

INSTEP

THE NEWSLETTER
OF STEPPINGSTONE
A PROGRAM OF ECH
EVERY CHILD'S HOPE
WINTER 2017



A STEPPING STONE TO A **BRIGHT FUTURE**

May 18 will be a monumental day for Mary. She will graduate from high school, which is a huge accomplishment all by itself. But she will also have enough college credits from the community college to have an associate's degree. Mary's hard work has paid off, as she was accepted to Truman State and received the Horatio Alger \$25,000 scholarship! The scholarship assists students "who have faced and overcome great obstacles in their young lives." She is also being considered for a scholarship from Yale.

Mary plans to obtain a dual-engineering degree of physics and mechanical engineering, to help her pursue her interests of robotics and computer-aided design. She hopes to use her love of engineering and physics to be a skilled inventor and entrepreneur. "The Steppingstone program has allowed me to have a place to sleep while teaching me life skills useful when I'm off on my own," Mary says. "Steppingstone also helps pay for a lot of important essentials, such as school supplies or a birth certificate. Steppingstone is exactly what it sounds like—a stepping stone. The resources are available to reach your goals, whether that be to finish a four-year degree or afford your own home."

Due to confidentiality, this is a stock photo courtesy of Stephen Coburn | Dreamstime.com.

Mary knows it's up to her to stay motivated. "The world can be rough and even harsh. I know that it is up to me to go after my dreams valiantly. I also have my mother, my siblings, and my cousin who push me to do my best. With Steppingstone, I don't have to worry so much about basic needs, which allows me to focus on school and stay motivated."

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STEPPINGSTONE SNAPSHOT

Here's a look at what's happening around Steppingstone!

- Reece Nichols Real Estate donated Christmas gifts for all of the youth. The Steppingstone entryway was full to the brim and the youth were so blessed by their thoughtfulness!

- Blue Ridge United Methodist Church collected Christmas gifts and various gift cards as incentives for the youth when they reach a personal goal.



- Michael is working toward becoming more independent, including getting his driver's license. He rode the bus from school to his therapy appointment and was on time! He is working on submitting all the forms to apply for his license!

- Gavin found a job immediately after coming to Steppingstone. He works the graveyard shift at IHOP while working toward of goal of obtaining his CNA license and applying to UMKC.



STEPPINGSTONE AUXILIARY

The Steppingstone Auxiliary met last November and they went above and beyond to help the Steppingstone youth! The Auxiliary donated \$3,635 to purchase baby beds, vacuum cleaners, mattresses, and locking file cabinets. They also held a baby shower for parenting teens. We are so thankful for their generosity and support!

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Member of: Missouri Coalition of Children's Agencies (MCCA), Alliance for Strong Families & Communities

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

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THE FUTURE OF ECH: IMPLEMENT THERAPEUTIC STRATEGIES



As you review this latest edition of In Step, pay close attention to the various ways ECH staff members develop and implement therapeutic strategies to meet the individual unique needs of the children we serve.

Just like we ask children and families to learn and grow, ECH also is challenged to learn new approaches that best assist clients in accomplishing their goals.

Take note of a story about one of our newest services, Family Finding. Family Finding helps youth in our care find a link to their past by locating family members and other supports. After much due diligence, the program was able to bring together a sister and brother who had been disconnected. As you will read, not only were we able to reconnect them, but also to assist them with potentially life-changing experiences and information about their mother and family.

This type of personal impact is happening throughout ECH every day in our work with children and families. I am proud of the work our staff performs to assist the most vulnerable in our community.

So enjoy these stories and the other descriptions of the work we do in this publication that demonstrates our commitment to the mission of ECH. Please know that only due to your interest and support can ECH assist clients to find health and wholeness, and most of all, HOPE, in their lives.

With much appreciation,

Michael Brennan



A BROTHER'S REASSURANCE THROUGH FAMILY FINDING

Julie was 16 when she was placed in residential treatment at ECH, after spending the past six years in numerous foster homes, residential treatment centers, and hospitals. The referral information on Julie's family background was sparse, but the history indicated that her mother abandoned her. It seemed Julie would benefit from the Family Finding program, so Amy, our Family Finding Coordinator, began to research family members for Julie. Amy found an older brother, Will, and set up a phone call between him and Julie.

