SUNSHINE

THE MAGAZINE OF METHODIST CHILDREN'S HOME | SUMMER 2026



PATHWAY TO *Promise*

Preparing Young People for Independence

Methodist Children's Home
Offering Hope Since 1890

Join us for the

2026 Willson-Johnson Lecture Series



Featuring

Rob Kenney

Creator of the "Dad, How Do I?" YouTube Channel

Rob Kenney launched his "Dad, How Do I?" YouTube channel in April 2020. He wanted to help people learn basic life skills and offer encouragement and guidance through life's challenges.

The channel grew to more than 1 million subscribers in 1½ months. Six years later, Rob has written a book and built a community of more than 7 million followers across social media, where he is known worldwide as the "Internet's Dad."

The seventh of eight children, Rob went to live with an older brother at age 14 when his family situation changed. Those experiences shaped his desire to encourage others.

Through his videos, speaking engagements and faith-based content, Rob shares practical wisdom, personal stories and encouragement to help people understand their past does not have to define their future.

FREE ADMISSION

October 14, 2026
2:00 - 3:30 PM

In-Person & Livestream

Harrell Memorial Chapel on the Waco Campus

1111 Herring Avenue
Waco, TX 76711

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PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE



Trey Oakley
President and CEO

As I reflect on the past few months at Methodist Children's Home, I am reminded that creating lasting change takes both vision for the future and a commitment to meeting children, youth and families where they are today. At MCH, we are grateful to be part of a community that believes every young person deserves the opportunity to discover their potential and build a bright future.

In this issue of Sunshine, we are excited to share about Pathway to Promise, an ambitious campaign that will help expand and strengthen our Independent Living Program while also making possible the construction of an innovative, trauma-informed school on our Waco campus. For many young people, turning 18 does not mean they are suddenly ready to navigate adulthood on their own. Through safe housing, education, employment support, life-skills development and caring relationships, MCH walks alongside young adults as they take those next steps toward independence. At the same time, the new school will create an educational environment designed to meet the unique needs of the young people in our care, helping them build the skills and confidence they need to thrive. Together, these projects represent an investment in the future of the children and young adults we serve.

You will also see how MCH continues to make summer a season of growth, connection and discovery. From group therapy sessions that give youth new opportunities to build trust and relationships, to summer camp, mission trips, field trips and visits from guest speakers, our summer programming is designed to help young people experience new things while building community and growing in confidence.

This issue also introduces Dr. Carolin Sinkfield as the new chair of the MCH Board of Directors. A lifelong educator, advocate and servant leader, Dr. Sinkfield brings more than five decades of experience in education, nonprofit governance and community service to this important role. Her service represents the continued strength of a community that believes deeply in the mission of MCH and the future of children, youth and families.

As always, you will also learn more about individuals whose stories reflect the heart of our work. These stories remind us that transformation rarely happens all at once. It happens through relationships, opportunities and people who are willing to walk alongside one another.

And please save the date of October 14 to join us in Waco or online, when we welcome Rob Kenney, known for his popular "Dad, How Do I?" videos, for the 2026 Willson-Johnson Lecture.

Thank you for being part of the MCH family. Your prayers, generosity and support make it possible for us to continue creating pathways of hope for those we serve. Together, we are equipping children, youth and families to flourish through Christ-centered relationships, services and support.

MCH CORE VALUES



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ONE MCH

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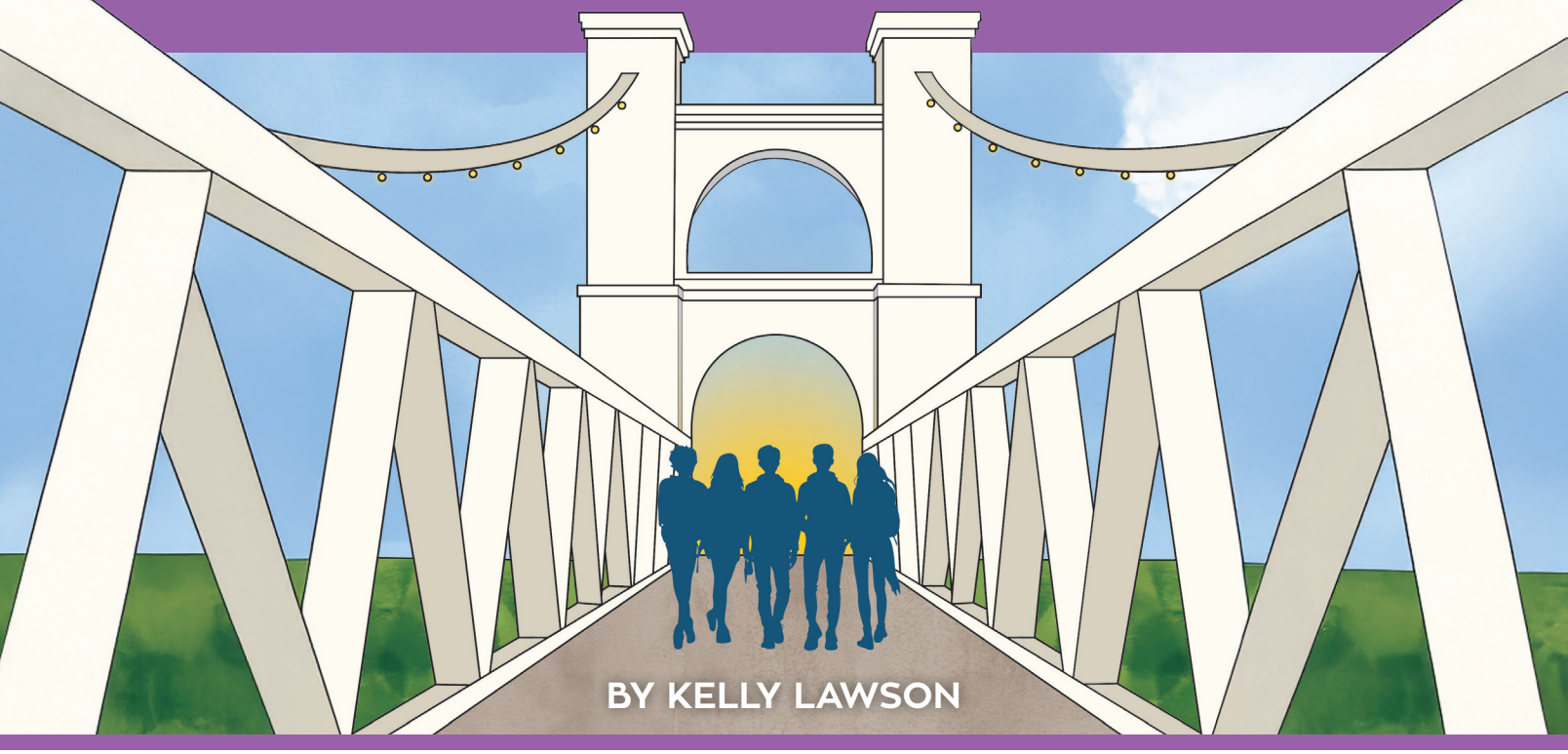
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TBRI TRAUMA BASED

