

thriving

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

Nevertheless, I Persisted:

Robin's Inspiring
Success Story

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KVC is a Great Place to Work!

On Indeed, KVC's Work Wellbeing is rated **High at 76.** 

Read over 600 reviews from people who find Purpose, Happiness, and Satisfaction working at KVC.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO



Dear Friends,

Over the last few months, KVC's work to strengthen families, prevent child abuse and neglect, and help both children and adults achieve mental wellness has expanded dramatically. With the integration of the St. Louis, MO-based nonprofit Great Circle into KVC Missouri on April 1, our team grew by 50 percent. **We are now proud and grateful to be a team of 2,400 employees, united by a common mission, vision, and values.** But the growth isn't limited to Missouri; we're close to announcing exciting new partnerships, programs, and services in multiple states.

We've never aimed to be the biggest child welfare and mental health network. In fact, size matters very little to us. What matters to our caring team of professionals and our generous supporters — many of whom have supported KVC's mission for decades — is that we provide children and families with the very best, heart-centered care. This recent integration and other changes are about preserving

life-changing services that vulnerable families need, elevating quality across this broad continuum of care, and ensuring the health and sustainability of the local nonprofits in the KVC network for years to come.

As we rise to the task of transforming the lives of children and families while also transforming our organization's capacity, we want to thank you for your support. In this issue of *Thriving*, you'll read stories that remind us that this work is about each individual and family we serve:

- In **Nevertheless, I Persisted: Robin's Inspiring Success Story** (pg. 6), you'll read why one young woman we served years ago reached out to tell us that she achieved her dream of becoming a registered nurse.
- In **Safely Reuniting Families: A Day in the Life of a Foster Care Case Manager** (pg. 12), you'll see how our Instagram Takeover Tuesdays let you go behind-the-scenes with the KVC professionals helping our country's most vulnerable children and families.
- And in **Nebraska Teen Football Phenom Gives Back to KVC** (pg. 21), you'll be amazed by Malachi, a high schooler who was once in foster care with KVC and is now a top 75 national recruit for college football.

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



Camber™

Children's Mental Health

KVC HEALTH SYSTEMS

10 Camber Hays Opens to Help Children Experiencing a Mental Health Crisis

Camber Children's Mental Health in Hays provides a healing space for youth throughout rural western Kansas. The treatment center serves youth experiencing suicidality, depression, anxiety, self-harm, and other needs with residential and inpatient mental health services.

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Spring/Summer 2023

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The 988 Suicide & Crisis line is a free, confidential suicide prevention number and crisis line for people experiencing any type of mental distress. When people call, text, or chat 988, they connect with trained counselors who listen, provide support, and direct individuals to resources.



14 Top Tips to Prioritize Your Mental Health This Year

Want to prioritize your mental health this year? Straight from our KVC experts, here are steps you can take to improve your mental wellbeing in 2023.

Strengthening Families

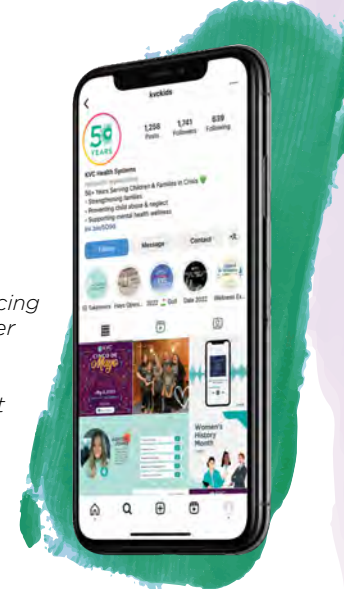
6 Nevertheless, I Persisted: Robin's Inspiring Success Story



When Robin was just three years old, her mother's substance use led to her and her siblings being placed in foster care. This began a long and difficult road for Robin. Along her journey, she developed meaningful connections with people including her KVC case manager and another woman she admired for being both a wonderful mother and a caring nurse. Read how Robin took control of her destiny, choosing to defy the statistics about youth who age out of foster care rather than be defined by them.

12 Safely Reuniting Families: A Day in the Life of a Foster Care Case Manager

As a KVC case manager, Shalona Stewart helps parents and children safely reunify after experiencing foster care. She describes herself as a "cheerleader for parents," and is passionate about supporting the families with whom she works. "We celebrate reintegration!" Shalona said. "Reuniting is the best part of the job."



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Amiri, Madison, Andrew, and Dana are four teens who are each waiting for a loving adoptive family. Learn more about these youth including their unique personalities, strengths and interests.



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Kansas City-based KVC Missouri and St. Louis-based Great Circle, two nonprofits with a shared mission to provide high-quality children's mental health and family services, became one on April 1. The expanded KVC Missouri team of 800 professionals now serves thousands of families with preventative family strengthening services, foster care, children's mental health treatment, educational academies, residential treatment, and other services from 20 locations including Kansas City, St. Louis, and Springfield.



20 People on the Move

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



21 Nebraska Teen Football Phenom Gives Back to KVC

Malachi was once a young boy in foster care. But once KVC professionals placed him and his sister Nevaeh with foster parents Miranda and Craig Coleman, everything changed. Read how the Colemans' love and support along with Malachi's God-given athletic abilities, hard work, and giving spirit have converged in a special way, bringing hope to other children in need.

22 KVC Is a Great Place to Work... for All These Reasons!

After years of intentionally creating a positive, supportive workplace culture, KVC is experiencing new highs in employee engagement and retention. The percentage of engaged employees has grown from 35% to 57%, and many teams are exceeding 80% or even 90% annual retention. This tells us that people love working at KVC and enables them to do their best work with children and families.

