MountainStar Prineville is growing fast; we just moved into a new building at 430 NW 4th Street that will enable us to help more Crook County children and families. Community members are coming together to support our efforts by forming an Advisory Board, and you can join! If you are interested in learning more, please contact Kayla at 541-322-6820 or KaylaR@MtStar.org.

In an effort to boost the health and development of the babies and toddlers we serve, MountainStar began a new Well Child Initiative within our Therapeutic Early Childhood Program in September. Sadly, all of the children in our therapeutic classes have adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and those are an indicator for childhood and life-long health concerns. We prevent childhood trauma and support family resiliency, which in turn helps thwart serious health problems. We’ve been attending to the health of the children in our program for years, but to do an even better job of that we launched the Well Child Initiative which includes:

- Providing in-class screenings for vision, hearing, and dental health
- Encouraging parents to schedule routine Well Child Exams with their child’s pediatrician
- Increasing parent education around dental care, nutrition, and other health topics
- Tracking child immunizations internally
- Regularly evaluating each child in our program with the “Ages & Stages Questionnaire” which helps identify delays in social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development
- Connecting children who have delays with partner agencies that can help get the child back on track

This new endeavor is possible through our collaborations with generous community partners including Advantage Dental, Mid-Columbia Head Start, NeighborImpact, and The Children’s Learning Center. We are grateful to St. Charles Health System for investing $32,000 in our new program over the last two years.

Already we’re seeing positive results! For example, in a dental screening the visiting hygienist found that a one-year-old had severely decayed teeth. Mom didn’t know, but now with the help of OHP and a local dentist, she is getting the appropriate care for her little one.

If you feel compelled to help ensure the health and safety of local, vulnerable children, you can donate at MtStar.org/donate or send a check to 2125 NE Daggett Lane, Bend, OR 97701 (Be sure to indicate where you’d like your gift to go — Prineville, Madras, Bend, or wherever it’s needed most).

Thank you!
Christina is a single mom, domestic violence survivor, and has a family history of substance abuse. Despite numerous challenges, she is trying her best to make a good life for her young son, Jayden, which is why she reached out to MountainStar for help. On the day of their first home visit with our staff, neither of us knew just how badly they would need support; that very night one of Jayden’s grandparent’s suffered a tragic death.

The next day, we called to check in and Christina was understandably in a “dark place.” We jumped into action: Jayden came to MountainStar the very next day so Christina could have the alone time she desperately needed to deal with her grief. Now little Jayden comes twice a week to our therapeutic classes, and we’re helping mom recover from this terrible loss.

THE TAPPING TODDLERS

Do you remember how excruciatingly difficult it was to stand still as a kid? While waiting to head out to the playground, toddlers at MountainStar used to squirm this way. Now, their MountainStar teacher asks them to tap their fingers to different pressure points on their own body (wrists, neck, temples...). They get so focused on that feeling, that waiting patiently becomes a lot easier!

Tapping like this is a form of patterned repetitive activity — an activity that has been shown to repair the neurological effects of early childhood trauma. Repetitive actions help a child’s brain develop sequentially from the brain stem (regulates survival functions) that very night one of Jayden’s grandparent’s suff ered a tragic death. Their MountainStar teacher asks them to tap their fingers to diff erent pressure points on their own body (wrists, neck, temples...). They get so focused on that feeling, that waiting patiently becomes a lot easier!

Tapping like this is a form of patterned repetitive activity — an activity that has been shown to repair the neurological eff ects of early childhood trauma. Repetitive actions help a child’s brain develop sequentially from the brain stem (regulates survival functions) up to the frontal cortex (regulates executive functions such as problem solving). The scientifi c description for this is the ‘Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics’ (NMT) and it was developed by Dr. Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D., Senior Fellow of The Child Trauma Academy as an approach to inform work with children, families, and the communities in which they live. MountainStar’s Mental Health Specialist, Cherie Skillings, M.S., L.P.C., is trained in the NMT and has woven elements of it into our therapeutic classes as a way to repair and enrich each child’s development.

Their Family Coach excitedly reports that six months later they have not only reunited with their children, they’ve reconciled their relationship! She says, “They worked really hard to get where they’re at. Our program put the tools in front of them, but they picked them up and put them to use to make their family whole again.” That’s the goal! We want participants in the EVS program, which is funded by Oregon’s Department of Human Services, to have a positive experience that helps them quickly and safely reunify as a family.

ENHANCED VISITATION PROGRAM

MountainStar’s Enhanced Visitation Program is going strong in Deschutes, Jefferson, and Crook counties. This program provides safe, family-friendly visits for children living in foster care and their parents. Families strengthen their bond while they get help taking steps toward a better future together.

Here’s one family’s story: Amy and Mike had restraining orders against each other and a history of domestic violence issues, as well as no place to live. When their two toddlers were put in foster care, visits at MountainStar helped the little ones maintain a bond with mom and dad. As Amy and Mike met separately with their MountainStar Family Coach, they were able to identify root causes of problems and work to improve their communication with each other.

Their Family Coach excitedly reports that six months later they have not only reunited with their children, they’ve reconciled their relationship! She says, “They worked really hard to get where they’re at. Our program put the tools in front of them, but they picked them up and put them to use to make their family whole again.” That’s the goal! We want participants in the EVS program, which is funded by Oregon’s Department of Human Services, to have a positive experience that helps them quickly and safely reunify as a family.