

Rialzo

EDITION | SPRING 2014

CURRENT

INSIDE:

4

Rialzo IV
photo
pages

MERIDIAN'S **PARTY** WITH A **purpose**

Rialzo raises thousands
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HEADLINES
RIALZO V



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Special report inside: CHILDREN AND FAMILY EDITION



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Row 1: (left to right) Pam Melander, Jan VanMatre-Reed, Marjorie Jameson, Donna Polcz, Ali Harrigan, Beth Parris, Janet Blackmer, James Celkis. Row 2: Steve Slavin, Sherry Harrigan-Ridenour, Merry Schwindt, Kathy Smith, Dave Taylor, Ryan Kramer, Jim Mochal. Row 3: Jim McClain, Jim Kouns, Ray Burcham, Sandy McReynolds, Mike Lunsford, Sean Burcham, Monte Needler, Monte Brown, Laura Hernandez. Not pictured: BJ Bowman, Bob Watters, Carolyn Cline, Carrie Thompson, Kambi Dulworth, Linda Needham, Lisa Swink, Lourie Hargis, Sheri Coffman

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Kits for clients.

Tools for clinicians.

Making connections.

Wheeling for Healing
p.74

CURRENT

RIALZO V EDITION | SPRING 2014

FEATURES

8 BOARD

Meet the community leaders behind Meridian's organization

9 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The meaning behind this special Children and Family Edition of CURRENT

10 COMMUNITY REPORT

Our report to you: Meridian Health Services' latest statistics.

11 COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Meridian Health Services provided more than \$5 million in charity care last year.

14 RIALZO V

The gala this year features '80s heartthrob Rick Springfield.

20 AUCTION PREVIEW

Plan your giving strategy for this year's Rialzo with this auction bidding guide

CHILDREN & FAMILY SPECIAL REPORT

PAGES 27 - 64

66 SUZANNE GRESHAM

A one-on-one with the Center's founding CEO

68 MERIDIAN WOMEN'S HEALTH

Meridian welcomes Dr. Denise Reeves an its newest specialty

70 FOUR MERIDIAN PROGRAMS YOU HELP FUND

70 FOSTERHOPE

Providing homes for children

71 TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Helping people find independence

72 GERIATRIC SERVICES

Assisting the elderly in returning home

74 WHEELING FOR HEALING

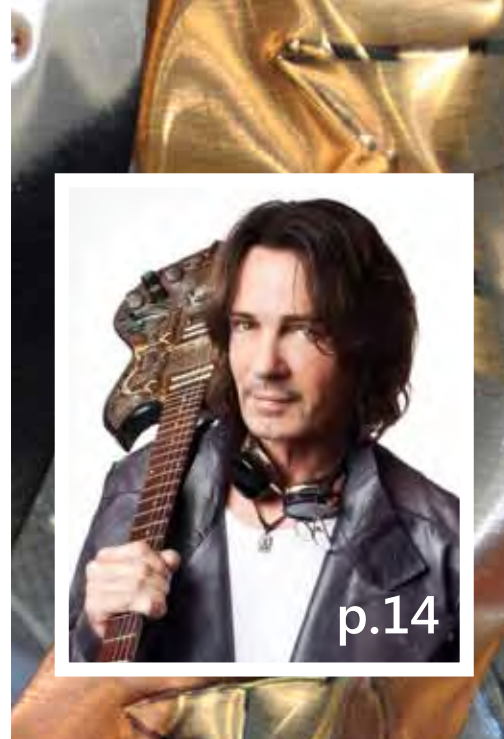
Special kits add mobility

85 RIALZO IV

A special look back through photos at Rialzo IV

ON THE COVER

Cover photo of Terri Milius and auction puppy, Maggie, from Rialzo IV, 2013.
Photo selected by committee.



MERIDIAN

HEALTH Services

Physical. Mental. Social Well-Being.

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Healthy women.

Whole person care.

A new partnership.

Meridian Women's Health
p.68

MERIDIAN

Meridian Health Services is a progressive healthcare organization specializing in “whole person” health integrating physical, mental and social well-being.



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Front row, from left:

Al Rent, Brent Webster, Chair, Hank Milius, President/CEO

Back row, from left:

Chris Fancher, David Gobble, Vicki Tague, Terry Whitt Bailey, Brian Ring, Wayne Shaffer, Steve Smith, Sue Ann Pflum, John Bowles



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Seated, from left:

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Standing, from left:

Al Rent, Chair, Slade Smith, Robby Tompkins, Lathanial Berkel, Cory Pollen, Beth Clark, Linda Mawhorr, Kathy Rapkin, Scott Smalstig

Not pictured:

Hank Milius, Dave Bahlmann, Tammy Dodson, Todd Sandman, Alena McKenzie, Doug Droste, Marilyn Cleary

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Dear Friends of Meridian,

AT MERIDIAN HEALTH SERVICES – with our roots in community mental health – we're connecting the dots of behavioral health, physical health and social well-being. Our whole person health approach means you can expect expert care in each of these areas in a single, convenient health care provider.

In this issue of *CURRENT*, we share with you some of our most significant achievements this year toward that goal, including the addition of a women's health clinic. We introduce you to Meridian Women's Health, and to Dr. Denise Reeves, a longtime Muncie OB-GYN doctor who has joined the Meridian family of physicians.

Studies tell us that women make the majority of health care decisions for their families. Yet, women tend to spend less time caring for themselves than they do for their loved ones. Meridian Women's Health means a broader scope of care for women in our community.

You'll read about the Child Advocacy Center, which opened in 2006, and what it has meant to our community, how it protects child victims and their families.

In this issue, you'll meet Muncie resident and retired Ball State Foundation executive Dave Bahlmann and learn about how his life at age 5 changed direction thanks to a nurturing single mother and a "big brother" figure. Later, he and his wife paid it forward by giving safe haven to 27 foster children. Dave's been in Muncie since the '90s but before that he led two of this country's biggest children's organizations – Big Brothers and Big Sisters and Camp Fire Boys and Girls.

You'll read about how the community supports Rialzo, Meridian's signature benefit gala, and how it helps Meridian programs. For example, the Wheeling for Healing program funded through a generous gift from First Merchants Bank and Rialzo proceeds, gives behavioral clinicians mobile kits to help young clients open up about their experiences and begin the healing process.

Lastly, in this edition of *CURRENT*, we offer up a special report on children and families. Look for tips on parenting and advice from our experts. Check out a series of Meridian "health moments," which focus on how to keep your family healthy all year long. At Meridian, we strive to be the best possible resource for your health care choices. This edition of *CURRENT* is part of that resource material. We hope you'll enjoy it.



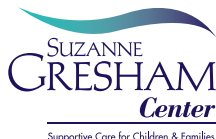
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Brent Webster
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Charles Sursa
CHAIRMAN, FUND
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE



Community Report



Residents in
26 Indiana counties
receive health services
from Meridian.



2013 Community Benefit Summary

**Making a Positive Impact
on the Communities We Serve**

Meridian offers services throughout Indiana with 28 facilities in 10 counties. Delaware County is home to our main campus, the **Suzanne Gresham Center, Child Advocacy Center, MeridianMD, Women's Health,** and the **Gero-Psychiatric Hospital** (located at IU Health Ball Memorial Hospital).

Meridian serves over **15,600** individuals each year.

This is **75% more patients** than five years ago. Meridian has grown its service area and expanded services to provide "whole person" health which integrates care for physical, mental and social well-being.

Meridian had **438,226** outpatient visits in the past year.

In a recent survey, Meridian patients reported a **96% satisfaction** rate with Meridian's quality of services.

Over **180 schools** have partnered with Meridian to bring services to students. Over 6,000 children received services from Meridian and **97% of their parents would recommend the program to others.**

Meridian has **750** staff members in Indiana.

Over 130 employees are doctors, nurses and medical assistants on our constantly growing medical staff.

Revenue generated was over **\$75 million** during fiscal year 2012-13.

This is a **173% increase** from five years ago. **Over \$32 million** is dedicated for our employees' salaries and benefits.

Meridian's community investment in 2013 totaled over

\$21 million

Meridian provides charity and uncompensated care, community education and activities that benefit the community in addition to quality healthcare.

Community Outreach

Last year, Meridian provided care to 4,988 individuals who were unable to pay for services

which totaled **\$5.1 million** in charity care.



Outreach into the community includes advocacy, events and educational opportunities.

