

# thriving

Stories about creating happy childhoods, strong families & healthy communities.

## A Father's Story of Transformation and Hope

KVC Hospitals Is Now



**Camber**<sup>™</sup>  
Children's Mental Health  
KVC HEALTH SYSTEMS

Teacher Helps a Struggling Student

*Graduate High School*

How Foster Parents & Birth Parents Can

*Work Together*





# Your Support is Changing Lives

**56,606** people served and positively impacted by KVC this year

**11,418** families strengthened

**312** children matched with loving adoptive families last year

**4,634** children in foster care were cared for by relatives and foster families

**18,540** children and adults supported with in-home therapeutic services

**3,811** admissions at our children's mental health hospitals and residential treatment facilities



## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO



Dear Friends,

This October, we held our KVC Annual Celebration in person and livestreamed the event online. The celebration is a special event we host every fall to thank generous supporters like you who make KVC's work with children and families possible and to report on the positive impact we're making in people's lives. **Over the last year, thanks to you, we've strengthened over 11,000 families, prevented child abuse and neglect by caring for over 4,600 youth in foster care, and helped nearly 20,000 children and adults achieve mental wellness.**

As our KVC Foundation Chair Paula Meidel shared, the last year has been monumental. Our nation saw millionaires in space, U.S. Soccer agreeing to equal pay for men's and women's teams, and U.S. Olympians winning gold while breaking their own records. Still, two of the most impactful performances came from tennis star Naomi Osaka and U.S. gymnast Simone Biles postponing their competitions to focus on their mental health. As a parent and mental health

advocate, I'm thankful for these young leaders and their courage and commitment to taking care of themselves. We continue to see the pandemic's impact on physical, financial, and mental health. And yet, we see resilience everywhere.

Thank you for helping to build resilience in children, adults and families seeking help from KVC. In this issue of *Thriving*, you'll read real stories of resilience-building in action:

- In **Father Overcomes Addiction to Safely Reunite with His Sons in Foster Care** (pg. 6), you'll read the inspiring story of Adam, a man who decided to do everything in his power to bring his children safely back home.
- In **KVC Hospitals Is Now Camber Children's Mental Health** (pg. 10), you'll read how the new brand of our children's mental health hospitals and residential treatment centers makes it easier for families in crisis to find life-saving treatment.
- And in **How This Teacher Helped a Student Overcome Massive Challenges to Graduate High School** (pg. 19), you'll hear how a young man at our trauma-informed K-12 alternative school received the support to achieve his dreams.

Thank you for believing in and supporting KVC's mission. You're part of a vital network of caregivers, donors and volunteers who change people's lives every day.

Sincerely

  
Jason Hooper  
President and CEO





## 14 How Foster Parents and Birth Parents Can Work Together to Help Youth

Helping youth in foster care maintain relationships with their family members allows youth to experience a continued sense of identity and belonging. Get tips on how you can work with birth parents toward reunification in this article.

# thriving

Fall 2022/Winter 2023

## Health

### 10 KVC Hospitals Is Now Camber Children's Mental Health

In 30 years, KVC Hospitals has served more than 37,000 youth experiencing a mental health crisis with inpatient and residential treatment. The organization is now reintroducing itself as Camber Children's Mental Health, the Midwest region's premier source and leading provider of children's mental health care.



### 19 How This Teacher Helped a Student Overcome Massive Challenges to Graduate High School

Jay was a junior struggling in school. But once he transitioned to Niles Prep, a therapeutic alternative school, he got the help to achieve his dream of high school graduation.

## Strengthening Families

### 6 A Father's Story of Transformation and Hope

When Adam was facing time in prison following years of substance use and addiction, he thought he may never be safely reunited with his two sons in foster care. But thanks to the KVC foster parents who cared for his children and cheered him on, as well as his supportive KVC case manager, Adam was able to take the courageous steps to bring his children safely home.



## Creating Families

### 13 Meet Children Who Need a Forever Family

Andrew, Jacob, Skyla, Josiah, and Emily are youth who each need adoptive families to provide them with safety, a sense of belonging and unconditional love.



### 18 Families Grow in Love as They Adopt Children in Foster Care

Over 123,000 children and teens in foster care are waiting for loving adoptive families. See some of the families who adopted children through KVC this year and learn if fostering or adopting might be right for you.

## News & Events

### 15 To Serve 200 More Families Each Year, KVC Opens New Office in West Virginia

Responding to the urgent need for more foster parents and better access to children's mental healthcare in the Eastern West Virginia panhandle, KVC West Virginia officially opened a new office in Martinsburg this summer. This area of the state is just an hour from the greater Washington, D.C. area. See photos from the grand opening event.

### 16 KVC Kentucky Names New Leaders as Family Strengthening Services Grow

In early 2022, the state of Kentucky selected KVC to provide expanded family strengthening services in several regions. Meet the experienced leaders who are overseeing this vitally important work that strengthens families, prevents child abuse and neglect, and helps both children and adults achieve mental wellness.

### 20 People on the Move

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

### 22 Diversity & Inclusion Are Key to Belonging... And Belonging Matters Greatly

Every day, life-changing moments happen at KVC: young people receive essential care in our mental health hospitals, families get support to overcome complex adversity and relationship challenges, and some children are brought into foster care to address their immediate safety needs. To provide the highest-quality services to all children and families served, KVC has committed itself to prioritizing diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging across our organization.

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William H. Dunn, Jr. — Vice Chair-Finance  
David F. Ball  
Patrick Desbois  
Jason R. Hooper  
Teresa Markowitz  
Bill Self

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# A Father's Story of Transformation:

## The Inspiring Journey to Bring His Boys Home

*"Daddy!"*  
shouts Adam's young son from the other room.

*"What is it, bud?"*  
Adam calls back.

