

# thriving

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

## The Loneliness Epidemic:

How to Cultivate a Culture of Connection

- 12 | What Every Caregiver Needs to Know About Teen Brain Development
- 16 | KVC and Children's Mercy Partner for New Mental Wellness Campus
- 23 | 7 Ways You Can Help a Child in Foster Care (Without Being a Foster Parent)



# KVC is a Great Place to Work!

On Indeed, KVC's Work Wellbeing is rated **High at 78.** 

Read 700 reviews from people who find Purpose, Happiness, and Satisfaction working at KVC.

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

Dear Friends,

Over the last 50 years, one positive change after another has transformed life for children and families in the U.S. There have been technological advancements such as the creation of the Internet, improving education and communication. There have been incredible healthcare advances, leading to life-saving treatments and longer life expectancy. And there has been much progress on civil rights and gender equality, although we still have a way to go.

But one aspect of our lives is trending in a dangerous direction. According to a new report from the U.S. Surgeon General, also known as "the Nation's Doctor," the amount of time people spent alone increased from 2003 to 2020 and time spent on in-person social engagement decreased. Yet people are social beings, and this loss of connection has grown into an epidemic of loneliness and isolation. Lack of social connection is linked to cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, anxiety, suicidality, and self-harm.

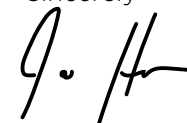
As a network of child- and family-serving nonprofits, we're thankful to see a spotlight put on the most important truth of our time: ***we all need connection.*** By prioritizing connection, we help our minds and bodies to be healthy, we enjoy life more, and we also give the children in our lives their greatest chance at wellbeing and a bright future.

In this issue of *Thriving*, you'll read stories that celebrate the healing effects of social connection:

- In **Children's Mercy and KVC Health Systems Building New Mental Wellness Campus** (pg. 10), you'll read why we've partnered with a world-class pediatric healthcare provider to expand inpatient pediatric and adult mental health treatment capacity.
- In **What Every Caregiver Needs to Know About Teenage Brain Development** (pg. 12), you'll discover how simple interactions during the adolescent years help teens develop the resilience and skills they'll need in adulthood.
- And in **7 Ways You Can Help a Child in Foster Care (Without Being a Foster Parent)** (pg. 23), you'll learn how you can support the families that help children heal after they've experienced abuse, neglect, or other serious family challenges.

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



# KVC Gala

Thanks to our many sponsors and guests, KVC's Cinco de Mayo Gala raised **over \$356,000** for children and families in crisis. See photos from other recent events on pg. 21.



## thriving

Fall 2023/Winter 2024

### Health

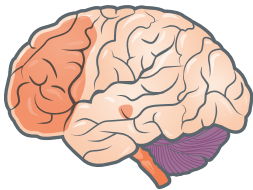
#### 6 The Loneliness Epidemic: How to Cultivate a Culture of Connection



The U.S. Surgeon General recently released an advisory on the loneliness epidemic, calling attention to the fact that connection is a fundamental human need for survival. Discover how prioritizing connection with other people can lead to healing, support wellbeing and combat the negative health effects of loneliness.

#### 12 What Every Caregiver Needs to Know About Teenage Brain Development

The adolescent years are a unique time of growth and change. Gain a better understanding of teenage brain development and learn how to promote healthy behavior.



#### 14 How Caregivers Can Celebrate Children's Textured Hair



Proper hair care allows children to feel loved and celebrated. Learn the importance of textured hair care and get tips and resources.

### Strengthening Families

#### 22 Turning the Page as a KVC Social Worker

Andrea Rishel, a KVC Case Manager in Kentucky, set out to gather some books for one family. But an outpouring of community support turned her mission into something much larger.



### Creating Families

#### 13 Meet Children Who Need a Forever Family

Rachael, Lucy, Bre'Anna and Nicholas are each waiting for a loving adoptive family. Learn more about these youth, including their unique personalities, strengths and interests.



#### 23 7 Ways You Can Help a Child in Foster Care (Without Being a Foster Parent)

Fostering is one of many ways to help children in crisis. If being a foster parent isn't right for you, you can still get involved. Find out how you can make an impact.

### News & Events

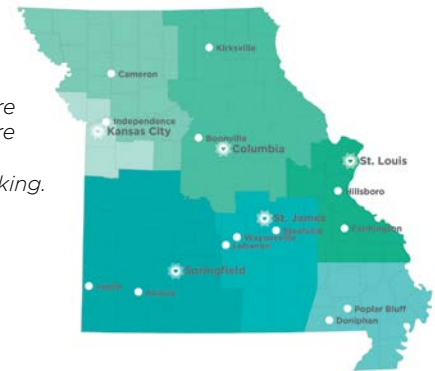
#### 10 Children's Mercy and KVC Health Systems Form Joint Venture to Build New \$53 Million Mental Wellness Campus



As our nation faces a mental health crisis, two leading children's healthcare organizations have come together to build a new \$53 million Mental Wellness Campus in Olathe, KS. KVC's trauma-informed, neuroscience-driven inpatient mental health treatment model, combined with Children's Mercy's world-class pediatric care, research, and community engagement, will elevate mental health and community health outcomes for decades to come.

#### 16 KVC Missouri's New Leaders & Services Aim to Strengthen Child and Family Wellbeing Statewide

The expanded KVC Missouri team of 800 professionals now serves thousands of families each year at 20 locations including Kansas City, St. Louis, and Springfield. Learn more about the broader continuum of care KVC is bringing to Missouri and the positive impact our services are making.



