

## NR 1-16-14

### CareOregon grant to help children coping with trauma

An \$80,000 grant from CareOregon will launch a groundbreaking effort in Gladstone Schools, supporting elementary students who suffered traumatic events in early childhood. The goal is improving children's long-term health and academic success.

A Kaiser Permanente study in 1995-97 revealed that individuals who faced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) such as abuse, domestic violence, loss of a parent, or living with a substance abuser have dramatically increased life-long risks from health issues, addiction, and depression.

"The evidence is overwhelming regarding the impact of trauma. By addressing this issue through Trauma Informed Practice, we look forward to further enhancing the well being of Gladstone children," said Superintendent Bob Stewart. "CareOregon has been a wonderful partner with the Gladstone community. We have benefitted from their knowledge, expertise and resources. This next step in our journey together is truly exciting."

Wendy Wilson, principal of John Wetten Elementary, has been studying education and counseling strategies to help students coping with ACEs. She understands that students who have had highly stressful experiences in their lives may also have difficulty succeeding academically. Research has shown that constant stress impacts brain development in young children.

"Children are impacted by toxic stress in different ways. Some have difficulty regulating emotions, while others show lack of attention, impulsivity, or extreme passivity," explained Wilson. "For these children to develop in healthy ways, they need connections to caring mentors and strategies to self-regulate their emotions, behaviors, and attention."

Staff training is an essential component of the program, as the school works to build teacher awareness of the reasons behind children's behavior, and to learn trauma-sensitive, strengths-based approaches and routines to help children cope.

"Providing predictable routines, attachment to positive adults, and teachers in touch with children's social/emotional development will benefit our entire student body," added Wilson. "Children who have experienced higher levels of trauma and stress can build resiliency and coping strategies with help from small support groups, one-on-one mentors, and mental health therapy."

"We are pleased to support the efforts of Gladstone Schools to address early childhood trauma," said Patrick Curran, CareOregon's chief executive officer. "It is a great example of what we are trying to accomplish through Coordinated Care Organizations: addressing the important determinants of health early and comprehensively. We believe this initiative will have a life-long impact on these children."

"We all know a few amazing adults who had the worst childhoods imaginable, but managed to find success despite the odds," said Wilson. "Our goal is to make that possible for every student who experienced childhood trauma."

To apply for Open Enrollment in Gladstone Schools, contact Sandi Frohnert at 503-496-3935. To contribute to Gladstone's Overcoming ACEs Project, send donations to the **Gladstone Education Foundation/ 17789 Webster Road/Gladstone, OR 97027**

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