THE LEAF

MONTHLY EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER

Congratulations!

KIRSTEN PURINTON: 2026 DSP OF THE YEAR - SPECIAL CATEGORY AWARD FOR LEADERSHIP

We are incredibly proud to celebrate Kirsten Purinton, who has been named the recipient of the ANCOR American Network of Community Options and Resources 2026 DSP of the Year Award—one of the most prestigious honors in the field of direct support.

Selected from a record-breaking pool of nearly 550 nominees from across the country, Kirsten's recognition is a testament not only to her exceptional work ethic, but also to the meaningful impact she makes every single day. Her unwavering dedication, creativity, and innovative approach to supporting individuals with disabilities set her apart as a true leader in her field. She consistently goes above and beyond to ensure the people she serves are empowered, included, and given every opportunity to succeed.

In her role as a Job Coach, Kirsten plays a vital part in helping individuals build confidence, develop skills, and achieve greater independence in their workplaces and communities. Beyond her daily responsibilities, she serves as a trusted mentor to her colleagues—offering guidance, encouragement, and leading by example through her compassion and professionalism.

Kirsten truly embodies the core values of Emory Valley Center—Compassion, Inclusion, Quality, Value, and Forward Thinking. Her passion for this work is evident in the relationships she builds, the lives she touches, and the positive energy she brings to our organization.

We are honored to have Kirsten as part of our team and thrilled to see her recognized on a national level. Please join us in congratulating her on this well-deserved achievement!

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who contributed to our recent hygiene drive. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to collect a wide range of essential hygiene items that will directly support the individuals and families we serve.

Your willingness to give makes a meaningful difference in the daily lives of those in our community. These items are more than just necessities—they provide comfort, dignity, and care to those who need it most.

Thank you for showing up, giving back, and helping us continue our mission.

We gave our EVC Warriors the send-off they truly deserved as they headed to compete in Special Olympics track & field!

The air was filled with excitement as children from the Early Learning Center lined up outside with handmade signs, cheering loud and proud for our athletes. Their smiles, energy, and encouragement made the moment incredibly special.

Watching everyone come together to support our Warriors was truly heartwarming. Moments like these are a powerful reminder of what EVC is all about—lifting each other up and celebrating every achievement along the way.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

APRIL 2026

Dear Team,

As we reflect on the month of April, I am filled with pride and gratitude for all that has been accomplished across Emory Valley Center. It has truly been a busy and inspiring time, marked by meaningful milestones, well-deserved recognition, and the continued dedication of our incredible staff.

One of the highlights of this month is the recognition of Kirsten Purinton, who has been named the 2026 DSP of the Year - Special Category Award for Leadership by ANCOR American Network of Community Options and Resources. This prestigious honor reflects Kirsten's unwavering commitment, creativity, and compassion in supporting the individuals we serve. We are proud to have her represent the very best of EVC.

We are also looking forward to celebrating at the upcoming Jack Case Award, where we will honor Leslie England for her outstanding dedication and service to our community. Events like this remind us of the strong network of support and leadership that drives our mission forward.

April also brought exciting growth as we celebrated the ribbon cutting at our Campbell County location. This expansion represents our continued commitment to reaching more individuals and families with the services they need and deserve.

I would also like to recognize the ongoing efforts of our Early Intervention team, whose hard work and commitment to leading parent classes continue to make a lasting impact. Their dedication empowers families and strengthens the foundation for lifelong success.

Additionally, we proudly cheered on our EVC Warriors who competed in Special Olympics Track and Field. Their determination and spirit are a true reflection of the resilience and strength we celebrate every day.

It has been a wonderful month, and I am continually inspired by the passion and purpose each of you brings to your work. Thank you for all that you do to make EVC a place of compassion, inclusion, and excellence.

We are excited to see where the rest of this spring takes us.

With appreciation,
Jennifer Enderson
President, Emory Valley Center

POLICY UPDATES

- Language Access Plan |Added technology for interpreting services
- GPS Policy | Updated to follow DDA guidance
- REM Policy | Updated to add speeding as a Tier 2 investigation
- Evacuation Policy | Added that batteries would be changed if required by the specific detector. Added specific locations for CTB if there is a need to seek shelter.

