



## Embodying the Spirit of Mount Saint Vincent

**M**ount Saint Vincent Clinical Director Kirk Ward knew early in life what he wanted to do for a living. His decision to study psychology came about after he witnessed the quiet struggles of a close family friend. “Mike had a lot of issues when he was young, and as result, he was always in trouble in elementary school,” Ward said.

Fortunately, mental health services were widely available in schools back in the 1960s. Mike worked extensively with the school psychologist and it turned his life around. “I thought what the psychologist did was really cool, and that’s what got me interested,” Ward said. “From that point on, I felt pulled into a career in mental health.”

### This Job Was Different

While Ward was pursuing his undergraduate degree in psychology, a friend recommended that he apply for a job as a swim instructor at Mount Saint Vincent. It was the summer of 1983. Ward’s previous summer jobs were unremarkable, but this time, it was different. “It just felt so natural to be here, and so fulfilling to make connections with the kids and see them improve,” Ward said. “It was really hard to leave at the end of the summer.”

From then on, Ward volunteered at the agency and spent time at the school every chance he could. Through a stroke of luck, a job opened up right after Ward received his bachelor’s degree.

Ward worked as a mental health worker for six years. While working, he obtained his master of social work degree. In 1990, he was promoted to float therapist, and eventually became a treatment leader. Mount Saint Vincent named him clinical director in 1999.

### New Therapies Aid Healing

During his tenure, Ward has introduced numerous alternative therapies, such as art, music, play, animal-assisted, dance/movement, and equine.



*Clinical Director Kirk Ward and an eight-year-old boy chat about school work, tree blossoms, and who’s better at Nintendo DS as they stroll around the campus grounds.*

*Continued on page 9*

## A Letter from Sister Amy



*Sister Amy poses next to a statue of Mother Xavier, founder of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth.*

Mother Xavier, the founder of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, once said, “Look forward to the good that is yet to be.” These are words of hope that are focused on the future.

Mount Saint Vincent has been shaped by its 132 years of history, but we are always looking forward to what is to come. As a treatment center for children suffering from the effects of trauma, abuse, or neglect, we focus on healing, education, and the inner strengths children need to move into the future. And just as Mount Saint Vincent continues on its amazing journey, so must I.

I have spent the past 11 years as the executive director of Mount Saint Vincent. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve here. As my first ministry as a Sister of Charity, Mount Saint Vincent holds a special place in my heart.

A search committee will soon begin the task of selecting a new executive director—one who will help Mount Saint Vincent continue on its path to make life better for generations to come.

I leave Mount Saint Vincent poised for continued success. Thanks to our mission-focused board of directors and dedicated staff, Mount Saint Vincent is emerging as a regional center of excellence in trauma informed care for the most vulnerable children. Our supporters also play an integral role. Your generosity helps provide the specialized treatment that allows our children to heal and trust again. Thank you for continuing to be so engaged in this important mission.

I eagerly await the challenges that lie ahead. But rest assured that no matter where I go in my life’s journey, Mount Saint Vincent, our children and staff, and you, will always be in my heart and in my prayers.

With much gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sister Amy Willcott".

Sister Amy Willcott, SCL  
Executive Director

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# From Chalk Dust to Touch Screens: The School Moves Up a Grade



*Special Education Teacher Austin Bash uses an interactive whiteboard to engage students in his classroom.*

**G**one are the mismatched desks, the wobbly chairs, and the dings in the drywall. Thanks to a successful investment partnership campaign, generous donors raised more than \$200,000 to refurbish Mount Saint Vincent's 10-year-old Sister Daniel Stefani School and provide it with new furnishings and much-needed equipment. In addition to new desks, carpeting, and updated curriculums, each classroom is now equipped with the very latest in academic technology: interactive whiteboards.

"It feels like we're celebrating our tenth anniversary in a brand new school," said School Director Lori McClurg. "The students love the new whiteboards and Zuma rocker chairs. I'd like to give a big thank you to the donors who made our wish a reality."

"My students were so excited about the new furniture," said teacher Myra Marcus. "They were actually reluctant to sit on the chairs or use the desks for several days. Of course, they got over that fairly quickly."

The Sister Daniel Stefani School serves the children in residential treatment at Mount Saint Vincent and

also up to 30 additional students from across the Denver metro area. All of the students suffer from the effects of trauma, mental illness, abuse, or neglect.

Because of their past trauma, many students have difficulty with sensory integration, which is the process of accurately organizing environmental or bodily sensations in order to produce an appropriate stimulus response. Sensory overload can cause frustration, anxiety, or stress. Desk chairs that rock or standing desks equipped with swinging footrests allow fidgety children to stay calm and focus on their schoolwork.