*"I love you!"*

*"I love you, too!"*

When Adam was facing 230 months in prison following years of addiction, he never thought he would again have the opportunity to be safely reunited with his two sons and hear those words again. He knew it would take hard work and a lot of accountability to get back to them, and he was ready to put in that work.

"I don't want to be that person to just give up on my kids," Adam said. "I wanted them to know that I did whatever was necessary to be back with them." After his release from prison, Adam was eager to work with KVC and other supportive programs to start seeing his two sons again. And with KVC as a partner, Adam gets to hear those joyful words — *I love you!* — every day.

### Caring Foster Parents

Adam is among numerous parents around the country who are grateful for foster care and organizations like KVC to help reunite them with their children. Over KVC's 52-year history, 40,151 children and counting have been supported by loving foster families. In 2021 alone, KVC trained or supported 5,125 foster caregivers. These individuals ensure that children receive the nurturing, support and education they need to thrive, and they play a significant role in helping children recover from trauma and/or neglect.

*continued on page 8*



## A Father's Story of Transformation

*continued from page 7*

Among the people Adam credits with helping his family through this difficult time were the foster parents who cared for his children. "I think I was really blessed with the foster parents that we had," Adam said, reflecting on the important role they played in his reunification. "They were there for my children when I couldn't be." He appreciates how this foster family stepped in and cared for his kids when he wasn't able to, and they had very open and kind communication throughout the reunification process, supporting Adam every step of the way.



Foster parent Kayla Pieschke with Adam's boys

*"We are new foster parents and Adam's boys are only the second placement we had," said Kayla Pieschke, foster parent. "When we prepared to meet Adam, we were nervous. But his son ran right to him calling 'Daddy!' and he introduced himself to us. We spent a good deal of time chatting about the boys and their development. Adam told us right from the beginning that he would need to be a team with us, and we have been a team ever since. Every time I saw Adam, he thanked us for taking care of his kids and said he was so happy that the kids are happy. From the moment I met Adam, he's been positive, and he worked really hard to reunify with his boys. I am still a part of the*

*kids' lives. I help take them to appointments or take them out to lunch. Parenting is hard for anyone – it's a lot of work. So I'm thankful that he's accepted we are part of their lives. This is what you do foster parenting for – for families to get back together and for our family to be extended."*

## Successful Reunification

The goal of foster care, ultimately, is reunification. And foster care is a safe place that allows both a child and their birth family to resolve conflicts or disruptions and learn healthy skills so the child can safely return home.

Adam put in the work to recover and prepare his life to support and care for his two sons and is now proudly more than 17 months clean and actively working with his sponsor in recovery programs. While it was ultimately Adam's own drive that successfully and safely reunified him with his children, he is grateful to KVC for their accountability and partnership in helping him get to a place where reunification was ideal.

Adam credits many people for this successful reunification, especially his KVC worker, Zane Johnson. Adam shared how appreciative he is of Zane's constant communication and support. "He was there for me for all my court dates," Adam said. "He stood up and said that I was doing what I was supposed to be doing. We had a really good relationship." Having accountability through his KVC worker enabled Adam to take full responsibility for what had happened and what he needed to do to safely reunite with his sons.

## Systems of Support

Beyond partnerships with KVC, foster care and his recovery sponsor, Adam has discovered a renewed passion for recovery and safely reunified families through his work with Oxford House. The worldwide self-run, self-supported recovery housing aims to help individuals recovering from drug and alcohol addiction to stay clean in a group living situation. What makes Adam's Oxford House unique is that it is a home for single fathers who have been safely reunited with their children. "It's just like a big family. We're all after the same goals," Adam said.

After living in an Oxford House for seven months, Adam became president of the new house in Topeka so he could have a place to reunite with his sons. The three now live there with a few other families, all of whom were safely reunited through working with KVC.



## Putting the Kids First

Recovery for Adam has gone beyond his personal experience, as it all came down to doing what was best for his children. "I don't subject my children to the things that they were subjected to in my addiction," Adam said, considering how his parenting has changed since his recovery and reuniting with his children. "Any time I make a decision now, I think about what's in the best interest of my children. In my addiction, I figured as long as I provided for my children and they had what they needed, I was a good parent. But now they're not subjected to those types of people or situations."

One of the ways Adam has started prioritizing his kids is through their time together on weekends. The week may be filled with school for the kids and work for Adam. But when the weekend comes, it's all about fun times for the family! Whether it's going to monster truck shows, the county fair or just playing at the park, every weekend Adam is intentional about spending quality time with his children together. These are experiences he missed while his children were in foster care, and he doesn't take a moment for granted today.

When asked to reflect on what his life looks like now, Adam kept coming back to the word "blessed." He never imagined he would be 17 months clean and president of a recovery house chapter, working a great job detailing cars and enjoying the simple pleasure of getting off work and going to pick up his two sons — "and knowing they're going home with me," he says.

"It's like a huge weight off my shoulders," Adam explained, "Never in my wildest dreams thought that I'd be sitting where I'm sitting now."

## Hope for Reunification

With a passion for helping other fathers reunite with their children, Adam finds deep fulfillment in being a founding member of the Oxford House Buchanan Men and Children's House, a self-supporting drug-free home for people recovering from drug and alcohol addiction. Since taking on this role, he has seen parents succeed and he has seen parents struggle. In every situation, Adam encourages parents to see their potential and never give up.

When asked what advice he has for other parents working to reunify with their children, Adam said, "If you really want it, it can be done. You just have to put your kids first and let go of all the street stuff. The streets aren't going to support you in getting your kids back. You have to put your kids first."

Half of children who leave foster care each year are safely reunited with their birth families, and it is our goal at KVC to ensure children receive a safe, permanent home as quickly as possible when reunification can occur.

