



THE LEAF



MONTHLY EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER



EVC VALENTINES DAY MIXER

Our Valentine’s Day Mixer was filled with joy and celebration at Emory Valley Center!

We had such a wonderful time coming together to celebrate friendship, kindness, and community. From creating heartfelt valentines and sharing sweet treats to spending time on the dance floor, every moment of the afternoon was filled with smiles, laughter, and meaningful connection. The room was buzzing with excitement as friends gathered, music played, and creativity was on full display.

Events like this are such a special reminder of how important it is to create opportunities for fun, inclusion, and togetherness. Seeing everyone engaged, celebrating one another, and simply enjoying the moment truly made the day unforgettable.

Thank you to everyone who joined us and helped make the day so special. Moments like these highlight the strength of our community and the joy that comes from spending time together. We are so grateful for our Emory Valley family and the friendships that make celebrations like this so meaningful.

The Emory Valley Board is proud to recognize two valued members of the Emory Valley Center family – Scott Britton and Matt Helton. Scott Britton, a MAPs participant and member of the Emory Valley Center Board of Directors, brings an important voice and perspective that helps guide our mission and represent the people we support. We also thank Matt Helton, our Facilities and Transportation Manager, for his dedication to keeping our campus safe, accessible, and running smoothly every day. Thank you, Scott and Matt, for all you do for Emory Valley Center!



Austin is our very first MAPs participant to graduate from the program! He successfully completed 8 out of 11 milestones and now qualifies for \$4,000 to be deposited into his ABLÉ account – an incredible achievement.

Throughout the program, Austin has gained so much independence – from traveling on his own, to cooking for himself, to living independently with a roommate. His growth has been inspiring to watch, and this is just the beginning of what he will accomplish.

Congratulations, Austin! All of us at Emory Valley are so proud of you and your achievements!

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

FEBRUARY 2026

Dear Team,

As we continue into the new year, I am reminded every day of the strength of our mission and the dedication of the people who make it possible. February has already been filled with meaningful moments, joyful celebrations, and valuable opportunities to advocate for the individuals and families we serve.



Our Valentine's Mixer was a tremendous success! The room was filled with laughter, creativity, music, and connection. From Valentine-making and cookies to dancing and fellowship, it was a wonderful reminder that community and belonging are at the heart of everything we do. Thank you to everyone who helped plan, support, and participate in making this event so special.

We were also honored to welcome Senator Marsha Blackburn to Emory Valley Center. Her visit gave us an important opportunity to highlight our programs, introduce her to our dedicated staff, and share more about the services and supports we provide to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We appreciate her time, thoughtful engagement, and interest in the work happening at EVC.

Additionally, members of our Early Learning Team attended the ETCCY Legislative Lunch hosted by the East Tennessee Council on Children and Youth. This event allowed our team to connect directly with state and local leaders, share the impact of early intervention services, and advocate for children and families throughout our region. Opportunities like this help ensure that the voices of those we serve are represented and heard.

Thank you for your continued commitment to Emory Valley Center. Your compassion, professionalism, and dedication make a difference every single day. Together, we are strengthening our community, expanding opportunities, and building brighter futures.

With appreciation,
Jennifer Enderson
President, Emory Valley Center



- 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](mailto:KRISTEN.OTTO@EVCMAIL.ORG)**

STAFF TENURE

Penny Cooper- 22 years

Samantha Townsend- 14 years

Kimberlee Libberton- 11 years

Alexandra Newberry- 10 years

Brandy Carroll-McMurray-
9 years

Diana Michel- 9 years

Courtney Kitts- 7 years

Roy Jones- 3 years

Anna Caswell- 2 years

Luke Lawson- 2 years

Christopher Mannuzza- 2 years

Christopher McCulloch- 2 years

Meegan Miller- 2 years

Orian Miller- 2 years

Kerris Shelton- 2 years

James Bolden- 1 year

Andria Cassell- 1 year

Morgan Hawkins- 1 year

Sheila Huskey- 1 year

Kerris Shelton- 2 years

Melanie Stanley- 1 year

Daniel Vargas- 1 year

When it comes to supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), the role of family members as advocates is truly invaluable. Families are often the first and strongest champions for their loved ones, ensuring their voices are heard, their needs are met, and their rights are respected. But advocacy goes beyond the individual—it sets a powerful example for the broader community. By speaking up, navigating systems, and fostering inclusive environments, families show others how to support and include people with IDD. Their actions model the understanding, patience, and commitment required to create communities where everyone belongs.

