

thriving

A Nationwide Crisis: The Shortage in Children's Psychiatric Treatment

 **KVC** Health Systems
Spring/Summer 2019

Health
Isn't Just
a Personal
Choice:

What the Social
Determinants of
Health Are and
Why They Matter

9 Things in
"Instant Family"
That Are *Totally*
Accurate

Couple Creates a
Remarkable Life:
Caring for
Individuals
with Disabilities

Want More in Life?

Here's a way to experience the joy of parenthood and help children

Over 400,000 U.S. children are in crisis due to child abuse, neglect or other family challenges. The need for new foster and adoptive parents is greater than ever.

Whether you are single or married, own or rent your home, have children already or don't, work full-time or stay home, you may qualify. We provide free training, 24/7 support, and monthly reimbursement to meet the child's needs.

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



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO



Dear Friends,

If I had my way, nearly all of our team members' time would be spent doing preventative work in homes. We would help parents and other caregivers learn how to support children's development so they grow up strong and resilient.

We do a great deal of preventative work, but the reality is that many people are facing serious challenges that require the highest level of care available. More youth are experiencing mental health crises, and the need for children's psychiatric treatment is greater than ever. The number of teens hospitalized for attempting or thinking about suicide has **doubled** in less than a decade, according to a study in *Pediatrics*. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also reports an increase in teen deaths as a result of suicide. Increasing rates of depression and loneliness among youth, academic pressure, family discord, trauma, and

the prevalence of social media may play a part in this rising threat.

KVC is working hard to address this urgent need. First, we offer mental and behavioral healthcare and substance use treatment in many communities. Secondly, we have a Suicide Prevention and Detection Innovation Project Team within our KVC Institute. This group is ensuring KVC's commitment to suicide prevention by reviewing and selecting the most effective screening and assessment instruments to be used throughout our health system and better assist our team members as they help our clients. Thirdly, we are continuing our Hope Lives Campaign which is raising funds to **open a new children's psychiatric hospital this year** (pg. 6). Opening in Wichita, Kansas, this will be our third children's psychiatric hospital, helping to meet families' needs in the state's largest city.

In this issue of *Thriving*, you can read inspiring stories of how we are creating safe, happy childhoods and healthy communities:

- In **A Remarkable Life: Caring for Individuals with Disabilities** (pg. 12), you'll read how we help Nebraskans with disabilities by caring for them in family homes;
- In **Teenage Girls Transforms After Equine Therapy** (pg. 13), you'll read how we helped a young woman in Kentucky heal from loss by interacting with horses; and
- In **Receptionist Supports a Mother in Need to Help Her Thrive** (pg. 21), you'll read how even our administrative team members rally around the families we serve.

Thank you for believing in our work and supporting it as a KVC team member, client or patient, foster or adoptive family, extended family home provider, donor, volunteer or partner. Whether the need is for preventative services or the highest level of care, KVC stands ready to help until every person is safe and connected to a strong family and a healthy community.

Sincerely


Jason Hooper
President and CEO





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A Nationwide Crisis: The Shortage in Children’s Psychiatric Treatment



If you or someone you know is considering suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **1-800-273-8255**.

As a parent, you never want to see your child suffer or in pain, and when these challenges are related to mental health, the roadmap to healing becomes more complex. A child or adolescent who is experiencing a psychiatric crisis is struggling with suicidal thoughts, depression, anxiety, a history of trauma, substance abuse, or other mental health challenges. When a psychiatric crisis occurs, it is critical to intervene with professional help immediately to prevent long-term negative impacts. Unfortunately, families nationwide are struggling to get psychiatric care for their children when they need it most.

To know if your child or teen is experiencing a psychiatric crisis and what you can do to help them, visit our blog at www.kvchospitals.org/childcrisis.

Children Waiting Days or Weeks While in Crisis

Parents with a child in crisis are going to emergency rooms across the country, only to be told their child will have to be placed on a waitlist for inpatient psychiatric treatment.

A report from Cynthia McFadden of NBC News called *“Shortage of psychiatric hospital beds shortchanges American children”* shows that a child at one Connecticut hospital had to wait 40 days before an inpatient bed became available. While there’s been a 40% increase in psychiatric visits to emergency rooms over the past few years, there has also been a 17% decline in psychiatric beds available in state hospitals. As a result, some emergency rooms have stretchers in their hallways with children waiting to be admitted for inpatient psychiatric treatment. A parent can take their child home still needing acute treatment, but depending on the hospital’s policies, they risk being removed from the treatment waitlist.

