



the VOICE

FALL 2021

harvesting HOPE

Story p 4-5

FALL 2021



harvesting a continuous line of HOPE

Like many words, **"hope"** can have various connotations.

On a simplistic level, I can hope it won't rain on my vacation, or I can hope the Bengals win their next game. But on a deeper level, hope refers to a state of mind...an underlying sense that life going forward will offer the possibility of safety, well-being, and success. It is driven by a belief in one's self-worth and by a confidence that there are people who genuinely care about us.

Many of the children in our care come to us with very complex emotional and behavioral difficulties and require a multitude of therapeutic interventions. However, if I had to describe in the most basic terms what our main goal is for these youngsters, I would suggest it is quite simply to instill in them that deeper sense of hope which many of them have lost or perhaps have never even experienced.



"Hope" is the central theme of this newsletter. We are blessed with a host of compassionate individuals who collaborate to offer hope to those whom we serve. From our dedicated staff to our wonderful supporters like you, we collaborate to make hope happen. This can sometimes be a very challenging task. It can get frustrating and tiring. But it is all worth it when we are privileged to see even a spark of hopefulness in the eyes of one of our kids. It is a glimmer that seems to say, "Hey, maybe I am loveable... maybe there is a place for me in this world...maybe there is hope after all!"

As always, I am grateful to each of you for helping bring such moments of realization to life. Thank you so much for being bringers of hope to our precious children and their families.

Sincerely,

Bob Wilson

Bob Wilson
Executive Director

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Our Executive Staff

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Executive Director

Gay Trame
Finance Director

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John Ross
Programs Director

Emily Burch
Residential Treatment Director

Doug Harlow
TBS/PQI Director

Ron Bertsch
Therapeutic Foster Care/Adoption Director

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Agency Partner



Hope is an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large. As a verb, its definitions include: "expect with confidence" and "to cherish a desire with anticipation."





fostering HOPE

The DCCH Foster Care Team works tirelessly to place children in loving foster homes, many with the goal of returning to their biological parents. This summer, the Team was thrilled to support three foster families as they worked to return children to their "bio" homes. In May, a pair of twins returned home after over a year of care. During that time, the biological family connected with the foster parents, Rachel and Tobias Nathe, and invited them to become an ongoing part of the children's life.

Tobias says, "When we took in seven-month-old twin boys in March of 2020 it was with the understanding that they were on the 'return to parent' track. So, from the beginning we surrendered the notion that we would eventually adopt the kids and instead focused on how to make the best of the situation we were in. This meant caring for the boys with abundant love, of course, but also praying daily for their birth parents and encouraging them when they came back in the picture some three months later. Our relationship with the birth parents was always cordial; they were very thankful from the start for all that we were doing. As they progressed in their individual plans to turn their lives around, we became their advocates – not just for their sake, but for the sake of the boys who deserved a stable home as soon as possible. Knowing our intentions, the birth parents came to trust us and a solid friendship blossomed.

Now that the twins have indeed returned to their parents, we are in frequent contact with Mom and Dad. Our relationship has allowed us to remain in the boys' lives as babysitters, gift-givers, and overall support. Isn't this how foster care is designed to work? The parents get better, their children return to a healthy environment, and the foster family remains in touch for support and love."

We're happy to share these stories that continue to bring joy to reunited families. In June, a sibling group returned home in less than a year. The first-time foster parents opened their home to teenagers, enjoyed spending time with them, and learned more about their family. And, just this past month, another DCCH foster family was able to care for a child in need until he could return to his biological father.

Fostering is flexible! Please reach out to our Team at Info@DCCHCenter.org to learn all the ways foster parents can #ChangeLives!



Rachel and Tobias Nathe

Recently, a child adopted by one of our foster families wrote a nice note to our TFC leader, Ron Bertsch. She was a teen when she was adopted and is now going off to college. We thought we'd share an excerpt with you!

