



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BestSelf Behavioral Health Celebrates Opening of the Scott Bieler Child Advocacy Center on Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus

Buffalo, NY – BestSelf Behavioral Health proudly hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony today to mark the official opening of the Scott Bieler Child Advocacy Center (CAC) at BestSelf, and BestSelf administrative offices, located at 899 Main St, right in the heart of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. The BestSelf Board, led by Board Chair Ellen Bieler, and agency leadership identified the urgent need to expand services for children and families impacted by sexual abuse, violence, and trauma. This new, state-of-the-art facility marks a major advancement in addressing the rising number of reported cases in Erie County, which continues to rank among the highest child abuse rates in New York State.

The CAC consolidates services previously spread across multiple locations, bringing together a multidisciplinary team under one roof. The team includes law enforcement, victim advocates, forensic interviewers, medical examiners, prosecutors, and mental health providers working collaboratively to provide safety, support, and healing.

BestSelf President and CEO Elizabeth Woike emphasized the center's transformative potential: "The expanded center will enable BestSelf to serve every child in our community who needs support. This represents a monumental improvement from the CAC's previous location, which could only accommodate one-third of the more than 3,000 annual cases of sexual abuse reported in Erie County. We are grateful to the community for helping us achieve this critical milestone."

After being inspired by a newspaper article in 1993, the late Lee Gross Anthonie identified a best practice model from the West Coast and rallied women leaders from the community leaders to establish what is now the Child Advocacy Center. Among these leaders is **Ellen Bieler, Board Chair of BestSelf Behavioral Health**. Reflecting on the center's mission, Bieler expressed gratitude and hope, stating, "This center will support the most vulnerable among us by addressing the immediate crisis facing our children while helping to create a brighter future for them."

As BestSelf worked to cultivate support for this vital resource, one community leader stood out: Scott Bieler. His significant investment demonstrated his commitment to the community and played a pivotal role in making the Scott Bieler Child Advocacy Center a reality." **Scott Bieler,**

President and CEO of West Herr Automotive Group, whose generous donation helped make this expansion possible, shared his pride in the project, “This building will continue to symbolize hope, a sanctuary for those seeking support, and a place where healing and growth are possible,” Bieler said. “I am honored to be part of BestSelf’s incredible journey and look forward to witnessing our partnership’s impact on countless lives.”

Several notable figures have expressed their support and excitement for this critical addition to Erie County’s mental health and child protection services.

“In New York State, we put children first by investing in projects and partnerships that support each child and family in all areas of behavioral health,” **said Empire State Development President, CEO & Commissioner Hope Knight**. “The significant state investment in this project demonstrates Governor Hochul’s unwavering commitment to ensuring a comprehensive and user-friendly experience of the highest quality for the families of Western New York during their greatest times of need.”

Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes praised the center’s potential to change lives. “I am grateful that children and families in our community will have new resources to heal and find hope after experiencing violence and abuse. Surviving trauma is the beginning of a long journey, and we must do everything in our power to provide safety and support while working to bring abusers to justice. Thank you to Scott Bieler, West Herr Automotive Group, and BestSelf for their tireless commitment to Buffalo and Western New York.”

“The new Child Advocacy Center will be helping families and children impacted by sexual and physical assault, individuals who are at their most vulnerable point and need compassionate care to help them navigate the days ahead. Erie County is proud to be a supporter of this new Center, contributing a \$ 1 million funding match as part of the Restore New York Round 7 application process through the New York State Empire State Development Restore New York Communities Initiative,” **said Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz**. “This much-needed, accessible new Center expands the capability to handle these cases, allows for extended hours, and offers more support to those who need it. Projects like these invest in the health and wellbeing of our residents, and we are glad to join our partners in doing so.”

The new CAC was made possible through the collaborative efforts of numerous donors and community partners, including major donors such as The Scott Bieler Family Foundation, The John R. Oishei Foundation, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, KeyBank, M&T Bank, County of Erie, Governor Kathy Hochul, New York State and the state of New York, Uniland Development, Foundation 214, Russell J. Salvatore, Delaware North and the Jacobs Family, National Grid, Their generous contributions will also support the expansion of vital programs like the mobile trauma treatment initiative, which provides direct care to children and families in their homes or communities, ensuring even the most vulnerable populations can access services.

In addition to the critical services provided at the CAC, Unapologetic Coffee, owned by sisters Alicia and Alisa Officer, will open on the ground floor starting in early November. The café, open to the public from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends, will create a welcoming space for the community while supporting the important work within the center.

As BestSelf continues its mission to provide life-changing services to Erie County's most vulnerable children, the Scott Bieler Child Advocacy Center at BestSelf will stand as a beacon of hope, recovery, and community support. For more information about the center, its services, and the generous donors that made it possible, please visit <https://cacbuffalo.org>

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About BestSelf Behavioral Health

BestSelf Behavioral Health is the largest community-based behavioral health organization serving Western New York. It offers comprehensive services for mental health and substance use disorders. The organization serves over 41,000 individuals annually across more than 70 locations, focusing on trauma-informed care and person-centered treatment.