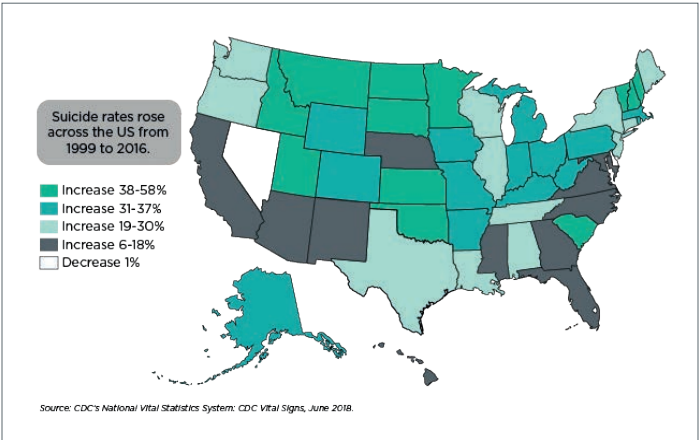
In Kansas, the increased demand is similar. While KVC has two children’s psychiatric hospitals in the state, it had to decline admissions to over 2,000 youth last year because they were at full capacity.

McFadden wrapped up her report stating, “One thing nearly everybody seems to agree on is that until insurance pays more consistently and fully for children’s psychiatric beds, they will remain scarce.”

KVC is working with legislators, managed care organizations, private health insurance providers, donors and foundations to develop a range of solutions to this crisis.

Breaking Down the Stigma and Preventing Crisis

As suicide rates continue to climb to all-time highs, it’s imperative that mental health treatment becomes a central focus within our healthcare systems. Understanding mental health challenges as brain disorders and normalizing conversations about mental health will reduce stigma and save lives.



There are many preventative steps you can take to help a child or teen before they experience a crisis. Here are a few examples:

- Tell them that they matter. Positive reinforcement is important.
- Identify positive supports in their life (such as school, church, sports) and work together.
- Create opportunities for them to talk about their emotions. Actively listen.
- Encourage involvement in extracurricular activities and volunteering.
- Teach them healthy habits for caring for their body and brain.

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- Work with them on stress tolerance and coping skills.
- Help them identify safe people, safe activities and safe places.
- Encourage therapy; you don't have to be in crisis to seek help. Find out what singer, songwriter, actress, and activist Janelle Monáe says about therapy on our blog at www.kvchospitals.org/janellemonae.



Ryan Speier

"Children are struggling, and their families feel helpless and don't know where to turn for help," said Ryan Speier, President of KVC Hospitals. "If we want to build healthy communities, we must invest in the health and wellbeing of every person, starting as early as possible."

Expanding Treatment Options in the Midwest

As a psychiatric treatment provider with two inpatient facilities in Kansas and one residential program in Missouri, KVC Hospitals sees the impacts of the bed shortage firsthand. "Last year, KVC Hospitals cared for nearly 3,000 youth and adults. Still KVC was unable to serve over 2,000 additional youth due to lack of capacity," said Jason Hooper, President and CEO of KVC Health Systems.

Responding to this overwhelming demand for more emergency psychiatric care for children and adolescents, KVC Hospitals is opening a new 54-bed youth psychiatric hospital in Wichita, Kansas in 2019. KVC's **HOPE LIVES Campaign** serves to raise \$7 million to help fund the new children's psychiatric hospital. With the help of The Sunderland Foundation, donors from 14 Kansas communities, and a J.E. & L.E. Mabee Foundation challenge grant, our **HOPE LIVES Campaign** is steadily progressing toward the goal.

Learn more about the plans for our new hospital and how you can help by visiting www.kvchospitals.org/wichita.

Meet Children Who Need a Forever Family

We're honored to play a role in matching children with loving adoptive 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. To see children near you who need adoptive families, visit www.AdoptUSKids.org.



ANGELICA
(16)

Watch my video online!

Angelica is an energetic teen with a great sense of humor. She enjoys socializing, helping others and is a whiz at math. When she grows up, she hopes to work in the

forensics field. Angelica needs a family who can provide structure, consistency and encouragement.



