



CORNERSTONES
OF CARE

Community Voice

FALL/WINTER 2024



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Angela Danley Comes ‘Full Circle’ as New Senior Director of Education Programs and Services

In June, Cornerstones of Care announced the appointment of Angela Danley, Ed.D., as the new Senior Director of Education Programs and Services. In this role, she will oversee the BIST (Behavior Intervention Support Team) program, Build Trybe, and the Gillis and Ozanam Campus Day Treatment Schools, leading teams to achieve the highest program standards of quality, consistency, and financial health to ensure a lasting positive impact on students and their families.

“Our education department is a diverse mix of programs and services, demanding a dynamic leader who is adaptable and knowledgeable with robust prior experience,” said Justin Horton, Chief Programs and Innovation Officer. “Dr. Danley has only reinforced what the interview panel thought of and expected

Five Years of Supporting Children and Families in Kansas



This year marks a milestone for Cornerstones of Care. Five years ago, we began our first foster care contract with the Kansas Department for Children and Families. During that time, the nature of our work has evolved, but our commitment to the children and families we serve in Kansas has remained steadfast. We are committed to our vision of a trauma-responsive world that transforms lives through courageous compassion and care.

Over the years, our focus has shifted from supporting children in foster care to prioritizing prevention by helping families heal from trauma. Today, we have more than 250 team members supporting residents in 52 Kansas counties. In the counties in which we manage foster care, our team members have successfully reduced the number of children removed from their homes by approximately 40 percent.

At Cornerstones of Care, our goal is to work our way out of the foster care business. By keeping families together, we reduce the disruption of removing children from their homes and focus on resolving trauma to help everyone lead healthier lives.

For the past two years, we have championed Parent-Youth Facilitation (PYF), a pilot program led by the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare. This program aims to reduce the number of youth entering foster care in Wyandotte County for resolvable issues such as chronic truancy. Our PYF mediator facilitated several truancy cases, which can escalate and lead to out-of-home placements. By partnering with families early in the process, we prevented the need for removal from parental care.

Prevention efforts often involve team members advocating for best-care practices. Recently, one of our case managers participated in a Team Decision Making (TDM) meeting alongside Department for Children and Families representatives. As a result, they used our trauma-informed perspective to prevent six youth from going into foster care.

Our Kansas Foster Care Case Management team relies on our Aftercare program to provide additional services after the child has left foster care and has been reunited with the family. Our Aftercare Case Management Specialist partners with the family, their support system, and team members to ensure children remain safely at home and to help the family adjust following reintegration.

In one case, David* and his family continued to work through their challenges in Aftercare at home, leading to significant improvements in David's school performance. In the fall, he was failing five of his seven classes with Ds in the other two. By spring, he improved his grades to include three Bs. Additionally, David's behavioral incidents at school dropped from seven in the fall, to just one in the spring semester.

I am proud to share that Family Preservation Services continues to do outstanding work in northeast and southeast Kansas, maintaining an unwavering dedication to helping families heal from trauma while keeping them safely together. Starting with our new contract in July, we are expanding our scope of care through this program. We are hiring for several new positions, training our team members in the BIST model, and building capacity for therapeutic foster homes to provide respite care for families in our Family Preservation program.

Our Functional Family Therapy (FFT) program is also broadening its scope. This program supports both Foster Care and Family Preservation, working closely with families for typically 12-14 weeks. Our FFT team also works with the state, providing therapy to individuals referred by the Kansas Department of Corrections.

The work we do is always challenging, and we are deeply grateful to our Foster Care Case Management team, our Family Preservation team, and all our Kansas team members for their tireless support of children and families. Over the past five years, we have truly made a tangible difference in the lives of those we serve, and we look forward to continuing our mission with renewed dedication and passion for the next five years and beyond.

**Name changed to protect privacy.*

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MRose'.

Merideth Rose, President and CEO

Angela Danley Comes ‘Full Circle’ as New Senior Director of Education Programs and Services

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from her during her first two months, and she is the ideal leader for us.”

Angela brings a wealth of experience from her 29 years in education, including 17 years as a K-12 classroom teacher and in special education.

In 2009, Angela earned her Education Specialist Degree in School Administration from the University of Central Missouri and went on to receive her Doctorate in Educational Leadership, Policy, and Foundations from the University of Missouri, Kansas City, in 2012. Though she initially intended to become a school principal, she instead pivoted to a distinguished career in higher education.

Angela’s focus has been on teacher development through supervision, curriculum development, and program coordination. She has also taught undergraduate and graduate courses in education and earned recognition as an academic researcher with over 20 peer-reviewed articles to her name.

