

# HEROES OF HOPE



WINTER 2026

**The Child is the Center of it All.**

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# From the CEO's Desk

Dear Friends,

As we close another remarkable year at The Children's Center, my heart is filled with gratitude for all that we've accomplished together. Because of you, more than 4,000 children received the care and support they needed in 2025. Your generosity has provided comfort, healing, and opportunity for children and families across our community—each story a reflection of your compassion and belief in what's possible.

This year, we've seen our community come together in the most inspiring ways. Time and again, people stepped up—giving, volunteering, and ensuring families could share meals, access resources, and experience the joys of the season. From Trunk or Treat to Thanksgiving and holiday celebrations, your kindness helped create lasting memories for children and families right here in our community. Witnessing the ripple effect of that goodness reminds us how powerful a single act of care can be—and we are so grateful to receive and share that love.

As we step into 2026, we carry forward your compassion, knowing every child deserves to be seen, heard, and supported. With your partnership, we'll continue to strengthen our programs, expand access to care, and advocate for a future where every child and family can thrive.

Thank you for being a part of our story, for believing in the potential of every child, and for standing with us in this work. Your continued support inspires hope—today, tomorrow, and always.

With gratitude,



Desiree Jennings

President & CEO



# Teaming Up for a Playground Transformation

This fall, our playgrounds underwent a meaningful and exciting transformation, made possible through the generous in-kind donations and dedicated volunteer support of the National Association of Black Suppliers Scholarship Fund (NABSSF), along with the invaluable support of Ford Philanthropy. Their partnership—anchored in thoughtful planning, inspired leadership, and hands-on involvement—brought this vision to life for our children and families.

We are also grateful to our friends at Detroit Chassis LLC and DTE Energy, who recognized the opportunity to make a lasting impact and worked side by side with us to ensure our play areas were refreshed, safe, and ready for children to enjoy. This collaborative effort is a shining example of what can be achieved when community organizations come together with purpose and heart.



The outdoor improvements include new, safe mulch, child-friendly picnic tables, a playful roadway on the playground blacktop, whimsical animal-themed benches, and a bright, cheerful rock garden—each designed to inspire imaginative play, encourage social connection, and provide a welcoming space for children to explore.

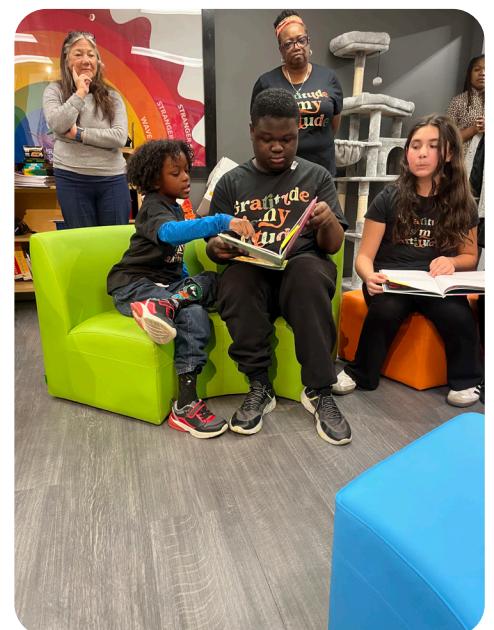
Thanks to this remarkable teamwork, our children now have a safer, more engaging environment where they can play freely, learn, and create lasting memories. We are deeply grateful to all of our community partners whose dedication and generosity continue to help children and families thrive every day.

## Little Readers, Big Hearts

We are so proud to share a heartwarming moment from our Readers and Creators program. This wonderful program invites guest readers to join us for a special story time, followed by an activity inspired by the book. It's always a joy to see creativity and curiosity come alive.

Recently, a group of children asked a simple but powerful question: "Why can't we be the readers?" Ms. Andi, who leads Readers and Creators, responded just as powerfully: "Of course you can!"

These young readers wanted their experience to be about more than just reading—they wanted to give back. In honor of National Philanthropy Day, they formed the Gratitude Team and led a hat and gloves drive, asking for donations from our staff to support the community we serve.



The group proudly read *A Kid's Book About Giving*, by Jessica Jackley, reminding us all that you're never too young to make a difference. Their leadership, compassion, and enthusiasm inspire us, and we are so grateful for these little readers with big hearts.

