

# thriving

## From Foster Care to Family Reunited

When Breanne's children entered foster care, she embraced the support offered to her to become a successful and confident parent

 KVC Health Systems

Spring/Summer 2018

**Elmo,  
Big Bird  
& Cookie  
Monster**

Are Helping  
Traumatized Children

*Find Out How.*

You Won't Believe This

**Extreme  
Makeover**  
at a KVC Cottage

KVC's **NEW COLLEGE**  
in **West Virginia**

Gets Name, Opening Date

**Raw Emotions,  
Real Insights:**

*Learning from Parents in  
the Child Welfare System*



# Caring Adults Needed

## Foster parenting is one of the best ways to help children in crisis

Over 400,000 children and teens in the United States — including in your own local community — have experienced abuse, neglect or other family challenges. Foster parenting provides a child with a safe, loving environment. It will also enrich your life with joy and meaning. People from all kinds of life situations can qualify!

### We'll guide you every step of the way by providing:

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- Assistance finding local resources
- A fun weekend away at our Resource Family Conference, which provides a fantastic learning experience for parents and children
- And, of course, monthly reimbursement to meet the child's needs plus assistance with back-to-school supplies and holiday gifts.



Contact us to learn more. [www.kvc.org/foster](http://www.kvc.org/foster)

We offer **FREE** training classes and support you every step of the way.

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO



Dear Friends,

A couple months ago, country superstar Luke Bryan released a song called, *"I Believe Most People Are Good."* In it, he sings, "I believe kids ought to stay kids as long as they can" and "most mamas ought to qualify for sainthood." The lyrics also say, "I believe if you just go by the nightly news, your faith in all mankind would be the first thing you lose."

It may be a new song (and trust me, I know country music isn't for everyone), but it's an idea that has been the foundation of KVC Health Systems for nearly 50 years. Most people *are* good. Most people want to live a good life; have a strong, healthy family; and give their children a safe, happy childhood. Even families that struggle in significant ways, such as becoming involved with the child welfare system or experiencing addiction or other mental illness,

simply want connection and support. The vast majority of people who engage with KVC's services have challenges because of the adversity they endured as children and the real ways that those experiences affected their brain development and lifelong health.

Faith in people to make changes and reach their full potential has paved the way for us to be part of some amazing stories of personal and community transformation. In this issue of *Thriving*, you can read about several remarkable people including:

- **Breanne**, a mother whose children needed temporary foster care, but who quickly gained the confidence and skills to bring them safely back home (pg. 6),
- **Ellen McCarthy**, the founding mother of KVC, who recently passed away, leaving an incomparable legacy of seeing the best in children and families in need (pg. 13),
- **A team of volunteers and donors** who did an extreme makeover at a KVC Prairie Ridge Hospital cottage, brightening the environment for children and teens receiving psychiatric residential treatment (pg. 17).

Thank you for continuing to believe in people and supporting KVC as a team member, client, foster or adoptive family, donor, volunteer, or partner. Often just being there for others is the catalyst they need to be their best.

Sincerely,

Jason Hooper  
President and CEO



[www.kvc.org](http://www.kvc.org)







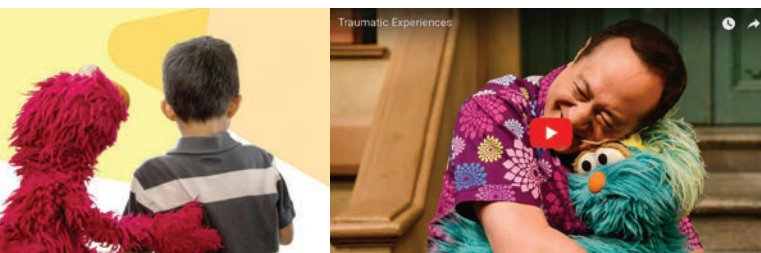
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### KVC MISSION:

To enrich and enhance the lives of children and families by providing medical and behavioral healthcare, social services and education.

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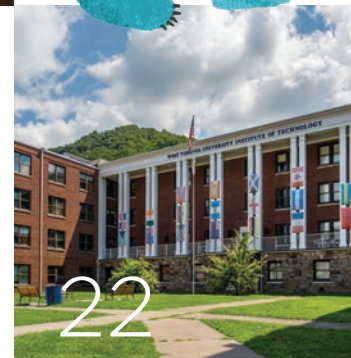
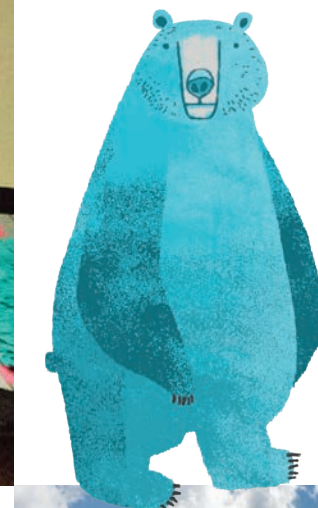
Compared to five years ago, Kansas has 39% more children in foster care. KVC Kansas is working to safely prevent and reduce the number of children in care and strengthen its workforce.

### 20 People on the Move

See our leaders across the country who were recently hired, promoted or recognized for their accomplishments.

### 21 KVC Kentucky Opens New Headquarters and Walk-In Clinic

The new building includes a walk-in behavioral health clinic. People facing depression, anxiety, thoughts of suicide, addiction or substance use, or other challenges can receive an immediate assessment without an appointment.



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From Foster Care to Family Reunited:

# Mother Gains Confidence, Healthy Skills to Bring Her Children Safely Home



Breanne and her children Gavin and Bailey became involved in the child welfare system in 2016. The children's father struggled with serious mental illness, which impacted his ability to properly care for his children. He also acted violently towards Breanne, so the state child welfare agency and the court system deemed it necessary to intervene.

It was determined that Gavin was malnourished and failing to thrive, so the children were removed from the home and placed in foster care while both parents received support in order to safely reunite their family. Unfortunately, the children's father wasn't open to working with KVC support workers or seeking help for his mental health needs. A judge made the decision to restrict the father's visits with the kids until he met the requirements of his case plan.

Breanne, however, embraced the support KVC offered to her. She completed parenting classes, participated in individual and family therapy, and learned about healthy child nutrition. During this time, she also gained confidence in herself and her ability to care for her children as a single parent.