LYNN (15)

Watch my video online!

Lynn is a caring young man with a great sense of humor. He enjoys playing football and basketball, and he wants to either be a police officer or join the army when he gets older. He deserves family that will not give up on him and

will support him as he strives to complete his goals.



JUNAYA
"JUPITER" (15)

Junaya, who goes by "Jupiter," loves to sing, play guitar and piano, and is active in several sports. Her favorite class is creative writing and she hopes to either join the military or do something music-related when she grows up. Jupiter is a resilient young woman who has a lot of potential and just needs a loving family to recognize that and support her in all her goals.



CHRIS (16)

Watch my video online!

16-year-old Chris is energetic, full of life and has many interests like basketball, golf, football and cooking. Chris is naturally entertaining and

funny and likes to make people laugh; he states that his favorite class in school is "Social Skills, because it's easy!" Chris needs a compassionate family that will set him up for success in the future.

8 WARNING SIGNS Your Child Could be Using Drugs



By David Snyder,
Clinical Service Supervisor for KVC Kentucky

Many adolescents and teens will likely be exposed to drugs and alcohol at some point, and nearly 40% of American teens have been impacted by substance use. Illicit substances can have a negative impact on brain development when used at an early age and limit important decision-making skills, potentially jeopardizing a youth's safety.

Here are 8 indicators your child may be using drugs:

1. A loss of interest in activities that your child used to enjoy.
2. Your child is spending increasing amounts of time away from home and is reluctant to tell you where they are.
3. There are items in your child's room that seem unusual; this may include pipes, plastic water bottles with pipes sticking out of them, rolled up dollar bills, pill bottles or even needles.
4. Odd smells in your child's room or on your child's clothes. Marijuana has a very distinct smell that you may be able to recognize.
5. Your child locking the door to their room and using spray cans or deodorant to drown out possible odors.

6. Sudden changes in behaviors and mood swings.
7. Memory problems and difficulties remembering things or forgetting about time.
8. Frequent dishonesty and difficulties answering questions.

How to Get Help

If you've noticed any of these signs, it's important to first talk with your child in an open, welcoming environment. When doing this, try to remain calm and conversational, be mindful of any punishments you administer and show how drugs aren't in their best interest. In addition, the assistance of a professional clinician is valuable. Professionals who treat substance use in adolescents can provide a level of care that ensures recovery while equipping them with the tools and resources to stay healthy in the long term.

We offer youth substance abuse treatment in Kentucky and can refer you to qualified providers in our other states. Visit www.kvc.org/locations find a location near you.

KVC Celebrates Over 100 Children's Adoptions In One Month



There are over 120,000 children and teens in foster care in the U.S. who need loving, permanent forever families. These are children who have experienced abuse, neglect or other serious family challenges. During National Adoption Month in November, KVC Health Systems' community teams facilitated over 100 children's adoptions in Kansas, Nebraska, West Virginia, and Kentucky. On National Adoption Day, always the Saturday before Thanksgiving, courthouses across the country open to help families finalize their adoptions and grow in love.

Beyond the loving hugs and big smiles, there were some extra special moments that happened.

In Kansas, a teen girl named Nevaeh was adopted by her stepfather. He and her mother had divorced and family challenges led to the mother's rights being terminated. Her father said, "This is a happy ending right now to a new beginning." At the courthouse in

Topeka, Kansas, KVC facilitated the adoptions of 35 youth in one day. One child was dressed as Superman because Superman was also adopted.

In West Virginia, KVC facilitated the adoptions of 10 children in courtrooms across the state. One was joined by Batman to help celebrate the incredible day!

KVC has facilitated 4,456 children's adoptions total and continues to facilitate another 450 children's adoptions annually — that's more than one child adopted each day! There are thousands of children still needing loving forever homes.

Learn more about children waiting for families in your community at www.kvc.org/adoption

The Heart of Our Work Is Helping People



Every child deserves to be part of a loving family. Join us in strengthening families through in-home family support, behavioral healthcare, foster care, adoption, children's psychiatric hospitals and more.

Visit www.kvc.org/careers today!



KVC
Health Systems
people matter

A Remarkable Life:

Caring for Individuals with Disabilities

Suzan and Mike dedicate their lives to caring for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities as Extended Family Home (EFH) providers with KVC Nebraska. They do this as their full-time jobs so that they can be fully engaged and available to the individuals in their care for whatever they need. They still have alone time and do things they enjoy, and the clients have the alone time they want, too. It's all about scheduling and balance.

