Good afternoon!

I’m Mary Pat Lee, Executive Director of the Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery.

I’m humbled that today we recognize the 40th anniversary of the Crisis Nursery. I want to add my thanks to our founding mothers for their vision and commitment to the prevention of abuse.

It was May 1, 1983 when the Crisis Nursery opened with an annual budget of $200,000 to support just six children each day.

The goal and vision of our founders from the Junior League was to care for children and support parents BEFORE abuse occurs.

Today, 40 years later, to care for 20 children each night and strengthen hundreds of families through our Home Visiting Program and other community partnerships -- it takes $4.2 million.

**The needs of our community have grown.**

Many of you in the room today are Formula for Hope multi-year donors. Your three or five-year pledges and contributions allow us to plan carefully. **Thank you** for being our partners. **YOU** deserve to share in our pride in the Crisis Nursery’s 40 years of effectiveness, innovation, and collaboration.

While our work is serious and often difficult, the biggest joy for me is to hear a child laugh and play during their 72-hour stay with us – while their mom or dad is doing important work to rest, or heal from trauma, or go on a job interview -- all while receiving judgment-free support.

As many of us know, whether we’ve raised our own children or are caring for aging parents or a spouse who needs extra care – what it takes to care for someone is resilience, courage, patience, humor, inner strength and so much more.

What the families who call on the Crisis Nursery for support deal with in their day-to-day lives often chips away at any and all inner strength and self-confidence.

Toss in a global pandemic and for many the loss of their childcare or their job, -- well – an already precarious and stressful financial situation hits new lows.

Worrying about how to feed your child or pay for diapers or medicine while dealing with your own mental health is overwhelming on a “good” day. We are here for children and parents when they are experiencing those “less than good” days.

When I think about the effectiveness of the Crisis Nursery I think about Crystal, a young mom in her mid-twenties, who is completely in love with her son Zachary.

Like most parents of newborns, she wasn’t sleeping much. In fact, little Zachary had a sleep disorder so he only slept for about 40 minutes at a time. Exhausted isn’t a strong enough word to describe how Crystal was feeling.

She would rock him and walk him in the middle of the night. Hearing him cry was wearing on her - causing her to feel like she wasn’t being a good parent.

Crystal has two older children to care for so there was no time for naps or self-care during the day.

The final straw was that Crystal was dealing with her own mental illness. She’d been diagnosed with bipolar disorder which gets exacerbated by lack of sleep.

Crystal does her best to get up each morning and be there for her children. She is tenacious and kind -- and she was overwhelmingly tired.

It was another mom, one of her friends, who referred her to the Crisis Nursery.

Crystal called us in the middle of one of those nights when Zachary was crying nonstop. She was invited to the Nursery. Took a tour and decided she needed to take advantage of a place that would allow her a break from being overwhelmed and exhausted.

She brought her three kiddos to us, and she got 72 hours FOR HERSELF.

It takes $1300 per child to support them during their 72-hour visit. That’s food, clothing, toys, diapers, formula, everything each child needs to be safe and cared for **AND** highly trained staff who know how to deal with a child who is hard to comfort.

After the 72 hours, when Crystal returned, she shared with us that she slept for 15 hours that first night!

Because she finally felt like she had a clear head she reached out to her doctor to explain what was going on with Zachary. Together they found solutions that worked for Zachary. He started to sleep, and their family is now on a very different path.

She still comes back to utilize the Crisis Nursery when she needs it and each time she returns feeling stronger and healthier.

**That’s what your support makes possible.**

You might be surprised to learn that 80% of our annual $4.2 million budget comes from philanthropy – from financial contributions from people like you and me.

It’s for that reason that I’m so grateful as I look around the room. It takes a village to raise a child. And **WE** are that village for hundreds of parents just like Crystal.

What is important for you to know is that the Crisis Nursery works!

In the past year, families in our Home Visiting program had over 350 visits in their homes. Through this strengths-based approach families report they have learned more about child development, positive parenting, and how to access resources to make their families more stable.

That’s dramatic success! I hope YOU are proud of what you help families accomplish!

In the past, you may have heard me speak about the Nursery Way. Our approach to care that is rooted in the belief that every child and parent that enters the Crisis Nursery has experienced trauma or crisis and our message to them is “you can expect help here.”

Our specially trained staff not only care for the children who stay with us, but they also teach children coping strategies to help them build resilience to the stresses in their lives.

Something we do very well is to identify partners in the community.   The Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery is stronger for collaborating with family shelters, medical practitioners, Hennepin County, and a number of nonprofits.  Each of these partners work with us to help **prevent** abuse and neglect.

Here’s what it will take to be OUR best for children and families:

1. The work we do with families is incredibly challenging. Our staff must have training that incorporates all the best practices and current research to be equipped to care for families that experience crisis and trauma.
2. Our home visiting caseload is almost full. More staff home visitors will ensure that families who are ready to participate in this program don’t go on a waiting list.
3. It’s time to restore our very successful in-home Mental Health Services program. Families are waiting for these services and they deserve to get the support they need.

This annual luncheon while celebrating our 40th anniversary – is the way we raise substantial funding to achieve all three: ongoing training, expansion of home visiting, and restoring the in-home Mental Health Services program.

It is YOUR support, YOUR investment in our work, that allows us to plan for the future and provide caring support for children like Zachary and his mom Crystal.

In a few minutes, you’ll be invited to make a pledge for multiple years. Please remember your generosity will allow us to expand our reach one child, one parent, at a time.

Thank you for believing, as I do, that everyone deserves a chance to succeed.