The Power of Virtual Reality for Children’s Mental Health

The OPIOID EPIDEMIC’S Effect on Children & How You Can Help

Creating the First-Ever COLLEGE FOR YOUTH EMERGING FROM FOSTER CARE

KIDS Won’t Listen? Here’s Why and How to Change It
Dear Friends,

At KVC Health Systems, innovation is part of our core identity. A commitment to innovation permeates our 47-year history and guides our strategy for the future; it’s written in our DNA.

At its heart, innovation is implementing new ideas that unlock new value. This process is critical for organizations of all types because it increases engagement among people and teams, leads to new products and services, and ultimately creates a better world. Innovation sometimes means solving problems that are so long-standing, they seem permanent, normal, even acceptable. For the KVC team, “unsolvable” is a challenge we can’t resist. As Walt Disney said, “It’s quite fun to do the impossible.”

Passion for innovation is the reason that so many stories in our newly-renamed and redesigned magazine, Thriving, are about creating new solutions. In this issue, you’ll read about how we’re:

• Exploring the use of virtual reality for child and adolescent mental health, knowing the power it holds for achieving mindfulness and decreasing anxiety (pg. 6),

• Developing a specialized college for youth aging out of foster care — the first of its kind in the nation — that will help address the national crisis of 30,000 youth aging out of foster care each year without a permanent family or home (pg. 9), and

• Advancing solutions to the opioid addiction crisis, ranging from expanded substance abuse treatment services in underserved areas to recruiting more foster families to care for the children affected by this epidemic (pg. 12).

Coming up with new ideas is fun, but that’s not why we do it. We prioritize innovation because families and communities face serious problems: childhood adversity including abuse, neglect and other hardships; drug addiction; mental health crises and rising suicide rates; and more. We must innovate to solve these challenges. As we often say, “Children can’t wait.”

Thank you for supporting KVC. Whether you are a partner, client, foster or adoptive parent, donor, volunteer, or team member, you are making a transformative difference in the lives of children, adults and families.

Sincerely,

Jason Hooper
President and CEO

www.kvc.org

FREE RESOURCES
Get guides, eBooks and more
Visit www.kvc.org/free
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The Power of **VIRTUAL REALITY** for Children’s Mental Health

Imagine swimming deep in the Pacific Ocean, watching a brightly-colored fish peacefully pass by you. Now imagine standing on top of a mountain, seeing across green hilltops for miles around. These are just some of the landscapes and worlds youth at KVC Prairie Ridge Hospital are able to experience by using virtual reality (VR).

— continued
VR has been at the top of popular holiday toy lists, but in recent years, the technology has expanded into the mental and behavioral healthcare space. To its knowledge, KVC is one of the first organizations to use VR specifically for child and adolescent mental health, and, in particular, with children who have experienced severe trauma such as abuse or neglect. Children and teens who are receiving psychiatric treatment at KVC Prairie Ridge Hospital in Kansas City, Kansas for depression, anxiety, and other behavioral health needs are able to use VR during treatments to help create a calming safe space.

"We often think of therapy as two individuals sitting face-to-face talking, but in pediatric care, the therapist uses various mediums including music, art, play and drama to facilitate therapeutic growth and healing," said James Roberson, L.M.S.W., Vice President of Program Services at KVC Hospitals. "Immediately we could see that using VR in therapy created joy and excitement, which as a clinician is amazing to see in trauma-focused treatment. After the novelty began to decrease, we were even more excited to see the calm and real curiosity the VR experience provides. Children are showing us new ways to use VR every day."

The VR sessions used in behavioral treatment facilitate new approaches to meditation, environment and landscape exploration, and art and expression therapy. Youth can create personalized pathways to allow them to visit a place in virtual reality where they feel safe or happy. This technology creates a sense of engagement that is far stronger than other treatment modalities. Through treatments, the KVC Institute determined that VR has the potential to enhance clinical practices through role-playing, sensory integration, executive function, socialization, decision-making, and pleasant imagery.

"VR technology takes down the walls of traditional ways of learning and opens a world of creative possibilities. As the research, training and consultation arm of the agency, the KVC Institute for Health Systems Innovation aims to unleash that creativity and maximize human potential," said Sue Lohrbach, Executive Director of the KVC Institute.

The possible applications of this new technology are nearly endless. The Technology Innovation Officer of the KVC Institute, Shawn Gross, recently presented the initial findings of the use of virtual reality for children and teens in behavioral healthcare at the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Mobile Learning Week Conference in Paris, France. Delegates from more than 30 countries participated in KVC’s workshop.