"We wouldn't trade what we're doing for anything. We're happy and more importantly, our clients are happy. We have a remarkable life," says Suzan.

Suzan and Mike plan out meals and activities for an entire month at a time. Each week typically includes at least three to four outings such as hiking, visiting the humane society, going to the zoo, and other fun activities. They even recently took a trip to Chicago!

Suzan and Mike love being EFH providers because they enjoy caring for others as if they are family and spending their days doing fun activities together. They also agree that a big perk of being a full-time EFH provider is getting out of corporate America.

Currently, the EFH program only operates in Nebraska. To find out why Suzan and Mike chose this path in life and their advice to others considering becoming EFH providers, read the full story at www.kvcnebraska.org/mikeandsuzan.



Teenage Girl

Transforms

After Equine Therapy

Marla is an intelligent 13-year-old girl with cropped blonde hair and a wonderful smile. I was introduced to Marla for therapy sessions to help her work through issues of trauma and behavioral challenges. In her young life, she had experienced troubles at home with her birth mother who struggled with substance use and complications related to severe mental health issues.



After her mother's death, Marla went to live with her grandmother and was later adopted by her. Marla was resistant to accepting help from others and admitted she trusted no one. Marla's strengths included a love for animals, learning, and art, but she struggled in a traditional classroom environment. She caused disruptions and showed verbal and physical aggression on a regular basis toward teachers and peers.

Knowing I needed to try a unique approach, I referred Marla to an equine therapy program that would let Marla work with horses to learn about their grooming, how to ride them and the type of communication needed to work with animals.

Research shows there are positive physical and psychological results from humans interacting with horses. Often, patients treated with equine-assisted therapy have difficulty relating to other human beings, and may not accept being close to others — but they will with horses. There's a bond that develops over time with the horse that is profound and natural.

From that day forward, things with Marla began to change. Marla began to focus, make eye contact and most importantly, smile! By working with horses, Marla learned new communication skills, patience, and compassion and she began to open up about her emotions. Marla now regularly laughs and gladly participates in therapy sessions that will help her become a happy and successful young woman.

What You Need to Know About the Opioid Crisis and How to Help

The opioid epidemic is dominating national news stories as it lethally sweeps through local communities. Drug overdoses killed over 70,000 Americans in 2017 with the vast majority involving opioids. This public health emergency continues as an average of 130 people die each day from opioid-related overdoses. The opioid crisis is driven by the widespread misuse of prescription pain-relieving medications and non-prescribed opioid.

Drug overdoses are now the leading cause of death among Americans under 50 years old. The impacts of the opioid epidemic are devastating. People of every racial demographic are impacted by overdose deaths, and nearly every age has been touched by opioids.



The crisis is across the U.S. with the highest overdose rates occurring in West Virginia, New Hampshire, Kentucky, Ohio, and Rhode Island.

The number of children and teens in foster care has risen because of parental drug use. In the worst cases, parents have died and left their children orphaned; affected extended family networks are often unable to care for these children, resulting in the state taking custody. Even in non-lethal cases, addicted parents and relatives become increasingly unable to care for their children.

In October 2018, a new bipartisan bill was signed into law called the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act. This bill aims to address the opioid crisis by encouraging the development of innovative prevention and treatment approaches with individuals and families. Such approaches also include helping children who have been impacted by trauma by requiring schools to become trauma-informed and by offering grants to schools for trauma support services.

KVC is currently using a trauma-informed approach model and completed the first-ever study of using a trauma-informed model for foster care that has produced incredible outcomes. In some areas, KVC has integrated evidence-based approaches to addiction disorders with its in-home, community-based, wrap-around, family-based treatment approaches. This is one extremely powerful strategy for fighting the opioid epidemic.

The opioid epidemic is an complex public health emergency and even experts know that drastically reducing the prevalence of Opioid Use Disorder will require concerted and coordinated efforts including more funding, regulation, and education.

There are things that you can do right now to help those who have been affected. Consider becoming a foster parent to a child who is in care. Open your heart and provide a stable, loving home for a child whose parent is working to overcome their challenges. You can also advocate for programs and policies that promote drug education, appropriate prescriptions, and prevention.