## Coming Home

**"Who's your best friend?"** Adam asks his energetic son.

**"You are!"** his son giggles in response.

**"Forever?"**

**"Yes!"**

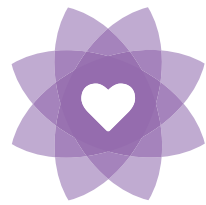
Every night before going to bed, Adam's son declares this as he is tucked safely in bed by his father. "That's where it's at," Adam smiles. "Right there."

Last year, KVC cared for 4,634 children in foster care, helping many of them safely reunite with their families. Adam and his two sons are one success story among many. At KVC, we envision a world in which every person is safe and connected to a strong family and a healthy community. Adam's story is one of many, and he's grateful to be connected to his children once again.

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



Introducing...



**Camber**<sup>TM</sup>  
Children's Mental Health  
KVC HEALTH SYSTEMS

Formerly, KVC Hospitals Children's Psychiatric Treatment

With a new name, locations in Kansas City and Wichita, and a new inpatient hospital and residential treatment facility opening soon in western Kansas, **Camber Children's Mental Health (formerly KVC Hospitals) is reintroducing itself as the region's premier source and leading provider of children's mental health care.**

*"We all need connection* — that's

been our guiding philosophy for three decades as KVC Hospitals, and it will continue to guide us forward as Camber Children's Mental Health," said Bobby Eklofe, President of Camber. "In fact, we chose Camber because it means bridge or arch, representing our commitment to making



meaningful connections with every child, teen, family, and community we serve."

As demand for children's mental health treatment increases, Camber continues to grow and evolve to address the mental health wellbeing needs of the region's children and teens. Camber's expansive network of inpatient hospitals and residential treatment centers provides lifesaving intervention and collaboration for youth ages 6 to 18 who are struggling with their mental health.

With youth suicide rates and mental health crises on the rise, Camber's leadership says it is more important than ever to band together in ways that address the mental health needs of children and teens.

In addition to expanding education and training opportunities for professionals and partner agencies serving children, Camber will add another children's mental health hospital to its network, with a new facility opening soon in Hays, Kansas. The new Hays location, which will be on the HaysMed campus adjacent to the HaysMed Business Center, is set to open in January 2023. Camber will continue providing residential treatment services in Hays at this facility. Camber previously provided inpatient children's mental health treatment in Hays for a decade (2009-19) until federal regulations required new state policy and funding changes to continue the service.

"We are grateful to expand our footprint in western Kansas, enabling us to reach more children and families in need of our services," said Eklofe. "Through expert treatment delivered in the most compassionate, collaborative, and connected way possible, we are leading the way to better mental health — one child at a time."

### Why We Chose Camber

In order to best serve our communities, we need a distinct brand that helps identify the unique care we provide and truly encompasses the range of services we provide.

We are deeply committed to developing meaningful connections with every child in order to positively impact their quality of life and ensure mental health care is available and accessible. When we evaluated options for a new name, we wanted a word that reflected this promise.

Camber is an English word that means arch or bridge. A great description of what we do—building a bridge to better health for children and families. We are providing life-changing mental health services and building connections with each child to help them achieve wellness.

You'll also notice we chose purple as a distinct brand color for Camber. Purple represents harmony and balance and is associated with new beginnings. **It portrays hope, wellness, and opportunity.**

### How Camber Is Impacting Communities

Camber is a network of nonprofit inpatient hospitals and residential treatment centers serving youth who are struggling with depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, the impacts of trauma, and other mental health needs. The goal of treatment is to provide each child with individualized treatment plans to help them return home as soon and as safely as possible, equipped with the resilience, support, and resources they need to continue treatment in their community.

For over 30 years, Camber has provided a healing space for more than 37,000 youth admissions, using a patient-centered approach that works to help heal the whole family unit. Additionally, Camber is proud to be an internationally renowned educational resource for community mental health providers, first responders, and a wide range of other partners who work with youth in need of intervention and support.

Camber is proud to remain a private, nonprofit organization that is part of the KVC Health Systems network. Our regional sister organizations KVC Kansas and KVC Missouri are not affected by this name change.

*continued on page 12*





## Introducing Camber Children's Mental Health

continued from page 11

KVC Kansas and KVC Missouri continue to provide family strengthening services, innovative child welfare delivery, foster care, outpatient mental health services, and in the case of KVC Niles, youth residential treatment.

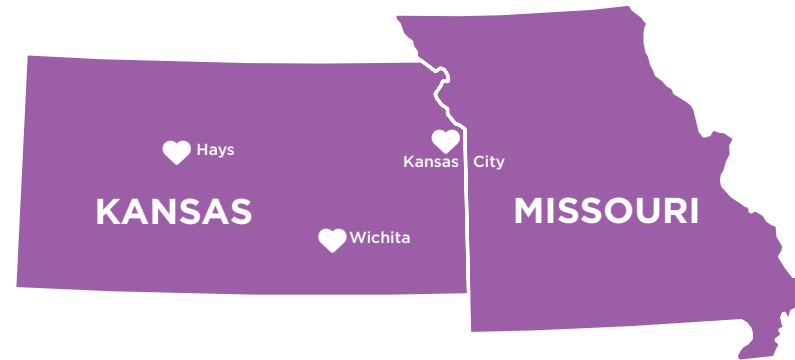


## The Region's Leading Provider of Children's Mental Health Services

As the pioneer of trauma-informed mental healthcare models in the region, Camber has developed and enhanced innovative therapies to help children live more balanced, healthy, and resilient lives. Because of this commitment, Camber is the leading market share provider of inpatient mental health treatment for youth in the state of Kansas and the Kansas City region. Camber is one of only two facilities in Kansas serving youth as a State Institutional Alternative for inpatient services, designated by the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services, and is a leading choice as a psychiatric residential treatment facility (PRTF).

