



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Struggling Children Get help from Gillis and Build-A-Bear's Bear Hugs Foundation

The mission of the Build-A-Bear Workshop Bear Hugs Foundation is to make life more bearable for children, families and pets in need of the kindness of others. Grants support the health and wellness of children and families, the welfare of animals and the promotion of literacy and education for all.

Recently Hannah, a child from one of our family programs witnessed her parents be forcibly restrained and taken away by the police. At three years old it was impossible for the child to understand why her parents were arrested. All she could understand was that her mother was screaming and being held down on the ground. One can hardly imagine the mistrust of authority that this kind of trauma might engender in a child. For Hannah, whose life had already been one of acute deprivation, the traumatic effect was even worse. For a three year old, it is very difficult to express much verbally, and Hannah was behind in her verbal development to start with. Sometimes, verbal expression doesn't help children much anyway. Children work through crises and process the world through play. For this, and many other such situations, play therapy could mitigate many problems.

Play therapy is a developmentally-based and research-supported approach to helping children cope with the trauma they experience in the process of living their lives. In a one-on-one play therapy session, the child creates a world he can master, practices social skills, overcomes frightening feelings and symbolically triumphs over the traumas that have affected his sense of well-being.



Recently, Gillis Center, Kansas City's oldest child focused social services agency got a big boost to its play therapy program when the Build-A-Bear Workshop's Bear Hugs Foundation made a \$2,000 grant to support this vital service. Gillis provides play therapy in two ways. First, young children in Gillis's residential treatment program are kids who, due to the traumas caused by abuse or extreme neglect, have emotional disturbances so severe that they are often difficult to place in foster care. These boys work out some of their emotional problems with certified play therapists on Gillis's historic Wornall campus.

Gillis also provides play therapy off-campus to struggling children enrolled in Johnson County Head Start programs and occasionally to children in one of our four in-home family programs.

The Bear Hugs Foundation grant will help pay for therapy supplies and up-to-the-minute training in the best play therapy techniques for Gillis therapists.

More information is available at www.Gillis.org and www.buildabear.com/aboutus/community or by contacting Leslie Brock at 816.508.3556 or leslie.brock@gillis.org