 **KVC Health Systems**
We all need connection.

KVC MISSION:

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

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See full leadership team at kvc.org/leaders.



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Nevertheless, I Persisted:

Robin's Inspiring Success Story



When Robin was just three years old, her mother's substance use led to her and her siblings being placed in foster care for their safety. This began a long and difficult road for Robin. She was adopted, but the family was not able to stay together. Despite many heartbreaking experiences, her KVC case workers were a consistent support to her. She was also inspired by an adult role model in her life, a single mom who was a nurse. Read how Robin took control of her destiny, choosing to **defy** the statistics about children in foster care rather than be **defined** by them.

Robin's Early Childhood and Adoption

In 1988, Robin was born in the historic city of Philadelphia. She was the youngest of four children at the time. But Robin's time with her mother and siblings was short-lived. Her mother struggled with substance use, putting the family on the radar of child welfare professionals.

Decades later, in 2017, advocacy by nonprofits including KVC and others led to the passage of the Family First Prevention Services Act. This federal law allocates millions of dollars to mental health and substance use treatment services to help families like Robin's remain safely together. But in the 1990s, very little funding and programming existed for foster care prevention.

At the age of three, Robin and her siblings were removed from their mother's custody for their own safety. They were placed in foster care.

Robin and her brother closest in age to her were cared for by a foster family. Robin recalls she was very close with her foster father but did not have a good relationship with her foster mother. Her foster mother used the possibility of adoption as a discipline tool, promising to reward the kids with adoption for good behavior and threatening to not adopt them as a punishment if the kids behaved badly.

Eventually, the couple finalized their adoption of Robin and her brother. Yet the comments had been hurtful and confusing. Deep down, Robin knew that all children deserve a loving family regardless of their behavior. But the experiences planted seeds of doubt about her own worth.

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Robin’s Family Moves to Kansas

Tragically, there was more turbulence ahead. Robin’s adoptive father contracted Hepatitis C before it was curable. He desperately needed a liver transplant, and moving to Kansas gave him a better chance of receiving one.

“I had only heard about Kansas from the Wizard of Oz,” said Robin. “We moved to Leavenworth, Kansas when I was 12 years old.” As a Black girl in a white adoptive family and new, small town, “I definitely had culture shock,” she said.

The cross-country move, her father’s serious health problems, and regular marriage and family challenges put immense stress on the family. Her father received the liver transplant but remained very sick. Due to bullying at school, Robin started skipping school, getting in trouble for truancy. Her parents separated, and her father moved back east when she was 13 years old, leaving Robin with the adoptive mother who didn’t treat her well.

Robin Reenters Foster Care as a Teen

“When he left, she put me back in foster care,” she said. Robin was 14 years old, and reentered foster care, this time with KVC Kansas.

“[My adoptive mom] would kick me out of the house, then call me in as a runaway. I was so angry,” said Robin. Her adoptive father said he was coming back for Robin and would get a lawyer. But meanwhile, time was ticking by.



Robin clearly remembers that night of reentering foster care. Though she was experiencing a nightmare and crying, a KVC worker sat with her, was kind, and even made her smile. She said she would check on Robin the next day, and she did.

Her KVC caseworkers were a consistent, encouraging presence in her life. One woman was her caseworker for two years. “My KVC caseworker was always there for me. I called whether I was crying, angry, or had something good to share. She would come pick me up or

bring me shoes. Just getting me out of my environment for a short period was enough of a break to keep me mentally stable. You look forward to seeing your caseworker.”

While Robin was in foster care, her adoptive mother relinquished her parental rights. And, a few years later, her adoptive father passed away.

Robin Decides to Write Her Own Future

Soon, Robin turned 18. While the Kansas Department for Children and Families and KVC Kansas have programs and professionals focused on helping young adults transition out of foster care, Robin needed more informal types of support.

Thankfully, she had people around her who cared. She dated a young man for four years, from ages 17–21, and grew close with his family. She admired her boyfriend’s mother who was a single mom and a registered nurse. She thought to herself, “I want to take care of people like her.”

Robin became a certified nursing assistant (CNA) at age 19 but felt a bit stuck. She was running with a crowd that was content with where they were in life, but that didn’t match what she wanted.

She also realized she’d been treating her trauma, depression, and ADHD with medication only, and hadn’t worked through it using therapy.

“I was about 24 or 25 when I realized I needed help,” said Robin. “I thought, I’m never gonna finish school if I can’t talk to someone about this.”



She decided to take charge of her own mental health and her future. “I had to stop using being a foster kid and aging out of the system as an excuse, and instead use it as motivation. You don’t have to be a statistic. You can make a decision every day and choose.” Through therapy, she began to heal from her past trauma. She also finished nursing school.

In 2022, Robin reached out to KVC to let us know she had achieved her dream. She graduated college and became a registered nurse!

“I love my job, I love caring for people,” said Robin. “It gives me a sense of being needed.”

“KVC helped me through this journey,” she said. “Yes, there are flaws in the system, but KVC provided guidance. That’s why I wanted to reach out and let you all know that I achieved my dream.”

Robin recently became a traveling nurse to help people while also exploring new parts of the country. She’s enjoying working in Atlanta, GA now and spending time with family and friends in the area.

Watch a video of Robin’s story at www.kvc.org/blog.



Robin in Her Own Words:

Tens of thousands of children are removed from their homes and enter foster care each year.

I was, but I persisted.

Adopted children make up roughly **2% of the total child population**.

I was adopted, but I persisted.

11% of children placed in a permanent home will re-enter foster care within 12 months.

It happened to me, but I persisted.

33% of children in foster care nationally have experienced five or more school moves, causing them to fall behind academically.