Methodist Ministries NETWORK

PATHWAY TO *Promise*

Preparing Young People for Independence



BY KELLY LAWSON

Pathway to Promise is creating spaces where young people can discover hope, healing and a life of *flourishing*.

Every story at Methodist Children's Home (MCH) begins differently.

Some young people arrive having experienced instability or hardship that has interrupted nearly every part of life, from friendships to school to family. Others come carrying grief that has followed them for years. Some have learned, far too early, that the world can be difficult.

Yet somewhere along the way, for children, youth and families in MCH care, transformation happens.

It may happen in a classroom where a teacher helps a student believe they can succeed. It may happen during a conversation with a case manager who encourages and affirms a young person and their gifts. It may happen the first time a young adult unlocks the door to an apartment they can call their own.

For most, healing rarely happens in a single moment, but rather, over time, through relationships, and the gift of a supportive community.

That has been true throughout Methodist Children's Home's history. For more than 136 years, MCH has walked beside children, youth and families, offering hope through Christ-centered relationships, services and support. Every generation has brought new challenges, and every generation has called MCH to respond in new ways to ensure those in care are equipped for a lifetime of success.

Today, that response is the **Pathway to Promise** campaign.

Inspired by the words of Psalm 16, "You make known to me the path of life," the campaign reflects a simple but powerful belief that every young person deserves a path forward. One that is rooted in God's promises, and a path that leads them toward purpose, confidence and experiencing life to the fullest.

This vision is taking shape through **two transformational projects**: an innovative new trauma-informed school on the Waco campus and a new state-of-the-art independent living residence for young adults ages 18 to 26.

Together, these two planned facilities tell one story.

A Place to *Learn*

Education changes lives and opens doors, but for many young people who have experienced trauma, school can be challenging, and learning is anything but simple.

Research shows that chronic stress and trauma affect memory, concentration and emotional regulation, making academic success much harder to achieve. Across Texas, nearly half of students in foster care attend multiple schools in a single year, and only 61 percent graduate from high school, compared with 90 percent of students statewide. Fewer than one in 10 complete a postsecondary degree.

For more than two decades, MCH has partnered with the University of Texas-University Charter School System to provide a different kind of educational experience through small class sizes, individualized instruction, trauma-informed practices, and caring teachers who recognize that before students can fully learn, they often need the opportunity to heal.

Since opening in 2003, the charter school on the MCH Waco residential campus has celebrated 439 graduates. The day student program has maintained a 100 percent graduation rate since launching in 2012, giving students from the larger Waco community access to the same supportive educational environment as MCH residents.

Over time, the need has outgrown the school space.

The new 31,000-square-foot academic center has an overall project cost of $18 million and will include classrooms, science and computer labs, a sensory room, cafeteria and health center that are intentionally designed to meet the needs of students who have experienced trauma. Located on the Waco campus near the gym and Embry Vocational Building, the new school will create a more connected campus where academic, vocational and extracurricular opportunities work together.

"MCH is committed to educational excellence," said Trey Oakley, president and CEO. "This new school will give our youth the environment and encouragement they need to flourish."



Rendering of the planned new school on the Methodist Children's Home Waco campus. Construction is anticipated to begin within the next three to five years.

Damien: A Future in *Motion*

Just a few months ago, Damien walked across the stage to receive his diploma from the University of Texas-University Charter School on the MCH Waco residential campus. This fall, he began his first semester at McLennan Community College, taking the next step toward a career in exercise science with hopes of one day coaching athletes.

He's excited about college and the process of getting there.

After purchasing an e-bike, Damien now rides to work at a local restaurant and to the gym while saving money to buy his first car.

"Right now, I'm just focused on my grades," he said. "I'm excited for college."

That sense of purpose is a long way from where he started.

"Life was full of chaos," Damien said. "I never knew what was coming next. But when I came to MCH, and when I enrolled



in the charter school on campus, my life became stable and secure. I didn't have to worry about what I was going to eat or where I was going to sleep. I knew if I failed, it was a safe place where I could get back up, see where I went wrong and learn from those mistakes."

He points to one conversation with his home parent, Scott, as the turning point.

"He introduced me to Jesus," Damien said. "That was probably the best thing I've experienced."

As Damien prepares for college, MCH staff continue helping Damien navigate financial aid, registration and the transition to independent living. Damien lives in one of the Waco campus residential homes designated for young adults pursuing independence through the Independent Living Program (ILP).

Looking ahead, Damien admits he doesn't know exactly what the future holds, but that uncertainty no longer feels intimidating.

"I'm excited for what God has in store for me," he said. "I'm excited for the unknown."

A Place to *Launch*

Graduation is an exciting milestone and the beginning of greater independence supported by family, mentors and a place to come home.

For many youth aging out of foster care, that same milestone comes with a different reality.

Each year, approximately 1,200 young people age out of foster care in Texas. Many suddenly face adulthood without stable housing, financial support or trusted adults to help navigate life's biggest decisions. Nationally, between 20 percent and 30 percent of those who age out of foster care in Texas experience homelessness within 18 months. More than half become unemployed, and one in four will experience incarceration within two years.

