NEW THERAPY GARDEN GROWS AT CHILDSAVERS

Claire Bowes knows the therapeutic nature of a garden. The feel of dirt in her hands, plants growing and changing with the seasons, and the satisfaction of finding peace through all of the hard work.

Claire’s sense of service and passion for the outdoors found a shared purpose when she visited ChildSavers. In the fall of 2017, as part of her Gold Award, the highest youth award for young women in the Girl Scouts of the USA, she studied, designed, and built a beautiful and functional therapy garden for the children in our community.

“My teacher’s mom is a therapeutic gardener and I spent some time learning from her about the emotional benefits and how the garden affects all the senses,” Claire said.

Totaling nearly 140 hours of work, the children’s garden is host to native plants, tables and benches of a variety of sizes for “big kids and little ones”, and functional space to grow and cultivate plants and vegetables.

There are a number of practical and therapeutic reasons to use gardens when we treat children. Maria Kalevas, mental health clinician, shared a story about Lucas* and the power of the garden.

“Being in the garden with Lucas brought to life tangible and meaningful metaphors we discussed in therapy. Lucas was especially anxious about nightmares related to memories of his grandmother and her funeral. Lucas was able to explore his reactions to losing his grandmother by digging and using his hands to nurture and grow the lavender he planted in memory of her. Week to week, we watched his plant that he cared for move through the seasons of change, deterioration, and regrowth. It seemed that the mastery he gained taking care of his plant and going through the process helped him release some of the anxiety and fear he had been experiencing. Despite his great loss, through caring for the lavender, Lucas gained a sense of control and order again.”

We would love to know if you have a special interest in the new ChildSavers therapy garden. Please contact Amy Garmon at agarmon@childsavers.org or 804.591.3913 for more information.

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*Name and details have been changed to protect anonymity.
Your support of ChildSavers' training programs helps enhance Crystal (left) and Margaret's (right) quality child care.

OUR MISSION:
Is to guide our community’s children through life’s critical moments with trauma-informed mental health and child development services.

OUR VISION:
All children can be safe, happy, healthy, and ready to learn.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ENHANCES QUALITY CHILD CARE

First Baptist Christian Child Development Center (First Baptist CCDC) was established in 1998. It ran as a half-day preschool until 2007 when it became full-day. When that transition took place, Crystal Hopper was there and she has been part of its growth and success ever since.

Crystal, now the Director, has worked with children for 14 years. She knew in high school that she wanted to work with children. "I love watching the children learn and grow throughout the years. The best part is knowing they are in a safe and loving environment," she said. As a director, Crystal says she has learned that good child care extends beyond the classroom. This includes hiring the right teachers, such as Margaret, her Assistant Director.

Margaret has been working with children since 1995, first driving children with special needs and then serving as a crisis counselor in Richmond Public Schools. In 2012, she came to First Baptist CCDC. "I love being a child care provider because I get to teach children at such a young age. I love teaching them about the love of God, creating a nurturing, safe, and loving environment, as well as alphabets, numbers, shapes, and colors," she said.

Both Margaret and Crystal have experienced challenges in the classroom. "Some days you have behavior issues or sick children. ChildSavers has helped me by providing the right resources and classes," said Crystal.

Margaret and Crystal earned their Child Development Associate (CDA) credentials with the help of ChildSavers in 2016 and in 2014, respectively. Margaret says that ChildSavers' training and her CDA have helped her address challenges such as helping families that have higher needs and deescalating situations in the classroom. "Earning my CDA has enhanced my skills as a child care provider. I am always willing to listen to children so much more and now, I always remind my teachers to listen to the children and allow them to talk and express themselves," said Margaret.

To learn more about training and professional development for child care providers, visit ChildSavers.org.
As the Richmond Public Schools Resiliency Partnership grows to serve more students, we welcome two new clinicians to the team. Julia and Jess are now providing care to children at Woodville, Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Preschool, and MLK Middle. Jess says she has been pleasantly surprised at how accepting and welcoming the students have been. One student, who has an especially tough exterior, has recently started to warm up to her after they worked together on a therapeutic art activity. Jess says her art work gave insight into the student’s experience and will be a useful starting point for their conversation during their next meeting.

Julia agrees that the students are very welcoming. She works to ensure that the children know that they are safe to express themselves around the ChildSavers staff without fear of disciplinary actions. Julia says students “need a good guy to advocate for them.” One student has already felt safe enough to open up to her and share “things she’s never told anyone.” Both clinicians are extremely empathetic to the teachers as well. They hope to shift the school environment to a calmer and safer space by helping students manage their emotions, toxic stress, and behaviors. They will also help teachers react to students in a way that supports the regulation of these behaviors.

When asked if school-based therapy was critical, Jess says, “It’s a no brainer.” With the amount of time children spend at school, school-based therapy is necessary. Working with the child in school allows their therapy sessions to be consistent and removes the common barriers of transportation and time. Julia and Jess are passionate about their work and are excited to collaborate with RPS in its entirety. They know they are helping to make a positive change in the child, the school staff, and the systems in which they operate.
DINE WITH PURPOSE: SUPPER AT SUNSET
Save the Date: May 24, 2018
Tickets on sale week of April 9th

With sweeping views of Richmond’s skyline as a backdrop, Supper at Sunset is a distinct dining experience, taking place at ChildSavers’ Overlook. On May 24th at 5:00 p.m., we’d love for you to be our guest, enjoying wine paired with a well-crafted, four-course meal. There’s nowhere else in the City you can enjoy this experience while supporting children in your community. It’s dining at its finest: with a purpose.

Ways to Support:
Sponsoring an event at ChildSavers goes beyond leveraging your company’s products, services, and brand. Your partnership changes children’s lives in Central Virginia. Contact Lindsey Leach at 804.591.3907 or lleach@childdsavers.org for more information.

THE WRVA BUILDING CELEBRATES 50 YEARS!

“I can see the whole world from here!” – a child we serve inspired by the view at the Overlook.

ChildSavers’ WRVA Building, designed as a radio station by American architect Philip Johnson, was dedicated 50 years ago on Patrick Henry’s 232nd birthday, May 29, 1968. In 2003, ChildSavers accepted the building as a generous gift. We committed to the adaptive reuse of the building for delivery of mental health and child development services. It’s your support that allows us to serve our community’s children in an iconic, architectural gem.

When’s the last time you visited ChildSavers’ WRVA Building? Contact Amy Garmon at 804.591.3913 or agarmon@childdsavers.org to schedule your tour during the 50th anniversary year.

Inside – how you help children thrive