I did, but I persisted.

More than 23,000 children age out of the U.S. foster care system every year.

I did, but I persisted.

There is **less than a 3% chance** for children who have aged out of foster care to earn a college degree at any point in their life.

Statistically speaking, I was destined to fail. But my perseverance guided me through the journey of failures, and now I can finally say I have officially graduated registered nurse (RN) school.

All the good and bad experiences of my childhood molded me into the woman I am today. I made it my goal to learn from every single one of them.

My ultimate goal is to be someone that others look up to. I want children in foster care to know that it is possible to dream. And most importantly, it is possible to turn those dreams into reality. Children in foster care need to know that our struggles are the strength we need to succeed.



Camber Hays Opens

to Help Children Experiencing a Mental Health Crisis

Camber Children's Mental Health is the Midwest region's leading provider of mental health treatment for youth, helping thousands of kids and teens each year who are struggling with behavioral and mental health disorders. Camber has been providing mental health treatment in rural western Kansas since 2010 and in 2019, state funding changes led to a temporary closure of Camber Hays' inpatient treatment for youth, while residential treatment continued. Camber Hays recently expanded to a newly designed facility and reopened inpatient services.

In December 2021, Camber Hays entered into an agreement with Kansas Governor Laura Kelly and the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) to expand the reach of its life-saving mental health treatment for youth throughout Kansas. The goal of the partnership was to create a modern, state-of-the-art inpatient children's mental health hospital designed to meet the needs of youth in western Kansas and its surrounding communities.



Pictured are Rep. Bill Clifford, KDADS Secretary Scott Brunner, KDADS Commissioner Andrew Brown, Rep. Jim Minnix, Rep. Barbara Wasinger, Gary Shorman of the Schmidt Foundation, Camber President Bobby Eklofe, U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, KVC Health Systems President and CEO Jason Hooper, Doug Albin of the Dane G. Hansen Foundation, Rebecca Swender from U.S. Sen. Roger Marshall's, M.D.'s office, Hays City Commissioner Sandy Jacobs, and Sen. Rick Billinger.

The partnership with Gov. Kelly and KDADS included state grant funding to create the new hospital. In addition, The Patterson Family Foundation, The Schmidt Family Foundation and The Dane G. Hansen Foundation generously committed philanthropic support to bring the Camber Hays treatment center to life.

Camber Hays opened its newly renovated facility at 3000 New Way Blvd. in Hays in early February 2023. At this location, Camber's mental health and medical professionals provide inpatient and residential treatment for youth ages 6 to 18 in need of intensive mental health treatment.

Camber services are designed to help youth in a mental health crisis stabilize, build resilience, and develop coping skills so they can return home as soon as safely possible to continue outpatient treatment in their community. The expansion of services will also help to reduce wait times and improve access to care for youth experiencing a mental health crisis.

“Like much of the nation, we are at a crisis point here in Kansas regarding mental health. This hospital will provide the necessary resources and care for young Kansans facing mental health crises,” said Gov. Kelly. **“I am impressed with the commitment shown by the leaders at KDADS and Camber to not only the youth in western Kansas, but also the communities this center will impact.”**

In its new location, Camber will continue to provide psychiatric residential treatment facility (PRTF) services. An additional 14 new inpatient hospital beds will also allow Camber to serve 600 more youth each year who are facing struggles with suicidality, depression, anxiety, the impacts of trauma, self-harm, and other mental health disorders.

The state-of-the-art facility is led by Sarah Berens, LCSW, Executive Director of Camber Hays. Berens has been with Camber since 2016 where she gained experience as Clinical Director, Associate Clinical Director, Clinical Supervisor, Hospital Therapist, and Residential Therapist.

“We are thrilled for this next chapter for Camber and the western Kansas community. Our expanded services in Hays will bring critical resources directly to young people in an under-served region of our state,” said Bobby Eklofe, President of Camber. “We are privileged to provide these services and to be a source of hope for children and families.”



What is the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline?

The 988 Suicide & Crisis line is a **free, confidential suicide prevention number and crisis line** for people experiencing any type of mental distress. When people **call, text, or chat 988**, they connect with trained counselors who listen, provide support, and direct individuals to resources.

Since the launch of the shorter 988 number in July 2022 which replaced a longer suicide prevention hotline number, **calls answered increased by 48%, chats answered increased by 263% and texts answered increased by 1,445%.** The new number is intended to make its use instinctual — much like calling 911 — making it easy for people to receive immediate help.

988 also offers support for any kind of mental distress, including substance abuse. You can also call 988 on behalf of someone else who has expressed a desire to harm themselves or is experiencing a mental health crisis.

Learn more about this new treatment center in Western Kansas at cambermentalhealth.org/newcamberhays.



Safely Reuniting Families:

A Day in the Life of a Foster Care Case Manager



Every child deserves to grow up in a safe, loving home.

Unfortunately, there are times when caregivers are unable to fully meet a child's needs and it becomes necessary to temporarily remove a child from his or her home. When this occurs and yet a safe family reunification remains in the child's best interest, KVC helps caregivers and children reunify through individualized support, parent/child visitations, and connection to resources.

