



Some of the youth we serve participated in the Helmet Walk at Chiefs Training Camp.

COMMUNITY VOICE

Winter 2018

Ensuring Access to Quality Healthcare

Imagine going to the doctor. Now imagine going to the doctor again, but this time, it's a new doctor in a different clinic. Imagine going to the doctor again, but again, it's another new doctor in another different clinic.

This is a common experience for youth in foster care. Frequent moves between homes, residential care and psychiatric hospitals result in a breakdown of consistent healthcare. Children may miss immunizations or be placed on multiple prescriptions. In fact, children in foster care are four times more likely to be prescribed psychotropic medication than their peers.

Access to quality healthcare is a right all children deserve. Having experienced abuse and neglect, children in foster care have complex medical and psycho-social needs that require consistent, integrated care. In addition to those concerns, older transition-aged youth and young adults have shared this about their healthcare experiences:

“I never really feel welcome. The receptionists are usually really grouchy and get frustrated when I ask a question, so I just stopped asking.”

—Madison, 18

“Don’t you have to have insurance to go to the doctor? I don’t even know if I have that. If I do, I have no idea how to use it.”

—Juan, 17

To transform the way children in foster care receive healthcare, we are using some of the funds raised from the Chiefs Charity Game to partner with KC CARE Health Center to create a space that delivers holistic physical, oral, mental, emotional and social healthcare.

Homeroom Health, a pediatric healthcare center, will be located in the Wonder Shops and Flats at 30th and Troost in Kansas City, Mo. Expected to accept its first child in spring 2019, it will improve access to fully integrated care, improving the healthcare experiences of youth in foster care and children and young adults in the surrounding neighborhood. With your support, we can ensure these children receive the appropriate care they deserve.

We’d like to invite you to coffee to learn more about Homeroom Health. Please reach out to Chad Harris, chief development officer, at chad.harris@cornerstonesofcare.org to set up a time that works best for you.





Letter from the CEO

Denise Cross

“Since I have been at Cornerstones of Care, I have had the opportunity to meet many people. I’m continuously impressed and inspired by the impact of our staff. Every single day they are transforming lives.”

Eleven years ago, I joined Cornerstones of Care. On that day, just like today, I was honored to be chosen to lead an organization that focuses on what is best for the whole community. An organization committed to learning to ensure the best possible care. An organization that values its history while keeping its eye on the future. An organization that supports its 650 team members who show up every day because they know someone is counting on them. I came to Cornerstones of Care because I am personally and professionally committed to helping improve the safety and health of children, families and communities.

That commitment started in my 20s when I became a case worker for the Missouri Division of Family Services. I loved that job. I felt like I was able to bring a little relief to children and families who were struggling. I fondly remember the resiliency and ambition of a particular young mother. On her path to becoming a nurse, she worked hard in a GED program I connected her to and became the first person in her family to complete high school. I’m not sure who was prouder of this monumental achievement — me, her or her two young children.

In my first month at Cornerstones of Care, I met several youth in our Pathways transitional living program. I was grateful to be a part of the team who helped move one young woman into her first apartment. I’ll never forget the pride in her eyes as she realized her independence.

I have watched in awe as students in our Youth Educational Success (YES) program shared their experiences, successes and dreams with Representatives from the United States Congress during legislative briefings.

Most recently, I had the opportunity to visit with warm-hearted foster parents at the 2018 Chiefs Training Camp in St. Joseph. They spoke about the incredible love and support they are providing children of all ages. To see the excitement on the faces of those kiddos as they walked alongside a Chiefs player and received their autograph or a pair of signed practice gloves was truly amazing.

These are only a few examples of why I joined this team more than 10 years ago and why I’ve been grateful to work here every day since. The care our staff provide to children and families is profound. The impact they have is immeasurable and the benefit of your contributions of time and treasures is long lasting. Thank you so much for your continued support. We couldn’t do any of this without you!

Denise Cross
President/CEO

Like many families we work with, the Abbotts benefited from more than one of our services. Read their story of heartbreak and reunification at cornerstonesofcare.org/abbottfamily.

