

# Beating The Odds



## Brayden Mitchell, 2011 Festival of Trees Ambassador

FROM THE MINUTE HE WAS BORN, BRAYDEN MITCHELL HAS BEEN BEATING THE ODDS that have been stacked heavily against him.

In fact, when Brayden was born his loved ones were told they would be measuring his life in minutes, not years. He was born with a condition called arthrogryposis, a rare congenital disorder. Brayden's grandfather, Chuck, describes the condition in lay terms as "a restriction of the joints, where they won't extend fully. Brayden also was born with a severe curvature of the spine and club feet."

Doctors gave him 45 minutes to live. He is now 8.

When Brayden surprised the medical team by beating those odds, they told his mom Marcie, Chuck and his grandmother Bobbi he would need a respirator to aid his breathing "for a long time." He needed the machine all of three days.

"The doctor finally told me he was going to stop making predictions," Chuck says. "He said Brayden was making him look bad."

Today he is fitting right in with his second-grade classmates at Myrtle Creek School. Confined to a power wheelchair that Mercy Foundation purchased for him, Brayden can't play all the games his classmates do, but he is an active participant in his own way.

"He doesn't feel sorry for himself; he sits on the playground and watches his schoolmates play and has as much fun as they do," Chuck says.

Brayden started reading when he was 18 months old, and he has remarkable retention skills.

"He loves to read, and he'll read anything," Chuck says. "I gave him a telephone book once and he studied it and studied it. Then he put it down and got on the computer and reproduced the first two pages of it."

Brayden started making remarkable progress after attending Camp Attitude, a non-profit organization that serves families in the disability community. "Before he attended Camp Attitude, Brayden's speech was basically one word at a time. He'd say

'eat' or 'hungry.' But after that experience, for the first time started to express what was on his mind."

Not just in words, but in music. During a talent show at Camp Attitude, Brayden sat in front of a keyboard and performed a song he had written for the occasion. "Most kids will take their little hands and just pound on the keys," Chuck says. "But Brayden was able to widen his fingers and hit the keys with one hand then pick out notes with the other and play them together. He even named his song. It was called *Promise Me*."

Chuck has a hard time talking about the progress his grandson has made and the odds he has bucked without getting emotional. Who can blame him? He and his wife Bobbi have devoted much of the last eight years to caring for their grandson. That includes a 56-day stay at the Shriners' Hospital in Portland, where they rarely left his side.

There have been several trips to Portland since, and Mercy Foundation has been there to help frequently.

"Mercy Foundation has really helped us out when we haven't had the money to get up to Portland," Chuck says. "They have been very, very helpful. I don't know what we would have done without them."

Doctors told Chuck that the average life expectancy for a child with arthrogryposis is seven years. It's no surprise that he has beaten those odds, too.

"He's proved the medical community wrong again," Chuck says proudly.



Brayden  
Mitchell

# FESTIVAL



# OF TREES

# 2011 FESTIVAL *of* TREES

Seven Feathers Convention Center, Canyonville

Wednesday  
**Nov. 30**  
through  
Sunday  
**Dec. 4**



*Presented by:*

CATHOLIC HEALTH  
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## What Is The Festival Of Trees?

The Festival of Trees is a community event for Mercy Foundation's children's health care programs. It is one of the most beautiful collections of decorated Christmas trees you'll ever see.

Local designers donate their talents, and individuals as well as businesses donate funds that buy decorations and gifts for each tree. The 19 trees, one wreath, and two pieces of fine jewelry are on display Wednesday, November 30 - Sunday, December 4 at Seven Feathers Convention Center in Canyonville, Oregon. During a special gala celebration Friday night, the trees are auctioned off - decorations, gifts, and all.

**WEDNESDAY, NOV. 30**

## Silver Bell Luncheon and Fashion Show

10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. / \$40 per person

Silent & Live Auction

Tickets available at: Mercy Foundation 541-677-4818

Platinum Sponsors:  Christine M. Seals, MD, PC

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**WEDNESDAY, NOV. 30**

## Designers' Preview Party

5:30 - 7:30 p.m. / \$30 per person

Tickets available at: Mercy Foundation 541-677-4818


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**THURSDAY, DEC. 1**

## Senior Day 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Hosted by the Douglas County Senior Resource Coalition

Platinum Sponsor:  Gold Sponsors:

**FRIDAY, DEC. 2**

## Gala Evening, Auctions & Dance

Doors open at 5:30 p.m. / \$125 per person

Dance to the Moorea Drive band

Tickets available at: Mercy Foundation 541-677-4818

Brilliant Star Sponsor: 

**SATURDAY, DEC. 3**

## Santa's Safari Adventures

10 a.m. - Noon / \$5 per child (ages 3 - 9)

Tickets available at: Brooke Communications

Only 300 tickets available • Live animal show by Wildlife Safari  
Dental screening/sealants (first come first served)


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**SUNDAY, DEC. 4**

## Family Day

11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

\$1 per person or \$2.50 family

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## A Feast for Your Eyes

In its 18 years of existence, Mercy Foundation's annual Festival of Trees has added meaning to the holiday season and given hope to children throughout Douglas County. In addition to offering festivities for local families to enjoy, Festival of Trees provides funding for services which support Douglas County children, as well as local child service agencies. Please help us continue to serve the children of Douglas County. Your contribution can help them believe that dreams really can come true.