Integral to Camber's mission is a commitment to being a valuable resource for the families, healthcare professionals, school districts, mental health providers, and community partners seeking our help. Each year we provide training courses, webinars, and free continuing education units for thousands of community professionals. Our website serves as an information hub with continuously updated blogs, videos, and resource guides for children, parents/guardians, and community members who may be seeking more information about mental health. The education we provide extends beyond our region to internal requests for training on our innovative therapy models.

Learn more at our new website [www.cambermentalhealth.org](http://www.cambermentalhealth.org) and check us out on Facebook @[cambermentalhealth](https://www.facebook.com/cambermentalhealth).



## Join Our Team!

Reason 8

KVC has provided life-changing mental health treatment for more than **30,000** youth.

KVC Health Systems [kvc.org/careers](http://kvc.org/careers)

*We all need connection.*

## 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 Stacey Hauck at (913) 232-6686 or email [shauck@kvc.org](mailto:shauck@kvc.org). To see children near you who need adoptive families, visit [www.AdoptUSKids.org](http://www.AdoptUSKids.org).

### ANDREW (13)



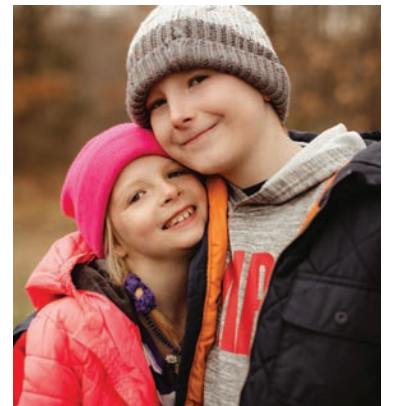
Traveling into space is one of Andrew's goals! "I want to see what it feels like to have no gravity," the young boy said. Andrew enjoys science class in school because he likes to conduct experiments, and he also loves playing sports. Andrew is very observant and enjoys having meaningful conversations with others. He needs a loving adoptive family to support him as he grows up.



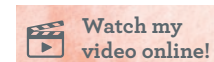
### SKYLA (8) JOSIAH (11)



We are seeking a loving adoptive family that can adopt these siblings together. Skyla is sweet, funny and has a smile that brightens any room she's in. Older brother Josiah is very creative, social and enjoys sports. They deserve a "no matter what" family to provide them with a loving home.



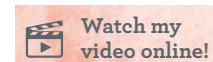
### JACOB (16)



Jacob is an athletic teen who loves to play basketball and football. Math is his favorite subject. Everyone who knows him says he is very loving and compassionate to others. Jacob would benefit most from a loving, caring, patient family that is knowledgeable about parenting children who have experienced trauma.



### EMILY (17)



Emily is a teen known for her imagination, which is really on display through her crochet and embroidery. She also enjoys biking, swimming, being outdoors, and her favorite class at school is choir. Emily loves animals and strives to be a veterinary technician when she grows up, and she needs a forever family to help her realize her dreams!





## How Foster Parents and Birth Parents

# Can Work Together to Help Youth

All children deserve a safe and loving home. Unfortunately, there are times when caregivers cannot fully meet a child's needs and it becomes necessary to temporarily remove the child from their home. The first goal of foster care is to safely reunite children with their families. Our goal is to help caregivers and children reunify by enhancing protective factors and reducing the risk factors that led to the child being removed from the home.



*"It can be traumatic to be removed from your home, your family, your routine and everything you know,"*

said Lucy Ajuoga, Clinical In-Home Supervisor for KVC Nebraska.

It's vitally important for foster parents to maintain relationships with the biological parents and other relatives of youth in foster care. Keeping in contact with birth parents can ease the trauma of being removed from home. This also gives young people a sense of identity, cultural background, and family history.

Find more ways to work together at [kvcnebraska.org/parents](https://kvcnebraska.org/parents).

### 4 Ways Foster Parents Can Build Strong Relationships with Birth Parents

Consider these helpful ways to reassure birth parents:

- 1 Encourage the child to contact their birth parents.** Help children create pathways for regular, ongoing communication when appropriate.
- 2 Maintain traditions, like going to church or attending cultural events.** This demonstrates to birth families that their culture and traditions are respected and important.
- 3 Share updates and pictures when possible.** Sharing updates from the day-to-day can help families remain connected. It doesn't have to be groundbreaking; even sharing about a child's favorite subject in school can keep that bridge strong.
- 4 Stay empathetic and practice active listening.** There will be bumps in the road and times when the relationship is challenging, of course. But staying empathetic and consistent can make a big difference over time.

With these strategies and more, foster parents can build positive relationships with birth parents. This connection will support children and reunification efforts.

## To Serve 200 More Families Each Year,

# KVC Opens New West Virginia Office

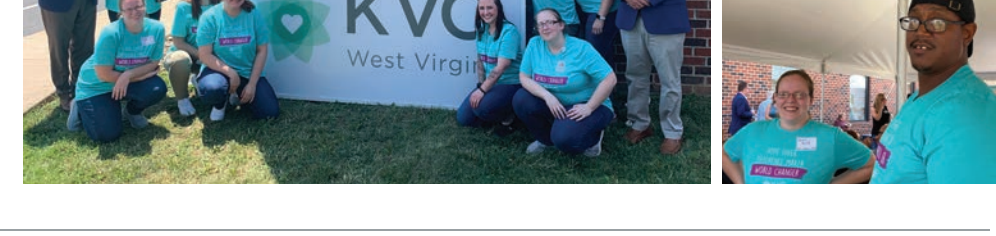
Responding to the urgent need for more foster parents and better access to children's mental healthcare in the Eastern West Virginia panhandle, KVC West Virginia officially opened a new office in Martinsburg on July 15, 2022. This area of the state is just an hour from the greater Washington, D.C. area. Growth into this region will allow KVC to serve over 200 more families each year.

"Children's mental health treatment wait lists are long, especially for youth insured by Medicaid," said Brent Lemon, KVC West Virginia President. "Our expansion into this area will give so many children healing and skills for resilience."

