THE LEAF

MONTHLY EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER

A NIGHT OF CELEBRATION, RECOGNITION, AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT AT THE JACK CASE AWARDS

The generosity shown during this year's Jack Case Awards Honoring Leslie England was truly inspiring. Thanks to the incredible support of our donors, sponsors, and community partners, we are proud to announce that more than $125,000 has been raised — with donations still continuing to come in.

This remarkable achievement reflects the compassion and commitment of a community that believes deeply in our mission and the individuals we serve. Every contribution helps strengthen programs, provide meaningful opportunities, and improve the lives of countless individuals and families throughout our community.

The evening was not only a celebration of the legacy of Jack Case and the outstanding contributions of Leslie England, but also a time to recognize individuals who make a lasting impact in our community. During the event, Emory Valley Center proudly presented the Dove Award to Joseph Reed in recognition of his dedication, service, and support of our mission.

The event was a wonderful reminder of what can be accomplished when a community comes together for a shared purpose. We are sincerely grateful for every donation, sponsorship, kind word, and show of encouragement that helped make this year's event such an overwhelming success.

Thank you for your continued support and for helping us make a lasting difference.

Our recent Parent Support Group meeting was a great success, with eight parents joining us for an informative session on Infant/Child CPR, choking response, and basic First Aid. Led by Save a Heart Instructor Mike King, parents gained hands-on experience practicing life-saving techniques and learning the latest CPR recommendations and choking response procedures. Families also received a helpful list of recommended First Aid kit items to keep at home or in their vehicles. Thank you to everyone who attended and took part in this important opportunity to build confidence and preparedness for their families!

This month, the Board recognized Bridget and Jamie for the dedication, consistency, and care they bring to our Pre-K classroom each day.

Over the past few months, the growth in the classroom has been amazing to witness. From helping children learn to write their names and begin reading to creating engaging classroom experiences and meaningful family celebrations, their impact has been tremendous.

Most importantly, Bridget and Jamie create a positive learning environment where every child can thrive. We are so grateful to have them as part of the ELC family. Thank you both for all that you do!

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

MAY 2026

Dear Staff,

As we reflect on the past few weeks at Emory Valley Center, we are filled with gratitude for the incredible support and dedication shown throughout our community.One of the highlights this season was the outstanding turnout for the Jack Case Awards honoring Leslie England. The evening was truly special as so many individuals, families, and community partners came together to celebrate Leslie's impact and support the mission of EVC. Thanks to your generosity, we are proud to share that we have raised over $125,000, with donations continuing to come in. We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed and helped make this event such a success.
We are also excited to share that Emory Valley Center has successfully completed our The Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL) accreditation process and achieved accreditation for another four years. This accomplishment reflects the dedication of our staff and our continued commitment to providing high-quality, person-centered services and supports for the individuals and families we serve.
We also had the opportunity to celebrate Teacher Appreciation Week and Nurses Appreciation Week, recognizing the extraordinary educators and nurses who make a difference in the lives of the individuals and families we serve every day. Their compassion, hard work, and commitment are at the heart of everything we do, and we are thankful for all they bring to EVC.
In addition, our Early Intervention team continues to provide meaningful support to families through engaging parent support groups and educational classes. These gatherings offer encouragement, resources, and connection for parents while helping children continue to grow and thrive.
Thank you for being part of the EVC family and for your continued support of our mission. Together, we are creating opportunities, building connections, and making a lasting impact in our community.

With gratitude,
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

Jamie Ballard

Tonya Bateman

Nichole Brooks

Arezu Fazelnia

Dominique Files

Rajasi Gore

Richard Griggs

Jacob Hayes

Charles Ivey

Henry Langford

Wendy Lineberger

Amy Marlow

Anna Metaxas

Nicole Pasini

Patreese Poore

Hayley Potter

Jill Purcell

Stephanie Rodriguez

Charlene Schlesinger

Candis Starkey

Emma Vowel

Dianna Wooldridge

ADVOCACY CORNER

MAY 2026

Why Language Matters in Advocacy

Words shape the way we perceive and interact with the world and with each other. When advocating for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), language is a powerful tool that can either reinforce outdated stereotypes or promote true inclusion and respect.

