

# Fragile Times



## TREVOR

*It had never been a secret that Trevor's birth mom was addicted to drugs.*

It was something he had known all along. His adoptive mom was always very open and ready to answer any of his questions. He knew that his birth mom had been addicted to heroin and that her choice to give him up for adoption was so he could have a better life than she could provide. That was all fine. But, it was the other bit of information that he had always wondered about; a place called PICC. A place where he had spent the first five weeks of his life -- *going through withdrawal!*

Trevor knew that PICC was a home for newborns that had been exposed to drugs while their mothers were pregnant. He had been told what his symptoms were - that he had tremors and was difficult to calm. He had heard that his symptoms were so severe that morphine was required to help him through the process. But he was still curious about PICC. What did PICC look like? Was it like a hospital or a home? He had always wondered how he was treated, if he cried a lot and did it hurt.

Trevor, like many of our "graduates" felt a need to visit PICC and to see first-hand where his life had begun. Now 14 years old, he asked his mom to bring him in.

As important as it was for Trevor, it is just as meaningful for PICC's founder, Barbara Drennen and her staff. Imagine caring for these little ones as they struggle through such a difficult time and then to have them leave and never know how they are doing. You wonder what their family is like, if they will thrive and of course, if they are happy. It is much like seeing one of your own children leave, never to be heard from

P E D I A T R I C I N T E R I M C A R E C E N T E R

*I am of  
the opinion  
that my life  
belongs  
to the  
community,  
and  
as long as  
I live,  
it is my  
privilege  
to do for it  
whatever  
I can.*

George Bernard Shaw

## Treats for Little Pumpkins



*This year PICC is again teaming up with Kent Downtown merchants to sponsor a safe trick-or-treat event for children. Together, they will sponsor the Little Pumpkins Trick-or-Treat in Downtown Kent from 2-5 p.m. on Halloween, Friday, Oct. 31.*

*PICC, located at 328 Fourth Ave. S., Kent, is the starting point for the event. For a donation of \$5 to PICC, children and their parents can pick up Little Pumpkins Trick-or-Treat sacks and maps to participating merchants. Professional photos of children in their Halloween costumes by Kathy's Photo Impressions will also be available at PICC for \$2 (processing and shipping). More than 25 downtown merchants will hand out treats. We need about 20 volunteers to serve as crossing guards, cashiers, and photo helpers. Costumes are encouraged, but not required. If you can help from 1-5 p.m. Friday, Oct. 31 (Halloween), please call PICC at 253-852-5253 and ask for Elaine.*

## The Health Concerns of RSV

Nearly 18 months ago, we had a virus contaminate the center, affecting fourteen of our babies. Most had to be transported to Children's Hospital in Seattle; only one was healthy enough to remain at PICC. We had to remain closed to new admits for over a month. The virus, called "a major public health problem throughout the world" by American Family Physician, is RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus), a major cause of respiratory illness in young children. Highly contagious, it spreads rapidly by coughs and sneezes from infected people. It can also live on surfaces, such as doorknobs, clothes and hands. RSV spreads rapidly through schools and day-care centers. In adults, it may only produce symptoms of a common cold, though recently, severe RSV infections have been found among elderly patients as well. Pre-mature infants and children with existing health issues, such as respiratory or cardiac issues, are at greater risk of having RSV lead to more serious illnesses and possibly death. The Center for Disease Control considers RSV to be "the most common cause of bronciolitis and pneumonia among infants under the age of three. They also strongly suggest that infants not be placed into a day-care or an environment where contamination is possible. For children at risk of developing serious RSV related diseases, a monthly injection of RSV antibodies (Synagis) can be given during peak season. Fortunately, most cases of RSV are mild and require no specific treatment from a doctor.

Because of our experience last year, we will do everything we can to keep our newborns as healthy as possible. With our babies being our utmost concern, we will be discontinuing tours until spring and will be closely monitoring the health of visiting family members.



### *Why does PICC only use Johnson's Baby Powder with Cornstarch??*

Babies exposed to methamphetamines excrete the poisons in the drug through their stools. The poisons or acids eat into their tender skin and create open wounds which are extremely hard to heal. Johnson's Baby Powder with Cornstarch absorbs the acids and acts as a barrier. It also does not react with the excreted chemicals, as other products do.