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Lending a Hand



Friends from the Cause Church hosted a field day and cookout.



U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services staff sorted school supplies during the United Way Day of Caring.



Staff from SelectQuote stuffed backpacks for youth in our care to be ready for school.



Members of William Jewell's volleyball team helped maintain our vegetable garden for a day.

Summer 2018 was packed with fun in the sun for our youth thanks to the many volunteers who came out to provide meaningful experiences for the children and families we serve. Groups and individuals alike filled the long days with cookouts, kickball and basketball games, field days and entertaining outings. Many other volunteer groups helped us care for our gardens, farm sites, campuses and even helped us prepare backpacks for the upcoming school year. Thank you for being a part of our volunteer program and making a difference in the lives of our clients.

You can make a difference, too! Simply visit cornerstonesofcare.org/volunteer to submit your volunteer interests and we'll pair you up with the right activity.

Wish List

You can help our children and families have a magical holiday!

Sponsor A Youth — Once again, we are asking our community to “sponsor” youth in our care to give them a joyous holiday. Our children’s wish lists will be available in early November.

Gift Gallery — We are currently collecting new, unwrapped items for children, teens and adults for our Gift Gallery, which allows families in our community-based programs to shop at no cost to ensure everyone has a gift to open during the holidays. While some suggestions are included below, a more comprehensive list is available at cornerstonesofcare.org/giftgallery.



To learn more or to sponsor a youth, please contact Head Elf Kristen Zucht at kristen.zucht@cornerstonesofcare.org or 816.508.3614.

- Remote Control Cars
- Legos
- Twin-Sized Sheets
- Tool Sets
- Headphones & Earbuds
- Playdough
- Twin-Sized Comforters
- Perfume & Cologne
- Action Figures & Dolls
- Sports Balls
- Kitchen & Household Items
- Gift Cards

Fun in the Sun



Kansas City Chiefs Ambassadors Larry Marshall, Shawn Barber, Chris Penn and Mark Collins joined us for some golf.



Golfers enjoyed taking a break to test their aim with potato launchers at our Annual Golf Classic.



Victory was sweet for the Let's Get Quizzical team at the Chiefs Charity Game Trivia Night.



Students in our horticultural therapy program show our farm site to visitors during Cultivate Kansas City's Urban Grown Tour.



Disc golfers enjoyed a relaxing morning of friendly competition and banter at Thornfield Disc Golf Course.



Team FOSSA took home the gold — gold discs that is — at this year's annual Open Disc Golf Tournament.

In June, our annual Golf Classic at Loch Lloyd Country Club featured some unique activities for golfers, such as competing against former Kansas City Chiefs players and testing their aim with potato launchers. The fun-filled event raised more than \$64,000 to help keep children safe and families together. Also during the month, the farm site on our Gillis Campus participated in Cultivate Kansas City's Urban Grown Tour. Students in our horticulture therapy program had a great time giving tours, explaining the program and showcasing their home-grown vegetables to visitors. Then in July, the Chiefs Charity Game Trivia Night took place and, thanks to all of the teams and sponsors, raised more than \$10,000 to help fund new projects like Homeroom Health, which will open this spring (*see more on page 1*). The summer wrapped up with our annual Disc Golf Tournament, raising more than \$11,000. Thank you!

Where does your money go? Schedule a campus tour to see your dollars in action — you won't be disappointed! Just contact Laurie at laurie.minx@cornerstonesofcare.org.

A Huge Win for Our Children and Families



Pam Sanders, director of education, threw out the ceremonial first pass.



Foster families, volunteers and staff took the field in front of a stadium full of fans.



Volunteers, sponsors and foster families enjoyed a pre-game celebration in the Chiefs Draft Room.



During halftime, presenting sponsor NASB helped give us the check for the money you helped us raise.



Megan Elsen, program implementation manager, led everyone in the drum ceremony.



Staff and their families and friends had the opportunity to carry the KC Chiefs flag onto the field before the game.