*"To my DCCH Family,
Thank you for the love and support over the years.
I could not be the person I am today without DCCH.
DCCH is responsible for giving me a family."*

HOPE

is back in session



School's back in session, which means one of the most important safety nets children have is back in place – our teachers and school workers! We wondered if the number of suspected incidences of child abuse were down because children were not in school or other places people might notice evidence of abuse.

The University of California, Irvine, recently studied suspected and actual cases of child abuse in December 2019 versus December 2020. They reported "cases of suspected child abuse fell, but the severity of actual child abuse cases rose during that time." Fallout from the pandemic – economic instability, widespread shutdowns, remote school, telecommuting, and quarantines – raised stress levels of family members and left some children isolated in homes with their abusers.

We thought we'd share the latest stats on "out-of-home-care" for the Commonwealth and our Northern Kentucky Region. Children are removed from the home for an array of reasons, including parental incarceration, abandonment, abuse, and neglect. Every number represents a child in need of a safe place to live, food security, people who care, and in many cases, intensive therapy. These are the things we provide in our Residential Treatment and Therapeutic Foster Care & Adoption programs and through The Therapy Center at DCCH. Every day we work to heal children and bring families together – and we appreciate your partnership in carrying out our mission!



Ky Cabinet for Health & Family Out of Home Placements

| All Kentucky | NKY |
|--------------|-------|
| 9,115 | 1,272 |

First Entry to Foster Care

| | All Kentucky | NKY |
|--------------------|--------------|-----|
| Less Than One Year | 1,882 | 261 |
| 1 To < 3 Years | 1,230 | 156 |
| 3 To < 6 Years | 1,493 | 212 |
| 6 To < 12 Years | 2,348 | 331 |
| 12 To < 18 Years | 2,155 | 312 |

Adoption vs Family Reunification

| | All Kentucky | NKY |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----|
| Children w/Goal of Adoption* | 3,066 | 423 |
| Children w/Goal of Reunification* | 4,673 | 633 |

* Other goals include placement with relatives, planned permanent living, or the goals have not been determined.

Data as of August 1, 2021

Source: Kentucky Cabinet for Health & Family Services



O most watchful guardian of the Holy Family, defend the chosen children of Jesus Christ; O most loving father, ward off from us every contagion of error and corrupting influence; O our most mighty protector, be kind to us and from heaven assist us in our struggle with the power of darkness.

Photo credit: St. Joseph By Manuel Farrugia (2019).
Commissioned by Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC consecrationtostjoseph.org

St. Joseph's Ministry *an outreach initiative*

Saint Joseph's Ministry is an outreach initiative offered by DCCH Center for Children and Families' Therapeutic Foster Care Program, with support from the Diocese of Covington. It was created to raise awareness of the many ways the church and faith communities can support children in Kentucky's public child protection system.

As St. Joseph accepted the task of fostering Jesus, we are also called to care for the orphan. As noted in James 1:27, we are called to care for widows and orphans. This role can come in many forms. Perhaps full-time fostering of a child for a season? Maybe adopting a child or sibling group and making a lifetime commitment? Nearly one-fourth of the 9,100+ children in foster care will come to need an adoptive family.

St. Joseph Ministry not only aims to help educate the community about foster care, it also calls the rest of the church to wrap a loving embrace around the family from your individual church community who is or will be taking on this difficult calling. We can do this through prayers and by offering goods and services. A foster/adoptive family from your church may need help with a meal during a busy time, or with getting a child to or from school or an activity. They may just need a piece of furniture, new car seat, or some hand-me down clothes. Maybe an evening off for a respite break or some tutoring for the child that will make the task more manageable.

DCCH seeks volunteers from each church to become a liaison or an ambassador to assist DCCH with these efforts. We're also looking for speaking opportunities at local churches. Know that DCCH will try to coordinate the support offered from your own church. If you are interested in helping or learning more about the unique support St. Joseph's Ministry offers to youth and foster/adoptive parents, please email Info@DCCHCenter.org or call 859/331-2040.