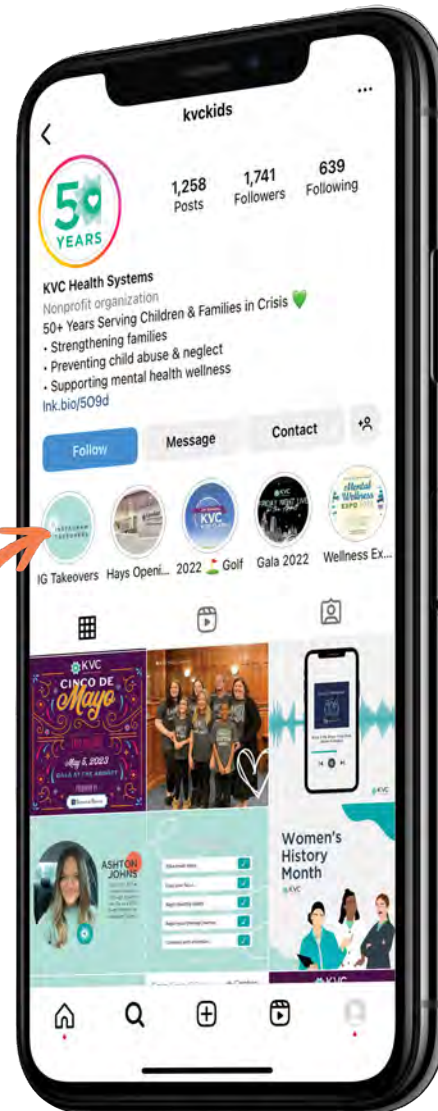
As a reintegration case manager at KVC Kansas, Shalona Stewart helps parents and children safely reunify after experiencing foster care. She describes herself as a "cheerleader for parents," and is passionate about supporting the families with whom she works.

With 14 years of case management experience, Shalona has supported families through KVC for four years. Her motivation comes from reunifying families. "We celebrate reintegration! Reuniting is the best part of the job," Shalona said.

In an engaging Instagram story takeover on KVC's profile (@kvckids), Shalona recently took viewers along with her and showed them a day in her life at KVC. Starting with a breakfast meeting and a check-in with her supervisor, Shalona then educated the audience about common misconceptions surrounding foster care, reintegration, and her job. She also shared why she loves working at KVC.

Shalona appreciates how collaborative her work is at KVC. "We work as a team," she said. "You're never alone here, and you will always have help and collaboration. You'll never feel like you're drowning — and if you do, someone is always tossing you a life vest to stay afloat."

See Shalona's day on our **Instagram Story highlights (@kvckids)**.



Meet Children Who Need a Forever Family

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

AMIRI (15)



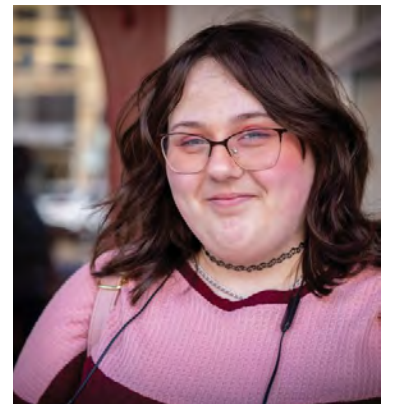
Amiri is an intelligent boy who does well in school and enjoys "all of the subjects." He likes to play outside, swim and ride his longboard. He loves music and even plays the guitar! Amiri needs an active, loving family that will commit to him and give him lots of guidance and support.



MADISON (14)



Madison is an amazing 14-year-old who loves to create! From drawing to singing to cooking, Madison's artistic spirit shines brightly. She has a passion for giving back to her community through volunteer work. Madison deserves a loving, accepting, "no matter what" family who will empower her to thrive.



ANDREW (13)



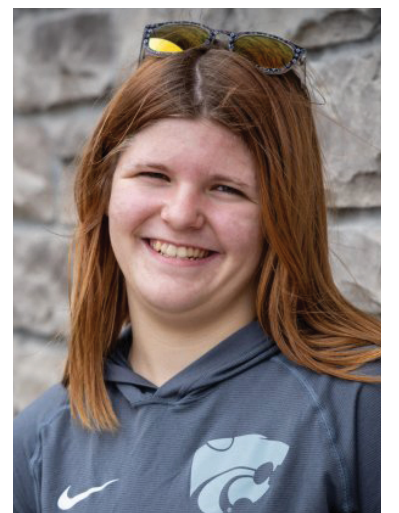
Passionate about staying active, Andrew is especially talented at caring for horses. He's even learning to saddle and ride them! Andrew would benefit from a patient family who can offer him one-on-one time like cooking a meal together, tossing a football or working on a project.



DANA (13)



Dana is a resilient teen who enjoys reading, crafting, and cooking. You'll find her playing a variety of sports and most importantly, having fun. When she's older, she wants to be a cosmetologist to help people feel beautiful. Dana needs a forever family who will give her the love, acceptance, and stability she deserves.





Top Tips

to **Prioritize** Your Mental Health in 2023

Want to prioritize your mental health this year?

Straight from our KVC experts, here are steps you can take to improve your mental wellbeing in the year ahead.

» Take Small Steps

If you've ever set a New Year's resolution only to lose traction by Valentine's Day, you're not alone: 80% of us report giving up on resolutions. The solution? Take small steps.

"Resolutions can be lofty," shares KVC West Virginia Vice President of Clinical Services, Erin Keltner. We set overly ambitious goals and get overwhelmed. "I talk to people a lot about making small changes," Erin says. Plan just a few minutes of meditation or journaling each day. Once you've mastered that, add another attainable tactic.

» Find Your Focus

Where should you start when it comes to mental health goal setting? Since there are countless ways to improve your mental health – for example, focusing on mindfulness or boundaries – finding your focus is critical.

KVC Nebraska Director of Clinical and Prevention Services, Larissa Dowe, recommends reviewing Gallup's Five Essential Elements of Wellbeing as a place to start: social, financial, career, physical and community wellbeing. Reviewing these five areas can help you choose which focus may benefit you most.

