

Letter from the CEO

Julia Adami



Dear friends, donors,
and colleagues,

Summer has brought
beautiful weather and
countless opportunities
for the children we
serve to experience
simple joys of being

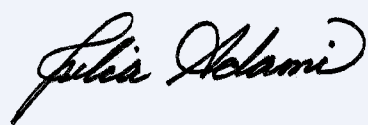
kids. Each day, our recreational team fills the park with laughter, playing, jumping, and running. I feel such temptation to jump into a kick-ball game, but my better judgement tells me to just soak up the joy of watching them have some carefree summertime.

June marked another successful summer session at our Carrie Elligson Gietner School on our Saint Charles Rock Road campus. This summer school programming for eighteen children had a focus on credit recovery and academic progress to help them stay on track for future success.

This summer we were also excited to host our Hope Rising Gala. This evening was more than a fundraising event – it was a celebration of hope, resilience, and community. We are deeply grateful for this opportunity to build relationships and to connect us to our longtime supporters while welcoming new ones.

As we look ahead to the second half of the year, we are filled with gratitude for the compassion and generosity of those who stand beside us. Because of your support, children are finding hope, families are discovering strength, and brighter futures are possible.

Thank you for believing in our mission and for helping Every Child's Hope continue to transform lives – one child, one family, and one story at a time.



Julia Adami

Client Spotlight: ECH Enables Hope, Healing for the Whole Family



For youth facing complex mental and behavioral health challenges, progress can take time, structure, compassion, and steady support. For one Missouri family, ECH made all the difference.

Rob and Ethan are fathers to 11 adopted children. Their family is close-knit and full of activity, from holidays and swim parties to shared meals and everyday life together.

When one of their sons began experiencing significant behavioral challenges, the entire family felt the strain. His needs required time, energy, and attention and Rob and Ethan worried about the effect on his siblings. In May 2025, their son entered residential treatment at ECH's Dill Center in St. Louis. ECH's behavioral health residential treatment program provides trauma-informed care in a secure and supportive environment.

The two dads made the weekly four-hour drive for family therapy and remained deeply involved in their son's care. ECH provided consistent communication, including regular updates about their son's progress, medication changes, and his day-to-day progress. Their son returned home in December with new coping skills, stronger communication, and a better ability to self-regulate.

"He's not perfect ... no one is, but he's totally different," Rob said. "He knows how to regulate, how to use coping skills, how to communicate, and how to have open and honest conversations."

Relationships with siblings have improved, and both parents have been able to give more balanced attention to all of their children. For both dads, the experience reinforced an important lesson: Family healing requires family participation.

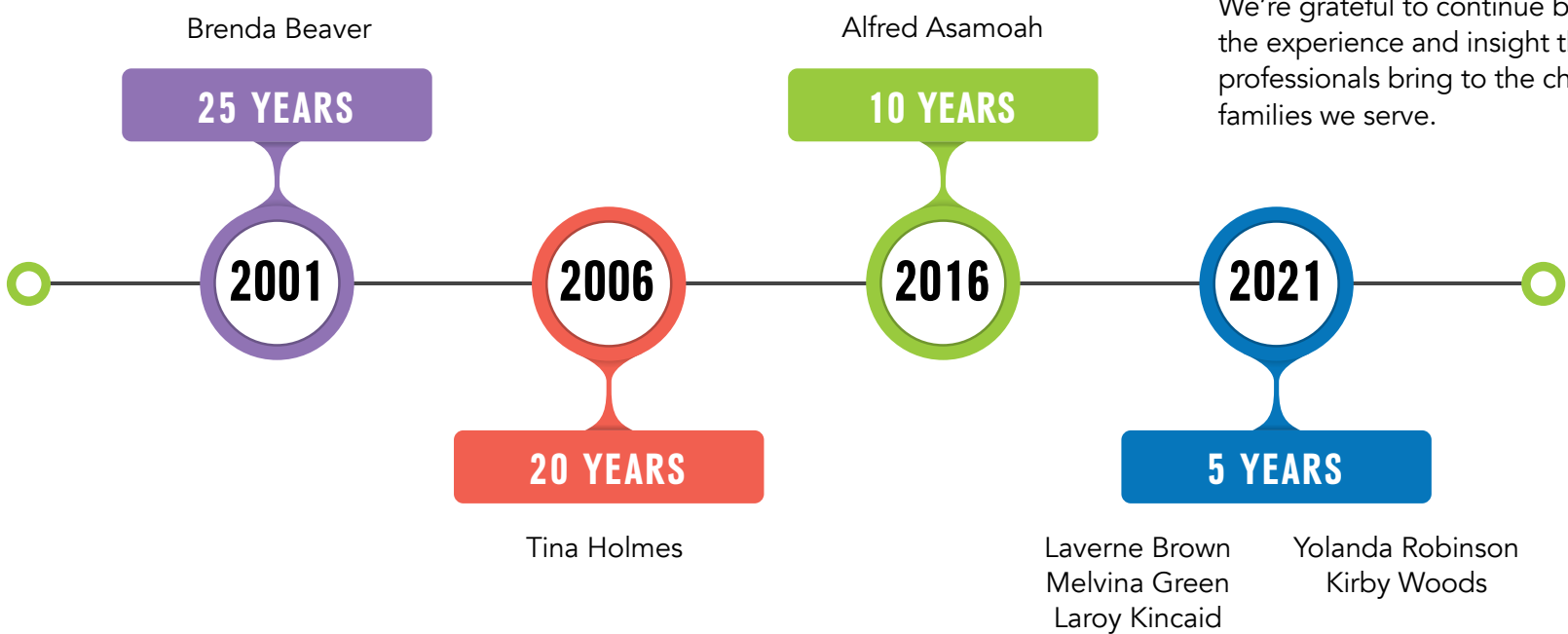
"Doing family counseling, we've worked through stuff that's helped make us all better," Rob said. He added:

