

## Letter from the CEO

Julia Adami



As we enter the Fall season, it is always refreshing to see the students and teachers head back to school with excitement and joy! The kids in our residential program also attend our school, so we won't see them outside playing like they do over the summer, but we are excited to welcome them to their new school year. A group of staff at ECH who have connections and prior work history in the beauty world have coordinated with a group of hairstylists and barbers to come to ECH and provide free haircuts for our kids in all our programs! We decided to make it a back-to-school bash and enjoyed some barbeque, games, and haircuts to kick off the new academic year.

In other exciting news, we recently went through our accreditation process with the Council on Accreditation. Surveyors were here for four days and reviewed all programs, support departments and governance standards – a total of 912 standards. After they left, they let us know if there were any areas we needed to fix. We received just 4 items, all easily fixable, thus we continue to maintain our accreditation status!

This year we hosted our first volunteer and donor appreciation event since the pandemic to highlight the generous spirits of those who give so much to ECH by way of their time and/or resources. The support we receive at ECH is priceless, and we are always in need of more volunteers. Please consider ECH if you are looking for somewhere to spend some quality time.

As the seasons change, we are grateful and honored to continue our work with children and families across Missouri. The needs are great, and so is our staff! We have some of the most committed and passionate people at ECH. It is such an honor to be a part of it all, every day!!

Sincerely,

Julia Adami

## Foster Care: Keeping Kids Together



Missouri's foster care system has been strained in recent years. The pandemic and understaffing at the state level have made challenging work even tougher. Did you know that there are more than 13,000 children in Missouri's foster care system right now?

ECH maintains four offices throughout the state to work with foster children and families. Within the last two years, ECH has worked diligently to increase our staffing and double the number of foster cases we serve. These efforts allow ECH to now manage more than 400 cases each year.

Foster care case management is difficult work with a variety of reasons why care is needed. Often, children are removed from their home, sent to a foster family without their personal possessions, and forced to adapt to a new environment. Our staff works hard to ease the transition and get each child into a permanent, stable home as soon as possible. Typically, the first priority is to reunify children with their family whenever possible, thus we provide services to the family as well. If, over time, that option isn't available, we seek guardianship with a relative or adoptive homes so a child can be raised in a loving and safe permanent home.

Foster care is uniquely challenging when it impacts multiple siblings. Recently, our staff worked with a foster family who brought five siblings into their home. Even though there was apprehension about fostering such a large number of children, the family credited ECH staff for providing the support they needed to take on such a significant responsibility. When the time came to find a permanent home for the children, the foster family agreed to begin adoption procedures. The family said they would not have considered this if not for their ECH foster care case manager.

We are very thankful to have committed staff, families and donors who make these happy endings possible and provide hope every day.

**Since 1995, November has been marked as National Adoption Month. It's a time to celebrate adoptive families and spread awareness of the more than 109,000 children in foster care nationwide waiting for their forever homes.**



# It's the Most Wonderful Time

As we wake up on crisp fall mornings to see leaves of deep red, gold, and orange, it is a reminder that the holiday season is near. ECH's annual Christmas Campaign kicks off in early November. We invite you to help make the holidays the most wonderful time of the year for a child or family in our care.

You have the opportunity to adopt a child or family for gifts, shop from our Amazon wish list, host a donation drive, purchase gift cards, or volunteer helping to fulfill Christmas wishes for hundreds of children who will be in our care during the Christmas season.

The Christmas Campaign page on our website will allow you to see the names and ages of children wishing specific gifts. You can register to provide gifts to that child or choose additional links for other ways to give back.

Check your email and our social media accounts for the kickoff announcement. The campaign grows each year, and we are so grateful that you continue to provide special memories that every child deserves.



**CONTACT MIKE ZOLEZZI**  
at [michael.zolezzi@everychildshope.org](mailto:michael.zolezzi@everychildshope.org) or  
314.506.7331 for details.



### Gift Drive

Create your own gift drive with friends, family members, church groups, coworkers, or any other team who'd like to share in some holiday magic. Contact Sarah at [sdeweese@everychildshope.org](mailto:sdeweese@everychildshope.org) to get started.



### Shop Like an Elf

Be one of Santa's elves by heading out to fulfill the Christmas wishes of one child or an entire family! We'll supply the list, you check it twice and enjoy getting into the spirit.



### Shop Online

Are you more of a digital shopper? We can share wish lists that allow you to make the holidays bright for a child or family from the comfort of your keyboard. And don't forget... gift cards of any denomination are very appreciated!



### Year-End Monetary Donation

Make your year-end, tax-deductible donation online at [everychildshope.org](http://everychildshope.org). Your gift will ensure children and families have the support they need year-round.

## Golf Classic Helps Kids and Families

More than 160 players and volunteers gathered at Old Hickory Golf Club in St. Peters, MO for the 24th Annual ECH Golf Classic. Participants enjoyed a great day on the course, lunch, dinner, a live auction, and baskets of items that were raffled. More than **\$53,000** was raised to benefit ECH programs across the state!

