



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **With Families UPward, UP Kids focusing on prevention**

Portage Health Foundation provides quarter-million-dollar grant for innovative new program

When UP Kids serves children in our community, Executive Director Mark Lambert often sees that if they could have intervened a few years earlier, less children would be suffering the trauma that they are.

"We're too often locked into downriver problems," Lambert said. "We need to help upriver. Early on. That will lead to healthier kids and families."

That's exactly what UP Kids is looking to do with a quarter-million-dollar grant from Portage Health Foundation for their Families UPward program. With a \$75,000 match, UP Kids brought in Clinical Social Worker and Team Leader Kristine Maki, who will be paired later this fall with a case manager, another new position for the program. Each will have a role with all families.

"This seed money allows us to do what actually needs to be done before it truly gets toxic for a child," Lambert said. "All of the facts are there to show this kind of work helps a community, but prevention money like this is hard to come by."

The funding is coming in at a beneficial time as the federal government recently approved the Family First Prevention Services Act, a bill that aims to prevent children from entering foster care by allowing federal reimbursement for mental health services, substance use treatment and in-home parenting skill training. Details in each state are yet to be hashed out. Lawmakers in Michigan are digging in now.

"Portage Health Foundation gave us a head start to do what is truly right," Lambert said. "It gives us a chance to be a model for the rest of the U.P., and maybe the state of Michigan."

Maki started at UP Kids in late August and is currently working on the implementation plan.

"It's exciting to be part of a prevention approach like this," said Maki. "Many of the ideas behind this program are things we focused on during my studies at Michigan State University. I can't wait to see the difference we make for families in our community."

**You make the difference. Together we make it possible.**



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Maki earned her Master of Clinical Social Work degree from MSU. She spent the last five years working for the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community as a Family Health Educator. Her work for them was similar to what she'll be doing for UP Kids in the fact that she was doing home visits to families.

"Meeting families where they are at and comfortable can make a world of difference in providing services and helping them," Maki said.

The collaboration between UP Kids and PHF was years in the making, and is a perfect example of what's possible by having a health foundation like PHF in the four-county community.

"It's this kind of big thinking that will make a difference in the long-term health of our community," PHF Executive Director Kevin Store said. "Mark has a vision of a better future for children and families in our community, and we're proud to help make that vision a reality with the funding it needs."

### [About UP Kids](#)

Since 1899 UP Kids has been caring for children and building brighter futures. First as the Good Will Farm Orphanage, followed by the Residential Treatment home for kids. Now UP Kids offers foster care and adoption programs, post-adoption resource and support centers, Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring, and provides a host of important in-home family support and parenting services. UP Kids also runs the Wheels Program, providing donated vehicles to families and the Read to Ride program, encouraging children to read for a chance to win a bike.

### [About Portage Health Foundation](#)

Established in 1990, the Portage Health Foundation's mission is to positively influence a healthier community through enhanced philanthropy and collaboration. By influencing a shared vision, fostering collaborations and partnerships, and working to build community capacity, PHF aims to improve health outcomes in its four-county community of Baraga, Houghton, Keweenaw and Ontonagon counties. Since becoming a charitable community organization in December 2013, the foundation has granted out more than \$7.5 million.

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