Issue 15

2026 NEWSLETTER

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



Gateway Children's Services

Celebrating 45 Years of Hope and Impact



Gateway Children's Services kicked off our 45th anniversary celebration on May 12 during Kentucky Gives Day by revealing our refreshed logo - a symbol of who we are and the role we strive to play in our community.

The life preserver represents a lifeline and safety. We are here during moments of crisis, offering hope and a way forward. The rope represents the strength and support that hold children and families together through every challenge, while the heart reflects the care and compassion at the center of everything we do.

What began in 1981 has grown into a range of services that support children and families at home, in schools, and in our community. Each new program has been shaped by the needs of the people we serve and made possible by the partners and supporters who have stood with us along the way.



We continued the celebration on Friday, June 5, with birthday cake, games, refreshments, and fellowship as we honored 45 years of impact. Thank you for being part of Gateway's story and helping us provide hope, healing, and new beginnings for 45 years!

FROM THE CEO



For 45 years, Gateway Children's Services has been a place of hope, healing, and new beginnings.

Since 1981, thousands of children and families have turned to GCS during some of life's most difficult moments. Here, they have found caring adults, safe places, practical resources, and hope for a brighter future. None of this would have been possible without **YOU!**

As we celebrate this milestone, we are also looking ahead. We believe the next 45 years will bring even greater opportunities to strengthen families, support recovery, enhance parenting skills, and foster happy, nurtured children.

Yet the challenges before us are real. State and federal funding cuts, changing program requirements, and rising costs are creating uncertainty. At the same time, children and families need more help than ever, and their needs are becoming increasingly complex.

That is why the support of our friends and community has never been more important. The time to help sustain Gateway's work is now.

All gifts are welcome, including one-time donations. Our new monthly giving program provides dependable support throughout the year. We need just *eight* more monthly donors to reach our first goal of ten. Whether it is $10, $25, $45, or more each month, every recurring gift helps us plan ahead and respond when children need us most. Will you help?

There are also tax-advantaged ways to make a difference, including qualified charitable distributions (QCD) from your IRA, gifts of appreciated assets, and grants from donor-advised funds (DAF). You can recommend a gift from your donor-advised fund directly through our online giving platform at gatewaychildrensservices.org/donate. Please reach out to your financial advisor to learn more.

We also invite you to consider the LEGACY you want to leave. Estate gifts, charitable gifts of real estate, and other planned gifts can help ensure that Gateway remains strong for generations to come. A legacy gift of any size is a meaningful way to reflect your values and continue caring for children far into the future.

For 45 years, our community has believed in Gateway Children's Services. As we begin our next chapter, we are asking YOU to believe in what comes next.

Sincerely,

Denise Spittler

Denise Spittler, CEO

P.S. Together, we can honor our history, meet today's urgent needs, and build a strong foundation for the next 45 years.

Learn more by visiting:
GatewayChildrensServices.org/give
Federal Tax ID/EIN: **61-1033836**

Follow us on Facebook & Instagram / GatewayChildrensServices

From Foster Care to Forever



After nearly three years in our care, we are overjoyed to celebrate 2 very special adoptions and the beginning of a beautiful new chapter for the White-Ford family. We are so happy for you! Congratulations!!!

If you are interested in becoming a foster parent, please message us at fostercare@gatewaychildren.org.

A Night to Remember



Two young people living in our Transition Home recently enjoyed a special milestone—attending their high school prom! Dressed for the occasion, they spent the evening celebrating with friends and creating memories they will carry with them for years to come.

Prom



Experiences like prom are an important reminder that **every** young person deserves opportunities to celebrate, belong, and simply enjoy being a teenager.

15 Youth - and Counting!!

Since our transition house opened in January 2025, **15 young people** have called it home while attending public school, working in the community, and building the skills and confidence to thrive independently.

Thank YOU for your continued support and for making those opportunities possible for children who need it the most.

Watch Our 45th Anniversary Celebration Video!

Scan the QR code with your phone camera to watch our special anniversary video featuring Jansje Huyck, Al Botts, Andy Baker, Steve & Jennifer Allen, Chris Haddix, Alan & Joann Newkirk, and other special guests!

New Board Member



Gateway Children's Services proudly welcomed Chris Haddix to the Board of Directors in July 2026.

Chris serves as Montgomery County Judge-Executive and has long been an avid supporter of our youth and mission. His extensive background in public service and deep commitment to Montgomery County will bring valuable insight and leadership to our organization. Welcome, Chris!

