# THE NEWSLETTER OF STEPPINGSTONE A PROGRAM OF ECH EVERY CHILD'S HOPE SPRING/SUMMER 2016

## HAPPENING AT STEPPINGSTONE

- William recently filed his taxes for the first time! Thanks to the care managers who help our youth learn the necessary life skills to achieve independent living, including financial skills!
- The Steppingstone Auxiliary donated funds to purchase 11 vacuums for Raytown apartments. This amazing group of volunteer supporters also hosted a shower for household items for our youth!
- Dan, who is in charge of maintenance, provided a very useful "Maintenance 101" training to staff, which included showing staff where the water shut offs are in all agency owned property, fuse boxes, how to light a pilot light, how to locate building alarms etc.
- The Raytown EMS invited Steppingstone staff to a car seat safety training, which included training on proper installation of car seats and general passenger safety. Staff drove the agency vehicles to the EMS station to practice installing car seats in agency vehicles, so they will be prepared to transport youth who are parents.



 A former youth in Steppingstone, Amelia, will be spending her summer break from college back at Steppingstone. She is hoping to find a summer job and attend a week of camp with her church. Amelia would also like to give back to the program by talking with current youth about her experience going to college, especially having to build new support systems. In a new environ-

ment, Amelia felt anxious, so she isolated herself in her dorm room. But she learned it helped to get involved with the activities that her dorm was sponsoring, along with having on-going support from her church family.

• Four youth graduated from high school this year. Staff planned an ECH graduation party to celebrate this major milestone.



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# FROM CONFLICT TO COLLABORATION

St. Louis County Police Officer Amanda Signorino had responded to calls at ECH before. But when she arrived on campus the evening of January 7, 2016, she didn't know it would represent a

major shift in the relationship between the County Police and ECH.

Officer Signorino calmly assessed the scene and investigated the details surrounding the incident. Eventually additional police administrators arrived and afterward, a precinct Lieutenant suggested a meeting to discuss how police handle calls to the agency. On this night, Officer Signorino recognized that both parties needed to open the lines of communication and improve the relationship between staff and police. She knew that both sides had the same goal of helping kids.

Signorino suggested that the Department approach ECH as a partner and work to find a solution, rather than being confrontational. Officer Signorino is one of the newest and youngest officers on the force, and after the original meeting, she was allowed to make this challenge her personal project. She says that collaborating with ECH staff to find a solution has humanized the issues. Now when officers respond to a call at 8240 St. Charles Rock Road, they know the staff and kids and understand the unique population ECH serves.

The result is that the officers have significantly reduced the time they spend on campus responding to calls, and at Officer Signorino's suggestion, have started cruising through campus just to talk with staff and youth to build a positive police presence in the community. Staff not only have encouraged this project, but have also invited the officers to join the youth in the ECH Dining Hall for lunch or dinner. They've even sent them the meal calendar. We hear they like Italian!

Officer Signorino recently won an award at the Police Department for this project. Precinct Commander Captain Mark Cox and Lieutenant Jeff Hoots presented her with the Employee Progress Report, which is a Platoon Commanders award for her outstanding work on this project. "It's not often that a great community partnership can come from an unfortunate incident that could have had the opposite result," says ECH Resident Clinical Director Kim Handlang. "We are very grateful for Officer Signorino's idea and persistence, and we are also grateful that the police department was willing to allow her this opportunity."



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Member of: Missouri Coalition of Children's Agencies (MCCA), Alliance for Strong Families & Communities Approved by: Better Business Bureau, Charities Committee, Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis Founding Member of: The Missouri Alliance for Children and Families

ECH Every Child's Hope is not a United Way Agency.

Follow us on:









When I was a boy, my father was diagnosed with cancer. He went

through surgery and radiation, the standard treatment in the 1950's. He spent weeks in the hospital, months away from work, and endured a long rehab at home. Although it was very scary, the result was good and he lived for many more years.

Today, diagnosing and treating cancer is much more sophisticated. Through imaging, a more specific diagnosis can be found and through genetic testing, a targeted treatment is prescribed, sometimes even

as an out-patient procedure.