» De-Stigmatize Mental Health

While progress has been made, an unfortunate stigma still surrounds mental health. People often diminish mental health needs because of fear of what others will think. Sadly, more than half of people with mental illness don't get the support they need. To prioritize mental health this year, start talking about it.

"Mental health stigma disallows us to speak of mental health openly and then get treatment," says KVC Health Systems Chief Clinical Officer Chad Anderson. Make it a point to talk openly about mental health. Every engagement helps to create a safer environment for these critical conversations.

» Build Healthy Habits into Your Routine

Healthy habits, like exercise or getting more sleep, can greatly impact your mental health. But sometimes, the demands of life get in the way. Larissa proposes a new perspective: integrate new habits into your current routine. "Playing with my kids is a way I get exercise in," she says. "Playing tag or going for a bike ride engages my kids and gives me exercise. Those things are a lot easier than going to the gym for me."

» Don't Wait for a Crisis

One crucial mental health tip from KVC Kansas Director of Outpatient Services Matt Arnet is simple but profound: Don't wait to make changes or get support. "If you feel really overwhelmed, it's going to be harder to start a new habit, or to implement strategies from therapy," he says. "There's a real benefit to noticing patterns and seeking support right away."

Have your sleep habits changed over the past few months? How are your anxiety levels? If you review your daily life and discover a decline in what's healthy for you, taking immediate steps can be beneficial.

» Begin Your Therapy Journey

We can do many things on our own to improve our mental health. But professional help can sometimes be necessary. Make this the year you get the help you need.

Finding help often starts with calling your insurance provider to learn about your coverage. If your insurance doesn't cover mental health or if you're uninsured, don't let that stop you. Some therapists offer sliding scales based on income. Then, go to psychologytoday.com

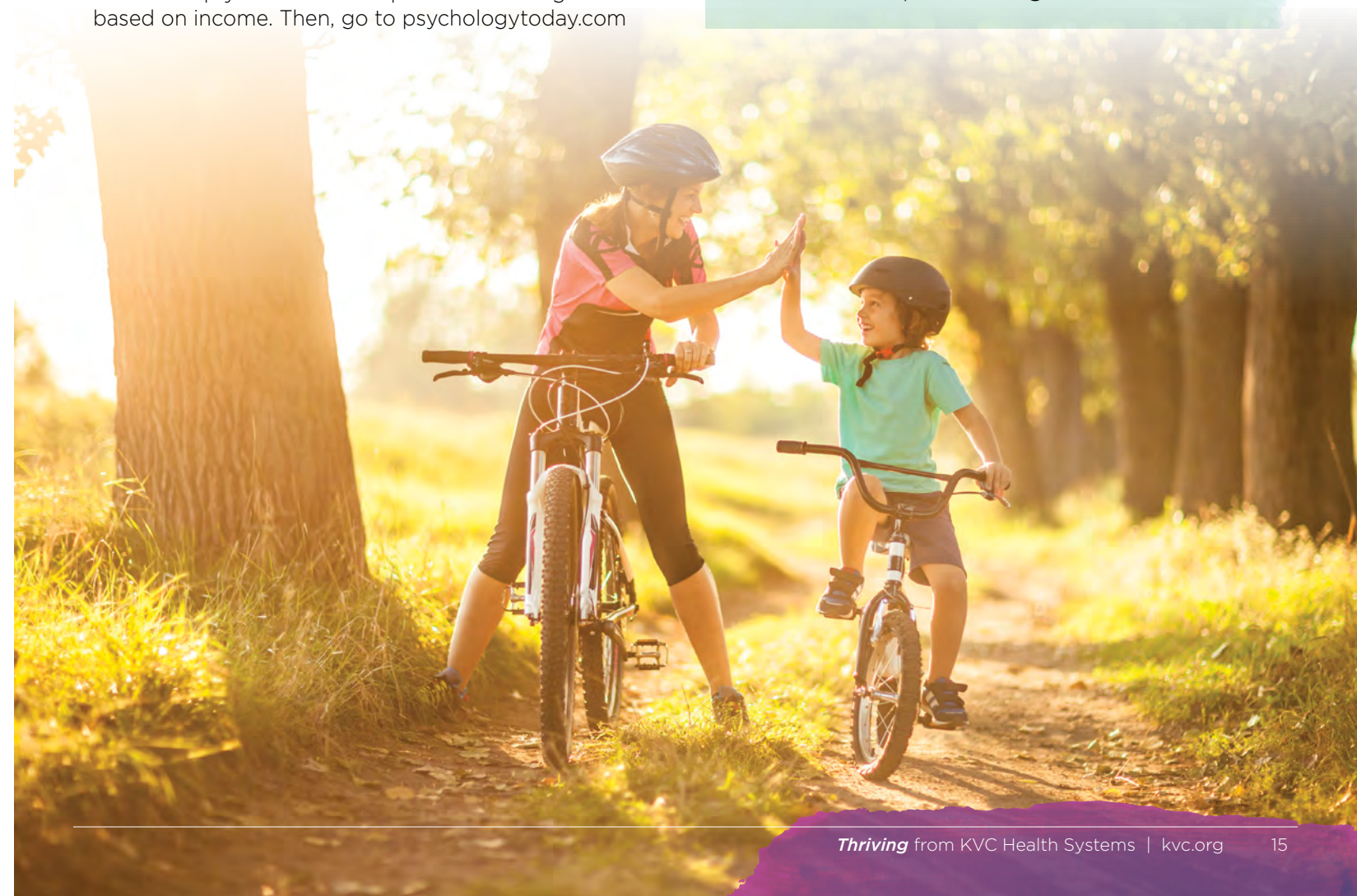
and search for a therapist. Taking steps to start this therapy journey can have a tremendous impact on the rest of your life.