MCH has worked to change those outcomes through Transition Services and the Independent Living Program.

Through this program, young adults receive life-skills coaching, educational support, career guidance, counseling, spiritual encouragement and stable housing. Most importantly, they remain connected to a loving, supportive community.

Since the program's inception 20 years ago, 86 percent of participants completed the program as planned, while 94 percent made measurable progress toward independent living skills. Last year alone, 43 young adults pursued advanced education with support from MCH endowed scholarships.

The new 22-unit independent living residence will allow that impact to grow.

Located adjacent to the MCH Family Outreach Center in Waco at 620 N. Fifth St., the residence has a total project cost of $7.5 million and will provide individual bedrooms, shared community spaces and on-site support while connecting residents to employment resources, educational opportunities and continued mentoring. MCH will break ground on the independent living residence this fall, with residents occupying the space beginning in January 2028.

"This residence will be more than a place to live," Oakley said. "It will be a community where young people find belonging, build confidence and discover hope for the future."



Kiki: Growing into *Herself*

Not long ago, Kiki says she was quick to react.

"I used to have a really bad attitude," she admitted with a laugh. "I didn't know how to deal with things that made me upset, so I just took it out on everybody."

Today, the young woman who once struggled to manage her emotions is balancing college classes at McLennan Community College, a recent promotion to manager at her workplace, and life in her own apartment at Clay Commons, an off-campus apartment complex that is part of the MCH Independent Living Program. Kiki is studying architecture with plans to pursue a career in interior design, a natural fit for someone who has always loved designing and building spaces.

This growth certainly did not happen overnight.

After Kiki moved from residential group care and the charter school on the Waco campus and into the Independent Living Program, she began seeing herself and her future differently.

"I realized I didn't have to die on every hill," she said. "I started focusing on what was really important instead of letting everything get to me."

> "Just knowing they're there if I need them has made a big difference. They've helped me learn **how to do life**."

That new perspective has shaped the way Kiki approaches work, school and relationships. It has also given her the confidence to tackle adulthood, from learning to cook and manage a budget to advocating for herself at work.

"I've come a long way," she said.

Kiki credits MCH with giving her both the support and the opportunity to grow.

"Just knowing they're there if I need them has made a big difference," she said. "They've helped me learn how to do life."

Kiki knows there will still be challenges ahead, but she's no longer anxious about them. Instead, she's embracing them one step at a time, building the confidence and resilience to make a future her own.

***Opposite Page:** Rendering of the new 22-unit independent living residence, located adjacent to the MCH Family Outreach Center at 524 W. Waco Drive in Waco. Construction is set to begin in fall 2026, with occupancy planned for early 2028.*



One *Vision*

Although the Pathway to Promise campaign includes two different projects, a school and an independent living residence, they share one purpose — giving young people paths toward bright futures. Together, they create a continuum of care that reflects a commitment to supporting young people through some of life's most pivotal moments.

"We are preparing young people to thrive, to become confident, capable adults who believe their lives have meaning and purpose," said Traci Wagner, vice president for programs.

An *Invitation*

As Methodist Children's Home continues its mission of equipping children, youth and families to flourish, these new facilities will help ensure future generations experience the same hope, healing and opportunity that have defined this ministry for more than a century.

"The Pathway to Promise campaign is an opportunity to make a lasting investment in the places where future generations will learn, heal, grow and prepare for lives of flourishing," said Lyle Mason, vice president for advancement.

The psalmist reminds us that God "makes known to me the path of life."

Through the generosity of friends and supporters, Methodist Children's Home has the privilege of helping young people find that path, and walking beside them every step of the way. MCH invites all to join and learn more about the Pathway to Promise campaign, including ways to financially support and invest in this project at ***MCH.org/Pathway***.

Floor plans for the new independent living residence in Waco and school planned for the MCH Waco campus, illustrating the vision for these future spaces.

The University of Texas Charter School

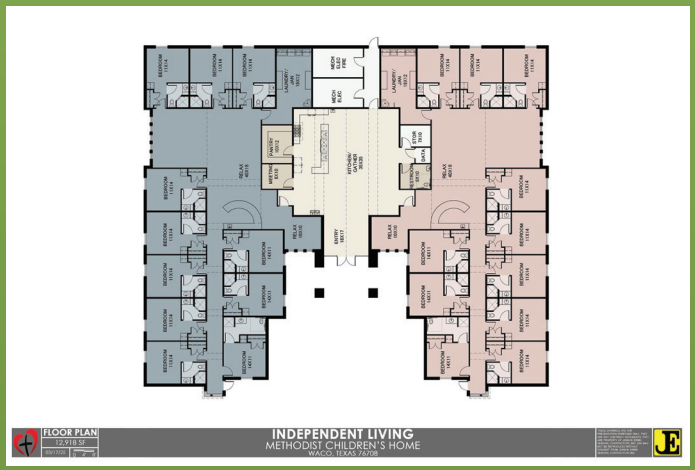


First Floor



Second Floor

Independent Living Residence



Congratulations CLASS OF 2026!















Seniors graduating from the University of Texas–University Charter School on the MCH Waco campus were celebrated by family, friends and staff during commencement on Friday, May 22. Before the ceremony, the 18 seniors participated in the traditional senior walk through the school.



TYLER & ABRAHAM

Finding Family

By Sarah Bey

Like most brothers, Abraham and Tyler crack jokes about each other and are quick to poke fun.

"We're both big, but Tyler is bigger," Abraham joked. "I used to be taller than Abraham but now he's taller than me."

"And stronger," Tyler quipped.

The 14-year-old Hawaiian twins were born a minute apart and have stuck by each other's side ever since.

"When we first got to Methodist Children's Home, Tyler always told me to ask for things he wanted or if he needed something, to ask the staff for him," older brother Abraham said. "He's still working on talking to more people when we go out in public."

MCH home parent Monique Walls reflected on how both boys have grown while in her and her husband's care.

"They have grown socially, communication-wise," she said. "My husband and I started at MCH around the same time Abraham and Tyler came. I remember going on outings and crowds would make Tyler nervous. He would say, 'Too many people.' But over the last couple of years, Tyler has grown out of his shy shell."