FOR MORE INFO PLEASE CONTACT KRISTEN.OTTO@EVCMAIL.ORG

STAFF TENURE

Arthur Channell-18 years

Regina Wilson-16 years

Penny Nunley-13 years

Alicia Jones-12 years

Brent Langford-11 years

Wayne Ogden-9 years

Teresa Blazer-7 years

Carly Manuel-5 years

Jonathan Pettigrow- 5 years

Spencer Smith-5 years

Casey Chumley-4 years

Aaron Price-3 years

Samantha Armes-3 years

Marisa Colvais-3 years

Kendall Greene-2 years

Pedro Jimenez-2 years

Kelly Dodson-1 year

Erik Drinnon-1 year

Isabella Freeman-1 year

Steve Hamby-1 year

Zachary Saylor-1 year

Cynthia Shortridge- 1 year

Rachel Strayer-1 year

Eric Vici-1 year

ADVOCACY CORNER

APRIL 2026

When we think about the support provided to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), we think of Direct Support Professionals — and rightfully so. DSPs are on the front lines every day. But the truth is, every single employee at Emory Valley Center (EVC) plays a meaningful role in shaping the lives of the people we support.

Consider our receptionist who greets individuals by name and with a warm smile. Or the billing specialist who ensures funding stays in place, so services aren't interrupted. Think about the HR team who recruit and hire compassionate staff, maintenance personnel who keep environments safe and welcoming, or the scheduler who makes sure no one is left without support. Each of these roles — though they may not involve direct, hands-on care — contributes directly to the quality of life experienced by individuals with IDD.

EVC is a community built around a shared purpose: to ensure that every person, regardless of ability, can live a full, dignified, and self-determined life. Every employee, whether they interact directly with individuals or not, must understand the gravity and the privilege of our work. The people we support are the reason our jobs exist.

To every employee at every level: your role matters. Your attitude matters. Your commitment to the mission matters. The individuals and families at EVC deserve nothing less than an entire organization dedicated to their well-being — from the Executive Team to the front lines and everywhere in between.

Sincerely,
Mel Stanley
Advocacy Specialist

UPCOMING:

OAK RIDGE WE ADAPT EVENTS

REGISTRATION:
HTTPS://KFTN.NETWORKFORGOOD.COM/EVENTS/95091-WE-ADAPT-OAK-RIDGE-BOWLING-DAY?HID=NTYXNZY5OTI=&UTM_CAMPAIGN=DMS_EMAIL_BLAST_4377184

RESOURCES

- **Useful Links:**
  - https://www.disabilityrightstn.org/resources/
  - https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/information-and-resources/tdhs-resource-library/resources-for-tennesseans-with-disabilities.html

Staffing Updates

New Hires

DSP- 5

Home Manager- 1

Community Manager-1

Residental Manager-1

Koinonia Foundation Participant Information Form

5908TooleDriveUnitC | Knoxville,TN37919 | 865-888-7365

Participant Name: _____

GoesBy: _____ Birthdate: _____ Age: _____

Sex: _____ Primary Disability (optional): _____

Parent/Guardian Information

Parent/Guardian 1:

Name: _____ Relationship to Participant: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Parent/Guardian 2:

Name: _____ Relationship to Participant: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

In case of an emergency, if parent/guardian cannot be reached, please contact:

Name: _____ Relationship to Participant: _____

Phone Number: _____

Name: _____ Relationship to Participant: _____

Phone Number: _____

Please complete and return via email at msmith@kftn.org

HUMAN RESOURCES

Take Advantage of Our Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

At Emory Valley Center, we care about the well-being of every team member—not just at work, but in life. That's why we offer the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), a free and confidential resource available to all employees and their families.
The EAP is designed to provide support when you need it most. Whether you're navigating personal challenges, seeking counseling, managing stress, or looking for tools to improve work-life balance, help is just a phone call or click away. The program also offers resources for financial planning, legal advice, family support, and more.