» Connect with Intention

At KVC, we talk a lot about the importance of connection— and for good reason. "We know connection is essential for brain development and social skills," Matt explains. "That's why it's important to think about our support system and to engage with that supportive community."

Making this connection might involve scheduling time to get together with friends or family or catching up via text. Meaningful connection strengthens your sense of community and can help combat the cumulative effects of stress and anxiety.

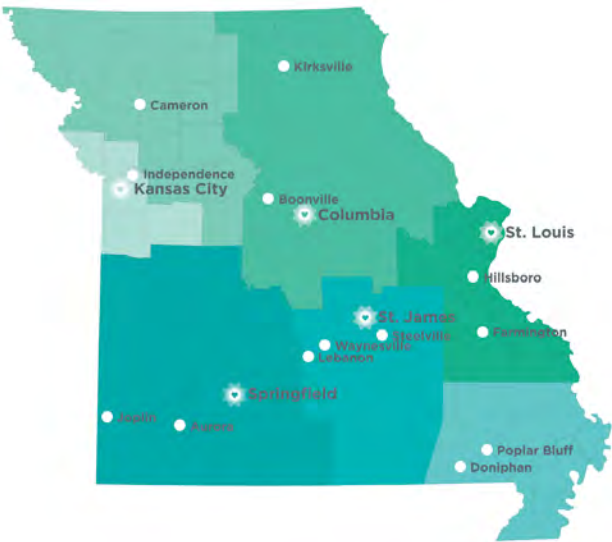
Whichever goal you set, it's a great step forward as you prioritize your mental health in the upcoming year. As you do so, KVC will be right by your side to support you. Find more mental health tips at kvc.org.



To Strengthen Children’s Mental Health, KVC Missouri & Great Circle *Become One*

Kansas City-based **KVC Missouri** and St. Louis-based **Great Circle**, two nonprofits with a shared mission to provide high-quality children’s mental health and family services, became one on April 1, 2023. The expanded KVC Missouri team of 800 professionals now serves thousands of families each year with preventative family strengthening services, foster care, children’s mental health treatment, educational academies, residential treatment, and other services from 20 locations including Kansas City, St. Louis, and Springfield.

“The combined strength of KVC Missouri and Great Circle is a win for the state because it expands children’s and families’ access to care at a time when needs are increasing,” said Lindsey Stephenson, President of KVC Missouri. Depression, anxiety, and trauma- and stress-related disorders are on the rise. Teen suicide is the third leading cause of death for 10- to 18-year-old youth, and mental-health-related visits to hospital emergency rooms have risen significantly.



Jason Hooper

“This restructuring honors Great Circle’s legacy of caring and brings it into a national network,” said Jason Hooper, President and CEO of KVC Health Systems. “It will elevate best practices to and from other states; and it will help shape the state of Missouri into a national leader in outcomes. We can truly transform the face of foster care and mental health.”

KVC Missouri will also transform its collective services into a purposeful, connected system of care that serves as a statewide safety net for children and families. This could alleviate pressure on hospital ERs and the child welfare system and surround families who are experiencing difficult times with caring support.



Lindsey Stephenson

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 **KVC Missouri**
We all need connection.

Listening Tour



KVC and Great Circle leaders traveled on a listening tour to meet employees, talk about the shared values that drive our work, answer questions, and get team members’ input on our future. Listening sessions occurred in St. Louis, Springfield, Columbia, St. James, and Kansas City.

KVC Missouri & Great Circle Become One
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As part of the integration, KVC Missouri added several new leaders which you'll meet in the fall issue of *Thriving*. In addition, Great Circle board members Ted Armstrong and Peggy Gordin joined the KVC Health Systems Board of Directors, and William J. Fleck and Brian Salmo joined the KVC Missouri Board of Directors.

"Prevention is the future, and we have a sense of urgency about creating that future now," said Lindsey Stephenson. "Child welfare systems must evolve into child and family wellbeing systems, and children's mental health treatment must be as accessible as ERs and urgent care clinics. This is what motivates our team every day to wake up and give our best. The heart of our work is helping people and inspiring hope."

Watch for a more in-depth story this fall as we introduce the new KVC Missouri leadership team and new programs and services statewide. In the meantime, learn more at www.kvcmo.org.



West Virginia Couple Adopts Miracle Child from Foster Care

After struggling with miscarriages and infertility, Michele and her husband decided to consider foster parenting. With encouragement from Michele's sister, as well as a heartfelt realization from the movie *The Blind Side*, the Sweeneys knew they needed to open their home and hearts to children in need. Soon after, Michele and her husband started foster parent training classes with KVC.

When they arrived at their first class, the couple saw they were the only participants in attendance. Michele told the instructor that she didn't want to cause an inconvenience. However, the trainer said, "If you're the only couple that comes for fostering, I will drive all the way back down here every Saturday for you guys to do that." The Sweeneys completed training and were licensed foster parents a few months later.

On December 28, 2018, Michele and her husband got a call from KVC. There was a baby girl in the hospital who needed a safe place. The next day, the Sweeneys met Miracle. "I'll never forget that day," Michele said. "She looked over at my husband and gave him the biggest smile. Then, she turned to me and gave me the biggest smile."

This "love at first sight" didn't come without its challenges. Miracle was born with many health challenges including clubfoot, a congenital foot abnormality in which a baby's foot is twisted. By taking shifts with her husband, consulting doctors, and collaborating with KVC, the Sweeneys cared for Miracle through occupational therapy, 18 casts, and several surgeries. But the family persisted and enjoyed the time they had together.