"When Breanne and her children came to KVC, she was having a hard time in life and she needed to make some changes," said Kellie Hans Reid who oversaw the team providing aftercare services to her family. "KVC staff were there to help support her in the changes she was making and help her believe in herself and know that she did have the skills to be a great mother to her kids."

"I didn't feel like I was being judged at any point in time," said Breanne of KVC's services. "I didn't feel like anyone thought that I was a horrible mother. It was just that some circumstances happened and I was doing my very best to get them back. I was told on multiple occasions that people were very proud of me, that I'm a very strong person, and I really needed that at certain times when I was close to giving up on myself."

Hans Reid says that the hopeful, respectful approach taken by KVC staff influenced Breanne in a positive way. "Because KVC social workers advocated for Breanne and her children, Breanne really began to learn how to advocate for herself and be a good advocate for her children."

"I'm not just a mom," Breanne said. "I'm also a person myself and I learned that I need to make sure I know what I want for myself so that I can help my kids. There were times where it just seemed so overwhelming but what kept me going was knowing that I would be reunited with my kids."

Gavin and Bailey were able to safely return home to Breanne's care in less than one year. Being a single parent isn't easy, but with help from relatives and several other community supports, this family continues to succeed. Breanne enjoys doing activities with her kids and teaching them new things including how to share and keep their bedroom clean. Her ability to be a patient, structured and confident parent is truly something to be admired.



"We like to play outside. We like to color. We like to sit down and watch movies, especially when I make popcorn and hot chocolate."

The KVC team applauds the hard work that Breanne completed to safely reunite her family. "Breanne's resilience and strength has really demonstrated what we want for all of our families – for families to be reunited and to be happy and safe together," said Hans Reid.

Through our partnership with the Kansas Department for Children and Families, KVC was able to help safely reunify 993 children with their 590 families after being in foster care last year, and provided services to another 10,000 children and adults to prevent the need for foster care. We provide similar services in other states and are proud to play a role in strengthening families.



Watch a short video of Breanne's story and learn more at [www.kvckansas.org/breanne](http://www.kvckansas.org/breanne).



# Sesame Street Releases Tools to Help Children Affected by Trauma

Niles, an organization in the KVC Health Systems family, shared this article on its blog at [www.nileskc.org](http://www.nileskc.org). Niles provides compassionate behavioral health programs for children and teens in the heart of Kansas City, Missouri.



Everyone can name some of the characters on Sesame Street. There's Big Bird, Cookie Monster, and Elmo, of course. They all live on Sesame Street and help children learn their numbers and letters. Now, the popular children's show has introduced a more serious topic: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Traumatic experiences like abuse, neglect, domestic violence, parental divorce, and others can impact a child's mental and physical health, brain development and life expectancy. As part of the Sesame Street in Communities initiative to support children, parents, and caregivers, the show has released new resources to help families and children who have experienced trauma learn to cope.

## Helping Children Affected by Trauma



Sesame Street in Communities' free materials on trauma cover topics such as feeling safe, managing emotions, self-care, relaxation, breathing strategies, and expressing feelings. It is important for children who have

experienced trauma to know these skills because they may not be able to find the right words to explain how they are feeling, they may feel a loss of trust, and they may even have thoughts of sadness, fear or anxiety.

Over half of U.S. children have experienced at least one Adverse Childhood Experience, and one in five have experienced at least two traumatic events, according to a 2016 National Survey of Children's Health. All people react differently to trauma but left unaddressed, it

can lead to increased health risks later in life. Health problems could include alcohol abuse, depression, increased risk of cancer, suicide, and many others.



## Hope for a Healthy Future

With these resources, caring adults can help children who are affected by trauma move beyond those experiences. Sesame Street's videos, storybooks, and games speak directly to children while allowing parents and caregivers to start conversations and help to make connections. The initiative has also released content for adults to implement healthy coping strategies in their own lives, understand trauma from a child's perspective and build on their own skills.

Find all of the free resources online at [SesameStreetInCommunities.org](http://SesameStreetInCommunities.org).

# Meet Children Who Need a Forever Family

We're honored to play a role in matching children with loving forever families in Kansas, Nebraska, Kentucky and West Virginia. Due to our role as a lead foster care agency in Kansas, we're able to share photos and videos of Kansas children like those below at <http://adoption.kvc.org>. To inquire, please call (888) 655-5500 or email [adoptionspecialist@kvc.org](mailto:adoptionspecialist@kvc.org). To see children near you who need adoptive families, visit [www.AdoptUSKids.org](http://www.AdoptUSKids.org).



## CODY (12)

Cody is intelligent, laid back and has a lot of love to give. He's quick to laugh and enjoys being around other people. Cody, who is nonverbal, communicates with body language. You'll know he's

happy and content when he's smiling and laughing. He will do best with a family that has a strong support system, and will see that Cody has the resources and supports in place to realize his full potential.



## CHRISTOPHER (15)

Watch my video online!

Chris is an energetic teenager who is full of life and has many interests including running, basketball, golf, football, and spending

time outside. Chris is a bright and capable student with the ability to achieve and maintain good grades. He would greatly benefit from an adoptive family willing to set aside a specific time for homework, oversee the completion of his assignments and support him as needed.



## ERIN (13) and EIN (15)

Watch our video online!

Erin and Ein are a sister and brother who hope to be adopted together! Erin is witty,

intelligent and enjoys reading, drawing and playing outside. Ein is kind, enjoys helping others, participates in Boy Scouts, and likes building projects. They will thrive with a family that provides structure, consistency and unconditional love.



## DALTON (16)

Dalton is a caring and sweet young man. He enjoys playing sports, outdoor activities, and animals. He plays football, basketball, and baseball and enjoys hunting and riding four-wheelers. With the help of teachers and counselors, he continues

to make great progress in school and is proud to see such an improvement in his grades. He needs a patient family that can offer calm guidance and help him in utilizing healthy coping skills. Dalton has a lot of love to give and deserves a family that is committed to loving him unconditionally.



# Raw Emotions, Real Insights:

## Learning from Parents in the Child Welfare System

Most people know that the child welfare system is set up to protect children — even the name says “child” welfare. Child welfare systems investigate reports of child abuse and neglect, provide services to families that need assistance, arrange for children to live in safety when they are not safe at home, and arrange for reunification, adoption or other permanent family connections for children leaving foster care.