You don't have to face life's challenges alone—the EAP is here for you, anytime.
📞 Call 800-272-7255
🌐 Visit www.guidanceresources.com
🔑 Use WEB ID: SymetraGR

Take advantage of this benefit and remember—you are never alone in finding the support you need.

BOARD RECOGNIZES OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUALS FOR DEDICATION AND IMPACT

We are proud to recognize several individuals recently honored by our board for their dedication and impact.

Matthew Stewart (not pictured) was recognized for his involvement across multiple programs, including Community Supported Living, PSR, Special Olympics, and Workforce Development. His positive attitude and determination continue to inspire those around him.

Addie Foster has demonstrated impressive growth in just six months, skillfully managing a complex caseload while advocating for the individuals she supports and maintaining strong communication with their Circles of Support.

Lacey Ausburn was recognized for her exceptional commitment in her transition from Direct Support Professional to Case Manager. Her nursing background and compassion have made a meaningful difference, especially during challenging times for individuals and families.

Please join us in congratulating Matthew, Addie, and Lacey on these well-deserved recognitions.

EVC HAPPENINGS

Spring Fling: An Afternoon of Connection, Laughter, and Celebration

Spring Fling was a tremendous success, bringing together an afternoon filled with music, games, laughter, and meaningful connection. From the moment the festivities began, there was a sense of excitement in the air as individuals and staff came together to celebrate the season and enjoy time with one another.

Guests enjoyed a variety of activities that encouraged participation and connection, while the music and lively atmosphere kept spirits high throughout the event. Smiles were everywhere as friends gathered, new memories were made, and everyone took part in the fun. Events like Spring Fling highlight the importance of community and the joy that comes from simply spending time together.

This special day would not have been possible without the dedication and support of our team and everyone who contributed their time and energy to make it a success. We are incredibly thankful for all who attended and helped create such a welcoming and vibrant environment.

Spring Fling truly captured the spirit of our community—one of inclusion, connection, and celebration. We are already looking forward to the next opportunity to come together and create more memorable moments.

Employee Spotlight: Casey Chumley

Casey Chumley joined EVC in April 2022 as a Residential Manager and has since grown into her current role as HR Benefits Administrator—truly finding where she thrives. Throughout her journey, she has built meaningful relationships with staff, individuals served, and their families that are evident across the organization.

Casey brings both heart and a strong commitment to quality in everything she does. She is always willing to step in and help, regardless of whether it falls within her role, and her compassion is at the center of her work. She fosters an environment where people feel included, respected, and valued, leading by example each and every day.

