



The San Diego Center for Children is a local organization that has been the beneficiary of multiple grants from the Children's Health Foundation to empower their work supporting local youth. Photos courtesy of Children's Health Foundation

Children's Health Foundation is Growing Up

NONPROFITS: Org. Rebrands, Launches \$1M Grants Program

■ By MADISON GEERING

SAN DIEGO – One hundred and seventeen years ago, **Rest Haven Preventorium for Children** opened its doors as a healthcare facility for youth affected by tuberculosis.

Today, the organization has evolved into a foundation that addresses regional children's health challenges — and it just got a name to match that mission.

Now **Children's Health Foundation (CHF)**, the nonprofit is launching a \$1 million Signature Grants program, significantly expanding its community investment.

"Because our name started out as Rest Haven, a lot of people were not aware of us," CHF Board Chair **Christine Bryant Nelissen** said. "We've kept it very low key, and we decided that it's about time we evolve."

In 1953, proceeds from the sale of the preventorium established an endowment that has since supported delivering healthcare to children in the absence of other resources.

Earlier this year, CHF awarded over \$300,000 to local nonprofits through its Children's Impact Grants program. With the launch of the Signature Grants program, the organization is on track to distribute over \$1.3 million in 2026.

"I feel so fortunate because we're at a point right now where we can take the organization further. Our biggest goal is to position our organization for the next 100 years," Bryant Nelissen said. "As we have grown, we found that we have the capabilities to make even more of a significant impact."

New Identity, New Support

CHF generally distributes emergency grants, where social workers and other community members request funds to address the urgent needs of families and children.

An example would be if a family with a newborn baby needs the money to purchase a car seat to get home from the hospital, or if a family needs to purchase expensive adaptive equipment for their children.

Once a year, CHF also distributes about \$200,000 to \$300,000 through its Children's Impact Grants program to 15 to 30 organizations.

Through the new Signature Grants pro-

gram, CHF will distribute four grants of up to \$250,000 each to organizations in San Diego and Imperial Counties serving children. The application period for the program closed on Sept. 14 and recipients will be announced by the end of the year.

"We want to not just continue programs, but see how we can enhance programs," Bryant Nelissen said. "And help agencies that have not had the funding to look into more innovative approaches to their challenges."

The program will become an annual effort, Bryant Nelissen said.

"We're not guaranteeing that we're going to give away \$1 million every year — it depends on our financial position," Bryant Nelissen said. "But it is our goal to continue to do this. We want to make more of a significant impact."

Diversifying Organization

CHF's investment fund was started with the sale of its preventorium over 50 years ago.

Since then, the organization has also purchased investment real estate, including a commercial property in Coronado.

Recently, CHF joined **Catalyst of San Diego & Imperial Counties**.

"A lot of your major nonprofit organizations have joined Catalyst to share ideas and bring together a number of organizations to see how they can work together, like **Price Philanthropies** and **San Diego Foundation**," Bryant Nelissen said. "They call themselves a community of funders... We've been talking about that for a while, and this is part of our evolutionary process."

In an increasingly challenging nonprofit funding landscape, CHF is also focused on identifying more revenue-earning investments to support its efforts.

"I think one of the most prudent things you can do as a nonprofit or in any business is to look for diversification of where you get your money," Bryant Nelissen said. "Let's say that, for some reason, the market fails and our investments are not earning, then it's very important to know that you've got other funding sources." ■



Founded in 1909 and led by the vision of Florence "Ma" Mead, Children's Health Foundation began as a healthcare facility for children affected by tuberculosis.

SDBJ EXTRA:

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Children's Health Foundation



FOUNDED: 1909
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Cass Kaminetz
HEADQUARTERS: San Diego
BUSINESS: Nonprofit
EMPLOYEES: 1
REVENUE: \$1.8 million
WEBSITE: <https://chfsd.org/>
CONTACT: cass@chfsd.org

SOCIAL IMPACT: CHF advances the health and well-being of children in San Diego and Imperial Counties by filling gaps in funding with the goal to ensure no child goes without essential care, supporting innovative programs, and empowering communities to build a healthier, brighter future for every child.

NOTABLE: Children's Health Foundation traces its roots to a 1909 children's "preventorium" created to help children affected by tuberculosis. When the facility closed in 1953, its proceeds became the endowment that still supports children's health in San Diego and Imperial Counties today. More than 115 years later, the mission continues—just in a very different form.