But children always exist in *families*; not on their own. Both research and common sense tell us that the best way to help children is to strengthen their parents or other family members to provide a safe, loving place for them.

For this reason, KVC Kansas, which serves thousands of families in the child welfare system each year, recently began some innovative approaches to learn from parents. Dr. Linda Bass, Vice President of Clinical Services and Wellbeing, launched a group for parents whose children had either been removed from home and placed in temporary foster care, or who were required to participate in state-funded services to prevent foster care. Her work was guided by a planning tool produced by the Annie E. Casey Foundation called “*Engaging Parents, Developing Leaders*.”

“Parents are the people we are serving, so we wanted their voices to be a central part of everything we do, from creating programs to training staff.”

“Parents are the people we are serving, so we wanted their voices to be a central part of everything we do, from creating programs to training staff.” “Our goal was to find out what quality of services we were providing and if there were ways we could support parents more. These parents have already provided so many insights which we’re putting into action, making our services better for the next family.”

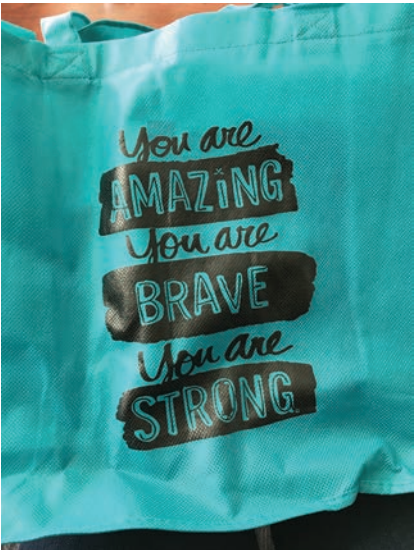
Dr. Bass started the group over one year ago, convening the group every other month. The parents themselves decided to take the meetings on the road, visiting each of KVC’s 12 offices in Kansas. Each time,

the meeting starts mid-morning with a gathering of the birth parents along with all the staff in that office. There is a parents panel in which the parents share their stories of facing the child welfare system. Few dry eyes are left in the room as parents express the fear, anger, frustration and deep pain they felt as a result of having their children taken from them. They recount the long, often difficult process of completing parenting classes; finding safe, stable housing or employment; working to overcome substance use or addiction; and moving toward that day when they would finally be safely reunited with their children.

One common theme among the parents is that they lacked a support network of family or friends. When life dealt them hard blows, they felt alone in weathering those storms. Some even asked for professional help but didn’t qualify for services. They were told that their problems were not significant enough to warrant assistance. Unfortunately, this reflects the nationwide reality that preventative services are often significantly less funded than higher-level interventions like foster care. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, but taxpayers and state budgets don’t always heed that logic.

After the panel discussion, the parents and staff mingle over lunch. Then the parents in the group have their meeting afterward. Each time the group meets, new parents from that county join and share their stories. It slows down the momentum, making it difficult to complete an entire agenda, but the stories are cathartic and they resonate.

The group is making big plans for June which is National Family Reunification Month, celebrating the families who did the hard work needed to bring their children safely home after foster care. Last year, KVC held three “Families United” picnic celebrations. This year, the group is quadrupling that effort to get to 12 events — one for every KVC Kansas office. This will allow parents from all 30 Kansas counties that KVC serves to participate. The parents are designing the t-shirt that will be worn at these events celebrating families. Staff are working to secure donations of hamburgers, potato salad, cakes and other items from local businesses. The invitation list has been expanded from families who have already reunified, to those who are in preventative services. Essentially anyone receiving child or family services is welcome to attend.



Beyond these summer events, the group is having an impact all year long. KVC now gives parents newly involved in the child welfare system a turquoise welcome bag with the words, “You are amazing, you are brave, you are strong” on the front. The bag includes a letter from the agency’s

leaders, a calendar, a water bottle and other items. The letter affirms that KVC Kansas’ goal is to help the parent(s) bring their children safely back home. That is the happy ending for the majority of families in foster care. Sometimes just hearing that it can be done and that the professionals believe in the parents’ ability to succeed helps the parents believe in themselves.

The group is starting parent support groups in each office. The groups will meet twice a month and provide a safe place for parents at all stages of the journey. KVC has hired its first birth parent to be a KVC Parent Advocate, a paid position that helps to facilitate the support groups, and a second parent will be hired soon.

“These parents are craving support and, because of what they’ve been through, they’re also really good at supporting their peers,” said Dr. Bass. “They can have those difficult conversations with each other and inspire hope. They are organically forming the support networks they need. That has big potential to not only help the families who have reunified, but to also help a family on the brink of a crisis, preventing the need for foster care in the first place.”

KVC Kansas regularly shares videos and written stories of families who have successfully reunited after foster care. Check them out at [www.kvckansas.org/reunify](http://www.kvckansas.org/reunify).





# Singapore Learns About **TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE** from KVC Health Systems



A delegation from Singapore's Ministry of Social and Family Development meets with KVC Health Systems leaders.

Singapore, a sovereign city-state in Southeast Asia, is nearing the completion of a four-year partnership with KVC Health Systems and New York University's Langone Medical Center. The partnership is focused on reducing Singapore's use of congregate care for children such as large group care facilities and making the transition to community-based care, such as foster families.

KVC's partnership with Singapore was also designed to enhance Singapore's child welfare system by expanding training strategies for social work staff and parents, reintegration strategies for children and their families, specialized services for children, the use of evidence-based tools such as Trauma Systems Therapy (TST), and the capabilities of community-based supports.

One fact that prompted the partnership was that 70% of the children and youth in Singapore's foster care system were living in congregate residential homes such as large group care facilities, yet research shows that children grow better in the context of a family.

In Kansas, KVC helped safely reduce the congregate care rate from 30% in 1996 to less than 4% just a few years later, and has continued to promote family supports in child welfare throughout all of its locations.

Through the partnership, Singapore's Ministry of Family and Social Development received consulting and training from KVC Health Systems that included the

implementation of the comprehensive Trauma Systems Therapy model for treating traumatic stress in four pilot sites, intensive on-site trainings for sector providers, and hosting of three delegations from Singapore to review child welfare and residential best practices in the United States.