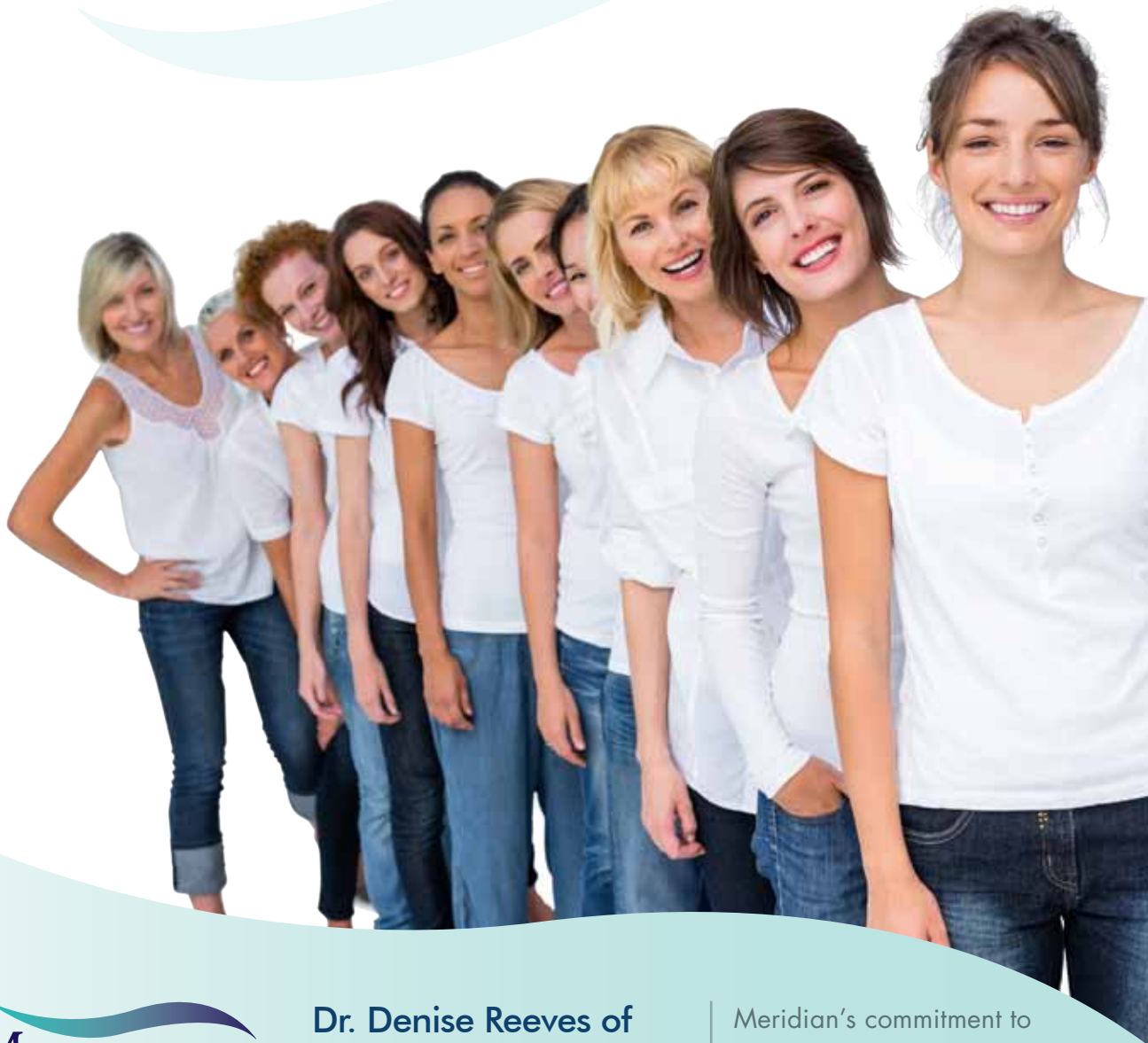
- **Child Advocacy Center** supports victims of child abuse and has increased the rate of cases accepted for prosecution by 320% since it opened.
- The annual **Gresham Center Fam Fest** is a free event for families, offering health resources, entertainment and food.
- The **Eileen Moore Child Abuse Awareness Walk** has raised over \$25,000 to help local children.
- **FosterHope** helps children in need of foster care, and provides training, resources and financial support to new foster parents.
- Meridian provides **After-Hours Emergency Services** which helped over **3,000 patients** with behavioral health emergencies.
- **Suicide Prevention Training** is offered to local organizations with the assistance of Meridian professionals.
- Meridian hosts a **statewide conference** for professionals serving individuals with a **dual diagnosis – developmental and mental health challenges**.
- **MeridianMD and Women's Health** promoted an awareness campaign and free health screenings for American Heart Month.
- **Gero-Psychiatric Hospital** helped to substantially reduce readmission visits to the hospital's Emergency Room.
- Meridian's medical staff and employees volunteer to teach **continuing education programs** to healthcare professionals.
- Many Meridian employees are **community volunteers** donating their time and talents to local organizations.

Services We Provide

- Primary family medical care
- Psychiatric medical services
- Women's Health
- Gero-Psychiatric Hospital for senior adults
- Counseling and therapy
- Children and family supportive programs
- Child Advocacy Center for children affected by abuse
- Addictions and chemical dependency services
- Home, community and school-based services
- Homelessness and independent living support
- HIV care coordination
- Programs for individuals with both intellectual disabilities and mental health challenges
- Care management, skill building and supported employment
- Therapeutic foster care and adoption

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MERIDIAN WELCOMES *Women's* **HEALTH**



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**Dr. Denise Reeves of
Muncie Women's Center
IS NOW MERIDIAN
WOMEN'S HEALTH**

Meridian's commitment to "whole person" health now offers more physical health choices, Primary Medical Care and Women's Health.



Harmony of whole person health.

What's your favorite song?

That special tune that takes you somewhere special...even energizes you. That synergy of melody and rhythm that creates incredible harmony.

At Meridian Health Services, we're creating the harmony of whole person health. We're integrating the physical, mental and social aspects of health to create results that heal and lift the body, mind and spirit.

Meridian's spectrum of services featuring primary medical care, behavioral health, and human services focus on a broader spectrum of health for happier, healthier patients. It's a healthier approach with a healthier name.


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Springfield 2014 headliner

Meridian's Rialzo V digging for diamonds

HEADLINING MERIDIAN HEALTH SERVICES' RIALZO V Gala in 2014 is '80s heartthrob Rick Springfield, the Australian-born actor, singer, and songwriter whose signature song, "Jesse's Girl," earned him a Grammy in 1982.

Springfield, who launched a comeback in the late '90s after spending several years at home raising his two sons with wife, Barbara Porter, these days spends about 100 nights on the road touring to packed houses. Springfield reprised his 1980s role as Dr. Noah Drake on the long-running soap opera, *General Hospital*, which last year celebrated 50 years on the air. Springfield, 64, a best-selling author, has sold more than 15 million records.

"We did this for the ladies," said Scott Smalstig, Meridian vice president of Fund Development for Meridian and Rialzo organizer. "Springfield is a great performer and promises to bring the house down!"

Past performers for Meridian's black-tie gala include last year's Three Dog Night, and Kool & the Gang, the Pointer Sisters and the Fifth Dimension. But Rialzo is a party with a purpose, and its purpose is to draw attention to the work done at Meridian and to celebrate the local community of the arts. This year, Rialzo, an Italian word meaning, "to rise up," pays homage to the fine arts. Once again, representatives from the Muncie Symphony Orchestra, the Muncie Civic Theatre and Cornerstone Center for the Arts will be featured throughout the evening.

Featured on April 12 will be a "diamond dig," and Rialzo guests will be sifting through sand to find the treasures. The celebration is at the same place, Muncie's Horizon Convention Center, but look for a new party footprint as organizers are making 2014 something special.

First Merchants, the presenting sponsor of Rialzo since its inception five years ago, continues in that role in 2014, elevating exposure of Meridian's widely recognized programs including Meridian MD, FosterHope, the Child Advocacy Center, and its behavioral care specialists. New this year is the recent addition of Meridian Women's Health, and a renewed focus on health issues facing women. Meridian is a progressive healthcare organization that believes in treating the "whole person," integrating physical, mental and social well-being to help people achieve their optimum health. This approach connects treatments and doctors working together to heal both the body and mind for total well being.

"We're proud to be a 'Partner with a Purpose' for the area's best 'party with a purpose,'" said Mike Rechin, CEO of First Merchants Corp., Indiana's largest publicly held company headquartered in Delaware County. "We have signed on to be the presenting sponsor of Meridian Health Services' Rialzo for another three years, and couldn't be prouder of the relationship and the results," said Rechin. "We not only share a common footprint across the great state of Indiana, but we share the same primary values," he said. "Meridian Health is committed to the



Performer
Rick
Springfield.

communities they serve for their physical, mental and social well-being, as we care for their financial well-being."

"The best part of the partnership is knowing that thousands upon thousands of dollars gets to people enabling them to be healthier," Rechin said. "One patient at a time adds up to entire communities being healthier."

Hank Milius, President and CEO of Meridian Health Services, gave high praise to First Merchants. "They coined the phrase 'party with a purpose' and they have put their resources behind being a partner with real purpose in helping make our communities healthier."