# A Look Inside The Children's Center

We're excited to share our new tour video, giving you a glimpse into the transformation and magic that happen here every day. From children discovering their confidence to families finding support, every moment is made possible by a caring community like you.

Scan the QR code to watch the video now!



Want to see it in person? Schedule a tour by emailing [tours@thechildrenscenter.com](mailto:tours@thechildrenscenter.com).

## Celebrating Kate Bandol: A True Community Champion

For over 12 years, Kate Bandol has generously given her time, energy, and remarkable talents as the design lead for our annual Holiday Shop. Each year, she transforms the Tau Beta Family Success Center into a magical, festive space that warmly welcomes families, creating a joyful experience that parents and legal guardians look forward to. Her creativity and attention to detail make every corner feel special, turning the space into a place of celebration, hope, and connection.

Kate's impact doesn't stop there. She is a natural leader who rallies her community to support events for children and families, inspiring friends, neighbors, and colleagues to volunteer their time, donate items, and contribute in countless ways. Her ability to bring people together and motivate them to help those in need has amplified the reach and impact of our programs far beyond what words can capture.

In recognition of her unwavering dedication and selfless service, Kate was honored with the **Distinguished Volunteer Award** at the AFP Greater Detroit National Philanthropy Day (NPD) Strolling Dinner & Awards Ceremony—a well-deserved acknowledgment of her years of commitment and the countless lives she has touched.

Kate's thoughtfulness, generosity, and passion exemplify the spirit of community. We are profoundly grateful for all that she does, and her story reminds us of the incredible difference one dedicated individual can make.



# Meals that Matter

This Thanksgiving, we were reminded of the extraordinary strength and generosity of our community. Thanks to the support of our partners and neighbors, more than 500 individuals enjoyed a warm and memorable holiday meal through our annual Turkey and Ham Giveaway and a special home-cooked meal donation from Norm's Diner.

Our longtime partners at Tau Beta played a pivotal role once again, providing 50 turkeys and 50 hams—complete with all the traditional sides—as well as dedicated volunteer support to help distribute meals to families. Their commitment ensured that dozens of households could celebrate the holiday with comfort and abundance.

Meanwhile, Norm's Diner, a locally owned restaurant in Detroit's West Village, responded with incredible compassion to the recent SNAP benefit pause. Motivated to make a difference, they launched a community-driven effort that resulted in fresh, home-cooked Thanksgiving meals for 400 individuals. In an extraordinary act of generosity, they also presented The Children's Center with a \$17,500 donation to strengthen essential programs, including our pantry.

As we reflect on this heartwarming season of giving, we are deeply moved by the spirit of unity, compassion, and gratitude displayed by our community. Whether in moments of challenge or celebration, our partners continue to stand beside us, helping to create brighter, more hopeful futures for every child and family we serve. We are truly thankful for a community that cares.



## Voices of the Future

Following the launch of our endowment through the Michigan Central Station Children's Endowment Initiative (MCSCEI), we have seen our community rally in remarkable ways to support the future of our city's children and families. This initiative has been championed by Detroit youth themselves, and it has been inspiring to witness young leaders across the city stepping forward to raise funds and help move us toward our goal of securing \$1.5 million by December 2026.

One standout example is high school junior Alaina Peters, who chose The Children's Center as the focus of her DECA Community Giving Project. Alaina immersed herself fully—researching our mission, volunteering her time, and spreading awareness through a thoughtful and compelling display of our work. She also launched a successful crowdfunding campaign that raised \$1,279, every dollar of which is doubled through the endowment's matching opportunity.

Alaina's passion, determination, and creativity exemplify the powerful role young people can play in strengthening their communities and driving meaningful change. Her classmates joined her efforts as well, contributing to the campaign and proudly wearing branded bracelets to help promote The Children's Center.

We are deeply grateful for the dedication of our community members—especially the youth who are leading the way. Their efforts are creating a lasting legacy, and we look forward to watching this next generation continue to uplift and inspire our city.

# A Year of Resilience

As we ring in the New Year, we want to celebrate the incredible progress of one of our clients. At 17, she faced profound challenges—grieving the loss of her father to suicide, struggling with major depressive disorder, and navigating frequent suspensions at school. She had fallen into a difficult peer group and often clashed with her own family.

