


HEROES OF HOPE

YOUR IMPACT ON THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AT THE CHILDREN'S CENTER

OCTOBER 2021



**“Better days begin at
The Children’s Center.”**



Nancy Heard the Call of Foster Children and Answered It

My name is Nancy Willis, and I am a retired foster and adoptive parent. As a young child, my mother and I would read the newspaper, and we'd always see the same ad for foster parent recruitment: "This child is waiting for you." I would tell my parents, "We need to go get this child." And that's what I've done. For 19 years, I have fostered 33 children, most of whom were infants under three years old when they came to my home. I'm an adoptive mother to four of them.

Foster children come into the world with so many challenges; drugs in their little systems, abandoned, scared. Sometimes their families have been struggling for a long time and they're often wounded children themselves. They need our help. One little girl, Zias, was just three years old. We were together for three years and became very attached to each other. She potty trained with me, and started kindergarten, walking to school every day with my daughter. At age six she started the reunification process with her biological mother. The night before she was set to leave, her mother called me and said "I can't do this. I can't take her."

I knew the heartbreak Zias would feel. I told her mother, "Yes, you can. You can do this. She's counting on you. You will pick her up tomorrow. Better yet, I'll bring her to you." The whole drive there Zias cried, "I'm going to miss you." The Children's Center has always been there for all our needs. The counselors and psychiatrists are great with my kids. All the different programs they have for children—birthday parties, homework help, the boutique—have been great for my family.

The Children's Center is a beacon of hope in the community. It's bright. It's cheery. Lives are changed there. Better days begin at The Children's Center.

We're Cooking Up a Storm Together

Thanks to you, our youth are becoming budding chefs. In August our virtual cooking class had youth (aged 15-21) in our Cornerstone program whipping up delicious meals for their families. These youth are receiving mental health services and working to build the skills they need to transition to adulthood. The meal had a Greek pasta salad, fried potato chips, chicken pizza, and pineapple upside-down cake all made entirely from scratch—YUM!





Hats Off To Our Graduates

Graduating high school is such an accomplishment. It didn't go unnoticed here at The Children's Center. In August, we celebrated our 2021 graduating seniors with a fun-filled party! We love celebrating the major accomplishments of our youth and families. Because of you, we can make these amazing young people feel just how special they are.



Finding the Path to Reunification

In 2021, The Children's Center has reunified 21 foster children with their biological families to date. Many children come into foster care having experienced trauma, abuse, or neglect. Thanks to your support we are able to make the process easier. While a child is in foster care, our specialists not only meet with the child and their foster family, but also with the biological family to try to get them on track. We provide parenting classes, techniques for emotional regulation, and communication skills. We work with parents on their path to reunification to ensure they are equipped to safely parent their children. Of course, it is not always possible to reunify a child with their biological family, especially in cases of abuse and neglect. For those children, our foster care specialists work to find forever, adoptive families that can promise brighter, happier futures. In 2021 The Children's Center has helped 24 children be adopted to date.

You Helped 650 Children Get Ready for School!

School is in session again, and you made sure our children were ready for it. More than 650 children received backpacks and school supply kits at our Back to School Bazaar. We had a record 75 volunteers pitch in to make the event a success—from buying supplies to stuffing backpacks, distributing kits, and cleaning up afterward. Thank you for helping our scholars achieve their academic dreams.



Let's Trunk or Treat

Spooky season is upon us! We are holding our annual Trunk or Treat event on Friday, Oct. 22, from 4-5:30 pm. Want to get in on the spooktacular? Contact us right away to see if there is still space to bring your car and pass out candy! Over 500 children will be in attendance—we can always use donations of candy too! Visit <https://a.co/6mhV9cX> to donate candy today!

Nancy Made a Difference, You Can Too!

Every year there are around 14,000 children in foster care in the state of Michigan. Nancy Willis wanted those children to know that someone believed in them and loved them, and so she's fostered 33 children throughout her life. **Make a difference in a child's life today by becoming a Believer, and let even more children know how amazing they are.**

TheChildrensCenter.com/believers

