



## Alternative Therapies: Providing Trauma-Informed Care

**A**s a result of physical abuse, 12-year-old Alex distrusts people, particularly adults. He lashes out violently and then withdraws within himself, avoiding eye contact with anyone.

Nine-year-old Melanie is dissociated with her body, a coping mechanism she developed from being sexually abused.

After tripping and falling on the asphalt, she feels no pain, even though she has a large gash on her knee.

Children like Melanie and Alex who have endured trauma are ideal candidates for alternative therapies such as creative arts, play and animal-assisted. Unlike traditional cognitive or

“talk” therapies, alternative therapies give clinicians a different way to tap into the children’s thoughts, feelings and stories. “These modalities provide our children with a conduit for self-expression,” said Mount Saint Vincent Clinical Director Kirk Ward. “It’s a way for us to gently uncover the kids’ trauma stories in a safe, nurturing environment.”

### Healing With Creative Arts

Creative Arts Therapies (CAT) includes dance/movement, art, and music therapy. Art therapists help the children express themselves through coloring, painting, making collages and other art forms. These activities help the children with impulse control, anger management, regulation and maintaining focus. “When kids are traumatized, they carry that trauma with them. But if the trauma occurred before the child had language skills, they may not have words to express what happened,” said Treatment Leader/Intern Coordinator Misty White, LPC. “Art therapy can help the kids express nonverbal trauma by drawing what happened rather than saying what happened.”

Dance/movement therapy can help sexually abused children reconnect with



Photo by Helen H. Richardson/The Denver Post

A boy plays with Charlie, a certified therapy dog, as Supervising Lead Clinician Jessica Pfeiffer looks on. Animal-assisted is one of several alternative therapies used to treat children at Mount Saint Vincent.

*Continued on page 9*

## A Letter from Sister Amy

Dear Friends,

We had a hero's send-off at Mount Saint Vincent last Friday after school. Twenty staff and a number of children lined the sidewalk leading to the gate, forming the famous "MSV High-Five Gauntlet." Our hero that day was James; he successfully discharged from Mount Saint Vincent after two years in our residential and day treatment programs.

James is a very likeable boy with sparkling blue eyes. But behind those eyes was pain and hurt that most of us will never know. When he first arrived, the eight-year-old struggled to control his anger, and he often acted out. Our clinicians used a number of effective therapies to help James, including equine, animal-assisted, art, music and dance/movement. Our well-trained staff, both in the cottages and in the school, treats each child as an individual. The children's strengths are celebrated and areas of growth are nurtured.

I am so proud of James—and of every child here who is a hero in his or her own right. I share James' success with you because he demonstrates that *life becomes better* for the children at Mount Saint Vincent.

Our special heroes need the support of our volunteers, donors and friends. You are there in spirit with us as we celebrate each child's success. And I know you share our joy as we cheer James on, walking out our gate to the next step in his life.

May God bless you for your ongoing belief that life becomes better for children at Mount Saint Vincent.

Gratefully,



Sister Amy Willcott, SCL  
Executive Director



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# School Launches Improvement Initiative



A colorful balloon arch welcomes the students back on the first day of school.

This year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of our beautiful Sister Daniel Stefani K-8 school. Since the school doors opened in 2004, hundreds of children have received academic instruction and clinical therapies to help them in their life journeys.

While our staff continues to teach and help heal children who have experienced abuse, neglect, trauma or mental illness, the building and its contents are showing some wear. Ten years and hundreds of kids have taken its toll. The school is in great need of new carpeting, paint, IT upgrades, and furnishings.

The school wish list includes:

- A smart board in each classroom
- Replacing worn classroom furnishings
- Installing new carpeting
- Upgrading outdated curriculums
- A security system for school safety

To raise funds for these improvements and repairs, Mount Saint Vincent has launched an investment

partnership campaign. There are seven levels of giving: Head of the Class at \$40,000, Honor Roll at \$30,000, Straight A's at \$25,000, Passing With Flying Colors at \$15,000, Reading and Writing at \$10,000, Book Worm at \$5,000 and Make the Grade for a donation of any amount. Donations of \$1,000 or more

will be recognized on a plaque in the school.