Michele and her husband officially adopted Miracle in June 2020. Now, Miracle is four years old and the Sweeneys enjoy plenty of family fun. "We go to the park every weekend. It's really huge for her," Michele said, smiling.

"KVC has changed our lives tremendously," Michele said. "If I never found KVC, or that man who was willing to facilitate those fostering classes on Saturday, I would not be a parent."

Read the Sweeneys' full adoption story at www.kvcwv.org/miracle.



People on the Move

Watch for a special **People on the Move** section this fall as we recognize many leadership changes resulting from Great Circle’s recent integration into the KVC family of nonprofits.

PROMOTION



Kierstin Reed, LMSW
Director of Adoption Services
KVC Kansas (Olathe, KS)
7.5 years with KVC

Kierstin oversees the department responsible for helping children in foster care achieve permanency through adoption while equipping families with the education and support they need to thrive.

PROMOTION



Regena Pearl
Director of Qualified Residential Treatment Program (Q RTP)
KVC Kansas (Kansas City, KS)
30 years with KVC

Regena leads a team of healthcare professionals providing behavioral health treatment to girls in foster care ages 12-18 who live in a residential home environment.

PROMOTION



Kristina Foster
Director of Marketing and Communications
KVC Health Systems (Olathe, KS)
3.5 years with KVC

Leading marketing and communications efforts for KVC Kansas and KVC West Virginia, Kristina oversees strategy, media relations, content creation, social media, graphic design, video production and more.

PROMOTION



Amanda Moline
KSTEP Associate Director
KVC Kentucky (Frankfort, KY)
1.5 years with KVC

Amanda Moline is a KSTEP Associate Director in Kentucky’s Salt River Trail region and provides leadership and support to her clinical team in their work with families impacted by substance abuse.

PROMOTION



Danielle Riley
Homebuilders Supervisor
KVC Kentucky (Ashland, KY)
1.5 years with KVC

Danielle Riley is a Homebuilders Supervisor in Kentucky’s Northeastern region and oversees staff that provide intensive in-home services targeted at mitigating imminent risk of removal of children in the child welfare system.

NEW HIRE



Tom Waugh
Director of Information Technology (IT) Support
KVC Health Systems (Olathe, KS)

Tom oversees a team of IT helpdesk support staff that enable KVC employees to do their work efficiently.

PROMOTION



Blythe Hinderliter, MBA
Senior Director of Marketing and Communications
KVC Health Systems (Olathe, KS)
4.5 years with KVC

After years of leading marketing strategy for KVC’s subsidiary Camber Children’s Mental Health, Blythe now leads the team of marketing and communications professionals serving all KVC business units.

NEW HIRE



Cary Christie, MNA
Director of Nursing
Camber Children’s Mental Health (Kansas City, KS)

As Director of Nursing, Cary is responsible for driving excellence in quality of care through evidence-based practice and the building of strong care teams at Camber Kansas City.

PROMOTION



Kelly Beale, LMSW
Director of Intensive In-Home Services
KVC Kansas (Olathe, KS)
16 years with KVC

We apologize that due to an administrative error, we’re just now sharing Kelly’s promotion. Leading the Intensive In-Home Services department for three years, Kelly assists her team in ensuring families have the support they need so children can remain safely at home.

Nebraska Teen Football Phenom Gives Back to KVC



Malachi Coleman @ChiColeman23
Thank you for the love,

“Thank you for the love,” said Malachi Coleman in a tweet. As a young man who was once in foster care and is now a high school football phenom, Malachi humbly shares messages of gratitude like this with his thousands of Twitter followers. Chi, pronounced like “Kai,” tweets regularly from his handle @ChiColeman23.

By the time Malachi met his foster parents, Craig and Miranda Coleman, he had endured more than his fair share of heartbreak. Malachi’s father died and his mother dropped him and his sister, Nevaeh, off at a stranger’s house when they were 5 and 2 and never returned.

When Malachi and Nevaeh entered foster care, KVC Nebraska supported them in three foster homes before the child placing team paired the siblings and the Colemans together. On Nov. 20,

2015, the Colemans adopted Malachi and Nevaeh, making them a family forever.

Exceptionally talented in sports, Malachi is now using his voice to help other kids in foster care see their worth and potential. With Nebraska’s first high school football Name Image Likeness (NIL) deal, Malachi is raising money and giving it all back. Through his fundraising and advocacy, Malachi hopes to make foster care better for the next generation of kids.

Malachi has created a successful brand, Fly Like Chi, and releases Chi-branded merchandise for his nationwide supporters to purchase. Partnering with local Lincoln, Nebraska restaurant, Muchachos, Malachi also created his own burrito special called, “The Giver.” He hosts youth sports camps for aspiring athletes, too. He donates all proceeds from his brand’s

merchandise sales, his collaboration with Muchachos, and other NIL deals to KVC Nebraska and the Foster Care Closet of Nebraska.

“Without KVC, I wouldn’t be where I am today,” said Malachi. “When I learned that I could do NIL in high school, I knew I wanted to be impactful. I knew giving back to people who got me to where I am today would be important to me.”

Malachi announced that he will be attending the University of Nebraska – Lincoln to play football for the Huskers. He is a true success story from a combination of his hard work, the Colemans’ unwavering love and support, and the dedicated foster care team at KVC Nebraska.

Read Malachi and Nevaeh’s full adoption story at www.kvcnebraska.org/chi.



KVC is a Great Place to Work...
for All These Reasons!

Why KVC is a Great Place to Work

Reason 35

KVC frequently promotes people from within, providing exceptional career opportunities.

Reason 41

KVC is committed to treating every person equally, with respect and dignity.

