



Quarterly Newsletter

ISSUE NO 18 | April 2025



Great things are happening in 2025! Spring has been busy with Easter Events, Child Abuse Prevention Month, Appreciation Events and more. Many events have been hosted and planned for the spring and summer to raise awareness and show appreciation to our foster and adoptive families across the state! The University of Kentucky College of Social Work hosted a statewide Appreciation Event for our 2024 Foster and Adoptive families of the year at the Louisville Zoo and regions are planning additional local events for all families in the region.

We have been working diligently with Kentucky Kids Belong, Angel Studios and local churches and organizations to present impact screenings of the movie *The Sound of Hope: The Story of Possum Trot*. To find out more about how to host an impact screening at your church or organization, contact your local Recruitment and Certification (R&C) Team.

As we quickly approach summer and busy social calendars, keep in mind that word of mouth from our foster/adoptive parents is our best recruitment tool. Ask your worker about foster parent recruitment cards or materials that you can pass out to friends, family and community members. Across all of Kentucky, homes are most needed for teens between the ages of 12-18, sibling groups, and minority homes. For more specific information about the needs for a particular region or county reach out to your worker or the diligent recruitment specialist at Rena.Hardin@ky.gov.

In This Issue

Family Spotlights

Mattingly, Ruiz & Shaffer

Pg. 2

KAPE Korner

Aiden, Mary Ann & Justin, Laurie, Marlette

Pg. 3

Regional Happenings

Easter Events, Child Abuse Prevention Month, etc.

Pg. 4-5

Parent Resources

Kentucky Rise, The Network, Kids Bowl Free!

Pg. 6

News from Central Office

Just In Time, Network Openings, Exceptional Alum of the Year Award

Pg. 7



CABINET FOR HEALTH
AND FAMILY SERVICES

FAMILY SPOTLIGHTS

Lara Mattingly, Southern Two Rivers Region Network President, was recently awarded the Linda Eisele Award for Advocacy at the 37th Annual Attach Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. This award is presented to passionate leaders who serve families and meet the needs of children they parent or assist in using Attachment Therapeutic Skills. Lara Mattingly and her husband, Nathan, and their four forever kiddos, have welcomed five kiddos in their home over the seven years of fostering. They are also very busy providing other valuable resources to foster families across Kentucky and specifically Two Rivers Region. They provide respite, babysitting and other vital resources that are exceptional and unique to our Region. Her goal has always been to train, recruit, support and assist in foster parent retention. It is Lara's passion to serve children coming into foster care any and every way she and her community can. Lara, because of her passion and her unique abilities to empower churches, groups, individuals, and her community, has developed so many initiatives that were never part of fostering before. Because of these initiatives she has retained many more foster families who would have otherwise stopped fostering leading to fewer disruptions. If the disruptions still occurred, Lara made sure they were done as correctly and timely and as least disruptive as possible. She began monthly meal drops, new placement assistance packets, foster closet supports, notes with coffee when children return home or to another placement, men's support groups, women's support groups, social media posts, foster family spotlights, mentor matching that goes far more in depth than any match could, foster parent fun celebrations that include social time between the parents, free food for the family and a fun time for our special needs children. Lara has weaved her way into over 15 churches from every denomination within the Two Rivers Region to empower the congregation to support foster families within their churches and outside of their church but community. She has been able to gain thousands of dollars worth of gift cards to feed the hard to place youth that are in non-traditional placements-office and foster house.



Jill Ruiz, of the Northern Bluegrass Service Region, joined the DCBS family as a basic foster home in September 2022. Since then, she has provided care for nine of Kentucky's foster children, many of whom would be considered difficult to place. Jill understands her role as a foster mother is to help guide children along side their biological parents. Jill has repeatedly stepped up to assist by offering her home and care to teens for short periods of time to keep them out of non-traditional placements, such as the office. Most recently, she opened her home to a teen mother and her child despite there being a language barrier due to all other options being exhausted. Although it was meant to be short-term, Jill maintained placement until the teen could successfully reunify with her parent.