#### 20 People on the Move

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

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- B. Wayne Sims — Co-Chair and Past CEO
- John Barnes — Co-Chair
- Ted Armstrong
- David Ball
- Patrick Desbois
- William (Bill) Dunn, Jr.
- Peggy Gordin
- Jason Hooper
- Teresa Markowitz
- Bill Self

### LEADERSHIP TEAM

- Jason R. Hooper, M.S.W.  
President & Chief Executive Officer
- Erin Stucky, L.S.C.S.W.  
Chief Operations Officer
- Chad E. Anderson, L.S.C.S.W.  
Chief Clinical Officer
- Lonnie Johnson  
Chief Information Officer
- Sherri Lohe  
Chief Financial Officer
- Cheryl Marquardt, J.D.  
General Counsel
- Robert (Bobby) Eklofe, M.H.S.A.  
President - Camber Children's Mental Health
- Lindsey Stephenson, L.S.C.S.W.  
President - KVC Missouri
- Dr. Linda Bass, Ph.D., L.C.M.F.T.  
President - KVC Kansas
- Gina Klyachkin, M.S.W., L.C.S.W., L.I.C.S.W.  
President - KVC Kentucky
- Ashley Brown, L.C.S.W.  
President - KVC Nebraska
- Brent Lemon, L.C.S.W., L.I.C.S.W.  
President - KVC West Virginia
- Michelle Lawrence  
President - KVC Foundation
- Renny Christian Arensberg, M.A.  
Executive Vice President of Employee Engagement
- Jenny Kutz, M.B.A.  
Executive Vice President of Marketing & Communications
- Erik Nyberg, M.H.S.A.  
Executive Vice President of Technology
- Kimberly O'Connor-Soule, L.S.C.S.W.  
Executive Vice President of Inpatient Services
- Venkata Rao, M.S.H.R.M., S.P.H.R., S.H.R.M.-S.C.P., L.S.S.B.B.  
Executive Vice President of Human Resources
- Tabetha Vance  
Executive Vice President of Finance

See full leadership team at [kvc.org/leaders](https://kvc.org/leaders).



Thriving is published at KVC Health Systems, Inc., 21350 W. 153rd St., Olathe, KS 66061; 913-322-4900. Please send comments, change of address and duplicate copy notices to the attention of the Communications Department.

KVC is nondiscriminating in its admission and employment practices. KVC is accredited by The Joint Commission.

KVC is a member of Social Current, a member of the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, and a recipient of United Way funds.



# The Loneliness Epidemic:

## How to Cultivate a Culture of Connection

Connection is a fundamental human need for survival. Here at KVC, we know we all need connection. Those who have studied human connection say it fits right next to our need for oxygen, food, water and shelter. So, what happens when connection is limited or lost — and how can we combat loneliness with connection?

Recently, the United States Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, released an advisory noting the public health crisis of loneliness, isolation and a lack of connection. “Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation has been an underappreciated public health crisis that has harmed individual and societal health,” said the Surgeon General in his report.

### The Impact of Loneliness on Our Culture Today

Loneliness has a significant effect on our physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. It's a symptom that comes from losing connection to others, and with the integration of technological advances into our everyday lives, our connection opportunities have been reduced. Add into the mix the social distancing and isolation from the COVID pandemic, and it's become clear that there's been a drastic increase in the mental health issues surrounding loneliness, depression and suicide.

*“Our relationships are a source of healing and well-being hiding in plain sight — one that can help us live healthier, more fulfilled and more productive lives.”*

— Dr. Vivek Murthy

*continued on page 8*





## The Effects of Loneliness on Children

For young people, loneliness can have long-lasting effects. From birth to around age 26, the brain is developing constantly. During this time, forming healthy attachments and engaging socially with others is essential for healthy brain development.

Dr. Abyssinia Tabron, Vice President of Clinical Engagement and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging with KVC Health Systems observes, “Due to COVID-19, the opportunities normally available to children to engage in direct relationships with each other, their teachers, coaches, etc., were severely limited, jeopardizing an important ingredient to their healthy learning, development, and connection.” Many children and adolescents are still trying to understand and cope with what happened in their worlds and may struggle to rebuild that sense of connection they’ve lost. Because the Surgeon General described this condition as an epidemic, we now know that experiences of loneliness and social isolation are widespread in their extent, growth, and impact among children across the U.S. And, what’s the remedy? “Relationships are really the best prescription,” says Dr. Tabron

## Break the Pattern of Loneliness and Cultivate Connections

While loneliness has a complex impact on our lives and health, the solution to loneliness isn’t complex at all. “There’s really no difficult formula for breaking the pattern of loneliness,” says Chad Anderson, Chief Clinical Officer with KVC Health Services.



“At its core, it’s pretty basic: Life is all about relationships. It’s about finding others or something you enjoy, and connecting with commonality to form relationships,” explains Anderson.

## Strengthening Your Connections

Here are a few simple practices to break the pattern of loneliness and cultivate connection:

- Nurture Existing Connections: Relationships take effort to thrive. Make time for the important people in your life. Plan get-togethers, celebrate milestones and show support.
- Reconnect to Activities: Consider things you have previously enjoyed, or find new places of interest, like a gym where you’ve enjoyed group fitness classes, for example.
- Give Back as a Volunteer: Acts of kindness generate a boost of serotonin in both the giver and the receiver.
- Show Empathy and Support: Reach out to others (especially if you’ve noticed someone struggling with isolation and loneliness).
- Be Open-Minded and Inclusive: Stay open to new experiences and meet new people. Forming connections with people from diverse backgrounds can help us embrace and learn from others, creating an inclusive environment where all feel welcome.

## How Caregivers Can Reduce Loneliness in Children

The earlier in life that we learn to form healthy relationships, the more fulfilled our lives will feel. Caregivers are at an advantage in helping their children learn how to develop healthy connections early so that they will have those skills for a lifetime.

Secure and healthy attachments form first between caregivers and their children, and in an epidemic of loneliness, parents and caregivers are the first places a child will look for support. Kimberly O’Connor-Soule, KVC’s Executive Vice President of Inpatient Services, shares advice for caregivers to proactively help children deal with and push past feelings of loneliness:

- **Communication is Critical:** Make sure you, as a caregiver, are a safe space for your child to express themselves.
- **Get Involved:** Be a champion for your child’s connections by actively participating in and also encouraging involvement in activities:

music, sports, gaming, church groups, scouting, whatever sparks excitement!