"Almost every school district in Colorado utilizes smart board technology," said School Director Lori McClurg. "When our students discharge, we want them to be familiar with commonly used technologies within their local schools. Whether it's smart boards, curriculums or desks, our kids deserve the same opportunities as any other student."



Those wishing to make a donation may do so using the reply envelope included in this newsletter or visiting [www.msvhome.org](http://www.msvhome.org) and clicking on the "Donate" heart. For more information on the school partnership program, call Director of Development Kay Kelleher McDowell at 303-964-1137. ❤️



## Mark Your Calendars for Colorado Gives Day!

Colorado Gives Day is an initiative to increase philanthropic online giving in Colorado. The program was developed in 2010 by Community First Foundation, with financial support from FirstBank. This year's event takes place on December 9, 2014.

If you are planning to participate in Colorado Gives Day, please consider making a donation to Mount Saint Vincent. As always, we thank you for your support. ❤️







# Charity Golf Tournament to Benefit Children

Event Slated for June 12, 2014



Participants enjoy a challenging 18 holes of golf at The Ridge, which is consistently named "Best Public Golf Course in Colorado" by two leading golf magazines.

Clean off your clubs and polish your golf shoes; it's time for the eighth annual Play a Round for Kids golf tournament. This event raises funds to provide treatment for children who have suffered from abuse, neglect or mental illness. This year's tournament is slated for Thursday, June 12, 2014, at The Ridge at Castle Pines North in Castle Rock, Colorado. The \$250 registration fee will cover the greens fee, golf cart rental, boxed lunch, awards dinner, a silent auction, and prizes. If a lucky player hits a hole-in-one on a specified par 3, he or she will win a five-day, four-night golf vacation to Pebble Beach, California. Play kicks off with a 1:30 p.m. shotgun start.

This year, we will pay tribute to a wonderful friend and long-time supporter, Marsha Routzon. Marsha, who played in all seven prior tournaments, had a special place in her heart for our kids. Following a brief memorial given by Executive Director Sister Amy Willcott, one hundred helium balloons will be released in a tribute to her memory.

The number of players and funds raised has risen consistently every year. "Participation in our tournament has really taken off," said Donor Relations and Events Manager Angela Frederick. "We're expecting a full field of 144 players and an early sell-out."

The Ridge at Castle Pines North is a challenging par 71, Troon Golf-managed



Numerous prizes are awarded, including "Closest to the Tree," a Ridge exclusive.

course. Every year since its opening in 1997, The Ridge has been voted the number-one upscale public golf facility in Colorado by the state's two leading golf publications.

"This tournament is a great way to support the children at Mount Saint Vincent while playing an amazing golf course," said seven-time tournament participant Mike Anderson.

Corporate sponsorships are available; contact Angela Frederick at 303-964-1122 or e-mail [afrederick@msvhome.org](mailto:afrederick@msvhome.org) for information. Those interested in playing in the tournament can register for the event by visiting [www.msvhome.org](http://www.msvhome.org) and clicking on "Events." A photo recap will be posted on the web site. ❤️



After play is over, golfers look forward to a silent auction and awards dinner.

# From Never to Forever

**R**yan turned around to wave goodbye one last time. Grinning from ear to ear, he waved enthusiastically to his therapists, teachers and staff, all of whom cheered and waved, shouting out their goodbyes and best wishes. Then Ryan turned back to his new parents and climbed into a car headed for the airport, on a journey marking the beginning of a new chapter in his life.

Ryan fought a long, hard battle to get to where he is today. At the tender age of two, he was removed from his home. His parents, addicted to methamphetamine and alcohol, were found guilty of physical abuse and neglect. For the next seven years, Ryan was shuttled through eight different foster homes. He was hospitalized twice for behavioral stabilization. The last home, a foster-to-adopt placement, came to an abrupt end when the adopting parents changed their minds. The rejection was a crushing blow for Ryan.

