The Fuentes' bright and sunny Morrison home radiates a sense of peaceful calm, despite the fact that four children under 10 years of age are underfoot.

Read about this remarkable family whose faith and compassion led them to adopt two boys in need.
A Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friend,

As I write this, Denver is in the midst of a snowstorm. White-out conditions make travel treacherous, but somehow our staff always manage to make it in. The reason is simple: they know the children here need the highly skilled, trauma-informed care they provide.

This year, we are excited to share that extensive trauma-informed knowledge with a broader audience than ever before.

In April, we will host an inaugural event: a conference and boot camp for foster parents, clinicians, educators, and others interested in our approach to clinical work, education, and caregiving.

Internationally renowned child trauma expert Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D., will provide the keynote and more than a dozen leading experts will give informative presentations. See page three for more details.

Nationwide, there is a growing trend to reduce the number of children in out-of-home settings and transition them into family-like environments. Once again, Mount Saint Vincent is at the forefront of this movement.

Our prevention programs, Day Treatment and In-Home Therapy, offer support and training for families to bolster their child’s behavioral and emotional recovery. For children needing other family-like places to grow and thrive, we offer foster care training, placement, and services.

Our founders, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, sought to ease the suffering of children in need. Every time a child—yearning for a place to call home—finds love in a foster parent’s arms, that original intent is met. In this newsletter, you’ll meet parents Joe and Janelle Fuentes, who help us carry out our mission.

Just as sure as this winter will fade in the light of spring, Mount Saint Vincent will be here for the children in our care. We’re here to provide the clinical treatment and support they need to heal, and give them the one thing their lives were missing before: Hope.

Gratefully yours,

Kirk Ward, LCSW
Background information about the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT) and its application at Mount Saint Vincent.

Sharing the Knowledge
To educate others about NMT throughout Colorado and beyond, Mount Saint Vincent will be hosting a conference and boot camp about the model and its applications. The event's theme is "Developmental Trauma: Implications for Clinical Work, Education, and Caregiving." Both the conference, slated for Monday, April 1, 2019, and the boot camp, slated for Tuesday, April 2, will be held at the Denver Marriott Westminster, located at 7000 Church Ranch Boulevard, Westminster, CO 80021.

Opportunities for Learning
During the Monday morning plenary session, Dr. Perry will discuss the influence of experiences in shaping the organization of the brain, how trauma affects development and functioning, and how NMT can help determine a course of action to address underlying concerns. The afternoon will consist of two breakout sessions focused on the application of NMT in education and caregiving.

The Monday conference is designed for parents, caregivers, educators, and others interested in obtaining an overview of NMT and obtaining tools and processes that can best meet a child's needs. The Tuesday boot camp is an intensive training designed specifically for clinicians and educators seeking professional certification.

For complete details about the upcoming conference and boot camp, visit MSVhome.org/NMT.

Interested in attending this event? Visit MSVhome.org/NMT for details.
hold the tiny infant. Soon after, they brought Gavin home, where he began to thrive.

Nearly two years passed before Josiah came along. He, too, was born early and needed special care. Once again, Joe and Janelle took the baby into their home. Now almost two years old, Josiah is the picture of health, toddling around the house, unselfishly offering up his toys to the people around him. The couple has since adopted both of the boys.

Unexpected Gifts
Joe and Janelle never assumed they would adopt two of the children they fostered. They understood the underlying tenet of foster care: to provide a safe, nurturing home until a child’s unsafe family situation is resolved. “The ultimate goal is reunification,” said Joe. “Everyone wants the birth family to be well and whole again.” But sometimes, extenuating circumstances—which may include substance abuse, homelessness, or other issues involving birth parents or caregivers—may prevent that objective from being met. That was the case for both Gavin and Josiah. Both times, the couple made the decision to adopt.

In each instance, there came a point in time where Joe and Janelle couldn’t imagine their lives without the child they came to know and love. “We became attached,” Joe said, “us to the boys and the boys to us.”

Guiding Advice
The need for foster parents in the state of Colorado is great. According to the most recent statistics from the Colorado Department of Human Services, there are 3,803 children in out-of-home placements. Every day, children removed from their birth families due to safety concerns need foster families to care for them.

For those considering becoming foster parents, Joe and Janelle offer several suggestions. “Talk to people who have gone through the process, preferably more than one,” said Janelle. Doing so presents a clear picture of what to expect. Be gracious, they suggest. Fostering can involve struggling birth parents and court system delays. “Be patient and undemanding. The caseworkers, GALs (guardians ad litem) and everyone else involved will be a pleasure to work with,” Janelle said.

Joe recommends taking advantage of the knowledge of the foster care agency staff. “Mount Saint Vincent’s staff explained the process, attended court hearings with us, and made sure we had access to resources we needed,” he said. “On a scale of one to 10, when it comes to knowledge of the process, we’d give them a 10.”

