

Seymour Center for Children and Families

Philanthropic Partnership Opportunities

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Family Resource and Child Development Center

Where children and families flourish



The Family Resource and Child Development Center will serve children with special needs. Right now, thousands of children in our community are suffering from trauma, post-traumatic stress, intellectual and physical disabilities – and unable to receive the services they need.



It is often difficult for the parents of these children to access services due to lack of service integration, transportation to various parts of the county where services are located, need to schedule services around school and work, and lack of knowledge about which services are needed, available, accessible and affordable. **Many parents of children with special needs are over burdened, stressed and need support to protect and nurture their children.** Some are foster parents seeking to help a child recover after neglect. Public school teachers of children with special needs sometimes find it challenging to locate and access services, materials and equipment that children need to thrive and flourish.

“Children with special needs, and the families that love them, need to have integrated, accessible resources to maintain that child’s health and the wholistic health of the family. Collaboration between services, agencies, health providers, and financial navigation is essential, and this Center will fill a desperately needed void in Marion County.”

-Pat Olson
Parent of Special Needs Child

The Center is designed to **help children with special needs and their families and teachers by bringing together services and care providers in a single, convenient and accessible location.** On-premises services will include mental health services, classrooms, meeting spaces, offices for providers, and space for community gatherings.



Offered by
Catholic Community Services

“Anytime we can support our children from birth to school age with strategic collaborative partners, our students will be school-ready and prepared to thrive in a community that cares deeply about them and their success.”

-Christy Perry
Superintendent, Salem-Keizer Public Schools

The promise of the Center is to help children with special needs to thrive and flourish, increase their success at school and in the community, strengthen family resilience, reduce the incidence of disrupted foster care placements, improve collaboration and services integration among health care professionals, social service providers and educators, reduce service duplication, and increase accessibility.



Family Resource and Child Development Center



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New center geared for helping little Oregonians succeed

The Catholic Community Services project is a response to classroom disruptions



Workers get going on a project to renovate a former Salem St. Vincent de Paul building into a family resource and child development center to be operated by Catholic Community Services in Salem. (Courtesy Catholic Community Services)



An architect's rendering shows the exterior of a new center in Salem, where about 100 children would be able to attend preschool and parents can learn stress management, financial planning and other skills to help the family succeed. (Courtesy Catholic Community Services)

SALEM — Teachers know it best. The whole educational enterprise is hindered from the get-go because kindergartners lack academic, social and emotional preparation for school. Disruption in the classroom is becoming a crisis.

Catholic Community Services is marshalling a coalition to solve the problem, at least in the mid-Willamette Valley and the central Oregon coast.

The church agency has received a \$1 million donation to build what it's calling a one-stop family resource and child development center. The Portland Road structure, former home of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, will be a single, convenient location where children and

families can enroll in preschool, obtain social services and meet with counselors and health providers.

Each day, the center will welcome as many as 100 3- and 4-year-olds who are behind in academics or social development. While the kids play and learn, mom and dad can take classes in parenting, stress reduction and financial strategy. The parents may even see a counselor to address trauma from their own childhoods.

English- and Spanish-speaking workers will be available, with translation planned for other language groups.

Many children from low-income families face a disadvantage at school because they are suffering the effects of trauma and an unstable family life, said Jim Seymour, executive director of Catholic Community Services here. The new center is especially for them. Sounding a theme in Catholic aid work in Oregon, Seymour said the project will create more resilient families.

The center is likely to start partial operations by the end of this summer, with a total opening at the start of 2020.

School problems

The idea came after people who attended community meetings said getting youngsters ready for school is a top need.

In February, the Oregon Education Association released a survey and report showing that a third of teachers often are frightened for student safety in classrooms, not to mention the affect such behavior has on instruction. The state's annual kindergarten assessment showed that at the start of this school year, public school teachers rated their young students at about 70 percent — akin to a low D — for self-regulation. In academics, Oregon kindergartners were rated at 69 percent for math readiness and a dismal 42 percent for reading.

The deficiencies have proven hard to overcome. Needy families are thwarted in getting help for their children because they must travel to many different agencies, often on public transportation.

For families who come to the new center, Seymour hopes for positive social connections, tangible aid, and a boost in the “knowledge, skills and virtues needed to succeed in life.”

“We want every parent to be their kid's best teacher about how to get along with other kids and how to handle authority,” said Seymour. “We want kids to show up to school with these skills.”

Partners in the project include Salem-Keizer Public Schools, Willamette Education Service District, the Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub, Marion County Mental Health services and the Oregon Department of Human Services.