“Failed placements can reinforce a child’s negative beliefs about himself,” said Child and Family Therapist Jesse Carollo, LCSW. “Thoughts like I’m bad, I’m not good enough, something is wrong with me, I’ll never be loved—these are all beliefs that take time to overcome.”

When Ryan first arrived at Mount Saint Vincent, he was very aggressive, frequently hitting, throwing and shouting. “Ryan presented with a nearly textbook case of hypervigilance,” said Clinical Director Kirk Ward. “His eyes were constantly darting, his resting heart rate was nearly 100 [beats per minute], and he suffered from extreme sensory sensitivity.”

Ryan’s hypervigilance impacted his school performance as well. Because of his constant heightened environmental awareness, he had an extremely hard time focusing on his school work.

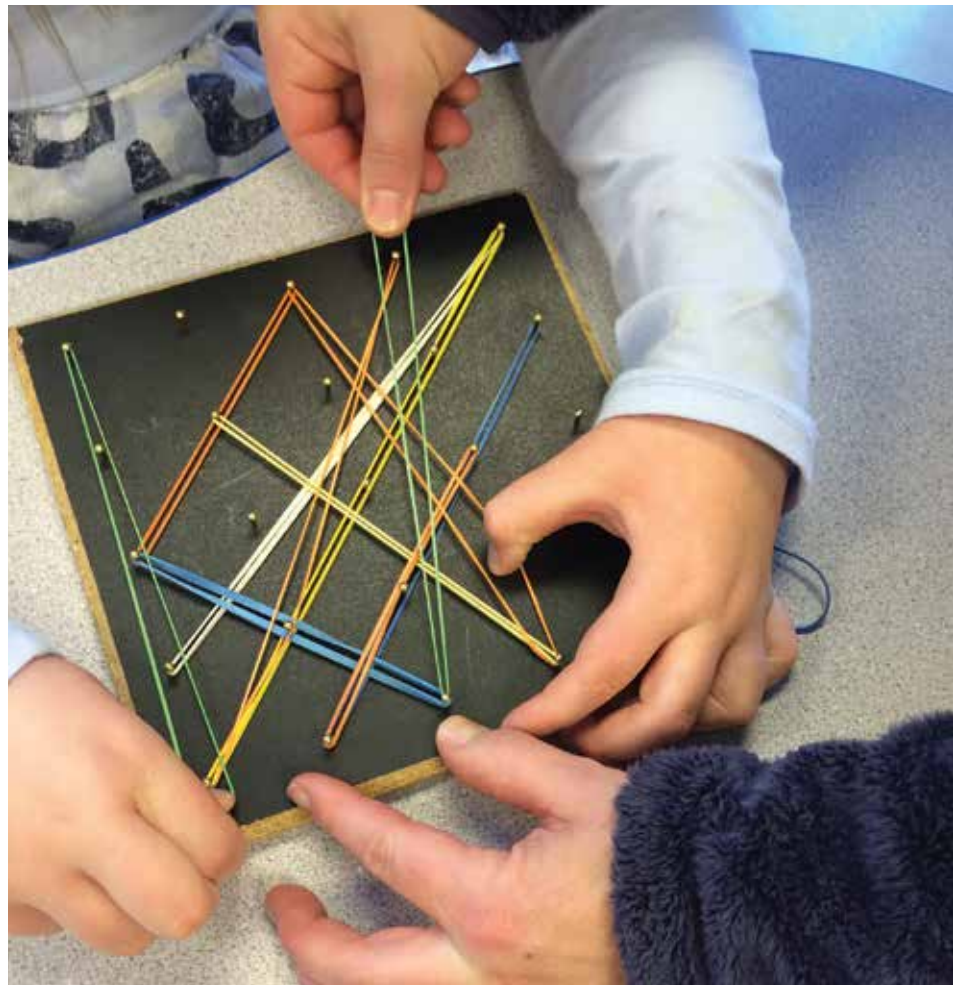
The staff of Mount Saint Vincent used many different treatment methods to help Ryan: animal assisted therapy, dance/movement therapy, and, most

