

## Childhaven to hold fundraiser along riverwalk

By James Fenton *The Daily Times Farmington Daily Times*

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### IF YOU GO

**What:** Childhaven fundraising event, "More the Merrier" Walk and Roll

**When:** 8 to 10 a.m., Saturday, June 8. Registration begins at 8 a.m.

**Where:** Riverwalk Pavilion at Berg Park located at Scott and San Juan Blvd.

**Cost:** Registration is \$30.00 and includes breakfast, T-shirt and entertainment. Children 12 and under are free.

**More info:** Call 505-325-5358 or register online at [childhaven.org](http://childhaven.org).

FARMINGTON — What used to be a mountain bike-only affair has been expanded to other types of wheels and even foot power this year.

Childhaven, the local foundation that helps children and families through hard times, will hold its major fundraiser of the year Saturday along the Animas River.

In recent years, the nonprofit has held its fundraiser at Lion's Park, favoring spandex-clad riders on mountain bikes. This year, it opted to open up participation to those on bikes, in wheelchairs, pushing strollers, or in a comfy pair of walking shoes. Bringing your dog on a leash is encouraged, too.

"Farmington is such a supportive community, and the Riverwalk is such a great venue for this event," said Jamie Church, development director for the Childhaven Foundation. "For our twenty-second year (holding the event), we wanted to encourage more people to come out and take part, have a great morning along the Animas and learn about all the programs and volunteer opportunities Childhaven offers."

Registration for the event will begin at 8 a.m., followed by a speech by Farmington Mayor Tommy Roberts. Participants will get a T-shirt, a breakfast burrito brunch, bottled water and a goodie bag.

To add a festive air, Aztec musician John Cater, a member of the Celtic band Mad Haggis, will herald supporters with a performance of "traditional opening ceremonies" music on the bagpipes.

"We will start the 'Walk and Roll' with bike riders first," said Erin Hourihan, Childhaven CEO. "They can ride the whole trail to San Juan Regional (Medical Center) and back, but everyone else can walk or roll as far or as long as they like."

Organizers for the event are also eager to update their contact information for supporters on Saturday.

"We want to keep in touch with the community by making sure we have your address and email or phone numbers," Hourihan said. "A lot of times we have people who are interested in learning more about how to help but we have an old address or no email, so this is another way to keep our connections updated."

Established in 1969 as an emergency shelter open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, Childhaven has since grown with community support to create a foundation in 2003 to encompass the many programs it now supports.

More than 300 abused, neglected or abandoned children, from infants up to 17 years, are provided shelter each year. The organization has added various programs under its collective umbrella through the years.

The Children's Safehouse offers sexually abused children and their families medical, therapeutic and advocacy services, averaging more than 160 forensic interviews a year for alleged victims of abuse.

Childhaven's foster care program is the only dual-licensed program in San Juan County, helping both children with severe emotional disturbances as well as children removed from their homes for their safety and well-being.

CASA, or Court Appointed Special Advocates, volunteers are appointed by area judges to advocate for neglected, abused and abandoned children in courtrooms and visit them in their homes.

Childhaven board president Kathy Hunt knows a lot about the nonprofit's efforts on behalf of children. She was once a recipient of support herself.

When, as a 17-year-old mother with an infant daughter, Allison, she needed a place to stay, Childhaven was there to help.

"At that time, they were running around putting together a makeshift room for us. Had they not made a place for my child and I to stay, to stay together, we would not have been as successful going forward," Hunt said.

A retired corrections officer, she spent six years as a childcare worker at Childhaven, then five years on the board and now is in her first year as board president.

"When I worked at Childhaven's shelter, I remember two young moms were there," she said. "My own time there in that same situation certainly gave me a unique perspective, recalling what I needed then. I had Allison at 16. I mean, who knows how to be a parent at that age?"

She will be busy early Saturday making things go smoothly for participants at the Riverwalk. As in all of the roles she's played at Childhaven, Hunt wants to stay involved.

"It's emotionally hard work sometimes, but infinitely rewarding," she said. "Everything we do is to help lift children from crisis to hope. That's who I am. That's who we are."

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