It's important to recognize that supporting people with IDD does not require someone to be an "angel" or a "very special person." These well-meaning phrases, while intended as compliments, set individuals with IDD apart as fundamentally different, which can unintentionally perpetuate stigma. Instead, we should focus on seeing people with IDD as individuals—friends, colleagues, neighbors—who deserve the same dignity and respect as anyone else.

The words we choose matter. Speaking directly to people with IDD, using respectful language, and avoiding patronizing or sensationalized terms help foster a culture of belonging. Advocacy begins with everyday conversations and the recognition that everyone deserves respect. Along with this respect, it's important to remember that laughter, joy, and fun are natural parts of every relationship. Sharing genuine moments of humor and connection with people with IDD affirms their full participation in all aspects of life.

Choosing our words thoughtfully not only shows respect, but also opens the door to authentic relationships, shared experiences, and true community for everyone.

Sincerely,
Mel Stanley
Advocacy Specialist

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
- https://vkc.vumc.org/vkc/self-adv/res/

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

EMORY VALLEY CENTER

DRAGON BOAT RACE

2026

AUGUST 15TH

MELTON LAKE PARK | OAK RIDGE, TN

EMORY VALLEY CENTER

MAXIMIZING HUMAN ABILITIES

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.

CELEBRATING THE CARING HEARTS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Our organization was proud to celebrate both Nurses Appreciation Week and Teacher Appreciation Week by recognizing the incredible individuals who make a lasting impact on the lives of the children and families we serve every day.
We extend a special thank you to our dedicated nurses, Kristen, Lacey, and Teresa, for their compassion, patience, and exceptional care. Their commitment to supporting individuals and families strengthens our community in countless meaningful ways. We are deeply grateful for the comfort, encouragement, and support they provide each day.
We also celebrated the amazing teachers and staff at our Early Learning Center and Little Learning Lab. Their creativity, dedication, and nurturing spirit help children learn, grow, and build confidence in inclusive environments where every child feels supported and valued. Their influence extends far beyond the classroom, making a positive difference in the lives of so many families.
To all of our nurses, teachers, and staff members — thank you for the heart you bring to your work and for the difference you make each and every day. We are proud to celebrate and appreciate all that you do!

EVC HAPPENINGS

Celebrating Our Administrative Professionals

During Administrative Professionals Appreciation Week, we proudly recognize the incredible individuals who help keep everything running smoothly behind the scenes at Emory Valley Center. Our administrative team plays a vital role in supporting staff, coordinating daily operations, and helping ensure the individuals and families we serve receive the highest level of care and support. Their hard work, organization, dedication, and attention to detail make a difference every single day.

This week, we celebrate and thank Annette, Daniel, Britney, Lynne, Kelsi, Ana, and Leah for all they do. Their commitment, professionalism, and compassion are truly appreciated, and we are grateful for the important role they play in fulfilling our mission.

Thank you for everything you do — not just this week, but all year long!

Employee Spotlight: Daniel Orahood

Daniel Orahood joined EVC in January 2024 as a PSR Specialist and has quickly become an integral part of the Behavioral Health team. In his role, Daniel supports helping individuals build skills that promote stability, independence, and overall well-being.

Daniel is currently completing his Master's internship and will be graduating on May 9th, demonstrating his commitment to continued growth and professional development. He consistently goes above and beyond in his role, always willing to step in and help wherever needed. Whether covering groups, supporting coworkers, or adapting to last-minute needs, Daniel approaches every situation with flexibility and a positive attitude.