- **Reach Out to a School Counselor or Social Worker:** The school environment is rich with opportunities for children and young adults to seek involvement.

## The Benefits of Caregivers Prioritizing Health, Wellness and Connection

A great way children and young adults can learn connection is by watching their caregivers. When parents and caregivers prioritize health, wellness and connection, they model that behavior and those habits for their children. It’s beneficial for adults and caregivers to take a look at their own mental health and wellness and evaluate if they could also use support. O’Connor-Soule encouragingly notes, “When you find the support you need, you will function better, and when you’re functioning better, your ability to connect to others is better.”

## Finding Support Through KVC

It’s critical for both children and adults struggling with isolation and loneliness to reach out and find support. KVC emphasizes creating an environment that nurtures connection for its employees and clients.

If you or a child in your care need help, KVC Health Systems is here. We provide multiple resources, including parenting resources, children’s mental health hospitals, individual therapy, group therapy and support groups. If another community resource is needed, KVC connects clients to those resources as well. Caring for your mental health is a positive step toward improving your connection with yourself and others and ending the epidemic of loneliness.

Learn how to break the pattern of loneliness, get caregiver tips for helping children build healthy connections and connect to more resources at [kvc.org/connectionculture](https://kvc.org/connectionculture).





# Children's Mercy and KVC Health Systems Form Joint Venture to Build New \$53 Million Mental Wellness Campus



KVC Health Systems, a national leader in delivering specialized mental and behavioral healthcare, and Children's Mercy Kansas City, a leading independent children's health organization, have formed a joint venture (JV) to expand inpatient pediatric and adult mental health treatment capacity and access in the greater Kansas City area and across the region. The new JV will open a \$53 million 72-bed mental health inpatient hospital in Olathe, Kan. Target for opening is late 2024.

The JV will engage KVC's subsidiary Camber Mental Health, which operates three children's mental health hospitals currently, to operate the Olathe hospital for children and adults. Camber has spent over 30 years developing unique behavioral health therapies and is an internationally recognized educational resource for healthcare providers, first responders, school districts, and community partners.

Camber's trauma-informed, neuroscience-driven inpatient mental health treatment model, combined with Children's Mercy's world-class pediatric care, research, and community engagement, will elevate mental health and community health outcomes for decades to come.

Jason Hooper, President and CEO of KVC Health Systems, with Gov. Laura Kelly and Paul Kempinski, President and CEO of Children's Mercy Kansas City

The new hospital will serve as an inpatient mental health healing campus, which will include three separate 24-bed units — 48 pediatric beds and 24 adult beds, six private courtyards, walking paths, and dining and activity space. The design and healing environment are centered on staff and patient safety, supportive care and treatment spaces, patient wellness, and connection with nature.



## Groundbreaking

This \$53 million project broke ground in June 2023 with elected officials in attendance including Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly, U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, U.S. Rep. Sharice Davids, U.S. Rep. Emanuel Cleaver II, and Former Kansas House Speaker Ron Ryckman, as well as other state and local leaders. The two healthcare CEOs — Jason Hooper of KVC Health Systems and Paul Kempinski of Children's Mercy Kansas City — announced generous lead funding from the Sunderland Foundation and the State of Kansas SPARK Committee to kick off the project.

*"We feel a sense of urgency to partner in new, transformative ways to expand help for children and adults experiencing acute mental health crises,"* said Jason Hooper, KVC Health Systems President and CEO. "It's been absolutely inspiring to see so many step forward, including Children's Mercy as our JV collaborator and the Sunderland Foundation and the State of Kansas as lead supporters. Mental health deserves our urgent action, and we want the community to know that there is hope and help for anyone who is hurting."

## PAUL KEMPINSKI

"Our country is facing a mental health crisis. This collaboration demonstrates our joint commitment to providing resources and creating greater capacity across Kansas and Missouri to serve children requiring more complex care," said Paul Kempinski, Children's Mercy President and CEO. "We continue to see an increasing need for these services each year. In 2022 alone, Children's Mercy provided care to nearly 3,000 children in our emergency department with acute mental health needs. This new hospital will take a significant strain off area emergency departments that are not well-suited to facilitate care for patients in mental health crisis by increasing access to acute inpatient care designed specifically for their needs."

## KENT SUNDERLAND

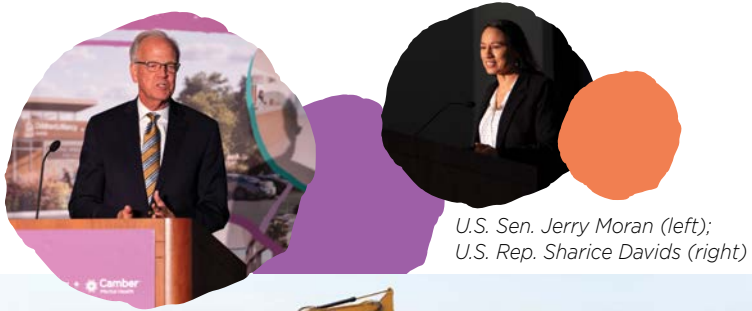
"We are honored to be part of creating this new inpatient mental health hospital," said Kent Sunderland, Chairman, The Sunderland Foundation. "We have a long history of working with both KVC Health Systems and Children's Mercy. This is the perfect partnership of two leading children's healthcare organizations that will bring hope to thousands of families in our region."

Additional private philanthropy is being secured for the \$53 million project, which includes a 72,700-square-foot, state-of-the-art hospital. It will have capacity to care for more than 3,400 patients annually and will create approximately 150 new jobs.

## GOV. LAURA KELLY

"The need to strengthen mental health services is a nonpartisan issue that affects all Kansans, rural and urban alike—and addressing the need pays dividends for everyone," Governor Laura Kelly said. "A lack of psychiatric beds has been one of the largest barriers to providing mental health care in our state. When completed, this state-of-the-art hospital will take significant pressure off our health care systems."