“Any time we can support our children from birth to school age with strategic collaborative partners, our students will be school-ready and prepared to thrive in a community that cares deeply about them and their success,” said Christy Perry, superintendent of Salem-Keizer Public Schools.

Unique funding

The \$1 million donor was Larry Tokarski, a local developer and investor who has long supported Catholic Community Service's work. "I committed a leadership gift to this project in recognition of Catholic Community Services' long history of leadership in bringing the community together to meet the needs of children and families facing adversity," Tokarski said. "This center will pave the way to a new level of collaborative service partnerships that will change the odds for our community's most vulnerable children."

Tokarski's donation is only part of the \$3.5 million needed to build the center. In addition to a traditional capital campaign in which donors can make contributions, Catholic Community Services is selling shares in the project. The CCS Life Fund allows older investors to receive an income for life while also helping families. Auxiliary Bishop Kenneth Steiner is buying five shares.

Those who buy the \$10,000 shares must be 60 or older. The rate of return will start at 6 percent and rise over time. When shareholders die, their shares return to Catholic Community Services.

There will be opportunity for individual Catholics to get involved as host families, which care for children while the parents are navigating a crisis. Other parishioners can become mentors to parents or tutors for youngsters.

Where love is learned

Catholic Community Services already runs the Father Taaffe homes for pregnant girls and women and operates St. Joseph Shelter in Mount Angel. It built the St. Monica Apartments in Keizer, housing 10 low-income families.

Clearly, family life often is on Seymour's mind. He would not rank his own childhood high when it comes to stability and safety. It took some work and blessings for him to succeed. He wants to make life easier for today's children.

He went on pilgrimage to the 2015 World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia in 2015 and heard Pope Francis extol family life as a marvel of God's creation and the place where humans learn to love.

"I came out of that with a sense that if there is one thing we need to do, it's strengthen families," Seymour said. "The pope helped me see there is redemption no matter how much strife there is in a family."



[Ed Langlois](#), Of the Catholic Sentinel 4/16/2019 2:16 PM

One-stop resource center coming to help Salem families and young children

[Natalie Pate](#), Salem Statesman Journal Published 12:45 p.m. PT March 8, 2019 | Updated 12:58 p.m. PT March 8, 2019

Oregon is ranked as the worst state in the country for the prevalence of mental illness. Lawmakers and schools want to help. Natalie Pate, Statesman Journal

Elementary school staff are seeing more students than ever enter kindergarten without the academic, social and emotional skills they need to be successful.

The impact is seen in [disruptive behaviors](#) day-to-day, as well as the long-term effects of not all students meeting [kindergarten assessment standards](#), reading on grade level or [graduating from high school](#).

Catholic Community Services wants to change that, beginning before the children even start school.

With the help of multiple community partners, [Catholic Community Services](#) is creating the Family Resource and Child Development Center in northeast Salem.



A rendering of the future Family Resource and Child Development Center, run by Catholic Community Services, that will be located off Portland Road NE in Salem. The center is expected to have a partial opening in August, 2019, with a full opening in January, 2020. (Photo: Courtesy of architect Ron Ped)

The one-stop-shop will serve as a hub for local families to access numerous services, including special education programs, parenting classes, mental health counseling, pediatric dental work and information on affordable housing.

The center is geared specifically toward families of 3- and 4-year-olds who already may be behind academically or socially.

Jim Seymour, executive director of Catholic Community Services, said they began asking educators last year what are the most pressing issues facing students today.

Continuously, they heard a greater number of students than ever are entering kindergarten without the skills they need to learn and thrive.

Additionally, there's a growing awareness of traumatic, stressful events that affect children as they grow up, known as [Adverse Childhood Experiences](#), or ACEs.

Seymour said they knew they would need a trauma-informed approach to whatever work they did, one in which both children and their parents were safe and able to learn.

"When it comes to teaching social-emotional skills, parents are the first and best teachers for that," he said.

[Mountain West Investment Corporation](#) President Larry Tokarski donated \$1 million to Catholic Community Service to get the project started.

They began connecting with existing and new partners, including Salem-Keizer Public Schools, Willamette Education Service District, the Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub, Marion County Mental Health services and the Oregon Department of Human Services.

A partial opening will likely be scheduled for August of this year, and the full, grand opening is scheduled for January, 2020. They began connecting with existing and new partners, including Salem-Keizer Public Schools, Willamette Education Service District, the Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub, Marion County Mental Health services and the Oregon Department of Human Services.