Read more about how our nation and KVC Health Systems are fighting the opioid epidemic at www.kvc.org/opioids.

130+ people die every day from opioid-related drug overdoses.



When you think of factors that influence your health, you probably think of eating well, staying active and seeing a doctor when sick. But there are actually many more factors that influence our health. Our health is greatly determined by the conditions in which we live. Health starts in homes, schools, workplaces and communities, and our overall health is greatly impacted by access to social and economic opportunities, such as the quality of schools, safety of workplaces and the availability of clean food and water.

Social Determinants of Health

Economic Stability	Neighborhood and Physical Environment	Education	Food	Community and Social Context	Health Care System
Employment Income Expenses Debt Medical bills Support	Housing Transportation Safety Parks Playgrounds Walkability Zip code/ geography	Literacy Language Early childhood education Vocational training Higher education	Hunger Access to healthy options	Social integration Support systems Community engagement Discrimination Stress	Health coverage Provider availability Provider linguistic and cultural competency Quality of care

Health Outcomes
Mortality, Morbidity, Life Expectancy, Health Care Expenditures, Health Status, Functional Limitations

Health Isn't Just a Personal Choice:

What the Social Determinants of Health Are and Why They Matter

The term “social determinants of health” describes the conditions into which people are born, grow, live and work. This includes aspects such as education, income, living environment, access to health care, available social support networks and much more.

Growing research shows that medical care accounts for only 10-20 percent of health outcomes, while 80-90 percent of outcomes are a result of environmental and social factors. While we can each make personal choices that support our health, it takes a much bigger perspective and more comprehensive approach to help communities as a whole get healthier.

KVC teams in Kentucky and West Virginia are putting this research into practice. We're working with health insurers on innovative ways that we can use our social work skills to address the mental health and socioeconomic factors that prevent people from engaging in healthy behaviors.

Learn more about the work we are doing at www.kvcky.org and www.kvcwv.org.



FAMILY FIRST ACT

Adds Funding for Foster Care Prevention



A guiding value that has led KVC Health Systems for nearly 50 years is that “Children grow best in families” and in their own families whenever safely possible. In our decades of caring for children and families with in-home services, family prevention services, foster care, and behavioral healthcare, we have worked hard to ensure that families have the support and resources to keep their families safely together and their children healthy.

New federal funding from the Family First Prevention Services Act that was signed into law on February 8, 2018, has now empowered more child welfare agencies and other organizations across the country to establish the best practices of effectively helping families when they experience crisis. KVC has long offered these best practice services, been a leader in reducing congregate care, and championed innovative ways to help families stay safely together. That’s why we are eager to educate our many partners on the benefits of this federal legislation for local families and communities.

One of the most extensive reforms of the foster care system in decades, the Family First Act offers 50% in matching funds to states that help prevent the use of foster care. This funding backs preventative services like substance use treatment, parenting skills education and mental health services to help prevent the need for removing children from their homes. Where previous laws had offered reimbursed funding to services like foster care, family reunification, and adoption, the Family First Act allows agencies to focus on evidence-based prevention services, aiming to reduce the trauma and disruptions that removals can cause.

The law also puts limits on the use of congregate care of children, also called group homes, as placements for youth in foster care. Knowing that group homes weren’t in the best interest of children, KVC worked to reduce the percentage of Kansas children in state

custody who were living in congregate care from over 30% in 1996 to less than 4% just a few years later. The increase in children living in family-like settings ensured that children had access to much-needed family supports. Even today, as the state of Kansas has experienced a large increase in the number of children in foster care, KVC has kept the congregate care rate at 6.5%. Of those children who do live in a congregate or residential care setting, most are there for the specific purpose of receiving psychiatric treatment. The national average is 14% of youth in foster care being in congregate care and, in some states, it is as high as 34%. For these states, it is a challenge to provide family-like settings for children in foster care.

KVC supports policies and funding that will strengthen families and will work to prevent the need for foster care. Visit us online at www.kvc.org as we will be publishing resources throughout the year to help our team members and other child welfare agencies embrace and align to the Family First Act.

Get Started

Children and families can benefit greatly from the Family First Prevention Services Act, but it will take state child welfare agencies and other partners first understanding the law and implementing it. To begin evaluating how your agency can prepare for the Family First Act and help more families, download our **FREE** checklist at www.kvc.org/familyfirst.