Amazon Wishlist

Finding Their Stride, One Step at a Time

Thanks to a grant from CommonSpirit focused on promoting healthy behaviors, our youth have been participating in a twice-weekly running program and putting their hard work to the test in local 5Ks.

With encouragement from our friends Alan and Joann Newkirk, they are building endurance, confidence, and healthy habits - one step at a time. We love celebrating every success, big or small!



After giving it his all in a recent race, one young runner was completely tuckered out and slept most of the way home (a sure sign of a race well run)!



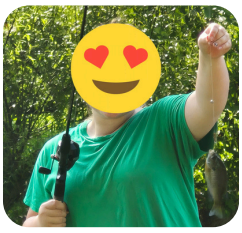
A Summer Full of Fun and Learning

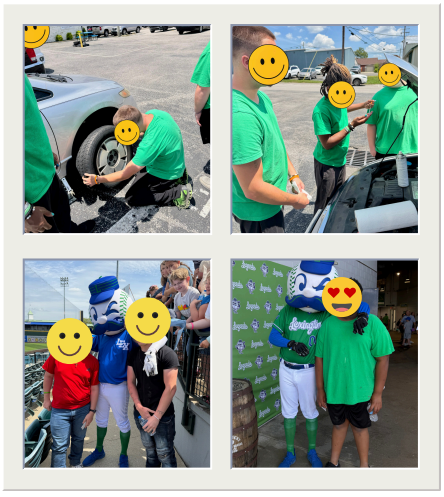
Our youth made wonderful summer memories through days filled with fun and friendship. Jennifer and Steve Allen treated our residential youth to an evening of fireworks, karaoke, games, and delicious food.

The Men of Tomorrow group learned how to change a tire and perform an oil change.

Our youth also spent a special day fishing and grilling at Easy Walker Park with our friends from Gateway Christian Church.









Child Abuse Prevention



State Representative David Hale was recognized for his unwavering support for GCS during his tenure at our annual Child Abuse Prevention Month Pinwheel Planting.

Thank you to everyone who joined us in April for our Child Abuse Prevention Month proclamation signing and pinwheel planting. Your presence showed children that our community cares.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Giving Tuesday kicks off our holiday giving season on December 1. The Christmas Parade will be held on December 5, and you're invited to our annual Holiday Open House on December 11 from 1-3 p.m.

GIVING TUESDAY

December 1, 2026

Four Graduates, Bright Futures Ahead

We're celebrating three young ladies and one young man who graduated from high school this year! Two graduated from GCS, and the other two graduated from the Sterling School. We're proud of their achievements and excited to see what their bright futures hold. Congratulations!









Youth Voices & New Skills



In March, one of our young men was invited to talk about the new curriculum at the Sterling School during a Montgomery County School board meeting. He did an excellent job and we're so proud of him.

Another young man graduated from MCTC's 1st Responder Academy in July. He explored careers in emergency medical services, fire, law enforcement, search & rescue, and obtained his CPR certification.





Several of our youth served as escorts at Mount Sterling First Church of God's Joy Prom, helping guests feel welcomed and celebrated. It was a special night for the church and community to come together in honor of friends with special needs.

School-Based Support Expands to Three Counties

Last year, Gateway Children's Services launched a new approach to supporting families by placing staff directly in local schools - and the results were exciting! Our team led small groups focused on physical and emotional well-being, met individually with more than 200 students, and helped families overcome barriers contributing to chronic absenteeism.

Because the program is not limited to a specific billable service, our staff can simply ask schools "Where do you need help?" That might mean walking a student from the cafeteria to class each morning or connecting a family without transportation to MoCo Transit.

This year, we are continuing our partnership with Montgomery County Schools and expanding into Clark and Rowan counties. We look forward to sharing more stories about how your support is helping children and families build the skills and resilience they need to navigate life's challenges.

If you see our school-based staff in the community, be sure to say hello!



