

2026

NEWSLETTER

Gateway Children's Services is a "Lifeline for Change" to Kentucky's children and families.



Gateway Children's Services

A Season of Warmth and Generosity

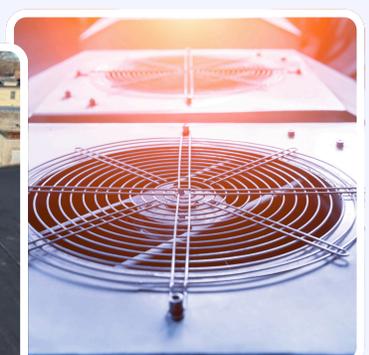


This holiday season, Gateway Children's Services experienced an incredible outpouring of support from our community, and we are thrilled to share that our holiday appeal goal to replace four HVAC units at our main residential facility was fully met. Because of YOUR generosity, we also raised enough to replace two gas furnaces at our Transition Home, bringing the total to SIX critical units replaced.

Because you opened emails and letters, shared our story on social media, donated online, and mailed contributions to our office (sometimes multiple times) our residential spaces are warmer, safer,

and better equipped to support healing and stability.... not just this winter, but for years to come. We are so grateful to everyone who helped make this campaign successful.

Thank you for believing in our children and programs - we can't do it without you!



FROM THE CEO



Dear friends,

Over the past year, Gateway Children's Services has taken an important step forward. I am proud to share that we have completed our new three year Strategic Plan, a roadmap that will guide our work from 2026 through 2029.

This plan was not created behind closed doors. It was shaped through a year-long, collaborative process that intentionally brought many voices to the table. Children and families we serve, staff, board members, our Development Committee, community partners, volunteers, donors, and other stakeholders all played a role in helping us reflect, listen, and learn. Through Ripple Effect Mapping and thoughtful conversations, we examined not only what we do, but how our work truly impacts lives across our community.

What emerged is a plan rooted in shared values and lived experience - one that strengthens our commitment to quality services, financial sustainability, staff and volunteer support, and meaningful outcomes for children and families. It reinforces who we are today while positioning Gateway to respond thoughtfully to the changing needs of Kentucky's children and families in the years ahead.

I appreciate everyone who gave their time, insight, and honesty throughout this process. Your perspectives helped ensure this plan reflects both the heart of our mission and the realities of the communities we serve. Most importantly, this strategic plan belongs to all of us - it is a shared vision and a shared responsibility.

Thank you for walking alongside Gateway Children's Services and for believing in the power of collaboration, compassion, and long term impact. I am excited about the future we are building together and look forward to putting this plan into action in 2026 and beyond.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denise Spittler".

Denise Spittler, CEO



P.S. Want to see the impact of your support? Our 2024-2025 Impact Report is available in the About Us section at GatewayChildrensServices.org.

AMAZON WISHLIST



Open your phone camera to scan the QR code.

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18th Annual Cornhole Tournament & Silent Auction

On Saturday, August 9, 2025, we welcomed players from four states and 41 cities to the 18th Annual Cornhole Tournament & Silent Auction presented by Save A Lot of Mt. Sterling & Owingsville.

Held during the Mt. Sterling Small Town America Festival, the afternoon kicked off with opening remarks from Denise Spittler, CEO of Gateway Children's Services; Mayor Al Botts; Judge Executive Chris Haddix; and Kentucky Senator Greg Elkins.

Former Gateway CEO Joe Gomes also recognized a special milestone, honoring player Barry Back for participating in all 18 tournaments. Local elected officials kicked off the tournament with the opening bag toss.

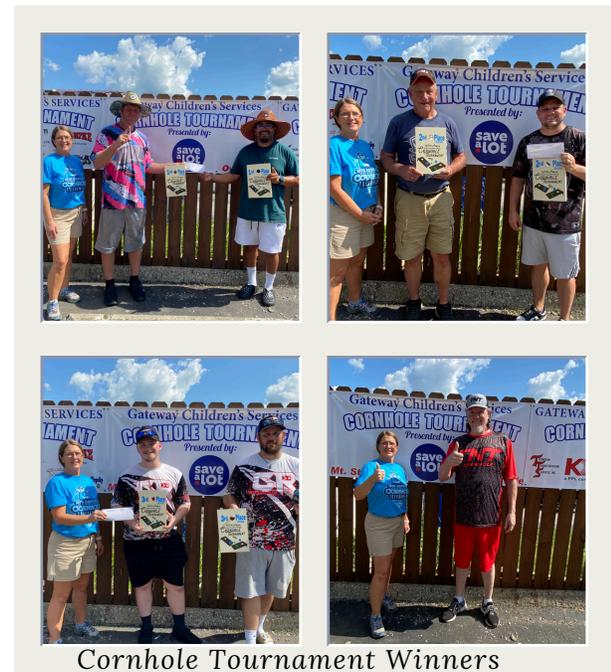
This fundraiser raises \$18,000 for enrichment and support programming that includes recreational outings, clothing assistance, wellness services, and other resources for children in our Qualified Residential Treatment Program. This event would not be possible without our sponsors and silent auction donors. Thank you for believing in our work year after year!!



