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Blount County Children's Advocacy Center



Contact Information

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The Story of New Hope

New Hope – Blount County Children's Advocacy Center formed as a result of the 1985 Tennessee Sexual Abuse Law, which mandated that the district attorney, Department of Children's Services, law enforcement, medical personnel, and mental health professionals work together in the intervention, investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases, and to provide counseling to assist the child victim overcome the trauma of the abuse.

The New Hope Task Force, comprised of local professionals and community volunteers, recognized that children were often re-traumatized by the very system designated to help them. In 2000, the Task Force set out to create a child-friendly, home-like setting based on the national model of Children's Advocacy Centers located in Huntsville, Alabama. Like the national model, our Center is a private not-for-profit agency that facilitates the teamwork essential for effective intervention and healing.

Since opening our doors in 2003 New Hope has continued to grow and expand services. We provide forensic interviews, advocacy, therapy, forensic medical exams, and prevention education. All our services are provided to children and families at no cost to them as well as free Stewards of Children child sexual abuse prevention education to all adults in Blount County. Over the last 14 years we have assisted over 5,000 children and their protective family members. Our mission to restore hope to abused and traumatized children and their families continues as we see the need for services grow and change.

Over the last year we have expanded both our therapy and advocacy programs. The therapy team has moved to a rental property down the street and also added Sensory Motor Arousal Regulation Treatment (SMART) to their treatment modalities. This modality assists children with sensory motor issues so that they can learn how to self-regulate and work through their emotional trauma.

Although our current location has served us well for many years, we are in need of a larger space to house our entire team under one roof. Our goal is to continue to provide a location that is child- friendly that allows children, families, and staff to work together for the benefit of the healing process.

One Story. One Time. One Place.

Tabitha Damron, Executive Director

Tabitha, a native of Blount County, has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Maryville College, a Master of Science in Social Work from the University of Tennessee, and has received a certificate of completion from the Consortium for Social Enterprise Effectiveness Certification program through the Haslam College of Business.. As the Executive Director of New Hope, she oversees operations and programs implemented at New Hope and works to ensure quality services and access for children in the community.

Tabitha has been with New Hope for over a decade. She began as Clinical Director, working with sexually abused children and has received extensive training in the area of sexual abuse and trauma. Tabitha has provided individual counseling and has worked with parents on how to understand and cope with their child's behaviors.

Tabitha is a member of the Child Protective Investigative Team and provides consultation on cases reviewed by the team and also coordinates the Child Protective Investigative Management Team, working in collaboration with leaders from other Child Protective Agencies. She also represents New Hope on the Sexual Assault Review Team and Child Fatality Review.

Contact Tabitha at tdamron@blountkids.org

Renee Poole, Development Director

Renee received a Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Family Sciences at Oregon State University. Fueled by her passion for non profit work, Renee has spent the last 7 years engaging local communities within Oregon and Tennessee to provide for families in need. She has worked in many different roles at child advocacy centers including prevention, education, community outreach, advocacy, and fundraising. As Development Director, Renee is excited to use her experience to develop and sustain good relationships with the community and our generous donors.

Contact Renee at rpoole@blountkids.org

Danielle Reggio, Office Administrator

Danielle is a 2002 Maryville College graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies and a minor in business and sociology. As the newest team member at New Hope she brings with her over 10 years of experience as an office administrator and a passion for non-profit work. She has volunteered at Trinity Dental Clinic in various capacities for 5 years including serving on their Board of Directors. Danielle is excited to share her passion, experience, and knowledge in an effort to assist New Hope and it's mission.

Contact Danielle at dreggio@blountkids.org

Christina Copland, Forensic Interviewer

Christina received a BS Ed. from Ashland University in Ohio, a MS Ed. at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and her Paralegal Studies Certificate from Roosevelt University in Chicago IL. Christina has worked with abused and neglected children since 1993 when she was a case manager/placement manager for medically fragile children at Maryville Academy's Emergency Shelter in Chicago IL. Christina left Maryville Academy in 1995 to become a mother and wife and reentered the field of abused and neglected children in 1998 as the first ever hired Forensic Interviewer at Child Network in Kankakee IL. During her time in IL, Christina was a member of the original faculty of Finding Words Illinois that trained other professionals in Forensic Interviewing until leaving IL in 2007 to come to Blount County and continue interviewing children regarding allegations of abuse or neglect at New Hope.