“I view myself as a collaborative leader who is passionate yet empathetic,” said Angela, who estimates she has helped prepare nearly 1,000 students for careers in teaching.

“I know it’s not easy what teachers do. I want to be an advocate and support for them.”

In 2023, Angela took on a dual role as Chair and Director of Clinical and Field-Based Experiences at Avila University. Returning to Avila in 2022 was a “full-circle moment” for Angela as she began her journey in education there as a first-generation college student.

As Angela embarks on her first year, she is experiencing similar full-circle moments, highlighting how this role is a culmination of her diverse professional experience and passion for trauma-informed care.

In July, Angela helped set up the annual Basic BIST conference, which was attended by more than 600 school leaders across the country. Over two decades earlier, she attended her first BIST training as a second-grade teacher at Lee’s Summit School District.

“I remember that training well,” said Angela. “I completed Basic BIST and advanced training as a classroom teacher.

Now it’s a full-circle moment because here I am working with Marty Huitt again.”

Themes of trauma-informed care have been a central part of Angela’s career from the beginning, and she has been open with students and colleagues about how her past shapes her views as a leader in education. Raised in a single-parent household, Angela recalls the impact of a kindergarten teacher who helped her see her future as an educator from a young age.

“Mrs. Hatfield was the person who helped me see that you might go through hard things in life, but the classroom is a safe space for you,” said Angela.

For Angela, bringing a trauma-informed mindset into her work at Cornerstones of Care means building professional development opportunities for educators to make their work sustainable.

“We can’t serve youth if we’re not okay,” said Angela.

“I know teacher burnout is real. I want to work with the principals to help teachers not feel burned out at the end of the year. When you go to a conference, it builds morale and gets them motivated to come back to work.”

Much of her first year will focus on building relationships and “listening with intent” to identify necessary changes to better support team members, students, and families. She has kept herself busy these first three months, attending trainings and visiting sites like the Build Trybe Shop, engaging with curiosity and a genuine desire to learn.

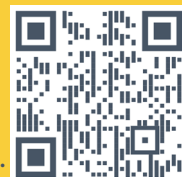
During uncertain moments, Angela likes to remember her purpose or her “why,” a practice she developed during her early years as a teacher. She recently shared this with her oldest daughter, a second-year elementary math and science teacher following in her mother’s footsteps.

“My first five years were challenging, but I thought, ‘I’m doing this for the kids,’” said Angela. “I want them to have opportunities and see that they have the potential to break the cycle. Even preparing teacher educators, I told them, ‘I’m preparing you to become a great teacher because every child deserves the best version of you each day.’ That’s why I do what I do, and I feel like I can do that here.” ✨



Celebrate those who have impacted your life with a honor or memorial gift.

Visit cornerstonesofcare.org/tributes or scan the QR code for more information.





NORTH POLE

BENEFITING  CORNERSTONES OF CARE

Sponsor-A-Youth Wish Lists

Help stuff Santa's bags by purchasing gifts for a youth in foster care. **Scan the QR code** to get your name on the list, and we'll share details and personalized wish lists when the holiday season gets closer.



Get ahead of the holiday hubbub by signing up to help with **NASB's North Pole**, a holiday destination spreading the joy of the season to more than 1,300 children and families in the Kansas City area.

Gift Gallery

Fill our Gift Gallery with toys and trinkets for families in our community-based programs. We accept brand-new, age-appropriate gifts that have not yet been wrapped. Perfect gift examples include art supplies, board games, and fidget toys.

Contact lea.loudon@cornerstonesofcare.org with any NASB North Pole questions.



Gift In-Kind Opportunities

When a youth is facing tough times, a new toy or game can be just what they need to brighten their day. Make a meaningful impact on the lives of the youth we serve by purchasing an item from our wish list. Donations can be dropped off at the Gillis Campus Admin Building during regular business hours.

- Fidget toys
- Teenage coloring books
- Dungeons & Dragons Starter Sets
- Action Figures
- Legos
- Board games
- Card games
- Bluetooth speakers
- Wireless headphones
- Gift cards to Walmart and Target

UPCOMING EVENTS



Spirit Gala

November 8

Walk the red carpet and celebrate the spirit of giving at this year's Hollywood Glam Spirit Gala.

NASB's North Pole

December 10-14

Spread the joy for the holiday season to children and families throughout the Kansas City area.

Pies For A Purpose

October 1 - December 31

Give yourself a break this holiday season by stocking up on Tippin's pies for dessert.

