### Fall 2016

Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery







Carrie DePasquale is what we'd call a smart cookie. It could be her degree in Neuroscience, or the fact that she's working on her PhD in child development. Luckily for us, Carrie's putting her smarts to work for the Nursery, by helping develop critical program measures. And even better, she's bringing her big heart along.

#### A HEART AWAKENS

As an undergrad at the University of Delaware, Carrie took a job entering research data—and entertaining children whose siblings or cousins were involved in a research study.

Carrie had no idea that a simple hour of playtime would help ignite a passion that has helped shape her research and community commitment to date. While babysitting a cousin for a fairly high-risk Philadelphia sample, Carrie was struck by how quickly the little girl opened up after such a short period of positive interaction. "It made me realize: she probably doesn't get experiences like that very often," Carrie says.

"I became so motivated by that little girl," Carrie relates. "Kids go through such stressful experiences at such a young age. That has really made me passionate about identifying ways we can prevent exposure to or reduce the impact of those stressors."

#### **MEASURING SUCCESS**

Fast forward a few years, and Carrie's now planted at the University of Minnesota's Institute of Child Development, where she's working on her PhD under Dr. Megan Gunnar. Here at the Nursery, she's working to develop a behavioral measure that will help Nursery staff better evaluate our program offerings, by collecting data across six different behavioral categories.

"My goal is to help identify opportunities for improvement," Carrie says. "Whether that means adding programs, or potentially just finding different ways to help the kids deal with transitions. They're not used to getting up and going about a normal day." Carrie works with Mary Pat and the Nursery staff on a regular basis to ensure the behavioral tool she's developing will be usable and reliable for ongoing work.

#### AN EYE ON THE FUTURE

Carrie recognizes that the cycle of poverty and violence can be hard to break. "It's important to realize that these parents want what's best for their children. There's only so much that they have control over," she says. "The Nursery is an amazing place and resource for parents to use. The Nursery can foster hope, and set families on a better track."

For Carrie's part, her early experience with at-risk kids has really shaped how she thinks about community outreach—and today, she's committed. "I want to help make sure that all of these kids grow up and lead happier and healthier lives."

#### KID-FRIENDLY METRICS

Carrie and her team are looking at several different behavioral measures. Here are a few: Behaviors to discourage and reduce

- Self-stimulating behaviors, such as rocking back and forth
- » Aggression physical or verbal
- Coping skills such as taking a b
  - counting to 10, recognizing I need help
- Prosocial behavior, such as sharing and comforting





truly believe that we are never done improving. And here at the Crisis Nursery, we take that idea of continuous improvement to heart. For us that means doing good work today—and even better work tomorrow.

The belief that we can always do better has driven us to develop our Nursery Way Care protocols, a trauma-informed approached to working with children and parents. It has led us to expand our 4th Day Home Visiting program to provide more families in crisis with deeper support. And this same belief has motivated us to create an in-home mental health services program, to ensure that parents who aren't able to successfully access traditional mental health services get the help they need.

In striving to improve, we're developing resources that we can use to help the community understand the real impact of our work. And we try to keep learning. By reaching out to the University of Minnesota, the University of Chicago, and the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard, we are able to incorporate the most current research and best practices into our work. This gives our staff the tools and resources they need to do their good work each day. A constant desire to innovate and do better means we spend time on evaluation standards, logic models, and measurement criteria. Yes, it may be a whole lot of data collection but this data is at the core of how we know whether the families we serve are getting what they need. Our families face so many challenges. We owe it to them to provide the very best care possible.

To our volunteers, donors and friends—thank you. We are so grateful for the support you provide that helps us get better each and every day. We know that our work is making a difference in improving children's physical and emotional health, and in supporting parents' ability to care for their children.

Every day, we work to keep children safe from abuse and neglect and to create strong healthy families. And every day, we work to keep getting better.