Special thanks to tournament host Randy Karraker of 101 ESPN Radio in St. Louis and our volunteer planning committee. Key sponsors included OneDigital, Plaza Motors, Vehicle Assurance, and Manny Rivera. Did you miss this year? Make plans to join us for "25 in '25" – our Silver Anniversary Golf Classic in September 2025.



## Leave Your Legacy

### Have you considered ECH as part of your estate plans?

It's never too late to join the ECH Legacy Society. In many cases, not only can you make an impactful donation to ECH in the future, but also reduce your tax liability today. Consult with your tax advisor or contact **Chief Development Officer Sherry Gerke at 314.427.3755, x232 or [sgerke@everychildshope.org](mailto:sgerke@everychildshope.org).**



Your commitment today can bring hope to future children who will enter our care for years to come.





# Our Commitment to Trauma-informed Care



Time does not always heal all wounds. Some require extra care and attention, such as trauma wounds. It is common to think of trauma in terms of a natural disaster or serious bodily injury, but there are multiple types of trauma.

The scope ranges from acute trauma caused by a specific event to chronic trauma due to prolonged exposure to distressing situations or circumstances. The children and youth in our care who have experienced trauma may have lasting adverse effects on their physical, social, emotional, or spiritual functioning and well-being.

ECH is committed to being a trauma-informed agency where we interact with youth, families, and co-workers in a way that exhibits awareness and responsiveness to the impact of trauma on each individual's life. ECH Trauma-Informed Committee Chair Keith Haar noted,

**“Our commitment to a trauma-informed approach ensures ECH is fulfilling its mission by promoting healing and resiliency so youth, families and communities can function at their full capacity and potential.”**

## ECH Trauma-informed Care Principles:

- ✓ Safety
- ✓ Trust and Transparency
- ✓ Collaboration and Support
- ✓ Empowerment and Choice
- ✓ Sensitivity and Inclusion
- ✓ Compassion and Empathy

## Volunteer Spotlight – Wallace Resources



Dr. Julie Wallace formed Wallace SC&W, an Oklahoma City nonprofit that trains and supports people interested in leadership and community service, with husband Rev. Stephen Wallace. She leads a mission trip with friends and associates every year and, despite the nearly 11 hour journey to St. Louis, welcomed the challenge of a multi-day trip with several participants.

Julie began planning the trip during this past winter, inspired by a time when she visited our area many years ago. They were here during April's Dill Center grand opening festivities and helped with set-up for the event, but also provided hospitality for the hundreds of guests that visited the St. Louis campus that day.

Once here, Julie realized she had confused ECH with another organization, but that an internet search had led her to us. “We thank God for such a wonderful experience and for connecting us with caring people who are doing such hard work to make life better for so many kids,” she said.

Sometimes there really are such things as happy accidents. We are grateful for Julie, her community, and all of our volunteers who serve our children and families.

## Donor Spotlight



### Kayla Scott

“God blessed me,” says Kayla Scott. She is talking about both her time at ECH and her ability to become a donor.

Kayla entered ECH's residential treatment program at age 9. Her stay at ECH was expected to be six months, but she ended up spending three years in our care.

“I had a lot of anger,” she said. “The staff was terrific. My therapist – Ms. Stephanie – helped me address what I was feeling.”

After Kayla's initial stay at ECH, she returned at age 19 to enter the Steppingstone transitional living program. She remembered the care she received and knew where to turn when she needed help again.

**“Mr. Garrett was a wonderful mentor. I learned so much about being on my own and starting my life. Ms. Lake helped me enroll in college.”**

Kayla started her own cleaning business with residential and commercial clients throughout the St. Louis area. Why does she choose to give to ECH? **“I told myself that if I ever had means, I would pay back the kindness given to me,” she says.**

Kayla wants the ECH community to know that as a child, “I didn't miss out on having fun.”

This past summer, Kayla became a newlywed. Mr. Garrett, who recently retired from our Steppingstone program, walked Kayla down the aisle on her wedding day.

**“Everything I've learned has a root in ECH,” says Kayla.**

You can join Kayla by becoming an ECH donor.

*Click here to learn more about giving options.*





# Congratulations to our recent Retirees!

**40  
YEARS**

**DEBORA LAKE**  
Steppingstone  
Program  
Life Skills  
Coordinator

**23  
YEARS**

**KIM HANDLANG**  
Residential Services  
Director  
  
**ED STAGE**  
Purchasing Manager

**11  
YEARS**

**LYNN DURBIN**  
Kansas City  
Steppingstone  
Director



*Congratulations, Debora!*

## A Look Back



Children who were residents on our St. Louis campus in the 1950s practiced their spelling with an ECH teacher. The classroom may look different nearly 80 years later, but our organization continues to provide exceptional education services.



Looking good, one hundred years apart! ECH got everyone ready for the new academic year with free haircuts in the 1920s, which was also a part of our 2024 Back to School celebration.

Read about this year's Christmas Campaign inside!



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