Pictured above: Senator Greg Elkins, Mayor Al Botts, CEO Denise Spittler, Judge Executive Chris Haddix; & Senator Elkins' two grandchildren

Tournament Results:

- **1st Place:** Christian Likins (Maysville, KY) & Devin Workman (Maysville, KY)
- **2nd Place:** Ryan Clark (Cincinnati, OH) & Ron Cracraft (Mt. Orab, OH)
- **3rd Place:** Joseph Hurt (Cornettsville, KY) & Harold Shepherd (Cornettsville, KY)
- **Money Shot Winner:** Jamie Gayheart (Hazard, KY)



Cornhole Tournament Winners

GATEWAY CHILDREN'S SERVICES
18TH ANNUAL CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT

Presented By

Mt. Sterling **save a lot** Owingsville

Kosair for Kids **KU** **THOMPSON TRANSPORTATION SERVICES, INC.** **WMST** **CBSRADIO**

Community Trust Bank **Traditional Bank** **STERLING HEALTH CARE**

momentum commercial construction **FIRST CHRISTIAN Mt. Sterling** **INDEPENDENT STAVE COMPANY** **Wildcat Recycling**

CTI FOODS **DUTCH'S CHEVY FORD** **RUMPEKE Waste & Recycling** **Camargo Salvage** **WHITAKER BANK UNIQUELY KENTUCKY** **KEYSTONE FINANCIAL GROUP**



Gateway Children's Services Staff

Recent Grant Awards

Grants allow Gateway Children's Services to go beyond meeting basic needs by creating enriching experiences for the children in our care. From wellness and educational supports to therapeutic and recreational activities, these investments help foster growth, stability, and opportunity across our programs. Since our last newsletter, we have received the following grants:

- **CHI Saint Joseph Health** funded nutrition services, substance misuse education, and case management at Owingsville Elementary School.
- The **Commonwealth Center for Fathers & Families** provided support for Houses of Healing programming and the Incarcerated Father's Day Event.
- Thanks to the **Cralle Foundation** we purchased conference room chairs, foldable sofa beds, a custom-built cabinet, a mailbox, and window tint for the front windows.
- The **Doris Duke Foundation** provided funding for a Community Response Peer Navigator.
- Medical services, health and wellness support, and GED/test preparation materials were funded by the **E.O. Robinson Mountain Fund**.
- We upgraded our entire building to energy efficient LED lighting thanks to the **Kentucky Colonels**.
- **LG&E and KU** funded much needed operating support to use where we needed it the most.
- **Mt. Sterling Kiwanis** equipped us with a commercial dishwasher plus installation, a refrigerator, and pantries for the Transition Home.
- First time operating support was provided by our newly built **Starbucks**.
- The **Steele-Reese Foundation** funded literacy initiatives for elementary school children in Montgomery & Bath counties.
- **UNITE** funded the Power Source programming to reduce substance misuse.
- Enrichment activities and outings for youth were provided by the **Walmart Spark Good Local Grant**.
- **WHAS Crusade for Children** supported equine therapy services for our residential youth.

New Foster Care Director

In June, Megan Davis joined us as our new Director of Therapeutic Foster Care. Originally from Mount Sterling, she brings a heart for service, a Master's in Social Work, and years of experience in community mental health and nonprofit leadership. As a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), she's deeply passionate about supporting families and strengthening communities.



If you are interested in becoming a foster parent or want to help us get the word out, please reach out by calling 859.390.3080 or email m.davis@gatewaychildren.org.



Learn How YOU
Can Help a Child Today.

*Become a
Foster Parent*

GatewayChildrensServices.org/fostercare

Community Service

Children in our residential program are spending time giving back to the community. This summer they mowed and trimmed grass at the Montgomery County Courthouse, the Sterling House, and Machpelah Cemetery for community service.

In addition to outdoor projects, they actively volunteer at the Sterling Community Food Coalition and the local Animal Shelter.



These experiences help build responsibility, confidence, and a sense of purpose, while showing our children they have meaningful roles to play in their community. Service opportunities like these foster connection, life skills, and pride.

If you have community service opportunities for our youth, please call 859.498.9892 or email Lynda at L.taylor@gatewaychildren.org.

Life Lately Roundup: Snapshots from life, learning, and growth.



Children in our residential program participated in several Independence Day activities and many saw fireworks for the very first time.



Kids, fishing poles, and really good days.



In October, GCS staff attended the Commonwealth Center for Fathers & Families Fatherhood Symposium in Louisville.



The Kentucky Colonels came to the rescue with emergency funding to replace two stoves in our residential program. Youth had an opportunity to learn firsthand how to install them.

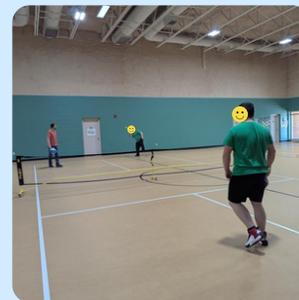


Jessica Mitchell, Director of Residential, is a Class of 2025 Leadership Montgomery County Graduate.

