



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Russell J. Salvatore Donates Half a Million Dollars to Help Local Children *Charitable Contribution Puts BestSelf in Good Financial Position with Child Advocacy Center*

Buffalo, NY, January 11, 2024 – BestSelf Behavioral Health announced today that they have received another financial boost toward completing the new Child Advocacy Center (CAC) and BestSelf's administrative headquarters, this one from a familiar name in Western New York philanthropy, Russell J. Salvatore.

Salvatore's generous donation gives him naming rights for the Education and Events Center inside the new building currently under construction at 899 Main Street. The new Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus location will be known as the Scott Bieler Center at BestSelf and is expected to open this summer. The gift from Salvatore marks a significant step forward in the organization's mission to provide essential mental health services and support for children and families affected by sexual abuse, violence, and trauma.

The recent contribution puts BestSelf well over 80% of its \$12.5M goal for the new CAC. Salvatore is encouraging the community to follow his lead. He is committed to matching public donations of up to \$500,000 to complete the center's new building so children and their families can be treated there as soon as possible. With the community's unwavering support, BestSelf is confident they can raise the \$2 million needed to complete this project successfully.

The need is urgent. Erie County has the second highest cases of child abuse in the state, behind Suffolk County.

Salvatore was impressed by the plans to co-locate all essential community partners at the CAC -- law enforcement, social services, and legal aid -- that typically are involved when a child is removed from an abusive situation so the child can be treated holistically in one location.

"I pick out places where there are many people to care for," Salvatore said. "When I learned that kids are taken right to the police station when they are removed from a bad situation at home, it became clearer why there is such a need for the Child Advocacy Center," he said incredulously. "At a time like that, kids need the police, of course, but they also need it to be child-friendly."

So, when BestSelf representatives approached him about the CAC, Salvatore listened. Looking around the new location during a tour, he was convinced and told BestSelf, "Okay, we'll do it."

The Education and Events Center, bearing Salvatore's name, will provide space for BestSelf and the CAC's multi-disciplinary partners (MDT) to conduct professional development workshops, training programs, and education seminars.

"Russ Salvatore's generous contribution to the Child Advocacy Center is a transformative step in our journey. His kindness empowers our team to elevate the care and support we provide to those in need, ensuring that we can offer the highest standard of care for children and families of Western New York," said Elizabeth Woike-Ganga, President and CEO of BestSelf Behavioral Health.

The CAC provides a range of services to children and families affected by sexual abuse, violence, and trauma. It has been operating for 30 years out of tight quarters in the current location at 556 Franklin Street, only allowing enough space to serve about 1,000 children annually, which is a third of the children in Erie County in need of these services.

Russ encourages everyone to join in his commitment to this vital community resource by visiting www.cacbuffalo.org to donate today.

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The Russell J. Salvatore Foundation was created in 2012 and has funded over \$11 million to benefit much-needed projects. The foundation has given grants exceeding \$5 million to fund naming rights gifts to a dozen Western New York institutions, primarily those supporting education, science, health, and veterans.

BestSelf Behavioral Health, Inc. is the largest community-based behavioral health organization serving children and adults with mental health and substance use disorders in WNY. We provide easy access to a full continuum of person-centered, trauma-informed behavioral health treatment, rehabilitation, and recovery services. BestSelf has an annual budget of \$94 million and serves over 41,000 children and adults in 70+ locations in Western New York.