Mary Pat Lee Executive Director







## VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT JEREMY THIGPEN PITCHES IN FOR COOK FOR KIDS

ach day, children at the Nursery are served breakfast, Iunch and dinner, along with three snacks – yay food! Volunteer groups help to plan, prepare, and serve these meals and snacks to the children seven days a week; 365 days a year. Keith Johnson, Food Service and Volunteer Services Coordinator, sat down with Jeremy Thigpen from Mortensen Construction, to talk about his experience with our Cook for Kids Program:

# KEITH: How did you learn about the Nursery and what motivated you to volunteer for Cook for Kids?

JEREMY: Mortenson has promoted the Crisis Nursery since I started 10 years ago, when the Nursery was at the Golden Valley location. My college years included business management as well as working with elementary and middle-school children—I have a place in my heart for kids who need help or guidance or an adult that they can count on. Showing them that a stranger does care about them—that motivates me.

#### How do you motivate others to join you in volunteering?

That's always a challenge. Many want to volunteer, but now that the facility has moved, the drive is 20 minutes from our office, as opposed to 5 minutes, so some may be hesitant to volunteer because of the extra time added. So, I try to explain to them how easy it is to cook and then it's hanging out with the kids and cleaning up. Not too tough!

**Do you have a specific story to share about your experience?** All the many times that I have volunteered to do Cook for Kids, I go with different Mortenson teammates, so it's great to volunteer with co-workers that I don't get to interact with on a regular basis, and we're helping kids (and the Crisis Nursery) at the same time!

### What would you say to someone who is thinking about volunteering for Cook for Kids but hasn't signed up yet? Keith makes it easy. Donate \$100. Food is ready for you when you get there. Menu is ready for you when you get there. You really can do this with 2 people, sure 2 to 5 is recommended, but 2 to 3 volunteers can prepare most meals just fine, so you don't need an army of volunteers to complete this mission. Seeing the young children's eyes wide open as you sit next to them and talk to them about their days or what playground games they like to play or what animals they like, is great!

If you are interested in volunteering for our Cook for Kids program, contact Keith Johnson at (612) 767-8483 or kjohnson@crisisnursery.org. Learn more at crisisnursery.org/volunteer. **FY16 VOLUNTEER STATISTICS** 

# MEASURES OF SUPPORT AND SUCCESS

Each year, we keep track of the support we receive as well as the impact we have on our community's families. Here are some highlights of the results we've seen in the past fiscal year.



Volunteers from The Breck School do weekly enrichment projects with children at the Nursery.

+2,000

## **VOLUNTEERS PROVIDED**

20,468 HOURS

of service – Equal to nearly 10 full time employees!

### **VOLUNTEERS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE**

Volunteers are an integral component of the love and support we deliver to our community's most vulnerable children and families – and we couldn't do this important work without them! Check out how much volunteer support we had in the past year:

## 4,318 VOLUNTEER SHIFTS FILLED

# \$65,000

Amount that volunteer donations saved the Nursery in food costs

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365 TEAMS PROVIDED 545 MEALS 211 SNACKS

for children at the Nursery



## GMCN ANNUAL PROGRAM REPORT

Your support makes a difference for the children and families we serve. With your donations in the past year, we are happy to report some significant successes for our community's families. Take a look at some of the highlights below.

3,764

Number of calls for help that family advocates answered



accessed overnight residential services (unduplicated)

**STORIES OF SUCCESS** 

# 736

home visits were provided through the 4th Day Home Visiting Program

# 142 PARENTS

participated in parent education and parent support groups

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**99%** of families reported the Crisis Nursery helped them alleviate their current crisis **97%** of families reported they now have strategies in place to keep themselves and their families safe

**93%** of parents have gained a better understanding of child development while working with the Crisis Nursery **92%** of families have identified someone to talk to when they need support

# **EVENT NEWS**

### THREE CHEERS FOR HARVESTING HOPE

Thank you to everyone who joined us for the 12th Annual Harvesting Hope wine tasting event to benefit the Nursery. More than 350 of our supporters were there, and together we raised nearly \$265,000 to provide crisis care to children and families who need it most.



## **BE A HOLIDAY HELPER!**

Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery's Holiday Helper Program supports families who access our services during the winter season of giving. Gifts received from the Holiday Helper Program

are distributed to families based on their specific needs and what has been donated. Download the Holiday Helper Wish List at www. crisisnursery.org



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