Singapore has made great strides throughout the partnership by creating safer and healthier environments and supports for youth. They have significantly increased the number of foster homes and community-based and family preservation services to keep youth in their communities and out of residential centers. They have developed sustainable, trauma-informed therapeutic residential treatment programs and have sector-wide strategies to address and mitigate the impact of trauma and adversity.

KVC and Singapore will continue their partnership to improve systems of care. They are planning additional pilot sites in 2019 and launching related projects with residential partners.

To learn more about KVC's consulting and training services, please visit [www.kvc.org/institute](http://www.kvc.org/institute).



Senior Parliamentary Secretary and Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim (right) presents a meaningful gift to Jason Hooper, President and CEO, KVC Health Systems.



ELLEN MCCARTHY

## Tribute to Ellen McCarthy, a Founding Mother of KVC

*This past December, Ellen McCarthy passed away. She is the founder of what has grown to become KVC Health Systems. Wayne Sims, co-chair of KVC's Board of Directors and past CEO for 35 years, shared a eulogy at the memorial service in her honor. Excerpts of that eulogy are below. Ellen's enormous generosity and care for others will be greatly missed.*

I first met Ellen 37 years ago after I had just been hired to be the director of this organization called Wyandotte House.

I thought then that Ellen had to be a very courageous, competent, caring woman who was definitely full of love and certainly brave enough to start a nonprofit organization.

The way I was told the story, Ellen had been volunteering at a place called Kaw View Detention Center, a place where youthful offenders were taken prior to some kind of dispositional hearing. Ellen had a minor in Art from Saint Mary College and she began volunteering at Kaw View to provide art classes.

Something very special happened to her while she was there. She began seeing children being brought to the facility for being neglected, abused or homeless. So if you are a very courageous, very competent, very caring woman full of love, what do you do?

**In other words, one woman, in one county, and in one state, saw something that wasn't right and stepped forward to do something that no one else had considered.**

Well it was obvious to Ellen. You start a nonprofit organization for children: first for boys she had met in her art classes and then for girls. Oh, and by the way, Ellen and the ladies who followed her as their leader put up their own money to buy the first group home and, guess what? These ladies, as the story goes, did this without uttering a single word to their husbands.

Well, the organization continued to grow because it was founded by a lady who was courageous, who was competent, who was caring and who was full of love. She would not allow this fledgling organization to fail even though it was a monumental effort.

In other words, one woman, in one county, and in one state, saw something that wasn't right and stepped

forward to do something that no one else had considered. This was a woman who saw children who should have been growing up in a loving family but instead were growing up in an institution. This was not acceptable to Ellen.

Over the years, the organization changed names as it began to grow beyond Wyandotte County, Kansas. She never stopped volunteering. In fact, she even attended some KVC events in 2017.

Now if you fast forward 37 years, Wyandotte House is now called KVC Health Systems.

The organization Ellen originally created now provides medical care, psychiatric inpatient and outpatient services, in-home services, foster care and adoption services and most of these are provided in multiple states.

And through the KVC Institute, the latest child welfare research techniques are being dispensed in multiple states and around the world. Each year across the United States, KVC finds forever, adoptive parents for an average of 500 children in foster care. Overall, KVC reaches 60,000 lives through its national services annually.

So why do some individuals seem to care so much? Some seem to really care about feeding the hungry or providing clothes to those in need or even founding a nonprofit organization for children without parents.

I suspect it has something to do with their intrinsic traits. Ellen had the traits of being courageous, of being competent, of being caring and of being full of love.

What is love? God is love. Of all of Ellen's great traits, I think the greatest one she possessed was that of love. Perhaps, just perhaps, as you looked into Ellen's face, you may have actually gotten a glimpse of the divine.





# Nebraska Family Adopts Children Again, Keeps Sisters Together



Crystal and Paul Neun are a Nebraska couple who wanted their family to include children. Because they were unable to have children biologically, they decided to explore the process of adopting a child from foster care.

“We saw that there are children in the foster care system that need homes and guidance. We felt like we could provide that,” said Paul. “We were always open to adoption, but also knew our first priority as foster parents was to safely reunite a child with their family whenever possible.”

The Neuns provided foster care to several children who were able to be safely reunited with their birth families and went home. Eventually they met a young boy named DeMar who needed a forever home. The couple finalized the adoption of their son DeMar on National Adoption Day in November 2014 (read that story on our blog at [www.kvcnebraska.org/demar](http://www.kvcnebraska.org/demar)).

The Neuns continued to expand their family, adopting another boy named Dominic, and became a family of four. They knew that they could still offer a loving home to children in need.

The Neuns were asked to care for sisters Evie and Maddie shortly after they were born. After some time in foster care, it was determined that Evie and Maddie would need an adoptive family. Crystal always hoped to add a girl to their family full of boys, so they began the process to adopt the two sisters.

“Every child we foster, we treat like our own children,” said Paul. “And even after they leave our home, we still see them as our family. When adopting both Maddie and Evie became possible, it was just them becoming our family permanently.”

On National Adoption Day on November 18, 2017, the adoptions of Evie and Maddie were finalized. DeMar

and Dominic wore t-shirts that said “Big Brother” to celebrate their new siblings.

## Crystal and Paul offer the following advice for other adults who are considering adopting from foster care:

- **Have the patience to know that a child’s physical, mental and emotional state is not caused by you.**  
Have the patience to deal with the constant changes in both your life and the child’s life. There have been several times where last minute changes drove us crazy because we strove to provide some form of consistency and stability for the kids.
- **Love the child as if they were your own biological child and treat them as such.**  
Some may not accept your love, but that doesn’t mean you still can’t provide it. Know that what you are doing will eventually help that child in some form or another.
- **Meet other foster parents and form a support system.**  
It’s good to have support from those familiar with what you are going through. You can also help others in the same way.



There are 428,000 U.S. children and teens in foster care due to abuse, neglect or other family challenges. While most will be safely reunified with their birth families, there are many waiting to be adopted.

Learn more about adopting from foster care or becoming a foster parent to help a child in crisis at [www.kvc.org](http://www.kvc.org).

# Driven to Serve: An Interview with the President of KVC Hospitals

Understanding people and having a drive to serve helps Ryan Speier, President of KVC Hospitals, as he leads a team of nearly 400 people at KVC’s network of children’s psychiatric hospitals, which recently expanded to provide adult psychiatric treatment as well. The teams at KVC Prairie Ridge Hospital in Kansas City, Kansas and KVC Wheatland Hospital in Western Kansas (Hays) help children, teens, and adults who are struggling with depression, anxiety, thoughts of self-harm, the effects of trauma, and other mental and behavioral health challenges.