Jill fosters with great dedication and gives her heart to the children placed in her home. She offers a safe and nurturing home to some of Kentucky's most vulnerable children all while continuing to effectively communicate with DCBS staff. Through her unwavering commitment, Jill has been a stable and loving home for numerous children and continues to open her door and heart to those in need. It has been an honor to work beside Jill as she navigates Kentucky's teenagers and there appears to be no end in sight! Way to go Jill, keep up the hard and impactful work!

Amy and Mark Shaffer, of the Northeastern Region, began their foster/adoptive parent journey with DCBS in 2008. Being a foster parent was Amy's childhood dream. Mark was drawn into his role of foster/adoptive parent when he and Amy married and together decided they would be foster/adoptive parents. Amy and Mark have fulfilled this role for nearly sixteen years!

Amy and Mark have fostered several sibling groups and adopted a sibling group of three. Of the fourteen or more kids that have been placed in their home, most all have become their unofficial "forever family" and return for family events and functions. Amy and Mark provide respite services as well.

The Shaffers have a strong support system of grandparents, extended family, and friends. They are constantly engaged in school activities, sports, band, choir and enjoy traveling to the beach, Gatlinburg, NASCAR sports and anything animatronic. Amy also serves as president of the Eastern Kentucky Caregivers Association.

The Shaffers desire for their children is to be fantastic as humans, to be a contributing member of society and most of all to be happy and confident. Thank you for your service Amy and Mark!



KAPE KORNER



Aiden (12/09) is a friendly teen once he gets to know you. He has good insight into his thoughts and feelings. Aiden is artistic and creative. Aiden can also be very caring towards others who he is close with. Aiden is smart and does well in school. Aiden is very talented on a skateboard. He enjoys drawing and listening to “chill music.” Aiden also likes anime books and would one day like to visit Japan. Aiden will do best with a family that can provide consistency in his life. Aiden needs a forever family that is nurturing, supportive, patient, and sensitive to his needs.

[Child Profile - AdoptUSKids](#)

Mary Ann (10/2013) is sweet girl who is kind, passionate, and will advocate for herself and her family. Mary Ann is quiet and introverted but will bust out of her shell by singing and dancing at church and school events. Mary Ann is shy and hesitant to try new things. She is very affectionate. She loves creative activities like drawing and painting. Mary Ann describes herself to be a good, caring, kind and loving child. She says she likes playing with dolls, playing with her siblings and eating Chick-Fil-A. She does not like spiders, raccoons, or math. Mary Ann has made great progress at school educationally and socially. Mary Ann needs a home that has experience with children and trauma and can give her lots of love and support.



Justin (11/2014) is funny, caring, passionate and helpful. He enjoys playing outside, spending time with his foster family and playing games on his tablet. His favorite foods are pizza, hamburgers, and fries. He is not a picky eater but does not like mushrooms. Justin is very energetic and outgoing. He wants to please everyone and doesn't know a stranger. He is very affectionate with people he knows. He is afraid of spiders and bugs. He loves Paw Patrol, vehicles, iSpy and similar games. He loves outdoor play and does not enjoy reading but he does enjoy Laura Numeroff books. Justin describes himself as being kind, nice and friendly. Justin loves school and has numerous friends. Justin would benefit from a home

[Child Profile - AdoptUSKids](#)



One of the first things you will notice about Laurie is her huge smile that can light up a room! Laurie has a great sense of humor. One of Laurie's strongest qualities is her empathy and care for others' well-being. Laurie can be shy upon first meeting but opens up when she gets comfortable with you. Laurie loves animals. Laurie is very affectionate towards people she likes. Laurie says that she would like a family who shows kindness, patience, and really cares. Laurie says that she has no preference in family structure. Hopefully with you/your family, Laurie will receive the love and attention she deserves!