During the call, Will was able to explain why they had gotten separated: he was in the Army and when he came home on leave, he realized that something was wrong with their mom. She was hospitalized and they learned that she was suffering from an undiagnosed mental health condition and dementia. The rest of the family did not realize what was happening with their mom and Julie was left to handle it all on her own. Will reassured her that her mother had always loved her, but became

sick. Mom's deteriorating condition changed her personality and caused her to do and say things that she would not have done in the past. Will provided Julie the reassurance that she was loved and that her mom was not able to be her mom- which is a much different scenario than the one where her mom didn't care for her and didn't want her anymore.

Will told Julie that he had never forgotten about her and even kept her baby pictures, past art projects and the books she used to write. He told how he had always hoped that he would get to see her again and give these back to her.

Since that first phone call, Julie has been able to visit with her brother and even visit her mom, who is terminally ill and expected to pass away soon. If it hadn't been for Family Finding, Julie would have likely never seen her family again and may have never known the truth about why she was placed in foster care.



**SAVE
THE
DATE**

Save the Date
FRIDAY, APRIL 7, 2017

30th Annual
"Extend A Caring Hand"
Dinner & Auction
benefitting
ECH Every Child's Hope
Platinum Sponsor: The Smith-Fain Family Foundation

THE SAINT LOUIS RITZ CARLTON

WWW.EVERYCHILDSHOPE.ORG

Invitations will be mailed in February, 2017



MISSOURI YOP TAX CREDITS AVAILABLE FOR 2017

Great News...ECH Every Child's Hope has just been **awarded new YOP tax credits for 2017** for our Conflict Resolution for Troubled Youth program!

The new 2017 YOP tax credits will apply to donations of \$500 or more received between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017 and are available to any individual, business, or corporation paying taxes in the State of Missouri.

Our goal is to raise \$160,000 by the end of the year, and we would love your assistance in helping us meet that goal! There are two things we would like you to consider:

- **Help underwrite** our 30th Annual (and perhaps last) "Extend A Caring Hand" Dinner & Auction: **An Evening of Pearls & Polka Dots.** We are looking for **30 donors to contribute \$1,000** to completely underwrite the event.
- **Pledge your gift NOW** and we will hold credits for you until November 15, 2017, at which time your credits will be released for someone else's benefit.

As you know, the benefit to you as a YOP donor is a 50% Missouri State Income Tax Credit that can be used anytime within the next five tax years. For example, a \$500 donation would qualify for \$250 in state tax credits. Additionally, all YOP donations qualify for the standard federal and state income tax deductions.

Thank you for your continued support in our work to provide hope to the children, youth, and families at ECH.

To make a pledge or a gift, call or email Sharon Fenoglio at 314-427-3755 or sfenoglio@echmail.org



"Laura is a long time ECH employee and I have great confidence in her as she fulfills this new role," said CEO Michael Brennan. "I am excited about what the Development Department can accomplish under Sharon's and Laura's leadership as we set a course for the healthy future of the agency."

After 14 years of service in the roles of Public Relations Manager and Associate Development Director, Laura Kilcullin has been promoted to Director of Development. In her new role, Laura will supervise all annual fundraising and communications efforts at ECH.

With Laura at the helm, Sharon Fenoglio will focus her efforts on planned giving and capital projects as the Chief Advancement Officer.

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St. Louis Community Foundation
St. Matthew Cemetery
Sterling Bank
Stifel, Nicolaus & Company Inc.
Sutter Plumbing Company, Inc.
The PrivateBank
Truman Heartland Community Foundation
United Car Care Inc.
United Surgical Partners
United Way of Central & Northeastern Connecticut
Vehicle Assurance
Winkelmann Sons Drug Company
Zamzow Manufacturing Co., Inc.