Tyler admits he also had an issue managing his anger when he became a resident at MCH in the summer of 2024. Since then, he has learned how to communicate his needs and channel his energy in positive ways through sports.

"I'm looking forward to getting my state track championship ring in the coming months," Tyler said. "I was the only eighth grader who threw shotput and discus at the state meet last season.

"I have also been enjoying our team workouts this summer as we get ready for football season," he said. "I am the second strongest student-athlete now at MCH. I can deadlift 475 pounds."

Abraham will join Tyler on the line this fall. When they aren't at football practice or enjoying fun trips to museums, restaurants and water parks, Abraham likes to dig into his creative side.

"I like to draw, especially magical creatures and dragons," he said. "I created an anime that includes characters based on people here at MCH. I feel I have grown my imagination and creativity."

Abraham and Tyler's home parents and case manager tailor their care to each child. For Abraham, staff help him with his reading and other important life skills.

"They help me keep my room clean," he said. "I like to have all of my stuff out though because it reminds me I'm home."

The twins shared they have found safety, care, love, community and Jesus in their time so far at MCH.

"This is our family," Abraham said. "Ms. Mo is like our mom, Mr. Kev (Monique's husband) is like our dad, and our case manager, Ms. Brittanie, is like our grandma … or she could be like our sister."

Tyler added, "The staff are our caretakers, and we are thankful for them. I know sometimes when kids are placed in Child Protective Services, they might get separated from their siblings and it can be a lot harder. Me and Abraham have always been together, and we have found more family and a safe, peaceful place."

Case manager Brittanie Durden continues to support the boys' efforts toward an adoption placement.

"That is my greatest hope — that they find an adoptive family and are able to accomplish their other goals like attending public school and enjoying the different activities life has to offer," Brittanie said. "Abraham and Tyler are really friendly, kind and thoughtful. They have learned how to advocate for themselves and are outgoing."

As for their other hopes, Abraham and Tyler have similar goals.

"We both want to go skydiving," Tyler said. "I want to go to every country and look around, specifically to Greenland or Iceland. After high school, I think I'll go to college and maybe pursue engineering or welding."

For Abraham, he hopes to continue developing his anime and drawing skills and go on some adventures of his own.

"I want to go to every place where you can fish and cook those fish," he said. "I want to learn how to cook more things I like. I want to learn how to drive."

As the twins make their way through the school year, they know they can count on the support of their MCH staff.

"They are our family," Abraham said. "I know we'll be able to accomplish things because of the love, care and guidance me and my brother continue to receive from them."

Dr. Carolin Sinkfield Elected MCH Board Chair

BY KELLY LAWSON



Dr. Carolin Sinkfield of New Braunfels, Texas, has been elected chairperson of the Board of Methodist Children's Home (MCH), a 136-year-old social service ministry serving children, youth and families across Texas and New Mexico.

Sinkfield has served on the MCH board of directors since 2021. Her term as chairperson began in June. She succeeds Les Leskoven of Corsicana, Texas, whose leadership helped guide the ministry through a season of growth and strategic advancement.

A lifelong educator, advocate and servant leader, Sinkfield brings more than five decades of experience in education, nonprofit governance and community service to the role. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Education from Texas State University, a Master of Education from Texas Tech University and a Doctor of Philosophy in Organizational Leadership from the University of the Incarnate Word.

Throughout her distinguished career, Sinkfield served as a special education teacher, vision specialist and program coordinator before joining higher education, where she taught and mentored future educators as a faculty member at Texas A&M University-San Antonio, the University of Texas at San Antonio and Wayland Baptist University. Her professional work has focused on supporting vulnerable learners, advancing educational equity and preparing leaders to serve diverse communities.

In addition to her service on the MCH board, Sinkfield has held numerous leadership roles with faith-based and nonprofit organizations, including Women's Global Connection, Project Transformation Rio Texas, the San Antonio Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen Inc., and St. Paul United Methodist Church, where she serves as president of the Usher Board.

"I am humbled as I consider it a tremendous honor to serve as chairperson of the Board of Methodist Children's Home," Sinkfield said. "Throughout my years on the board, I have witnessed the life-changing impact of this ministry on children, youth and families. The mission of MCH aligns deeply with my own calling to serve others. I look forward to working alongside my fellow Board members, leadership team and staff as we continue empowering those we serve to experience life to the fullest."

Dr. Sinkfield embodies the values that define Methodist Children's Home, said Trey Oakley, president and CEO of MCH. "Her lifelong commitment to education, faith and service, coupled with her thoughtful leadership and passion for helping others thrive, make her exceptionally well-suited to lead our board. We are grateful for her willingness to serve and excited for the future of MCH under her leadership."

Since joining the board, Sinkfield has been a dedicated advocate for MCH. Her experience in governance, leadership development and community engagement has strengthened the board's work and helped advance the organization's vision for serving children, youth and families across its service area.

"As I step into this role, I am mindful of the faithful leaders who have come before me and the generations of children whose lives have been transformed through this ministry," Sinkfield said. "My hope is that we will continue to build on that legacy while remaining responsive to the diverse needs of today's children, youth and families. Together, we can ensure Methodist Children's Home continues to be a place of hope and healing for generations to come."

SUMMER PROGRAMMING
Offers Recreation & Life Skills

By Ken Sury

Summer at Methodist Children's Home is much more than a season on the calendar.

"It is an opportunity to create experiences that help children, youth and families heal, grow and thrive," said Traci Wagner, vice president for programs. "Across each campus, outreach office and program, our teams intentionally provide opportunities for learning, recreation, relationship-building and skill development that reinforce the work happening every day throughout the year."

The programs support social and emotional well-being, added Marissa Smith, assistant vice president for programs, while allowing the residents to enjoy themselves during the summer break.

"I'm incredibly proud of our staff for the creativity and intentionality they brought to this summer's programming," Smith said, "whether it was attending a concert with Spiritual Life, spending a day boating on a lake in East Texas, Boys Ranch youth increasing life skills at a local tire shop, group therapy opportunities at both campuses, and Family Outreach offices offering family activities at local parks and movie nights at the local theater."

