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Today is a remarkable day. I dare say that the odds were against us. Not only do we have the CEOs of the three healthcare systems in the same room – three competitors, that is – but they are coming together with a collaborative solution to one of our community's toughest issues. And not just any issue, but one that people, institutions and communities like to keep quiet. An issue that even in the year 2008 carries with it a stigma.

I find myself wondering, how can this be?

I don't know how this can be, but I do know this: Today is the day we move forward from problem to solution. We're going to change things, here in the Fox Valley, starting right here, right now.

Colleagues, friends...this community is being confronted with a serious crisis. Something I call the "Cancer of the Soul." According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness – NAMI, 10 to 20 percent of the youth in the Fox Valley meet the criteria for a mental health disorder. Yet, 80 percent of these children do not receive treatment.

To further confirm this crisis, the 2006 Fox Cities L.I.F.E. Study identified mental health as a recognized opportunity for improvement. And, it noted that untreated mental illness negatively impacts our community in numerous ways. The same report contends that there is a three-month wait for children who have public or no insurance for a first psychiatric appointment.

Again I ask, how can this be? And again, I don't know how this can be. But we're going to change it, here in the Valley, starting today.

Martin Luther King had a dream; well, I have one, too. And like Dr. King, my dream is about equality and a new paradigm. My dream is that, as of today, we start thinking about mental illness in a new context – for the sake of our kids, for the sake of our future.

In my dream, I stand before you – a group of 100 or so prominent people – and not flinch or think twice, wondering, worrying what label you would attach to any one of us who told our story of mental illness, because most of us have been impacted in some way.

My dream continues with stamping out the stigma – and signing on with support. As Dr. King re-defined greatness, he opened the door for us all to be great, all of us to take part, because in this new definition of "greatness through serving," it allows everyone to be great...because everyone can serve. We all have the opportunity to serve. And the journey is just beginning...we all need to stand up and fight this "Cancer of the Soul."

A *New York Times* article last year highlighted the challenge. Indeed it seems that among the areas that prove to be most resistant to fund-raising is that of mental health. Reasons

are many, but in part it's because many of the patients who use these services are not able to donate to these programs. And, approaching donors can be difficult because of the stigma associated with psychiatric care.

But we in this community – this remarkable Fox River Valley – we have never been the norm, as you well know. We are big-picture, long-term thinkers; we are tight-knit and collaborative; we are truly philanthropic and we want to do what is needed and will make a difference – no matter the stigma, and despite the challenge.

Knowing first-hand the challenges mental health issues bring, and knowing further that the affected population often is not in a position to have a strong voice, my grandmother, Ethel Keller, felt we must be proactive and be the catalysts for finding a solution for our kids. Somehow, she just knew.

It was back in 2003 – pre-LIFE study – when we approached Children's Hospital to help find a solution to this crisis. We knew we'd need the community with us to make a dent in an issue of this magnitude, and the challenge came in the form of a matching grant of \$625,000.

While I have a dream, I'm not a dreamer...indeed, I'm more of a realist, and I always say nothing amazing comes easy. This project was no exception. As we grappled with the issue and its potential solutions, it became clear that to make a true impact, the solution would likely require innovation and collaboration.

I'm thrilled to be here today to announce that we have just that – a remarkable and unique collaboration between three competitive health systems:

- Affinity Health System
- Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, and
- ThedaCare

They are all coming together to launch a new and innovative pediatric mental health clinic to help overcome this crisis. This clinic and program will ensure that more children in our community will get the care they need and deserve.

As for the challenge grant...well, the community certainly responded. Indeed, even those outside the community responded – with a \$500,000 vote of confidence from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation!

We are on our way... to begin taking care of the literally thousands of children and their families in this community who are affected by mental illness.

So as you can see... We ARE going to change things, here in the Valley, starting today. I am no longer wondering, "How can this be?" Quite simply, it IS. The dream is coming true and we at the J. J. Keller Foundation are so very proud to be part of it.