Learn more at [kvc.org/olathe](https://kvc.org/olathe) and [cambermentalhealth.org](https://cambermentalhealth.org).



U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran (left); U.S. Rep. Sharice Davids (right)





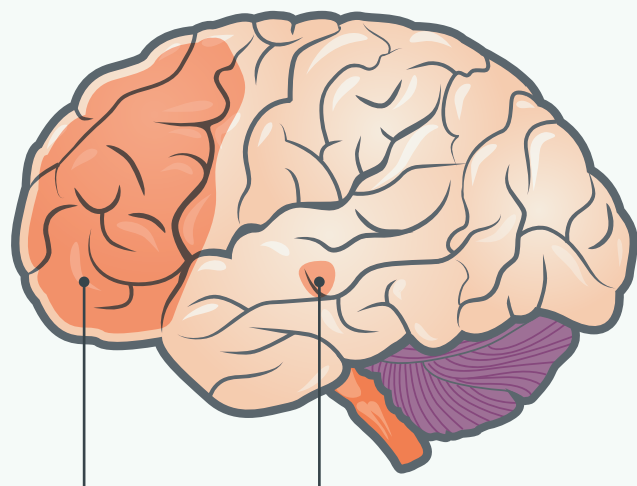
# What Every Caregiver Needs to Know About Teenage Brain Development



As any caregiver knows, the adolescent years are a unique time of growth and change. The brain itself is constantly changing and growing rapidly. And just as a baby's brain makes significant leaps from birth to age three, another significant leap happens during the teenage years.

It's during this teenage leap that humans begin developing the executive processing functioning that creates an ability for problem-solving, impulse control and self-regulating emotions. While their seemingly erratic behavior can be difficult to maneuver, there is so much joy to be found in the teen years, and parents can help.

## The Teenage Brain



**Prefrontal Cortex**  
Responsible for thinking, reasoning and logic. Not fully developed.

**Amygdala**  
Responsible for emotions like anger, happiness and sadness. Rapidly develops.

The 'feeling part' of the teenage brain develops faster than the 'thinking part' making it difficult for them to regulate emotions and follow instructions.

How can you understand teenage brain development and promote healthy behavior? Here are a few practical steps for parents/caregivers to keep in mind:

- » **Actively communicate:** Stay aware of the changes occurring and encourage a healthy connection.
- » **Practice patience:** Make room for active listening and authentic conversation.
- » **Check in on social media and technology behavior:** Monitor what youth in your care are watching and interacting with online and keep careful watch for mental health changes.
- » **Engage in real-life interactions:** Create opportunities for your family or teens to get offline and into the real world.
- » **Ensure physical activity:** Encouraging physical activity in teens boosts healthy brain chemicals that help stabilize mood.
- » **Connect to self-care:** Find ways to expand their ability to meditate, practice gratitude, and other methods to calm their inner world.
- » **Focus on potential:** Maintaining a positive, growth-centered lens helps you focus on the upsides and joyful moments.

"Parents might perceive that kids aren't listening, but they very much are," said Erin Keltner, Vice President of Clinical Services with KVC West Virginia. So, if you feel like your teen may be ignoring you, take heart. Communication can make a world of difference.

Learn more about teenage brain development at [kvcwv.org/brain](http://kvcwv.org/brain).

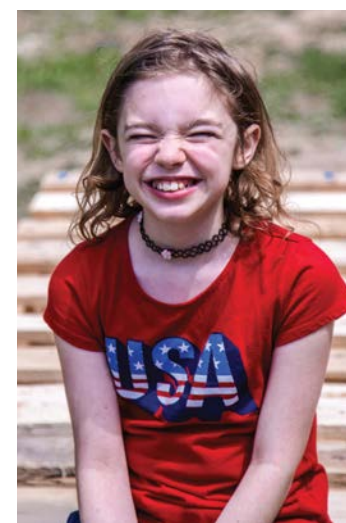
# Meet Children Who Need a Forever Family

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](mailto:shauck@kvc.org). To see children near you who need adoptive families, visit [www.AdoptUSKids.org](http://www.AdoptUSKids.org).

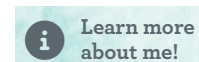
## RACHAEL (10)



Rachael is a playful, imaginative and energetic child who brings warmth to any room she enters. She enjoys outdoor adventures, creative crafts and quality family time. Rachael has a lot of love and energy to offer a family. She hopes the right family will be able to offer her the same!



## LUCY (14)



With an infectious laugh and a love for coloring and swimming, Lucy is a joyful spirit. She's looking for a dedicated, lifelong family who knows or can learn American Sign Language to support her unique needs and maintain her vital connections.



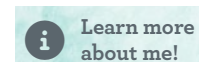
## BRE'ANNA (16)



Bre'Anna is a happy, healthy and loving child who enjoys activities like horseback riding, crafting and cooking. She is very passionate about animals and would thrive in a family who can provide a structured environment with pre-established expectations and who will love her unconditionally.



## NICHOLAS (15)



Nicholas, with his observant and humorous personality, aspires to be a photographer one day. He enjoys activities like video games, football and camping. Nicholas desires a family who can provide consistent emotional support and patience.







# How Caregivers Can

# Celebrate Children's Textured Hair

Our hair serves as an important visual marker of our personal identity and self-expression. Discover what makes hair care such a significant part of caregiving, as well as some tips for caring for textured hair. Plus, understand how caring for textured hair stretches far beyond the hair itself.

## The Importance of Proper Hair Care

"Hair is more than just an aesthetic feature of how we show up in the world," says Dr. Abyssinia Washington Tabron, Vice President of Clinical Engagement and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging at KVC Health Systems. "When children come into care with families who may not have a detailed awareness or experience in caring for textured hair, there can be missed opportunities to fully embrace and celebrate cultural identity."