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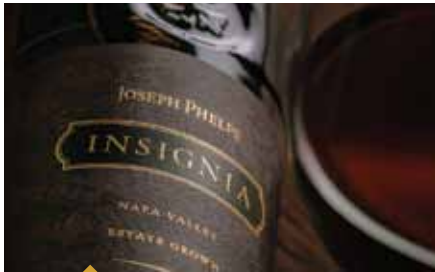
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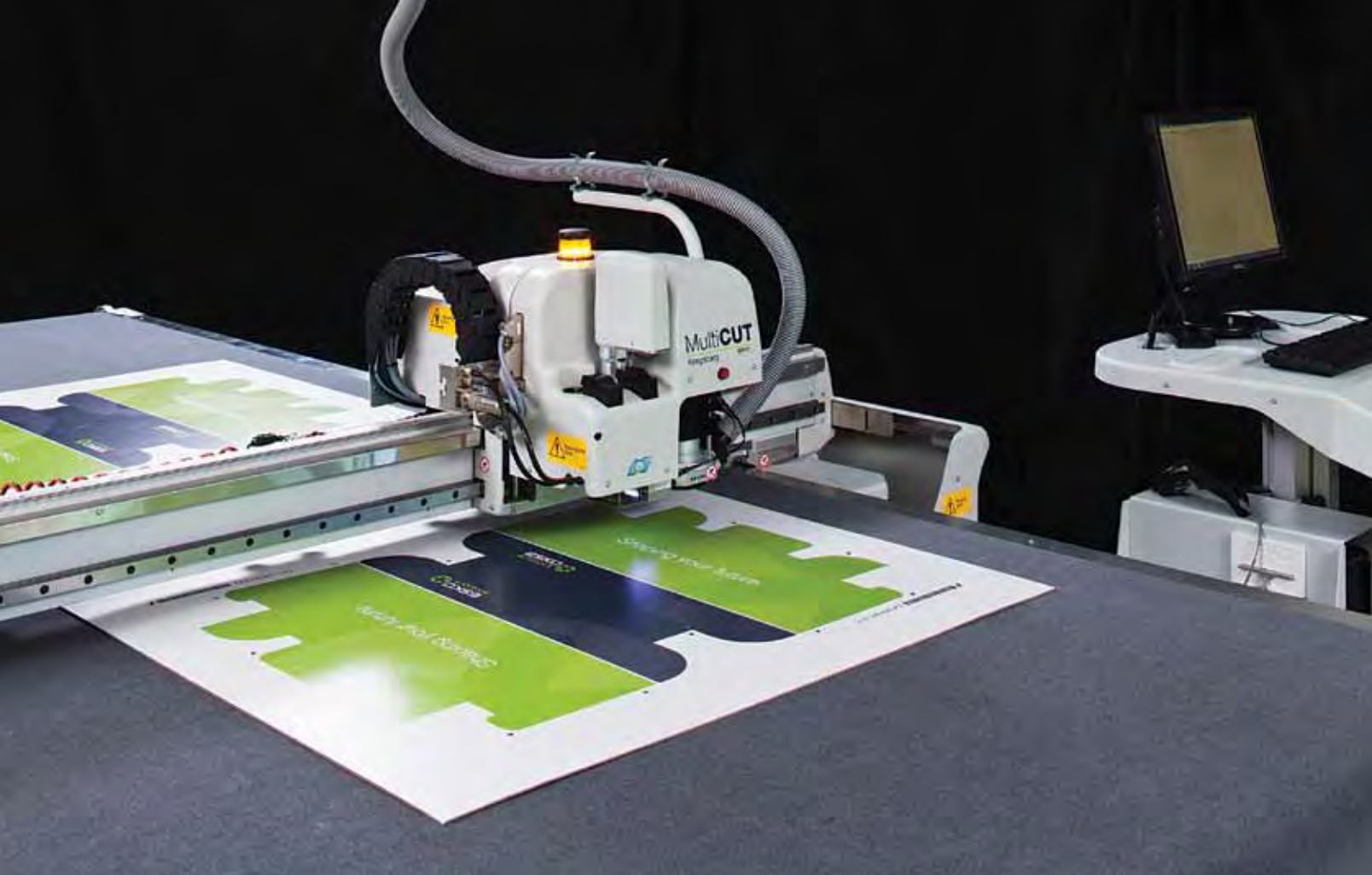
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**Mother.
Advocate.
Living testimonial.**

Erica Graham **p.48**
Child Advocacy Center

CURRENT

CHILDREN & FAMILY EDITION | SPECIAL REPORT

FEATURES

32 MEET THE BAXTERS

A family created through bonds of courage and acceptance

37 BE A FOSTER PARENT

Six steps, from trainings to financial assistance, to help you be one

38 PARENTING 101

Meridian's child psychiatrist has advice for every parent

39 IMPROVE YOUR SKILLS

10 ways to improve your own parenting skills with children

44 THE LISTENING TREE

Learn about a tree that speaks through children

46 EILEEN MOORE

Be inspired by her passion for children and the legacy she leaves

48 ERICA GRAHAM

Learn how she credits Meridian for returning her family to her

52 PAYING IT FORWARD

Dave Bahlmann's foster parenting story serves as an example for all

58 FAMFEST 2013

Event draws big crowds for worthy causes -- creating healthy changes in families

62 SCHOOL IS IN SESSION

How Meridian programming is making a difference during the school day



p.32



p.38



p.52



FOSTER FAMILY OF THE YEAR. Mary Lou, Dezna, Mahaley Faye, Caleb and Nelson Baxter.

A FAMILY portrait

built by love, courage and acceptance

Mary Lou Baxter, who grew up number seven in a household of eight children, says she always wanted a big family for herself. "But God had better sense than I had and gave me three to start." Over the years, her family has come to her in shifts.

The newest Baxter children -- three teen-age siblings adopted in May after about 18 months in her home as foster children -- are settling into life on an expansive farm in Jay County with go-carts, wildflowers, fresh air and plenty of rescue animals.

"They're good people," says 14-year-old Caleb, of his new parents.

Mary Lou, 50 and Nelson Baxter, 63, married in 1991 and blended their families from previous marriages. Mary Lou brought two girls and a boy -- ages 8, 7 and 4. Nelson had two boys, ages 10 and 8. As their biological family grew up and moved away, the house got pretty quiet.

When Nelson retired after several years as a truck driver, the couple seriously considered adding to the family.

In December 2011, they took in three teen-age siblings who'd been shuffled between foster homes and residential facilities. Besides Caleb, who will be in the eighth grade, there is Mahaley Faye Baxter-King, a 17-year-old

TO PAGE 34



FOSTER PARENTS OF THE YEAR. Mary Lou and Nelson Baxter have a blended family with five grown children. In 2011, they added to their family with three teenagers who are siblings.

To learn more about becoming a foster parent, call 1-866-590-8220 or go to our website: www.meridianhs.org



PARTNERS IN PROJECTS. Nelson and Caleb Baxter talk while on their family farm in Jay County.

Photos: ADAM STURM

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AT HOME ON THE FARM. Mahaley Faye Baxter-King.

FROM PAGE 33

sophomore and her 18-year-old sister Dezna Leann Baxter, who is a junior at Jay County High School. The siblings had been in foster care for six years and had gone through eight homes.

The Baxter family is Meridian Health Services' 2013 Foster Parents of the Year.

"We selected them to be our Foster Parents of the Year because of their tremendous dedication and courage," says Deceil Moore, regional clinical manager at Meridian Health Services. "Most people would be planning vacations," said Moore. "But they said, 'We have space at home and open hearts'."



Moore

"Being a foster parent takes lots of courage, and the children often come through horrible circumstances," Moore said. "It's a foster parent's job to bring this person into their lives and make them healthy again."

