

Caritas Family Solutions Receives \$25,000 Grant to Fund Innovative Virtual Reality Therapy System

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BELLEVILLE – Caritas Family Solutions’ has received a \$25,000 grant from the Tracy Family Foundation to purchase and install a virtual reality therapy system at St. John

Bosco Children's Center, a residential treatment facility for children who have experienced profound trauma. The grant will also provide funds to train the clinical manager and five therapists on the new system.

The innovative therapy approach known as Virtual Reality (VR) Prolonged Exposure, will allow trained clinicians to work with youths who have experienced profoundly traumatic abuse and/or neglect and have developed significant mental health diagnoses such as ADHD, Anxiety, Depression, Bipolar Disorder or most commonly, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a result. VR therapy is a promising practice that has been studied with combat veterans and is now being applied to others with significant trauma histories.

“Innovation is a core value of Caritas and we could not be more excited about this opportunity,” said Caritas Family Solutions CEO Gary Huelsmann. “Our purpose is to provide services to individuals who are experiencing one of life's unexpected hardships and instill life-lasting positive change. This new treatment method may not only engage youth at St. John Bosco Children's Center who might typically shy away from traditional methods of therapy, but could also successfully change the trajectory of their lives.”

“The children we work with at St. John Bosco Children's Center are kids who have experienced such profound trauma, that living in a traditional foster care environment is not currently possible for them,” said Director of Residential Services Mike Philbin. “They gain the skills needed to be safe and successful in a home and this new technology will be a very beneficial way to aid that effort.”

“Our mission is to advance innovative, collaborative, and sustainable change in communities,” said Tracy Family Foundation Executive Director Dan Teefey. “We're proud to support Caritas Family Solutions' wonderful work and to be a part of their impact through the St. John Bosco Children's Center.”

St. John Bosco Children's Center is one of only two providers in Southern Illinois that is deemed a "severe level" provider for children who have experienced profound trauma. It is the only facility in Southern Illinois that provides residential behavioral health treatment to children 12 and younger, as well as girls with severe behavioral health needs. The Children's Center is nearing completion of a renovation which will allow them to serve more children and will address the shortage of youth residential treatment facilities in Illinois.

About Caritas Family Solutions:

Founded in 1947, Caritas Family Solutions strengthens the social and emotional well-being of individuals and families in order to create healthy relationships, loving homes and strong communities. Caritas provides services across Southern Illinois from offices located in Belleville, Carterville, Mount Vernon, Olney, East Alton and Effingham. For additional information, visit www.caritasfamilysolutions.org.