Community members, KVC employees, and child welfare and mental health professionals gathered to celebrate this grand opening in July. Event attendees enjoyed speeches from KVC leaders, a ribbon cutting ceremony, tours of the new office space, and food and refreshments from Nucilli's BBQ. KVC Health Systems President and CEO Jason Hooper and KVC West Virginia President Brent Lemon were both present at the event to welcome guests and celebrate the new office.

**"Helping people is a part of our mission,"** said Sarah Marshall, Regional Director for the Eastern Panhandle. **"We want to make a difference. It's not just a job."**

Learn more at [kvcwv.org](https://kvcwv.org).





# KVC Kentucky Names New Leaders as

# Family Strengthening Services Grow

In early 2022, the state of Kentucky selected KVC to provide expanded family strengthening services in several regions. These Family First Prevention and Reunification Services are designed to help stabilize and strengthen families in crisis, safely preventing the need for children to enter foster care. Services often include parenting education and skill-building, mental health treatment, therapy such as family or marriage counseling, assistance meeting basic family needs, and substance use treatment.

As a result of these new and expanded contracts with the state, the KVC Kentucky team has hired nearly 100 new social workers, case managers, therapists, and other professionals. KVC also promoted several leaders who have been with the organization for years to spearhead this expansion.

KVC Kentucky positively impacts the lives of over 12,000 children and families each year by using high-quality evidence-based practices that build on people's unique strengths. These services strengthen families, prevent child abuse and neglect, and help both children and adults achieve mental wellness.

All referrals to our Family First Preservation and Reunification services are made by the Kentucky Department for Community-Based Services (DCBS) and require the family to have an open case with the Cabinet for Health & Family Services. Family First Preservation and Reunification Services are a collaboration between DCBS and KVC Kentucky, made possible through state and federal funding.

## KVC Kentucky Regions for Family Strengthening Services



## Meet Our KVC Kentucky Family First Preservation and Reunification Services (FFPRS) Leaders

### FFPRS Leaders Statewide

 **Kimberly Miller, LCSW, MSW**  
Director of Clinical Services

 **Sonia Epps, BASW**  
Director of Administration

### Jefferson Region

 **Isaac Tandy, LCSW, MSW**  
Program Director, Jefferson

 **Emily Tucker, LCSW**  
Associate Director, Jefferson


### Salt River Trail Region

 **Michael Stone, LCSW, MSW**  
Program Director, Salt River Trail

 **Lydia Akin, LCSW**  
Associate Director, Salt River Trail

### Southern Bluegrass Region

 **Tina Taylor, LPCC, MA**  
Program Director, Southern Bluegrass

 **Tracy Perkins, LCSW, MSW**  
Associate Director, Southern Bluegrass

 **Lorinda Cowan, LCSW**  
Associate Director, Southern Bluegrass


### Northeastern Region

 **Amanda Alley, LCSW**  
Program Director, Northeastern

 **Ashley Straka, LCSW**  
Associate Director, Northeastern

 **Angela Combs, LCSW, MSW**  
Associate Director, Northeastern

### Northern Bluegrass Region

 **Ashley Palmer, LCSW, MSW**  
Program Director, Northern Bluegrass

 **Jerry Grugin, LCSW**  
Associate Director, Northern Bluegrass

### Eastern Mountain Region

 **Rita Crutcher, LPCC**  
Program Director, Eastern Mountain

 **Norma Jean Thomas, LPCA**  
Associate Director, Eastern Mountain

 **Whitney Parsons, LPCC**  
Associate Director, Eastern Mountain

**Kentucky Strengthening Ties and Empowering Parents (KSTEP)** is one of KVC's prevention programs. It helps parents access substance use services to safely prevent children from needing foster care.

### KSTEP Salt River Trail

 **David A. Snyder, LPCC-S, JSOCC**  
Program Director

 **Billie Love, LCSW, MSW**  
Associate Director

### KSTEP Northeastern Region

 **Tammy Smallwood, LCSW, MSW**  
Program Director

 **Casey Logan, M.Ed., LPCC**  
Associate Director

### KSTEP Cumberland Region

 **Adam Atherton, LCSW**  
Program Director



# Families Expand with Love

## as They Adopt Children in Foster Care

There are over 123,000 children and teens who urgently need loving adoptive families. These children have experienced abuse, neglect or other serious family challenges and are at risk of aging out of foster care without permanent family connections.

Many relatives and foster families choose to finalize children's adoptions in November which is National Adoption Month. But all year long, families involved with KVC have been growing in number and in love. Here are just a few of the children who experienced the best day of their life so far in 2022!

### Demetrius' ADOPTION

The smiles on their faces say it all. Congratulations, Demetrius! You now have a forever home with Amy and Danny Cronin. Thank you, Judge Anita Ashley, and adoption attorneys Bob Noone and Scott Briscoe, for making this a day that will never be forgotten.



### Lexi's ADOPTION

Congratulations, Lexi! You now have a forever home with Amanda and Tim Moyer, as well as sisters Julia and Kara. Thank you, Judge Tabit, and adoption attorney Natalie Atkinson, for making this a beautiful day for this family.



### Jaclyn & Jaxon's ADOPTION

Congratulations, Jaclyn and Jaxon, on receiving your forever home with Eddie & Cheryl Simpson. Thank you, Judge Michael Cochrane, and adoption attorneys Bob Noone and Scott Briscoe, for making this day possible.

