MERIT IMPACT REPORT
HOW YOUR GENEROSITY CHANGES THE LIVES OF CHILDREN
DEAR FRIENDS OF MERIT,

The past year has been challenging in many ways for all of us, and that could not be more true for the MERIT team. We have felt the impact of recent changes in our world in both the gravity of cases and the new barriers we face for child abuse survivors. Even in the most challenging of times, our work has continued, and we appreciate the strength of your support as we fight to identify, intervene, and prevent child abuse. Your gifts and advocacy allow us to advance our mission of caring for our community’s most vulnerable population with the hope for a brighter future.

In the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought the severity of child abuse and neglect in our community to the forefront. When the stay-at-home order took effect in March, children were no longer visible to daycare providers and teachers who historically have been the largest source of referrals to DCFS. By April, we experienced an alarming 68% decrease in the number of children referred to MERIT as children sheltered in place, often with their suspected abusers. We proactively reached out to the communities and multi-disciplinary teams we serve to offer updates, guidance and medical recommendations on how to reach victims and expedite intervention and treatment. Since the state has lifted they stay-at-home order, our numbers have returned to historical, pre-COVID-19 levels; however, we have observed an increase in the severity of cases.
MERIT is committed to finding new and innovative ways to address today’s challenges and provide compassionate expert medical care for children and families as well as enhance community wide prevention initiatives to address the issues around child abuse and neglect. Thanks to the support of Club Blue of Rockford, we were able to expand our services to treat more children with the addition of a pediatric nurse practitioner, Heather Sharp, who has been an invaluable asset to our medical team. MERIT continues to work with regional program partners to address the many new requirements of the Sexual Assault Survivors Emergency Treatment Act (SASETA) legislation, ensuring that all pediatric sexual assault patients in our area will receive expert medical evaluations.

Although we have accomplished so much this year, the challenging work we do is difficult beyond words. We rely on this community and your support each day to ensure children have a fighting chance when faced with abuse. Our commitment is stronger than ever to provide evidenced-based, trauma-informed care to our children and families. We are humbled by your support and deeply appreciate your continued generosity. Having a community of support from friends like you is what keeps us moving forward and for that, we thank you.

Shannon Krueger MSN, CPNP, SANE-P
MERIT Director and Provider

Ray Davis, MD
MERIT Medical Director
LAST YEAR, YOUR GIFTS TO MERIT HELPED PROVIDE:

338 Exams including medical evaluations, assessments, diagnosis and treatment for referred children who are suspected to be victims of child abuse and neglect.

146 were physical abuse cases
169 were sexual abuse cases
21 were neglect cases
2 were multiple issues cases

BY GENDER
- 39% were male
- 61% were female

BY AGE
- 16% of children were 0-1 years old
- 4% were over 15 years old
- 19% of children were 6-9 years old
- 21% of children were 10-15 years old
- 40% of children were 1-5 years old
21 educational opportunities to medical students and undergraduate nursing students

108 prosecutorial case reviews

86 subpoenas in preparation to testify in court when required

10 administrative hearings to provide testimonies for Department of Child and Family Services

29 comprehensive consultations for cases referred that meet MERIT criteria

150 professionals and staff from child-facing partner organizations trained through MERIT’s educational offerings
WHY I GIVE TO MERIT

Recently, I was asked, “If you could donate $1 million to a local charity or cause, what would it be?” I reflected on the mission and impact of MERIT and confidently responded that this unique program fulfilled the values and characteristics I seek when considering a philanthropic contribution. MERIT is the only program in the area that provides specialized, pediatric expert medical exams in a child-friendly atmosphere to suspected victims of child abuse and neglect. The program serves over 300 children under the age of 18 each year. Every 10 seconds, a report of child abuse is made in our country. In Winnebago County four children are physically or sexually abused every day - one of the highest rates in Illinois.

A gift to MERIT helps build on the notable foundation already in place and assists in overcoming significant existing barriers that prevent suspected victims of child abuse and neglect from receiving expert and timely medical evaluations.

Because of the generational impact of sexual abuse and the debilitating consequences for childhood victims, the effect of strengthening this program would have a ripple affect now and in the futures. By appropriately addressing the trauma and risk they endure, we will interrupt the cycle of domestic violence and free victims to develop whole and healthy lifestyles in which they live, learn, work and play as valuable contributors to our community.

I am committed to being a partner with MERIT in this interruption and the creation of opportunities for victims to find wellbeing and wholeness in their lives.

LoRayne Logan
Founder and President of workplace Co-Founder, MERIT Friends Circle

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2019, there were 36,608 confirmed victims of child abuse and neglect in the State of Illinois - an average of 100 each day.

One-fourth of these instances occurred in Northern Illinois, including the counties served by MERIT.