**Ryan perceived all personal relationships as threatening. “If you think about it, it makes sense,” said Special Education Teacher Myra Marcus. “Every time Ryan cared about someone, that person left him.”**

importantly, the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT). NMT is a developmentally sensitive approach to child trauma treatment. Using repetitive, rhythmic, and relational activities, Ryan gradually learned to calm himself down and control his behavior.

Ryan’s teacher found issues involving trust to be her biggest challenge. He perceived personal relationships as threatening. “If you think about it, it makes sense,” said Special Education Teacher Myra Marcus. “Every time Ryan cared about someone, that person left him, so he strongly avoided building any kind of relationship.”

*Continued on page 9*



*Elizabeth Grace, a student teacher in Mount Saint Vincent’s K–8 school, helps a 10-year-old student create a colorful design using a rubber band loom.*



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Barbara and Bill Pontarelli  
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Potenza Lodge  
William and Karen Powers  
Karen Price  
John and Darlene Putnik  
**Q**  
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James and Jeanne Quinn  
**R**  
R.A.E.S. Inc.  
Harry W. Rabb Foundation  
Joseph and Marielena Radecki  
John Ramirez  
Joseph and Hope Ramirez  
Blake and Leah Ramsey  
Carlos and Josephine Rangel  
Charles and Marilyn Ransdell  
Ready Talk  
Judith Redfern  
Regis University  
Reil & Associates  
Aileen Reilly  
Paul and Patty Reilly  
Albert Rendon  
Maura Rice  
Ralph Rice  
Louis and Leslie Richard  
Betty Riede  
Rino Supply Company Inc.  
RMC Health  
David and Kristy Robey  
Bruce and Janet Robinson  
Jerry Robinson  
Rocky Mountain School of Dance  
Andy Rodriguez  
Andrew Rogers  
Mary Rolsch  
Michael and Debra Rooney

Joseph and Barbara Rosario  
Brian Rose and Marilyn Sterrenberg-Rose  
Rose Foundation  
Rotary Club of Littleton  
Routzon Family Foundation  
Royal Gorge Route Railroad  
Gerald and Jacqueline Ryan  
Gina Ryan  
**S**  
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Sacred Heart of Mary Charity  
Safeway Foundation  
Shelley Safina  
Joseph and Linda Sandoval  
Joyce Santarelli  
Andrew and Collette Sappey  
Jay and Ann Satterfield  
Sattva Soul  
James Savory and Mary Echnacht  
Daniel Schachtner and Connie Elsbury  
James and Donna Scherer  
Michael and Jessica Schiewe  
John and Donnell Schmalz  
Dean Schmeling and Jane Estes  
Harry and Deborah Schmidt  
Mark and Geri Schmidt  
Zachary Scholl  
Susan Schubert  
Frances Schuldt  
Mark and Mary Beth Schumacher  
SCL Health System  
Lon and Brenda Sears  
Ryan Segelke and Leslie Roberts-Segelke  
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Senior Roadrunners of Colorado, Inc.  
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Servpro of Greater Boulder  
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Susie Severson  
Carole and George Shaw  
Caroline Shaw  
Daniel Sheehan and Celia Prinster  
Shepherd of the Hills  
Elizabeth Siebert  
Leslie Siebert  
Judy Sigg  
Michael Simonton  
Robert Simpson  
Francis and Kathy Sincere  
Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth  
Jeffrey and Michelle Slocum  
Michael and Barbara Slubowski  
Annie McClelland Smith  
Brian and Colleen Smith  
Bruce Smith  
Craig and Mary Smith

