

**From:** [Mary Starrett](#)  
**To:** [JWMED Exhibits](#)  
**Subject:** Relief Nurseries Change Lives  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 13, 2019 4:10:18 PM

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Dear Oregon Legislators:

Relief Nurseries across the state are preventing child abuse and neglect today and building a solid foundation for Oregon's families.

I wholeheartedly support the stabilization and expansion of the Relief Nursery model in the next biennium.

My name is Mary Starrett, I am a Yamhill County Commissioner, foster child mentor, involved in various child welfare initiatives and am the liaison to Yamhill County Health and Human Services.

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I have lived and worked in Yamhill County, Oregon for 25 years. Our county's Relief Nursery, *A Family Place (AFP)*, was formed in 2011, after a statewide reporting agency published data indicating that 226 of Yamhill County's children saw their lives forever altered by child abuse and neglect. Because studies show that as few as 1 in 10 child abuse cases are reported and confirmed, that number multiplies to nearly 2,500! Consequently, a group of concerned local community members decided they wanted to help and thanks to their keen vision and diligence in 2013, AFP Relief Nursery was born.

Through the Relief Nursery here in Yamhill County, we are privileged to support children and families who are in crisis.

When one of those children, Ava, arrived at A Family Place, she had witnessed things no child should ever see.

Her Mother, Sarah, had fled a violent family environment with her baby girl and Ava was struggling to find ways to deal with her fear and separation anxiety.

She was so stressed that she had resorted to tearing out her own baby fine hair. Our teacher interventionist staff worked gently, at Ava's pace, helping her find words to describe her feelings and modeling constructive ways to cope with her fear. Slowly, Ava's hair grew in and her courage grew stronger.

Today, Ava runs around the Relief Nursery classroom with her curly auburn hair in pigtails and a smile on her face. Through intensive classroom therapy, home visits, and community connections both she and her Mother are thriving. It's just one success story.

As you well know, this vitally important work would not be possible without the thoughtful support of policymakers like you. We are honored that you and so many others have chosen to invest your time and energy into taking a closer look at this time-tested model and, as always, remain dedicated to ensuring that Oregon's Relief Nursery network continues to produce a phenomenal and lasting return on the investments you and your colleagues are making in the building blocks of Oregon's future prosperity.

Thank you again, for demonstrating the foresight to learn more about how investing in the

important effort to keep our state's most vulnerable children safe today produces dividends for generations.

The Relief Nursery model works. I hope you'll support this successful endeavor.

Respectfully,

*Mary Starrett*

Yamhill County Commissioner

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