No matter the location, activities and opportunities were plentiful across MCH.

YOUTH PROGRAMS

Dorothy Phillips, senior director for programs on the Waco campus, said the summer was filled with learning opportunities, adventures and memorable experiences for MCH youth.

"Throughout our summer programming, we welcomed guest speakers who led engaging discussions on addiction recovery, healthy coping skills and financial literacy," Phillips said. "These sessions provided valuable life lessons and encouraged youth to make positive choices for their future."

Each week of summer camp ended with a Friday fun day. Youth and staff traveled to Six Flags Over Texas, Skiin' with the Galilean water activities at Lake Athens, Epic Waters, Austin's Park, and Hawaiian Falls in Mansfield. They also enjoyed a fun-filled Water Day at the football field on the MCH Waco campus, followed by a hot dog dinner that evening.

Afternoon summer clubs offered youth opportunities to explore new interests and develop life skills. Offerings included athletics, cooking and grilling, providing hands-on experiences that promote teamwork, responsibility and independence, Phillips said.

Giving back to others was also an important part of the summer, she said. Youth participated in community service projects, allowing them to make a positive impact while learning the value of service and compassion.

Several youth attended Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center, where they experienced a Christian retreat focused on faith, fellowship and personal growth.

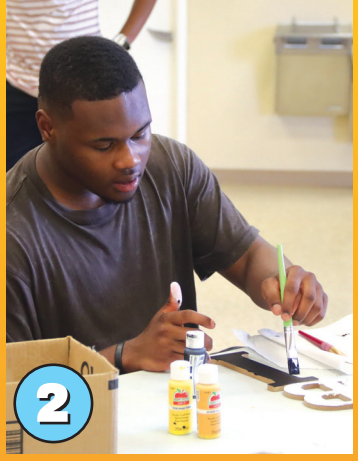
Another important tradition each summer is U.M. Army, a Christ-centered mission experience where youth focus on serving communities by meeting home repair and maintenance needs for low-income, elderly and disabled homeowners who are physically or financially unable to make needed repairs themselves.

"U.M. Army is a fantastic way for our students to take a week and make a significant difference in a community and to their own spiritual well-being," said Ron Britton, spiritual life minister. "This year we were able to build 18 wheelchair ramps for families in need who would not have been able to afford one on their own. With the focus on service and spiritual growth, it really is a fantastic week for everyone involved, myself included!"

MCH student Caden attended the six-day mission trip, and described it as an eye-opening experience as he saw firsthand people who were struggling financially and in need of the help the U.M. Army provided.

"It definitely strengthened my faith," Caden said, adding that they were split into four-person teams with an adult and spent about six hours each day building the ramps. "It was an awesome experience."













GROUP THERAPY

"One of the highlights of this summer was the introduction of group therapy sessions for all youth," Phillips said. "Led by our therapists and supported by residential staff and case managers, these sessions gave youth the opportunity to build relationships with their therapists in a comfortable group setting. This approach has helped foster trust and will make individual counseling sessions feel more familiar and supportive."

Elissa Riach, senior director for treatment services, said the effort brought together therapists from across MCH to develop a curriculum specifically for the summer.

"This was a real team effort reaching across many different parts of MCH residential and outreach teams," Riach said. "Residential therapists worked together with outreach therapists to brainstorm and develop a five-week group therapy curriculum."

The team had four main goals in initiating group therapy, she said. Those were:

1. Provide therapeutic support to residents on campus in a way that fosters connection with their peers and staff.
2. Bring unity to the Waco campus by including youth in all homes in the same weekly conversation and curriculum.
3. Increase collaboration and teamwork across clinical therapists, case managers and residential staff.
4. Include parents and caregivers by sending them a caregiver resource informing them of the group therapy curriculum and equipping them with questions to ask their children on phone calls or during home visits.

The five-week curriculum was completed with all the homes on campus in July.

"We found immediate wins with therapists being able to connect with a higher quantity of youth, increasing positive peer relationships, and effective teamwork and connection between therapists and residential staff," Riach said.

(Continued on next page)

***1.)** Children of all ages enjoyed the Family Outreach back-to-school event in Waco at Pecan Bottoms Park. **2.)** Youth at the Boys Ranch do a painting project as a summer activity. **3.)** Aid'Ron and Deja show their approval for the inflatable slide during Water Day on MCH Waco campus. **4.)** Skyler tries on a Bellmead Fire Department helmet during a Boys Ranch visit to the station. **5.)** Youth take part in praise music during summer camp at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center. **6.)** Zipping through the go-kart course was one of the fun activities for youth at Austin's Park.*







***1.)** Face painting was among the activities at Waco Family Outreach's back-to-school event. **2.)** MCH Family Outreach in El Paso held a Connected Classrooms event during the summer. **3.)** These siblings are all smiles during Killeen Family Outreach's summer event at Urban Air Trampoline Park for Caregiver Empowerment Group (CEG) families.*

"With this being our first run of group therapy, we had a few bumps along the way and learned how we will adjust and strengthen next summer. We are taking feedback from our residents and incorporating this into how we continue to plan, which says a lot about MCH and our teams providing excellent trauma-informed care."

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Spiritual Life had a busy summer as well, continuing its traditional summer opportunities with a mission trip with U.M. Army and camp weeks at Glen Lake Camp & Retreat Center.

"Those continue to be meaningful experiences for many of our youth," said Kimberly Clark, director of Spiritual Life.

"In addition, we intentionally created space for community, discipleship and rest throughout the summer. Rather than filling every week with programming, we wanted to offer consistent opportunities for connection while recognizing that summer has a different rhythm."

Spiritual Life offered monthly Independent Living Program (ILP) outings focused on fellowship and building community for young adults in the program; monthly community opportunities for homes to participate in worship with local faith communities; and one community event each month that encouraged spiritual growth and shared experiences.

In June, Spiritual Life hosted an evening devotional at the prayer labyrinth on the Waco campus. During July, students were taken to the Selah concert at Baylor University, and in August a back-to-school picnic was held on campus following worship.

