



## For Immediate Release

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## Children's Healing Center Finds New Home in West Michigan

*Nonprofit to move to larger facility in Grand Rapids to continue bringing Good.  
Clean. Fun.® to kids with weakened immune systems*

**Grand Rapids, Michigan, Aug. 29, 2023** – The Children's Healing Center is moving to a new facility in Grand Rapids to bring the healing power of play to even more medically complex children.

The move will enable the Center to meet the needs of its growing member base, who rely on the Center as a safe place for socialization and fun. Families who use the Center have at least one qualifying child who is immune compromised, which often limits them from visiting public places for fear of getting sick.

After an intentional search for an ideal location and with financial support from the state of Michigan, the Center purchased a building from Calvin University. Currently known as the Youngsma Center, the facility is located at 1580 E Beltline Ave SE alongside Calvin's nature preserve.

"We're delighted to take the healing power of play to a new, larger home in West Michigan that will allow us to better serve our members," founder and CEO Amanda Barbour said. "When we opened the doors to our first physical location in 2015, we knew it likely wouldn't be our last.

"We have experienced tremendous growth over the past eight years and are incredibly grateful to our partners at St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Parish and School for helping us with our first home. As we embark on this next chapter, we're looking forward to providing even more Good. Clean. Fun.® to our West Michigan members in a new space designed just for them."

The Center has seen its members quadruple in the past three years, resulting in waitlists for programs. The current space has other logistical challenges, including accessibility limitations, circulation issues, insufficient programming rooms and inadequate on-site parking. The new location will be specifically designed to eliminate these challenges.

The building requires extensive renovations to match the high-quality and hospital-grade environment of the current facility. Work is expected to get underway this fall, with a grand opening for Center members planned for the fourth quarter of 2024. Erhardt Construction is serving as the project's construction manager and Diekema Hamann as the architect and engineer.

To make the new space possible, the Center has embarked on an \$8.5 million fundraising campaign called “A Million Minutes More.” Currently, more than half the funds have been raised, with additional opportunities to contribute available.

Designs for the space include:

- A **half gym** that will provide a flexible space for fitness and group classes, sports activities and a variety of other programs while ensuring all members can play more freely.
- The addition of an **entry and intake area** to provide adequate room for health screenings for multiple families at a time and ample room to store belongings.
- A **state-of-the art mechanical room**, similar to one in the Center’s current space, that will house a premium HVAC unit, water filtration system and other equipment needed to ensure the integrity of the Center’s super-clean environment.
- An **expanded Exploratory Play** room that will feature a larger area to support exploration and play-based learning, including an educational environment for the Center’s Little Tots University Preschool and areas for creativity and imagination.
- A **dedicated art and snack room** for the Little Tots University, which will have appropriately sized tables and chairs so all can easily participate.
- A **dedicated space for teens and young adults** that will provide room for group activities and games.
- **Community spaces** that will be available for parents, including a café, lounge and counseling room. The areas will be ideal for catching up or relaxing as well as provide respite and a supportive environment that encourages mental wellness.

The Center works to improve health outcomes for children with compromised immune systems by focusing on the social determinants of health and the effects of social isolation and loneliness. By providing community and socialization programs, the Center relieves stress on local health care systems and significantly improves the mental health of member families. Investing in this new, expanded facility will enable the Center to better serve its members and continue to improve health outcomes.

The Center recently announced it would build a [second location](#) in Ypsilanti Township, with an expected open date in summer 2024.

There are still opportunities for leadership and community-supported gifts. If you are interested in giving, please contact Melissa Block at [mblock@childrenshealingcenter.org](mailto:mblock@childrenshealingcenter.org).

More information about the project can be found [here](#).

### **About Children’s Healing Center**

Opening its doors in September 2015, the Children’s Healing Center is the first year-round recreation center in the nation for children with weak immune systems. The Center, with locations in Grand Rapids and Ypsilanti Township, offers a safe, clean and interactive place for children ages 0 to 26 to come play and socialize. For more information, visit [childrenshealing.org](http://childrenshealing.org).

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