



April 2023

## Abilene elementary school supports Morrison House

As part of Abilene McKinley Elementary School's annual Great Kindness Challenge week of festivities in February students have customarily chosen a charitable cause to support. This year the students chose to support the Rebecca A. Morrison House after Principal Mindy Miller presented information on how the hospitality house's services had benefited one of the school's own families.

A serious car accident just before the holidays left the family without transportation and in disarray while the father recovered from his injuries at Salina Regional Health Center. The family spent several weeks at the Morrison House and Principal Miller made special trips to Salina each day to take the kids to and from school after winter break ended in January.

"I just presented information about the house to our student council and how it had served one of our own families, and they became interested in supporting the Morrison House," Miller said. "Beyond that, this was honestly driven by the kids."

From there the students distributed information about the Morrison House to their peers along with collection buckets for loose change in each classroom. There was an emphasis on making this a kid-driven initiative instead of asking parents for help. Kids could search chair cushions and laundry for spare change or do extra chores to raise money. All told, the students raised \$423.53 and presented the money to Morrison House Manager Lisa Hoffman at a school assembly in March.

But the story doesn't quite end there! An anonymous supporter of the Morrison House heard about the donation and decided she wanted to provide matching funds. The donor also shared the story with her employer, who also decided to donate matching funds. The students' initial gesture ended up raising more than \$1,270 to support the Morrison House.

"The kids were really excited when they heard their donation had been matched two more times," Miller said. "It made their efforts extra meaningful."



Morrison House Manager Lisa Hoffman received a donation from students at McKinley Elementary School in Abilene at an assembly in March.

## Grants support two infant/toddler child care playgrounds

Shortages for child care abound across the country. Child Care Aware of Kansas estimates the current shortage in Saline County is 900 children awaiting child care slots.

Two recent Community Health Investment Program (CHIP) grants were awarded to local churches that have added child care services to help alleviate community needs. Both grants were requested to help construct playgrounds to meet Kansas Department of Health and Environment requirements that stipulate age appropriate play equipment and separate play areas for infants and toddlers from older children.

Church of the Cross United Methodist received \$10,000 to support its Angel Child Care program staffed through a cooperative agreement with the YMCA. St. John's Missionary Baptist Church received \$14,000 to support its Kid Kare program, which is increasing capacity this year. Both playgrounds are open to the public outside of child care center hours.

"The Health Foundation board is always community conscious and we're very thankful for the support," said Allen Smith, pastor at St. John's Missionary Baptist Church.

## CHIP supports increasing mental health services for Blessed Hope Family

Blessed Hope Family serves foster and adoptive families throughout central Kansas. Its mission is to keep foster and adoptive families "stronger for longer."

"Our services are aimed at supporting the foster and adoptive caretakers," said Leah Graves, executive director for Blessed Hope Family. "If our foster and adoptive caretakers aren't strong, then they aren't in a place to advocate for the needs of children."

A recent outreach of the organization has been the addition of mental health counseling services. Last year the organization hired a licensed professional counselor, Rindi Guldner, to help provide one-on-one coaching and advocacy, and also group support and educational classes. The program provided free mental health counseling services to more than 65 foster/adoptive families who received more than 220 hours of direct and 150 hours of indirect mental health counseling services.

A \$5,000 Community Health Investment Program grant is helping to increase these services in 2023.

"Whether it's a foster family that's had an emergency placement and is worried about the impact it is having on their lives, grandparents who are raising grandkids or a child who has been through a lot of trauma, there is often a lot of support and resources needed to keep the families functioning," Graves said.



Toddlers at Angel Child Care, a cooperative service by Church of the Cross United Methodist and YMCA, will soon have a new playground thanks in part to support from a \$10,000 CHIP grant. The playground will also be open to the public outside of child care hours.



Rindi Guldner (LEFT), licensed professional counselor at Blessed Hope Family, was able to expand her services for adoptive families and foster parents thanks in part to a CHIP grant. Guldner is pictured with Leah Graves, executive director, and Meadow Piepho, director of events, at Blessed Hope Family.

# New child care center offers intergenerational benefits

Research has shown that older adults and children mutually benefit when they participate in activities together. That was one of the ideas behind the efforts to start a child care center on its grounds at Sunset Home Senior Living Community in Concordia. The other thought was to help improve child care availability in the community and for its own employees.

A \$10,000 Community Health Investment Program (CHIP) grant through the Salina Regional Health Foundation is helping to support the initiative.

“Having child care on site will be a huge retention and recruitment benefit for our staff members, and they will have preference for available openings,” said Teresa Shippy, administrator at Sunset Home. “There will be benefits for our elder residents as well. Having children around makes for a more homelike environment.”

Sunset Home is remodeling one of its assisted living cottages on site to house the child care center and plans to open early summer.



Elder residents, area children and employees will all benefit from a new child care center at Concordia's Sunset Home Senior Living Community. The initiative received grant funding through CHIP.

## Spring into Giving

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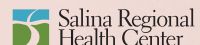


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