"Our hope is the summer feels both restful and intentional," Clark said. "We want to provide opportunities for students to deepen relationships with one another, encounter God in different settings, and experience joy and adventure together."

BOYS RANCH

Tony Stewart, senior director for programs at the MCH Boys Ranch, said this summer was structured with activities incorporated into each day of its programming.

"In addition to staff-led activities, we involved the youth in selecting many of the activities based on their interests, which helped increase engagement, ownership and participation," he said.

"Each activity was designed to include a life skills component while reinforcing values such as teamwork, respect, effective communication, dedication, and the principles of Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI)."

The boys had numerous recreational opportunities at the ranch, but staff members wanted to create other meaningful experiences, such as field trips to local businesses like Discount Tire, or to the Bellmead Fire Department, where they viewed a fire truck and some of the everyday tools used by firefighters.

"These experiences allowed them to observe how the world operates, interact appropriately within the community, and better understand how they fit into the world around them," Stewart said. "By connecting recreation with practical life experiences, we aimed to help the youth build confidence, strengthen social skills, and prepare for greater independence."









FAMILY OUTREACH

Summer can bring a different set of opportunities and challenges for the families served through MCH Family Outreach.

"While school may be out, our commitment to children and families remains constant," said Marisol Gomez, director of MCH Family Outreach Corpus Christi. "Our team understands that summer often means more children at home, increased demands on parents and caregivers, changes in routines, and heightened concerns around food insecurity. Because of this, we intentionally adjust how we show up for families during the summer months."

Gomez said one of the highlights of this summer were "No Screen Time" summer baskets that were shared with families.

"These baskets were filled with thoughtful items designed to help families create connections and fun experiences together without relying on electronics," she said. "Families received sidewalk chalk, bubbles, beach balls, board games, snacks, crayons and coloring books, reading books, and other activities that encourage creativity, family engagement and healthy development.

"These simple resources can make a significant difference for parents looking for affordable ways to keep children active and engaged throughout the summer."

Gomez added her team keeps a pulse on free and low-cost community activities happening across the Coastal Bend and shares those opportunities with families. "Whether it's community events, library programs, family festivals or recreational activities, we work to connect families with resources that strengthen their support systems and create positive experiences for children," she said.

***4.)** Families enjoyed food and fun at Urban Air Trampoline Park in Killeen during a summer event hosted by Killeen Family Outreach. **5.)** Abilene Family Outreach held an outing for families at Adventure Cove water park. **6.)** Las Cruces Family Outreach beat the summer heat with a trip to the movies for youth. **7.)** Caden flies down the inflatable slide during Water Day on the MCH Waco campus.*

Killeen Family Outreach Director Franki Cones said her office focused on increasing community engagement through collaborative events and outreach opportunities that connected families with resources and support systems.

"Compared to previous summers, we placed a greater emphasis on building and being in community with the families we are privileged to serve by creating opportunities for families to connect outside of traditional services or spaces," she said.

"One new initiative was a summer event for our Caregiver Empowerment Group (CEG) families at Urban Air Trampoline Park, which provided a fun and engaging opportunity for families to have fun in a relaxed setting," Cones said. "The event was well received and highlighted the importance of creating positive experiences for the families we serve."

Traci Wagner, MCH vice president for programs, said she is continually inspired by the creativity, dedication and collaboration of MCH staff across Texas and New Mexico.

"Their willingness to invest time, energy and heart into creating meaningful summer experiences demonstrates that healing often happens in everyday moments," she said. "Together, these stories reflect who we are as an organization and our unwavering commitment to helping children and families build brighter futures."



THE OLIVARESES

A Family Lifted By One Mother's Focus

By Ken Sury

Life has been a chorus of hard knocks for Jemina Rodriguez-Olivares. She grew up in the foster care system, experienced domestic violence and then homelessness for herself and three young sons.

One thing she has never lacked, however, was the motivation to improve her situation. Methodist Children's Home Family Outreach in San Antonio has been helping her along that path.

Tabitha Pitts, her MCH case manager, says Jemina's attitude and steadfast desire to better her life is an inspiration.

"She's got that 'can do' attitude," Tabitha said. "It's her drive and her ability to pick up the pieces after there's a downfall. She always says, 'I have a Plan A, a Plan B, and a Plan Z'. Her perseverance is a highlight."

The MCH Family Outreach San Antonio team began working with Jemina in December 2025. Jemina and her boys are living in Fairweather Family Lodge, a long-term homeless shelter for women who have suffered domestic abuse.

MCH case worker Lisette Rodriguez Rivera was presenting parenting classes last fall at Fairweather when Jemina reached out.

She asked for ways to help her eldest son, Azarahi, who has ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) and dyslexia.

Jemina needed assistance working with his school to get an IEP plan. The Individualized Education Program is a legal written plan that outlines special education instruction, supports and services for an eligible public school student with a disability. It is designed to ensure a child receives the tailored help they need to learn.

That connected Jemina with Tabitha, her now case manager. Tabitha has experience advocating for students needing IEPs and 504s, school plans that provide accommodation and remove barriers for students with disabilities.

"That was advocacy that I could help her with, so that's how we got started," Tabitha said. "Jemina said she needed somebody that would help her through the IEP process, since she was brand new to it. The school was not making it easy to figure out."

Tabitha said she sees that a lot with her clients. When Azarahi exhibited behavioral issues, Tabitha said his teacher and the school decided he was "problematic," instead of working with Jemina on ways to help him.

"He is going to the third grade," Jemina said this summer. "But right now, we have a whole semester gap where he didn't get the help he needed. He is still at a first-grade level. So that's really a big thing that we had to address now because there's STAAR testing in third grade."

Tabitha advocated on Azarahi's behalf. "We sat in on meetings, and that's how we all got started. But along the way, Jemina's had different goals, of course, and we work towards those as well."

Those other goals include securing her own place to live and obtaining reliable transportation. Jemina was recently hired at a thrift store and is saving money for a down

payment. A relative loaned her a car to use but has a deadline when it needs to be returned.

