



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The WellStar Family Visitation Center at The Children's Haven receives the *Hedi Levenback Supervised Visitation Provider of the Year award*, a national recognition from Supervised Visitation Network (SVN)

CANTON, Ga. – The WellStar Family Visitation Center at The Children's Haven received the *Hedi Levenback Supervised Visitation Provider of the Year Award* from Supervised Visitation Network (SVN). The award was presented during the national SVN 2020 Annual Conference, held virtually September 29-30.

"The honor of being awarded *Hedi Levenback Supervised Visitation Provider of the Year Award* is a testament to the dedication and commitment of our staff in serving Cherokee County children," said Lewis Cline, Board Chair for The Children's Haven. "We have such a warm and caring staff and on behalf of the Board of Directors, we thank each staff member at The Children's Haven for their heartfelt service to our community and congratulate them on a well-deserved award and recognition."

Named for one of SVN's founding members, the *Hedi Levenback Supervised Visitation Provider of the Year Award* recognizes supervised visitation practices and/or programs that demonstrate excellence, innovation, and a commitment to SVN standards. Nominees must directly manage or work at a supervised access/visitation program and the 800 SVN members from across the country select the winner from providers who are chosen as finalists.

The WellStar Family Visitation Center was developed in 2015. Before the program existed, families in Cherokee County held supervised visitation meetings in fast food restaurants, the police station, the DFCS building or the library.

"The WellStar Family Visitation Center is a community initiative envisioned by child welfare stakeholders who advocated for a warm, welcoming and home-like environment for family visits," said Marcie Smith, Executive Director of The Children's Haven. "The visitation team has developed this program anchored in love and support for the families we serve. We are humbled and honored to be receive the *Hedi Levenback Supervised Visitation Provider of the Year Award* and we're so thankful to our community for supporting this program from the very beginning."

Equipped with a full kitchen and living room, the center offers families a unique opportunity to prepare a meal, enjoy meaningful celebrations, complete homework, and spend valuable time together in a secure environment. A trained family support specialist monitors each visit from a closed-circuit room and is available for assistance and support.

2019 updates include a complete review of all policies and procedures by attorneys with Pro Bono Atlanta, additional resources for parents, and innovative security features. An upgraded camera system, along with a lockdown system with an emergency key fob that will alert local law enforcement, have been added.

Since opening in 2016, supervised visits at the WellStar Visitation Center have grown tenfold. In its first year, the center hosted over 100 supervised visits and continued to see a steady increase each year. In 2019, the program served the community with 1,000 supervised visits.

“Every family served by our program has an individualized service plan to help them meet their goals,” said Christina Fisher, Visitation Director for the WellStar Family Visitation Center. “More than anything, we want them to feel cared for and supported by our team and our community. It’s so humbling to realize that we’re able to support more than 1,000 visits every year.”

About the WellStar Family Visitation Center

The WellStar Family Visitation Center offers a safe, comfortable environment for a child to visit with parents, siblings and extended family while they are separated by child welfare involvement. Cases that generally require supervised visitation involve allegations of sexual or physical abuse, substance abuse, mental impairment and extended absence of a parent. The WellStar Family Visitation Center offers a unique view into family functioning and allows the Family Support Specialist to provide the court and DFCS with progress reports and recommendations for specific, appropriate services. Most importantly, the WellStar Family Visitation Center allows for the child’s bonded attachments to be kept intact while maintaining the safety and wellbeing of the child. For more information about The Children’s Haven WellStar Family Visitation Center, visit CherokeeChildrensHaven.org or call 770-345-3274.

About The Children’s Haven

The Children’s Haven supports children in Cherokee County who are impacted by abuse and neglect to ensure they all have the opportunity to thrive in a safe and permanent family. The organization offers three main programs to help the county’s foster children and their families – Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Cherokee County, WellStar Family Visitation Center and Prevent Child Abuse (PCA) Cherokee. The Children’s Haven empowers volunteers to serve the county’s foster children and their families with the goal of strengthening the individuals and ultimately the community where they live. For more information about The Children’s Haven, visit CherokeeChildrensHaven.org or call 770-345-3274.

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