The 2018 Chiefs Charity Game was a huge success! With your support, we were able to give away 1,049 game-day tickets to the children and families in our programs and raise \$485,000. We all had a blast celebrating, and the money will be instrumental in the opening of the Homeroom Health clinic, further developing our solution-based casework efforts and other programs to keep children safe and families together. Thanks for making it all happen!

*Interested in being part of the action at other special events?
Call Katie at (913) 515-7951 to discuss sponsorship opportunities and perks.*

Lighting the Way for Children & Families

Spotlighting Our Staff



*Lauren Collins,
Pathways
transitional
living manager*

Lauren Collins oversees our 22-unit Pathways transitional living apartment building for youth aged 16–22 in Wichita, Kan. Lauren recently celebrated the birth of her daughter, Quinn, and has been cherishing the extra time she is spending with her husband, Carlton, and two other children, Kosi and Tahlia.

What is the most rewarding part of your job? Those moments when the individuals I work with, whether staff or youth, have a breakthrough that propels them in a positive direction. I love to help people become the best versions of themselves.

What have you learned working with the youth in the Pathways program? How to peel an orange properly. That laughing at ourselves is beyond valuable. And that even though it appears no one is listening, not only are they clinging onto every word you speak, they are holding you accountable for those words.

What inspires you when the job gets difficult? That diamond in the rough. You never know who really needs you, and wants hope and change in their lives. It hurts to think that the one I would give up on could be the one who needs me the most.

What excites you the most about the Pathways program? Watching the joy on the youths' faces as they complete the program and discover they've conquered areas they thought they could never overcome. Many of the youth I meet have lost hope in themselves and live with a day-to-day mindset. Watching this mindset change to be future-focused is the most exciting part of my job.

Learn more about Pathways or become a mentor at cornerstonesofcare.org/wichita.

A Journey of Resilience



Elijah never met his birth parents. Born in Kazakhstan as Alibek Jarad, he was given no last name and immediately placed in an orphanage. An American couple adopted him, bringing him to United States. But what was supposed to be a happy ending turned out to be anything but.

"The abuse went on for nine years," Elijah confided. "They took away my childhood." Eventually, Elijah had a glimmer of hope when he was sent away to another home. But that home was an unlicensed "foster home" where the caretaker routinely abused the eight boys in her care. Mental and physical torment, along with the sound of frequent neighborhood gunfire, became his reality.

Two years later, real hope came in the form of an early-morning knock on the front door. The FBI and Missouri Children's Division had learned about the situation and took the boys away. Elijah spent some time at the Crittenton Children's Center, then was placed at our Ozanam Campus.

"I felt like something good was happening," he explained. "I remember driving down the road — a road that led to a campus that was so beautiful. It felt like home."

Though many people were instrumental to his development during his stay, it was Rick Wright, a staff member, who would change his life. The two connected after Elijah learned he had to have heart surgery. "As I went to my appointments, Mr. Wright was there by my side."

Rick continued to mentor Elijah when he transitioned from our residential treatment program to a group home in 2013. Then in 2014, Rick adopted Elijah into their family. "I was excited. The judge said I could change my name, and I did. I changed it to Elijah, which means 'The Lord is my God.'"

Now 20, Elijah is a regular at the Ozanam Campus. He has been the head manager and assistant coach of the Ozanam Eagles basketball team for eight years and volunteers with our music therapy students. Currently enrolled at Grand Canyon University, he has even started his own small financial firm. Elijah has many dreams for the future, all of which seem to focus on giving back to the community that supported him.

"I hope to one day have the chance to serve as president and CEO of Cornerstones of Care. I feel that I can continue to make this place the best place for the next generation of kids to come."



Connecting to Our Communities

Why Mentoring Matters

Coleen Davis began her mentoring experience with us in December. Paired with a feisty eight-year-old whose red curls matched her temperament, the mother of four was undaunted by her mentee's swinging emotions.

