntia was the first recipient of the Christine Parker Memorial Scholarship offered by the CSI Guild in 2008. She was also selected to receive the award the following year.

Any student who has participated in a CSI program is eligible to apply for the scholarship. Shauntia's prior experience in a CSI foster home qualified her for the educational boost. "I am most grateful to the agency for the scholarship," Shauntia says. "It really made a difference."

Substitute Santa | December 12-15

Everyone knows who Santa Claus is, but do you know what a Substitute Santa is? It's when generous folks like you step forward to make a brighter holiday for kids in need in our community! Last year, your generosity brought holiday cheer to hundreds of children and teens served by Child Saving Institute and we need your help again.

We especially need gift cards. Gift cards are easy to buy, easy for CSI to store and they help ensure equity among the children and teens served by CSI. Cash donations are also always appreciated and allow the staff to purchase clothing and other essentials for kids—especially for hard-to-shop-for teens—whose families are experiencing tough times.

If you prefer to purchase a gift rather than a gift card, we need movie passes, arts & crafts supplies, tonka trucks, building toys (like Legos or Lincoln logs), ethnic dolls and Barbies, board games for 8 years+, board books for infants and toddlers, wallets/billfolds, hoodies and sleep pants in adult sizes, especially XXL and XXXL, sports equipment, and electronics.

As a CSI Substitute Santa, we are asking you to please:

- Bring or mail your gift cards to CSI by December 15th;
- If you choose to purchase gifts, please bring your gifts *unwrapped* with all tags intact to CSI December 12th–15th from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. (Please note, gifts must be brought to CSI by December 15th to allow sufficient time to distribute them before the holidays);
- Visit CSI's website at www.childsaving.org to make an on-line donation.

Thank you for caring about kids!

Catching up with our Pre-K Grads

This past May, both of CSI's Early Childhood Centers—the ECEC located on our main campus as well as at the Spellman Child Development Center, managed by Child Saving Institute, on the College of Saint Mary campus—hosted “graduation” ceremonies for the preschoolers in their respective programs who would be attending Kindergarten this fall. We checked in with a few of the grads to see how they were doing in school.



AVA

When we caught up with busy Kindergartner Ava, 5, she had completed nearly three weeks of school at Hillrise Elementary in Elkhorn and had the routine down pat. She loves school; she loves her teacher, “Mrs. A,” and her new best friend is Elise. Oh, and she’s already learned to count to 10 in Spanish! (Which she proudly demonstrated while standing on one foot.)

Overall review: “Kindergarten is AWESOME!”



CALEB

The day we met Kindergartner Caleb he was sporting a t-shirt featuring the school mascot, a quail, aptly named “Grover” for Anderson Grove Elementary. Caleb likes his new teacher, Mrs. Ghaizai, enjoys playing on the swings and climbing wall at recess, and hanging with his new best friends, Ellie and Morgan. Caleb had learned to recite his ABC’s, count, and write his name before graduating from his class at Spellman Center, but in the first few weeks of school, he has already learned to write his numbers. Much to his mother’s dismay, he doesn’t seem to be eating the sack lunch she lovingly prepares for him each morning. Hmmmm. It’s a mystery...

Overall review: “I like recess!”



LAURYN

We had heard rumors that CSI Pre-K graduate Lauryn had been telling folks “I hate school!” when repeatedly grilled by well-meaning adults about how she liked Kindergarten, but she seems to have made peace with her new routine. A student at Ezra Millard Elementary, Lauryn now describes the experience as “good” and admits she likes to push kids on the tire swing at recess. On the day we met, she had learned to write the letter “M” and “how to help people in your community.” When pressed on how she would help, Lauryn explained, “If someone’s in the parking lot and a car is coming, I’ll say, ‘WATCH OUT! GET OUT OF THE WAY—THERE’S A CAR COMING!’”



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Mark Your Calendars!

Don't miss out on a moment of the fun and philanthropic opportunities we have planned for you in the coming months! Visit our website, childsaving.org, or call **504-3661** for more information about these events and how you can get involved!



Touch-A-Truck | Saturday, October 6

First Data/UNO parking lots, just south of 69th & Pacific

The CSI's Guild's exciting "friend-raiser" is a free event for the entire family where children can see and climb on "real life" vehicles. Kids, accompanied by their parents or guardian, can explore emergency and military vehicles, semi-trucks, bobcats, race cars and other commercial vehicles and talk to the people who operate them. Other activities will include face-painting, prizes, bouncy tents, clowns and more.



Radiothon | Friday, December 14

Broadcasting live from Regency Court, 7am-6pm

Tune into the Mighty 1290 KOIL and call in your pledge at CSI's 17th Annual Radiothon with NRG Media. Listen for great prize giveaways, surprise guests and touching stories in this annual holiday fundraiser for CSI's kids.