"Virtual reality has the potential to offer radically new and innovative methods for treatment in behavioral health. Due to decreasing costs and portability, virtual reality will be able to increase access to new services and treatments," said Gross.

To learn more about the use of virtual reality at KVC, visit [www.kvc.org/virtualreality](http://www.kvc.org/virtualreality).

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First-Ever College for Youth Emerging from Foster Care

KVC Health Systems is working with partners to bring a vision to life: the creation of a specialized career college for youth aging out of foster care. One possible location for the college is the campus of WVU Tech (West Virginia University Institute of Technology) in Montgomery, West Virginia, which will be vacated soon due to WVU Tech’s relocation.

The plan is an innovative response to a national tragedy that affects communities across the U.S. Each year, nearly 30,000 youth age out of the foster care system without a permanent family or home. Research shows that this lack of support puts them at high risk of homelessness, unemployment, illness, incarceration, early childbearing, sexual and physical victimization, and being unable to reach their full potential. While virtually all states have extended foster care funding to age 21, no national model of success exists.

KVC’s college is a promising solution to help youth transition to healthy, thriving adulthoods.

An Innovative Solution with Local and National Benefits

While the possible Montgomery location is new, KVC has invested years of work into its plan. It hoped to acquire a closing naval base in West Virginia as the site, but that property was sold. The possible Montgomery location gained attention earlier this year when Governor Jim Justice recognized KVC Health Systems at the beginning of his first State of the State Address.

What makes KVC’s college concept unique is the combination of vocational training in high-demand fields such as healthcare, IT and hospitality services along with specialized behavioral healthcare support and career readiness training. Youth who have entered foster care due to abuse, neglect or other family challenges have often experienced trauma, and the compassionate support of therapists and other professionals will help them learn the skills needed for successful independent living.

While details are still to be finalized, leaders and organizations across the U.S. have endorsed KVC’s plan. Organizations ranging from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago have stated that a college experience designed for this population will be an important contribution to the success of young people transitioning from foster care to adulthood.

Learn more online at [www.kvc.org/collegeupdate](http://www.kvc.org/collegeupdate).
It happens to every parent — you want your child to do something but they don’t do it. You’re forced to repeat yourself multiple times, eventually resorting to begging, pleading, and even making threats to try and get your child to comply. This is a common frustration felt among parents everywhere, and luckily, there is a solution for getting your kids to listen to you.

It may come as a surprise but often the reason that children don’t follow directions is related to how parents give directions. Can you identify with one of these typical approaches?

- **Nagging/screaming** (in a very loud voice) “You never do what you’re supposed to do. Why can’t you be like other kids?”
- **Making threats** “If you don’t pick up your clothes, I’m going to throw them in the trash.”
- **Giving unclear/vague directions** “Let’s not do that anymore.”
- **Using too many words** “Now, after you finish making your bed, you need to get dressed, comb your hair, brush your teeth…”
- **Asking a question** “How about eating your food at the table?”
- **Using stop commands** “Stop yelling! Don’t do that!”

These are the approaches that parents often use. And often, they don’t work.

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**Kids Won’t Listen? Here’s Why and How to Change It**

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**Meet Children Who Need a Forever Family**

Each of these children needs and deserves a forever family. Watch videos and search additional child profiles at [http://adoption.kvc.org](http://adoption.kvc.org). To inquire, call 888-655-5500 or email adoptionspecialist@kvc.org.

- **LEXI (10)**
  - Lexi is a loving child who likes to read, play outside and go for walks. She loves animals and would be very receptive of a home with pets! In school, it’s no surprise reading isLexi’s favorite subject. Lexi is very sweet, in particular to her foster sister with a disability. KVC is seeking a Kansas family that will help Lexi remain connected to services she needs and provide her with unconditional love.

- **MORGAN (15)**
  - Morgan is an energetic young man who likes history and science. He enjoys watching the History channel and learning about science. Morgan is interested in tanks, and he likes to take things apart. When he grows up, Morgan would like to have a career working with electronics. Morgan also really enjoys playing video games, and would like to have a family that would spend more time at home than out and about. Morgan needs a family that can help him learn to manage his emotions in a healthy way and help him thrive as he grows into adulthood.

- **LEON (15)**
  - Leon is a talented drawer who enjoys singing, dancing, sports, and helping others. His favorite classes are math, reading, and biology and he enjoys playing basketball and football. When he grows up, Leon has aspirations of becoming a professional singer. Leon wants a family that he can count on and a family that is patient. Leon deserves a family that can provide him with structure, patience, and support.