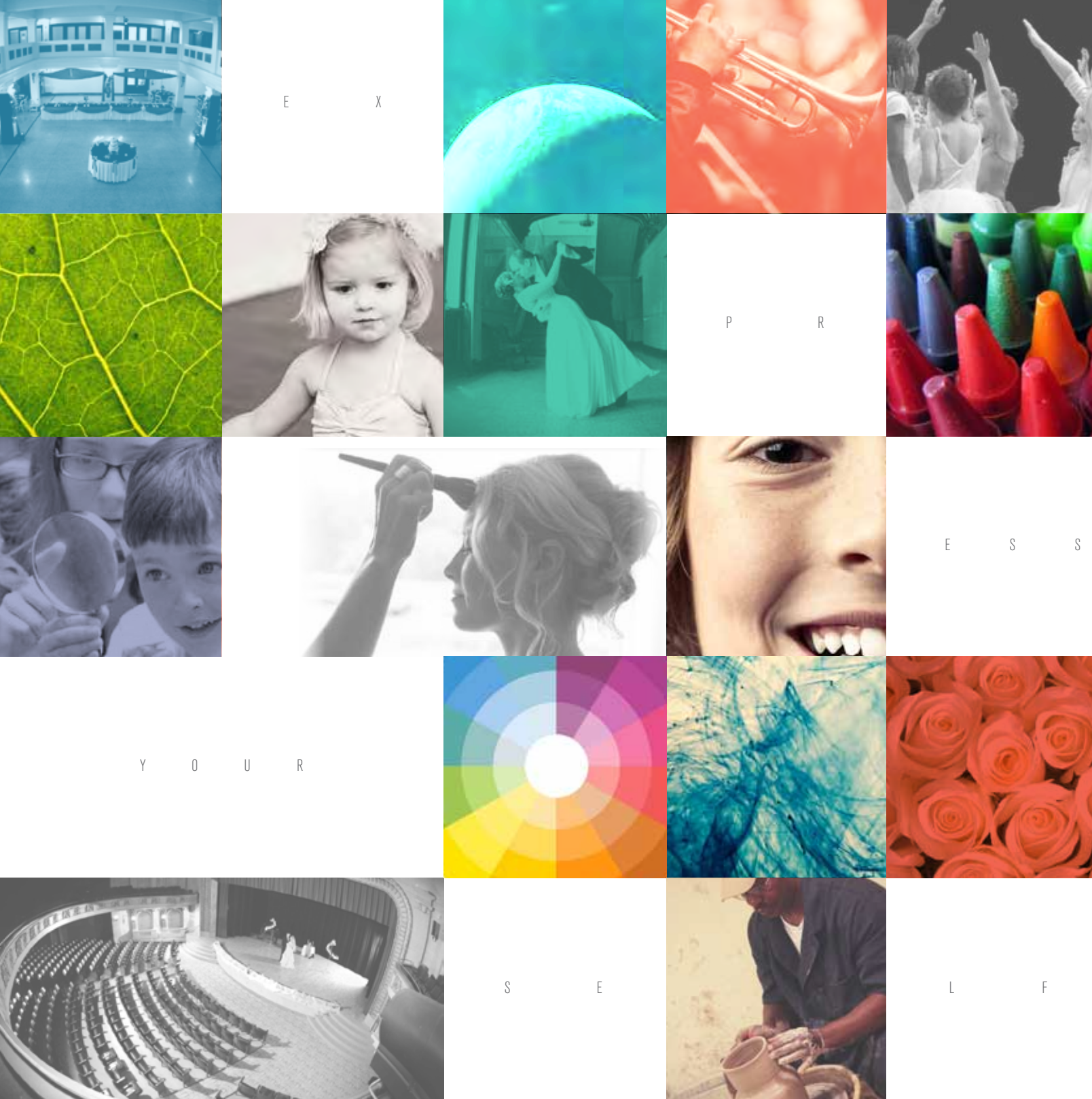
"It was hard," Mahaley said. "We just fit in here. Their family is silly and goofy, like we are. They have accepted us more than any of the others." Even with the Baxters there to support and nurture them, each teen continues to see a Meridian behavioral clinician on a regular basis. They are counseled on issues like anger, making good decisions, and preparing for adulthood.

FosterHope is Meridian Health Services' specialized foster care program for Indiana children in need of emotional, behavioral, or mental health support. It is a therapeutic program that recruits, trains, and licenses new foster families within the

TO PAGE 36



THE MECHANIC. Caleb Baxter works on repairs while at the farm.



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CORNERSTONE
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FROM PAGE 34

State of Indiana. FosterHope parents offer special care and support for the child and provide the connection to community health services. The system is not easy on the children, so finding a fit is huge. “We turn down kids all the time because we don’t have a suitable home,” Moore says. “Referrals come from all kinds of places and the matching process is complex.”


At last report, Indiana had 5,700 children in need of homes and only 5,200 available foster homes. FosterHope has about 20 foster families who have a total of about eight openings left.

“The current trend is perhaps 1 of 10 persons who express interest in being a foster parent actually gets through training

and licensing,” Moore explains. The need is great and growing.

People like the Baxters, who even after their adoption, say they will continue to be foster parents for children in need of respite care, are exceptional.

“We wanted teenagers,” Mary Lou said. “We’re not scared of teenagers, we’ve done it before.”

“Nelson and Mary Lou have taken on the challenges,” said Moore, “and it’s been amazing to watch them become a family.” 

VIDEO: To learn more about this program, watch a video and browse a photo gallery at www.meridianhs.org and on our Facebook page.



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6

STEPS TO
KNOW TO
BE FOSTER
PARENTS

STRONG TOGETHER. Siblings Dezna, Caleb and Mahaley Faye.

1 DEMONSTRATE INTEREST

FosterHope is always recruiting foster parents either at community fairs, churches or one-on-one. A variety of homes is needed in order to make matches.

2 CRIMINAL CHECKS

Submit to a criminal background check, sex offender registry check and fingerprinting. Foster parents must be free of any felony convictions.

3 SUBMIT TO HOME INSPECTION

Submit to home inspections. Foster parents must demonstrate that they have the space for additional people in their home and that their home is structurally sound and clean.

4 TRAINING

Participate in 20 hours of pre-placement classes on Saturdays and evenings. Training sessions include courses on how to manage aggressive behavior, how to be an educational advocate for your foster child and CPR certification. Additional hours are required in subsequent years to maintain the foster parenting license.

5 HEALTH CARE HELP

Foster children automatically qualify for Medicaid services, which pays for all their health care needs.

6 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Foster parents qualify for a monthly stipend, which is dependent upon the age and circumstances of the foster child.



DR. 'R'. Dr. Snieguole Radzeviciene is board certified in adult and child psychiatry and works in the Suzanne Gresham Center.

Dr. Snieguole Radzeviciene, MD

Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
Suzanne Gresham Center

TRAINING: Dr. Snieguole Radzeviciene received her medical training in her homeland of Lithuania, and completed her post-graduate work at the University of Florida in adult psychiatry in 2003, and child psychiatry in 2005. She is board certified in adult and child psychiatry.

EXPERIENCE: "Dr. R," as her patients call her, has worked for Meridian Health Services for four years.

Recently, Dr. R talked about what parents can do to be proactive about behavioral issues with their children.

5 signs that a parent or child may need help

1

You aren't in control.

You cannot stay calm and level-headed when an incident erupts. All children misbehave. How you deal with it says a lot about you, as a parent. Are you in control? Can you control your response?

2

You stay angry.

You find yourself getting angry and staying angry with your child. This may be a sign that you may need help working through the issues you and your child are facing.

3

Your child's behavior changes.

Your child loses interest in hobbies or friends. Question a change in behavior and look for the reason behind it.

4

Your child cannot function well in school.

Your child is not able to function in a family or in a school. Families are more stressed than ever before. How is that stress manifesting itself in your child?

5

Your child is unwilling to interact with others.

There is a sudden change in personality or your child is unwilling to interact or is consistently more irritable than usual. Do not chalk this up to adolescence. Especially in the case of teen-agers, there may be more at work here.

10 ways to improve your parenting skills

- 1 Remember to stay parents.**
Parents should not try to be a "friend." And they're not the police officer, either. Parents must strike a balance between being loving, forgiving and strict.
- 2 Balance technique and talent.**
Parenting is an art. You really have to work hard on technique but it takes talent, too.
- 3 Spend time with your children.**
Allow for plenty of quality time with your child. The economy is creating tremendous stress on families. Many cannot afford a vacation. But all parents need to spend one-on-one time with their children.
- 4 Be active with your children.**
An active lifestyle matters. Children need adequate stimulation for mood regulation. Children who are active (riding bikes, running) are less hyperactive and less likely to present with oppositional behavior.
- 5 Maintain a healthy lifestyle.**
Good nutrition and sleep make a difference. Appropriate nutrition and exercise, a good sleep schedule and a healthy lifestyle, can influence a child's outlook to a huge degree.
- 6 Set clear expectations.**
Give boundaries to your child and be consistent about the limits you establish.
- 7 Do not ignore misbehavior.**
Let them know what is a better way to behave the next time.
- 8 Provide a safe environment.**
Provide a safe and predictable environment at home. The best response a parent can have toward a child who has been through a traumatic event is to stay calm and reassuring. It is an important part of the healing process.
- 9 Don't wait to ask for help.**
Turn to someone you trust. A friend. Your church. Your family.
- 10 Remember, you're not alone.**
Unfortunately, there is still a stigma associated with receiving help but we all need a way to cope with life's circumstances. Don't feel alone or deal with problems in isolation.

CURRENT

HEALTH moment

Playtime essential for growth, learning

Play, it turns out, is essential to growing up healthy. Research shows that active, creative play benefits just about every aspect of child development.

"Play is behavior that looks as if it has no purpose," says NIH psychologist Dr. Stephen Suomi. "It looks like fun, but it actually prepares for a complex social world."

Building social skills

Play can help lay a foundation for learning the skills we need for social interactions. If youngsters lack playtime, says Dr. Roberta Golinkoff, an infant language expert at the University of Delaware, "social skills will likely suffer. You will lack the ability to inhibit impulses, to switch tasks easily and to play on your own." Play helps young children master their emotions and make their own decisions. It also teaches flexibility, motivation and confidence.

Unstructured, creative, physical play lets children burn calories and develops all kinds of strengths, such as learning how the world works. In free play, children choose the games, make the rules, learn to negotiate and release stress.

Problem-solving

It's important to engage in a variety of activities, including physical play, social play and solitary play. "The key is that in free play, kids are making the decisions," says Golinkoff. You can't learn to make decisions if you're always told what to do.

Older children, including teens, also need to play and daydream, which helps their problem-solving and creative imagination.

SOURCE: NIH News in Health

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THE Listening Tree

Near the entrance of The Child Advocacy Center is a wall tiled with the image of a large shade tree.