Douglas and Linda Smith  
Jeanette Smith  
Kevin Smith  
Charles and Mary Ann Sonnen  
South Pearl Street Association  
Southwest Sertoma  
Sherry Spano  
Ronald and Kahala Sparks  
Candice Spicer  
Spirit of Christ Catholic Community  
St. Anthony's Central Radiology  
St. Frances Cabrini Parish  
St. Joan of Arc Church  
St. Joseph's Church  
St. Joseph's Polish Church  
St. Mark Catholic Church  
St. Thomas More Parish  
St. Michaels Society  
St. Thomas More Catholic School  
St. Vincent De Paul School  
Philip Stahel  
Edward and Jill Stammel  
James and Lucille Stanaway  
James and Annette Stasz  
Margie and Jeff Steel  
Kendra Stefaniak  
Millard and Diana Stephens  
Sister Mary Clarita Sternitzke and Sister J.V. Martinez  
Rhonda Soldwisch Stevens  
Jeffrey Stewart  
Ginny Stichternath and Andrew Yarnell  
Still Point Acupuncture  
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Nick Strainic  
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Ann Sullivan and Lewis Colgan  
Brendan and Jaclyn Sullivan  
Sunstate Equipment Company  
Larry Susman  
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Tamales By LaCasita  
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Target Take Charge of Education  
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Thompson Reuters  
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Tops of the Rockies  
Toscano Development Partners  
Town Hall Arts Center  
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Emily Trujillo  
Norine and Tony Tuka  
Peter Tynan  
Rosemary Tynan  
**U**  
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Jennifer Unger Waters  
Unified Health Services, LLC  
**V**  
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Vector Property Services, LLC  
Vibrant Earth Juices  
Stanley and Ellen Viens  
Vietnam Vets/Legacy Vets MC CO  
Krystal Vigil  
Patricia Vigil  
Vistar Corporation  
VMT Family Foundation  
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James and Judy Walsh  
Steven and Andrea Warnke  
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Lara Waters  
WaterStone  
Vernon Watkins  
Charles Wax  
Waxie  
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Terrance Weinburger and Ann Michaels-Weinburger  
Lee and Judith Weldon  
Scott and Heather Weldon  
Debbie Welle-Powell  
Wells Fargo Bank & Company

Wells Fargo Foundation  
Ellen and Marvin Werner  
Western Parking Management  
Western Roofing, Inc.  
Demian Wetzel and Janet Kemp  
Chris White  
Margaret White  
Nancy and William White  
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Sarah White  
Sharon White  
Ronda Whitehurst  
Scott Whitley  
John Wiberg  
Robert and Sheryl Wight  
Wild At Heart Investments, LLC  
Wilderness Construction  
Annabel Willcott  
Della Willcott  
Brandy Williams  
Marla Williams  
Charles and Adele Willson  
Mary Wilson  
WJD Foundation  
Frank Woertman  
Deborah Wolf and Gloria Bischoff  
Bill and Margaret Wood  
Donna Wood  
Thomas and Amanda Woods  
Bryan and Elizabeth Wright  
Robert and Sandra Wright  
Herb and Sarah Wyrick  
**X**  
Xcel Energy  
**Y**  
Diana Youngs  
**Z**  
Zachry Engineering Corporation  
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Pete Zarlengo  
JoAnn Zelasko  
Steve and Sheryl Ziegler  
Brad and Therese Zuercher  
Madhuri Zyla

\*Cash and in-kind contributions of \$75 and above received in 2012. \*\*R.I.P.



Photo by Helen H. Richardson/The Denver Post



*A young client waves brightly colored scarves during a dance/movement therapy session.*

their bodies. By mirroring the child's movements, the child sees that her therapist is attuned to her, respectful and mindful of her movements. This therapy helps the child improve her self-esteem and body image. As the child progresses, she learns to respect her body and gain better control of it, all while building a relationship with the clinician.