Hair care is about so much more than hair itself. It's about culture, confidence, community and connection. Culturally attentive caregiving sends a strong message to children:

*you matter, and every part of you is worth caring for.*

Taking care of children's hair also plays a crucial role in promoting healing through possible trauma. Textured hair care routines can provide a safe and comforting space for children to feel nurtured, leading to a sense of security and stability.

## Textured Hair Care Tips

Learning how to style naturally textured hair is crucial in supporting children from diverse backgrounds and strengthening their confidence. Here are a few ideas to consider:

- ▶ **Wash hair less often:** Shampoo can be drying, and since textured hair is naturally dry, you'll want to avoid over-shampooing. However, the scalp still needs cleaning once or twice a week to maintain a healthy hygiene routine.
- ▶ **Keep hair moisturized:** Textured hair tends to lose moisture easily. Whether you're pre-conditioning, conditioning after shampooing, leaving in conditioner or all three, be sure the hair stays moisturized.
- ▶ **Use a detangling comb:** Even with added moisture and conditioning treatments, textured and curly hair is prone to tangling. Once a leave-in conditioner or detangler is applied, use a detangling comb to work through the knots from the bottom of the hair up toward the scalp.
- ▶ **Prevent breakage:** To keep in as much moisture as possible, avoid using a standard bath towel for drying textured hair. Use a cotton t-shirt or towel created specifically for textured hair to prevent breakage.
- ▶ **Pull hair up:** Not only will tying up hair at night help keep it protected from breakage, but it will also prevent extra tangles to deal with while styling the next day. Before bed, dampen the hair, add a little leave-in conditioner or detangler, and pull it up into a ponytail or bun using a silk hair tie, satin bonnet/cap or hair turban.

▶ **Find resources in your community.** Without experience and the right resources, caring for textured hair can be trial and error at first. Researching people and places within your community that have experience and a good reputation for styling textured hair can be a great first step. You can also ask trusted people already in your life such as people from your place of worship, neighbors, friends from school or family friends. Your KVC team can help, too.

## Why Hair Care Matters

While these tips can help, it's important to remember the why behind proper care of textured hair. Hair represents more than our physical appearance. It can connect us to our cultural histories and become a source of bonding between caregivers and children. On a day-to-day basis, proper hair care and self-care allow children to feel loved, especially for youth experiencing foster care.

"In spite of our differences, we all have the ability to care for each other in ways that honor and support what we need," Dr. Tabron says. By caring for a child's hair and overall outward appearance, their sense of pride can flourish.

Take a deeper look at textured hair care at [kvckansas.org/haircare](https://kvckansas.org/haircare).

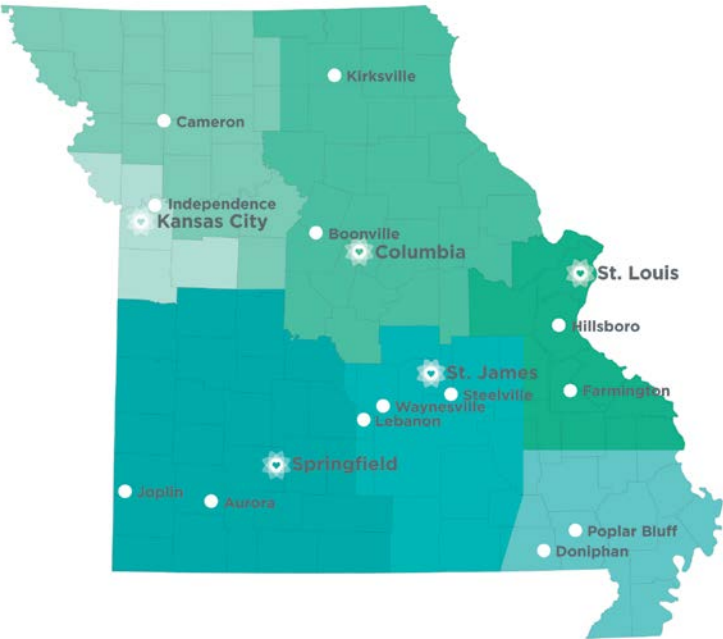
*"Hair is an important part of our cultural identity, how we take pride in our cultural expression and even a reflection of the attention and care we are given at home," said Dr. Tabron.*





# KVC Missouri's New Leaders & Services Aim to

# Strengthen Child and Family Wellbeing Statewide



In honor of the many generous people who have supported Great Circle's and its predecessors' charitable mission for decades, KVC is thankful for the opportunity to carry the organization's legacy forward. It is a legacy of caring for the most vulnerable children and families, and helping each person reach their full potential. Many of the families KVC Missouri serves on a daily basis are facing serious challenges like untreated mental health needs, unhealthy relationships, financial stress, a lack of a community support network, and the impacts of childhood trauma including abuse and neglect.

**Lindsey Stephenson, President of KVC Missouri,** is leading the integrated team into a shared future of providing high-quality services that will help transform children's mental health and family wellbeing statewide.

This integration allows KVC Missouri to provide a broader continuum of care and serve more children and families. It also increases KVC's ability to provide crisis care throughout the state, which means KVC can serve families with complex needs. Some of the newly added

In the last issue of *Thriving* magazine, we shared that Kansas City-based KVC Missouri and St. Louis-based Great Circle became one on April 1, 2023. **The expanded KVC Missouri team of 800 professionals now serves thousands of families each year** with family strengthening services, foster care, children's mental health treatment, K-12 educational academies, residential treatment, and other services from 20 locations including Kansas City, St. Louis, and Springfield.

community-based services include Child Advocacy Centers which provide a multidisciplinary response to possible child abuse or neglect in the community, emergency children's shelters, women's domestic violence shelters, foster care services and mental health support.

With the integration of Great Circle now complete, **KVC Missouri now positively impacts the lives of nearly 9,000 children and adults each year.** Of those:

- ▶ **Over 1,500 people** participate in community-based services that strengthen families and support mental wellness,
- ▶ **575 youth** receive mental health support in residential treatment, and
- ▶ **445 students** learn at KVC's K-12 therapeutic schools for day treatment, helping students grow academically and emotionally.