Crystal Motok-Salinas, director of Family Outreach in San Antonio, told Tabitha about the On-Ramp Program, a program being piloted in San Antonio to help low-income families obtain vehicles.

"There's a lot of prerequisites that the client has to meet in order to be approved for the program, in order to even really be nominated," Tabitha explained. "She met all of those prerequisites, so I was able to nominate her, and we're still kind of in the middle of that process. We're keeping our fingers crossed."

Jemina and her boys, Azarahi, 10; Arius, 5; and Elian, 3; can stay at Fairweather as long as they need.

"There's not a deadline on her housing situation," Tabitha said. "It's a permanent support. They do not charge when you are without a job, but when a client gains employment and sustains that job for a period of time, they'll start charging a small amount of rent so the client can begin working on budgeting, for when they do finally transition out on their own."

Jimena moved to San Antonio when she was very young.

"I was brought here (San Antonio) when I was 4, and I was in kindergarten when I was 5, and there was an issue with my mom and stepdad, and the school got involved."

That led to a visit by Child Protective Services, which ultimately removed her.

"Mom was fighting for a bit, but then she just up and left," Jemina said. "I stayed in the (foster care) system and I grew up in the system."

But she's never let that define who she is.

"I didn't grow up with a mom and dad, but I didn't let that affect me to say, 'well, I can't be a parent'," Jemina said. "My three boys need to be able to succeed. I've been through so much and they are my motivation."

MCH Family Outreach San Antonio director Crystal said Tabitha has established a great relationship with Jemina and her boys.

"Tabitha is wonderful for just being the person that Jemina can trust," Crystal said. "She has somebody to talk to. Things go wrong, but Tabitha's going to listen and be honest with her; to be realistic, but helpful."

Tabitha is optimistic things will keep improving for Jemina and her family, thanks to the support from MCH and Jemina's own drive.

Jemina expressed her thanks for Tabitha and MCH and then summed up her focus: "Don't let the past ruin you. Let it be the motivation for success."

Jemina Rodriguez-Olivares is thankful for the help of MCH Family Outreach in San Antonio and her case manager Tabitha Pitts in assisting her and her boys (from left) Azarahi, Elian and Arius.



TRANSITION SERVICES SUPPORTS NEW COLLEGE STUDENTS

Over the summer months, Transition Services staff supported three young adults as they moved to their new homes on college campuses. Elizabeth moved into her dorm at the University of Texas at Austin, and began the E4Texas program, a three-semester vocational and post-secondary program that prepares adults for careers as personal care attendants, childcare associates or paraprofessionals.

Londen moved into his University of Texas in San Antonio (UTSA) dorm just a few days after high school graduation from the UT charter school on the MCH Waco campus. Londen began classes soon after and is a walk-on for the UTSA football team.

Aid'Ron attended student orientation at UTSA and moved into his dorm for the fall semester. Aid'Ron was awarded the Bold Promise Award, which covers 100 percent of tuition for up to eight semesters.

Case managers Crystal Vela and Alyssa Billingsley helped transport the young adults to campus, assisted with dorm move-in and participated in student orientation. Elizabeth, Londen, Aid'Ron and others enrolled in the Transition Services After Care program will continue to receive support from MCH staff as they step into their new chapters.•







***Far left:** Aid'Ron attends student orientation on the University of Texas-San Antonio campus. **Center:** Londen stands outside his UTSA dorm shortly after high school graduation as a walk-on for the Roadrunners football team. **Below:** Elizabeth was settling into her dorm at the University of Texas at Austin.*

CHARTER SCHOOL FRESHMEN LEARN ABOUT HIGH SCHOOL INS AND OUTS

Charter school staff on the Waco campus warmly welcomed freshmen students to "Fish Camp" high school orientation a few weeks before the start of the new school year.

Students enjoyed a Bulldogs-themed soda bar, played an ice breaker game to get to know their classmates, learned about class curriculum and dress code, and met some of their new teachers. Staff also explained home rooms will be set up as "houses" and will compete against each other in various activities throughout the school year. •





***Right, above:** After-school coordinator Jason Bartlett makes soda floats for students at the MCH charter school orientation.*
***Right, below:** Principal Raul Kastner explains the new home room "house" plan for the school year.*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS LEAD OUT NEW FISCAL YEAR

Every quarter, the MCH board of directors meets virtually and in-person to discuss various agency topics including audits, investments, executive leadership, advancement and programs.

After meetings on June 11, staff led board members on tours of the Harrell Memorial Chapel and residential homes before enjoying a dinner together in the Mulkey Fellowship Hall. The dinner program included stories and reports from various staff members on athletics, residential life, admissions and family engagement, and family outreach.

Les Leskoven, former chair of the board of directors, was celebrated for his years of service to MCH. Dr. Carolin Sinkfield was officially welcomed into that role during the board's summer meeting (see page 9 for more details about Dr. Sinkfield).

MCH is blessed to have a committed, faith-led board of directors who support the agency's ongoing Imagine 2028 strategic plan, and for their professional insight, guidance and feedback. •













Top Left (then clockwise): *Outgoing Board Chair Les Leskoven (center) was recognized for his service by MCH President and CEO Trey Oakley alongside Dr. Carolin Sinkfield, who takes over as chair. Board member Mark Ward visits with Athletic Director Sarah Arocha and Vice President for Programs Traci Wagner. Members of the Executive Leadership Team (from left) Trey Oakley, Denise Ondrey, Traci Wagner, Lyle Mason, Brooke Davila and Julie Mitchell gather for a photo. Sara Beth Stoltzfus, director of admissions and family engagement (right), and home parent Monique Walls present at the meeting. Board members walk over to tour the Greathouse Home during their campus tour. Vice President for Advancement Lyle Mason speaks with board member Dr. Kendra Bircher about the trauma-informed spaces across MCH residential facilities.*

MCH HOSTS COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS SUMMER INSTITUTE

Staff welcomed dozens of fellow childcare professionals and youth from Communities In Schools (CIS) of the Heart of Texas, Inc. to MCH residential campuses for part of the group's annual Summer Institute.