It's what we do at DCCH. Every child who comes to DCCH – hurt, afraid, angry, broken – has a tiny seed of hope inside. We work hard to nurture that hope and ultimately allow each child to experience a bountiful harvest of hope for a brighter future.

Here Is Lily's Story:

"My name is Lily, and I'm 11 years old. I just had my birthday last week. Being 11 doesn't feel that different from being 10, but this birthday sure was different here at DCCH. I got presents and a cake with my name on it and everybody sang to me. It was kind of embarrassing, but really fun.

I came here from my last foster home. I didn't stay there too long because I kept being bad. It's just that I get real mad, and then I don't listen, and sometimes I hit people and cuss them out. I don't even realize what I'm doing when I feel that way. I guess that's why I had to leave that home, just like the ones before them. I get mad at myself when I can't do what I'm supposed to. I have too many thoughts about things that have happened to me. I get sad and scared.

My caseworker told me I was born on drugs because my mom took them when she was pregnant. I had to stay in the hospital until they were out. My mom couldn't take care of me, because she went somewhere to try to fix her problems. I stayed with my Aunt Beth for a while, but then she couldn't keep me anymore, so I went to my first foster family.

When my mom got better, I went to live with her and her boyfriend, Jimmy. But she started doing drugs again. She and Jimmy would yell and scream a lot, and I was so scared I'd hide under my bed. Sometimes they left me in the apartment for long times, and there was no food to eat.

When I was 6, my mom left one day and said she'd be right back, but she wasn't. It got dark and I was starving, so I walked to this restaurant, because sometimes I could find food in their garbage cans. A person who worked there called the police and they took me away, and that's the last time I lived with my mom.

I went back to my aunt's house but was mad about everything. I missed my mom, but I was mad at her too. And I was mad at myself. I thought maybe all her problems were because of me. I got in trouble at school a lot. I hated reading and couldn't pay attention to my teacher. Everything was really hard.

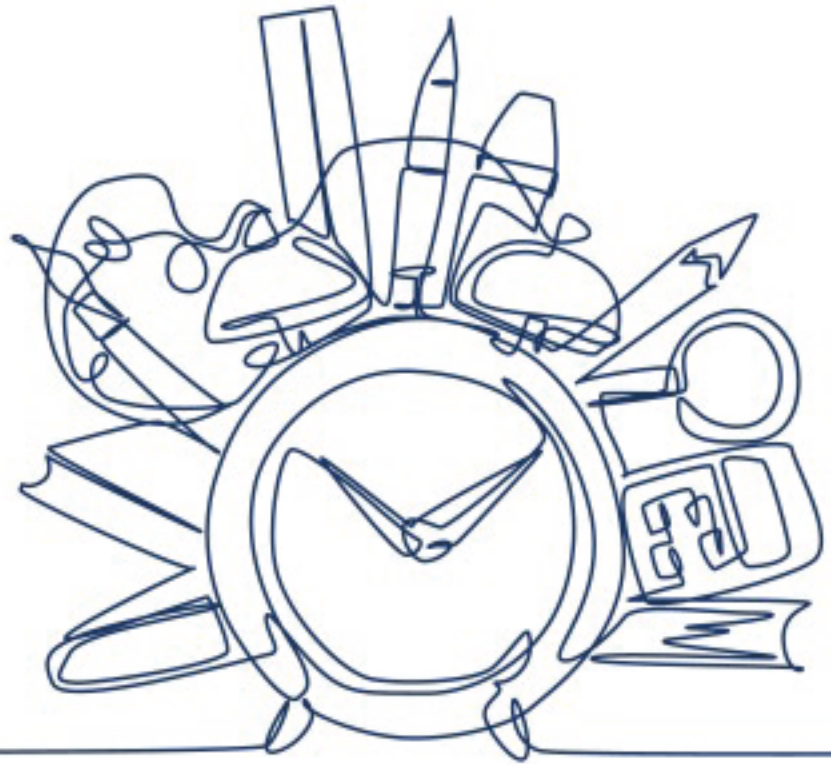
Then my real dad came back and I went to live with him. But when I got in trouble at school, he would call me names and hit me. Sometimes he tied me to my bed. I couldn't get to the bathroom, so I'd pee myself. That would make him even madder, and he'd hit me with his belt. When my teacher saw the bruises on my legs and arms, they called my state worker. That's when I went to the other foster homes, and eventually came here.