Hanging from The Listening Tree are metal "Leaves of Courage," each containing the first name and age of a youngster who has been interviewed at the center.

Dedicated in April 2011, the tree was donated by Dr. Jon and Janis Hendrix, in honor of their son-in-law, former Delaware County prosecutor Mark McKinney.

Designed and crafted by artist Sally Myers, The Listening Tree provides a tangible reminder of the more than 700 victims who have come through the CAC since it was founded in 2006.

Beside the tree hangs a plaque with a poem by Scott Smalstig, Meridian's Vice President for Fund Development. Paraphrased from the children's book, "The Giving Tree," by Shel Silverstein, it reads:

*"Come cool off in my shade.
Come rest at my side.
Come climb my trusty trunk.
Come swing on my sturdy branches.
Come tell me your story.
You are among friends.
Come grow with me."*







FAMILY HUDDLE. Eileen Moore, who passed away more than a year ago, hugs her daughters Sarah Gehring and Emily Long during an awareness walk.

For the children

IN DELAWARE COUNTY, MORE CHILD ABUSERS ARE being convicted than ever before as more of their victims are being rescued and rehabilitated.

The success is due in part to a child-friendly environment at Meridian's Child Advocacy Center where an innovative design has combined with a compassionate spirit fostered by the late Eileen Moore. Eileen Moore, who died in November 2012 after a long battle with cancer, was program manager for the CAC and was instrumental in getting the center started and seeing it mature. She regularly counseled child victims of unspeakable crimes with such compassion that she was often credited with giving mothers back their children.

"Eileen was battling cancer for some time," explained Bob Coles, vice president for clinical services at Meridian Health Services. "She had known for 2-1/2 years that her situation was not curable. She carried on with her job at the CAC and did not miss a step. She was there every day. She told me more than once that she believed her purpose on this earth was the CAC."

The advocacy center was established as a haven for child abuse victims — and to help law enforcement bring perpetrators to justice. It is one of only four nationally accredited centers of its

kind in Indiana, and the only one connected to a mental health facility. The rates of abuse cases accepted for prosecution in Delaware County have risen 320% since 2006, a testament to its success. Here's how the center works:

To make it easier for child victims, a single interview is arranged that is shared by police, prosecutors, child protection caseworkers and the center's professional staff. This reduces the trauma of the interview experience for the victim while ensuring that evidence is gathered properly for prosecution.

The multidisciplinary team - from the courts, the prosecutor's office, and victim's advocacy, are in an observation room witnessing the live interview, which also can be telecast to the actual courtroom, if necessary.

Previously, the child would have to undergo the same line of questioning from multiple agencies and was required to testify in court. The event of retelling and reliving the traumatic experience often caused even more trauma for the child. The CAC process puts the child's welfare center stage.

"Eileen was a very gentle spirit," Coles said. "She had a calmness about her. Children felt comfortable and safe with her, and she was always available to them."

Moore also chaired Meridian's annual walk for child abuse awareness, and was particularly proud of the Listening Tree mosaic at the Suzanne Gresham Center, which is made of individual ceramic panes with hooks on which little brass leaves have been hung, each with the name of a child.

The Listening Tree, dedicated in April 2011, was donated by Dr. Jon and Janis Hendrix in honor of their son-in-law, former Delaware County prosecutor Mark McKinney. It was designed and crafted by artist Sally Myers.

Moore was nominated as the 2011 Star Press Person of the Year then recognized by her daughters in a story about Moms the following Mother's Day. In May 2013, she was posthumously awarded the 2013 Liberty Bell Award by the Delaware County Bar Association. The Liberty Bell Award is typically given to a leader in the community other than a lawyer who excelled in public service.

"She was a guiding light who wore many hats," said McKinney, attorney and friend to Meridian. "She never lost sight of her one true goal, which was helping kids."

Eileen's husband, Patrick Moore cited his wife's humility. "I know [if she were here] she would just say, 'I'm just doing my job.'"

Coles said that any accolades were hard for Moore to take. She never sought them out. "Eileen would always be surprised by awards," he said. "Her satisfaction came from the CAC and helping the children and their families."

PHOTO GALLERY: Watch a video tribute to Eileen Moore at www.meridianhs.org or visit our Facebook page.

“The true character of a society is revealed in how it treats its children.”

~Nelson Mandela

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THE LISTENING TREE. Artwork honors the stories and voices of children.

A voice OF COMPASSION

Erica Graham advocates for victims of child sexual abuse

WHEN HE DOESN'T HAVE HIS NOSE IN A GOOD book, Erica Graham's 12-year-old son Casey can be found on the baseball diamond, basketball court or football field. His sister, Summer, is a fixture on local softball fields. At first glance, one would never know that each of these smart, engaging young people had once suffered sexual abuse in their lives.

They are just two of the faces behind the veil of child sexual abuse in Indiana. According to the Indiana Coalition Against Sexual Assault, one in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused before reaching adulthood.

But Graham and her children are living testimonials that life not only goes on for victims of sexual abuse, but that they can thrive. While certainly not forgotten, the bad things in their lives are in the background now, thanks to the power of compassion and the value of places like Meridian Health Services and the Child Advocacy Center.

"They gave me my family back," Graham said, tears streaming down her cheeks, amplifying the sincerity of her statement.

Through a difficult twist of fate, Graham has experienced two very different approaches to the treatment of child sexual abuse. She's seen the impersonal and frightening interview room at juvenile facilities. Then there's Meridian Health Services and the Child Advocacy Center.

Located in the Morrison Mock Professional Center on White River Boulevard in Muncie, the Child Advocacy Center (CAC) has a friendly, park-like appearance.

"You could see the tenseness come right out of him," Graham said of her son. "You could see the childhood come back into his eyes."



LIVING TESTIMONIAL. Erica Graham.

FACT: For each child interviewed at the CAC, a copper leaf with his or her first name is hung on “The Listening Tree.”

The interview is done carefully – and only once – as the parent watches a live feed in another room. Graham said that abused youth often change their original story if interviewed more than once.

“If they’re asking me again, then I must have said it wrong the first time,” Erica said is the way abused youth think. “Studies show more than 80 percent of the time a child tells the truth during the first interview. That number falls to 40 percent the second time.”

At the CAC, children color while they talk. They make new pictures while discussing old ones. They plant seeds for a new beginning – both symbolically and literally.

For each child interviewed at the CAC, a copper leaf with his or her first name is hung on “The Listening Tree,” a painting that branches out on the wall far and wide. Due to the efforts of the late Eileen Moore who created the tree, the experience for Erica’s son was one of healing, not agony and anger.

“I still had anger from the first time I went through this. I’m a 20-something mom and I can’t go through this again. This was a healing process for me as well,” Erica said.

As her children grew stronger, Erica became more determined to help other families going through similar trials. At one time, she found it hard to even talk about the things her

children suffered at the hands of people she once trusted. In 2008, she not only discussed them, but did it in front of a big crowd at the CAC’s Open House.

It was a defining moment, not only for her, but also for her son. Casey told her, “I’m really proud that you helped other people, mom. One of these days, maybe I can do it, too.”

That speech was just the becoming of Erica’s advocacy and advice for victims of sexual assault. In 2012, she was nominated as a member of the funding development committee.

She used a family picture as a way of describing what the CAC and Meridian meant to her. The glass in front of her family picture had been shattered by abuse, but the picture frame holding it all together was intact. “The CAC and Meridian Health Services were our picture frame, holding it all together,” she said.

She teared up while discussing the late Eileen Moore, Meridian Health Services’ inspiration behind the Listening Tree. Her advice to others?

“Don’t try to do it on your own. You have to have someone help you through it,” she said. “You find blessings in places you wouldn’t have imagined.”

VIDEO: Learn more about this program and watch Erica Graham’s video story at www.meridianhs.org and on our Facebook page.

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HOME SWEET HOME. Dave Bahlmann
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FOR DAVE BAHLMANN, WHO WAS REARED BY HIS MOTHER, GRANDMOTHER AND A QUASI “BIG BROTHER,” FOSTER PARENTING HAS COME NATURALLY.

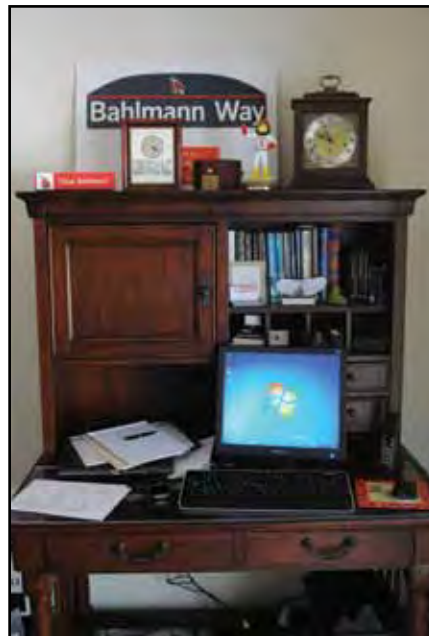
He and his wife, Joan, of 50 years have given safe haven to 27 children over the years, eight of whom they’ve adopted. But don’t try to figure out who is biological, who is adopted and who has been fostered. They see no relevance in the question. “Two of the kids that we got were two boys who came from a very severe situation,” Bahlmann explains. “As a result, when they came to us, they had not always had access to parents and were on their own and didn’t always have food.

