

# Fragile Times



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

*Nobody  
can go  
back  
and  
start a new  
beginning.  
But  
anyone  
can start  
today  
and make  
a new  
ending.*

*Maria Robinson*

## *Celebrating 20 Years!!*

This year's luncheon, May 20 at ShoWare Center, will celebrate Pediatric Interim Care Center's 20th Anniversary. We hope you will be able to join us on this special day as we share our memories and thank our wonderful supporters for being there for the babies ... for your work, and care, and support ... for making these 20 years possible.

In addition to celebrating this important milestone with you, the luncheon will feature a celebrity guest speaker. Television viewers knew Jodie Sweetin as Stephanie on the long-running sitcom Full House. You'll get a chance to meet her and hear the behind-the-scenes story of her own struggle with drug abuse.



Seattle television personality, Margo Myers will host the event, which will again feature a raffle for a 7-day Holland America cruise for two. Registration begins at 11:30, and the program is noon to 1:30 p.m. Tickets are complimentary, but registration is required and donations will be requested as part of the program.



The luncheon is PICC's major annual fundraising event. We especially need your help this year as we are working hard to make up a \$250,000 reduction in PICC's funding due to state budget cuts.

You can register for the luncheon, volunteer to be a Table Captain, or find information about sponsorships at our website, [www.picc.net](http://www.picc.net) or by giving us a call at 253-852-5253.

## *From the Director's Desk*

My goodness...twenty years seems to have flown by so quickly! Never in my dreams would I have thought we could have cared for so many babies and made such an impact on their little lives and the lives of so many others.

Now, many of our 'babies', many nearly adults, are visiting PICC. They are curious to see the center and where their lives began. My heart bursts with joy to see them grown and to hear that they are doing well. But, sadly, I also hear from other families that the beautiful baby they received from PICC is having problems. It is heartbreaking. Was it the drugs they were exposed to or was it simply their biological make-up? Could it be their caregiver? Of course, we will never know. Even in the best of families, where there hasn't been drug exposure, children have challenges in life.



For me, another highlight from the past 20 years has been watching the many young girls who, because they worked for PICC, decided to stay in the medical field. Many have gone on to become nurses.

I also treasure the memories of the many visitors we have had over the years; from the thousands of wonderful, caring people who share our passion to the special guests from the White House and Congress. We have had movie and TV celebrities plus honored visitors from more than fifteen different countries.

Who would have thought we would have had such an influence across the world?

Barbara Drennen

## *Drugs: Now and Then*

During the 1980's, Seattle was in the midst of an epidemic. Cocaine production had changed. Instead of the need for special chemicals and expensive smoking accessories, it was now able to be prepared in any kitchen. Crack, as it was called in its new form, could be sold very inexpensively. Now, it was no longer a drug for the wealthy. It became affordable for virtually anyone, even the unemployed or teenage drug user. Crack use quickly rose in popularity and spread across the nation in a very short period time.

Hospitals across our state were overwhelmed with babies being born to mothers that used crack. These newborns were weighing a pound and a half at birth. Many had additional medical complications. The medical community was working hard to help them survive. Most times, when mom left the hospital she never returned for her baby. The foster care system was also feeling the impact. This was the population that PICC was designed to help.

In 1990, by the time PICC opened its doors, drugs and their use had changed. Opiates had become the predominate drug of choice. The tiny neonates that we had seen previously, were no more. Babies coming to us were full term and at a healthy weight; *but* they were in severe withdrawal. The family dynamics changed also. Even a mom that was homeless would find a way to be at PICC with their baby. The extended family was very involved and because of that nearly 74% of the babies were placed back into the family unit.

Just five years later in 1995, the drug of choice changed again. Cocaine was back and methamphetamines were new, cheap and easy to get. We began to see a different population of parents. Babies were coming in having been exposed to numerous drugs, not just one. The percentage rate of babies returned into the family unit dropped to 52%.

During the period between 2000 and 2009 we again witnessed a change in drug use. Prescription drugs had come on the scene. No longer were mothers homeless, most were from the middle to upper classes. The dynamics of how we worked with these parents changed also. During this period, we found the State returned most babies back to the mothers.

Since 2009, we have been seeing all of the above mentioned drugs combined. Legal psychotropic drugs (anti-depressants, anti-anxiety, etc.) have become common and are showing their effects on the little ones we see. A number of our babies have up to seven drugs in their system at one time. One surprising statistic: Over the past 20 years, the average age of our mothers still remains between 25 and 35 years of age.