Some of the new KVC locations (previously Great Circle) offer uniquely valuable services for children. For example, the St. James campus offers youth an equine-assisted therapy program, which uses the connection between people and horses to enhance healing. The program helps young people learn how to strengthen their human relationships by building close ones with the campus' four-legged residents including horses, goats, and rabbits. Another example is the Meramec Adventure Ranch in Steelville, Missouri. This beautiful 1,200-acre therapeutic wilderness campus located just 90 miles from St. Louis and 30 miles from Rolla helps children from all types of backgrounds to heal, as well as groups of adults. The Ranch offers ropes courses, aquatic adventures, camping, climbing, kayaking, biking, team challenges, and more.

## Our Child and Family Services

KVC Missouri provides a wide range of family strengthening, foster care, children's mental health, educational, residential treatment, and other services. Our broad continuum of care means that children can access services from the least intensive, community-based care to intensive children's mental health residential treatment programs. We are also in the early stages of imagining new possibilities for world-class children's mental health treatment programs in St. Louis and elsewhere.

Stay up to date at [kvcmo.org](https://kvcmo.org).

### Community-Based Services

Our community and family services are provided to children and families in homes, schools, and other community settings. They aim to strengthen families and help people achieve mental wellness.

#### Our services include:

- Family strengthening programs
- Family resource centers
- Foster care case management
- Foster/adoptive parent licensing and training
- Treatment foster care
- Autism services
- Meramac Adventure Ranch (wilderness therapy)
- Emergency children's shelters
- Women's domestic violence shelters
- Child Advocacy Centers
- Plus, many more

### Educational Academies

KVC offers private K-12 therapeutic schools, approved by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, offering youth a place with the time and attention to heal, change, and grow.

#### We currently have KVC Academies in:

- Boonville
- Cameron
- Columbia
- Kansas City (KVC Niles and Blue Parkway locations)
- Lebanon
- St. James
- St. Louis (Edgewood)

### Children's Residential Treatment

In residential treatment, youth receive intensive clinical services in a home-like environment with 24-hour supervision and support from our trained clinicians and staff.

#### We offer residential treatment in:

- Columbia (PRTF)
- Springfield (PRTF)
- Kansas City (QRTP)
- St. James (QRTP)







A psychiatric residential treatment facility (PRTF) is the highest level of treatment, and Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP) are another level of treatment.

*continued on page 18*










Meet Our KVC Missouri Leaders of Programs & Services

KVC MISSOURI SENIOR LEADERS







- **Lindsey Stephenson, LCSW,**  
*President*
- **James Roberson, LMSW,**  
*Senior Vice President*
- **Sara Loftis**  
*Senior Vice President*
- **Christy Howard, MS,**  
*Vice President of Community-Based Services*
- **Mike Golden, Ed.D.,**  
*Vice President of Education*
- **Elke Hansen, LCSW,**  
*Vice President of Residential Treatment*

COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES LEADERS






- **Brett Bailey**  
*Director of Meramec Adventure Ranch*
- **Jessica Elliott, LMSW,**  
*Director of Community-Based Services — Western Region*
- **Amanda Everson, LMSW,**  
*Director of Child Placing Agency (Foster Family Care)*
- **Holly Hunt**  
*Director of Community-Based Services — Springfield*

- **Cammie Ruble**  
*Director of Community-Based Services — St. James*
- **Beth Stonefield**  
*Director of Community-Based Services — St. Louis*
- **Michael Turner, M.Ed.,**  
*Director of Community-Based Services — Southeast Region*

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES LEADERS



- **Dr. Pamela Dawson**  
*Director of Special Education/ Statewide Curriculum Specialist (KVC Academy Lebanon)*
- **JT Hartley**  
*Director of Special Education/ KVC Academy Principal (Kansas City/Cameron)*
- **Erika Rackers**  
*Director of Special Education/ KVC Academy Principal (Columbia, Boonville)*
- **Kaysi Rinks, MA,**  
*Director of Special Education/ KVC Academy Edgewood (St. Louis)*
- **Lindsey Russell, MS, EdS,**  
*KVC Academy Niles School Director (Kansas City)*
- **Tina Wheeler, MAT,**  
*Director of Special Education/ KVC Academy Principal (St. James)*

CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT LEADERS

- **Cheryl Costabile, MA, LCPC, LPC,**  
*Senior Clinical Director and Director of Niles Residential Treatment (Kansas City)*
- **Scott Dunn, MSW, LCSW**  
*Clinical Director — Springfield*
- **Jasmine Rebuck, LCSW**  
*Clinical Director — Columbia*
- **Christina Todd, MSN, RN,**  
*Director of Nursing*
- **Anne Tucker, LPC**  
*Director of Residential Treatment — Springfield*

STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP & SUPPORT

- **Dr. Michelle Denault**  
*Medical Director of Psychiatry*
- **Leslie Wiss, LPC,**  
*Senior Director of Trauma-Informed Services*
- **Jennifer Bryan**  
*Director of Human Resources*
- **Gabriella Harms**  
*Director of Compliance*
- **James Kohler**  
*Director of Performance Improvement*

- **Mary Martin**  
*Director of Human Resources*
- **Chris Noll, LWSW,**  
*Director of Admissions and Contact Center*
- **Tammy Andrews**  
*Director of Infrastructure Services*

See more program leaders at [www.kvcmo.org](http://www.kvcmo.org). KVC Missouri's administrative support comes from KVC Health Systems' Shared Services teams. Visit [www.kvc.org/leadership](http://www.kvc.org/leadership) to see leaders for DEI+B, Development, Employee Engagement, Finance, Human Resources, Legal, Marketing & Communications, and Technology.