[Child Profile - AdoptUSKids](#)

Marlette (5/2010) has a great sense of humor. He enjoys telling jokes and making people laugh. Marlette is very intelligent and is street smart. Marlette describes himself as a people person and enjoys hanging out with both peers and other adults. Marlette has great individual and group social skills. Marlette is great at communicating and talking with trusted adults. He is resilient, funny, a good friend and able to lighten the mood. He is kind to his friends. He strives to meet expectations and genuinely loves hearing that he is making good choices and progressing. Marlette likes soccer and has most recently talked about being a professional soccer player. Marlette likes sport or any outdoor activity. He also likes Disney movies and enjoys watching Luca. Marlette likes McDonalds, Chic-Fil-A and comfort food (macaroni and cheese and oatmeal). Marlette also enjoys rap music and has expressed interest in being a rapper. Marlette likes animals and he wants a family that has pets. He has always wanted to have a dog. Marlette enjoys playing video games and playing basketball as well. He enjoys going to school but his favorite subject in school is English. He enjoys trips to the library to check out books. He enjoys trips to the park to run around and play with his friends. He wants a family who is active that will take him places like Sky Zone, Dave & Buster's, and Main Event to enjoy family time. He wants to try having family game nights, family vacations, or family traditions because he knows they will be fun. He's excited to try so many new things with his future adopted family. He does not mind being in the country or the city because he likes them both. Marlette does well with a mix of extracurricular activities and down time. Marlette also likes to read and listen to music to help relax before bed. Marlette is ready to be a part of a loving family. Marlette gives the best hugs that will remind you of hugging a teddy bear. When he's happy or excited he has the biggest and the brightest smile. He wants to be adopted and make good connection with adults who is willing to stick around. Marlette is so excited about what his future family looks like. Marlette has a lot going for him the only thing he needs is a permeant family.

[Child Profile - AdoptUSKids](#)



REGIONAL HAPPENINGS

The Cumberland Region held its Foster Parent Easter Egg Hunt at the London Regional Office. Approximately 25 foster parents and 50 foster youth attended the event. Families were able to participate in an easter egg hunt, inflatables, food and more!



Basket raffle winner, Debra Gabbard, with R&C worker, Brandy Baldwin



Southern Bluegrass DCBS hosted the Third Annual "You've Been Egged" Event for their foster homes. Forty-three homes were "egged" as workers from across the region hid eggs in their yards to spread some joy this spring. Families had a blast surprising their children with this experience and of course the teens with some goodies of their own!



Easter Event in Mason County- Northeastern Region



Southern Bluegrass Foster Parent, Tori Robbins, kicked off Child Abuse Prevention Month with an interview on ABC. She shared why child abuse prevention awareness was so important and her story of becoming a foster parent.



REGIONAL HAPPENINGS (Continued)

Northeastern Region participated in many events over the past few months including the Child Abuse Prevention Event, Morehead Pride Festival, The Sound of Hope: The Story of Possum Trot screening, and the Be Heroes Conference.



Northern Bluegrass Region Network Team/FAPA of NKY team in Frankfort for Pinwheels for Prevention



Northern Bluegrass Region Foster/Adoptive/Kinship Family Swap & Shop
We were open for 3 hours and served 77 kids!



PARENT RESOURCES



KYRISE upcoming events and resources! Visit kyrise.ky.gov for more information and to register.

Fall 2025

EARN AND LEARN

Earn up to \$350 a week to complete a short-term training program!

No HS Diploma? No Problem! Earn while you pursue your GED.

Certificates available in a variety of fields, including:

- *Health Care
- *Construction
- *Business and IT
- *Advanced Manufacturing

Current/Former Foster Youth 18 - 22
Adopted from foster care at 16 or older

Register at kyrise.ky.gov
Registration opens May 1st

For more information, email: lorraine.wilbur@ky.gov

Made with PosterMyWall.com

The Annual KY Foster & Adoptive Parent Training Support Network Conference was held at Barren River State Park Resort in April.



Kids Bowl Free **EVERY DAY, ALL Summer Long!**

Unlock a Summer of Fun, Laughter, and Lasting Memories - All at No Cost

- ✓ **2 Free Games Every Day** - Enjoy a daily dose of fun and excitement.
- ✓ **Family-Friendly Activity** - Perfect for making memories together.
- ✓ **Over 1,300 Locations** - Find a bowling center near you!