## CONGRESSMAN DAVE REICHERT SPONSORS GRANT



Pediatric Interim Care Center has been granted a \$143,000 federal Financial Assistance Award sponsored by Congressman Dave Reichert. The grant provides funds for PICC's outreach and education programs on prenatal drug exposure. Activities covered by the grant include a regional conference, guidebook for caregivers, educational videos, classes, and information line.

PICC Executive Director Barbara Drennen said the grant will allow the pioneering nonprofit to share more widely the unique knowledge gained through caring for more than 2,300 drug-exposed newborns.

"We know that we only touch the tip of the iceberg with the infants we are able to safely bring through drug withdrawal here in our center. Most of these babies are out in the community, and there is a tremendous need for information. We're extremely grateful to Rep. Reichert for helping us fill this need."

Rep. Reichert's involvement with PICC and its mission is a personal one. His daughter and son-in-law, Ken and Tabitha Bussey, adopted two children who were cared for at PICC as infants. Reichert, former King County Sheriff, donated the proceeds of his book on the search for the Green River killer to PICC.

"Drug-exposed infants desperately need protection and support," Drennen said. "Dave Reichert has been a leader in standing up for them."

## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK...

It has been a fairly busy year at the Nursery. We have had an increased number of babies come to us that have been prenatally exposed to opiates - heroin, methadone, oxycodone and morphine. Because of the number and types of drugs these little ones are being exposed to in utero, it has made it difficult to withdraw them in a timely fashion. Even though the outward signs of withdrawal in babies exposed to multiple drugs are not as pronounced as in a baby exposed to only one drug, we have found we have needed to increase their dosage levels of morphine three to five times higher. It never ceases to be a cause of wonderment for me that these babies, so tiny yet so very strong, endure what their little bodies have to go through as they begin their life in this big world of ours.

Our babies, so precious to us, do, in time, complete their withdrawal course. Preparing them to leave PICC to start their lives with their family, either a relative, a foster or pre-adopt family, is a special time. Often, I tell our families that "it isn't the drug that is going to determine how well your baby will do in the coming years, but you, the caregiver. In most cases, you are the determining factor as to his success." Following the children over the years and seeing that they are doing well is such a joy. The child's well-being is proof that the families have shared our passion and believe as we do, that the care and the start in life that PICC provides to these little ones is so very necessary.

Barb



### TREVOR *(continued)*

again. When we have the opportunity to actually see one of our own return, it is such an honor! We have as many questions for them as they do for us!

Trevor and his mom did come and visit. He was a charming young man. He loves football and is doing well in school. He smiled easily and asked a lot of questions. He wanted to know about each of the babies we had at the time and, of course, he wanted to know if we remembered him. Truly, we did! Two of the staff on duty that day were with us 14 years ago and, most probably, had been his caregivers. We were even able to share some photos taken of him while he was here.

We believe that his visit was meaningful for him and that we were able to alleviate any unknowns that he might have had. We also believe that his visit to PICC is one of the greatest rewards we have - knowing that what we do, does make a difference in a child's life!

### Yes, I would like to support the Pediatric Interim Care Center, The Newborn Nursery

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Enclosed please find my donation in the amount of:

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To:

*The more you care,  
the stronger  
you can be.*

*Jim Behn*

SAVE THE DATE

Please save the date for PICC's Building the Future Luncheon, our major annual fundraiser. Next year's luncheon date has been set for May 8, 2009, at Southcenter Doubletree.

The luncheon is complimentary, but guests are requested to donate a minimum of \$50 to help support PICC's mission of caring for the littlest victims of child abuse. This year's luncheon was attended by 450 guests and raised \$77,000. **Contact Development Director Elaine Purchase at 253-852-5253 or elainep@picc.net to reserve your place.**

*Thank You!*

*We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our PICC friends, family and supporters that have never forgotten these most innocent victims of drug abuse. Without your continued belief in our mission, we could not continue to provide the care so necessary for their success.*

SERVICES

Providing immediate, short-term medical care for medically fragile infants suffering from prenatal drug exposure, in addition to providing educational and support services to the community in the recognition and management of substance abused children.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Barbara J. Drennen

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FRAGILE TIMES

This newsletter is published as a community service by Pediatric Interim Care Center (PICC).

Its contents are intended to be informative and offer insight into the problems facing many of our children born today.