MCH Community Engagement and training specialist John Warren led a two-hour session in de-escalation strategies at the Waco residential campus for CIS professionals while the CIS Community Youth Development group enjoyed outdoor activities at the Boys Ranch.

MCH has a longstanding collaborative partnership with CIS, which serves more than 4,000 at-risk students across 35 schools and nine districts in the Waco community. •



John Warren, MCH community engagement and training specialist, leads a session on de-escalation strategies for childcare professionals from Communities in Schools of the Heart of Texas, Inc.

CHARTER SCHOOL TEACHERS RECEIVE TRAUMA-INFORMED TRAINING

Organizational Effectiveness Coordinator Rebekah Graff provided trauma-informed classroom training for UT charter school teachers ahead of the new academic year.

The group discussed Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) tools and techniques that aimed to empower and equip them and their students as the school year progresses.

"I co-taught a brief overview of TBRI with Jean Wright, senior director for organizational effectiveness," Graff said. This was intentional time set aside for teachers at MCH to be reminded of the foundations of connection, trust and relationship as they started off the new school year.

"This was my first time training the teachers of MCH, and I had a really positive experience. The teachers were engaged and eager to share about their past experiences, as well as their hopes and intentions for the new year. I was honored to play a part in helping the school at MCH kick off a new school year!" •

Rebekah Graff (upper right), organizational effectiveness coordinator, presents a training on trauma-informed care to UT charter school teachers.



ADVANCEMENT NEWS

MCH CELEBRATES $500K DAY SUCCESS, GENERATING $513K IN DONATIONS

On July 1, the MCH Department for Advancement hosted its annual $500K Day, a one-day online matching gift challenge that has grown significantly since launching in 2014 as a $100K Day event.

This year, 488 donations generated $513,815.81, surpassing the campaign goal. The challenge was made possible through a combined $250,000 matching fund provided by several longtime donors, helping maximize the impact of gifts made throughout the day.

All funds raised are designated to the MCH Daily Needs Fund, which supports direct care for children, youth and families across Texas and New Mexico. These funds help provide essentials such as food, clothing, housing and childcare services in residential and family outreach programs.

"$500K Day is about far more than reaching a fundraising goal," said Kelly Lawson, senior director for advancement. "Every gift represents an individual or church choosing to invest in those we serve, to be part of offering hope in their lives. The support we receive on $500K Day, and every day, helps us live into our vision of empowering all we serve to experience life to the fullest!"

The continued success of $500K Day reflects the generosity of MCH supporters and their commitment to equip children, youth and families to flourish through Christ-centered relationships, services and support.











GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORIAL GIFTS

GIFTS MADE FROM APRIL THROUGH JUNE 2026

HONORARIUMS

Paul Bauernfeind
Les and Karen Leskoven
Beverly Bennett's Birthday
Sharon and Al Wertz
Mary Jane Caudill
Lisa Schumacher
Dr. Jack Kyle Daniels
Danny McSpadden
The Staff of Double J Animal Hospital
Alice Sappington
Judy Johnson Dunavant
Les Leskoven
Ed and Barbara Erwin
Les and Karen Leskoven
Brittany M. Chapman
Judge and Mrs. Robert A. Fitz
Father's Day
Women of Waples
Waples UMC
Granbury, TX
Genesis SS Class
FMC Corsicana, TX
Les and Karen Leskoven
Dr. Neal and Sylvia Green
Les and Karen Leskoven
Howard Family Legacy
Charles and Ann Cantrell
Joe and Belinda Faubion
Betty Ann Huddleston
James Huddleston
Rev. Daniel and Kay Humbert
Bereans SS Class
Trietsch Memorial UMC
Flower Mound, TX
Joy Jones
RJ and Emily Claassen
Mr. Ricky Jones
Mr. Kevin Rodriguez
Chloe Knust
Robert H. Collins
Stephanie Larson
Mr. Kevin Rodriguez
Kelly E. Lawson
Fellowship SS Class
FUMC, Richardson, TX
Elizabeth Lee
Les and Karen Leskoven
Joan Beth Leskoven
Les and Karen Leskoven
Les Leskoven
Eileen and Paul Ackerman
John M. Farrell
Jim Noble
Jack and Becky Lester
Les and Karen Leskoven
Lyle Mason
First Methodist Women
FMC, Corsicana, TX
James and Laura Milam
Mother's Day
St. Andrews UMC
Carthage, TX
Mother's and Father's Day
Shelbyville Methodist Women
FMC, Shelbyville, TX
Ms. Kelly Murphy
Sharon and Al Wertz
Connie Neelley
Leigh Neelley Boatman
Dan and Beth Nemeth
Les and Karen Leskoven
Priscilla Patterson
Les and Karen Leskoven
Maggie Pellicore
Les and Karen Leskoven
The Pellicore Family
Ms. Judy Shipes
Sharon and Al Wertz
Dr. Linda Tinsley
Jack R. Tinsley
Dr. John and Lisa Updegrove
Les and Karen Leskoven
Erik Van Brero
Mr. Kevin Rodriguez
Mrs. Gay Van Brero
Mr. Kevin Rodriguez
Ron and Tracy Watson
Les and Karen Leskoven
Martha Ruth Whatley
Ansel G. Whatley
Lisa White
Les and Karen Leskoven
Don Wilson
Robert Wilson
Steve Wilson
Les and Karen Leskoven
Richard and Sue Woodson
Janice Hamm
Charles and Gilda Worsham
Les and Karen Leskoven
KC Wyatt
Les and Karen Leskoven
KC Wyatt's 50 years in banking
Les Leskoven

Making a gift in honor or memory of a loved one is a meaningful way to celebrate their life and legacy while empowering children, youth and families to flourish!

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Arnold and Wanda Alberts
Gary and Mary Alberts
Thomas E. Angel
Steven and Terelyn Garlington
Jan Willis Baca
Robert and Lori Wilhite
Adrienne Charisse Kelley Barry
Karen Furman
Shirley Ann (Dishman) Bass
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Marilyn Bauernfeind
David Bauernfeind
Eddie Bickers
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Lou F. Wilson
Robert Earl Zimmerman
Darrell and Lory Zimmerman

"

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

HEBREWS 12:1-2

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