"What's been healing for me is that each one of us was really broken. But together, we're so strong. I love when my kids say our house is their safe place. We've all healed together. As we end this chapter and start a happier, healthier beginning, each one of us wants to thank the ECH team for their unwavering support to our family."

Employee 2026 Milestones

Congratulations to our ECH team members on these employment milestones!

We're grateful to continue benefiting from the experience and insight these dedicated professionals bring to the children and families we serve.



Meet the Team

Behind every child who finds safety, every family who discovers hope, and every life that's changed is a community of people who choose to care. ECH's development team helps make those moments possible. They build relationships with generous supporters who want to turn their compassion into real action.

Their work isn't simply about raising funds; it's about ensuring that children and families across Missouri have a place to find hope.



SHERRY GERKE | CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

With more than two decades of experience in advancement and philanthropy, **Sherry Gerke is Chief Development Officer** at Every Child's Hope. She leads fundraising strategy and donor engagement efforts that support programs serving children and families across the region.

Known for her relationship-centered approach, Sherry brings strengths in communication, reflective listening, and understanding behavioral dynamics. Her grandchildren light up her life, especially twins who are nearly 1.5 years old. She and her family are also BIG Mizzou fans!

Sherry holds a bachelor's degree in social work from Missouri State University and a Master's Degree in Organizational Management from the University of Phoenix.



FAILONA COLLINS | DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT

Failona Collins is Director of Advancement at Every Child's Hope, where she leads comprehensive development efforts, including major gifts, capital campaigns, grant management, and donor communications, all in support of strengthening outcomes for children and families.

She is known for cultivating meaningful connections with donors at all levels. In her time away from work, she loves to travel, especially anywhere with sun and sand, and spend time with family and friends.

In December 2025, Failona was named one of *Delux Magazine's* Power 100 Honorees. She holds graduate degrees in organizational leadership and nonprofit management from Webster University and a bachelor's degree in psychology from Central Methodist University.



BETHANY DUBER | REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND DONOR ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

The development department's newest team member is Bethany Duber, who is Regional Development and Donor Engagement Manager. Based in Kansas City, she focuses on building relationships and driving support for programs that serve children and families.

Her career began in marketing and advertising, and storytelling continues to inform her approach to fundraising and engagement.

Bethany combines creative strategy with a deep personal commitment to the foster care community, both professionally and as a foster and adoptive parent. Poetry is also a personal passion, helping Bethany turn her personal experiences into something she shares with others. Bethany is a graduate of the University of Missouri-Columbia with a journalism degree.