We joined him for a conversation about how KVC Hospitals is helping people and what’s to come.



we can serve our clients. Our opportunity to collaborate with community partners can allow for more treatment spaces and greater reach to those in need.

## Few people know what a children’s psychiatric hospital is actually like. Can you explain how you help children and teens?

Our hospitals create a healing environment; a safe place for people who are going through the worst time in their lives. Our employees are wonderful. They are so passionate and giving to those we serve. I have to give a big thank you to our employees because they do such important work and commit to a high level of care and treatment.

We want everyone who walks through our doors to see that there are different ways to look at life. We show them there are different opportunities and there are people who feel the way they feel so they are not alone. We give them a tool belt full of skills so they can lead healthy lives in their communities.

## What are some of the greatest challenges KVC Hospitals is facing right now and how is it addressing them?

Our greatest goal is to close our doors because everyone would be healthy and there wouldn’t be a need for psychiatric care. But, we do exist because there is a need.

Unfortunately, there is a high level of need for our services right now. The number of children and teens admitted to a psychiatric hospital for suicidal thoughts or actions has doubled over the past decade. We need more treatment spaces, Resilience Centers, Learning Labs, and space for expressive therapies. The more space we have for treatment opportunities, the better

## What do you hope KVC Hospitals achieves in the next year?

In the next year, we hope to continue to extend our reach and help more people. There are communities that need our level of care. We also want to hire more amazing individuals who want to be active in helping children, adults, and families achieve a higher level of health. We want more people to understand how KVC can benefit families and impact communities for the better.

## What do you want people to understand about mental and behavioral healthcare?

For the population of youth we get to work with, I would like people to understand that there are not inherently bad kids. If we recognize that it’s not the kids’ fault that something traumatizing has occurred in their life, then we’re going to help those kids get better with the understanding that it is a brain problem, not a behavior problem. That’s how we’re training our employees and that’s how we’re treating the youth in our care.

## How can people get involved in the great work done at KVC Hospitals?

We’re looking for energetic employees to help the people we serve, community partners we can work with to help get our expertise into new neighborhoods and donors so we can better assist in areas that need our services.

Read the expanded feature article with Ryan Speier at [www.kvchospitals.org/ryanspeier](http://www.kvchospitals.org/ryanspeier)



# Niles Celebrates 135th Anniversary of Helping Children in Kansas City



From humble beginnings in Kansas City, Missouri in 1883 to being part of a national behavioral health organization working to transform the experience of childhood for children, Niles has built a legacy in its 135-year history that it is proud of and will endure. Niles, the newest member of the KVC Health Systems family, is a nonprofit organization that helps children who have experienced traumatic stress or

mental health challenges by providing compassionate behavioral health treatment.

Niles offers two behavioral health programs: day treatment and residential treatment. Day treatment is an alternative education setting for children grades K-12. Youth served often struggle with challenges that make standard classroom learning difficult. In the day treatment program, students can continue their education with additional therapeutic support. Niles also provides residential treatment for children who struggle with mental and behavioral issues.

After a temporary hiatus for the residential treatment program in 2016, Niles joined KVC to ensure its mission would continue to meet the needs of youth and families in the heart of Kansas City. In 2017, Niles renovated its campus with tremendous support from the community and reopened its residential treatment program for youth.

As Niles continues to treat children and teens, it hopes to continue safely reducing treatment stays, helping children return to their homes sooner. The team also hopes to offer its level of treatment to more communities.

Both programs offer access to individual therapy, group therapy, family therapy and medication management and have added recreation, art, music, and animal-assisted therapy services. Niles will continue to develop those programs and offer more programs for the children in treatment.

“We’re so thankful for all of the support from the community, donors, employees, and volunteers that have helped Niles throughout the years,” said President of Niles, Astra Garner. “With their support, we’ve been able to keep Niles a place where youth and families can turn to for help.”

This September, you’re invited to join us in celebrating Niles’ 135th anniversary at a special evening event. Learn more and buy tickets at [www.nileskc.org/niles135](http://www.nileskc.org/niles135).

1883

Celebrating  
135  
Years of Helping Youth & Families

2018

# Design for a Difference KC Inspires a Healing Makeover for KVC Cottage

In February, volunteers, donors, community partners and employees gathered at KVC Prairie Ridge Hospital in Kansas City, Kansas to complete an extreme makeover of the first of three cottages that house our psychiatric residential treatment program on campus. This first cottage serves preadolescent children ages 5-12 receiving psychiatric residential treatment. Youth staying in our cottages and receiving 24-hour clinical care have experienced major depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, substance abuse disorders, mental illness or other behavioral issues.

The cottages on campus provide a safe, comfortable and therapeutic environment for these youth who typically remain in care for 45-60 days of treatment. While the number of licensed beds at youth psychiatric residential treatment facilities in the state has decreased by 65% during 2011-2017, from an original 780 to just 272 beds, KVC is pleased that Kansas City’s community of donors chose to reinvest in these critical services for children.

Thanks to Design for a Difference KC, generous donors, and volunteers, KVC was able to make major improvements to the interior of the Kiely cottage. Exterior improvements including landscaping will occur this Spring.



### Improvements include:

- **Comprehensive cottage update** — Updates include new safety windows, durable and attractive flooring, energy efficient lighting, child-friendly furniture and wall finishes throughout the main living space and bedrooms.
- **Renovated recreation space** — Incorporating a serene landscape in the renovation adds to the outdoor activities offered on KVC’s 75-acre campus and provides mental and physiological benefits that contribute to healing and therapy.

- **Renovated kitchen space** — Repurposing the original kitchen into a smaller kitchenette and a separate ‘Learning Lab’ area offers a dedicated space to help children build healthy brains and practice emotion regulation.
- **Personal items** — While some children bring belongings from home during their stay, others arrive without. Volunteers stocked the shelves with pillow pets, bedding, bath and beauty products, board games, toys and more for children to enjoy and take with them.