So, what does the future hold? Will there be new drugs or old drugs with new effects? Will we see drug use start to diminish or will it continue to grow? Of course, there is no way to know, but if we are needed, the Pediatric Interim Care Center, The Newborn Nursery plans to remain dedicated to the needs of newborns that have been exposed to drugs in utero.

## *President's Letter*

Each year as I sit down to write this letter, it causes me to reflect on the past year's events and what faces us in the coming year. This last year feels like we have been on a roller coaster!

We were so thankful that the dire predictions of flooding never materialized. Our babies were able to stay snug and dry in their home. We had hosted our successful seminar for caregivers a few months earlier that attracted national attention and attendance. With our babies safe and Barbara receiving invitations to help other communities around the country, everything about this crusade for babies seemed perfect.

Then, we found out how desperate our State's financial condition really was! The austerity measures in Olympia were shocking to all of us. For a period of time, we were cut off from our existing funding. When restored, it was at a far lower level than we had budgeted. Barbara has had to take our own austerity measures to cope with the situation – cutting staff, outside services, and economizing by every means possible.

The one thing that has never been subject to cutting has been the babies' care. Through it all, Barbara and our wonderful staff have made sure that our babies get only



J.C Hall, PICC Board President

the best of care. Through the generous help of all our benefactors, we have continued to serve these littlest victims well.

As we celebrate our 20th anniversary, we do not know what the future will bring. Despite the millions of dollars that we save Washington State each year, there are no funding guarantees in today's environment. We have assurances of support from many of our friends in Olympia, but nothing is certain. I want to ask you all for your support – please make sure that your elected representatives know how you feel about PICC, both now and on a continuing basis. Our State's funding crisis is not going away in the next few years, and we can expect continuing battles to fund the babies.

I wish I could use this space only to tell you about the wonderful success stories of our little ones, but the uncertainty and turmoil seem to have taken precedence this year. Rest assured that the little ones are safe and well cared for, and that each and every one of us puts those little angels first. We will do everything in our power to ensure that PICC remains a safe haven for their healing.

Thank you for all that you have done to help in this blessed endeavor.

# 20 Years of Dedication



Dr. Peyton Gaunt



Patricia Bland



Kris Plantenberg



Mary Hill



Peggy Guise

Working at the Pediatric Interim Care Center, The Newborn Nursery is enormously rewarding and we have the staff to prove it. The people pictured above have been with us since the day we first opened our doors. Many more have been with us for nearly that long. Though they say how wonderful it is to work with the babies; we hope they know that, in turn, they are wonderful to work *with*. PICC's family of employees are the best. We wish to commend them for the care they give to the tiny, fragile lives in their care and to thank them for their dedication.



## *Thank You!*

*Foundations provide an important part of the funding that allows PICC to care for the babies everyday. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the following foundations who have generously contributed to PICC this fiscal year:*

Paul G. Allen Family Foundation  
Apex Foundation  
Glaser Foundation  
The Norcliffe Foundation  
Norman Archibald Foundation  
Aven Foundation  
Ballinger Family Foundation  
Elizabeth A. Lynn Foundation  
The Florence B. Kilworth Foundation  
Charles See Foundation  
Puyallup Tribe's Charity Fund  
Danica Children's Foundation  
Greater Tacoma Community Foundation  
Catherine Holmes Wilkins Foundation  
The Byron & Alice Lockwood Foundation  
Nordstrom Foundation  
Renton Community Foundation  
Build-a-Bear Workshop Bear Hugs Foundation  
Muckleshoot Charity Fund

*In addition, we have for the first time this year received Human Service Grants from local cities. Our thanks to the Human Services Commissions and citizens of:*

City of Kent  
City of Renton  
City of Auburn  
City of Covington  
City of Issaquah

## *Fact:*

*Did you know that PICC is the only center in the United States that receives newborns immediately after their birth and assists them through the withdrawal effects from the drugs their mothers took during pregnancy?*



## *Flood Wall*

Many people have been asking when we are going to take down our "flood wall." As eager as we are to have it removed so we can see more of our beautiful landscaping, it appears that it won't be until next fall. Our insurance company will not allow us to take down our barricade until the Army Corp. of Engineers confirms that the Howard Hansen dam is sound. This summer, they plan to lower the amount of water held by the dam so it can be inspected. If it is declared to be solid, we hope to remove our wall as soon as possible,

## *Can You Help?*

Please help Pediatric Interim Care Center continue to care for drug-affected newborns while saving state taxpayers (you!) millions of dollars.