Through music therapy, children can express themselves in many different ways. These may include listening to different kinds of music, reading lyrics, creating music, becoming aware of different patterns and repetitive beats, or playing clapping games. This type of therapy assists with impulse control, regulation, and anger management. It also fosters positive peer interactions and can provide a framework for slower, deeper breathing.

### Animals and Kids—A Natural Combination

Another alternative therapy that is extremely popular with the kids is animal-assisted. This therapy is indicated when a child has attachment issues or is distrustful of other people. The animals in the program include dogs, horses, guinea pigs, and even fish in the school classrooms. "A dog shows unconditional positive regard for the child, and once a relationship has been established, the child feels safe. When children feel safe and comfortable and confident, they not only talk more, they also process more," said Child and Family Therapist Teresa Egan, LCSW, AAT.

Supervising Lead Clinician Jessica Pfeiffer, LCSW, SSW, AAT, worked extensively with a client who responded well to animal-assisted therapy. The child, a 10-year-old boy named Justin,

had a long history of physical abuse. He was nonverbal and almost completely withdrawn. He showed no interest in forming a relationship with anyone, so Pfeiffer introduced Justin to Morrison, a certified therapy dog. That was when the breakthrough occurred.

"Justin formed an incredibly close bond with Morrison," Pfeiffer said. "Morrison would wag his tail like crazy when he saw Justin, and Justin clearly loved Morrison back." As his relationship with Morrison blossomed, Justin began writing a story. It was an elaborate, multi-page story with words and pictures drawn in crayon. "The story was a detailed description of the abuse Morrison had endured as a puppy. It was, of course, Justin's own trauma story," Pfeiffer said. "Once we knew what had happened, we were able to identify the appropriate adjunct therapies to help him begin the process of healing."

Today, Justin is living with a loving foster family, and he and his family receive in-home treatment services to help strengthen familial relationships. "There's nothing more gratifying than watching a child grow and thrive to the point where he or she can re-enter the community," Pfeiffer said. "It touches my heart every single time." ❤️

### Ryan, continued from page 5

Marcus overcame this lack of trust through parallel play. "He and I each had a rubber band loom that we would work on together during silent reading time," she said. "As he became used to me being in his space, I left my loom in my office and we would work on his loom together. By working on projects like this together, we were able to make a connection. But even so, he needed me to prove that he was safe with me time

and time again. Eventually, he realized that yes, I am grown-up, but unlike other adults in his life, I wasn't going to hurt him. It took a long, long time, but Ryan slowly began to trust me. That's when we turned the corner."

A couple from the Northwest who were looking to adopt a child became interested in Ryan. The mother was an elementary school teacher who works with young kids. "I had a really good

feeling about them when they came to visit," said Winter. They were very open and wanted to learn how to handle different situations that might arise. I feel this adoption is an extremely good fit."

"Ryan went from being a child who was by himself all the time to bopping down the halls, saying, 'Hi!' to all the teachers and staff," said Marcus. "There is a genuine smile, excitement, 'what ifs'—and hope." ❤️

# Athletic Activities Boost Self-Confidence



Children participate in the popular running club during the summer.

**R**eady, set, go! Seven boys in the running club take off, feet flying as they race around the athletic field track. Eleven-year-old Travis is the first to cross the finish line. “Oh, yeah!” he shouts, arms lifted in triumph.

Running is just one of a many sports activities offered to the children in treatment at Mount Saint Vincent. The kids are given the opportunity to participate in football, basketball, soccer, running, swimming, handball, lacrosse, golf, volleyball, dance, hockey, and gymnastics throughout the year.

## Speedy Sprinters

Health and Physical Education Teacher Lara Holzman established the 10-week summer running club several years ago. She incorporates small hurdles, orange cones, agility ladders, and other equipment to hone skills and build endurance. The equipment was purchased through a generous

grant awarded by the Denver Kiwanis Foundation.