Last year, KVC Hospitals served **3,492 children** and adolescents who struggled with depression, anxiety, trauma, substance abuse, suicidal thoughts and feelings of violence. **97% of youth showed improvements in trauma-related symptoms within the first 7 days of treatment;** however, some youth require additional time to achieve treatment goals and will continue treatment in a residential setting.

Thank you to these generous donors:

Hall Family Foundation | H&R Block Foundation | Cocherl Foundation | John W. & Effie E. Speas Foundation, Bank of America N.A., Trustee | Sarli Family Foundation | KC CAN | Stephanie Stroud Interior Design | Madden McFarland Interiors | Design for a Difference | Sherwin Williams | Shaw Flooring

We are currently seeking additional donations, volunteers and partners to help us improve our cottages for teen boys and teen girls. Please contact Michelle Lawrence at [mlawrence@kvc.org](mailto:mlawrence@kvc.org) if you are interested in partnering, donating or volunteering to help complete facility renovations.

View more before and after photos online at [www.kvchospitals.org/cottagemakeover](http://www.kvchospitals.org/cottagemakeover). You can also watch a news story produced by 41 Action News KSHB-TV.



# Too Many Children in Kansas Foster Care: KVC Shares Challenges and Solutions

As a lead agency providing child welfare services on behalf of the state, KVC Kansas is intimately involved in helping vulnerable children and families. It is a nonprofit organization made up of 750 talented social workers, therapists, family support workers and other professionals.

On any given day, the KVC Kansas team helps care for thousands of children who have experienced abuse, neglect and other family challenges. We help hundreds of adults struggling with mental illness and addiction. We walk with them to overcome their own childhood adversity, violence and substance use so they become the loving parents or successful adults they dream of becoming. We go into families' homes to give life-saving hope and help, from preventing suicide to matching children with adoptive families.

Over the last five years, in a significant change from our positive track record, the performance of our agency and our state on several child and family outcomes has

started declining. This is as concerning to us as it is to the public. We are dedicated to providing high-quality, effective services to children and families. For many years we excelled at this, helping the state achieve national leadership in areas such as caring for children in families instead of group homes and preventing children from reentering foster care.

## What's Changed in the Last 5 Years?

So, what's changed over the last five years? What challenges is the Kansas child welfare system facing, and more importantly, what are the top solutions that will quickly and effectively address them?

See the infographic below to learn about the complex factors that are impacting children and families across the state.

## Let's Strengthen Families

Foster care is an important intervention for children who need it. It provides a temporary living situation for children whose parents cannot take care of them and whose need for care has come to the attention of child welfare agency staff.

But could we as communities be doing more to support and strengthen families so that fewer children need foster care in the first place?

The answer is a resounding yes. It is better for children, communities and our state as a whole if we can build supports around families so that children can remain safely with their parents. Investing in approaches that strengthen families and prevent the need for foster care is cost-effective and helps make our communities healthy and prosperous.