While all the new improvements are much needed, the interactive whiteboards are just about everyone's favorite new feature. They have games to help with spelling, videos to complement the weekly reader, and timed skills games like math facts. "The touch-screen technology gets students up and out of their seats," said teacher Molly Priebe. "We're moving from paper and pencil into a new, interactive way of learning."



*Each of the classrooms has new carpeting, desks, and chairs.*

The children expressed a great deal of enthusiasm about their new surroundings. One eight-year-old girl likes her new desk because there's more room inside. A 12-year-old boy likes the "cool colors" of the carpet and the artwork in the main hallway. "I really like my new chair," one student said. "Mine helps me stay focused," another added. A 10-year-old boy may have summed it up best. "Everything is awesome," he said, "because it's all brand spanking new!" ❤️

## Raffle Tickets for \$10,000 Cash Prize on Sale Now

**Winner need not be present to win!**

Raffle tickets for a \$10,000 cash prize are on sale now. The winning ticket will be chosen at the Silver Bell Ball on November 20, 2015, but the winner does not need to be present to win. Tickets are \$50 each, and the odds of winning are one in 2,000.

Tickets may be purchased at [MSVhome.org](http://MSVhome.org) or by calling 303-964-1137. All proceeds benefit the children in treatment at Mount Saint Vincent.

**Purchase one today!**





# Hitting the Links to Benefit Children in Need

*"Play a Round for Kids" Charity Golf Tournament Slated for Friday, June 19, 2015*



*Participants enjoy a challenging 18 holes of golf at The Ridge at Castle Pines North.*

**W**hether your handicap is three or 30, all golfers are invited to participate in the ninth annual *Play a Round for Kids* charity golf tournament. The event raises funds for children facing severe emotional and behavioral challenges due to trauma, mental illness, abuse, or neglect. This year's tournament is slated for Friday, June 19, 2015, 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, silent raffle, and prizes. More than two dozen items will be raffled off, including three foursomes at The Ridge, a suite at Coors Field, and tickets to Colorado Rockies baseball games. Play kicks off with a 1:30 p.m. shotgun start.

The number of players and funds donated has risen consistently every year. "Foursomes are already selling at a brisk pace," said Director of Development Kay Kelleher Mcdowell. "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 course. The Ridge is consistently voted the top public course in Colorado by

*Colorado Golf* magazine.

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

Corporate sponsorships are available; contact Kay at 303-964-1137 or e-mail [kmcdowell@msvhome.org](mailto:kmcdowell@msvhome.org). Those

interested in playing in the tournament can register for the event by visiting [MSVhome.org](http://MSVhome.org) and clicking on "How to Help."

## Thank You to Our 2015 Event Sponsors!\*

**Beverage Sponsor: Continuum**

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*Follow all the event happenings on Twitter with #PlayARoundforKids. ❤️*

\*as of April 13, 2015



*After play is over, golfers enjoy a raffle for prizes and a delicious awards dinner.*

# In a League of Her Own: Former Resident Looks to Give Back

**P**aige was just an infant when the abuse and neglect began. It was the only life she knew. Her mother's parental rights were terminated and Paige was placed in an adoptive home when she was two. Unfortunately for Paige, her new family was abusive, too.

With her uncontrollable behavior, Paige moved through a string of foster homes, crisis units, and hospitals. She recalls that physical and sexual abuse occurred in several of those placements as well. Eventually, Paige arrived at Mount Saint Vincent. It was her fifteenth out-of-home placement. Paige was nine years old.

"When I first met Paige, she exhibited many self-harming behaviors," said Residential Clinical Manager and Therapist Misty White. "She would wrap cords around her neck, she banged her head quite a bit, she tried to swallow objects. She tried everything she could to end her life." The cottage workers,



*Paige loved riding her bike around the campus. The bigger the jumps she could find, the better.*

**"Her recovery was nothing short of miraculous."**

school staff, and therapists had to be vigilant around the clock to ensure Paige was safe.

## Learning to Trust

It took several months for Paige to realize that the people at Mount Saint Vincent wanted to help her, not harm her. The level of safety and security provided to her was something she had never before experienced. At first, Paige was confused. But eventually she began opening up.

The mental health workers in the cottages realized early on that Paige was a natural athlete. They used her interest in sports as a way to connect with her. "Whenever Paige started to become disregulated and needed to take space, we would shoot some hoops, ride bikes, or play kickball," said Residential Shift Lead Reanel Morales. "I didn't try to pry; I just let Paige talk about what was bothering her, but only when she was ready."