IN KIND

801 Restaurant Group
All Saints
America's Incredible Pizza Company
American Legion Auxiliary Unit 400
Apple, West County Center
Arcobasso Jewelers
Are We There Yet?, LLC
Bentley Studio, Ltd.
Billy G's Kirkwood
Bloomsdale Bank
Brio Tuscan Grille
C J Muggs Restaurant
Cannoli's
Charlie Gitto's On the Hill
D R Sullivan & Company, CPA PC
Daniel Boone Shriners Club
Drury Hotels, LLC
Eckert Companies
Extra Virgin - an Olive Ovation
FedEx Home Delivery
Five Star Burgers
Fleet Reserve Association
Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar
Fortel's Pizza Den
Gateway Motorsports Park
Girl Scout Troop 4150
Glazers Distributors
GMA Architects
Gus' Pretzels
J.U.G.S., Inc.
John Bender Inc.
Kennelwood Pet Resorts
Kreis' Restaurant
Ladies Aid, ECH
Lockridge Cleaning Co.
Maggie O'Brien's Restaurant & Irish Pub
Magic House
Majestic Dance Studio

Massa's
Massage Envy - Creve Coeur
Missouri Botanical Garden
Paul Manno's St. Louis
River City Rascals
Salon de Christe
Schlafly Beer
Schroeder & Associates, PC
Shane Co.
Silver Dollar City
Sky Zone Trampoline Park
South County Senior Law & Estate Planning Center
St. Catherine Retirement Community
St. Louis Billikens
St. Louis Blues Hockey Club/ Scottrade Center
St. Louis Cardinals
St. Louis County Police Dept. 1st Pct
STAGES St. Louis
The Boxing Gym
The Cheesecake Factory Bakery Inc.
The Melting Pot Restaurant
The Pageant in the Loop
Tilford Restaurant Group
United Surgical Partners
Upper Limits Rock Gym
Urban Chestnut Brewing Company
Valvoline Instant Oil Change
Vi-JON
Vie
Vom Fass St. Louis
Wallis Companies
Weber Grill Restaurants
Western Digital Foundation
Winkelmann Sons Drug Company
Women's Exchange
Zamzow Manufacturing Co., Inc.

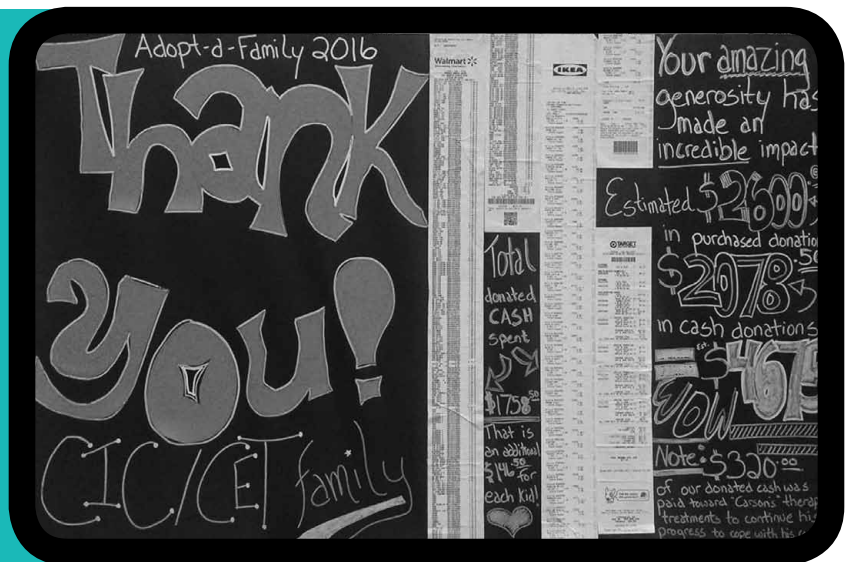


UNITY THROUGH GIVING

Several years ago Leigha Gaston was looking for an “adopt-a-family” type of program for Christmas donations. She figured young kids were the neediest, so she Googled “orphanages in St. Louis.” And that’s the beginning of a wonderful partnership between Leigha’s company and the Foster Care Case Management program at ECH. For the past five years, Leigha has connected with the program director right after Halloween and receives a Wish List for each child in foster care. She posts the list in the main area in the co-working building where she works. She also goes around to each office and explains about ECH and shares a few stories of the kids who will be receiving the presents. Every year the donations grow, along with the enthusiasm of the donors. “People want to give, but they don’t always have an outlet,” Leigha explains. She reminds people how much they have and encourages them to give back. “These kids have nothing, and that’s not fair,” she says. “We owe it to each other to help one another out. And you get better as your community gets better.”

It’s become a big event for her family, including her husband and 9-year-old daughter, who come with her to the wrap party her office hosts before they drop off all of the presents at ECH. It’s also become a unifying event for her office. Because they are all individuals who are just renting office space (most of them start-ups), there isn’t a lot of reason to interact. But collecting the gifts unites the building under a positive experience, Leigha explains. Workers congregate around the wall where the Wish List is posted and eagerly watch as the pile of presents grows each week.