[➔ Find A Kids Bowl Free Center Near You](#)

- ✓ **Join over 40 million families** who've made Kids Bowl Free their summer tradition!

www.kidsbowlfree.com

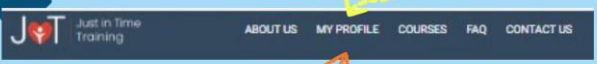
NEWS FROM CENTRAL OFFICE

DID YOU KNOW




Just in Time Training KENTUCKY

The Just In Time website saves all training certificates under My Profile




Training cannot be repeated on the website. Families can check their profile prior to enrolling in the course to check the status of their trainings.


Just In Time offers live webinars and multiple training opportunities each month for credit. Sign up on the calendar



- To ensure training credit is transferred into the training record, each individual must have their own account using the same email they use in the TRIS system.
- While we are transitioning to the new training recording system, please understand that it may take 7-14 business days to reflect in the training record. Families are encouraged to take training earlier than June 10th, 2025 when the systems are switching over to avoid delays.

Email: jitsupport@usf.edu
Or
jenniferr.barr@ky.gov

 www.jitkentucky.org



WE ARE LOOKING FOR YOU!

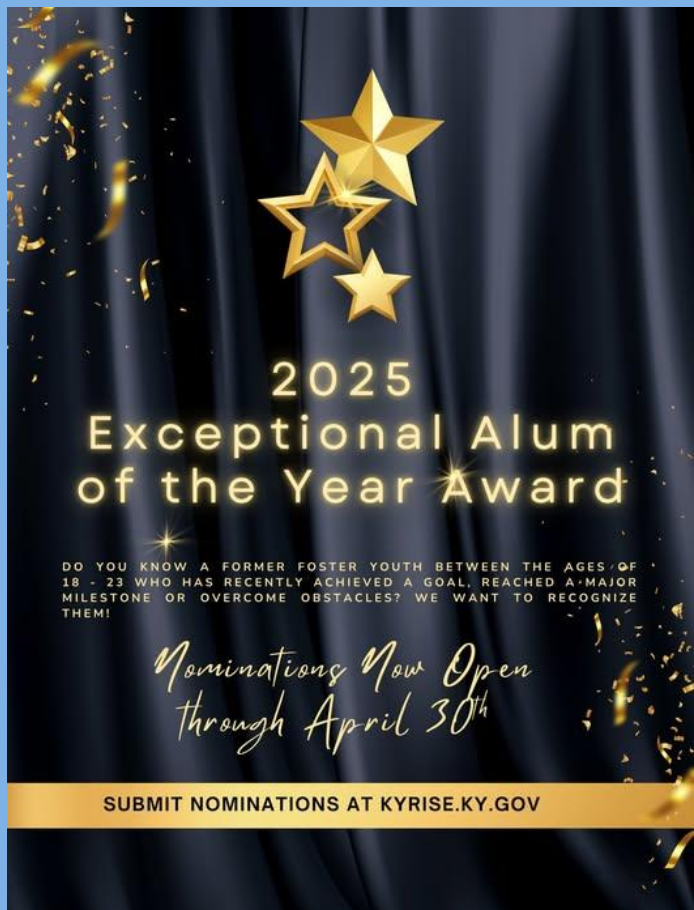
THE NETWORK IS NOW HIRING EXPERIENCED FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENTS.

WE ARE ESPECIALLY SEEKING REPRESENTATION IN: EAST CUMBERLAND, UPPER EASTERN MOUNTAINS, WEST LAKES, NORTHEASTERN, LOWER NORTHERN BLUEGRASS, SOUTHERN BLUEGRASS, AND UPPER TWO RIVERS.

APPLY NOW!







2025 Exceptional Alum of the Year Award

DO YOU KNOW A FORMER FOSTER YOUTH BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18 - 23 WHO HAS RECENTLY ACHIEVED A GOAL, REACHED A MAJOR MILESTONE OR OVERCOME OBSTACLES? WE WANT TO RECOGNIZE THEM!

*Nominations Now Open
through April 30th*

SUBMIT NOMINATIONS AT KYRISE.KY.GOV