Families also act as a vital bridge between their loved ones with IDD and the wider community. Through their advocacy, families help translate individual needs and strengths into opportunities for participation and connection. They foster understanding among neighbors, schools, and workplaces, opening doors and breaking down barriers that might otherwise isolate individuals with IDD. In doing so, families help ensure their loved ones are seen, valued, and included in all aspects of community life.

Ultimately, family advocates lay the groundwork for lasting change. Their dedication not only benefits their loved ones but also paves the way for a more inclusive and supportive society for all.

Sincerely,
Mel Stanley
Advocacy Specialist

UPCOMING: OAK RIDGE WE ADAPT EVENTS

Please Note
REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED FOR ALL PROGRAMS. FAILURE TO REGISTER MAY RESULT IN YOUR PARTICIPANT BEING UNABLE TO STAY. YOU CAN FIND THE LINK TO REGISTER FOR EACH PROGRAM BELOW!

Frequently Asked Questions
ARE THERE MINIMUM AGE REQUIREMENTS?
WE ADAPT EVENTS ARE PRIMARILY FOR ADULTS AGES 18 AND UP WITH A DISABILITY. FOR PARTICIPANTS AGES 18-17 CONTACT US PRIOR TO REGISTERING TO ADDRESS PARTICIPATION ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS.
WHAT IF I NEED TO COME OR SEND A CAREGIVER FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR MY PARTICIPANT?
IF YOUR PARTICIPANT REQUIRES ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM YOU OR A CAREGIVER, PLEASE CONTACT US DIRECTLY. PARTICIPANT TICKETS ARE STRICTLY LIMITED TO PARTICIPANTS ONLY.

KOINONIA

JOIN US FOR A DAY OF BOWLING

March 20th
1:00pm - 3:00pm

OAK RIDGE Bowling Center

246 S Illinois Ave
Oak Ridge, TN 37830

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>

Promotions

Carly Manual :
Teacher ELC to Assistant
Director ELC

Congrats!

Staffing Updates

New Hires

DSP- 11

HM- 1

Accreditation Specialist- 1

PSR Specialist- 1

Accounts Payable Clerk-1

HR Program Coordinator -1

ELC/LLL Floater- 1

PRN Admin Assistant- 1

LLL/ELC Sub- 1

Total Current Staff: 371



Koinonia Foundation Participant Information Form

5908 Toole Drive Unit C | Knoxville, TN 37919 | 865-888-7365



Participant Name: _____

Goes By: _____ 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.

EMORY VALLEY CENTER REPRESENTED AT ETCCY LEGISLATIVE LUNCH ON THE RIVER

Karen and Chase from Emory Valley Center’s Early Intervention Team proudly represented our organization at the East Tennessee Council on Children and Youth (ETCCY) Legislative Lunch on the River.

The event provided a valuable opportunity to connect with regional and state leaders to discuss issues impacting children and families across East Tennessee. During the luncheon, Karen and Chase engaged in meaningful conversations with Senator Becky Massey (Knox County), Senator Sam McKenzie (Knox County), Senator Blackburn’s East Tennessee Field Director, and Claiborne County Mayor Joe Brooks.

The program also featured remarks from Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs and Judge Irwin, highlighting the importance of collaboration and advocacy in strengthening services for children and families throughout our region.

We are proud of our Early Intervention team for representing Emory Valley Center and for continuing to build relationships that support our mission and the individuals and families we serve.



UNITED WAY REPRESENTATIVE, CHASE DAVENPORT
AND STATE REPRESENTATIVE SAM MCKENZIE



STATE SENATOR BECKY DUNCAN MASSEY, CHASE DAVENPORT, KAREN OLSON
(DEVELOPMENTAL THERAPIST), AND STATE REPRESENTATIVE DAVE WRIGHT.

EVC HAPPENINGS

Little Learning Lab Tours ORNL



Our Little Learning Lab team had an incredible time visiting Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL)!

