

Gift helps create local Child Wellness center

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SPECIAL | HPE Theresa Johnson engages in play therapy — one of the many modalities used in child therapy at Family Services of the Piedmont.

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Theresa Johnson engages in play therapy — one of the many modalities used in child therapy at Family Service of the Piedmont

HIGH POINT — Family Service of the Piedmont will create the High Point Center for Child Wellness through a \$1million gift from Earl and Kitty Congdon.

Projected to open in the summer, the center will combine psychiatric, therapeutic and case management services to establish and serve as a model for the state and country.



“To know that we are falling behind in caring for the mental health of children is an eye opener,” Earl Congdon said. “Our family believes in the city of High Point and cares deeply for the state of North Carolina. Supporting the creation of the High Point Center for Child Wellness is a wonderful chance for us to combat these trends and make a substantial and long-term difference in the lives of young people.”

In addition to the Congdon’s gift, the Foundation for Healthy High Point has contributed \$500,000 to the project.

“The center will be obvious and visible for children to come and take care of all their mental health needs,” said

Theresa Johnson, director of family counseling for Family Service of the Piedmont. “Mental health concerns identified early will improve outcomes for children both academically and socially. The setting proposed removes the stigma and gives a place for children to be taken care of where they are the center of the experience. Our goal is to level the playing field for all children.”

Dr. Jason E. Jones recently joined Family Service of the Piedmont and will serve as medical director for the center. As a child and adolescent psychiatrist, Jones specializes in the evaluation and management of psychiatric problems in youth.

The need for such a center, and replicable model of service delivery, cannot be overstated, organizers say. One of every seven American children is living with an already-diagnosed mental illness, according to a study published this month. Almost half, 49.4 percent, are not receiving the needed treatment or counseling. Even worse, North Carolina was ranked last of any state with a staggering 72.2 percent of children going without proper treatment. The advocacy group N.C. Child and the N.C. Institute of Medicine released a report last week that showed adolescent suicides in North Carolina have doubled over the past decade.

“The High Point Center for Child Wellness will fill an identified service gap in the High Point and Guilford County communities for lower-income families,” said Family Service of the Piedmont President and CEO Tom Campbell. “Currently, no clinics dedicated to serving this population provide psychiatric care exclusively to children.”

The High Point Center for Child Wellness will target children of low socioeconomic status who are uninsured or covered by Medicaid. Currently, no clinics dedicated to serving the Medicaid/state funded population provide psychiatric care exclusively to children.

“We are so appreciative to Earl and Kitty Congdon for their visionary leadership for Family Service of the Piedmont and for High Point,” said Jody Susong, chief advancement officer with Family Service of the Piedmont. “They continue to be pillars in the community and make a difference in the lives of children and families every day.”