Congratulations, Jessica!

Rachel Randle, a development committee member, helped organize volunteers to decorate our facility for Christmas.

Thank you, Rachel.



Each week, youth look forward to playing pickleball as part of the school's physical education requirement. Thank you to the staff at the First Church of God for hosting us.

Building Bridges with Horses

Our Building Bridges with Horses program gives children a unique chance to heal, grow, and build confidence through weekly equine assisted therapy sessions. Guided by our licensed therapist and an equine specialist, children engage with horses in ways that promote emotional regulation, stress reduction, and healthy connection - especially for those who struggle with traditional talk therapy.

Through movement, sensory experiences, and the calming presence of the horses, kids are learning to trust, communicate, and discover strengths they didn't know they had.

Thank you to the WHAS Crusade for Children for making this healing opportunity possible for our children.



Behavioral Health Spotlight: Investing in Our Schools

Youth spend more time in school than any other place outside of their home. At GCS, we believe empowerment starts by meeting people where they are at, so we are choosing to meet at school. Two of our team members are fully focused on our local schools, supporting students and families.



Charity McCleese rotates through all schools in Montgomery county, meeting 1-on-1 with students, leading student small groups, and partnering with counselors and family resource staff to ensure school is a nurturing place for our students and that families have what they need to send their students to school.



Megan Kathman focuses full time at Owingsville Elementary School. She works closely with the family resource counselor (FRC), expanding the school's ability to support the full family. Megan also leads educational initiatives for the students in the areas of nutrition and substance misuse.

School staff care deeply about their students but are often under equipped to support families beyond a CPS referral, which can trigger investigation rather than connection to help. We fill that gap by equipping schools with tools to connect families to community supports and we look forward to sharing how this prevention and early intervention investment strengthens overall child wellbeing.

A Meaningful Reunion



All three of Gateway's CEOs came together at the Nancy Clay Bryant Mission's We See You: Self-Care event in September. Pictured left to right: Joe Gomes, Kaye Templin, and current CEO Denise Spittler.

Adoptions!



Two children have officially found their forever home. Congratulations to the Gregory family as they begin this new journey together.

Three Cheers for Three Graduates

This year, we proudly celebrated three high school graduations - each one marking an exciting new chapter.

One young man recently moved into a foster home and is preparing to enroll in college, while another has stepped into the workforce with a full time job. A third graduate is pursuing her dream of becoming a teacher, inspired to make a difference in the lives of others.

These milestones reflect hard work, perseverance, and the belief that bright futures are possible. We are incredibly proud of each graduate and excited to see where their journeys lead. Congratulations!



E-News

Join Our e-Newsletter
SUBSCRIBE

Stay updated on our programs, events, and ways to support our children!



Want to stay connected as our work continues?

Join the email list by visiting our website:



[GatewayChildrensServices.org/ newsletter](https://GatewayChildrensServices.org/newsletter)

Holiday Activity Sponsors Made Christmas Magic

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our Holiday Activity Sponsors, the children in our residential program experienced a full season filled with laughter, connection, and Christmas magic. While the holidays can be especially difficult for youth who are unable to be with their families, this season was one to remember - filled with moments that brought comfort, joy, and a sense of belonging.

From pajama parties and gingerbread houses to holiday lights, performances, and special meals, the season was filled with experiences our children will carry with them long after the decorations came down. These moments were made possible thanks to the generosity of Brittany Smith, State Farm; Camargo Transmissions; Cathy Spencer; Vickie Richardson, CPA, PSC; Josh Davis Real Estate Group; Mount Sterling Pediatric Dentistry; and several anonymous supporters.

We are grateful to every sponsor who helped turn the holidays into something joyful. Your generosity created first time memories, traditions, and moments of happiness that truly mattered this Christmas.



A Very Memorable Christmas

This Christmas, YOU helped make the holiday special for 196 children.

You carefully shopped for each child's wish list, wrapped every gift, and ensured everything was ready for Christmas morning. For many of our children, it was the very first time Santa had ever found them.

Because of this incredible outpouring of kindness, Christmas morning was filled with joy, wonder, and moments that reminded each child they are seen, valued, and cared for. Thank you!



Robison Tree Service hosted a toy drive at Walmart for children.



Cash Express held a toy and clothing drive for us!



Volunteer Tina Baker helps make every Christmas so special!



Board of Directors

- Jesse Hodgson, Chair
- Jennifer Allen, Vice Chair
- Cay Lane, Secretary
- Will Clark, Treasurer
- Judy Bramblet
- Bryan Scott Holley
- Joe Zakrzewski
- Amy Ruth
- Emily Settle
- Gus Thomas
- Denise Spittler, CEO



In Their Own Words

During our strategic planning sessions we asked youth about our program and this is what they said:

“This place believed in me even when I didn’t believe in myself.”

“I’m not afraid of the future anymore. I’m excited for it.”

“They didn’t judge me for my past. They helped me build a future.”

