



For Immediate Release

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Children's Healing Center Opens in Southeast Michigan

Recreation Facility for Kids with Weakened Immune Systems and Their Families Provides Good. Clean. Fun. in Ypsilanti Township

Ypsilanti Township, Michigan, June 24, 2024 – The Children's Healing Center will officially open its doors in Southeast Michigan on July 8, offering children with weakened immune systems and their families a safe and clean place to play.

Located at 7400 Kalitta Court, the facility is the Children's Healing Center's second location after first opening its doors in Grand Rapids in 2015. The new state-of-the-art 11,000-square-foot facility features a hospital-grade environment where members can engage in a diverse range of innovative programming free of charge.

The community is invited to attend the grand opening on June 24 from 3-6 p.m. with remarks taking place at 3:15 and a playful ribbon cutting to follow.

"It has always been our goal to open a second location of the Children's Healing Center," founder and CEO Amanda Barbour said. "The kids, young adults and families who rely on us have very few options for social interaction, so we provide an invaluable outlet to build friendships and fight the effects of isolation and loneliness.

"We're beyond excited to expand our proven model that harnesses the healing power of play – and its many benefits – even further with this new location. We know there will be countless hours of play ahead and we are ready to provide Good. Clean. Fun. to Southeast Michigan."

The Children's Healing Center is a first-of-its-kind year-round recreational center for kids aged 0-26 with weakened immune systems and their families that provides opportunities for play, programming, education and socialization. Center members and their families must isolate from the world to prevent from getting sick so social interactions are rare without a resource like the Center.

Qualifying families typically have a child with cancer, an autoimmune disorder, organ transplant, congenital heart defect, sickle cell disease or other medically complex condition that leaves them at greater risk for infection. Siblings are invited and encouraged to participate in all programming, with the Center also holding regular programs designed exclusively for parents and caregivers.

The Southeast Center was built from the ground up and made possible by broad backing from the Southeast Michigan community, including \$4.5 million in private and foundation donations and a \$2 million grant from the state of Michigan.

“The support we have received is a testament to the generous spirit of this community, and we are honored these organizations and individuals recognize the value we bring to our members,” Barbour said. “The families who rely on us as a social outlet are often already burdened with significant medical bills, so it’s critical we remain a free resource to them. It’s the generosity of the community that makes play possible at the Center, and we thank everyone who has contributed to this campaign for supporting not only us but also the families we serve.”

The campaign’s success was spearheaded by a \$1.25 million matching gift from The Jones Family Foundation, which supports nonprofits addressing the needs of children in Southeast Michigan, among other initiatives.

“The Children’s Healing Center’s focus on the entire family through innovative programming was particularly interesting to us,” Wayne Jones at Jones Family Foundation said. “We are honored to support the Center as it breaks down the barriers of isolation for its members. We look forward to seeing how this unique resource makes longstanding and positive improvements in our community.”

The new location has different areas for children and families to use, including:

- **Exploratory Play:** Space that supports exploration and play-based learning, including an educational environment for the Center’s Little Tots University Preschool and areas for creativity and imagination.
- **Active Fitness:** Space that encourages kids to get moving and release energy, featuring a space to run, jump and play. It will also include flexible configurations for group games, fitness classes, yoga, sports, dance and other activities.
- **Teen & AYA:** Space for teens and young adults to call their own, designed to encourage group activities and games, build community and stimulate conversation.
- **Caregiver Lounge:** Space for caregivers to connect and share with one another, with flexible seating and a designated work area.
- **Multipurpose Room:** A versatile room that offers space for large group programs, talent shows, movie nights, culinary programs, seminars and more.
- **Art Room:** A hands-on area that enables children to be messy and creative as they work on individual and group art and educational projects. The environment will be designed to encourage exploration, ideation and learning.

More than one-quarter of the Center’s operating budget will be dedicated to maintaining a super-clean space, which features:

- Total absence of carpet, fabric or other materials that harbor germs; vinyl and other easily cleanable materials are used throughout the Center.
- Use of microbial-resistant surfaces amenable to frequent disinfection.
- A designated HEPA air filtration system and positive pressurization to maintain air quality.
- Use of filtered tap water along with state-of-the-art technology to ensure there is no standing water.

“One crucial aspect of caring for children with serious conditions is how to support their social and emotional healing, which is where the Children’s Healing Center shines,” said Dr. D’Anna Saul, who serves as the Center’s Southeast medical advisor and as a hospitalist and pediatric palliative care physician at C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital. “The Center delivers a key component of holistic healthcare by providing a safe space where children and families coping with serious illness can be vulnerable, ask for and receive support and find a community of others who understand their experience.”

The Children's Healing Center is the vision of Barbour, who was diagnosed with stage 4 Hodgkin's lymphoma just shy of turning 22. She immediately began treatment at Helen DeVos Children's Hospital in Grand Rapids, where her budding career in architecture and post-college social life were replaced with doctor appointments, surgeries and chemotherapy.

Unable to interact with friends and loved ones, Barbour felt isolated and lonely. During her weeks at the hospital, she met kids fighting for their lives who, like herself, were unable to enjoy the simple things in life – dinner at a restaurant, a birthday party with friends – without worrying about getting sick. Even as she struggled with her own health issues, Barbour dreamed of a place where these kids could go and just be kids.

After successfully battling her cancer, Barbour continued her career as an architect, but the seeds of the Children's Healing Center were planted. After five years of gathering community support – and maintaining a full-time job – Barbour was able to finally launch the Center and has since led as its executive director and, more recently, CEO.

The new location will be led by Lorrie Beaumont, an accomplished leader in education with a specialty in child development. Most recently, she was chief learning officer at the Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum, where she worked at the intersection of development and education, managing major community partnerships, writing grants and overseeing the vision and direction of the education programs.

More information 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 weakened 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.

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