- **JACOB (10)**
  - Jacob is an athletic young man who likes playing outside and riding his bike. His other hobbies include building things and playing with Hot Wheels and video games. Jacob does well in school and is a good student and classmate. His favorite subject in class is reading, and he enjoys getting to hear a good story. Jacob says that he would like to be a fireman or a professional video gamer when he is older. Jacob needs a patient family that can provide a calm, predictable and consistent environment.
Our nation is in the midst of an unprecedented opioid epidemic. Opioid addiction refers to dependence on prescription painkillers such as oxycodone, hydrocodone and morphine or the illicit drug heroin.

Over the past few years, opioid overdoses have accounted for 63% of drug overdose deaths. In 2015, over 33,000 Americans died from an opioid overdose; currently, 91 people die every day from opioids. The epidemic is not tied to only one region or demographic, meaning no community is immune to this crisis.

One of many tragic effects is that the opioid epidemic has had a startling effect on the ability of many parents to safely care for their children. This has resulted in increases in the number of children in foster care nationwide. Unfortunately, the availability of people willing to provide temporary foster care to children hasn’t kept up with number of children needing homes.

From 2012 to 2015, the percentage of removals of children from their homes that cited parental substance use as a contributing factor increased 13 percent (from 28.5 percent in 2012 to 32.2 percent in 2015). Several states in the Appalachia region, especially Kentucky and West Virginia, have reported an increase in children entering foster care faster than they are leaving. The numbers speak volumes as there are now more children in foster care in these states than there were four years ago.

KVC is exploring ways to expand substance abuse treatment in underserved areas and also increasing its efforts to attract new foster families.

Whether or not you personally know someone affected by opioid addiction, there’s an important way you can help. The need for loving, supportive people willing to provide foster care to children and teens is greater than ever. You can significantly help a child impacted by the opioid crisis by becoming a foster parent. KVC will support you throughout the process and provide 24/7 support.

If you’d like more information on fostering, our website has free guides that provide useful answers and insight about fostering. Visit www.kvc.org/resourcelibrary.
Stunning Results of 5-Year Child Trauma Study

The findings of Bridging the Way Home, the KVC Institute’s five-year initiative to integrate Trauma Systems Therapy (TST) into a comprehensive welfare organization, will be published in a peer-reviewed academic journal. The Children’s Youth Services Review Journal will include two articles on the groundbreaking study in its spring issue, paving the way for health leaders around the world to benefit from its lessons.

In partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Child Trends, and TST creator Dr. Glenn Saxe of The Child Study Center at New York University, this was the largest study ever conducted to implement a research-informed therapeutic model across an organization’s full continuum of care.

Trauma Systems Therapy is a model of care for traumatized children that addresses both the individual child’s emotional needs as well as the social environment in which he or she lives. TST is about breaking down barriers between service systems, understanding a child’s symptoms in the context of his or her world, and building on a family’s strengths.

The study sampled 1,500 children ages 6 and up who entered foster care through KVC Kansas between 2011 and 2014. Due to implementing the TST model, children had improved well-being with improvements in emotion and behavior regulation, placement stability and permanency, which can lead to far better outcomes in later life. KVC developed special training curriculum for those in the children’s immediate circle including all KVC staff and foster parents, giving them the skills and tools to help children in their care.

“This study validates what we have long believed, which is that, with the right interventions applied at the right time, children with significant challenges can and do get better. Implementing and sustaining trauma-informed and focused care changes lives,” said Kelly McCauley, Associate Director of the KVC Institute and project lead for TST implementation and evaluation.

For more information about this study and how KVC will continue to transform the lives of children, visit kvc.org/institute.
Introducing KVC’s New Diversity Leader

KVC Health Systems recently welcomed Rita Holmes-Bobo to the newly-created position of Executive Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. In this role, Holmes-Bobo will champion the inclusion of diverse individuals among KVC’s nearly 1,500 employees in Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Kentucky and West Virginia and in its services to children, adults and families.

KVC Health Systems serves people from a wide variety of backgrounds by providing in-home family support, behavioral healthcare, foster care, adoption, youth substance abuse treatment, and psychiatric hospitals. Through this new diversity office, KVC Health Systems has strengthened its commitment to its core value — “people matter” — by ensuring that all staff, clients and beyond are respected, included in decision-making processes, and treated fairly.