Jon Vice, President and CEO
Children's Hospital

- Children's medical needs are unique. Little bodies respond differently to illness and treatments. Children's Hospital of Wisconsin has been caring exclusively for children for more than 100 years.
- CHW is recognized as one of the leading pediatric health care centers in the United States. It is included on *Child* magazine's 10 Best Children's Hospitals list and is named by *U.S. News and World Report* as one of America's Best Children's Hospitals.
- Children's Hospital of Wisconsin-Fox Valley, located in Neenah, opened in 2001 to better serve children in northeastern Wisconsin. Children's Hospital-Fox Valley features a 22-bed neonatal intensive care unit and a 20-bed pediatric unit.
- In addition, Children's Hospital Clinics-Fox Valley offers child-friendly, close-to-home outpatient treatment options. Specialty clinics include asthma/allergy, cardiology, dermatology, endocrinology/diabetes, gastroenterology, genetics, surgery and urology services.
- Children's Hospital and Health System also serves Fox Valley children through other organizations, including the Child Advocacy Center and Children's Service Society of Wisconsin. The Child Advocacy Center works to identify and care for children who are suspected victims of abuse or neglect. Children's Service Society is the state's largest private, not-for-profit provider of child welfare services.
- Children's Hospital-Fox Valley is proud to partner with Affinity Health System and ThedaCare to offer pediatric behavioral health services in the Fox Valley. Our three healthcare systems are joining together for the first time ever to address a desperate need in the community.
- Providing these services is costly. The clinic is expected to generate a \$2.5 million operating loss over the next five years. However, the Fox Valley community has offered overwhelming financial support, for which we are very grateful. This positions the program to raise additional funds and expand the reach and scope of services in coming years.

Dr. John Toussaint, President and CEO
ThedaCare

The reasons we are here today are simple:

- According to the Department of Health & Family Services, one in five children and adolescents have a diagnosable mental health disorder.

- As many as two-thirds of these children NEVER receive treatment.
- There is a shortage of adolescent and child psychiatrists nationwide, and it is difficult in an area like the Fox Cities for any one of us as providers (ThedaCare, Affinity and Children's Hospital) to, on our own, recruit and retain an adequate number of child psychiatrists.
- Because of this, children and their families who do seek help must often wait weeks or months to access treatment, especially when that treatment requires intervention by a psychiatrist – a fact that became very clear in the 2006 Fox Cities LIFE study.
- We at ThedaCare and ThedaCare Behavioral Health are pleased to join with Affinity and Children's Hospital of Wisconsin to partner with our community on behalf of our children.
- On behalf of ThedaCare, I personally want to express our thanks and appreciation for the support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the JJ Keller Foundation. In particular, the energy and leadership of the JJ Keller Foundation in making this happen demonstrates their commitment to the quality of life of their employees and our entire community. All of us appreciate the good work that they do and we intend to live up to our part of the bargain by working together to make this effort a success on behalf of our children.

Dan Neufelder
 President and CEO
 Affinity Health System

- The burden of suffering by children with mental health needs and their families has created a health crisis in this country. The Coalition for Juvenile Justice estimates that 50 to 75 percent of teenagers in the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable mental disorder and these numbers continue to grow.
- And while the problem here in the Fox Valley is not as acute, we are seeing increased numbers of children with behavioral health issues. It's estimated that one in four Fox Valley families is affected by mental illness.
- Since 1991, the Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health programs of Affinity Health System has been providing a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to the assessment, initial treatment and disposition planning of children and adolescents with mental health and substance abuse issues.
- Right now, Affinity offers the only board-certified child psychiatrists in the Fox Cities and Oshkosh. Working with independent behavioral health specialists here in the Fox Cities, Affinity works with children who suffer from all types of

behavioral and emotional problems, from depression and suicidal tendencies to hyperactivity, anxiety and psychosis.

- But the number of children needing care and treatment is growing beyond what Affinity can handle. Over the past 10 years, the severity in mental illness among children is becoming more acute. Not only are we seeing more children with more acute mental illness, we have witnessed that their families are more ill, insurance is reimbursing less, and there are not enough behavioral health resources to cover the need both here and nationally.
- Fox Valley residents are fortunate that there are so many quality health care organizations here that are willing to work together to solve community issues. At Affinity, we work closely with independent behavioral health specialists. And we're committed to working with ThedaCare and Children's Hospital—Fox Valley to bring additional behavioral health services that will promote the care of our children.