Thousands Gather for Training and Inspiration

This past winter, more than 2,000 people joined us at our biannual Resource Family Conferences held in Kansas, Kentucky, Nebraska and West Virginia. These events are a one-of-a-kind training opportunity for KVC “resource families,” which is a term that includes foster families caring for children and extended family home providers caring for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

Resource families learned from inspiring keynote speakers, received continuing education, and developed an invaluable support network of people who share their passion. Some of the training topics discussed included helping youth feel safe and connected, trauma-informed care, gender diversity, and promoting healthy brain development.

For children and youth in care, this event is a fun opportunity to experience new things and make new friends. They are treated to a variety of fun,

developmental age-specific events such as bouncy houses, bowling, crafts, an indoor trampoline park, games, and many other planned activities.

The Resource Family Conference is made possible by generous individuals, companies and foundations who donate or sponsor KVC fundraising events. We are very thankful for the many people who helped us host these events and create new happy memories for the families and clients we serve.

Learn more about KVC’s Resource Family Conference at www.kvc.org/rfc.



Children’s Seasons Brightened by Generous *Holiday Heroes*

Each year, children and teens all over the world hope to open special gifts intended just for them during the holidays. Children who are in foster care or are receiving treatment in one of our children’s psychiatric hospitals and individuals with developmental disabilities whom KVC serves hope for the same thing.

Over the holiday season, many individuals and organizations become **Holiday Heroes** to donate and give gifts to more than 6,300 children and teens



receiving child welfare system or behavioral healthcare services. Holiday Heroes are individuals, businesses, churches, groups, and other organizations that donated toys, clothing, games, gift cards, electronics and more for vulnerable youth to help make their Christmas or other holiday traditions special.

Each of the services KVC provides involves children and parents who are overcoming challenges in order to be safe, healthy and connected to others. One simple thing that communities can do to support vulnerable families is to rally around them during the holidays.

We’d like to thank all of the donors, organizations, employees and media who helped donate and spread the message this holiday season. The individuals KVC serves needs your support all year long. Summer is right around the corner followed by back-to-school time. Please consider donating school supplies like backpacks, notebooks and crayons to children and teens in foster care so that they don’t have to worry about supplies and can get off to a good start in school.

Visit www.kvc.org/schooldrive to learn more.



Empowering the Helpers: An Interview with Chief Information Officer, Lonnie Johnson

As KVC Health Systems’ first Chief Information Officer, Lonnie Johnson has a big role. He leads the technology teams that support over 1,600 employees nationwide and the hardware and software systems that help KVC employees care for 63,000 children, teens and adults each year.

Lonnie’s three Business Information Technology teams — organized into Information Technology (IT), Information Solutions (IS) and Enterprise Systems Management (ESM) — have created and maintain software that matches children needing out-of-home care with caregivers such as foster families, a medication monitoring system to track and safely reduce the use of psychotropic drugs on children, and many other applications that help children and families. Learn more about KVC’s technology innovations at www.kvc.org/tech.

We recently sat down with Lonnie to learn more about him and how technology enables KVC Health Systems to provide high-quality services to children and families.

Why do you think technology is important in child welfare and behavioral healthcare?

For us, the sole purpose of technology is to enable people to do their jobs more efficiently. It doesn’t solve the problem of the business, but it enables people to do their jobs better. It brings about solutions that save time, save money and make people safe.

Ease of use is a huge thing for us. Once we have ensured ease of use, our professionals don’t have to worry about the technology — but, instead, are able to focus on the kids.

Read the expanded feature article with Lonnie Johnson at www.kvc.org/lonniejohnson





Register at
www.kvc.org

Join us **Aug. 12** in Parkville, MO
or **Sept. 13** in Ashland, NE

*Benefits children
& families in need*

People on the Move

PROMOTION



Dr. Linda Bass, L.C.M.F.T.
President
KVC Kansas, Olathe, KS
12 years with KVC

Bass, who previously served as Vice President of Clinical Services and Well-being, is now President of KVC Kansas. For years, she has led KVC’s foster care prevention programs (family preservation), intensive in-home services, and outpatient behavioral healthcare. In her new role, she will also oversee foster care case management, KVC’s network of foster and adoptive parents, and all other services. Bass’s vision for KVC Kansas includes an expanded focus on prevention services, safely reducing the number of children in foster care, and increased support for caregivers and staff.