One of the kids’ favorite activities is “Kick the Cone.” The participants were divided into two groups: one group was instructed to knock down as many of the 40 mini orange cones as they could and the other group was tasked with setting them upright again. The whistle blew and staff and kids ran all over the field, laughing as cones tumbled every which way. The culmination of the club’s activities takes place when the children participate in a 5K race.

## Lacrosse: A New Sport

Did you know that lacrosse is the fastest growing sport in the world? Thanks to a grant from the U.S. Lacrosse Association, our staff was given a lacrosse curriculum, instructional DVD, and 30 sets of “soft stick” lacrosse equipment so our children could try the sport out. Since lacrosse is a new sport

to our kids, members of the Colorado Lacrosse Association volunteered to give a demonstration and workshop of rules and playing techniques. Following that, Holzman plans to add a six-week lacrosse unit to the annual gym schedule.



Twice-weekly practices help the players develop their dribbling, passing and shooting skills.

## Nothing but Net

More than 20 children participate in Mount Saint Vincent’s basketball program each winter. Practices take place twice each week, with the five- to eight-year-olds on junior varsity and the nine- to twelve-year-olds playing varsity.

The children sign a sports contract detailing expectations and the importance of commitment and responsibility to the team. Following several weeks of practice, the two teams typically play All Souls Catholic School and Our Lady of Lourdes. The final event of the season is the annual staff vs. kids game, held at the Pepsi Center. Amazingly, the Mustangs beat the staff every single time. How do they do it?

## Handball Jive

Colorado Handball Hall of Fame inductee Ron Bronner regularly volunteers his time to teach the kids how to play handball. He and several other volunteers from the Colorado Handball Association teach a six-week course to students from four classrooms during

their regularly scheduled gym class. To make playing easier for the kids, Bronner even arranged for a handball wall to be built in the gym. Handball helps the kids improve their hand-eye coordination and it also builds strength. At the completion of the course, each child is given handball equipment so they can practice on their own.

### Holy Goalie

For the past two years, students from Arrupe Jesuit High School, along with school and cottage staff, have coached the kids in soccer, teaching them basic skills, running drills, and organizing practice games. The kids practice twice per week and play four games during



*Running drills help students with speed and endurance during soccer practice.*

the season. The Colorado Rapids soccer team regularly conducts workshops and demonstrations on our athletic field, often signing autographs for the kids afterward.

### I Did It!

Holzman says the athletic program benefits the children in several different ways. “Sporting activities teach our kids life skills such as teamwork, respect, and good sportsmanship,” Holzman says. “We like to offer cooperative activities rather than competitive activities, which helps build up our kids’ self-esteem. Participating in sports shows them that if they just keep trying, they can gain a new skill. Whether it’s a big step or just a small step, the child can say, “I did it!”” ❤️

## Thank You, Volunteers!



Thank you to the 1,000-plus volunteers who donate their time to Mount Saint Vincent every year. These wonderful folks perform a host of activities, including:

- ♥ Working with the children
- ♥ Beautifying our grounds
- ♥ Assisting at fundraising events
- ♥ Raising awareness in the community
- ♥ Performing building maintenance
- ♥ Raising funds

**We couldn't do it without you, so thank you from the bottom of our hearts!**



# Fresh Vegetables Nourish and Engage Kids

**H**ere at Mount Saint Vincent, the children enjoy early spring lettuce in their salads, warm vine-ripened tomatoes in the summer, and hearty acorn squash bubbling with brown sugar in the fall. It's all thanks to Chef Thom Olson's garden.

Encompassing 400 square feet on four raised beds, Olson's 100% organic garden is planted with tomatoes, melons, corn, squashes, and lettuces.