“The one boy was 3 years old. On the first night we had him, I put him to bed.

“He said ‘will you be here tomorrow?’ I said, ‘yes.’ He asked, ‘Will Mom be here tomorrow?’ I said, ‘yes.’ He asked, ‘Will we have milk tomorrow?’ I said, ‘yes.’ ”

A few weeks later, Bahlmann said, he and Joan noticed an odor. Tucked behind the bunk beds in a corner of the room was rotting food.

TO PAGE 54



HIS MISSION. Dave Bahlmann works with Meridian's fund development office to aid the programs with which his life has been aligned.

Photos: ADAM STURM

MENTOR.

Changing communities one hour at a time.

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FACT: Bahlmann's first job out of law school was for a county prosecutor. His first case? Child abuse.

"They had stashed food back there. In case we weren't there tomorrow."

Bahlmann retired in 2013 after 22 years as President/CEO of the Ball State University Foundation. During his tenure, assets grew from \$28 million to almost \$200 million, and the university had three successful capital campaigns as well as a drive to build the Ball State Alumni Center.

Today, he is a consultant at Meridian Health Services, working directly with the fund development office, raising money for the kinds of programs with which his life has been aligned. He believes passionately in the services that Meridian provides to children, particularly in the area of abused and foster children.

His lifelong passion for child welfare started long ago.

When he was 5, Bahlmann's single mother made a decision that may have set his life's course. She connected him with a "Big Brother."

"It wasn't a formal match like they do today," Bahlmann said. "He was about 50 and I was 5 and he was a lawyer. He influenced me in many positive ways."

"Years later when I was invited to speak to the Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America National Convention, I told them the story.

"When I was 10, my mother got a master's degree. She went to University of Pennsylvania to do summer course work and sent me to the Big Brothers of Philadelphia Boys Club camp in the Pocono Mountains," he said.

"They didn't know it until I told them that what they did was so important to me. I knew first hand. I knew because I had a Big Brother.

"My mother, my grandmother and my Big Brother raised me. I had everything I needed and some of what I wanted."

Bahlmann would later be invited to serve on the national board for Big Brothers & Big Sisters, and when the CEO position was vacant, they turned to him. He also was CEO of Camp Fire Boys & Girls in the 1980s.

Besides these twists of fate that kept connecting him to children, Bahlmann's first job out of law school was for a county prosecutor. His first case? Child abuse.

In the 1970s, he was legislative attorney to Gov. Otis Bowen and even then was setting the course for causes he would personally experience later. Bahlmann was instrumental in the work of an Indiana Legislative Study Commission that introduced a concept that keeps a child from having to directly confront the person accused of harming them.

TO PAGE 56



Reconstruction of intersection at
Riverside Ave. and McKinley Ave.
at Ball State University



Construction of the
Marilyn K. Glick Center for Glass
on Ball State University campus



Roundabout at
Morrison Road and Jackson
Street in Muncie

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CURRENT

HEALTH

moment

Watch for signs of language delay

Children learn to talk by watching, listening, and responding to people around them. Read to your child, starting as early as age 6 months. Listening to you read aloud can help your baby learn sounds. Reading can also help him/her understand language and learn new words as he/she gets older.

Milestones

You can watch for signs (called developmental milestones) to see if your child is learning to talk on schedule.

- By age 6 months: Your baby can repeat sounds like "ba, ba" or "da, da."
- By age 1: Your child can say a few simple words.
- By age 18 months, your child can say several single words.
- By age 2, your child can put words together like "more milk."
- By age 3, your child can talk using 2 to 3 sentences at a time.

Causes of delays

Many things can cause a delay in talking, such as hearing problems, problems with the tongue or roof of the mouth, or a problem in the part of the brain used for talking.

The best way to help your child with language delays is to find and treat problems early. With early treatment, the chances for improvement increase.

SOURCE: Healthfinder.gov



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‘ The Meridian programs are how you can affect a positive change. Right now. Today. ’ - Dave Bahlmann

FROM PAGE 54

It was a response to the Constitutional guarantee of one's right to confront one's accuser.

"The way the code was originally written meant that a child victim would have to face the alleged perpetrator," explained Bahlmann. "Because of the inherent danger of that, we believed a child had to be protected from that. Since then, the concept has been refined. But that was the beginning of it."

Bahlmann spent the 1980s as the head of two national youth agencies, while his wife, Joan, stayed in their home watching over their growing family. "I'd traveled two and a half million miles. Four airlines went out of business. It was nuts. I needed to be home." In 1990, he joined the Ball State University Foundation.

The family moved to Muncie.

From the very start, Bahlmann's life has been inextricably linked to the choices made for him by a parent who was engaged, caring and giving. He's represented children of abuse; he's rescued the abused and put them in his home, serving as a foster

parent. He has paid it forward with examples he has set for his own, extended family.

He's lived a life that most of us only wish we had. He believes many of the programs at Meridian can make the kind of difference that significantly changes lives.

"The Meridian programs are how you can affect a positive change. Right now. Today," he said. "The kinds of programs at Meridian are critical and that's why fund development is so important, to advance the work of the Child Advocacy Center, the Suzanne Gresham Center and all the other programs."

Meridian's total health approach is ideal for foster families, Bahlmann says. "I've lived it. Besides the mental health and physical health and the wellness development process, Meridian provides all the services and support that a family might need over time."

VIDEO: To learn more about foster parenting, watch the Dave Bahlmann video story and view a photo gallery at www.meridianhs.org and on our Facebook page.



FAMFest COMMITTEE 2013

Front row, from left:

Scott Smalstig, Amelia Clark, Carrie Anacker, Margaret Richardson, Beth Clark, Teri Grimes, Gerry Cyranowski.

Back row, from left:

Patty Covington, Kylee Ketring, Brenda Irelan.

Not pictured:

Dave Bahlmann, Jennifer Henderson, Dawn Huff, Jennifer James, Ginger Jennings, Katelyn Looker.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SEANMOLIN.COM/SENIORS

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FamFest! 2013 combined the annual Eileen Moore Child Abuse Awareness Walk with the Suzanne Gresham Center Health and Fun Fair. Together, FamFest! 2013 drew even bigger crowds and put more focused attention on children and their physical, social and mental health.

Why have these events? The staggering statistics say it all.

- One in four girls will experience sexual abuse by the age of 18.
- For boys, it's one in six..
- In an average classroom of 30 children, six have been sexually abused.

Beyond the stats, are faces of children and their families looking for guidance and support. They're also looking for community resources and that's one of the biggest benefits of combining these two events.

This year, hundreds walked through downtown Muncie, along the Minnetrista walk way, then along the White River to the expansive lawn of the Suzanne Gresham Center, where they joined in the usual family-fun activities and health resources including free children photo IDs and blood pressure checks.





Meridian Fam Fest! 2013





Student services earn HIGH MARKS

Meridian program expands in Anderson schools

THREE YEARS AGO, Anderson Community School Corporation (ACS) launched a pilot program in one of its schools to test the home, school and community-based services program offered by Meridian Health Services.

Today, the program is in every Anderson public school.

According to Angie Vickery, director of special services for ACS, the reason is simple.

"We are educators; we are not mental health professionals," Vickery says.

"Even though we have social workers in our buildings, there's a lot of mental health needs out there that we can't provide," she explained. "And, sometimes, if you can't fix that mental health piece, then you can't educate (the student) either."

Meridian's program places counselors in the schools to provide guidance and help during the school day to those kids with behavioral, emotional or mental health issues. The goal is to work on those issues in a real-world setting.

And the crucial phrase is "during the school day."

"The way it works for us is, if a teacher or a principal has a concern, and they think Meridian can help, the teacher or principal will talk to the parents about making a referral (to Meridian)," Vickery says.

"After the referral's made and the parents are interested, (Meridian) will come to school, do the intake and talk about what services the child will qualify for. After that, Meridian usually sends us a weekly update of who the contact is and what happened with that contact."

Meridian's counselors are given IDs and placed around the schools so that they do not readily appear to be mental health professionals. This allows them to help the students at a close-up level.

In treatment, a client has six goals:

- To identify – and work toward reducing – symptoms
- To function and live more productively in the community
- To develop skills to manage illness
- To achieve the level of independence that is possible
- To identify ways to become medically compliant
- To develop and improve cognitive and social skills

The program is in more than 180 schools in 26 counties across Indiana, and Carrie Anacker is in charge of 11 of those counties, including Madison.

Anacker, regional administrative manager of children's services and Connxxions at the Suzanne Gresham Center, a division of Meridian Health Services, describes the growth of the program in the ACS system as rapid.

"When we started in Madison County three years ago, we were in one school and had two behavioral clinicians and one therapist," Anacker says. "Now, we're up to close to 40 staff and in 16 schools."