I like DCCH. You get to have fun and they have good stuff to eat. Sometimes the other kids get on my nerves, but I'm working on not getting mad. Miss Kelly works in my apartment, and she helps me stay calm and listen. And she helps me at bedtime when I miss my mom and think about the bad things that have happened. She tucks me in and sings a song to me. Just before she leaves my room, she always says three things: "Keep trying your best...I know you can do it...I won't give up on you." Sometimes I say it with her, and we both laugh.

I know things are going to be better for me now because the people here are helping me. Miss Kelly says I've 'come a long way' and I know things will get better for me. They're even looking for a foster family for me and I'm excited about that."

The details of Lily's life are based on actual experiences of many of our kids at DCCH. Her story is all too real.

Employee Spotlight: *Tim Lucas*



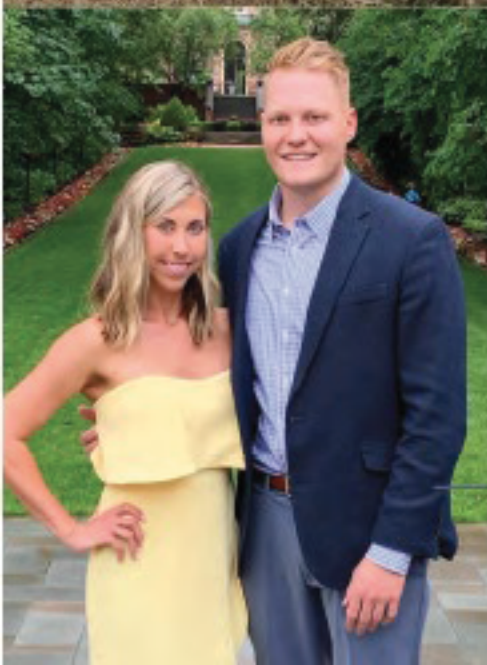
DCCH Finance Director **Tim Lucas** is hanging up his calculator after 18 years, and we couldn't let the occasion go by unmarked. Tim has been an integral part of DCCH's growth and financial stability for the past two decades, setting the stage for a successful capital campaign back in 2009, working with the Board to develop budgets, and ensuring DCCH will continue to thrive into the future.

Tim is a life-long Northern Kentucky resident and Newport Central Catholic High School graduate. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Northern Kentucky University in 1976, Tim went to work for Gap, Inc., eventually overseeing all their logistics operations and earning an MBA along the way. In 2001, after 25 years with Gap, Inc. Tim "retired," but always felt his dream job was a Business Manager, preferably for a local parish. When he saw DCCH's ad in the Sunday Enquirer in May, 2003, Tim immediately dusted off his resume, and it was in the mail on Monday. He interviewed that Wednesday and was hired on Thursday! "It was like it was meant to be," he says. Tim was already familiar with DCCH through his home parish of St. Joe's Cold Spring and his wife's aunt was a Sister of Notre Dame working at DCCH. The transition was seamless, and in 2008 Tim added the title of Human Resources Director to his business card. He has also overseen the management of our campus facilities and grounds. For the past 18 years, Tim has served the children and families who come to DCCH for compassionate care by ensuring our Programs will always be available to those in need.

Tim plans to spend his second retirement doing what he loves most: spending time with his four children and seven grandkids, traveling with his wife Linda, and of course, hitting the golf course as often as possible. He's promised to stay involved with DCCH through the Swing Into Spring Committee and is open to serving on the Board of Directors.

Please join all of us in wishing Tim a happy and fulfilling retirement...he's earned it for sure!