NEW ROLE



Renny Arensberg
Executive Vice President
KVC Institute, Olathe, KS
15 years with KVC

Previously, Arensberg has managed the Development, Human Resources, Marketing/Communications and Facilities teams within Shared Services. She also led the creation of the Ball Conference Center in Olathe, KS. Her focus within the KVC Institute will be on employee engagement and retention, and key critical business outcomes. Arensberg will lead employee engagement as a core strategy to improve KVC’s change readiness by building leadership, design leadership development experiences and focus on moving toward a culture of continuous performance development to match the rising employee expectations for career-relevant learning and development opportunities.

PROMOTION



Sara Schlagel, L.M.S.W.
Director of Program Development and Training
KVC Hospitals, Kansas City, KS
8 years with KVC

Schlagel oversees the program development and training initiatives of the residential and hospital programs with KVC Hospitals.

PROMOTION



Sarah Smith, MSW, LCSW
Director of Family Preservation/ Reunification Services Programming
KVC Kentucky, Morehead, KY
4 years with KVC

Smith oversees the team’s operation of FPRS delivery to families in the Gateway/Bufalo Trace Region to ensure safety and stability of families.



Join us **Friday, May 17** for our
**2nd Annual
Brews, Boots & Beats**
event in Lexington, KY.

Enjoy a night of live music, dancing,
food and fun that benefits
children and families in need.

Buy your ticket at **www.kvcky.org**.

PROMOTION



Bailey Bennett, RN, BSN
Associate Director of Nursing Services
KVC Hospitals, Kansas City, KS
3 years with KVC

Bennett oversees the Nursing Department for KVC Prairie Ridge Hospital’s inpatient/acute and residential treatment programs to ensure clients are provided high-quality, therapeutic nursing care.

PROMOTION



Erik Nyberg, MHSA
Vice President of Technology
KVC Health Systems, Olathe, KS
2 years with KVC

Nyberg provides technology to speed up administrative work, improve services to children, and help ensure the security and privacy of our system.

PROMOTION



Phillip E. Caldwell, Sr.
Associate Director of Programs
KVC Hospitals, Kansas City, MO
13 years with KVC

Caldwell directs unit programming of day treatment and residential services for youth at Niles. He ensures a positive, therapeutic approach to working with diverse groups of children.

PROMOTION



Jenna Parker, L.P.C.
Director of Adoption Services
KVC Kansas, Topeka, KS
5 years with KVC

Parker oversees KVC teams providing adoption services to children and the families wishing to adopt children in foster care.

PROMOTION



Michelle Hockett L.M.S.W.
Director of Integrated Services
KVC Kansas, Chanute, KS
20 years with KVC

Hockett oversees foster care case management (Permanency) in seven counties and foster family support (Child Placing Agency) in seven counties in southeast and central Kansas.

PROMOTION



Regena Pearl
Program Director at Youth Residential Center
KVC Hospitals, Kansas City, KS
25 years with KVC

Pearl ensures that children in foster care have a safe, stable placement, providing education, medical and therapeutic services, and independent skills training.

Receptionist Supports a Mother in Need to Help Her Thrive

By Teresa Lora, Receptionist for KVC Kansas

I worked with a mom named Stephanie who suffered extreme physical abuse from her husband, and she worried that she wouldn’t be able to keep her newborn daughter safe. One incident of assault was so severe that she had to be hospitalized, and out of safety concerns, she wanted to let her parents keep her daughter.

One day she came to our office and I compassionately explained to her that she needed to move away from her husband, which resonated with her greatly.

While she was working on recovering and finding a new home, her parents decided they didn’t want to give her daughter back. After this, she came to me very distraught.

“Do you believe in God?” I asked her.

“Yes,” she said.

“Then I’m going to pray, you’re going pray and we’re going to ask God for guidance on how to get your daughter back.”

Following this conversation, she completed parenting classes, secured two jobs and hired an attorney who was able to get her daughter back home.

She then said to me, “Ms. T., if it weren’t for you, I don’t know where I would be, because I really wanted to give up.”

She was able to escape the toxic environment that was preventing her from living a safe and happy life. She and I became personal friends because she was so thankful for me being there for her and her baby, who is now three.