“We’ve always embraced diversity and the privilege of serving diverse families in communities across the U.S.,” said Jason Hooper, President and CEO. “This marks a new level of commitment to our values of diversity, equity and inclusion. I’m excited for Rita to help our leaders and staff live out these values and experience the rich collaboration, creativity and innovation that come from making sure everyone has a seat at the table.”

Rita previously served as President of Niles, which recently became part of KVC Health Systems. Niles has been a treasured part of the Kansas City, Missouri community for 134 years, providing residential and day treatment behavioral health programs for children and adolescents. Prior to leading Niles, Holmes-Bobo led marketing, community engagement and public policy initiatives for Ameren Missouri, Fleishman-Hillard, and Express Scripts. She is a University of Kansas alumna and volunteers with many local organizations.

KVC Health Systems and its subsidiaries are currently seeking talented applicants from diverse backgrounds for dozens of meaningful career opportunities. Learn more at www.kvc.org/careers.

College basketball surged to its peak during the March Madness NCAA tournament, but KU Coach Bill Self still made time for recruiting — that is, recruiting new foster parents. Through a televised spot, Coach Self invited adults to open their hearts and homes to youth who are in foster care due to abuse, neglect and other family challenges. People who respond will not only help a child or teen, but they will also add rich meaning and depth to their own lives. See the commercial at tinyurl.com/kvcself.

Self has served for many years on KVC’s board of directors and headlines the annual KVC Hero Luncheon taking place June 15 in the Kansas City area.

Nationwide there is an urgent need for new kinship and foster families to care for the 428,000 youth in care. The availability of more foster families helps children remain in their schools and communities and with their siblings, minimizing disruption to their lives. People from all types of backgrounds can qualify to foster a child.

Learn more at www.kvc.org/foster.

RITA HOLMES-BOBO
Foster Families from Four States Gather for KVC Resource Family Conference

Nearly 2,000 children and foster parents in the Midwest and Eastern U.S. came together for a weekend of learning, networking and fun at KVC Health Systems’ 18th Resource Family Conference (RFC). The gathering took place March 31–April 1 in three cities: Overland Park, Kansas; Lincoln, Nebraska; and Daniels, West Virginia. The event is a one-of-a-kind training opportunity for kinship, foster and adoptive families who are caring for children who are temporarily in foster care due to abuse, neglect, parental drug use or other family challenges.

These resource families, a term which includes foster and adoptive parents and relatives, heard from guest speakers, networked with other foster parents and learned about topics such as helping youth feel safe and connected, promoting healthy brain development and resilience, and partnering with other members of a child and family’s support team. Children enjoyed fun activities like games, bouncy houses and talent shows.

Each location had a keynote speaker:
- **Derek Clark**, a renowned motivational speaker who was in foster care and author of the book *I will Never Give Up*, spoke in Kansas.
- **Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg**, a pediatrician specializing in adolescent medicine at The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, and Director of Health Services at Covenant House Pennsylvania, spoke in Nebraska.
- **Bob and Beth Hughes Noone**, KVC foster parents and past RFC speakers, spoke to both Kentucky and West Virginia foster families in West Virginia.

Learn more about the event at [www.kvc.org/rfc](http://www.kvc.org/rfc).

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Therapist Exhibits Relentless Effort to Help Young Man

Written by Matt Arnet, L.C.P.C., Director of Outpatient Services, KVC Kansas

I met Josh when he was 13 years old. He had been in and out of foster care for several years, and as a result, he had difficulty managing his emotions, connecting with caregivers and succeeding in school. Josh also suffered from a serious physical health challenge — kidney failure.

In the beginning, it was difficult for me to connect with Josh. He called therapy “stupid” and didn’t participate. Josh was pessimistic and told me that anyone who had ever cared for him had given up.

I refused to give up on Josh, and we eventually formed a working relationship. Josh routinely had challenges that caused him to leave one foster home and move to another (something we work very hard to avoid at KVC), but I just kept showing up and continued to help him.

When Josh was 16, he started dialysis and began the process of applying for a kidney transplant. One key component of a successful transplant is emotional wellness. Josh and I spent many sessions processing the surgery and recovery ahead. I attended Josh’s care team meetings at the hospital and advocated for his mental health progress.

When Josh turned 18, he requested to be released from the foster care system and enrolled in community college, and I lost track of Josh for a while.

In the fall of 2015, I received a text message out of the blue from Josh asking if he could call me. We talked for over two hours. He explained how he had moved several times, struggled with substance abuse, and been taken advantage of by others. He said I was the only person he could trust and needed my help getting back on track. He knew I would always be there for him and that helped keep him going.

