



CSInsider

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Peg Harriott,
President & CEO

A soft place to land

Well I'm lookin' for a soft place to land
The forest floor // The palms of your hands
I'm lookin' for a soft place to land

Excerpted from lyrics by Kathleen Edwards

Where is your safe place? Who do you turn to when you need to share your truths—both good and bad? Your sister? Your partner? Your best friend? Where do you go when you need peace, safety and acceptance?

Because of friends like you, Child Saving Institute provides a soft place to land for thousands of children and families. We are there to ease the pain and suffering of child abuse and neglect, and offer a safe, happy place to heal and grow.

From the very youngest clients to the oldest, all of our programs focus on creating and enhancing the comfort, peace and joy that should be every child's right. We provide classes for young people wanting to learn good parenting skills with focus on healthy communication skills, child development, stress management, literacy and promoting self-esteem. Our Independent Living Skills classes help prepare our foster teens for the reality of life on their own, helping them learn how to plan and manage their time and money; how to utilize available resources and complete applications to find housing, transportation, and employment.

The youth in the Crisis Center rest easier because they have a warm bed and a listening ear—and the priceless gift of safety, advocacy and structure in an often-times chaotic world.

And the babies and toddlers...they snuggle in for hugs and kisses, songs, nursery rhymes and naps, at the same time receiving the early foundation they'll need to be successful learners in school and life.

We could do none of this without you. Thank you for helping us provide all our children this soft place to land—and with tender care and guidance—*launch*.

Thank you!

You help them from the very start



With your help, two years ago Child Saving Institute created a vital new program developed to give young children the best possible chance for starting out happy and healthy. Our Pediatric Social Work program works in partnership with pediatric clinics serving low-income patients in our community. When mothers bring their babies in for their very first well baby check-up at two weeks, our mental health professionals are there to offer solutions to problems ranging from postpartum depression to assistance with community resources. And we continue to be there at every well child check until age five. Your ongoing commitment to kids in need is put to great use as we work to support these sometimes fragile families.

CSI Early Childhood Social Worker Maggie Neujahr offers a screening test to each new mom to detect postpartum depression at every check up in the baby's first year. Early diagnosis and treatment is important because children of depressed moms are more likely to have delayed psychological, cognitive, neurological, and motor development, and are at higher risk for behavioral issues. In fact, depressed mommies are at 10 times the greater risk of having poor mother-child relations, so it's important to catch these issues early.

After the initial consultation, Maggie continues to participate in well-child checks at ages 3, 4, and 5—this time to assess each child's success with social, emotional, and interpersonal development, as well as the family's socioeconomic issues. If problems are discovered, Maggie—along with her colleague, Lindsay Robey—identify the issues and work to find solutions involving everything from home visits to therapy to referral to community resources.

One day Maggie received a call from a pediatrician with whom she'd once worked. He told her he had a patient who could use her help. The woman, then 9 months pregnant, had gone into labor after watching her husband board a plane for deportation. The woman was so distraught, she could hardly care for her newborn, not to mention her 3- and 5-year-old children. There

were also other problems—she was behind on her rent and utilities and feared eviction. Maggie quickly set about helping “Melina” find solutions to the most pressing issues—securing therapy and assistance with the rent and utilities. When Melina came to Child Saving Institute, the therapists rallied around her, offering a listening ear, and feeding and playing with the kids while she poured her heart out. The team—and the physician—also wrote letters in support of family reunification. Now, nearly a year later, Melina's husband has returned and the family is thriving.

Melina and her family can't do it without you, nor can mom “Cassie” and her 5-year-old “Ian.” A kindergartner, Ian was attending school, but it wasn't going well. He still wore diapers and could not communicate. When the mother completed the screening at the pediatrician's office, it was clear the family was struggling. Maggie referred Ian for additional testing and he was

diagnosed with mental retardation. With Maggie's advocacy, Ian is now in special education classes for a portion of each day and the family is receiving the support and services they need.

“Nobody can do it alone, and if we can be that one person that supports her (the mom) and listens and believes in her, we can make a difference in the success of the children and the family,” Maggie says thoughtfully. “This is the best social work job I've ever had because this is what it's all about...doing what's best for kids by doing what's best for the family.”