A partial opening will likely be scheduled for August of this year, and the full, grand opening is scheduled for January, 2020.

Developing the resource center

The center will serve as a collaborative space in which myriad groups gather. Officials expect it to be open on both weekdays and weekends, with most providers working there full-time.

Some programs will have offices and meeting spaces, while others may have classrooms and play areas. There also will be outpatient community mental health and pediatric dental clinics.

The center will be housed in the old [St. Vincent de Paul](#) building, located near the intersection of Portland Road NE and Bill Frey Drive.



Construction workers begin work on the Family Resource and Child Development Center in Salem. The center, which will serve as a hub of resources for local families, will be located at the corner of Portland Road NE and Bill Frey Drive in the old St. Vincent de Paul building. (Photo: Courtesy of Nathan Schwab, Catholic Community Services)

Catholic Community Services expects the cost of renovations to total about \$3.5 million. With Tokarski's donation, that leaves them with \$2.5 million left to raise. Tokarski declined to comment for this story.

The agency is offering donors, 60 years old and older, a Real Estate Pooled Income Fund opportunity. There are 300 shares at \$10,000 per share with an initial 6 percent rate of return that will increase over time.

When donors die, their shares return to Catholic Community Services, meaning all the building shares will eventually belong to the agency again.

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Connecting with families

Seymour doesn't anticipate any challenges connecting with families since each of the groups involved already has a vast network of people they serve.

For example, several community partners work with Catholic Community Services through the [Fostering Hope Initiative](#) — eight nonprofits working together toward "collective impact."

Seymour said the initiative reaches about 750 children and their families every month. They served 9,059 children, adults and families in 2018 and he said they will likely exceed that number in 2019.

He doesn't want to label the center as a program for high-risk families and kids with special needs.

"If you have a need that we can meet and you're willing to do everything you can for yourself, then you're eligible," he said.

At the same time, they are especially trying to reach families facing adversity, such as alcohol and drug use, mental health problems and homelessness.

"It's difficult sometimes," he said. "It's families who want to protect and nurture their children, but they need community support to make that possible."

Seymour said officials have developed a curriculum for parents that integrates three components: mindfulness and meditation, honest and passionate communication, and trauma-informed care.

Through this curriculum, they'll teach parents how to develop safety and self-care plans, evaluate and reduce their stress levels, communicate compassionately and clearly with their children and recognize trauma and its impact on their children's development — as well as their own.

After that, they will learn about financial literacy and planning, then healthy eating and physical activity, followed by civic engagement and how to be an active, supportive member of their families and communities.

Seymour said these things are "at the heart of what families need to know (and what they) need to be able to teach their children."

When the curriculum has been used in past programs, he said they frequently see families come back to volunteer and bring in more people.

Sacred meteorite: [Pieces of the largest U.S. meteorite returned to Grand Ronde tribes](#)

Building a stronger community

Willamette Education Service District, also known as Willamette ESD, is one of the groups that will be actively involved in the center.

The agency serves 21 Oregon school districts in Marion, Polk and Yamhill counties, with a student population of approximately 90,000 students in grades K-12. At the new center, they will provide specialized pre-school classes.

Willamette ESD officials said the plan is to have two classrooms, a play area and office space for staff and itinerant specialists. The classes will be a part of their Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education program, serving children ages 3 to 5.

The program's curriculum will emphasize growth in communication, cognitive, academic, fine and gross motor and self-help skills, officials said, with related services provided by specialists and therapists. They plan to include bilingual instruction in English and Spanish.



Construction workers begin work on the Family Resource and Child Development Center in Salem. The center, which will serve as a hub of resources for local families, will be located at the corner of Portland Road NE and Bill Frey Drive in the old old St. Vincent de Paul building. (Photo: Courtesy of Nathan Schwab, Catholic Community Services)

Lisa Harnisch, executive director of the [Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub](#), has been a part of the center's development since last year, when she coordinated a number of focus groups that gauged the community's needs.

"It's just such an ideal thing to have a warm, welcoming space where families can go and get help from a multitude of organizations," she said. "This is community collaboration at its finest. ... It makes a lot of sense and I think it will serve families very well."

Since the early learning hub doesn't offer direct services to families, Harnisch isn't sure what the organization's physical involvement will be at the center, though they plan to actively participate.

Harnisch said they may have an office there, but plans haven't been solidified.

"It's about supporting the whole family," Harnisch said. "That's what's at the heart of this — stronger families, stronger neighborhoods and a stronger community."

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