

*If we are
to reach
real
peace
in the
world,
we shall
have to
begin
with the
children.*

~ Mahatma Gandhi



Fragile Times

FALL
2020

REFLECTIONS ON 30 YEARS

As I think back over the years since we opened Pediatric Interim Center Care, I think of all the beautiful babies who have come through our doors since then. It was all so new on that October day in 1990. No one had ever started a program like this before for drug-exposed infants who needed some extra time and special care between hospital and home. I could never have dreamt that I would someday be looking back at more than 3,200 babies safely discharged and thriving. I couldn't have imagined that we'd build this beautiful home for the babies, or that I'd travel all over the country from Washington, D.C., to all four corners of the United States teaching and helping others who want to start programs such as ours.

People often ask me if working with drug-exposed infants is extremely sad. No, it's heartwarming and very rewarding. These little ones are precious, and while their families have problems, they love their babies. My staff is truly dedicated to the care they give the babies. I've had the opportunity to meet so many incredible people, and I've found a level of support and warmth in my community that I didn't know existed. From the very beginning, our neighbors here in Kent and people across the state have been welcoming and supportive. The Washington State Legislature reached out to help us start the program 30 years ago, and they've kept PICC under their wing ever since. The support we received from them and from all you is why PICC exists today.

Of course, we've all gotten older, and many have retired and left me. People have asked me when I'm going to retire. My answer is always the same — not yet. I love what I do, I cherish the babies, and to leave the babies at this time would be extremely hard.

— Barbara Drennen, Executive Director



WATCHING OVER US ALL THESE YEARS



As we observe PICC's 30th Birthday, we especially want to acknowledge the steadfast service of the Kent police officers and firefighters who have watched over the babies every day and every night for all those years.

When PICC opened its doors in 1990, our original building was practically next door to the Kent Police headquarters. As the years went by, we realized how important it was to have the police so close by. Day or night, they were there at a moment's notice whenever we needed them, and their very proximity added a level of security that kept everyone feeling safe. When we started looking for a site for our new building in 2004, our top priority was staying close to the police. We were fortunate to find a property just down the street from Kent PD, and it was our friends from the police and fire who helped carry the babies from the old building to the new one in 2006.



While the police have watched over the babies from one side, the firefighters at Station 71 have protected them on the other. Whenever we have a crisis with a baby, the firefighters are our first responders, and we know we can count on them in any emergency. If a fire or disaster ever forced us to evacuate our building, the firefighters of Station 71 would be there to transport the nursing staff and babies to their station, where emergency supplies are ready and waiting.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you to all the first responders who keep the babies safe.

A MOTHER'S STORY



It has been wonderful to be able to welcome parents back to the nursery to visit their babies as COVID restrictions have eased. One baby's mom especially touched our hearts. Michelle came every day she could and spent hours quietly holding and caring for her little baby girl. "The staff is wonderful here," Michelle said. "They've taken such good care of her, and I just want to be with her as much as I can."

Michelle said she's been on a methadone program for chronic pain from an automobile accident some years ago. When her daughter was born two weeks early, the baby needed medication for withdrawal from

the methadone and was losing weight. "I really wanted to take her home from the hospital, but I knew she needed more care. I wanted what was best for her, and that was coming here."

Michelle has three other children at home, and they are all excited to meet their little sister. "My 5-year-old calls her Peanut," Michelle said, smiling. This fall has been a difficult time for Michelle's family. Right after the baby was born, their home was threatened by the wildfires. Then, with schools closed by COVID, Michelle has had to juggle keeping the kids up with their home studies and visiting the baby at PICC. "I can't wait to take her home," Michelle said. "I just want to be the best Mom I can."



NOVEMBER FUNDRAISER



Commander Mike O'Reilly, Kent Police Department

The Kent Police Department has come up with a novel way of raising money for the babies at PICC. During the month of November, officers will donate \$50 for the right to grow a "neatly trimmed" moustache or beard. The "Movember" fundraiser is an annual event to benefit charity while raising awareness of men's health issues.