\$120k+ Raised at ECH’s 2026 Hope Rising Gala

A generous spirit filled the air on June 13 as more than 130 guests gathered to celebrate and support ECH’s work for children and families at the Hope Rising Gala. Attendees mingled at the Ameristar Casino in St. Charles before being welcomed into the ballroom by KMOV News Anchor Maurice Drummond for the evening’s presentation.

“It’s been over a decade since we hosted a formal event like this, and it felt wonderful to see so many of our friends in one place,” said CEO Julia Adami.

The evening included the first-ever presentation of the Lifetime of Hope Award to Dennis Mertz, who has supported ECH for over 50 years. There was also a presentation of the Rising Star Awards, which recognizes staff who have gone above and beyond in their roles. Recipients included Liz Leroy, Franita Staten, Monica Harmon, Tylar Toussaint, and Jermaine Cotton.

Thank you to sponsors The Smith-Fain Family Foundation, Window World, Up Companies, and SACPA Accounting Firm, who helped make the evening a success.



Tee Up A Good Time! 2026 ECH Annual Golf Classic Set for Sept. 14

Make plans to swing by and stay awhile at the Every Child’s Hope Golf Classic 2026 on Monday, Sept. 14 at Old Hickory Golf Club in St. Peters, Mo.

Hosted by sportscaster Randy Karraker of Matrix Midwest for the 19th time, **the day brings together families and friends for friendly competition and fundraising to support the ECH mission:** Partnering with the community to help children, youth and families pursue health, healing and long-term stability.

There are flexible options for teams and individual players, with early bird sign-up options before Aug. 1. Each player gets time on the course along with lunch, dinner, snacks, and beverages. Plus, available sponsorships offer meaningful visibility throughout the tournament for area businesses and brands.



LEARN MORE
by scanning the QR code or
visit the ECH website:
everychildshope.org/2026-golf-classic/

Check Out the New Digital Home for ECH

Every Child’s Hope has launched a newly designed website that makes it easier than ever to connect with our mission and access the information you need. With a streamlined, user-friendly experience and enhanced navigation, the site reflects who we are today as well as where we’re headed.

The site also brings our work to life through “Stories of Hope.” These are real experiences that highlight the resilience of the children and families we serve. The stories offer a closer look at the impact of support and the possibilities ahead.

Whether you’re a client seeking support, a donor looking to make an impact, or a volunteer ready to get involved, you’ll find clear pathways and helpful resources throughout the site.

Scan the QR code to visit us online.

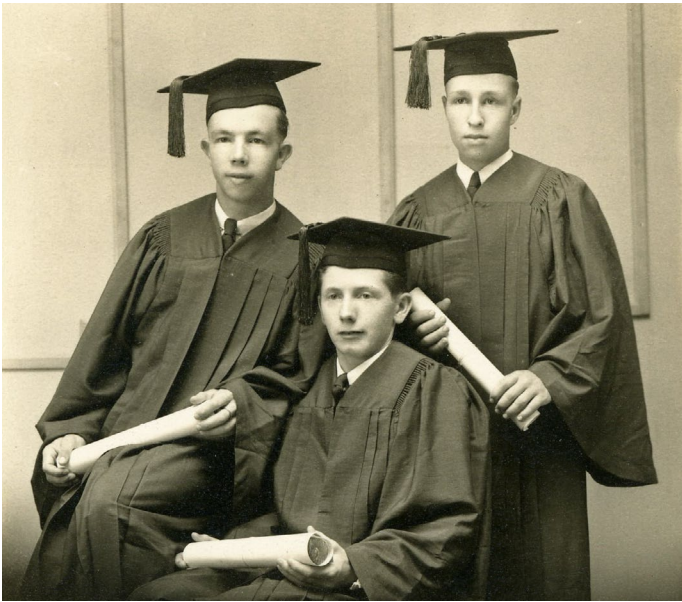


Hope Was Here



Be sure to look inside for full coverage of our 2026 Hope Rising Gala!

You can also scan the code to view our gala video.



A Look Back

Graduation has always been a special time of year at ECH! These young men graduated over 100 years ago, and the tradition continues in 2026 as we congratulate young graduates in our Kansas City and St. Louis Steppingstone programs as well as our ECH School.

In This Issue...

Letter from the CEO

Client Spotlight
ECH Enables Hope, Healing for the Whole Family

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Tee Up A Good Time!
2026 ECH Annual Golf Classic Set for Sept. 14

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