## Turning a Corner

Once Paige was able to start trusting others, her recovery picked up speed. She began sleeping through the entire night. The self-harming behavior stopped. She began to smile and laugh. "Paige started joking around with staff



*Paige poses for her high school senior photo.*

and made friends with the other girls in her cottage," said Morales. "She really was just a lot of fun to be around."

## Giving Back

Today, Paige is a senior in high school. She works part time and has her own car. She plans to attend college to become a physical therapist. "I'd really like a career in the medical field," she said. "Ideally, I think it would be great to combine physical therapy with special needs kids." She will enter the university in the fall. "Paige is one of Mount Saint Vincent's biggest success stories; her recovery was nothing short of miraculous," said White. "We are so proud of her and wish her all the best." ❤️



## 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 8, 2015.

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. ❤️



# Thank You to Our 2014 Donors!\*

Our mission at Mount Saint Vincent is to provide clinical treatment and loving care for children suffering from the effects of trauma, mental illness, abuse, or neglect. But this important work would not be possible without the incredible generosity of our faithful donors. Through their selfless giving, they help heal young children who are in desperate need of love and support. The 900-plus individuals and organizations listed here donated \$100 or more in 2014 to help our children.

Our hearts are full of gratitude and we are grateful beyond words. Thank you. We are truly blessed.

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Clinical Director Kirk Ward (right), Associate Clinical Director Megan Cook, and Business Development Director Jim Uhernik discuss plans to expand the in-home therapy program to meet increasing demand.

Each has a place in therapeutic treatment depending on the needs of the child. He also adopted the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT), a highly relational, positive model that builds upon a child's innate strengths. In 2012, Mount Saint Vincent earned the designation of NMT Flagship Site, an honor bestowed by Houston-based ChildTrauma Academy.

These days, Ward's knowledge and skill in conducting comprehensive NMT brain assessments for traumatized children causes him to be in high demand throughout the country. His assessments are both in-depth and spot-on. "We've had so many evaluations done on our son," said the mother of a nine-year-old boy, "but we've never had one this thorough, or had so many suggestions on how we can help our child. It's as if Kirk has known my son all his life."

Ward sees the agency continuing to serve children in need and expanding those services to include a preventative component. "We are reaching out to school districts, parent groups, and other professional and community organizations who are interested in learning about healthy brain development," Ward said.

### The Spirit of Mount Saint Vincent

In June of 2014, Ward celebrated an amazing 30 years of service to Mount Saint Vincent. When asked what has kept him at the agency, Ward gives three reasons. "First, I've never had two days that have been the same," he said. "Every day presents new challenges." Another element of his job that keeps him going is having past residents, now grown, come back to visit and express their thanks. "I have such great memories, and we reminisce about what a special place this is," he said.

But perhaps the defining reason for Ward's longevity is the spirit of Mount Saint Vincent. "There's just something about this place, something that defies definition," he said. "It attracts really, really good people that are committed to helping others."

Ward has worked with literally dozens of professionals over the past three decades. He states that almost without exception, those people look back at their time here with great fondness. "The spirit of Mount Saint Vincent never leaves you," Ward said. "It's always there inside." ❤️

# Pass Your Values on to the Future

ESTABLISH A LEGACY THAT LIVES ON FOREVER



Help ensure that children suffering from the effects of abuse or neglect receive the clinical treatment and loving care they deserve — both today and in the future. Demonstrate your desire for a more compassionate world, and make a legacy gift commitment and join the **Sister LaVonne Legacy Society.**

Learn more about planned giving options and the benefits of joining the society by visiting [MSVhome.org/planned-giving](http://MSVhome.org/planned-giving), or contact Tonya Kelly at [tkelly@msvhome.org](mailto:tkelly@msvhome.org), or by phone at 303-458-7220, ext. 217.



Sister LaVonne Guidoni  
1932–2007

# Silver Bell Ball – The Highlight of the Season

**H**eld every other year just prior to Thanksgiving, the much-anticipated Silver Bell Ball is the unofficial kick-off to the holiday season.

This year's event is slated for Friday, November 20, 2015, at the Grand Hyatt Denver. Live entertainment provided by the Mary Louise Lee Band will be complemented by a delicious dinner and dancing.

More than 150 items will be up for bid at the silent and live auctions. Mount Saint Vincent will be adding items to the auction list as they are secured, so keep an eye on our web site for updates.