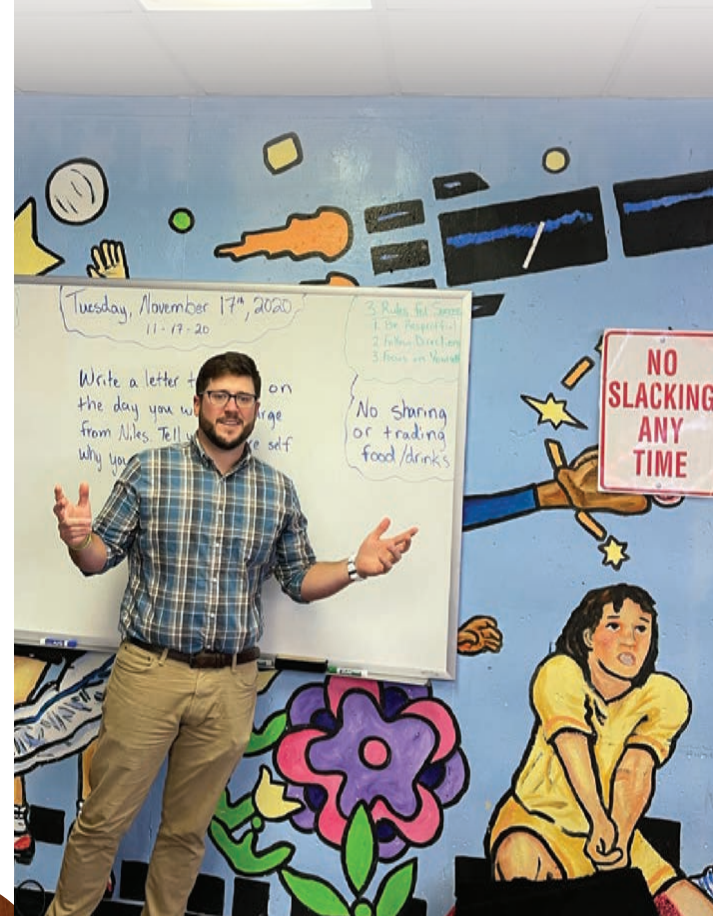


### Nathaniel's ADOPTION

After 735 days, Nathaniel has a forever home with Lori and John Ransbottom! This superhero will forever capture the hearts of his family. Thank you to Honorable Judge Gregory Howard and attorney Scott Briscoe for everything you have done for this family.



To learn more about how you can help a child or older youth in need and experience the love and joy of being a parent, visit [www.kvc.org/foster](http://www.kvc.org/foster).



By **Ryan Ratzlaff**, a teacher at Niles Prep School in Kansas City, a program of KVC Missouri

## How This Teacher Helped a Student Overcome Massive Challenges to

# Graduate High School

As a teacher at Niles Prep, I often have students that dream of graduating and reaching their post-secondary goals. Jay came to Niles Prep as a junior. He lived downtown, close to our campus. Jay had some challenges at his public school. He struggled with having appropriate social interactions with adults and peers. He also struggled with handling the stressors of the daily routine, moving through transitions during the day, and completing schoolwork and tasks. His Individualized Education Program (IEP) team thought the smaller classroom size and the therapeutic setting at Niles Prep would be best for him.

When Jay began at Niles Prep, I had the opportunity to be his teacher. Our program is a trauma-informed K-12 alternative school in which we can provide students a higher level of support. Jay began making great progress throughout the 2019-20 school year and was doing outstanding in all areas. The therapists on the team helped Jay focus on and grow in his challenge areas in individual, group and family therapy, and I also helped him work on these areas in the classroom. His progress was incredible.

However, no one could have foreseen the next big challenge: **the global pandemic**.

Everyone had to pivot at the snap of a finger. This could have easily regressed his progress as Jay was no longer able to receive the same type of support while doing remote learning. He was forced to work more independently and receive instruction virtually. However, he never gave up!

Eventually Jay was able to transition back to his public school. And like most students during the pandemic, he continued to experience virtual learning throughout the 2020-21 school year.

Then, in May 2021, Jay just finished his senior year and graduated! He finally achieved his dream of walking across the stage and that is all because of the hard work and persistence that he showed through everything! I am so proud to have been a part of Jay's success!



Learn more about how you can help students like Jay at [kvcmissouri.org](http://kvcmissouri.org).



# People on the Move

## RECOGNITION



**Lonnie Johnson**  
*Chief Information Officer*  
KVC Health Systems (Olathe, KS)  
21 years with KVC

For the second year in a row, Lonnie Johnson was named a finalist for the Kansas City CIO of the Year out of 130 nominations by the Kansas City CIO Leadership Association.

## RECOGNITION



**Sherri Lohe**  
*Chief Financial Officer*  
KVC Health Systems (Olathe, KS)  
8 years with KVC

The Kansas City Business Journal named Sherri Lohe a 2022 CFO of the Year. Lohe and the 15 other honorees were selected for representing the best in financial management.

## RECOGNITION



**JoVonka Marks**  
*Permanency Supervisor*  
KVC Kansas (Topeka, KS)  
14 years with KVC

JoVonka Marks has been honored as a YMCA Woman of Excellence in Topeka's Business Magazine.

## PROMOTION



**Adrienne Baars, LAC**  
*Director of Admissions*  
KVC Kansas (Lawrence, KS)  
7 years with KVC

Adrienne and her team of intake coordinators help facilitate the placement of children in foster care into family homes and residential treatment settings.

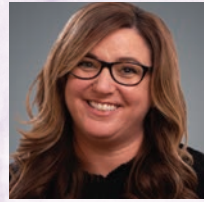
## PROMOTION



**Sarah Berens, LCSW**  
*Executive Director*  
Camber Children's Mental Health (Hays, KS)  
6 years with Camber

Sarah leads the multi-disciplinary team providing inpatient and residential services in Hays to ensure children and their families receive positive outcomes and compassionate care through enhanced collaboration, clinical practices, and operations.

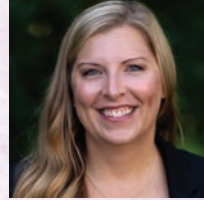
## RECOGNITION



**Kimberly O'Connor-Soule, LCSW**  
*Senior Vice President*  
Camber Children's Mental Health  
10 years with KVC

Women We Admire named Kim one of the Top 50 Women Leaders in Healthcare in 2022. The organization shared that these leaders are significantly changing our communities, providing hope and healing across multiple areas of healthcare.