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Rockin' Grannies

Do you remember how safe and loved you felt wrapped in your grandma's arms? Do you remember her hearty laugh? Her gentleness? Her ever-handy hankie, ready to wipe a tear or a runny nose at a moment's notice?

Everybody needs a grandma like that in their lives, and at Child Saving Institute we're so fortunate to have three!

For the past eight years, "Grandma Lula" Grunnells, 76, has risen early Monday through Thursday, rain or shine, to board a bus in order to be at Child Saving Institute's Early Childhood Education Center by 7:30 a.m. Donning a multi-colored smock and wearing a bright scarf tied around her now-gray hair, she settles into the rocking chair in the Pennie multi-age room and opens her arms wide, indicating her lap is open for business.

"Some people think I'm crazy," she observes with a deep chuckle. "But my husband has passed away and I'm all by myself in that big house. The babies motivate me to get up and come out here. They bring something out in me. And the babies love me—because they tell me so!"

"Some of these babies need a grandma in their lives—you can tell," she adds, her tone turning serious. "There's just something missing. I think I play the role they need by huggin' and lovin' on them. We're like a comfort blanket to them. I think each and every child should have a grandmother."

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Lula came to CSI through the Foster Grandparent Program operated by Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging. She is joined in her ENOA work by fellow Foster Grandma Johnnie Hawkins, 78, in the Henry Toddler Room. "Grandma

Grandma Myrtle



Johnnie” loves babies Tuesday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. A retired food service worker, Johnnie is the mother of four, grandmother of eight, and great grandmother of nine. She says rising every morning to come to CSI gives her day special purpose.

Once a week, 77-year-old Myrtle Weible walks to the agency from her nearby home. She spends Friday mornings rocking, reading and wrangling toddlers. When asked why she does it, “Grandma Myrt” replies, “I love the kids, and I hope I can bring some pleasure and joy to their lives.”

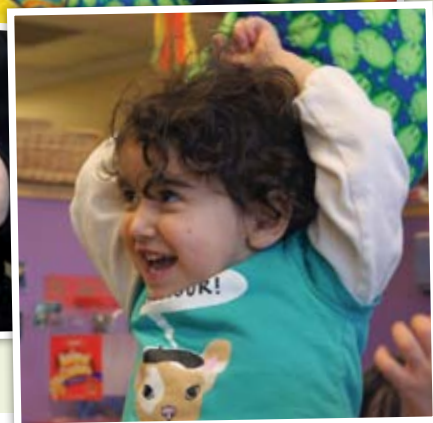
“I think these amazing women bring that extra ounce of nurturing that we pride ourselves on,” says Early Childhood Director Dalhia Lloyd. “Along with the teachers, they build real, meaningful relationships with the kids.”

Ja’Mese Coty, Early Childhood Site Coordinator, shared the story of a 4-year-old, now in Pre-K, who starts each day by first running in to greet Grandma Lula with a hug—as she’s done

every morning since infancy. “Our kids really depend on the consistent care the grandmas provide. They are the loving ‘heart’ of our center.” ♥

Your support in action

Last fall, Peg Harriott put out a plea for pillows. That’s right, those fluffy soft squares that kiddos in our early childhood education centers use daily for reading and rest (and in the case of energetic toddlers—to rough house and wrestle). Peg’s call was generously answered by several talented members of the Christian Church of Nebraska (Disciples of Christ). Pillows have been arriving by the dozens, providing the perfect spot for sleepy little heads—and the occasional cushy implement for playfully walloping your friends.





The Nikunens

WE are family!

No doubt you lead a very busy life. Work, faith, family, fun—every week is jam-packed. So how do you fit in philanthropy, too? If you're like the Nikunens, it's part and parcel of your family philosophy.

"Giving back has been part of our family philosophy since before the kids were born," Christine Nikunen notes. "I'm sure they don't even remember all the projects and meetings they've attended through the years. I guess it's based on the saying, 'To those whom much is given, much is expected.' Well, our family has been really blessed, so it's our responsibility to give back. From purely a financial standpoint, when we distribute their allowances, we have always encouraged them to save a little, spend a little and give a little."