Read more inspiring success stories like this at **www.kvc.org/stories**.

9 Things in "Instant Family" That Are *Totally Accurate*



The comedy movie “Instant Family” about a couple who begins their journey with foster care and adoption is winning audiences over with its funny and heartwarming moments.

Here are 9 things in the movie “Instant Family” that are totally accurate.

1. There’s a huge need for families to foster and adopt *teenagers*.

In one scene at a foster care/adoption fair, nearly all the prospective parents are drawn to younger children. Meanwhile, a group of teens stand off to the side with very little interest shown in them. As AdoptUSKids says, “You never outgrow needing a family. Everyone needs a sense of belonging.”

2. There’s a huge need for families to foster and adopt *siblings*.

As the movie points out, siblings are often the only connections youth still have when they enter the uncertain world of foster care. It’s important they stay with their siblings to maintain their bond and support each other. Yet it can be challenging to find an available foster family that has enough licensed beds.

3. Children in foster care sometimes have difficult emotions and challenging behaviors.

If it seems that strong emotions and behaviors are more prevalent among children in foster care than other children, it may be because of traumatic stress. Children in foster care are not bad kids; they are good kids who have experienced bad things like abuse and neglect. KVC trains foster parents on how to provide trauma-informed care.

4. Becoming a foster parent will disrupt your predictable life.

Pete and Ellie are in the home renovation “fixer-upper” business. Their home begins magazine-ready but ends up a bit messy with spilled milk, shattered crystal and more. Yes, it’s true that becoming a foster parent may disrupt your quiet, calm, predictable life. It’s also true that it will be completely worth it as you provide safety and love to a child.

5. All kinds of people qualify and are needed to become foster/adoptive parents.

The lead characters in “Instant Family” happen to have no kids of their own. They also are white, married and wealthy. But as you can see from their support group, people from all types of backgrounds can foster or adopt a child. Whether you are single or married, heterosexual or LGBTQ, own or rent your home, have children already or don’t, work full-time or stay home, you may be eligible to become a foster parent. Contact us today at www.kvc.org/foster.

6. The first goal of foster care is safe family reunification.

The child welfare system is built around the child’s best interests. It’s important for foster parents to be committed to supporting the children’s reunification with their parents if that is a safe and appropriate option. If biological parents are unable to provide a safe and loving home for the child, the goal will then change from reunification to adoption.

7. Foster parenting might fill the void of what feels “missing” in your life.

If you feel stuck in a rut of boring adulting, children can break up that monotony in a glorious way. Younger children can add cuddles and giggles and teens add a sense of friendship and connection as you help a young person learn how to navigate life. Many of our foster parents say that if you aren’t fostering youth, you may be missing out on a sense of purpose in life.

8. Support is available. You won’t be alone.

If you pursue foster care and adoption, you’ll become part of a community of people who share your passion. In your training class, in-person support group or even on social media, you’ll find a tribe of people who can support you no matter what behavior challenge, emotional challenge, or logistical challenge comes your way.

9. Your story can have a happy ending, even if it’s different than you imagined.

“Instant Family” has a happy ending. While there is certainly some heartbreak to be had, especially if you have to say goodbye to a child you’ve bonded with, you can know that it’s worth it in the end. That child needed love and you were able to provide it.

If you’ve ever considered becoming a foster or adoptive parent, now is the perfect time to contact us. Thousands of children are waiting for a family to show them love. You, too, can have an instant family!

Read the expanded version of this article with videos at www.kvc.org/instantfamily.



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Events Calendar

Visit www.kvc.org/events for details on these events and others.

- Apr. 2019 **National Child Abuse Prevention Month**
- May 2019 **National Foster Care Month**
and **Mental Health Awareness Month**
- May 17 **Brews, Boots & Beats Fundraiser**
Fasig-Tipton —
Lexington, KY
- June 2019 **National Family Reunification Month**
- June 7-9 **Crop for Kids**
Lincoln, NE
- June 19 **KVC Hero Luncheon**
Overland Park, KS
- Aug. 12 **KVC Kids Classic Golf Tournament — Kansas City**
The National Golf Club —
Parkville, MO
- Sept. 2019 **National Kinship Care Month**
and **National Suicide Prevention Month**
- Sept. 13 **KVC Kids Classic Golf Tournament — Nebraska**
Ashland Golf Club —
Ashland, NE



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