Montgomery
Molly Hignite

Clark
Paige Blevins

Rowan
Hannah Pendleton

Recent Grant Awards

Grants allow Gateway Children's Services to expand services, strengthen families, and provide meaningful opportunities for children and caregivers throughout our region. Since our last newsletter, we have received the following grant awards:

- The **Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention Board** awarded $30,000 to support our free summer camp next year and respite services for children and families. This program is funded in part by the Child Victims' Trust Fund.
- **Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky** awarded $26,000 over two years to implement the Nurturing Parenting Program, helping parents build skills that foster healthy, nurturing family relationships.
- The **Commonwealth Center for Fathers and Families** provided $9,000 for Father's Day events at the Montgomery County Regional Jail and Clark County Detention Center as well as Houses of Healing programming at the Clark County Regional Jail.
- **The Starbucks Foundation** provided $3,000 in flexible operating support, allowing us to direct funding where it is needed most.
- **Bluegrass REALTORS®** awarded $1,000 to provide enrichment activities and memorable experiences for the youth in our care.
- **WHAS Crusade for Children** awarded $5,000 to continue equine therapy services for residential youth into 2027.
- Thanks to an $8,636 grant from the **Kentucky Colonels**, we have purchased new dayroom furniture to create a more comfortable and welcoming space for our residential youth.

Five Weeks of Summer Fun

Gateway Children's Services' first five-week Summer Camp brought together 18 local children for a summer filled with friendship, learning, and fun. In partnership with First Church of God, campers enjoyed swimming, singing, chapel, crafts, playground adventures, and lessons about kindness.

Camp provided a safe and encouraging environment where children could build confidence and create lasting memories. Thank you to everyone who made our first summer camp such a success!



Literacy



Bright Beginnings provided 6,530 literacy tutoring sessions to **105 elementary students** across Bath and Montgomery counties.

Students gained an average of nearly one full grade level in reading, with some advancing up to two grade levels. Thank you, Steele Reese Foundation!

Father's Day



Thanks to the Commonwealth Center for Fathers and Families, youth with incarcerated dads were able to make Father's Day crafts to celebrate.

Generosity



A generous family brought so much joy to our children with Pokémon stuffed animals, games, and four Nintendo Switches, while also helping purchase new tires for our van and a parenting curriculum. Thank YOU!!

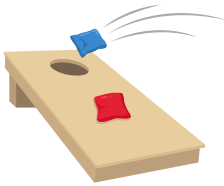
19th Annual Cornhole Tournament & Silent Auction



2026 Cornhole Tournament Winners

Downtown Mount Sterling was filled with cornhole players, spectators, and community supporters on Saturday, August 8, for Gateway Children's Services' 19th Annual Cornhole Tournament & Silent Auction, held during the Mt. Sterling Small Town America Festival.

Presented by **Save A Lot** Mt. Sterling and Owingsville, the tournament welcomed players from two states and more than 34 cities for an afternoon of friendly competition. Local and state elected officials helped kick off the event with an opening bag toss before teams began the double-elimination tournament.



<u>Tournament Results:</u>
1st Place: Todd & Matt Gammon
2nd Place: Will Wainscott & Jimmy McGaffin
3rd Place: Devin Workman & Devon Thompson
Money Shot Winner: Trent Smith

Proceeds from the tournament and online silent auction help Gateway provide residential care, therapeutic foster care, behavioral health services, and community-based support to children living in our community.

We are grateful to every player, donor, volunteer, sponsor, and community member who made the event possible. Thank you!!



From left to right: KY Senator Greg Elkins, County Judge Executive Chris Haddix, CEO Denise Spittler, KY Representative David Hale, and Mayor Al Botts.

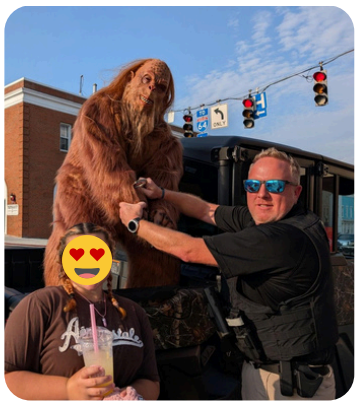


Gateway Children's Services
37 North Maysville Street
Mount Sterling, KY 40353
GatewayChildrensServices.org











Board of Directors

Jesse Hodgson, Chair
Jennifer Allen, Vice Chair
Cay Lane, Secretary
Will Clark, Treasurer
Judy Bramblet
Joe Zakrzewski
Emily Settle
Gus Thomas
Chris Haddix
Denise Spittler, CEO

Photo 1: Shoe Sensation continues to bless our youth with socks for every occasion. Photos 2 & 4: During First Friday, our youth met Blizzard, the Mount Sterling Dairy Queen dog, and Sasquatch! Photos 3 & 5: We beat the summer heat with big cups of cold water and enjoyed a summer picnic together.