Leigha tells one story of a guy in her office who goes above and beyond to provide gifts to make sure the foster care kids have a Merry Christmas. Instead of exchanging gifts with his wife, they buy gifts for ECH instead. Last year he was shopping for a family of boys, and the oldest one wanted a watch. This generous man donated his personal watch, which he had custom-made for a sailing trip he took. Besides being an expensive item, it also had sentimental value. But he decided to bless someone else with it instead. He even included a note with the watch, which said “I hope this watch guides you just as it did me.”



If your workplace is interested in donating Christmas gifts to the needy children and families at ECH, please call the Development Office at 314-427-3755 and we will touch base with you in November with more information. As Leigha explains,

“The stories of the kids who receive the gifts pull people in. It’s an opportunity to show my daughter how important it is to be grateful and to give back!”



A POCKET FULL OF PRAYERS

The Blue Ridge United Methodist Church donated “pocket prayers” for the Steppingstone youth. A group of ladies meet together once a week to sew these little reminders. As they knit, they pray for the person who will receive it. Even though they do not know who it will go to, these wonderful ladies want it to be a reminder that each recipient was thought of and prayed for. The ladies describe their mission this way:

“It’s not very big but it’s loaded with prayers for whoever receives it. Because it’s small, it can be used for many things and put many places. It can go in a car as a reminder that God is always with you as your travel from one destination to another. It can go in a dresser drawer where you see it every day when you’re getting dressed as a reminder that you are loved. Put it on a table and use it as a coaster, remembering someone thought of you as they made those stitches. And on days when you feel like you need a little extra love, put it in your pocket and have it near you all day. With just a touch of the hand, you’ll feel it and be reminded of those ladies who prayed for you while knitting and continue to pray for you today.”



SALES TAX INITIATIVE TO RAISE \$15 MILLION FOR JACKSON COUNTY YOUTH



November 8, voters in Kansas City passed the Children’s Services Fund initiative in Jackson County with approximately 167,000 (59%) votes! This 1/8 cent sales tax will fund agencies such as Steppingstone, to offer a variety of services to children and youth in need. The Children’s Service Fund Coalition estimates that for every \$1 invested in prevention, Jackson County will save \$11 that would have been spent on substance abuse treatment, lost wages, and criminal justice costs. The Coalition estimates that \$15 million will be available to help kids and families.

Steppingstone Director Lynn Durbin was heavily invested in helping this initiative pass. He was on the executive committee of the Children’s Services Fund Coalition, serving as treasurer. He also was part of the community education efforts related to the fund, including petition signature gathering to place the initiative on the ballot, fund raising for the coalition, polling, advocacy, media appearances, yard sign placements and working at polling sites on election day.

According to Lynn, the needs of at-risk children and youth in the Kansas City metropolitan area are clear and compelling. There are significant gaps in services for older youth struggling with homelessness, substance abuse, early pregnancy and mental health issues. Steppingstone seeks to build upon our already existing transitional living program which supports at-risk youth move towards successful independent living and self-sufficiency. Steppingstone is prepared to lead the way in narrowing the service gap for at-risk families, older youth and children in Jackson County in collaboration with the Children’s Service’s Fund.





STEPPINGSTONE:
A PROGRAM OF ECH EVERY CHILD'S HOPE
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KANSAS CITY, MO 64133
[Address Service Requested](#)

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U.S. POSTAGE
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ST. LOUIS, MO
PERMIT NO. 937

STEPPINGSTONE WISH LIST

Steppingstone is looking for the following items for donation. Please call the office at (816) 356-0187 for more information.

- Gift cards to Walmart, Aldi's, Dollar Tree or Dollar General (used for incentives for youth or for youth who are setting up their apartment) in any amount from \$5 to \$25

- Hygiene products for all skin types and hair types (shampoo, conditioner, lotion, soap, hair styling products)

- \$10 gift cards to Great Clips

- Energy smart light bulbs 60 or 75 wattage

- Bathroom essentials (trash can, shower curtain, bath mat)

- Plastic storage bins in large and small sizes

- Laundry detergent, fabric softener, dish wash soap, dishwasher detergent tabs or liquid

