



CHRISTUS SANTA ROSA Children's Hospital Center for Miracles



Nancy Kellogg, MD, Division Chief for Child Abuse Pediatrics

The Center for Miracles: *Seeking proactive remedies*

By Tracy Ross

"A 14-month-old and her younger brother were stuffed into a trash bag beneath their mother's apartment. The mother is being charged with two counts of capital murder." This is a real item from a San Antonio news story. Horrible realities like this case and others drove the creation of the Center for Miracles, founded by faculty member Nancy Kellogg, MD, and other community leaders. Kellogg is Division Chief for Child Abuse Pediatrics at the School of Medicine and also Medical Director of ChildSafe (formerly the Alamo Children's Advocacy Center), a local nonprofit organization and community resource for child and adolescent victims of sexual abuse. Kellogg and a team, including two pediatricians, a nurse, a director, a social worker and a community outreach specialist, staff the new center in partnership with CHRISTUS Santa Rosa. The clinic is located across from the CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Children's Hospital in downtown San Antonio.

About five years ago, Kellogg became concerned with the rapid and significant changes in medical knowledge, particularly in child physical abuse and neglect. "I applied for and received a grant from Children's Justice Act allowing me to serve as a medical consultant to Child Protective Services," explained Kellogg.

Through the grant activities, it became evident that a clinic was needed where children referred for physical abuse or neglect could be seen and evaluated instead

of relying entirely on photographs and information presented by Child Protective Services (CPS). A feasibility study conducted by CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Children's Hospital identified a community need for such a clinic. In 2006, the Center became a reality.

"It was all serendipitous and the Goldsbury Foundation provided their generous support," added the pediatrician.

The Goldsbury Foundation is a private family foundation committed to providing meaningful philanthropic support that stimulates positive and lasting change for the children and families of San Antonio. For every dollar donated, the Goldsbury Foundation will match up to \$1 million toward child abuse prevention programs offered at CHRISTUS.

The mission of the Center for Miracles is to promote health and safety for children who have been abused or are at high risk of being abused. Whether the abuse is physical, emotional, sexual, or neglect, the scars can be deep and long-lasting. Prevention is the central goal.

"I would love to be out of a job," says Kellogg, but the reality is child abuse is the second most chronic childhood disease." Asthma is number one.

The Center handles the heartbreaking truths that are part of our community. They face obstacles such as funding but have support through state grants to help keep services available. Providing guidance and information to the legislators and staff who wrote State

Senate Bill 1877, the Center has been described as the “model program” proposing that similar “Centers of Excellence” be established for evaluating child abuse throughout Texas.

James Lukefahr, MD, also a Professor in the Division of Child Abuse Pediatrics, assumed the Medical Directorship position when he joined in 2007. Faculty and staff who also support the Center for Miracles include Kathleen Buckley, Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, Dr. Amy Gavril, a first-year Child Abuse fellow, Sherry Rumsey, Project Director for the Forensic Assessment Center Network, and Sandra Quiroz, Administrative Assistant. Other team members include CHRISTUS Santa Rosa associates Rose Orsborn, who is Clinic Director, Community Outreach Director Brandy Ralston-Lint, social workers Angie Oviedo and Susan Lowe, Medical Assistant Leticia Martinez, and Administrative Assistant Sara Kizzie.

In 2008, Kellogg was recognized with a Community Leadership award by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which celebrates those who have made significant contributions to public well-being and security.

The Center provides medical, psychosocial and counseling evaluations, as well as diagnosis of treatment for children and their families referred to the Center. The work Kellogg, Lukefahr, and their dedicated team offer the community is nothing short of a miracle to an estimated 1,300 children evaluated each year in Bexar County and surrounding counties.

At the Center, affected families are able to talk to professionals in a nonjudgmental, respectful and receptive environment. The Center and its staff work closely with CPS.

“The Center cultivates trust between our staff and the families we are here to help—it’s a neutral environment,” explains Kellogg.

Essentially the Center is a referral-based child abuse center and a healing place for children and their families, but for one victim, it was heaven. It was the first place where she felt safe enough to describe her years of abuse and neglect; unfortunately, it wasn’t until after the tragic death of her 8-year-old sister. Beyond the vacant look in her eyes, the medical exam showed an enlarged liver, a sign of malnourishment, but this would just be a small piece of what needed to be mended. The emotional pain hidden behind the innocent child’s face showed no physical scars. The compassion and dedication of the Center’s team help these traumatic stories reach positive outcomes.

As you walk through the hallways, there are bright colors, alcoves for those needing quieter spaces, cut outs



The fire station themed exam room lends comfort to an uncomfortable situation.

of native Texas animals on the walls, and an exam room painted as a fire station with an exam table that is also a fire truck.

Kellogg has also played an important role in making child abuse pediatrics a recognized subspecialty in the School of Medicine. Its child abuse fellowship is the only one in the state and one of only 18 in the country.

With the support of Thomas Mayes, MD, MBA, Chair of Pediatrics, the UT Medicine/CSR employees, the Goldsburys’, as well as the community and the state, the Center is certainly a group effort to support a dire need in the community.

● ● ● ● ●
“This is like
heaven”

– Pediatric Child Abuse Patient