Just as the practice of medicine has come a long way, so too has the practice of caring for children. Through research, we know so much more about how to best care and treat children who have experienced abuse and neglect. At the end of the 19th century, the Evangelical Children's Home, as we were called

then, was caring for young boys and girls in a large dormitory style building. Over the next 100 years, ECH not only adapted its facilities to a better suited living environment, but we also learned the value of treatment by hiring professional staff who understand mental and behavioral health challenges.

A lot has been learned about the effect that trauma has on people. Research shows that physical changes actually take place in the brain when a child has experienced a traumatic incident such as abuse or neglect. Just like with cancer, we have learned how to specifically diagnose trauma and the best course for treating it. ECH is training our staff to become trauma-sensitive in our work, and our therapists are becoming certified in the treatment of trauma.

The latest studies show that children do better when they can live with their families in a safe and healthy environment. Helping and treating the entire family, rather than just the child, will continue to prove the best practice. Helping parents with parenting skills, assisting them in providing a safe and nurturing home, and connecting them to services within their communities will continue to be our primary focus at ECH.

If you were diagnosed with cancer today, as my dad was in the 1950's, you would certainly choose a doctor with the most advanced knowledge and tool. So it is at ECH; we strive to provide our children and their families with the best and most advanced treatment possible. We anticipate and look forward to the many changes this will bring to ECH in the future. We encourage you to take advantage of the various ways in which you can now learn about what's going on at ECH. We continue to communicate our news via mail, email, posts on Facebook, and a whole host of information on our new website.

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Duane Lewis, Chief Operations Officer, Every Child's Hope













### YOP CREDITS NOW AVAILABLE

ECH is thrilled to once again offer Youth Opportunities Project (YOP) tax credits for donations of \$500 or more received by December 31, 2016. This is an amazing benefit for donors, amounting to a 50% Missouri state income tax credit that can be used anytime within the next five tax years. The credit is available to any individual, business, or corporation paying taxes in Missouri. This credit is in addition to the standard federal and state income tax deductions. There is a limited amount of credits available, so you are welcome to donate now or make a pledge to hold credits if you prefer year-end giving. Our goal is to raise \$140,000 by the end of the year to provide HOPE to the 1400 children and families whom we serve each year. For more information or to make a donation, please contact Sharon Fenoglio at 314-427-3755 or sfenoglio@echmail.org.

# ECH UNVEILS NEW WEBSITE DESIGN

If you've been to everychildshope.org recently, you noticed a big change! A team of ECH employees worked throughout last year to assess how the site should function and what the design should look like. The new site is much more user-friendly and easier to navigate for donors, potential clients, and community professionals. We hope you take a few minutes to explore the website and tell us what you think of our new tagline, Hope Begins Here!



EVERYCHILDSHOPE.ORG



#### EARLY ED CENTER **WELCOMES BABIES**

The wonderful staff in the Early Education Center welcomed new children last Fall when we started accepting infants and toddlers through a partnership with Early Head Start. Now low-income children from six weeks through two years old can receive quality early education services, in addition to the older children we still serve. The staff worked incredibly hard to adjust to a room full of babies, and we love seeing their adorable little faces when they go for a walk in the 4-baby stroller!

















#### HELP ECH RESIDENTIAL KIDS WITH CARE BAGS

IS YOUR FAMILY, YOUTH GROUP, OR SCOUT TROOP LOOKING FOR A SERVICE PROJECT THIS SUMMER? HELP THE YOUTH IN OUR RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT PROGRAM WHO COME TO ECH IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT WITH NOTHING. SOME OF THE YOUTH ARE COMING FROM SITUATIONS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT, AND DON'T HAVE ANY BELONGINGS WITH THEM WHEN THEY ARRIVE. YOU CAN HELP MAKE THEIR TRANSITION TO ECH A LITTLE SMOOTHER WITH A CARE PACKAGE TO WELCOME THEM THEIR FIRST NIGHT ON CAMPUS. COLLECT THE FOL-LOWING ITEMS TO INCLUDE IN A CLOTH BAG OR NEW PILLOWCASE (PLEASE PURCHASE ALL OF THE ITEMS NEW, DUE TO HEALTH REGULATIONS): SET OF TOWELS, YOUTH/TEEN SIZE LARGE OR EXTRA-LARGE PAJAMAS, SOCKS, PUZZLE OR AGE-APPROPRIATE BOOK, AND A TWIN SET OF SHEETS.