## EVENT SPONSORS

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# Honoring Our Foster Care Children

For the second year, Douglas County foster children will be the special guests of honor at a Christmas party planned during the Festival of Trees celebrations. The party, with the theme "Home for the Holidays," will be held Thursday, Dec. 1, from 5:30 to 7:30 pm at Seven Feathers Hotel and Casino Resort. Sponsored by Oregon Pacific Bank, KPIC 4, The Rotary Club and Brooke Communications.

Douglas County foster children hold a special place in the hearts of the many community providers who provide care for this vulnerable group. If it takes a village to raise a child, local foster children have a lot of people looking out for them, with services and support being provided by an array of dedicated organizations, including CASA, Douglas C.A.R.E.S., Douglas County Children's Services and Mercy Foundation.

Unfortunately, the need for such support is tremendous in Douglas County, where the growth rate for children needing foster care is amongst the highest in Oregon. This year an estimated 600 children will enter foster care locally. That is the highest number ever in Douglas County and an approximate 30 percent increase over last year.

In addition to foster care, *relative care* (foster parents who are relatives of the foster child such as a grandparent, aunt, sibling) also has grown.

This growth presents significant challenges to the foster care system and related organizations, says Susan Knight, director of CASA, an organization dedicated to serving children who are wards of the court.

"From CASA's perspective, the main challenges of the foster care system," she says, "are a shortage of foster homes, not enough support and services for foster parents and a shortage of community services. The last problem means that children in Douglas County stay in foster care longer than children in counties where community services are more abundant."

Jan Patton, director of the Foster Parent Association, says foster parents themselves face many challenges caring for children, and it takes a dedicated individual to take on the responsibility.

"Lots of the children coming in have some pretty special needs," she says. "First you have to figure out what their needs are and then what kind of help they will need to make progress. A lot of foster parents start this journey with no special training for the special needs the children have. We kind of learn as we go."

Patton says it can be a challenge to recruit people as foster parents because they may have heard negative stories about the experience. "We try to get positive information out about being a foster parent to encourage people to look into it, but it can be difficult."

"Home for the Holidays" will provide one opportunity to celebrate all the positives of the foster care system and the many Douglas County children who depend on it.

## Violence Prevention Initiative

Our community has been awarded a 2nd year, \$87,000 design grant to support a violence prevention initiative that establishes a community-based Child Abuse Prevention Coalition.

The grant is provided by the Mission and Ministry Fund of Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI), the national health care system that includes Mercy Medical Center and Mercy Foundation.

The Child Abuse Prevention Coalition serves Douglas County, but also contributes to CHIs' systemwide initiative to prevent violence in every community the health care system serves.

"Every child has the right to a life free from violence," says Kelly Morgan, Mercy's president and CEO. "However, we know that hundreds of children in our own community are victims of physical, sexual and emotional violence. This is why Mercy, CHI and our local partners in prevention have made violence prevention — including domestic violence, child and elder abuse, gun violence and school violence a priority.

Some projects already implemented have been the additional training of eight Sexual Abuse Nurse Examiners (SANE); renovation of one of Mercy Medical Center's exam rooms to be more child friendly; and the purchase of six additional cameras that will be used for forensic evidence collection for our communities' multi-disciplinary task force, to name a few.



## Friday Night Entertainment: Moorea Drive

Back by popular demand, musical entertainment will be provided by Roseburg band Moorea Drive, whose blend of rock and soul music is sure to keep the dance floor packed, beginning at 9 p.m.

Moorea Drive features a three-piece horn section and plays an infectious mix of classics from the 60s, 70s and 80s, as well as more contemporary tunes from the 90s on.

Aretha Franklin, James Brown, Sam and Dave, The Spencer Davis Group, The Rolling Stones and Bruce Springsteen are just a few of the artists whose hits Moorea Drive will interpret for your dancing enjoyment.

Moorea Drive is Diana Spielman, vocals; Lon Huckaby, trombone, congas, vocals and arrangements; Bob Desrochers, drums; Kent Rochester, bass guitar and vocals; Mark Wiley, guitar and vocals; Jason Palmer, keyboards and vocals; Jason Montgomery, trumpet, Craig Jackson, saxophone and Dick Baltus, guitar and vocals.

## Mercy Foundation's Children's Programs

Since its creation in 1973, Mercy Foundation has been committed to developing strong community partnerships with the hope of improving the health, well-being, and quality of life for families and children of Douglas County. Foundation funding helps develop programs, which will enrich the lives of our children today and into the future.

*Some of those programs are:*

### **The Children's HealthCare Fund:**

Created to meet the needs of children with limited or no financial resources. It provides and covers the expenses of special equipment, medications, travel and lodging to other medical facilities, and health-related dental work.

### **The Learning Child Project:**

Provides all of our Douglas County schools with supplies, shoes and hygiene products.

### **The Tree of Hope Fund:**

Provides financial assistance to Douglas County agencies offering outreach programs to enrich the health and well-being of children.

### **Healthy Kids Outreach Program (HKOP):**

This program is aimed at providing a health care delivery system right at our schools. It consists of two components: hygiene, nutrition, and prevention education as well as medical resources in directing students and their families to the appropriate level of care.

### **Wings of Hope:**

Provides children the opportunity to grieve the loss of a loved one in a healing, supportive and understanding environment while utilizing an integrated equine assisted learning program through Horse Play, Inc.

*For more information about these programs, or to request a grant application, please contact Mercy Foundation at (541) 677-4818 or [www.mercygiving.org](http://www.mercygiving.org).*