You can honor Tim's retirement with a gift to DCCH! Go to <https://www.dcchcenter.org/donate> and click on "Dedicate This Gift."



JOIN US
FOR
TRUNK OR
TREAT!

HALO: *helping all the little ones*

If you are looking for a great way to get involved, the HALO League is a fabulous group of men and women who attend to the social and emotional needs of the children and staff at DCCH Center for Children and Families.

This group organizes and attends monthly events with the children in residence at DCCH. In June, HALO took the children to World of Golf to play putt-putt along with a pizza party. Upcoming activities include Bowling, Sky Zone, craft nights, Trunk or Treat, and stuffing St. Nick Stockings.

We hope you'll join us! Meetings are held the third Monday of each month at 7:00 pm in the DCCH Welcome Center. If you would like to get involved, please email Info@DCCHCenter.org or give us a call at 859/331-2040.

You can also help HALO fund these fun events for the children by registering your Kroger card to DCCH/HALO. DCCH gets a percentage quarterly from Kroger. Register at KrogerCommunityRewards.com. Use Organization #TA964.

Trunk or Treat | October 26, 2021 (Rain date: October 28)

Volunteer Spotlight: *maggie lehmkuhl*

Maggie Lehmkuhl was drawn to DCCH when looking for a way to get involved in the community. She is an office leasing agent with CBRE and has been volunteering with DCCH now for five years. When learning about the kids' stories, she really wanted to make a difference.

Maggie was involved with various area boards, but once she met the kids at DCCH and saw how they light up with just the smallest bit of attention from someone, she decided to just focus on volunteering with DCCH. Maggie is a member of the Young Professionals Group, which meets once a month, conducts fun events, and helps with recreational activities with the children in our Residential Treatment program.

Spending more time with the kids, Maggie was inspired to become a one-on-one Mentor for a girl in that program. She spends time with her a couple of times per week and sends her supportive messages every day.

"Most people don't realize how close DCCH is in our community, so being able to do a small gesture on a daily basis that brings joy to a child who is healing, makes you feel thankful for what you have and really grounds you to what's important in life."

Maggie has volunteered in other aspects as well, helping paint the interior of the residential building, supporting DCCH's Swing Into Spring fundraiser, and participating in a back-to-school drive for the kids. We are blessed by Maggie's dedication to our mission and for all the time, energy, and enthusiasm she brings to our children every day.

Maggie Lehmkuhl and fiancé Alex Welch

Independent Living Program

talk about harvesting hope!

Our Independent Living Program (ILP) is the largest it has ever been. We are now serving five young adults, ages 18-21. Two will be graduating from the program in less than a year on their 21st birthdays.

Our clients are hard working and are showing their resilience in finding work and services during the chaos of the pandemic. DCCH's ILP serves young adults who have aged out of the foster care system. We provide housing, financial support, and help each individual develop an education plan, career plan, and budget while helping them implement coping skills, leading to a successful transition to independence.

We are always looking for rental property we can access to house these brave young adults. If you are aware of properties that DCCH can rent, please let us know at Info@DCCHCenter.org



DO YOU
KNOW A
RENTAL WE
CAN
ACCESS?

Have you seen our new Marquee?

Thanks to a very generous anonymous donation, we have a new, beautiful, dynamic marquee! We're excited to be able to increase our visibility in the community as well as provide multiple messages each day to keep everyone up-to-date on what's happening at DCCH. Come by and check us out!



Old Sign

DCCH Thanks Our Local Foundations!

Thank you to the following funders:

Anonymous
Friedlander Family Fund
Kosair Charities
St. Timothy Parish, Florence
(Grants received between 5/15 and 7/30/21)

Stay Connected to Us!

There is always something good happening at DCCH! Whether it's a fun event, the latest adoption, or a child's success story, you can stay connected to it all. Check us out on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn; sign up for our "Good News" e-blast and The Voice Newsletter; or watch a video on our YouTube page. Like, follow, and share our stories. <https://dcchcenter.org/stayconnected>

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