Take Izak, 12, a sixth-grader at Kiewit Middle School. Last year Izak Nikunen delivered a \$90 donation to Child Saving Institute that he'd saved from his allowance. He created his own savings plan based on the popular children's book series by Laura Numeroff. He called it "If You Give a Pig a Penny." Every week when he gets his allowance, Izak tucks away a little for his favorite charity and CSI's less fortunate kids were the beneficiaries of his generosity.

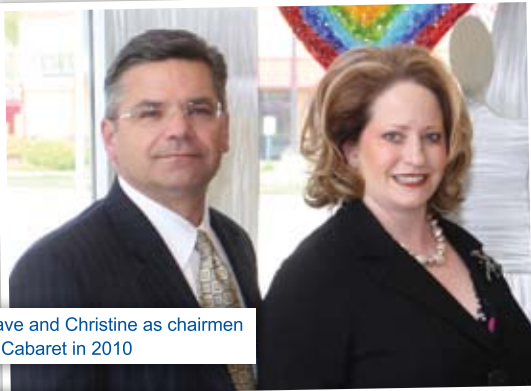
"Our family has been really blessed, so it's our responsibility to give back."

Then there's Maggie, 9, a third-grader at Aldrich Elementary, who dropped off \$45.53 for the kids—the proceeds from two lemonade stands. Not only did she and her friends, Elle and Kennedy, sell lemonade, Maggie took the opportunity to tell her patrons about the important work CSI does, resulting in additional donations.

Maggie also helped Christine, Senior Employee Education Specialist at First National Bank of Omaha and an active volunteer on both the CSI Board of Directors and Guild Board, when she assisted with the annual Substitute Santa holiday program. In fact, both children have accompanied Christine through

the years as she's attended countless meetings and volunteered not only for CSI, but numerous nonprofits throughout the community.

Christine's husband, David, Vice President of Sales at Principal Financial Group, is also actively involved with the agency. Not only did he partner with Christine



Dave and Christine as chairmen of Cabaret in 2010

as Benefit Chairman for CSI's largest fundraiser of the year, Cabaret, in 2010, but Dave has also rallied his Principal colleagues to volunteer at the agency. They have helped with mailings as well as doing weeding and gardening on the Nature Explore playground. "My company offers VTO—two hours of Volunteer Time Off each month," Dave explains. "Our group has opted to come to CSI a few times a year to lend a hand. I've discovered it's not just good for the organization being served, but it's also good for team building to see someone in a different environment outside the office."



Maggie donates the proceeds from her lemonade stand

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Izak saves up money from his weekly allowance for our kids

Christine's first exposure to CSI came a few years ago when she was serving as President of the Junior League. Because Junior League supported some agency programs, she was invited to participate in a "Day in the Life" event to educate community leaders about the reality of what it's like to be a child in the foster care system.

The event, hosted by CSI in partnership with Voices for Children, included a brief presentation by an 11-year-old foster child. The girl explained that she had been in nine different foster homes since kindergarten, adding firmly, "I am NOT a bad kid."

It was a turning point. "That's when I really remember focusing on CSI," Christine recalls, her eyes shiny at the memory of the little girl. "I thought I really have to help this organization help these kids."

You have. Thank you, Christine, David, Izak and Maggie for all you have done and continue to do for kids in our community. ❤️



Dave's team from Principal Financial volunteering time



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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!



Cabaret | Saturday, May 11

Embassy Suites Conference Center | 6 - 9:30 p.m.

You're invited to our biggest fundraiser of the year—Cabaret 2013—featuring the hilarious political satire of Washington's premier comedy troupe, the Capitol Steps! The fun evening will include cocktails, a steak dinner, and fabulously funny comedy. Attire is casual. Tickets are \$160 per person. To purchase tickets or for more information, please visit childsaving.org or call 402-504-3661.



Golf Fore Kids | Monday, June 24

The Players Club at Deer Creek | 11 a.m. Start

Don't miss this Multidivisional Golf Tournament and Par 3 contest featuring great prizes! For more information, contact Sara at sachelpohl@childsaving.org or register online at childsaving.org.