Olson started the garden in 2010. "I've always strived to make this a diverse and interesting food service program," Olson said. "It just seemed intuitive to start a garden." The children visit frequently to track the growth of the various veggies. Olson feels it's important for the kids to have the opportunity to watch the plants grow and realize that



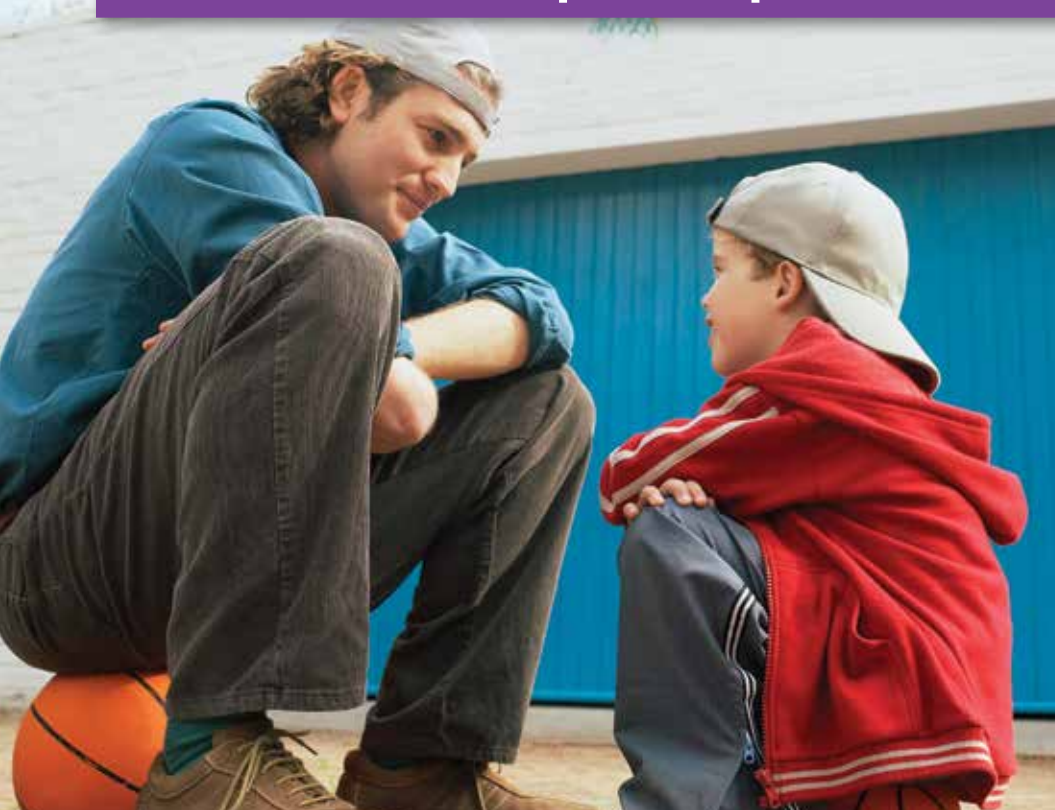
*Bright orange pumpkins grow in Chef Thom's garden.*

vegetables don't just come from the supermarket.

Does watching the plants grow translate into the kids wanting to eat the fresh veggies? "The kids have an interest

in seeing what certain vegetables taste like," Olson said. "But by far their favorite thing is watching the giant Halloween pumpkin grow. That's pretty tough to beat." ❤️

## How You Can Help Our Special Kids



The children in treatment at Mount Saint Vincent suffer from severe emotional and behavioral challenges due to mental illness, abuse, trauma or neglect. You can help make a difference in their lives. Here's how:

❤️ **Make a donation.** You may use the enclosed envelope or donate online at [www.MSVhome.org](http://www.MSVhome.org). Gifts of stocks, bonds, IRAs, unwanted vehicles and bequests are also welcome.

❤️ **Volunteer your time.** There are many opportunities available, from reading to the kids to painting a bedroom. For information on volunteering, call Angela Frederick at 303-964-1122 or e-mail [afrederick@msvhome.org](mailto:afrederick@msvhome.org).

❤️ **Give clothing or supplies.** Donations of seasonally appropriate clothing for children aged 5 to 12 are always appreciated (new only, please). View our wish list at [www.MSVhome.org](http://www.MSVhome.org) for other much-needed items.

**Thank you for your generous support!**