FRIENDS OF ECH EVERY CHILD'S HOPE DUSTED OFF THEIR BOOTS AND DRESSED IN THEIR FINEST WESTERN APPAREL FOR AN EVENING OF BOOTS & HOOTS ON APRIL 9, 2016. FOLK BAND THE MUDSLINGERS PROVIDED MUSIC DURING THE COCKTAIL HOUR, AND COUNTRY BAND BORDERLINE PLAYED AFTER DINNER WHILE GUESTS ENJOYED LINE DANCING AND TWO-STEPPING.

Dale Rohman designed the cactus and bandana-inspired décor that welcomed guests to a room full of cowboy hats and belt buckles! Randy Karraker from 101 ESPN Radio, served as the MC and auctioneer. This year's Boots & Hoots gala raised nearly \$75,000 for the children, youth, and families who come to ECH looking for hope. Thanks to the generosity of ECH friends and supporters, they will continue to find it!



NEXT YEAR ECH WILL CELEBRATE THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE "EXTEND A CARING HAND" DINNER & AUCTION. BUT WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOUR HELP!

Join the Dinner Committee and help make the 2017 event an amazing celebration of 30 years of helping children and families! Join other dedicated volunteers and make new friends when the Committee starts meeting in October, on the first Tuesday of the month at 6 pm at ECH. Call or email Sharon Fenoglio at 314-427-3755 or sfenoglio@echmail.org to join the fun!



TOP: The Mudslingers

MIDDLE: Dale Rohman and Sarah Grus

BOTTOM: Dancing to the country

band Borderline

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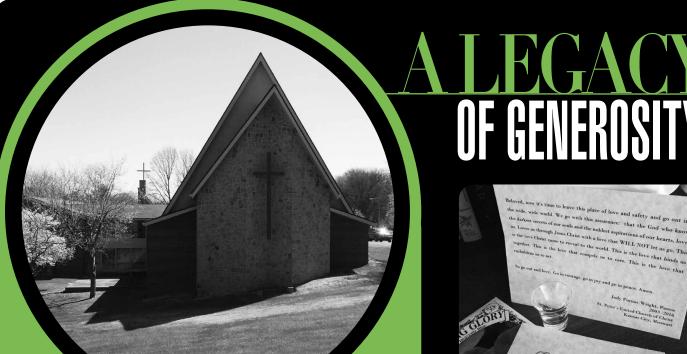




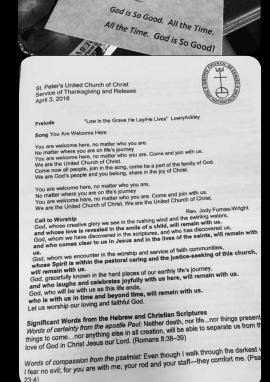








St. Peter's UCC, a 151-year old historic church and faithful supporter of Steppingstone, had their final worship service on April 3. Many of the Steppingstone Auxiliary members were part of this congregation. Steppingstone Assistant Director Carol Wehmeyer attended the service and reported that in the midst of the sadness, the service was uplifting and encouraging. Many of St. Peter's congregants will join other area UCC congregations. Steppingstone is one of the recipients of the proceeds of the release of the church. Thank you to St. Peters UCC for your legacy of generosity to the Steppingstone community!



Steppingstone has been in the process of translating brochures and flyers into Spanish, and they received some help from Elena. Elena is a youth in the program, and she was a big help in getting the brochure translated accurately. She also conducted a cultural competency training for the staff, based on her experiences growing up in Honduras.



STEPPINGSTONE: A PROGRAM OF ECH EVERY CHILD'S HOPE 5100 NOLAND ROAD

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Many thanks to the Ivanhoe UCC congregation who delivered some much needed household items to assist our youth who are residing in apartments. We are so grateful to be part of such a generous community!