



MAKING HISTORY IN ADA COUNTY

THE CHILDREN'S HOME SOCIETY OF IDAHO  
2008

## Orphans were put on westbound trains as a solution to the nation's homeless

From New England, the South and east of the Mississippi the nation's orphans were put on westbound trains as a solution to the nation's homeless. The abused often ran away from home, forced to live by their wits.

"And many of the kids came out west and found homes to live in," said Kara Craig Chief Executive Officer of the Children's Home on Warm Springs Avenue in Boise. "But many more were homeless. If the kids got in trouble with the law they were sent to Saint Anthony, but the good kids had no where to go."

The answer to this heart-tugging problem came in the form of a letter. In the fall of 1907 the Reverend O.P. Christian, of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, wrote a letter to Idaho's Governor, F.R. Gooding. He stated that he was authorized by the National Children's Home Finding Society to find a western state where they could establish a Home, and they were looking at Idaho if the state and people of Boise were willing to help out.

Governor Gooding knew a good thing when he saw it, this was an opportunity to make an impact on young lives; a way to get kids off the streets and into homes; he fired back an enthusiastic letter.

"Idaho has abundant provisions for the criminal child, but has neglected the class of children that has not yet become criminals. If you will



organize such a society here as they have in other states, I promise you my cooperation as the chief executive and my personal influence," wrote Gooding.

One hundred years ago the Reverend Christian came to Boise arriving in April of 1908 to get the project off the ground. Governor Gooding organized meetings with social workers, state and city leaders. In just a matter of days the Children's Home Finding and Aid Society was organized in Governor Gooding's Statehouse office on April 14, 1908. Four days later teacher Cynthia Mann donated a block of land on Warm Springs Avenue to the society. Three months later the Children's Home was opened on July 22, 1908. The first children came to the Home through Probate Court or by agreement with the kid's guardians.



## Local doctors and nurses donated services giving children free healthcare

In 1909 the Legislature saw the good and got on board. They passed legislation authorizing "any benevolent or charitable society, incorporated under the laws of Idaho, to receive, care for, and place out for adoption, homeless or neglected children." And from that day on, a large number of children found homes with good Idaho families. A school was established inside the Warm Springs Home by the Boise School District and was an active part of the public school system complete with district teachers. Local doctors and



## The Children's Home Society of Idaho 1908-2008

### 100 Years of Hope

For one-hundred years the Children's Home on Warm Springs Avenue has looked after the children of Idaho. In the early days Idaho was a tough place to live, especially for the homeless trying to make their way in the world. It was a time when mules and livestock had more protection under the law than children.



"Students come here for training in psychology or counseling with children and they work here while earning hours for licensure," explained Craig. "This year we expect to become the second APA accredited facility in the State of Idaho but the first in clinical study. We're excited because it gives us a draw, an even higher draw from college students across the United States." One hundred years later, in 2008 The Children's Home Society is doing business as the Warm Springs Counseling Center and Training Institute serving thousands of children each year. Though the nature of service provided to kids has changed, and continues to change, the mission remains the same to serve the children of Ada County and the state.

## "Students come here for training while earning hours for licensure"

continues to grow and prestigious Universities compete for student internships for their students. It has allowed The Children's Home Society to further its mission by providing services to children and families who cannot afford to pay for services at all.





nurses donated their services giving the children free healthcare in the Home. Soon health care was available to children whose parents had "met with misfortune" and couldn't afford a doctor.

Children's Home Finding and Aid Society was flourishing in Idaho and while the name was long and awkward the mission was simple, explained Craig. "The purpose of the society was to find homes, aid and help neglected children and we served the entire state of Idaho, all 44 counties from 1908 until 1914 when the North Idaho home was purchased in Lewiston; then we operated two homes under one corporate identity."

State Lawmakers took pride in their involvement and appropriated \$20,000 on the condition that the people of Idaho match the funding. The Board of Directors set out to raise the money and soon started building the Home on Cynthia Mann's donated property. The Building Committee was made up of Idaho's power elite names like C.W. Moore, Judge F.S. Dietrich and C.C. Anderson. The contract for the stone work of the building was awarded to the Kinney Brothers; and the carpentry work was headed by H.A. Larson, all of Boise. The plans were drawn up by famed Idaho architect Charles F. Hummel Sr. of Tourtellotte & Hummel.

### Thirty different organizations took part in a "monster parade..."

With much fanfare the Children's Home cornerstone was laid on May 14, 1908. The Masonic Lodge handled the dedication rites and the *Statesman* reported that the cornerstone was "laid with great ceremony." Thirty different organizations took part in a "monster parade all under the direction of Boise Mayor Harding who had three special cars waiting at the Idanha downtown to carry everyone to the far edge of town for the festivities. The dedication of the Home took place seven months later on December 28, 1910.

The building was modern and spectacular with walls of stately sandstone mined from Table Rock Quarry. The thick sandstone and deep set features kept the building cool in summer yet warm in winter. The kids slept in two large dormitory rooms on the second floor; one for the boys and the other the girls. There was also a wonderfully large, screened-in porch that often served as an outdoor sleeping room. An isolation room in the rear provided a place for the treatment of flu and colds. The grounds were large enough for a big shady playground. The Home was built for \$42,700 but was worth much more. Donations for the furnishings came from all over the state. The State of Idaho now had a state of the art care facility for children, one of the finest West of the Mississippi.

In November of 1908, the Society decided to address the North Idaho need for a home and established a branch of the Children's Home in Lewiston, appointing Reverend S.B. Chase as district superintendent. Four years later the Society purchased a large brick home on the east side of Lewiston, and the North Idaho Children's Home was up and running. The Impact of the Children's Home was swift and immediate. During the first two years of operation the staff cared for 326 children. Between 1910 and 1966, the number of children served reached into the tens of thousands. "We continued to operate as an orphanage here until 1966 when national legislation formed the foster care system and that legislation required states to independently take care of children," explained Craig. "So rather than referring children to institutional settings they felt children were better off placed in individual homes and the foster care system was formed." The Children's Home Society changed its name to the Warm Springs Center.

### "it was all about power and struggles so families really paid the price"

"You look back at the times, it was the '60s and a turbulent time with a lot of social unrest. It was a time of rebellion for kids; it was all about power and struggles so families really paid the price at that time, and our changes reflected the needs of the time." said Craig.

By 1970-71 the inside of the Home was remodeled, reducing capacity from over 100 children down to 37. The plans for the remodel job were completed by the grandson of the original architect of the Home, Charles F. Hummel.

Hummel modernized a building that had gone almost untouched for five and half decades, and with a changing society, the Home reinvented itself once again while maintaining its historic architectural integrity.



Up until 1975 the Home operated as a facility for "troubled youth" but with the popularity of foster care, the need for residential facilities fell off dramatically. The visionary Board could see the need for outpatient mental health facilities and reasoned that more children could be served. Once again the name was changed, this time to the Warm Springs Counseling Center.

### "We don't place a cap on the number of children we serve..."

Since its inception, the Warm Springs Counseling Center has always served as a safety net to those who need it most, they've provided mental health services to children and their families based on the family's ability to pay. "We don't place a cap on the number of low income children we serve and there are very few choices for children who don't have insurance. So the majority of our kids are low income. We serve about 81 percent low income families and children and the only way we're able to do that is through a subsidy program that we raise money for every year," said Craig.



In 1993 the Children's Home pioneered another innovative program that provides supervised training for interns in social work and counseling programs. Through the Warm Springs Training Institute a small group of interns take part in an intensive training program in the field of children's therapy and assessment. Since the time of its inception, the Training Institute has earned the respect of the clinical community. The reputation of this program