The need is high and growing, Anacker said. "Families have struggled and one school counselor cannot do it all."

Meridian's work teaches students – and their parents – how to cope. "Once the schools realize we can be the link between them and the home, they refer more families," Anacker says.

Improvements have included a reduction in suspensions and an increase in the time clients spend in the classroom, according to Anacker, who hears such reports from principals.

The 2013-14 academic year will be ACS's fourth with the Meridian program.

"It's been very successful, and you can look at the number of Meridian staff," Vickery says. "We have 14 full-time Meridian staff members that work in our buildings. That shows you right there that there is a need."

"I think we've needed this program for years, and we're fortunate to have these people in our system."

6 CLIENT GOALS

1

TO IDENTIFY

and work toward reducing symptoms.

2

TO FUNCTION

and live more productively.

3

TO DEVELOP

skills to manage illness.

4

TO ACHIEVE

the level of independence that is possible.

5

TO IDENTIFY

a way to become medically compliant.

6

TO DEVELOP

and improve cognitive and social skills.



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Suzanne Gresham

IN HER OWN WORDS

Was it intimidating to be the first female CEO of a community mental health center in 1979?

It was kind of fun. I had been in community mental health programming in the Detroit area. When I came here for the interview, I saw a system that was in its infancy but in a state that was one of the most supportive for community mental health. I wanted to plunge in and make it the best it could be. I had the good fortune of working for an incredibly effective board that was supportive of every effort to grow and develop programs. And, I had the best staff in the world.

Why are Child Advocacy Centers important?

They work principally because it's a non-threatening environment for the child and the family. They feel safe and supported. The youngsters can express what's been going on in their life. That's the key element. They have a way to see the child without having to put them through repeated retelling of their experiences. The fact that Meridian and the local prosecutor's office through Mark McKinney were able to bring a CAC here was a stroke of genius.



GRESHAM: PIONEER IN CARE

Suzanne Gresham became the first female CEO of a community mental health center in Indiana when she joined Comprehensive Mental Health Services in 1979.

Dr. Gresham retired in 2001 and the Suzanne Gresham Center, a treatment center dedicated to children, was opened in 2007.

Dr. Gresham earned her degrees, including her Ph.D. in clinical psychology, from Wayne State University in Detroit.

She and her husband have four children, eight grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

GRESHAM: ‘Kids have always been my passion. Both the basic programs and the CAC are just beyond my wildest dreams.’

What does it feel like to have the Suzanne Gresham Center named in your honor?

You can't believe how proud I am about that. Literally, I was blown away when the announcement was made. Kids have always been my passion. Both the basic programs at the Gresham Center and the CAC are just beyond my wildest dreams. I think it is the most child-friendly, family-friendly, supportive environment that I could have ever envisioned.

How have things changed in the world of mental health care?

Technically and systemically, we know so much more than we did 40 years ago. We know better how to intervene, how to be supportive, how to help children resolve problems but at the same time the macro system has changed significantly with regard to mental health funding and support. There have been major reductions of resources particularly for families who don't have the resources to purchase care.

What are the greatest challenges in non-profit health care today?

The Meridians of the world are under assault. They are given fewer and fewer resources to do a job that has grown bigger and bigger. They are in a Catch 22. Every provider in the state is struggling to survive, much less thrive.

What advice do you offer today's families coping with mental health issues?

Don't give up. Persist and insist. Be your own advocate. I think they need to do everything they can to advocate for improved care.

What do you attribute to Meridian Health Services' continued growth?

Creativity. Commitment. Again, persistence. I think the willingness to seize every opportunity and create others. I cannot help but admire the creativity that is used to get the job done.

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NEW PARTNERSHIP. Dr. Denise Reeves with patient Heather Williams at Meridian Women's Health.

Meridian expands primary care to **Women's Health Center**

Women make
80% of health care
choices for family

K KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION
research shows that women are
the health care decision makers for
families.

FACT: Half of all U.S. pregnancies are unplanned. Indiana has high rates of infant mortality.

MERIDIAN WOMEN'S HEALTH

LOCATION: 2501 W. Jackson St., Muncie, IN

"Their studies show women make 80 percent of family health care choices," said Amelia Clark, Meridian's vice president of community health. About 85 percent choose their children's doctors, 84 percent take them to appointments, and 79 percent ensure they get recommended care.

Kaiser is a non-profit, private operating foundation focusing on the major health care issues facing the U.S., as well as the U.S. role in global health policy.

"Women spend so much of their time focusing on their family's health that they often neglect their own," Clark pointed out.

These factors were driving forces behind Meridian's decision to expand its primary care services to now include a women's health center. Meridian Women's Health strives to make health care more accessible and inclusive for area women.

Dr. Denise Reeves, OB GYN, has been in Muncie since 1991, first affiliated with Associates in Women's Health, then as the founding physician of Muncie Women's Center, and now Meridian Women's Health. The partnership puts Meridian's "whole person health" emphasis on women.

"I care for the reproductive needs of women, who account for more than half the population in the United States. It's a unique

position," said Dr. Reeves. "Women see their gynecologist more regularly than any other physician."


Whole person health care encompasses a range of care. It isn't just going to the doctor when you are sick. It includes the full spectrum of women's health along with all of the preventative visits that are needed for people to stay healthy.

Premature delivery is one of the major contributors to infant mortality. Indiana, particularly parts of Muncie, has high rates of infant mortality. Locally, the statistic is 7.6 per 1,000 babies, higher than the national average.

"Prenatal care is the best way to ensure the birth of a healthy infant," Dr. Reeves said. "Now, with Meridian's help we have a care manager on site that can help women with other needs affecting their behavioral and social health."

Dr. Reeves earned her undergraduate degree in music education from the University of Kentucky in 1977 and graduated in 1987 from medical school at Wright State University School of Medicine.

"After graduating from college, I worked to put my husband through school, and had an unfortunate experience in an emergency room," she said. "I decided then I could do that job at least as well as the emergency room doctor so I went back to school."

Providing women's health is another step in treating the "whole person" integrating physical, mental and social well being to help people achieve their optimum health. Meridian's Women's Health is currently accepting new patients and will be adding an additional physician later this spring. 

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4 quality programs your Rialzo donations fund

Rialzo - Meridian Health Services' party with a purpose - turns five years old this year and has raised thousands of dollars for programs that touch lives throughout East Central Indiana.

While the event takes center stage for one night, Meridian's programs benefit the other 364 days of the year.

"Meridian supports the community in many different ways and I am humbled to have the community support Meridian through our charity benefit gala, Rialzo!" says Meridian's Hank Milius, President and CEO.

Money netted at last year's event – more than \$80,000 – benefited multiple causes including four unique programs at Meridian.



1 The gift of hope

In Indiana,
there are
6,000 children
in foster care
but only
5,000
available
homes.

FosterHope, a division of Meridian Health Services, is one of only a few foster programs in Indiana specializing in the needs of children with behavioral issues. Meridian identifies and trains families to provide therapeutic care with the hope of reuniting children with their families. Rialzo IV proceeds helped build a caregiver kit for families of The FosterHope program.

"These training packets will be materials that help families get through the foster licensing procedure and get them ready to take on their foster child, said Scott Smalstig, vice president of fund development for Meridian. "It includes anything from books to carbon monoxide detectors to baby proofing kits, to dry erase boards. Sometimes

not having certain items in the home can sometimes be hurdles to becoming a foster parent."

In Indiana, there are 6,000 children currently in foster care, but only 5,000 available homes. Mary Grey, a foster licensing and adoption specialist for FosterHope, takes great pride in Meridian's program because it has a variety of supports that other agencies don't offer. She specifically refers to Meridian's emphasis on "whole person" health.

Meridian is staffed with psychiatrists, therapists, and case managers. They offer crisis intervention, a 24-hour service for emergencies, and MeridianMD, a program with doctors who address a child's physical health needs.

2

A priceless \$8 million project

Meridian Health Services in its ongoing mission of whole-person health is partnering with a Chicago developer to bring transitional housing in 2014 to a local population that needs it most.

Work on the \$8 million, 44-unit housing structure for individuals transitioning from homelessness is expected to begin in the spring of 2014 and be available for occupancy sometime in 2015. Private donations raised at Rialzo help pay for "Welcome Home" packets for new tenants, who have been without a permanent residence and don't have necessary basics.

"We'll see people who come in with nothing," said Sue Buckingham, supervisor of homeless and vocational services. "My idea was wouldn't it be great for them to have a box full of stuff like pillows, and dishwashing detergent, and soap, washcloths, blankets, brooms ... the kinds of things you need when you move in to a new place."

Walnut Commons will be built on the former site of the United Way of Delaware County offices at the corner of Wysor and Walnut streets. UP Development will own the building but Meridian will provide support and services to tenants.



TEACHING HOUSING FIRST. Sue Buckingham is Meridian Health Services' supervisor of homeless and vocational services.


Walnut Commons will include a multipurpose room, an area for vocational assessments, and onsite offices for behavioral clinicians and casement management services.

