

# Rell: \$1.5 million for children's center

---

By BEN LEVINE

blevine@thestamfordtimes.com

STAMFORD — On Thursday, May 15 Gov. M. Jodi Rell was in town baring good news for a local children's center.

Rell announced that she has authorized the State Bond Commission to release \$1.5 million to help expand the Child Guidance Center of Southern Connecticut at Greyrock Place. The commission's next meeting is May 30.

"This is just enormously important to us," said Sherry Perlstein, executive director of the center. "The need for children's health services has gone up here in southern Connecticut."

Founded in 1954, the Child Guidance Center is a professionally staffed outpatient mental health center for children and adolescents who experience psychological, behavioral, developmental, social or family problems. The center helps children and adolescents from Stamford, Darien, New Canaan and Greenwich.

We are dedicated to reducing emotional suffering and dysfunctional behavior and to helping each individual achieve optimal potential.

"Last year the agency served more than 2,100 children and families, almost twice as many as they helped 10 years ago, so it is clear the expansion is needed," Rell said in a statement. "I am pleased the state will be able to help."

Perlstein said the bonded \$1.5 million, along with the \$2 million the center has raised locally, will be used for renovation and construction costs planned for the facility. In addition, the center plans to update its phone and computer systems, among other needed improvements.

"We needed to expand our capacity so we could have more staff and programs," Perlstein said.

Earlier this year, the center was designated as an enhanced care clinic, Perlstein said, and under state guidelines the agency had to meet access requirements. For example, if the center receives a call that is considered an emergency, they must see that patient within two hours.

"Without the expansion, there is no way we could have meet the state requirements," Perlstein said.

She said the agency has set it's own standard of 30 minutes. It's these quicker response guidelines that make the state's gift even more gratifying, Perlstein said.

"The governor is under tremendous pressure to support so many worthy projects throughout the state.

The fact that she valued our need, is a wonderful thing," Perlstein said.

Perlstein also lauded the commitment of legislators on both sides of the aisle, saying it was impressive to see the willingness to set aside political differences and to get behind a project for children.

State Rep. Christel Truglia, D-145, who attended the May 15 announcement, was one of the center's strongest advocates.

"(The Center) is a vitally important community resource and we are immensely grateful for the services it has provided through the decades," Truglia said. "It has a long history of providing professional services to children from low income and uninsured families; people who often do not have the option of getting help from the private sector."

The center offers therapy for children, adolescents and families; an emergency mobile crisis response team; a sexual abuse response unit; services for crime victims; services for children with HIV; and other services including a range of prevention programs.

Perlstein said the center's goal is to raise another \$1 million to bring its total private donations to \$3 million. She said the expansion will go a long way for the region's children.

"We want to get kids (in need) in early, so we can get them back to functioning well and developing normally," she said.