When allegations of severe child abuse are received, the Forensic Interviewer is the first person of the Child Protection Investigation Team to talk with alleged victims regarding the details of the allegations that have been reported. Christina has been cross-trained in RATAC, NCA and the Childhood Trust Forensic Interviewing Protocols and she utilizes these methods to conduct developmentally appropriate, neutral, fact finding interviews with children in a child friendly setting that are legal defensible in a court of law. Appointments for forensic interviews are accepted only from investigators/detectives assigned to a case after an official report of alleged abuse or neglect has been received by the Department of Children's Services or law enforcement agency.

Contact Tina at ccopland@blountkids.org

Diane Darby, LCSW, Clinical Director

Diane has been a part of the New Hope staff since August 2010.

Diane provides an integrative treatment approach and is trained in the following trauma modalities; Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TFCBT), EMDR, Theraplay, mindfulness, and the Attachment Regulation & Self Competency model (ARC). The New Hope therapy team will be adding SMART certification to their list in February 2016. Individual therapy is provided to children who have experienced trauma and their non offending caregivers.

As Clinical Director of the Center, Diane provides the therapists at New Hope with supervision and peer consultation. Diane is involved in the community by providing groups within the schools when requested and by serving as a member of the Blount County's foster care review board and CPIT.

Contact Diane at ddarby@blountkids.org

Shannon Follet, MA, Therapist

Shannon is a Master's Level, National Certified Counselor with 9 years of clinical experience working primarily with children that have been sexually abused. Prior to employment with New Hope, BCCAC she worked with the children's advocacy center model at Campbell County Children's Center, participating on the child protective investigative team and on the child fatality review board. Shannon has been trained in the Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy model and Play Therapy.

Contact Shannon at sfollet@blountkids.org

Becki Garland, LPC, Therapist

Becki is a Licensed Professional Counselor with 30 years of experience working with children and adults that have been sexually abused and assaulted. She has unique experience working with individuals and groups that have experienced trauma. She is certified in EMDR, Attachment Regulation & Self Competency (ARC), Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TFCBT), CISTD, and SMART (in February of 2016).

She is a part time contract therapist with New Hope. She is here 3 days a week seeing children and families.

Contact Becki at bgarland@blountkids.org

Heather Cupp, LMSW, Therapist

Heather received her Master's in Social Work from the University of Tennessee with a Graduate Certificate in the Treatment of Trauma. She has received extensive training in trauma (acute, complex, and developmental), early childhood development, and early childhood mental health. The majority of Heather's clinical experience has been working with at risk families and children who have experienced maltreatment and/or severe abuse. Prior to working at BCCAC, Heather was employed at Kid's First CAC of the 9th Judicial District participating on the child protective investigative team and on the child fatality review board. Heather has been trained in Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), Attachment, Self-Regulation and Competency Framework (ARC), and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy..

Contact Heather at hcupp@blountkids.org

Challye Hays, Child & Family Advocate

Challye, a Maryville native, received a Bachelor of Science in Human Services from East Tennessee State University. Before working at New Hope, Challye was a case manager for children and youth at Mental Health Cooperative of Nashville, TN. Working to improve the lives of young people has always been a passion of Challye's, where even as a college student Challye took part in several child-centered mission trips and spent two summers serving at-risk children with Project Transformation in the Antioch area of Nashville. Challye is a Child and Family Advocate at New Hope. As an Advocate, Challye spends her time engaging with families, connecting them to needed resources in the community, and working side by side with co-workers and other community agencies to best serve the needs of this very important population in Blount County.

Contact Challye at chays@blountkids.org

Brooke Whitehead, Child & Family Advocate

Brooke received a Bachelor of Science from Bryan College in Dayton, Tennessee. Brooke was a case manager for the State of Tennessee, working in both the Department of Children's Services and Department of Human Services for fifteen years. She left the State to work as a Prevention Specialist at Prevent Child Abuse Tennessee. Duties entailed teaching Nurturing Parent classes and facilitating Stewards of Children sex abuse prevention program.

Brooke has a passion for helping families provide a safe and nurturing environment for children to grow. As a Child & Family Advocate at New Hope, and spends time helping parents find community agencies who can ease the burden of trauma. Her experience with families in crisis can help serve this vulnerable population in Blount County by helping them to feel supported and heard.