HEROES OF THE NURSERY



Among the many heroes of PICC's Newborn Nursery are the nurse's aides who have cared for the babies every hour of every day for the past 30 years. They are amazing caregivers, many of them with decades of experience with the special care needed by drug-exposed newborns who are going through withdrawal or struggling with feeding difficulties. The nurse's aides at PICC provide all the infant care—feeding, bathing, dressing, diapering, rocking, and soothing babies who may be distressed and easily over-stimulated. This frees our Registered Nurses to attend to babies medical needs.



In addition to caring for the babies 24/7, several of our nurse's aides also serve as transporters. Pictured above are aide/transporters Patricia, Rhonda, and Patty. Traveling in pairs, they drive to hospitals around the state to pick up the babies and bring them safely back to PICC.

When graduates like Zachary come to visit, it's heartwarming to be able to reunite them with the aides who cared for them during their first weeks of life. Zachary (pictured at right) was able to meet Rhonda and Patricia and see the crib that was his when he was a baby.



Pediatric Interim Care Center is a qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization for tax purposes. Our federal tax identification number is 91-1485176.

30 YEARS OF TENDER CARE

— by Barbara Drennen

Patricia looks at every baby in PICC's nursery as "her baby," and that's how she's thought of all of them for nearly 30 years. Patricia is PICC's longest serving nurse's aide. She came to PICC in the early days when she was just 18 years old and very shy and quiet. To tell the truth, I was reluctant to hire Patricia at first. She was so young, and she'd have to take the bus at night to work the graveyard shift. But even then, I knew there was something special and incredibly loving about Patricia.

Through years of late night bus rides, Patricia never missed a shift. She was often a few minutes late, but she was always there. She left PICC for a couple of years when she married, but then returned as a single mom with two babies to support. Again I was hesitant to bring her back, not knowing how dependable she could be with two little ones, but thankfully I did. How she managed it, I'll never know. Through all the years her children were growing up, Patricia got up at dawn, took the children to daycare on the bus in all kinds of weather, and then took another bus to get to PICC for her 7 a.m. shift. She'd care for her PICC babies immaculately and tenderly all day long, and then repeat the bus rides to return home with her own children at night.

It was when her children were in grade school that Patricia finally learned to drive and was able to buy a car. I'd been lenient when riding the bus had made her a few minutes late for work, but I was surprised when she continued to be a little late once she had a car. When I asked why she was late, she confessed that she knew how to drive the car, but she hadn't learned how to park it! She was late because she'd been driving around the block until someone could come out and help her park.

Patricia soon overcame the parking difficulty as she had so many other challenges in her life. She was a wonderful mother and fierce protector of her two children, who are now in their 20s. Her daughter finished college and is a medical technician, and her son is studying media and public relations at Central Washington. She's loved by everyone who ever worked with her here at PICC, and she's still taking care of every baby as if it were her own.

When children and young people come back to PICC to see the place where they were babies, Patricia is here to greet them. They're still "her babies," and she remembers them all. They love reminiscing with Patricia about their time at PICC and having her point out the crib that was theirs.



WALK FOR THE BABIES



We're sorry we couldn't get together for this year's Walk for the Babies, but that didn't stop our walkers from raising more than \$26,500 for the babies at PICC. They laced up their shoes, put on their face masks, and completed their walks on their own. At the finish, they sent us photos capturing the fun of the virtual walkathon.

Thank you to everyone who participated, to everyone who donated, and to our sponsors: Moneytree, M&M Construction, Commencement Bank, Mutual of Enumclaw Insurance, Republic Services, Monica Ochs, Kent Station, and Duke's Seafood.

Mark your calendar for next year's Walk for the Babies, Saturday, October 2, 2021. We hope we can see all our friends then.



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CARE CENTER

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*Giving a safe
and healthy start
to drug-exposed
infants since 1990*



Mayor Dana Ralph delivered a proclamation from the City of Kent recognizing PICC's 30 years of service to the community and naming October 2020 Pediatric Interim Care Center Month in Kent.

SAVE THE DATE
December 1, 2020

**#GIVING
TUESDAY**

FRAGILE TIMES
This newsletter is published as a community service by Pediatric Interim Care Center. PICC is the only facility providing 24-hour interim care for drug-exposed and medically fragile infants in Washington State.

MISSION

Pediatric Interim Care Center's mission is to provide safe, short-term medical care between hospital and home for prenatally drug-exposed and medically fragile infants, to provide educational services to the community, and to always be a voice for the child.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Barbara J. Drennen

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