## RECOGNITION



**Lindsey Stephenson, LCSW**  
*President*  
KVC Missouri  
16 years with KVC

The Kansas City Business Journal named Lindsey as one of 25 rising stars in the community through their 2022 NextGen Leader Awards. NextGen Leaders are "up-and-coming Kansas City business leaders everybody is talking about. These honorees are contributing key leadership at their companies and in the community."

## NEW HIRE



**Amy Coppage**  
*Director of Administration*  
Camber Children's Mental Health (Wichita, KS)

Amy manages projects related to facilities, front desk departments, compliance, quality assurance and more, streamlining administrative and business processes.

## PROMOTION



**Cassandra Dittmer, LIMHP, LMFT**  
*Director of Quality & Impact*  
KVC Nebraska (Lincoln, NE)  
10 years with KVC

Cassandra evaluates and implements KVC Nebraska policy and procedure to ensure the highest-quality services. She also leads the development of team members and affiliated caregivers.

## PROMOTION



**Larissa Dowe, LICSW**  
*Director of Clinical & Prevention Services*  
KVC Nebraska (Omaha, NE)  
6 years with KVC

Larissa provides clinical oversight to departments that prioritize the safe and stable placement of children in their family homes and community-based mental/behavioral health services.

## NEW HIRE



**Celia Fritz-Watson, IOM**  
*Director of Corporate Giving and Events*  
KVC Health Systems  
1 year with KVC

Celia joined KVC in late 2021 to lead corporate giving and fundraising events, including the KVC Gala coming up April 28, 2023.

## PROMOTION



**Rachel Gauntt-Weaver, LMSW**  
*Assistant Director of Permanency*  
KVC Kansas (Hiawatha, KS)  
8 years with KVC

Rachel helps lead a team that provides foster care case management services to youth and their families.

## PROMOTION



**Erica Herzog, LMFT**  
*Director of Outpatient Services – East Region*  
KVC Kansas (Topeka, KS)  
14 years with KVC

Erica oversees mental and behavioral health including diagnosis and treatment for children, adolescents, and families involved in child welfare services.

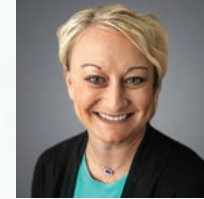
## PROMOTION



**Anna Lehew, MSW, LICSW**  
*Director of Wraparound Services*  
KVC West Virginia (Spencer, WV)  
8 months with KVC

Anna oversees all wraparound programming and team members, ensuring children and families receive high-quality services. She also maintains program compliance.

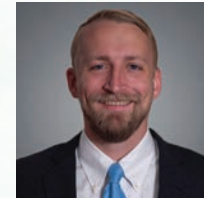
## NEW ROLE



**Audrey Lindenmeyer, MLS**  
*Director of Operations and Compliance*

Camber Children's Mental Health (Hays, KS)  
12 years with Camber  
Audrey ensures Camber's compliance with risk and safety management, licensing and accreditation. She will also provide oversight of administrative services and faculty operations.

## PROMOTION



**Eric Marley**  
*Director of Financial Reporting*  
KVC Health Systems (Olathe, KS)  
9 years with KVC

As the Director of Financial Reporting, Eric manages a team of financial analysts responsible for preparing financial management reporting and forecasting.

## NEW HIRE



**Sarah Marshall, MSW, LICSW**  
*Regional Director for the Eastern Panhandle*  
KVC West Virginia (Martinsburg, WV)  
7 years with KVC

Sarah oversees KVC's foster care, behavioral healthcare, in-home and wraparound programs. She provides clinical supervision and builds relationships with community partners.

## PROMOTION



**Laurel Phillips, LCSW**  
*Associate Clinical Director*  
Camber Children's Mental Health (Kansas City, KS)  
5 years with Camber

Laurel ensures Camber provides high quality therapeutic services to youth clients. She supervises the expressive therapy team and residential therapists and oversees clinical enhancements.

## NEW HIRE



**Danielle Rease Jones, MBA**  
*Director of Development*  
KVC Foundation (Olathe, KS)

Danielle joined the KVC Foundation focused on major gifts and planned giving. She previously led advancement and enrollment at Baker University and led corporations and foundations at Gallaudet University.

## PROMOTION



**Janny Sivilay, LCSW**  
*Associate Director of Admissions*  
Camber Children's Mental Health (Kansas City, KS)  
4 years with Camber

Janny oversees admissions for inpatient and residential mental health treatment, builds strong relationships with community partners, and supervises admissions.

## NEW ROLE



**Tyler Terry**  
*Associate Director of Programs*  
Camber Children's Mental Health (Wichita, KS)  
4 years with Camber

Tyler maintains program compliance with all regulatory standards and accrediting bodies. He also oversees the implementation of trauma-informed, evidence-based practices.

## PROMOTION



**Taylor Ziegler, DNP, FNP**  
*Senior Director of Nursing*  
Camber Children's Mental Health (Hays, KS)  
9 years with Camber

Taylor oversees nursing and program services with a focus on enhancing the patient experience and directing all aspects of nursing and patient care.



# Diversity & Inclusion Are Key to *Belonging*

## *And Belonging Matters Greatly*

Imagine a teenager being admitted to a children's mental health hospital. Or a family working to overcome complex relationship and mental health challenges. Or a child being removed from their home for their own safety and entering foster care.

These are the immensely important moments that happen every day at KVC. And while there are many qualities our professionals must bring to these situations such as compassion, authenticity and expertise, there's another aspect of the KVC experience that we must get right each time: that is an appreciation for **diversity** both within our team and among the children and families we serve, a commitment to **equity** and **inclusion**, and a desire for everyone to feel a sense of **belonging**.

Diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. Many organizations have strung these four words together to convey their commitment to creating communities where differences are valued as strengths.

Over the last few years, KVC has made several important steps to expand diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. Read on for a few of the steps we've taken lately.

### CEO Pledge for Diversity & Inclusion

Earlier this year, KVC Health Systems President and CEO Jason Hooper signed the CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion™ pledge. The leaders of KVC's seven subsidiaries also signed the pledge, solidifying the organization's deep commitment to people in every role, team, and area of the country.

CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion™ is a nationwide movement that aims to rally the business and nonprofit community to advance diversity and inclusion within the workplace.

### The KVC leaders who signed the pledge are:

- ✔ **Jason Hooper**, *President and CEO of KVC Health Systems (OLATHE, KS)*
- ✔ **Michelle Lawrence**, *President of the KVC Foundation (OLATHE, KS)*
- ✔ **Dr. Linda Bass**, *President of KVC Kansas (OLATHE, KS)*
- ✔ **Robert (Bobby) Eklofe**, *President of Camber Children's Mental Health (KANSAS CITY, KS)*
- ✔ **Lindsey Stephenson**, *President of KVC Missouri (KANSAS CITY, MO)*
- ✔ **Gina Klyachkin**, *President of KVC Kentucky (LEXINGTON, KY)*
- ✔ **Ashley Brown**, *President of KVC Nebraska (OMAHA, NE)*
- ✔ **Brent Lemon**, *President of KVC West Virginia (CHARLESTON, WV)*
- ✔ In addition, **Dr. Abyssinia Washington Tabron**, *Vice President of Clinical Engagement and DEI+B*, is championing implementation of the commitment nationwide.



Over 2,200 CEOs across the U.S. have signed the CEO pledge, making it the private sector's biggest effort to expand diversity and inclusion. The leaders have committed to four key actions:

- 1 We will continue to make our workplaces trusting places to have complex, and sometimes difficult, conversations about diversity and inclusion.
- 2 We will implement and expand unconscious bias education.
- 3 We will share best—and unsuccessful—practices.
- 4 We will create and share strategic inclusion and diversity plans with our board of directors.

KVC is making solid progress on all four commitments. You can learn more at [www.kvc.org/diversity](http://www.kvc.org/diversity).

### Adding Belonging to Our DEI Work

In August, KVC added Belonging to the title of its system-wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council. We embrace belonging because when employees truly feel like they belong at work, they are more connected to their team and committed to the mission of our work together. Belonging and acceptance are important to all we do!

The KVC Systemwide DEI+B Council is made up of members from all KVC business units. The group is finalizing its strategic plan and working to promote an inclusive, inviting, and supportive KVC.



### Sharing Our First Employee Diversity Snapshot

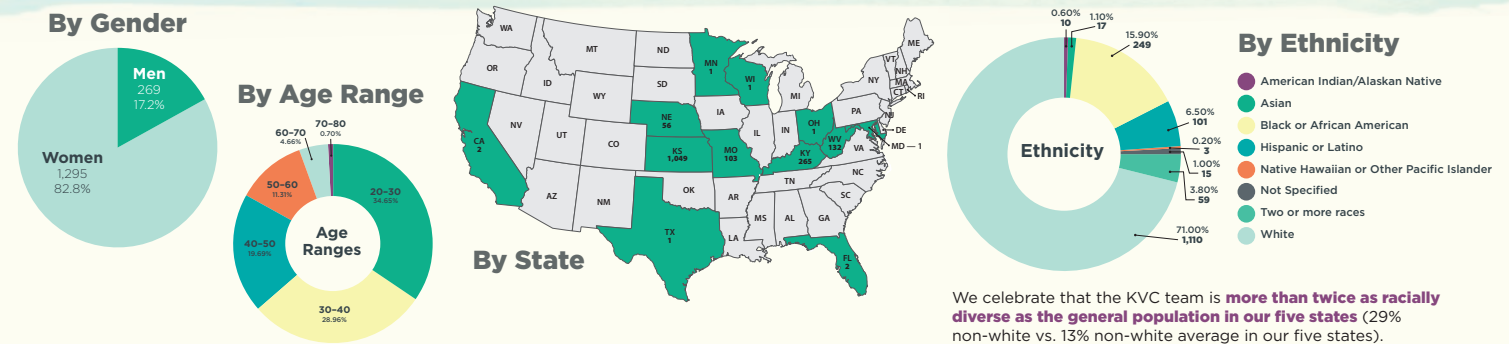
It's important that the people on the KVC team are representative of the children, families, and communities we serve. This year, we produced our first diversity snapshot.

Currently, the KVC team is predominantly women (82.8%) which matches the national average in the fields of social work and child welfare. Recently, the U.S. Department of Labor added a non-binary gender option, which will allow us to collect and share such gender data in future years.

There is strong diversity among the KVC team in terms of age ranges as well as the states that employees live in (14 total).

The snapshot also shows that overall, across the organization, the KVC team is more than twice as racially diverse as the overall census in the five states we work in (29% non-white at KVC vs. 13% non-white general population). On average, the population in our five states is 87% white and 13% other races. By comparison, KVC is 71% white and 29% other races. This is a strong foundation on which to continue building a diverse, inclusive team that can serve diverse communities.

## KVC Employees by the Numbers — OUR DIVERSITY SNAPSHOT







*We all need connection.*

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# This Year, Start a New Tradition Be a Holiday Hero!

**This holiday season, you can help children and families near you!**

You can make the holidays bright by donating gifts for children in our child welfare or children's mental health treatment services. We're looking for individuals, community and faith-based organizations, and businesses of all sizes to be Holiday Heroes!

**We need Holiday Heroes in:**

Kansas | Missouri | Nebraska | Kentucky | West Virginia

**Sign up at [www.kvc.org/holidayhero](http://www.kvc.org/holidayhero)**

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