Reason 33

KVC has a family-like culture where people genuinely care for one another.

Reason 39

KVC coworkers are committed to quality work, creating a strong sense of team.

Reason 2

KVC works every day to **enhance families** and prevent child abuse and neglect.

Reason 15

KVC is passionate about each team member getting to do what they do best every day.

Reason 40

KVC is focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion with employee-led councils in every local team.

Reason 49

The majority of KVC's work is about safely preventing family violence and mental health crises.

Reason 1

KVC's inspiring mission is to **enrich and enhance** the lives of **children and families**.

Reason 95

KVC offers a generous combination of paid time off plus 12 paid holidays and personal days.

Reason 43

KVC actively recruits diverse professionals to join the team so it can provide better services.

Reason 10

KVC intentionally works each day to create a **positive, supportive place to work**.

Reason 46

KVC is a national leader in quality, innovation, and child and family outcomes.

Reason 26

KVC offers numerous flexibility, such as hybrid work, flextime, and remote options.

To find out all the reasons, visit: kvc.org/careers

At KVC, *it's all about connection* — not just for children and families, but for our team members, too. Without the expertise of our talented teams, we wouldn't be able to achieve our mission of serving children, teens, adults, and families across hundreds of communities in five states. In return for their heart-centered service, KVC provides employees with the support they need to promote their overall wellbeing, producing high levels of work happiness and engagement. As a result, KVC is experiencing its highest employee retention rates in years with **many teams exceeding 80% or even 90% annual retention.** This tells us that people love working at KVC. They have found purpose and passion in the work we do because it matters.

According to Indeed's Work Wellbeing, KVC employees are having more positive experiences and staying longer because of the following reasons:

10 Reasons People Stay at KVC

- ✓ Purpose
- ✓ Flexibility
- ✓ Learning
- ✓ Appreciation
- ✓ Support
- ✓ Management
- ✓ Inclusion
- ✓ Achievement
- ✓ Satisfaction
- ✓ Belonging

Reported from Indeed's Work Wellbeing.

Candice Finds Working at KVC Is Fun and Rewarding

Candice Wagner, Assessment Support Specialist, has been with KVC Kentucky for more than three years. Candice knows how valuable it is to have a supportive team on your side, especially when working on challenging cases.



Belonging is also something Candice has found at KVC. “I love my job at KVC. My job is first and foremost fun,” Candice says. “I get to actively meet with families, assist their needs, and help them in a positive way. It is a very rewarding job. I have a lot of friends because of work. My supervisors are easy to talk with and they care about me. I feel like everyone really does know everyone and we all care for one another. My supervisors encourage me to use my PTO. I feel really proud and happy of the work I do for KVC.”

KVC loves to promote professional growth and development as well. We often promote from within, giving team members opportunities to grow their careers and have long futures at KVC.

Julia Says Supporting Families at KVC
is a Heartfelt Experience

Julia Beecher started as an intern at KVC Kansas and now works as a PMTO Therapist. PMTO means Parent Management Training — Oregon model, an evidence-based parent training program proven to help parents strengthen their families (it's also called Generation PMTO). "My journey at KVC began as a master's-level social work intern. I had never worked in child welfare before and felt nervous about this new experience. Once I began, I consistently received a warm welcome from KVC employees that made me feel important and included," recalls Julia.



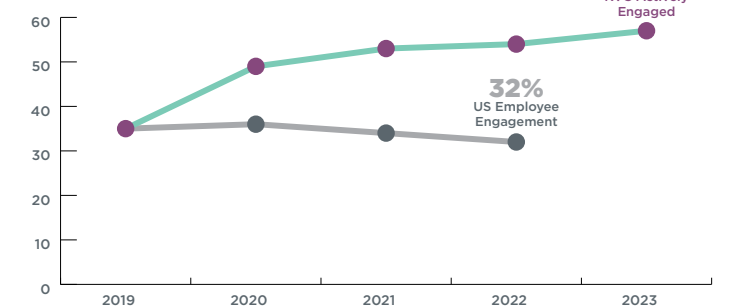
“As my internship was approaching the end, there was an opening for a permanent PMTO Therapist position that I applied for and eventually received! Some weeks may feel like a rollercoaster, but nothing is too difficult to work through with the support of my teammates. Over the past two years, working at KVC and providing PMTO services to support families and their needs has been such a heartfelt experience, and I cannot wait to see where else this journey takes me.”

How KVC Creates a Positive, Supportive Culture

KVC is committed to creating a positive, supportive workplace where our people love doing their best work. Employee engagement is woven into our DNA. Part of our commitment is to ensure everyone's voice is heard at KVC. We conduct the Gallup Q12 employee engagement survey twice each year to gain feedback so teams can have meaningful discussions and build toward progress not only within their teams, but agencywide as well. By fostering trust, we gain compassionate, stable, hopeful, and engaged teams at KVC. Our recent Q12 survey results show an increase from 35% engaged employees four years ago to 57% engaged employees today.

KVC is always looking for talented, committed, caring people to join us! KVC is proud to offer a robust benefits package including competitive compensation, a retirement savings plan with immediate company match, tuition reimbursement, generous paid time off and holidays, and more. We're hiring social workers, nurses, case managers, direct care youth workers, and more. If you're looking to help children and families and want to be a part of a thriving culture, consider exploring our career opportunities at kvc.org/careers. As so many others have, you may find that working at KVC is a way to not only make a living, but also make a meaningful life.

KUC's Rising Engagement



KVC is hiring for positions nationwide!
Learn more about our positive,
supportive culture and view open
jobs at **[kvc.org/careers](https://www.kvc.org/careers)**.



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