Since then, Josh moved back to the area and reconnected with services available to him. He is healthier than he has been in a long time, and he is getting the mental health treatment he needs.

The experience taught me that sometimes the most powerful intervention is making a relentless effort to show someone that you truly care.

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KVC’s 2017 Resource Family Conference

CFO MARILYN JACOBSON  
DEREK CLARK  
DR. KENNETH GINSBURG  
BOB AND BETH HUGHES NOONE

He knew I would always be there for him and that helped keep him going.
Sponsor or attend a FUNDRAISING EVENT

Partner with KVC Health Systems to provide hope and resources to children and families by supporting our three major fundraising events:

- **THURSDAY, JUNE 15**
  - The Sheraton Hotel
  - Overland Park, Kansas

- **MONDAY, AUG. 21**
  - The National Golf Club
  - Parkville, Missouri

- **FRIDAY, NOV. 10**
  - Union Station
  - Kansas City, Missouri

Learn more at kvc.org/sponsor

KVC Launches Public Campaign on Child Brain Development

KVC Health Systems has launched a public awareness campaign centered on healthy brain development in children. See the ads at www.kvc.org/brain.

Through three animated commercials airing on KCPT — Kansas City PBS, KVC Health Systems aims to educate children, caregivers and communities on the critical importance of positive interactions with adults for preparing youth for a lifetime of health and wellness. The latest neuroscience shows that, in order for communities to enjoy health and prosperity, they must ensure that all children have the opportunity to develop healthy brains.

The campaign’s three 15-second spots highlight three related topics:

1. **Healthy Brain Development** — “Did you know that brains are not just born? They’re built through positive interactions. It’s important for every child to have at least one caring adult. Talk with children, ask questions about their interests, and show them you care. Healthy, prosperous communities start with healthy childhoods.”

— continued
Toxic Stress — “Everyone has stress, but did you know that toxic stress interrupts a child’s brain development? Toxic stress results from repeated exposure to abuse, neglect or serious hardship. Let’s protect and nurture children. Healthy, prosperous communities start with healthy childhoods.”

Resilience — “Resilience is the brain’s ability to overcome adversity, and it’s never too late to help children learn new resilience skills such as improved coping and strengthened social skills. Let’s make sure all children have safe communities, supportive caregivers, and time for play. Healthy, prosperous communities start with healthy childhoods.”

The campaign arises out of KVC’s strong track record of bringing trauma-informed care into child welfare, psychiatric residential treatment settings and related systems. KVC expanded its trauma-informed care work into a larger neuroscience initiative, which has benefits for every child and adult, not only those in foster care or children’s psychiatric hospitals. During the last three years, KVC has been one of just 15 U.S. and Canadian nonprofit organizations selected to participate in the Change in Mind initiative led by the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities.

Learn more about this important campaign at www.kvc.org/brain.

Join Us for an Event Near You

KVC Nebraska
June 9-11
KVC Crop for Kids Scrapbooking Fundraiser in Lincoln, NE
More info at www.kvcnebraska.org/scrapbook

KVC West Virginia
June 28
KVC Home. Hope. Heroes. Fundraiser in Charleston, WV
More info at www.kvcwv.org/hhh

KVC Nebraska
Sept. 15
KVC Kids Classic Golf Tournament in Ashland, NE
More info at www.kvcnebraska.org/golf

Donate Back-to-School Supplies

Leading up to every new school year, KVC works to ensure that each child it serves is fully prepared to return to school. Over the summer months, we invite you to extend a helping hand to local children and teens in foster care or involved the child welfare system by donating new backpacks, pens, pencils, calculators, binders and more.

By donating a backpack filled with new school supplies, you are giving a child the best possible start to a successful school year!

Learn more at www.kvc.org/schooldrive

We’re Hiring! Join Our Team

Looking for a career where you can make a positive difference in the lives of children, teens and families? We’re looking for smart, caring professionals like you in Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Kentucky and West Virginia. Open positions include Case Manager, Therapist, Behavioral Health Technician, Registered Nurse (RN), Youth Care Transporter, and many more.

KVC Health Systems is an international leader in providing innovative, effective and compassionate care. Our team members enjoy a competitive salary, a robust benefits program with excellent healthcare, and opportunities for professional advancement.

Learn more and apply at www.kvc.org/careers.

KVC is an Equal Opportunity Employer
## Events Calendar

Visit [www.kvc.org/events](http://www.kvc.org/events) for details on these events and others.

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