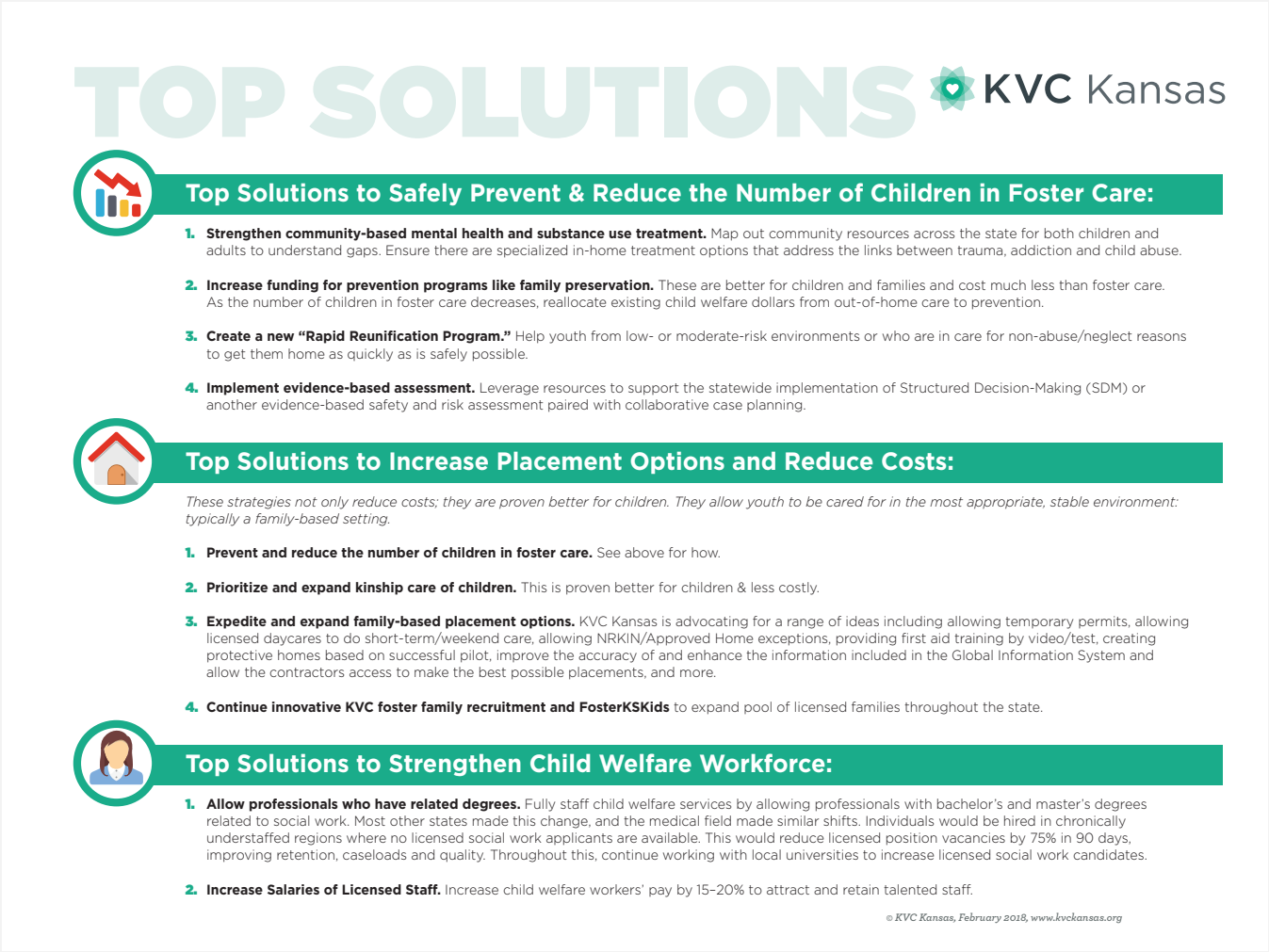
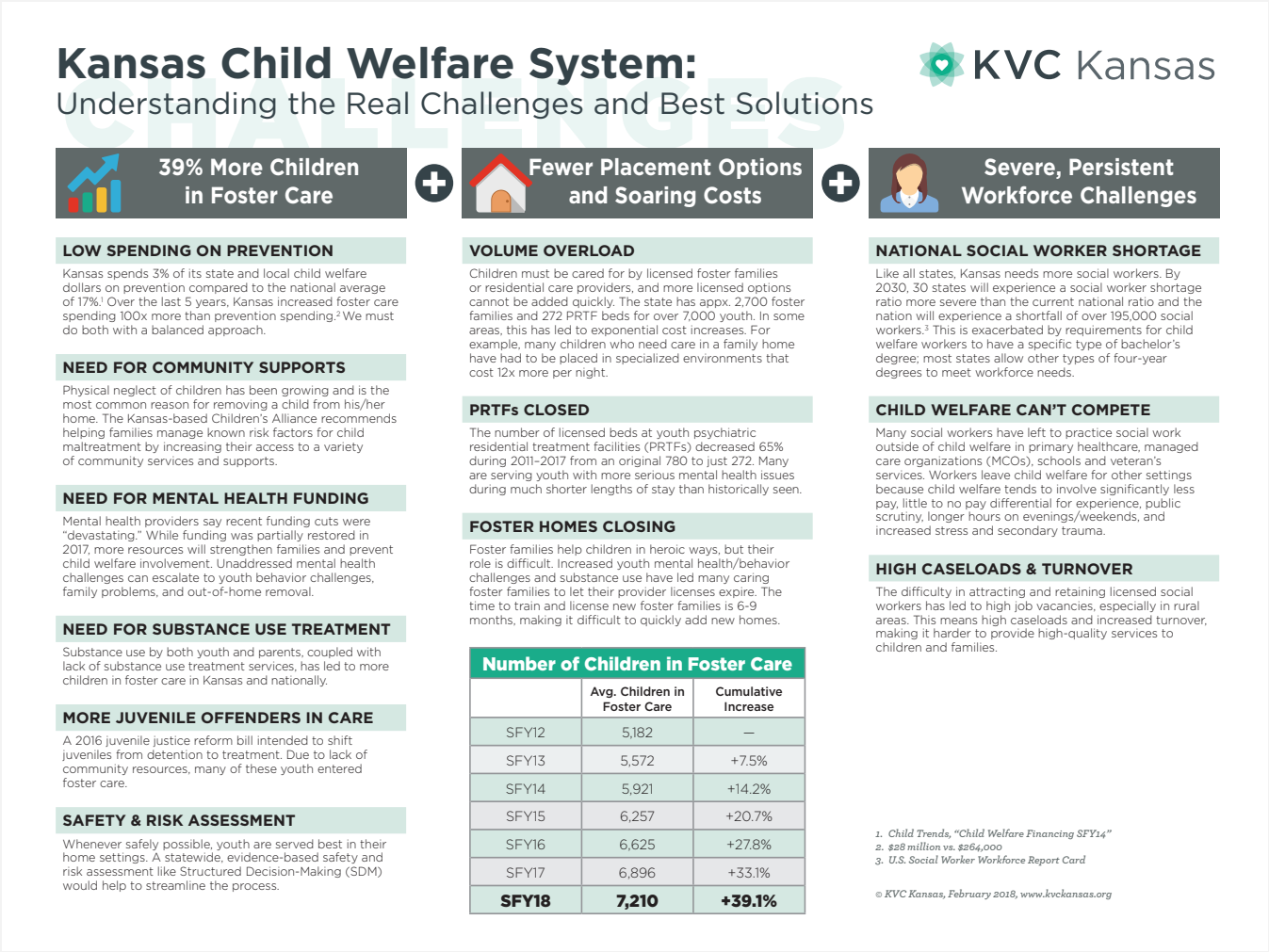
At KVC Kansas, there's much we can do and are doing to safely prevent and reduce the number of children we serve in foster care. We are working hard to strengthen

our team and services, while also advocating for specific solutions to external factors.

But KVC Kansas is just one part of the child welfare system. We are working with many dedicated partners including the Kansas Department for Children and Families led by new Secretary Gina Meier-Hummel, the bipartisan legislative Child Welfare Task Force, the court system, the Children's Alliance, and many other private organizations, individuals, faith-based communities and others who are each helping in critical ways.

We look forward to working with these partners to strengthen our child welfare system and to strengthen Kansas children and families themselves.

If you are open to providing a safe, loving, temporary home for a child or teenager in need, learn about becoming a foster parent at [www.kvc.org](http://www.kvc.org).





# People on the Move

PROMOTION



**Annmarie Arensberg, L.S.C.S.W.**  
*Director of Clinical Operations*  
KVC Hospitals, Kansas City, KS  
6 Years with KVC

Arensberg oversees the admissions, utilization review and clinical teams at KVC’s children’s psychiatric hospitals.

PROMOTION



**Tara Davis**  
*Director of Intensive In-Home Services*  
KVC Kansas, Olathe, KS  
7 years with KVC

Davis oversees the team providing in-home aftercare services following a child’s safe reunification with his/her family or adoption.

PROMOTION



**Katie Easley**  
*Vice President of Information Solutions*  
KVC Health Systems, Olathe, KS  
16 years with KVC

Easley leads a team of software developers who created and manage KVC’s client management system and produce robust analytics.

PROMOTION



**Jessica Elliott**  
*Director of Child Placing Agency, East Region*  
KVC Kansas, Topeka, KS  
8 years with KVC

Elliott supports hundreds of foster families who help children in KVC Kansas’ East Region.

PROMOTION



**Kristi Ferrell**  
*Director of Permanency*  
KVC West Virginia, Charleston, WV  
16 years with KVC

Ferrell oversees foster care services, foster family recruitment, marketing and fundraising.

