

FALL 2019
HOLIDAY ISSUE



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GIVING CHILDREN A HOME SINCE 1849



Jess Amburgey Photography

You Don't Need Superpowers To Foster A Child

"I can't be a foster parent because I would get too attached. It would be too hard to see them leave."

"All foster children are emotionally disturbed and damaged beyond repair. There's nothing I can do to help them."

These are the common phrases we hear people say in response to asking them if they would consider fostering or adopting a child. Unfortunately, these misconceptions can hinder a child's chance at finding a home by preventing families from getting involved in the first place.

Last Spring, we interviewed St. Joe's adoptive parents, Julia and John Dennison (see front cover), who experienced similar fears before joining St. Joe's Therapeutic Foster Care and Adoption program. According to Julia, they didn't know a lot about foster care or adoption but always knew that they wanted to adopt. After talking with the St. Joe's recruitment team and going through the foster care training, they realized that children in the foster care system aren't "bad" or "difficult" kids but rather, grew up in environments where they learned to respond to situations in unhealthy ways. Those same children must then relearn new ways to cope and react which is no easy feat for any one person, let alone a child. John said it best when he explained that children "don't always learn like we want them to"; a truth that all families share regardless of their backgrounds.

That's why we take supporting our families in every aspect of their lives very seriously by providing them with needed items, individual and family therapy, as well as emotional support through visits, phone calls, family parties, and support groups. When asked why people should foster and adopt through St. Joe's, Julia and John stated (at the exact same time no less), "THE SUPPORT!" According to Julia and John, they continue to receive phone calls and emails from the St. Joe's team asking about the children and offering them opportunities to come visit. "You know you can still call [St. Joe's staff] and ask them to help out with anything and they'll still be like 'sure!' even though the kids are already adopted," stated John. That kind of dedication to our families coupled with genuine love and care for Kentucky's most vulnerable children is why St. Joseph Children's Home remains a top leader in the state for taking care of children in need.

Towards the end of our interview, Julia indicated that you don't need an "amazing superpower" to foster or adopt a child but rather, an open heart and willingness to welcome a child into your home. While this may be true, St. Joe's foster and adoptive parents like the Julia and John, will always be our personal heroes. ❤️

If you or someone you know is interested in foster care and adoption, please contact the St. Joe's team at info@sjkids.org or call 502-893-0241.





ST. JOE'S PICNIC CELEBRATES ANOTHER RECORD BREAKING YEAR!

Thanks to everyone's unwavering support, the 170th St. Joe's Picnic For The Kids was a HUGE success this year. A combination of great weather, an electrifying performance by The Crashers on Friday night, and the community's love for St. Joe's kids made attendance skyrocket! We also had more community sponsors than ever before with IBEW #369 and Kosair Charities as the presenting sponsors. Relive the magic of St. Joe's Picnic by visiting the picnic photo gallery at sjkids.org.

**HERE ARE SOME OF OUR
FAVORITE PICNIC MEMORIES!**

Everyone loved the NEW! Picnic Pub area where adult guests could sip on a cocktail while cooling off in Tito's air conditioned camper.

#love titos
Tito's
Handmade
VODKA
Welcome
to St. Joe's
Love,
#Titos
Tito

The chalkboard sign is set up on a grassy area. It features the Tito's logo and a bottle of Tito's vodka. The text on the sign is written in white chalk. In the background, there is an orange Tito's camper with people sitting and standing around it. A yellow and orange striped awning is visible above the camper.



A large crowd gathered around the stage Friday night to watch The Crashers rock out.



Air Hydro Power's Celebrity Dunk Tank stayed busy all weekend long and featured an array of special guests such as Miss Kentucky, Vince Tyra, and Wave 3's Ken Selvaggi.



Former St. Joe's resident was adopted three days prior to Picnic weekend AND volunteered with her forever family in the 4 in a Row booth.

SEE YOU NEXT YEAR ON AUGUST 7TH AND 8TH!

Have a fond picnic memory or story? We would love to hear them! Contact info@sjkids.org or call 502-893-0241.