In addition, the winning raffle ticket for a \$10,000 cash prize, limited to 2,000 available tickets, will be chosen that night. All of the proceeds from the evening's events will be used to provide clinical treatment and loving care for the children in treatment at Mount Saint Vincent.

Corporate sponsorships are available by calling 303-964-1137. Tickets to the charity gala are \$250 per person, available for purchase at [MSVhome.org](http://MSVhome.org), or by calling 303-964-1137.

Stay up to date with event happenings on Twitter with [#silverbellball](https://twitter.com/silverbellball) or follow [@MtSaintVincent](https://twitter.com/MtSaintVincent). ❤️



Gala attendees enjoy a delicious dinner prior to the start of the evening's entertainment.

## Thank You to Our Silver Bell Ball Presenting Sponsor:



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- Bank of America
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\*as of April 13, 2015



Auctioneer Gary Corbett energizes the crowd during the live auction.



Colorado now has one toll-free number to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

## 1-844-CO-4-KIDS

Help keep children safe and secure. Your call is confidential.

## Mount Saint Vincent is now on social media!

Connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram and join in the conversation.



# Promoting a Strong, Trauma-Informed System of Care

**N**ow more than ever, conversations between state and local leaders; advocates; and professionals in behavioral health, education, and child welfare are focusing on trauma-informed care. New policies and practices promote the value of this type of care, which includes trauma assessment and treatment that is matched specifically to the age of the child and the complexity of his or her trauma.

Mount Saint Vincent actively supports efforts to promote a trauma-informed system of care. In addition to providing these behavioral health and educational services to children, we also provide trauma-informed care training to school districts, child welfare agencies, early learning centers, foster care agencies,



*Senior Workforce Training Specialist Kyle Bixenmann conducts a trauma-informed care training at Mount Saint Vincent for a group of 25 Denver CASA volunteers.*

and other organizations. Areas of consultation include:

- Early childhood development and developmental enrichment
- Crisis prevention and milieu/classroom management
- Creative arts therapy interventions and regulation strategies
- Individual crisis planning and intervention

Mount Saint Vincent is currently expanding its menu of training options. For more information about the training and consultations we provide, contact Senior Workforce Training Specialist Kyle Bixenmann at 303-458-7220 or [kbixenmann@msvhome.org](mailto:kbixenmann@msvhome.org). ❤️

## 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!**

# An Attitude of Gratitude



**T**he cottage staff is constantly introducing all sorts of fun and engaging activities for the children. From craft projects to dance parties to game nights, they are designed to allow for self-expression and self-regulation, with a dash of learning and comradery added for good measure.

On a recent afternoon, the children in one of the residential cottages were asked to make a list of things for which they are grateful. "Our kids have been through some pretty traumatic events, but all of them came up with at least

10 things they were thankful for," said Assistant Residential Manager Chris Van Sichel.

The children's answers ran the gamut, from funny to poignant. "I'm thankful for my teachers." "I'm thankful for my ham sandwich." "I'm thankful for the staff." "I'm thankful for my bike." The most touching response may have been this: "I'm thankful to have a roof over my head."

"The children's capacity for gratitude, caring, and compassion never ceases to amaze me," said Supervising Lead

Clinician Jessica Pfeiffer. Pfeiffer said that the staff tries hard to provide things for the children to be thankful for each and every day. Whether it's showing a child unconditional positive regard, letting them know that mistakes happen and that it's okay, or just offering support and encouragement, every small, positive interaction guides the children down the path toward healing, hope, and happiness. "The truth of the matter is, it's the staff who are thankful," Pfeiffer said. "We're thankful for every one of our wonderful kids." ❤️

## How You Can Help Our Special Children



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.**

While we gratefully accept many types of donations, our most urgent need are cash gifts. Your financial support helps pay for clinical treatment, therapy sessions, food, clothing, and much more.

Give as generously as you can today using the envelope attached to this newsletter. To give online or explore other ways to give today, tomorrow, and for the future, visit [www.MSVhome.org/ways-give](http://www.MSVhome.org/ways-give).

### ❤️ **Volunteer your time.**

There are many volunteer opportunities available on our beautiful 16-acre campus, from reading to the children to painting a bedroom. For information on volunteering, call Kay Kelleher Mcdowell at 303-964-1137.

### ❤️ **Give clothing or supplies.**

In-kind gifts or noncash donations help us to focus our funds on the care and treatment of the children. Donations of seasonally appropriate clothing for children aged 5 to 12 are always appreciated (new only, please). We are always in need of personal care and household items and school supplies. For specific needs, view our wish list at [MSVhome.org/wish-list](http://MSVhome.org/wish-list).

**Thank you for your generous support!**