Mount Saint Vincent’s foster care program staff of five individuals have more than 70 years of combined experience working with children; foster, adoptive and birth parents; county courts; human services departments; and other community agencies. “Our primary goal is to best meet the needs of the children we serve,” said Foster Care and In-Home Director Melissa Maile, MSW. “To achieve that, we strive to help and support the wonderful foster families in our program so they succeed in every way possible.”

Compassion and Grace
The couple had concerns about how the foster care and adoption process would affect their biological children—Levi, age nine and Olivia, age seven. “It went better than we ever could have imagined,” said Janelle. “They immediately loved these little boys and wanted to know what they could do to help.” Even though there are challenges in being part of a foster family, Levi and Olivia were happy to share the attention of their parents with their two younger foster siblings. “We saw a compassion and a tenderness develop in our kids,” Janelle said. “It was amazing to witness.”

Looking back at the years-long process—filled with its ups and downs, setbacks, and surprises—Joe and Janelle said they are especially grateful for one thing: their family did it together by God’s grace. Not knowing what would happen to the foster children in their care, they all prayed as a family for the birth families. “Our kids were with us, and they grew alongside us. We all grew together as a family,” Joe said. “What could be more rewarding than that?” As Josiah reaches up to pat his father’s face with his chubby hand, one has to wonder: What, indeed? ❤️

For information on becoming a foster parent, attend one of Mount Saint Vincent’s monthly information nights. Visit fostercare.msvhome.org for details, or call 303-458-7220 ext. 204.
Radio Station and Realty Company Launch Toy Drive

A local Denver radio station and a Front Range realty company banded together this past holiday season to present “Christmas Wishes,” a seasonal toy drive to benefit the children at Mount Saint Vincent.

Janice Hunt, owner of radio station 93.7 The Rock, was the driving force behind the campaign. Starting in late November of 2018, the station ran live, on-air stories each weekday, briefly describing a child’s background and the three items that child wanted for Christmas. Twenty separate stories were aired. Listeners were asked to purchase the gift items from a specially created Amazon wish list. The online retailer shipped the gifts directly to Mount Saint Vincent.

In addition to the twice-daily children’s stories, Colorado Flat Fee Realty ran a corresponding advertising campaign with prerecorded 30-second radio ads encouraging participation in the toy drive.

The result of the month-long drive was the donation of nearly 400 toys, books, and therapy tools, valued at approximately $5,000. “We’re so thankful to 93.7 The Rock and Colorado Flat Fee Realty for organizing this drive,” said Director of Development Cindy Liverance. “The need is ongoing, so we hope the community will continue to support the children here.”

Thank you to 93.7 The Rock, Colorado Flat Fee Realty, and the hundreds of people who took part in the campaign. We are deeply grateful.

Representatives from 93.7 The Rock received a personal thank you from Mount Saint Vincent staff for the hundreds of toys and supplies donated during the “Christmas Wishes” toy drive.

Thank You to Our Volunteers

Each year, an amazing 1,000-plus individuals volunteer their time at Mount Saint Vincent, providing essential services all around our 16-acre campus. These activities include helping out in our K-8 school, beautifying our grounds, playing with the children, organizing fundraising events, and much more. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to these generous, caring volunteers. Thank you all so much!

Be Social With Us!

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

Mount Saint Vincent | 303-458-7220 | MSVhome.org
Seven Thousand Hours and Counting

Why do people volunteer at Mount Saint Vincent? Many want to give back to their community. Others want to help disadvantaged children. And some consider it their civic duty. Whatever the reason, we are deeply grateful for the 120-plus individuals who donate their time on a regular, consistent basis. The benefits for everyone involved go far beyond the hours spent.

Dedication and Devotion
Nearly every Tuesday evening, Jeremy Coleman can be found sitting at the dining table in one of the children’s cottages, playing a board game with the kids. Last week, while playing perennial favorite Chutes and Ladders, Jeremy landed at the top of a chute. It sent him sliding back 10 spaces. “Oh, no!” he cried, as the children giggled. His fondness for the children was reflected on his face as he smiled back.

Jeremy began volunteering at Mount Saint Vincent in May of 2010. He says he really enjoys getting to know the children and building relationships with them over time. “It’s so gratifying to see their excitement when I walk in the door to visit,” Jeremy said. Nine-year-old Selena is one of those eager young children. “I’ve known Jeremy for a super-long time,” the spunky youngster said. “He’s my friend.”

I Let Them Speak
Roger Frank is a school volunteer whose reassuring demeanor calms even the most anxious children. Every Monday and Tuesday during the school year, Roger offers words of encouragement, helps students with their schoolwork, and most recently, teaches them to play chess. He notes that although chess is simple to learn, it’s a tough game to master.

“Through chess and other games, the students slowly build trust and start to feel safe having Roger interacting with them,” said Special Education Teacher Myra Marcus. “He’s really great with the kids.”

When getting to know a new student, Roger starts out by being silly to make the child laugh and feel at ease. After he gets to know them, a child may begin to share their thoughts, feelings, or even incidents from their past. When that happens, Roger just listens quietly. “I don’t say anything and I don’t judge,” Roger said. “I simply let them speak.”