The economic downturn has forced Washington State to make massive cuts, and the state funding that makes up about half of PICC's budget is in serious jeopardy. We have already suffered more than \$250,000 in reductions, and there are even more cuts to come, both in the current budget and the one for the next biennium (2011-2013).

We need to let our legislators know that cutting PICC doesn't save the state money. In fact, it costs millions more in Medicaid expenses to keep these babies in the hospital.

You can help PICC continue to protect drug-affected and medically fragile babies in Washington State by writing your state senator and your state representatives, urging them to preserve the line-item funding for Pediatric Interim Care Center. We have prepared letters you can print and sign, or use them as a guide for writing your own letters. They can be found on our web site: [www.picc.net/Letter\\_Camp.htm](http://www.picc.net/Letter_Camp.htm)

Thanks so much!!

## Baby Devon

Even though we know that every baby we care for will eventually leave PICC to be with family, we still wonder about each of them after they leave. As the primary caregivers during those first weeks of life, we spend every moment with them nurturing them through each step of their recovery. We have shared in the small joys of a first smile and a restful night. We rejoice when a little one is finally taken off his medications or has simply been able to take a full bottle. As you can imagine, these newborns become a part of us. It is only natural for us to be curious about what became of them after they left.

Devon came to PICC when he was just 4 days old. Having been exposed to opiates, he was to have quite a struggle ahead of him. He was given morphine to level out his withdrawal symptoms and placed in a low stimulus room to help him remain calm so he could concentrate on such tasks as feeding. Over the next two months, Devon made wonderful progress. He was weaned off of the morphine and was doing very well. But, because he had no visitors, it became apparent that a foster family would need to be found.

As Devon waited at PICC for a family, a couple that had wanted a child for some time, had made the decision that foster to adopt was their best option. They had just finished the licensing process when they received a call from a social worker asking them if they would be available to meet a baby that was at PICC.

Over the past 20 years, we have had the privilege to witness that special moment when a foster to adopt family meets their newborn. When Devon met his, it was no exception. That first day, with only an hour together, each parent took turns holding and admiring him.

The next afternoon, the parents returned to take Devon home. When a baby leaves PICC, it is always a time of joy. We know these little ones need to be in a family home environment. And, when the family is as thrilled as Devon's family was, it is especially heart-warming.

That was two years ago. This month we received the adoption announcement from Devon's family. It was official. He was theirs. Still curious what had happened over the past 24



months, we called and talked to his mom. She shared with us her thoughts on the day she met him at PICC. She admitted that she was nervous but very excited to meet Devon. "Neither of us had any experience with children. This was our first," she said. But, she went on to explain,

"It was his eyes," she said. "At first they seemed distant, but on the second day they were bright and focused. It was like he knew we wanted him."

She said that at that moment she knew it was the right fit and from that day, they have never looked back. She did admit that they worried that the birth parents could come forward and take him back. But, as he got older, and there was never any visitation from either parent, their worries subsided.

For Devon, the first four months in his new home were the most difficult. Mom said he was quite fussy and didn't sleep well. He was most content when he was swaddled and stimulus was kept to a minimum. Even up to the age of 18 months, he would cover his ears at loud noises. Now, at two, she says he is doing great. He is right where he should be for growth and development. But the best thing of all...he is with a family that adores him.

For all of us at PICC, we appreciate knowing how one of our little ones is doing. We thank Devon's family for keeping in touch and sharing his story. It validates what we do and, more than ever, gives us the confidence in our belief that these babies are getting a great start in life.

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

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Instructions \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed please find my donation in the amount of:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Check enclosed

Please charge my credit card.....  Visa

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Number \_\_\_\_\_

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Donations are tax deductible within the guidelines of the law. Please check with your financial advisor.



PEDIATRIC INTERIM  
CARE CENTER

328 4th Avenue South  
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*What you leave behind  
is not what is engraved  
in stone monuments  
but what is woven  
into the lives of others.*  
*Tricia*

*Planned Giving*

***Would you consider including a charitable gift to PICC's babies as a part of your estate planning?***

In times when many are concerned about out-living their assets, a planned gift may provide a way to leave a larger gift than you could make outright. If you have ever thought, "I wish I could give more," planned giving may allow you to achieve that gift without jeopardizing your future. Planned charitable gifts can also provide a number of significant tax benefits. For information on PICC's Planned Giving Program, please contact Elaine Purchase, 253-852-5253, or [elainep@picc.net](mailto:elainep@picc.net).



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.