"I knew I would become attached to her, and I knew she would probably enjoy our time together," Coleen shared. "However, I didn't know how important I would be to her. She needs our time together and depends on my visits on an entirely different level than my kids."

According to the National Mentoring Partnership, youth with mentors are 55% more likely to enroll in college and 130% more likely to hold leadership positions later in life. Though many of the youth we serve haven't had the opportunity to form healthy relationships with adults, our mentoring program is changing that.

Mentors commit to spending at least one hour each week with their mentee doing a variety of activities from visiting parks, attending community events, taking walks, or just hanging out playing board games, talking or even painting nails. They find a rhythm that works, and both look forward to their weekly visits.

Coleen realized that beyond the residential staff and her therapist, she had become the most stable person in this young girl's life.

Vicky Leitnaker, who heads up the program, has seen the extraordinary impact a mentor can make. Many of these kids have been repeatedly let down by the adults in their lives, but these consistent visits from a mentor build trust. The youth who are at the top of the wait list for a mentor rarely have visitors or leave campus; they long for a friend who is theirs and theirs alone.



Celebrating Successes

Our impact in St. Louis is growing so much, we moved office locations to better serve the community! Since starting work in St. Louis last summer, we have provided counseling services to 132 children. But now, we also have a growing number of treatment foster care homes accepting placements and have started offering trauma-informed yoga and our BraveHearts for Adolescent Boys program to area youth!

*Become a child's trusted friend — not only will you change their life, you'll change your life as well.
Visit cornerstonesofcare.org/mentor.*

Honors & Memorials

Memorial and honor giving supports the Cornerstones of Care Foundation and have a lasting impact on the children and families we serve by sustaining the long-term needs of our programs. Anyone wishing to remember a departed friend or loved one, or to honor a living individual or significant event, may send a gift to the Foundation in their name.

If you would like to make an honor or memorial contribution, simply return the enclosed envelope or visit cornerstonesofcare.org/donate. Please include any contact information for those who should be notified of your contribution. These gifts will be recognized in the next issue of our newsletter.



In Memory Of

Allene Hunt
Mr. & Mrs. David A. Leavitt

David Scheible
Mrs. Barbara Scheible

Gerald Starler
Dr. & Mrs. Donald M. Lieberwitz

Lu Vaughan (cont'd)
Ms. Joyce Herman
Lanard Toys
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Mr. Ken Vardyan
Mr. & Mrs. John Verbanic

Charles "C3" McDonald III
Mr & Mrs. Charles E. McDonald

Roy Scheible
Mrs. Barbara Scheible

Lu Vaughan
Mr. Larry Alfs
Mr. Wayne Baker
Mr. & Mrs. Todd Bertz
Mr. Nick Distefano

William O'Brien
Ms. Laura O'Brien

ReAnna Sperle
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Each year we host a variety of events to benefit the children and families we serve. From an upscale gala to the friendly entertainment of disc golf, we have events that fit every personality and interest. Join us!

Save the Date

SPIRIT GALA

November 10 at the Kansas City Convention Center

Be sure to save the date for a celebration honoring those who embody the spirit of giving back! Led by honorary chairs Mike & Sharon O'Connor, this magical blend of our legendary Spirit Awards and annual gala will be full of inspiring moments as we commemorate the philanthropic achievements of Spirit Award Winner Carol Sherman and Corporate Spirit Award Winner NASB for all they have done in support of our mission to keep children safe and families together. Guests will enjoy an evening of socializing, cocktails, silent and live auctions, dinner catered by Lon Lane's Inspired Occasions and electric performances by Quixotic and local favorite, Twice on Sunday. Be uplifted and inspired at a celebration not to be missed!

Reserve your seats today at cornerstonesofcare.org/gala!

2018-19 Fundraisers

SPIRIT GALA

November 10 at KC Convention Center
cornerstonesofcare.org/gala

THYME FOR KIDS PLANT SALE

Spring 2019
cornerstonesofcare.org/plantsale

Questions about these or other 2019 events? Contact Katie at 913.515.7951 or katie.culbertson@cornerstonesofcare.org.