Over the past year, working closely with her General Behavioral Health clinician, Sashay, she has made remarkable strides. Through consistent support and guidance, she learned to identify her feelings, practice problem-solving, and manage her emotions. These skills helped her rebuild trust and strengthen relationships with her family.

Today, she is no longer at risk of expulsion, has applied to colleges, and is focused on achieving her dream of higher education. Her journey over the past year is a powerful reminder of the resilience and transformation that is possible with support, self-reflection, and determination.

This progress wouldn't have been possible without the generosity of donors like you. Your support helps provide the guidance, tools, and care that make stories like hers possible. Thank you for investing in hope, healing, and brighter futures.

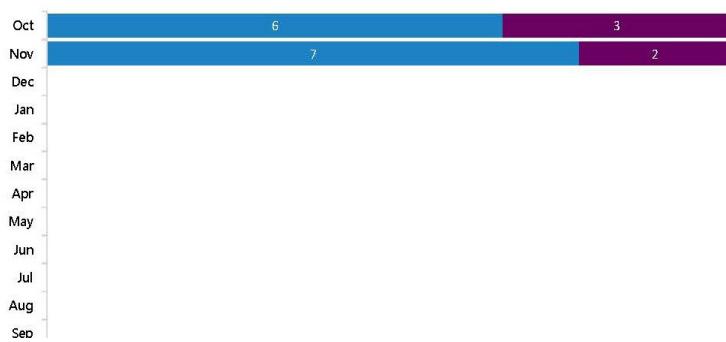
As we step into the New Year, we celebrate her achievements—and the strength, hope, and resilience she has instilled in herself!



## Child Welfare



Adoptions and Reunifications that occurred per month during FY26.



18

Children have achieved permanency, fiscal year to date

2

Reunifications

7

Adoptions

# Making Spirits Bright

Because of the generosity of our donors and community partners, the holidays were once again made magical for the children and families served by The Children's Center. Thanks to the continued support of Tau Beta, the Holiday Shop remains a cherished tradition—bringing joy, dignity, and relief to families during this meaningful time of year.

This December, 360 families with 1,409 children were able to shop for gifts at no cost. Each child received a large gift, stocking stuffers, a book, a hat, gloves, and a scarf, while every family also went home with a Meijer gift card, a cozy blanket, and other essentials to make the season warmer and brighter.

Because of you, nearly 1,500 children experienced the excitement and comfort of the holidays. Your generosity was felt throughout our agency and amplified by the commitment of more than 33 community groups and organizations and 442 individual volunteers, who contributed 1,878 hours of service to bring this program to life.

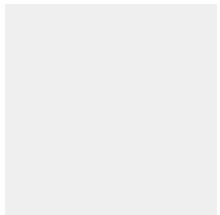
We extend our deepest thanks to our Gold Sponsor, Goldfish Swim School (BHB Operations); Silver Sponsors, Rariden Schumacher Mio Interior Design and Schaeffler; and Bronze Sponsors, Deb Allen, Mitsubishi Electric Auto America – Peace Committee, Operating Engineers 324, and the Sgt. Lee Smith Legacy Fund. Your generosity made Holiday Shop possible and helped create lasting memories for the children and families we serve.

Your generosity didn't just provide gifts—it delivered hope, warmth, and a powerful reminder that our families are not alone this holiday season.





79 Alexandrine West  
Detroit, MI 48201



The Children's Center of Wayne County, Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, IRS tax I.D. number 38-1359505.  
No goods or services were provided in consideration of this contribution, which is tax-deductible as allowed by law.



The Children's Center | 79 West Alexandrine, Detroit, MI 48201 | 313.831.5535 | [TheChildrensCenter.com](http://TheChildrensCenter.com)

## Future Events

### March

**313 Day - A Day of Online Giving**  
March 13, 2026

### May

**Save the Date:**  
**Power of Possibilities Breakfast**  
May 12, 2026  
*Motor City Casino Hotel*

## Scan the QR to Donate Today!

**This winter, your generosity lights the way to brighter futures.**

**Together, we're transforming lives.**



Events are subject to change.

If interested in Volunteer Opportunities, please contact the Volunteer Engagement team to sign up at [Volunteer@thechildrenscenter.com](mailto:Volunteer@thechildrenscenter.com).