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KidsPeace Receives \$10,000 Grant to Help Opioid Epidemic's Innocent Victims: Foster Children

(DOYLESTOWN, PA) July 26, 2017 - KidsPeace has received a \$10,000 grant to develop resources to support foster parents in caring for the innocent victims of the opioid epidemic -- young children affected by the drug use of their biological parents.

The donation by Foundations Community Partnership of Bucks County will help fund efforts to research and create a clearinghouse of the most advanced resources available to address the specific challenges of foster children touched by addiction. KidsPeace Foster Care staff at its Doylestown office will lead the effort, calling on resources across the 135-year-old national organization to develop a local "center of excellence" for the care of these children.

"The national opioid epidemic is affecting all Americans, but some of its most heartbreakingly innocent victims are the children of parents who are addicted," said Ann McCauley, KidsPeace vice president of development. "For example, we're seeing infants coming into foster care who are themselves addicted because their mothers abused drugs during pregnancy. And a growing number of young children we see are suffering from neglect and trauma related directly to their parents' struggles with addiction."

Ron Bernstein, executive director of the Foundations Community Partnership, presented the donation during a ceremony at the Doylestown offices (*see photo below*), which included foster parents who are caring for infants affected by opioid use in their biological family. One of them, Heather Brandt of Bucks County, noted that both medical science and social services are still catching up to the realities of the epidemic of opioid addiction, which has made it challenging to care for her foster son.

"Since I brought him home at five days old, his diagnosis has changed several times because they're still learning about the effects of opioid exposure on a child's development, and so we've had to figure out mostly for ourselves what his issues are and what we need to do," she said. "I think this program will be so important to foster parents like us, who are looking for advice on where to find help for these kids."

Debby and Bob Nobel, who are caring for twin boys affected by substance abuse, agree that more support would make a big difference for foster parents. "It would help them attack the problem of figuring out where to go for information and what to do with it in caring for these children - something we had to go through on our own," Debby Nobel said.

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“Our foster parents are truly heroes for taking in children from families touched by addiction,” said Heather Moore, eastern Pennsylvania regional manager of KidsPeace Foster Care. “Now, thanks to the generosity of donors like Foundations Community Partnership, we’ll be able to give them the best and most up-to-date information and support for their incredible efforts to give these kids the best chance to grow and thrive in the future.”

McCauley said full development and implementation of the program is estimated at a total cost of \$25,000, and KidsPeace is pursuing additional donations for the effort. For information on supporting this effort and KidsPeace’s other programs, visit www.kidspeace.org/donate.

Foundations Community Partnership is a philanthropic grant-making foundation supporting the behavioral health and human service needs of children and young adults in Bucks County. Foundations Community Partnership provides grants and technical assistance to non-profit organizations, awards scholarships to Bucks County high school seniors, subsidizes service learning internships for college students, underwrites community education programs and supports behavioral health education and research. For more information, visit www.fcpartnership.org.

For 135 years, KidsPeace has been building on its expertise to give hope, help and healing to children, families and communities throughout the United States. Through its comprehensive range of residential treatment programs; accredited educational services; unique psychiatric hospital and foster care and community-based programs, KidsPeace is dedicated to helping people connect, transform and overcome their challenges to ensure a stable future, transition to adulthood and gain independence. Since its doors opened in 1882, more than 200,000 children have participated in one of the multitude of programs KidsPeace offers.

For additional resources or more information on how to get involved, become a foster parent or make a donation, please visit www.kidspeace.org. Follow us at www.facebook.com/kidspeace.org or on Twitter @KidsPeace.

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CAPTION: Foundations Community Partnership Executive Director Ron Bernstein presents the \$10,000 donation to Judi Buttala of the KidsPeace Doylestown Board of Associates at a ceremony July 19, 2017. From left to right: Heather Moore, Eastern Pennsylvania regional manager, KidsPeace Foster Care; foster parents Bob and Debby Nobel; Judi Buttala; Ron Bernstein; foster parent Heather Brandt; Corl Ruskowski, program manager, KidsPeace Doylestown Foster Care.