Savor The Sound

February 2025

Immerse yourself in an enchanting evening sure to ignite your senses in a fusion of music, culinary delight, and visual artistry.



Visit cornerstonesofcare.org/events for more information

Former Foster Youth Overcomes the Odds to Achieve Excellence in Engineering

Colby Landwehr, Assistant Electrical Engineer at Burns & McDonnell, excels in solving technical problems. Now in his second year at the Kansas City firm, Colby's skills are in high demand. He has started performing quality reviews for other engineers, demonstrating his technical ability and attention to quality. Unfortunately, Colby's childhood problems were not solvable but well outside his control, and he could only do so much to help his mother, who struggled with narcolepsy and ended up houseless.

At 12, Colby entered care. After a year in a group home, he moved to the Ozanam Campus. Like many children in foster care, he hoped to return home, but by 17, reunification was no longer possible. He joined Pathways for Transitional Living, which provides support, housing, and case management for young adults in foster care.

The trauma of being removed from home as a child caused significant mental and emotional challenges for Colby. Despite his interest in learning and potential for growth, his unstable living experience made it difficult to maintain a consistent education.

"I knew I wanted to be an engineer, a scientist, or something like that," said Colby. "I liked computers from a young age. I was building a computer in the dorm with parts wherever I could find them."

He earned his GED while living in a foster home and started a college degree but left before completing the program. It was Colby's involvement in the YES program that helped him discover his vocational interests and set him on a path to a career in engineering.

In 2018, he graduated from Metropolitan Community College with an associate degree and then earned his bachelor's degree from UMKC's School of Engineering.

The YES program supported Colby throughout his education, helping him navigate college, access financial aid, and find transportation. But more than that, the program helped him adjust to life after foster care.

"A lot of kids have a hard time adjusting to life post-care," said Colby. "The goal is to address all aspects of life because a lot of things can stand in the way of being successful in your vocation and education."

The YES program helped Colby with everything from setting up appointments to cooking and managing money. He built a support network and continues to maintain relationships with peers in the program, his caseworker, and his life coach.



"The YES program gave me the resources, the experience, and the knowledge to teach myself the things that were not taught to me," said Colby.

After graduating, Colby was hired by Burns & McDonnell where he is passionate about increasing volunteer engagement for nonprofits like Cornerstones of Care. He and coworker Ken Gerling, a former Cornerstones of Care board member, coordinated several volunteer projects, including building a fence for Build Trybe and installing French drains at the Ozanam Campus.

.....
"A lot of the ways people give to foster care is monetarily – and that's very important – but I think it's equally important to give your time," said Colby. "I want to try and give back as much as I can to future foster youth."
.....

For this same reason, he is intentional about interacting with the youth when volunteering, often making small talk or giving advice. "You can have a normal life; you can have the things you want," said Colby. "It's unfortunate that you will probably have to work harder than other people. But when you do achieve it, I think you'll be even stronger than the people around you."*

SHARE THE LOVE ALL YEAR

Through our Share the Love monthly giving program, we offer a seamless way to help build safe, healthy communities alongside Cornerstones of Care through automated monthly donations.

Go to cornerstonesofcare.org/monthlygiving and sign up today.



Governing Board of Directors 2024

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Bright Lights, Waldo Nights: A Flashback to Fun!



On Friday, August 9, from 7-10 p.m., the Cornerstones of Care Gillis Campus Gym, transformed into a vibrant, neon-lit celebration of the '80s. Bright Lights, Waldo Nights was an incredible evening of fun, camaraderie, and philanthropy, all in support of Cornerstones of Care.

Guests were transported back in time as they danced to the nostalgic beats of Retroactive, sipped on beverages from the open bar, and enjoyed delicious late-night snacks. The atmosphere was electric with neon lights, shoulder pads, and the unforgettable vibes of the '80s. Paul Nyakatura, our dynamic emcee, kept the energy high and the crowd engaged throughout the night.

A special highlight of the event was our dedicated party hosts, who not only embraced the '80s spirit but also worked tirelessly to raise funds to support the children and families served by Cornerstones of Care. Their commitment and enthusiasm were truly inspiring, as they competed for the title of "Most Fly Fundraiser" at the dance.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our fantastic party hosts:

- **Natalie Nelson, Tiffany Johnson, and Jessica Johnson** from the Waldo Business Association, First Lutheran Education Center, and ONE10.
- **Brian Stewart and Jessica Best Stewart** representing Kansas City Orthopedic Alliance and BetterAve LLC.
- **Kyle Tritsarolis** from H&R Block.
- **Mo Awad** of Evergy.
- **Denise Hamalainen** from NASB.
- **Katie and Michael Culbertson** representing Cornerstones of Care and SSC Technologies.