We are so grateful for the opportunity to tour Oak Ridge National Laboratory and experience firsthand the innovative and impactful work happening right here in our community. From the moment we arrived, our staff was welcomed into an environment filled with curiosity, creativity, and discovery. We had so much fun exploring the campus, learning about cutting-edge research, and seeing so many amazing technologies and projects up close. It was truly inspiring to hear about the groundbreaking advancements taking place and to gain a deeper understanding of how science and innovation shape the world around us. The experience sparked meaningful conversations among our team and gave us new ideas and perspectives that we can bring back to the Little Learning Lab.

Days like this remind us of the importance of staying curious, continuing to learn, and finding new ways to inspire the children and families we serve. Opportunities like this help us grow not only as educators, but as lifelong learners.

Thank you, ORNL, for such a memorable, educational, and inspiring experience! We are grateful for your partnership and the chance to see excellence in action right here in our community.

Employee Spotlight: Kasey Foster

Since joining Emory Valley Center in November 2021 as a Residential Manager, Kasey has been a valued and impactful member of our team. Throughout her time in this role, she has played an integral part in strengthening our residential department and ensuring the individuals we support receive high-quality, person-centered services.

Kasey's leadership is defined by integrity, thoughtful problem-solving, and a deep commitment to excellence. She consistently goes above and beyond to support both the individuals in our care and the staff she leads. Her ability to balance confidence with approachability makes her a trusted and respected leader within the department.

In addition to her professional strengths, Kasey brings a positive spirit and sense of humor that uplifts those around her—even during challenging moments. Her steady leadership and dedication have made a lasting impact, and these qualities make her a natural fit for this next step in her career.

Please join us in congratulating Kasey on her well-deserved promotion to Assistant Residential Director. We are confident she will continue to excel in her new role and look forward to the ongoing growth and success of our residential department under her leadership.

Congratulations, Kasey!



GET INVOLVED

ARE YOU INTERESTED JOINING A COMMITTEE?



AGENCY QUALITY TEAM

Chair: Kristen Otto, Vice President of Professional Services

Focus: Driving continuous improvement and service excellence

Meets: 4th Tuesday of every month at 1:30 PM in the Multi-Purpose Room

DATA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Chair: Kristen Otto, Vice President of Professional Services

Focus: Ensuring data integrity and smart data use across the agency

Meets: Every 3rd month on a Tuesday – virtual only

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Co-Chair: Aaron Price, Vice President of Community Engagement, Casey Chumley HR

Focus: Boosting morale, culture, and workplace satisfaction

Meets: 3rd Wednesday of each month at 12:00 PM in the Multi-Purpose Room - lunch provided

HIRING COMMITTEE

Chair: Kim Jeffers-Whitaker, Vice President of Human Resources

Focus: Supporting high-quality, inclusive recruitment

Meets: Every Tuesday at 9:00 AM in the Multi-Purpose Room (Hybrid option available)

Note: Currently open to Home Managers only

EVENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Interim Chair: Elizabeth Hawkins, Accreditation Specialist

Focus: Review of agency investigations and actions to move forward

Meets: 2nd Monday of each month at 10:00 AM in the Training Room

IT COMMITTEE

Chair: Joe Reed, IT Specialist

Focus: Enhancing our technology systems and digital tools

Meets: 3rd Wednesday of every month at 1:00 PM in the Multi-Purpose Room

SAFETY COMMITTEE

Co-Chair: Kevin Hicks, Executive Facilities Director and Kim Jeffers-Whitaker- VP of Human Resources

Focus: Promoting a safe, healthy, and compliant work environment

Meets: 3rd Thursday of every month at 2:00 PM in the Multi-Purpose Room



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.



MEET WITH YOUR RETIREMENT REPRESENTATIVE

Schedule a complimentary in-person Account Review today!
 Appointments will be held on the last Wednesday of every month
 at the Emory Valley Center Office location in Room 112!

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	8:00 am	8:30 am	9:00 am
					1	2	9:30 am	10:00 am	10:30 am
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	11:00 am	11:30 am	12:00 pm
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	12:30 pm	2:30 pm	3:00 pm
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	3:30 pm	4:00 pm	4:30 pm
24	25	26	27	28	29	30			



You can discuss questions such as:

- How do I enroll in my account?
- How much should I save for retirement?
- Are pre-tax or Roth contributions best?
- How can I maximize Social Security?

Instructions:

1. Scan QR Code
2. Select "Private Appointment" (25 mins)
3. Schedule Time

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.