KVC MISSOURI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Jason Hooper**  
**Erin Stucky**  
**Sherri Lohe**  
**Chad Anderson**  
**William J. Fleck**
- Lonnie Johnson**  
**Sara Loftis**  
**James Roberson**  
**Brian Salmo**  
**Lindsey Stephenson**

**Note:** KVC welcomed several Great Circle Board members to new board roles. This includes Brian Salmo and William J. Fleck on the KVC Missouri Board, Ted Armstrong and Peggy Gordin on the KVC Health Systems Board, and Mike Hurst on the KVC Missouri Endowment Board. In addition, KVC retained and is enjoying engaging with all Missouri regional council members.




# People on the Move



**PROMOTION**  
**Dani Badas**  
*Director of Grants Management*  
KVC Health Systems (Olathe, KS)  
10 years at KVC

Dani has diversified funding streams, increased overall funding with long-term funders, and has continued to work with KVC Kansas' Community Resource Team around strengthening their grant writing strategy and skills.



**PROMOTION**  
**Alexandra Beineman, LMSW**  
*Director of Program and Staff Development*  
Camber  
7 years with Camber

Alex focuses on the development of treatment programs and ensures employees receive the necessary skills and tools to support each client through their treatment journey. Additionally, she oversees employee training and partners with multi-disciplinary teams in program development and employee engagement initiatives.



**PROMOTION**  
**Taylor Breeding, LCSW, MSW**  
*Senior Director of Clinical Practice & Advancement*  
KVC Kentucky (Lexington, KY)  
14 years with KVC

Taylor provides clinical direction, oversight and leadership in all areas of programming for KVC Kentucky, including the implementation of evidence-based treatments approved on Kentucky's Family First State Plan and system-wide clinical initiatives.



**PROMOTION**  
**Brittany Broeckelman, LSCSW**  
*Vice President of Clinical Services*  
Camber Children's Mental Health  
10 years with Camber

Brittany leads and oversees all clinical initiatives at Camber. She ensures we are providing quality patient care and that we are maintaining all accepted standards and compliance from the clinical perspective.



**NEW HIRE**  
**Gloria Christian, LIMHP**  
*Director of Clinical and Prevention Services*  
KVC Nebraska (Lincoln, NE)

Gloria prioritizes safe and stable placement of children in their family home and community-based individualized and quality mental/behavioral health services.



**PROMOTION**  
**Jannah Clark, LCMFT**  
*Associate Clinical Director*  
Camber Wichita  
3 years with Camber

Jannah ensures clients receive high-quality therapeutic services. She supervises the therapy team as well as the discharge case manager and oversees the strength and quality of clinical services provided by the program.



**PROMOTION**  
**Whitney Dailey, MSW, LCSW**  
*FFPRS Associate Director – Northeastern Region*  
KVC Kentucky (Morehead, KY)  
2 years at KVC

Whitney provides support and guidance to Clinical Specialists to help strengthen and empower families to safely keep their children at home or assist in reunifying children with their families following out-of-home placement.



**PROMOTION**  
**Cara Dawes**  
*Associate Director of Administration*  
Camber Wichita  
3 years with Camber

Cara oversees the hospital's compliance with standards and regulations while assisting with process and procedure changes.



**PROMOTION**  
**Tiffany Deschner, RN**  
*Associate Director of Nursing*  
Camber Wichita  
3 years with Camber

Tiffany oversees nursing care and coordinates with other departments and disciplines to ensure high-quality patient care and program improvement and maintains compliance with regulatory bodies.



**PROMOTION**  
**Brett Easley**  
*Vice President of ESM*  
KVC Health Systems (Olathe, KS)  
20.5 years at KVC

Brett oversees the Enterprise Systems Management team that manages integrations with third-party applications.



**PROMOTION**  
**Marlayna Hargitt, BSN, RN**  
*Director of Nursing*  
Camber Hays  
11 years with Camber

Marlayna oversees all aspects of nursing care, coordinates with other departments and disciplines to ensure high-quality patient care and program improvement and maintains compliance with regulatory bodies.




**PROMOTION**  
**Blythe Hinderliter, MBA**  
*Vice President of Marketing & Communications*  
KVC Health Systems (Olathe, KS)  
5 years at KVC

Blythe oversees marketing strategy for KVC's subsidiaries and provides support to a team of marketing professionals responsible for strategic plans that achieve business growth goals, enhance brand awareness, and develop strategic partnerships.



**NEW HIRE**  
**Kerri Lewis**  
*Director of Marketing & Communications*  
KVC Health Systems (Olathe, KS)

Kerri leads marketing and communications for Camber Children's Mental Health, helping to expand community awareness of our services.



**PROMOTION**  
**Phil McQueen**  
*Vice President of Technology*  
KVC Health Systems (St. Louis, MO)

Phil oversees a team of IT professionals working to improve healthcare delivery through technology.



**PROMOTION**  
**Megan Moore, DSW, CSW**  
*Senior Director of Innovation and Impact*  
KVC Kentucky (Lexington, KY)  
14 years at KVC

Dr. Moore works with KVC Kentucky's leadership team and direct service practitioners to ensure quality service delivery, compliance with agency accreditation, and ongoing agency evidence-based practice training initiatives.



**PROMOTION**  
**Jeremiah Pierce**  
*Vice President of Finance*  
KVC Health Systems (Olathe, KS)  
3 years at KVC

Jeremiah oversees KVC's finance teams including revenue cycle management, payroll and accounts payable.



**PROMOTION**  
**Farrell Rouse**  
*Director of Grants Management*  
KVC Health Systems (Olathe, KS)  
7 years at KVC

Farrell conducts complex research, analyzes detailed financial information, and successfully procures multimillion-dollar grant awards with Federal, State, Foundation, Corporate, and privately funded grant programs.



**NEW HIRE**  
**Amanda Masal**  
*Director of Development, Corporate Giving & Events*  
KVC Health Systems (Olathe, KS)

Amanda manages KVC's signature fundraising events, an annual gala event in the spring and the Kids' Classic Golf Tournament in the fall. She builds relationships with corporate partners and confirms sponsorships.