If there’s one thing Roger has learned over the past 14 years, it’s to keep his word. “If I promise a child I’ll play with them, I don’t ever, ever break that promise,” Roger said. “Their lives have been filled with so much turmoil and so little dependability. Finally, they feel they can rely on someone. I can’t let them down.”

Just You and Me
Establishing one-on-one relationships with caring adults can bring a strong sense of safety and stability to a child. “For children whose previous home environments were chaotic or violent, often there were few, if any, trusting relationships,” said Mount Saint Vincent Executive Director Kirk Ward, LCSW. “With that lack of relational support in the child’s past, our staff must provide a model for the children, so they know what a safe and positive relationship looks like.”

In addition to their unfamiliarity in forming trusting relationships, the
children receiving services from Mount Saint Vincent often harbor deep feelings of shame about their past.

"By the time children arrive here, they may have moved through numerous homes or been suspended from multiple schools," said Clinical Director Karen McGovern. "So when they're interacting with an adult, in the back of their minds they may be thinking, 'Do they know why I'm here?' or 'Are they going to judge me?' The development of a healthy, positive relationship with an adult can help a child realize their value and elevate their sense of self-worth."

My Reading Buddy
Linda Wasserman began volunteering at Mount Saint Vincent in March of 2002; she's been reading to the children Thursday evenings ever since. Although she hopes she has instilled a love of reading in the children over the years, Linda understands the true benefit of the time she has spent here. "It's not so much the reading," Linda said, "It's spending time with the children that matters the most. It's being consistent; it's coming here every week. It's letting them know that somebody cares about them." By helping the children, Linda is helping our community. "I believe that our children—and by that I mean all children—are our future," she said. "It is up to all of us, to help all of them."

That Feeling of Joy
Although he recently retired, Don Krattenmaker volunteered once a week for more than 13 years. Don has many fond memories of being with the children: playing catch on the athletic field on warm summer evenings, swinging with them on the school playground, and reading bedtime stories just before tuck-in. The best part of his time here? It was spending one-on-one time with a child. "What volunteering at Mount Saint Vincent did," Don said, "was bring me the most amazing sense of joy."

Who benefits most from these gentle and tender interactions? Is it the child, whose deep, hidden wounds are healed through the actions of a caring adult? Or is it the volunteer, whose heart overflows with abundance, knowing they made a difference in the life of a child?

Surely, it is both. For when we reach out—with compassion, care, and kindness—it is in that brief and shining moment that the world is made a better place. 💜

Roger Frank volunteers at the school, where he often teaches the students to play chess.

What Do Horticulture and Horses Have in Common?
They're both therapeutic modalities offered here at Mount Saint Vincent! There's also art, massage, animal-assisted, play, music, and dance/movement therapies. Contact us for a tour to learn more!
Can’t-Miss Events

Join us for one or all of the events below that help raise funds for children in need. Call 303-458-7220 or visit MSVhome.org for complete details.

**Take a Breath Luncheon**
Thursday, May 9, 2019
PPA Event Center, Denver

Attend this event designed to gain insights on living your best life. Our fun and engaging guest speakers will inspire you to live a life of meaning and intention. Enjoy a delicious spa luncheon as you “take a breath,” relax, and recharge! Tickets are on sale now at MSVhome.org.

**Play a Round for Kids Charity Golf Tournament**
Monday, June 17, 2019
Omni Interlocken Golf Club, Broomfield

Participants of the 13th annual “Play a Round for Kids” golf tournament will be treated to 18 holes of golf, breakfast, an awards luncheon, and prize drawings. All proceeds benefit the children receiving services at Mount Saint Vincent.

**Dining Out for Kids Day**
Tuesday, September 17, 2019
Various locations throughout the Denver metro area

What’s a fun and easy way to help out children in need? Take part in the seventh annual Dining Out for Kids restaurant day! Just choose from any of the participating restaurants, and they’ll donate up to 25% of their day’s sales to help our kids. More info will be coming soon!

**Silver Bell Ball**
Saturday, November 16, 2019
Grand Hyatt Denver

The much-anticipated Silver Bell Ball is the unofficial kickoff to the holiday season. Festivities will include a delicious dinner, entertainment, live and silent auctions, and dancing. Former Denver Bronco Reggie Rivers will be our host. Don’t miss the gala of the year!

---

How You Can Help Our Special Children

You can make a difference in the life of a child. Here’s how.

❤️ Make a donation
While we accept donations of many types, our most urgent need is for financial support. Funds are needed to help pay for therapy, food, clothing, and more. You can donate securely online at MSVhome.org.

❤️ Volunteer your time
There are many opportunities available, from reading to the kids to helping in a classroom. For information on volunteering, call Caleigh Isaacks at 303-964-1122.

❤️ Give clothing or supplies
Donations of clothing for children aged 5 to 12 are always appreciated (new only, please). Toys and therapeutic tools are on our Amazon wish list.

Donate securely online at MSVhome.org