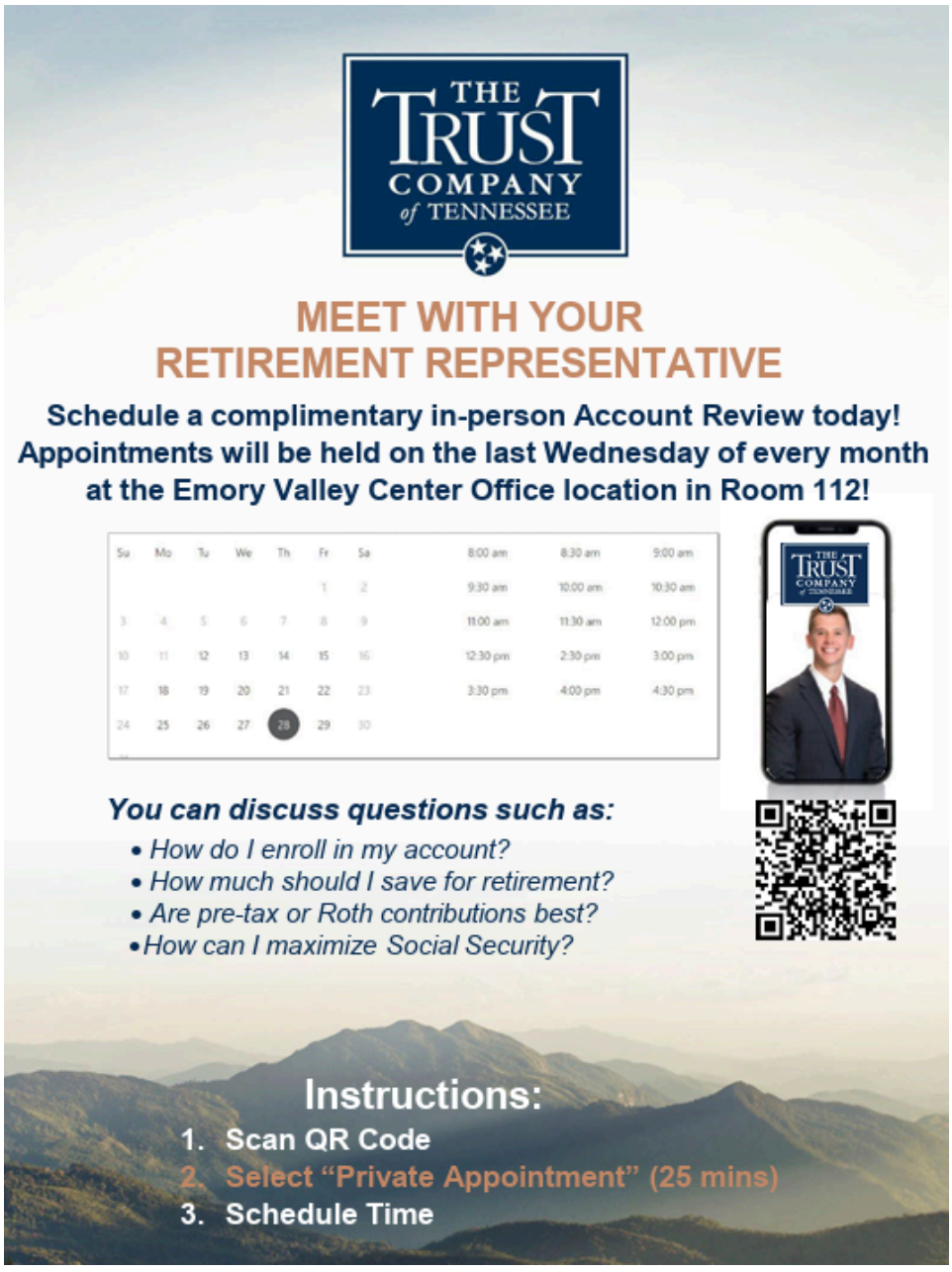
The trust Casey has built throughout EVC has led to impactful conversations, driving improvements in processes and strengthening the connection between HR and the rest of the organization. We are so grateful to have Casey on our team and look forward to all that lies ahead for her at EVC!

WELLNESS

Second Harvest Food Bank

Emory Valley Center is glad to share that Second Harvest food is available for both the people we support and our employees. When food is ready to pick up, a message will be sent through PHS email to let everyone know. If you would like to receive food, please go to the PSR area. Staff will help you sign in and answer a few required questions for Second Harvest. After that, you may choose the food items that are best for you and your family.

This program helps make sure everyone has access to healthy food, and we are grateful to be able to offer it. If there is a food item you are hoping to get, you may contact Crystal Hicks to see if it can be requested during the next order.



Planning for retirement is one of the most important steps you can take toward securing your financial future. To support you in making informed decisions, we have partnered with The Trust Company to offer in-person appointments where you can:

- **Review your retirement plan and investment options**
- **Make or update your benefit elections**
- **Ask questions about your current savings strategy**
- **Receive guidance on long-term financial planning**

Having a retirement plan in place is essential—it not only helps ensure financial stability in the future but also provides peace of mind today. Whether you are just starting to save, actively investing, or looking ahead to retirement, these appointments are a valuable opportunity to get personalized advice.

Appointments are available the last Wednesday of the Month . Please use the QR code on the attachment to reserve your time slot.