**PROMOTION**  
**Kimberly Smith**  
*Director of Kinship*  
KVC Kansas (Olathe, KS)  
8 years at KVC

Kim leads the Kinship Department at KVC Kansas, overseeing the identification of family or other caring connections to provide a loving, familiar environment for children in foster care.



**NEW HIRE**  
**Hannah Tamayo, MNM**  
*Director of Developmental Disability Services*  
KVC Nebraska (Omaha, NE)

Hannah works closely with individuals with developmental/intellectual disabilities, their families and support systems to provide opportunities for them to be part of an inclusive community.



**PROMOTION**  
**Tyler Terry**  
*Director of Programs*  
Camber Wichita  
2 years with Camber

Tyler is responsible for maintaining program compliance with all company, local, state and federal regulatory standards and accrediting bodies and ensuring the implementation of trauma-informed, evidence-based practices that foster safety, stability, and family and community connection.



**PROMOTION**  
**Amanda Volmer**  
*Director of Donor Stewardship*  
KVC Health Systems (Olathe, KS)  
1.5 years at KVC

Amanda processes donor gifts, manages the Everyday Heroes campaign for each business unit and leads events like the Annual Celebration highlighting the impact of our donors and supporters.



**NEW ROLE**  
**Evan Wood**  
*Director of Child Placing Agency – Kansas City Metro*  
KVC Kansas (Lawrence, KS)  
5 years at KVC

Evan oversees a team that helps adults become foster parents, connects children with dedicated foster families, and supports caregivers in forming meaningful connections with a child's birth family.



**PROMOTION**  
**Taylor Ziegler DNP, FNP -C**  
*Vice President of Nursing*  
Camber Children's Mental Health  
10 years with Camber

Taylor oversees nursing services and compliance for Camber's children's psychiatric hospitals and residential treatment facilities. This includes focusing on enhancing the patient's experience, directing all aspects of nursing and direct patient care, and coordinating with all other disciplines to provide the highest possible quality of care.

## KVC Events

### KVC Kentucky Back to School



### KVC Missouri Ozark Egg Scramble



### KVC Missouri Purse Raffle





# Turning the Page as a KVC Social Worker



In 2022, Andrea Rishel, a Case Manager with KVC Kentucky, began working with a mother whose oldest son needed speech therapy to address a significant speech delay. This situation resonated deeply with Andrea, as she was working through the same process with her son.

After the KVC Kentucky team helped get her client's child into an early intervention program, Andrea's client came to her with a straightforward question: "What else can I do to help him?"

"We talked through her experiences, worries and hopes for her son," Andrea said. "As we brainstormed ways she could use playtime and reading aloud at home to practice speech, I learned the family had no books in the home."

*"Let's get some books."* Andrea replied. Equipping her client with the tools to help her son learn was a natural next step for Andrea because of her experiences with her family. "My kids are little bookworms!" she says. "They have their favorite books and some other books memorized, so I really couldn't picture myself going a day without any books for my kids," shares Andrea. "Having young children, I knew first-hand the positive impact books have had on my children's language development."

First, Andrea helped her client get a local library card. Next, after opening this new world of accessible and affordable reading options, Andrea turned to her community. What started as a simple ask of a small group of fellow mothers to donate books soon grew and grew.



She began receiving books in the mail and social media messages from strangers who wanted to offer support. Local mothers were offering extra books their children had outgrown, college friends were sending their favorite childhood books, others sent gift cards to online bookstores and a closing preschool donated their entire children's library.

What started out as a modest goal to gather around 20 books for her client's two children soon became a book drive that collected more than 800 books along with bookshelves, storage bins and speech therapy tools like blocks and other play items.

Read more about this inspiring community effort at [kvcky.org/bookdrive](https://kvcky.org/bookdrive).



## 7 Ways You Can Help a Child in Foster Care (Without Being a Foster Parent)

Becoming a foster parent is a life-changing decision and it takes an enormous amount of patience and commitment. Fostering is one of many ways to help children in crisis. If being a foster parent isn't right for you, you can still get involved.

- 1 Mentor a Teen:** Mentors provide needed support to teenage youth and help them learn daily living and vocational skills.
- 2 Provide Respite Care:** Respite care gives foster parents a short-term break, often for one night or a weekend.
- 3 Assemble Welcome Boxes:** KVC provides welcome boxes for children while they are waiting for a placement with a caring foster family. These boxes include things like personal hygiene items, blankets, PJs, toys and stuffed animals.
- 4 Attend or Sponsor a KVC Event:** Funds raised through these events support our work in strengthening families, preventing child abuse and neglect, and helping people experience mental health wellness.
- 5 Donate Supplies:** In addition to our welcome boxes, KVC also gathers clothing, personal hygiene items, toys, school supplies, and other items that children and teens might otherwise not have.
- 6 Raise Funds or Make a Donation:** Peer-to-peer fundraising on Facebook or becoming a monthly KVC donor are both great ways to support the kids we serve.
- 7 Educate and Advocate:** Educating yourself and sharing with those in your circle spreads awareness and helps create a ripple effect of support for everyone affected.

Your support helps children and families connect to the resources they need to thrive. Learn how you can make an impact at [kvcky.org/getinvolved](https://kvcky.org/getinvolved).





*We all need connection.*

21350 West 153rd Street  
Olathe, Kansas 66061  
[www.kvc.org](http://www.kvc.org)



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Kansas City, MO  
Permit No. 1996

Please Recycle



*Are you inspired  
by these stories?*

Want to help children and  
families thrive? Support our  
work at [kvc.org/donate](http://kvc.org/donate).

# Start a New Tradition

***You can make the holidays bright  
for a youth in your community!***

Donating gifts is a great way for you to support  
the children and families we serve and show  
our very special clients that they matter!

Sign up to be a holiday hero at  
[kvc.org/holidayhero](http://kvc.org/holidayhero)