The success of this event would not have been possible without the generosity and dedication of our hosts, volunteers, and everyone who attended. Each donation and every effort contributed making a significant impact on the lives of the children and families we serve. ✨

Redesigned Training Helps Foster Inclusivity for LGBTQ+ Youth



Like many Cornerstones of Care employees, Case Management Specialist Adam Branson is required to complete annual training to stay current on trauma-informed practices for working with youth and families. In his role, Adam serves as a liaison between the Ozanam Campus Residential Treatment program youth, their families, and legal representation. The diverse training for front-line team members like Adam ranges from administering medications to working with youth on the autism spectrum.

In April, Adam signed up for the LGBTQ+ All-Inclusive course, a newly redesigned cohort-style training that educates participants on the LGBTQ+ experience and identifies steps in providing a safe space for LGBTQ+ youth. His oldest stepson is trans, and Adam has seen firsthand how challenging the coming out process can be.

“I saw this course as an opportunity to learn something new and better educate myself with what people may be going through,” he said.

“It wasn’t an issue,” said Adam. “People are understanding and accepting here. We try to show that we’re a safe space. If someone is struggling, we want to make them comfortable and understand what they’re going through.”

The LGBTQ+ All-Inclusive course was relaunched in early 2024 by Training Specialist Jonathan Graham, who spearheaded the process of developing a new curriculum to address the implicit biases and myths that impact team members’ ability to be fully open and accepting of LGBTQ+ youth.

“When we step out of our comfort zones and expand our knowledge and competence, we can be more welcoming to LGBTQ+ youth and even team members,” said Jonathan, who also is the lead facilitator for the course.

The six-hour course dives deeper into topics like gender roles, gender pronouns, the coming out process, and experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in foster care and in schools. The final session is centered on transgender individuals – ways team members can support them, the grief and loss process and who it impacts, and types of transitions.

The course is designed so each session builds on the previous one, and that cohorts build a sense of safety and shared understanding through open dialogue and hands-on activities.

Melissa Taylor, Director of Human Resources Operations, wasn’t required to take the LGBTQ+ All-Inclusive course but believes that everybody should participate.

“I believe it’s important for our support staff and administration,” said Melissa. “As HR, our clients are our team members, and we need to be advocates for them and ensure that we have a WIDE community.”

At Cornerstones of Care, this sense of personal responsibility and commitment to fostering a WIDE (welcoming, inclusive, diverse, and equitable) community is embedded into the culture. High-quality trainings, such as the LGBTQ+ All-Inclusive course, equip team members with the language and tools needed to deliver state-of-the-art trauma-informed care, demonstrating an ongoing commitment to WIDE principles.

Many of our courses are available year-round to community members and meet continuing education requirements. We currently offer a shorter, three-hour online version of the LGBTQ+ All-Inclusive course for foster parents wanting to learn how to create open and accepting environments for their placements. ✨



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We'd like to thank the following funders without whom our work could not be done:

- Children Services Fund of Jackson Co.
- St. Louis County Children's Service Fund
- Jackson Co. Community-Backed Anti-Drug Tax (COMBAT)
- Jackson Co. Community Mental Health Fund
- Mo. Dept. of Economic Development: Neighborhood Assistance Program
- Mo. Dept. of Economic Development: Youth Opportunities Program
- Children's Services Fund of Clay County
- United Way of Greater Kansas City

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Spirit Gala Pairs Elegance with Philanthropy for One Special Evening

Get ready to step into the spotlight at the annual Spirit Gala, returning this November with a dazzling Hollywood Glam theme. This red-carpet fundraiser celebrates the giving spirit of our Cornerstones of Care community and is a unique opportunity to pair elegance with philanthropy for one memorable evening at the Overland Park Convention Center on Friday, November 8.

This year, we'll honor our extraordinary Spirit Award recipients, Christine and Robert Leyva and the Kansas City Young Matrons, recognizing their remarkable contributions to our Kansas City community and to the mission of Cornerstones of Care. Attendees will delight in a three-course dinner accompanied by drinks from the open bar while participating in our live and silent auctions. Bids will not only win unique prizes and experiences but also support the vital work of Cornerstones of Care.

Tickets for the event are available at cornerstonesofcare.org/gala. Don't miss this glamorous night and the chance to make a significant impact by raising funds for our programs and services. *



cornerstonesofcare.org/gala