Muncie Mayor Dennis Tyler has been supportive of Meridian's community involvement and growth. "We welcome projects like these that enhance the lives of our citizens," he said.


Meridian teaches "housing first," which is a philosophy that says people who are homeless need housing before they can get a job, before they can bathe properly, before they can be retrained or even before they can care appropriately for their children.

"From there, we can provide services that can help a person get a job, be better parent, be cleaner or know how to live on their own," Buckingham said. "What comes first in your life? If you don't have a place to live, how do you do anything?"


FACT: Housing construction for people transitioning from homelessness will begin spring 2014.



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In 2013, Star Press Media Group:

... partnered with the Emergency Management Agency to unite fire, police, medical and emergency personnel during the Make a Difference Day Emergency Expo, giving \$5,000 worth of emergency tools to community members.

...gave more than \$15,700 to the Cardinal Greenway from proceeds of the Walk Indiana program.

...along with 1 Fun Farm, Outfitters, Casa del Sol and Grissom Elementary gave more than \$9,000 to the IU Health BMH Cancer Center from In the Pink month.

...employees volunteered countless hours to groups like the animal shelter and Relay for Life.

...gave more than \$13,000 for Star Press Children's Charities which gives grants to community groups.

...donated more than \$500,000 in advertising, sponsored programs and charitable giving.

...and the Gannett Foundation gave more than \$10,700 in donations to local organizations.

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3 Geriatric specialty services

Meridian's Geriatric Psychiatric Hospital - a collaborative project with IU Health Ball Memorial Hospital - received \$7,500 in Rialzo IV dollars.

The plan is to create a more nostalgic environment for the gero-psych floor at IU Health Ball Memorial Hospital, which is managed by Meridian Health Services.

The gero-psych program works with seniors who live with a psychiatric illness such as dementia, Alzheimer's, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or depression so that they may return home, whether it is to a private home or an assisted living center.

"Imagine mural paintings of streetscapes from the '50s or '60s," Smalstig said. "These kinds of calming images can create a stabilizing environment during an intensely difficult time for patients and their traditional caregivers, usually family members."

"Services like those offered in the geriatric specialty inpatient units have been growing for the last 20 years," says Brian Donley, vice president of clinical services.



In general, people are living longer. Along with aging come more physical and mental obstacles. Meridian's "whole-person health" strategy can give seniors everything they need in a single location.

"Seniors who need an inpatient psychiatric hospital have more specialized needs," Donley adds.

Services under the program include:

- Complete medical, psychiatric and social evaluations
- Group, individual and family therapy
- Medication evaluation and adjustment
- Medical care and monitoring
- Skill development
- 24-hour nursing care within a hospital environment

Donley says helping seniors with psychiatric problems is satisfying. "There is a huge amount of satisfaction, not just for me, but in this field and the people who work in it," he said.

FACT: The gero-psych hospital works with seniors so they may return home or to an assisted living center.

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A photograph of an older man with glasses and a beard, wearing a maroon shirt, and a younger man with glasses wearing a red shirt, sitting at a table and playing cards. The table is covered with a green card cloth and has various items on it, including a calculator, a bottle of Ketchup, and several red cups. The background shows a large window with a view of trees outside.

4 Wheeling for healing

Meridian Health Services behavioral clinicians are on the road much of the time, often meeting with patients in neutral locations like schools or libraries.



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FACT: Last year, Meridian provided programs and services to more than 5,000 children.

Kits keep behavioral clinicians mobile

FOR THE CLINICIANS, THEIR AUTOMOBILES are their offices and one of the best new tools to take on the road has been “Wheeling for Healing” kits, made possible by the generous sponsorship of First Merchants Bank.

“Before it was very difficult to have the supplies you needed,” explained Carrie Anacker, manager of children’s services at the Suzanne Gresham Center, a division of Meridian Health Services. “They would have to check out what they wanted from the office and check it back in.”

Last year, Meridian provided programs and services to more than 5,000 children. The initial 150 kits, at a cost of \$30,000, were quickly distributed to the hundreds of behavioral clinicians throughout the agency, serving a region that includes Madison, Delaware, Wayne, Jay, Blackford, Adams, Wells and Grant counties.

Another 75 have been ordered, Anacker says. “If you know anything about kids, you know you need to engage them to get them to talk to you. These kits help us do that.”

The kit is a suitcase on wheels filled with therapeutic tools, skill-building puzzles, games like UNO, Jenga and Trouble, as well as icebreakers, and other educational materials for families. The kit includes construction paper, colored pencils and

TO PAGE 76



MOBILE OFFICE. Behavioral clinician Tim Wallace meets clients wherever they are to meet their needs.

Photos: ADAM STURM



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crayons, activity books and reference material for parents.
"These are fun activities and very therapeutic, too," Anacker said. "Jenga is nice because the pieces are blank and the staff can use them to ask questions. You pull out a piece and it might say: 'What do you do when someone hurts you?'"

Behavioral clinician Tim Wallace says he sees the benefits of the kits every day.

"It gives the client a chance to be creative, and what they can't say in words, they can put down in other forms," he said. "The material in these kits allows them to share a feeling that they may not be able to articulate but can at least get something down and then we can talk about what that piece is."

Meridian started using the kits just a year ago but they've already made a huge difference in the field. "They're in a wheeled bag and easy to transport. The staff has found them very useful and we've seen the results immediately," Anacker said. "We work with so many families who don't have these kinds of materials in the home."

For Wallace, who works strictly out of his truck, the kits have become essential. He works with four to five children every day ranging in age from preschool to high school.

"I can't just head back to the office. I need to use that time to get to the next client. I meet clients in their homes and talk with parents for a little bit, then the client and I leave and go out in the community, and we spend time one-on-one, working on whatever skill they might need help with."

This simple tool, Wallace says, starts the conversation, which begins the healing process.

Many thanks to these friends who helped make *Rialzo V* a success:

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HEALTH moment

Children and asthma: The goal is control

The news about children and asthma is both good and bad. Better treatments have allowed children with asthma to live active, independent lives.

The bad news is that the number of reported cases of asthma in children has been rising. In 2010, there were 7 million children with asthma, up from 6.5 million in 2005.

Recognizing asthma

One reason may be that doctors are diagnosing more kids; illnesses once known as bronchitis or a croupy cough are now being recognized as asthma. Its symptoms may include coughing, wheezing (a whistling sound when you breathe), chest tightness and shortness of breath, according to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

Acting quickly

Uncontrolled asthma can lead to chronic lung disease and a poor quality of life, and may slow growth, according to Benjamin Ortiz, M.D., a medical officer in FDA's Office of Pediatric Therapeutics. "Early intervention results in better health into adulthood," he says.

In adolescence, childhood symptoms might disappear, but they are likely to return or be different. When they disappear, teens might think they no longer need to pack medicines when they travel, or keep them at school.

Other pitfalls include less parental supervision, and reluctance to be seen by their peers taking medicine. Doctors can help with a medication schedule that allows for privacy. Also, dry powder inhalers may be small enough to tuck in a pocket or purse and use discreetly.

SOURCE: U.S. Food and Drug Administration

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HEALTH moment

Sunscreen on infants? Skin experts say 'no'

You're at the pool, slathered in sunscreen. Your 5-month-old baby is there, too. Should you put sunscreen on her? Not usually, according to Hari Cheryl Sachs, M.D., a pediatrician at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

"The best approach is to keep infants under 6 months out of the sun," Sachs says, "and to avoid exposure to the sun in the hours between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when ultra-violet (UV) rays are most intense."

Sunscreens are recommended for children and adults. What makes babies so different?

For one thing, babies' skin is much thinner than that of adults, and it absorbs the active, chemical ingredients in sunscreen more easily, explains Sachs. For another, infants have a high surface-area to body-weight ratio compared to older children and adults. Both these factors mean that an infant's exposure to the chemicals in sunscreens is much greater, increasing the risk of allergic reaction or inflammation.

The best protection is to keep your baby in the shade, if possible, Sachs says. If there's no natural shade, create your own with an umbrella or the canopy of the stroller.

If there's no way to keep an infant out of the sun, you can apply a small amount of sunscreen—with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15—to small areas such as the cheeks and back of the hands. Sachs suggests testing your baby's sensitivity to sunscreen by first trying a small amount on the inner wrist.

SOURCE: U.S. Food and Drug Administration



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Rialzo IV 2013

"Joy to the World & Our Community" was the title for the fourth iteration of Rialzo, Meridian Health Services' annual charity gala.

Rialzo . . . Italian for "to elevate or rise above," is symbolic to Meridian Health Services in this collaborative fundraising event to raise the importance of a healthy mind and community.

Rialzo IV was indeed a "Three Dog Night": The classic band, famous for hits including "Joy to the World," "Mama Told Me (Not to Come)," and "Black and White," rocked the crowd, and the annual auction featured not just one, but three adorable puppies.

Sold out with more than 820 guests, Rialzo IV featured performances from arts partners, dinner and dancing.

The fundraising auctions supported Meridian's programs and celebrated the harmony of "whole person" health. The top silent auction item went for \$2,100, and the top live auction item went for \$9,000.





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