Putting Families First

AN INTERVIEW WITH ST. JOE'S CEO, GRACE AKERS, BY CHRISTINA MILLER

Kentucky is currently ranked #1 in the nation and it isn't for basketball or bourbon but rather, something much more sinister: child maltreatment. In order to combat this alarming issue, the Kentucky legislature passed House Bill 1 (HB 1) in 2018 in an effort to improve Kentucky's child welfare system and the outcomes for the Commonwealth's most vulnerable children and families. Key components of this landmark legislation include the establishment of a statewide Child Welfare Oversight & Advisory Committee, increased attention to child welfare caseloads, improved quality and access to family preservation services for vulnerable families, increased supports for kin caregivers, and streamlined processes for prospective foster and adoptive parents. This past year, public and private child welfare leaders including St. Joe's CEO, Grace Akers, have been working together on how Kentucky can implement this piece of legislation in the most effective manner possible. See what Grace has to say about the Family First Act, HB 1, and its effects on Kentucky's children and families:

CM: What is the Family First Act and why is it important for people to know about it?

Grace: The "Family First Prevention Services Act," (otherwise known as the Family First Act) seeks to increase funding for preventative care services to children who are at risk of entering the foster care system due to factors like substance use and untreated mental illness being present in their families.

Although adoption does break the cycle of abuse, it does not mean that the trauma leaves the child forever. This legislation seeks to fund those after-care services for adoptive families as a way to help them navigate life after foster care. While there are still some unknowns about how and when states will implement the Family First Act, it is clear that Kentucky is ready to be one of the first in order to combat the crisis of child maltreatment in our state.

CM: So what does this mean for children and families in Kentucky?

Grace: It hopefully means that more families will gain access to services they need to help their family heal and thrive. It will also delay children from entering into residential treatment programs like St. Joe's by keeping children at home with families when it is safe to do so. Additionally, it seeks to shorten the amount of time children have to live in a residential treatment facility by ensuring that children are not in out-of-home placements due to inappropriate mental, physical, or behavioral health diagnoses.

CM: Wow! It sounds like it will have a pretty big impact across the Commonwealth. How will the Family First Act directly affect St. Joe's kids and families specifically?

Grace: It will allow St. Joe's to continue supporting our kids and families even after they leave here by providing them with more after-care services (ex. Family therapy). Although, many of our staff

remain connected to our alumni, the Family First Act will provide us with the resources we need to maintain those connections of support. We will also likely see a decrease in the number of referrals we get for children needing residential placement at St. Joe's as well as quicker turnover times of children leaving the residential treatment program and transitioning into homes.

CM: Maintaining those supports after St. Joe's is so important. But why should the state government invest money into preventative services like increased access to substance use treatment, mental health care, and in-home parenting skills training?

Grace: If we want to stop child abuse from happening, we have to get to the root of the problem which starts within the family. Factors like addiction and untreated mental illness are the most common causes of abuse. With the right treatment and early interventions, we will hopefully be able to break the cycle of abuse before the child is removed from the home.

CM: What is the biggest takeaway that people should know about this piece of legislation?

Grace: The biggest takeaway is that we, as a community, must continue to educate ourselves about what it means to be "child-focused," meaning that we place the child at the center of every decision that is made. It is the right of every child to have family and we will not quit until every child is safe and loved. ❤️

You can find more information about the Family First Act and House Bill 1 by visiting kyyouth.org.



**Residential Treatment
Therapeutic Foster Care & Adoption
Child Development Center**

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If you haven't already, make sure to subscribe to St. Joe's email list by contacting info@sjkids.org and follow #sjkids on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.



COMING UP THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

We have a lot to look forward to before the year ends and here are some of the highlights:

November is National Adoption Month!

St. Joe's maintains one of the highest rates of adoptions in the state as we work diligently to find children their forever families. Get educated about adoption in Kentucky by visiting sjkids.org or attend the Foster Care and Adoption Info Session on Tuesday, November 5th, 5:45pm, at St. Joseph Children's Home. RSVP to info@sjkids.org or call 502-893-0241.

St. Joe's Holiday Open House

We are opening up the historic Frankfort Avenue home built in 1885 to all of our wonderful friends and cordially invite you to come celebrate the beginning of the holiday season with St. Joe's! The open house will occur on Thursday, November 14, 2019, 5:30-7:30 pm and will feature a brief presentation by St. Joe's CEO, Grace Akers at 6pm as well as hors d'oeuvres & drinks prepared by St. Joe's world class chef, Finbar.

End-of-the-year Giving

Every year, we offer our greatest supporters the opportunity to give back to St. Joe's kids and families by making a monetary donation. This November, you will receive more information on how and why we hope you'll continue to invest in the futures of our children. No matter the size of the gift, your giving makes a real impact and we are so grateful for your support!