Contact Brooke at bwhitehead@blountkids.org

Becky Rials, Prevention Coordinator

Becky was born and raised in York, PA and graduated from York College with a BS in Health Records Administration then becoming a Registered Health Information Administrator. Becky and her husband, Tim, moved from San Francisco, CA to Pineville, LA and then to Maryville in 2001. Becky served on the New Hope board for 8 years with 2 of them as president and 2 of them as past president. After coming off the board, Becky chose to stay with New Hope as a front desk volunteer. Becky and Tim have one daughter, Hannah, who is a senior at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga and who has volunteered for New Hope for a number of years. As the Prevention Coordinator for New Hope, she strives to educate, along with her team of facilitators, Blount County adults on how to prevent, recognize and respond appropriately to child sexual abuse. Becky networks with local organizations and community members that could benefit from the Stewards of Children training program. The goal is to reach the tipping point of 5% of the Blount County adult population to affect a change.

Contact Becky at brials@blountkids.org for more information on how to obtain this free training.

2016 Highlights



Pinwheels for Prevention
in honor of Child Abuse
Prevention Month

Hannah Rials shows off
one of New Hope's
holiday ornaments



Hops for Hope 2016

Attendees enjoying a pint with the
guys of Calkiller Brewing Company.



Bacon at the Bear 2016

Enjoying the lovely Dancing Bear
Lodge and Appalachian Bistro
while sampling some amazing
food and bourbon.



My Perspective: If Hallowed Halls Could Speak



by: Hannah Rials

It's a beautiful day, not a cloud in the sky. The wind is whistling in the branches of my trees, and the sun is shining down on my blooming flowers. There's a child walking up my stone path, looking up at me with big, wet eyes. A woman stands behind her, a hand on her shoulder, and urges her up to my front door. I feel her tremors through the boards in my floor. They resonate in the walls.

Raeann rushes to meet them, her warm, smiling face serving as a moment of reprieve to the child's terror. But then she remembers that she's here, with me. I must seem like a scary place. But Raeann is calming, reassuring. She leads our visitor into my playroom, filled with woodland critters. The girl's eyes are wide as she chews her lip, staring around at the toys. When she chooses to sit at the desk, I wait to see which color crayon she'll pick. They always go for their favorite color first, and I always remember.

The girl doesn't notice the Child Protective Service worker and the detective that slip into the closet-like room, preparing to observe her interview. Ms. Tina comes down the stairs, and the loud groans of the wood signal the girl that someone's coming. She's in good hands; she just doesn't realize it yet. I expect this next part—she doesn't want to leave. She's not done drawing her sunflower...she has to finish drawing her sunflower. That's the thing with the playroom—it's just a way station, and the kids don't realize that they'll have to leave it sooner rather than later. I want to tell her that everything's going to be alright. Maybe she'll believe me. Eventually, she sets her purple crayon on the desk and follows Ms. Tina into the interview room. This is the hardest part; if she can just make it through this, her journey of healing can begin. Over the past thirteen years, I've heard thousands of children's stories. Just this year, I have heard 298 stories. The calendar on my wall tells me that we're barely over halfway through the year, and that just makes me sad.

The interview is hard; this girl's been through a lot, but unfortunately, it's nothing I haven't heard before. She doesn't trust Ms. Tina easily, but when she does, the truth comes out. And as she speaks, my floor, my walls, my ceiling, we absorb the pain. You all might wonder why I've started to look so old. Well, after thirteen years of absorbing thousands of stories filled with pain...that starts to take its toll.

Her tears stain the pillows on my couch, her words seeping into my memory. But I feel the weight that releases from her chest. It floats through my walls and disappears into the air. It's just a small piece of that pain. It'll take awhile for the pain to go away, and she might always have phantom pain. But for now, in this moment, that first little piece of fear has been taken away. Thank you, Tina.

On her way out, Raeann helps her choose a stuffed animal. Her eyes, puffy and red, focus on the shelves filled with a variety of animals until she stops. A small hand reaches out for a kangaroo and pulls it to her chest in a rush. No one sees my smile at her choice.

Her time with us is not over. She'll become familiar with Raeann's smile, and soon, she'll meet one of our therapists, and together, they will work through all of the trauma, the pain, the tears, and the nightmares. They will rid her mind of dark thoughts, of demeaning words, of the phantom pain. In my walls, she will find safety, healing, courage, love, friendship, and most importantly hope. She has hope for a bright future. It is her choice, and we will do whatever we can to help her.

As she walks out my front door, gripping the kangaroo as if her life depends on it, she turns around, looking back into my halls. I feel her trust, and I want to tell her that I heard her. Her story matters. I'll always remember her. And now, with that kangaroo in hand, she's taking her first steps forward into her new life, filled with hope.

I am New Hope. I'm the house on the corner. I'm the one place where thousands of one stories are told one time. I am safety, healing, courage, memory, openness, humility, faith. I am history, and I will forever hold the stories of the abused children in my hallowed halls.