Nearly 1,200 of these cases in our region were victims of sexual assault and less than 25% received an expert medical exam.
The University of Illinois College of Medicine is pleased to announce the recent creation of the **MERIT Children’s Healing Fund**, an endowment that will help safeguard the sustainability of the MERIT program in perpetuity. The MERIT Children’s Healing Fund also allows us to continue and enhance MERIT’s mission to ensure our community’s most vulnerable children receive the gold standard of medical care and are given a voice in the pursuit of justice. Growing the endowment over time will further help solidify a permanent financial foundation for the MERIT Program.

The MERIT Children’s Healing Fund was made possible by a philanthropic gift from the Willard J. & Alice C. Corbett Foundation of Rockford.

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**NEW MERIT AMBASSADORS GROUP LAUNCHES**

As a friend of the MERIT program, you can join the fight against child abuse by joining the **MERIT Friends Circle** – a strategic ambassadors group launched in 2020 to help advocate for the program’s mission while making a direct impact on the children served.

**As a member of the circle, your role would be to:**

- Help to disrupt the cycle of physical and sexual abuse of children by becoming an advocate for the expert medical evaluations and treatment provided by MERIT. Your commitment to ongoing education about MERIT services will give you confidence in your ability to speak about MERIT and serve as an important program advocate;
- Join other Circle members for periodic program briefings where MERIT providers and program partners will offer education around the issue of child abuse and neglect;
- Facilitate strategic introductions to others who may have interest in supporting the mission of MERIT and participating in the Friends Circle. This could be through small, targeted social gatherings; and
- Contribute to MERIT’s sustainability and success by making an annual, personal gift of financial support. Your gift, along with the generosity of others, will not only help us sustain MERIT services, but also further enhance the services we provide well into the future!

To learn more about joining the MERIT Friends Circle, or to make your commitment to join today, contact Laura Knight at (815) 395-5921 or lewilhe@uic.edu.
HONOR ROLL OF DONORS

TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS COLLEGE OF MEDICINE ROCKFORD’S MERIT PROGRAM
July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020

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The FVV Shop
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Dr. Andrew P. Geddes and Mrs. Laura Geddes
Gerry’s Pizza
An immeasurable THANK YOU to all who have supported the MERIT program. Your gifts directly benefit some of the most vulnerable children in our communities and has the power to truly impact their lives. Each individual, family or organization listed below has committed to disrupt the cycle of child abuse and neglect, and for that, you will always be a part of the College of Medicine Rockford and MERIT family.

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Giuseppi’s Pizza
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Golf Shack
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Dr. Zakera Nanabawa
The National Center for Rural Health Professions
Dr. Richard E. Nora and Mrs. Lucille A. Nora
Dr. Dennis G. Norem and Mrs. Julia A. Norem
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Orange Theory Fitness
OrthoIllinois
Oscar’s Pub and Grill
OSF Healthcare Saint Anthony Medical Center
Every effort has been made to publish an honor roll without errors or omissions. In the event an inadvertent mistake has been made, please contact Miranda Puskar at mirandap@uic.edu or (815) 395-5745 so that our records can be updated.

SPECIAL THANK YOU

A special thank you to all who have also donated in-kind items through the MERIT Amazon Wishlist. Your gifts do not go unnoticed and directly support the children of MERIT by bringing positivity into the midst of an otherwise uncomfortable experience. These donations are crucial to the work of MERIT and are deeply appreciated.
WAYS TO SUPPORT THE CHILDREN OF MERIT

DONATE
Because government grants do not typically cover all of the costs of providing the medical services children of MERIT need, gifts to the program help us to provide evaluations, treatment and advocacy services to any child in Northern Illinois who is suspected of being abused or neglected. You can make your one-time or reoccurring gift today by visiting go.uic.edu/RockfordGiving.

ADVOCATE
As a friend of the MERIT Program, you can personally make a positive difference in the lives of children who are victims of sexual abuse, physical abuse and neglect by joining the MERIT Friends Circle. In this vital role, you can help to disrupt the cycle of physical and sexual abuse of children by becoming an advocate for the expert medical evaluations and treatment provided by MERIT. Your commitment to ongoing education about MERIT services will give you confidence in your ability to speak about MERIT and serve as an important program advocate and strategic connector.

SUPPORT
The MERIT Amazon Wish List is a great way to directly help the children that we serve. Through the Amazon.com wish list, individuals can select and purchase items that will be delivered to MERIT and distributed directly to the children and families that need our support most. A link to the list can be found by visiting go.uic.edu/MERIT.

LEAVE A LEGACY
MERIT is continually strengthened by the generosity of our dedicated donors and friends. As you reflect on your own goals, we hope that you’ll also consider a planned gift to the University of Illinois Foundation ("UIF") to benefit MERIT through your will, living trust, or retirement plan. There are also ways to structure a gift to provide a lifetime income stream to yourself and/or a loved one while receiving an immediate income tax deduction. We’re happy to share customized illustrations for these types of arrangements at no cost or obligation.

For further information, or to talk about unique giving opportunities, please contact the University of Illinois College of Medicine’s Senior Director of Development, Laura Knight, MBA at (815) 395-5921 or lewilhe@uic.edu.