PROMOTION



**Kellie Hans Reid**  
*Director of Communications & Recruitment*  
KVC Kansas, Olathe, KS  
10 years with KVC

Hans Reid leads the team that recruits new families to provide foster care for children and increases community awareness and support.

PROMOTION



**Brittany Kroeger, L.S.C.S.W.**  
*Associate Director of Clinical Services*  
KVC Wheatland Hospital, Hays, KS  
4 years with KVC

Kroeger ensures high quality children’s psychiatric services by leading the clinicians, social workers, and utilization review specialist teams at KVC Wheatland Hospital.

PROMOTION



**Jenny Kutz**  
*Vice President of Marketing & Communications*  
KVC Health Systems, Olathe, KS  
4 years with KVC

Kutz leads marketing, communications and public relations, increasing awareness and support of KVC nationally.

PROMOTION



**Cheryl Marquardt, J.D.**  
*Vice President and Deputy General Counsel*  
KVC Health Systems, Olathe, KS  
2 years with KVC

Marquardt joins the leadership team with 24 years’ experience in child welfare law. She provides legal support to KVC’s business units.

PROMOTION



**Alex Mendez**  
*Associate Director of Program Services*  
Niles, Kansas City, MO  
9 years with KVC

Mendez is transferring from KVC Hospitals. In his new role at Niles, he will support staff while providing a strong milieu experience for youth.

NEW HIRE



**Susan Ott**  
*Vice President of Human Resources*  
KVC Health Systems, Olathe, KS

Susan leads a robust HR team that supports KVC’s 1,600+ employees nationwide to contribute their best work and enjoy fulfilling careers.

NEW HIRE



**Stephanie Rhinehart**  
*Director of Child Placing Agency, KC Metro Region*  
KVC Kansas, Olathe, KS

Rhinehart supports hundreds of foster families who help children in KVC Kansas’ Kansas City Region.

NEW HIRE



**Kellie Temple**  
*Financial Analyst*  
KVC Kansas, Olathe, KS

Temple provides financial and accounting leadership for child welfare work across the state.

PROMOTION



**Taylor Ziegler**  
*Associate Director of Nursing Services*  
KVC Wheatland Hospital, Hays, KS  
5 years with KVC

Ziegler oversees the nursing staff and directs the policies and nursing services for KVC Wheatland Hospital.

## KVC Kentucky Opens New Headquarters and Walk-In Clinic

KVC Kentucky recently celebrated the opening of a new headquarters in Lexington, Kentucky. Many community partners made this a reality, and Commerce Lexington, the local Chamber of Commerce, assisted with the ribbon-cutting ceremony.



KVC serves over 12,000 Kentucky children and families each year in a region that encompasses half of the state’s counties. Many families it serves are facing significant challenges related to mental or behavioral health, relationships, parenting skills, employment or housing, addiction, traumatic stress, childhood adversity, and other needs. KVC provides behavioral health services that help individuals reach their full potential, strengthen families, and contribute to life-long health and wellness. The new headquarters will continue to provide strengths-based, high quality, innovative services for children, adolescents, adults and families.

The location also contains a walk-in clinic for children, teens and adults dealing with depression, anxiety, thoughts of suicide or other behavioral health challenges. The clinic offers immediate help between 9:00am-1:00pm without the need for an appointment. Walk-ins will receive an initial behavioral health or substance use assessment.

Learn more at [www.kvcky.org](http://www.kvcky.org).





# First College for Youth Emerging from Foster Care Gets Name, Opening Date

Every year, nearly 30,000 young adults “age out” of foster care without the life skills and support network to help them become independent, successful adults. Eighty-four percent of these youth want to go to college, yet 51% don’t complete high school. **Just 2% of youth emerging from foster care earn a degree of any kind after high school.**

KVC Health Systems envisions a welcoming, healthy, supportive campus designed specifically for these youth, one that provides an educational environment that teaches vocational and life skills. As a national child welfare and behavioral health organization, KVC has worked for nearly five years to establish the nation’s first college campus designed specifically to support youth transitioning from foster care. The campus, recently named the Riverbend Center Supporting Higher Education, aims to be a new national model, representing a unique infrastructure of specialized services and supports, tailored to seamlessly support older youth from foster care into high-demand careers paying sustainable wages. Riverbend expects to begin welcoming students as early as November 2018 to prepare for classes in 2019.

This 118-acre college community campus, located in Montgomery, West Virginia, is the former home of the West Virginia University Institute of Technology (WVU Tech). Through a 25-year lease purchase agreement, KVC took possession of the furnished facility in July 2017 and immediately began repurposing the campus into a fully-capable educational environment with subtle wraparound supports to create a safe, nurturing environment. KVC’s approach follows research-based initiatives in five areas: education, employment, housing, health care and relationships.

See more photos and details online at [www.kvc.org/college](http://www.kvc.org/college).

KVC is meeting with individuals, organizations and communities that are excited about and committed to seeing this vision come to fruition. To learn more, contact Thomas Bailey, KVC’s Executive Vice President of Strategic Initiatives, at [tsbailey@kvc.org](mailto:tsbailey@kvc.org) or (304) 347-9818.



# Worried about your child’s moods or behaviors?

Download these new FREE eBooks to find out what your child’s behavior might mean and how you can help.



Learn what you can do to support your child’s mental health and find out whether he or she might benefit from counseling or therapy.

Download at [www.kvc.org/free](http://www.kvc.org/free)

# 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](http://www.kvc.org/careers).

*KVC is an Equal Opportunity Employer*







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## Events Calendar

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

- April 2018 **National Child Abuse Prevention Month**
- April 13-14 **Empowered to Connect Conference**  
KVC's Ball Conference Center — Olathe, KS
- May 2018 **National Foster Care Month**
- May 2018 **Mental Health Awareness Month**
- May 30 **KVC Hero Luncheon**  
Overland Park, KS
- June 2018 **National Family Reunification Month**
- Aug. 13 **KVC Kids Classic Golf Tournament — Kansas City**  
The National Golf Club — Parkville, MO
- Sept. 2018 **National Kinship Month**
- Sept. 2018 **National Suicide Prevention Month**
- Sept. 14 **KVC Kids Classic Golf Tournament — Nebraska**  
Ashland Golf Club — Ashland, NE
- Sept. 20 **Niles 135th Anniversary Celebration**  
Corrigan Station — Kansas City, MO



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