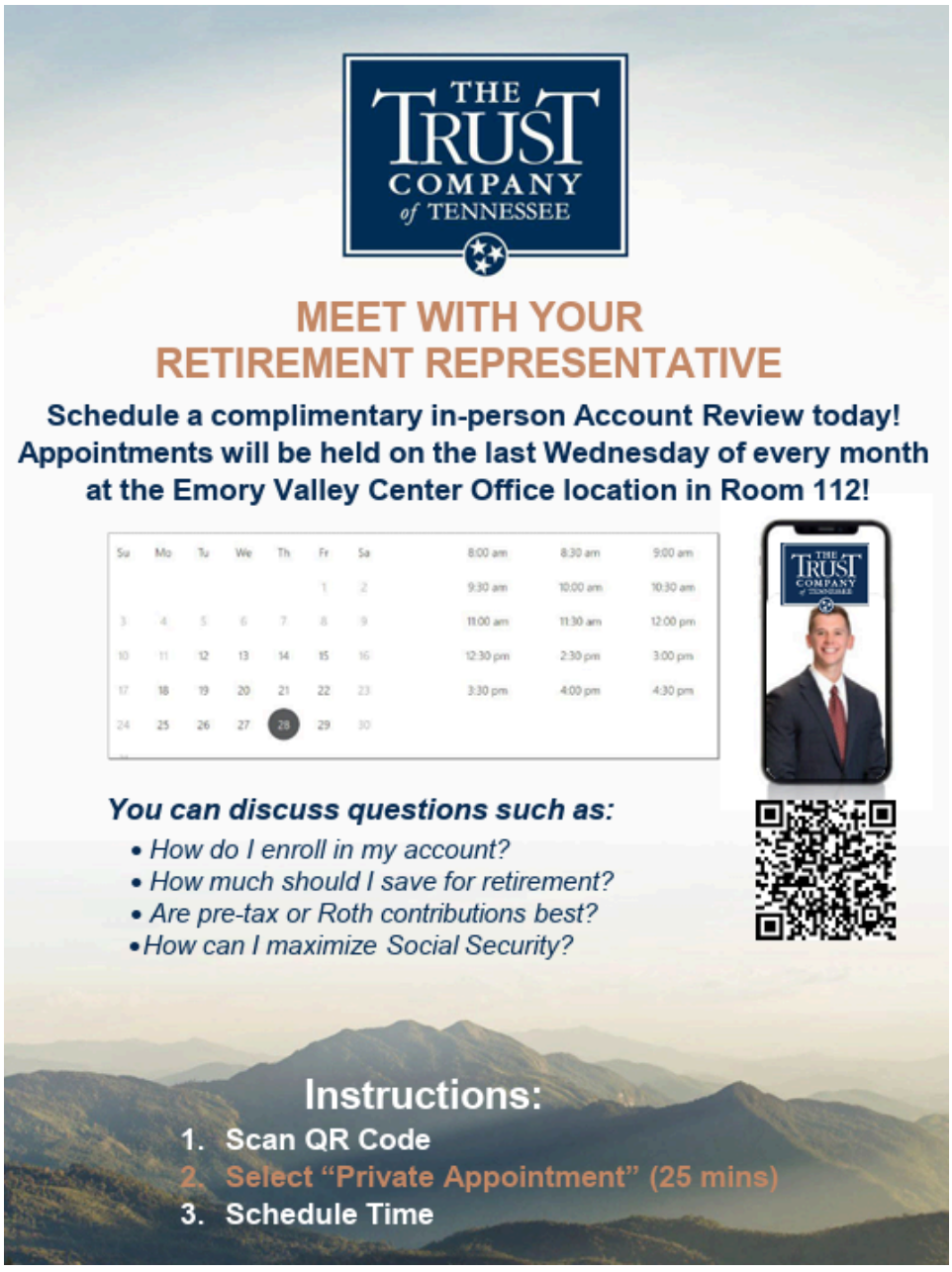
In addition to his daily responsibilities, Daniel is actively involved in Special Olympics, helping promote inclusion, confidence, and community engagement through athletics. His dedication extends beyond expectations, reflecting a genuine passion for everyone at EVC. Daniel's reliability, teamwork, and willingness to jump in at any moment make him a valued member of the EVC team. We are grateful for his contributions and look forward to celebrating his upcoming graduation and continued impact within the organization.

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.