



the james project

...homes and support for fostering families...



April 2019  
Volume 8, Issue 1

# The JP Journal

*Rewriting the stories of children in foster care*

## MORTGAGE RETIRED ON FIFTH HOUSE

We are overjoyed, overwhelmed, and just plain over the moon to announce that our 5th James Project Home purchased in October was paid off in full on February 19<sup>th</sup>! Through incredible support and generosity from people who believe in our mission “that none be lost,” enough funds were raised during the Christmas season to make this possible.

The Cherry Hills Church congregation took a special offering throughout December in which over \$63,000 were raised and donors Mike and Beth O’Shea made a new roof possible for the home. Many other businesses and individuals were a part of the Fifth House Campaign and we are grateful for each and every dollar given to allow us to have a warm and welcoming home for teenage girls.



## CHRISTMAS PARTY FOR FOSTER FAMILIES A SUCCESS

The season of Christmas can be especially hard for foster children and it was the goal of The James Project (JP) and Cherry Hills Church to provide an incredible Christmas party for them. On December 8, over 430 foster children and parents attended the first annual JP Christmas Party. With the help of countless volunteers who specialized in merry-making, Cherry Hills was transformed in a winter wonderland complete with Santa, professional Christmas photos, crafts, lunch catered by Chick-fil-A, beautiful gingerbread men cookies made by Incredibly Delicious, and a free candy store. The smiles on the faces of the children and their families let us know a wonderful and memorable day was had by all. We look forward to another Merry Christmas for foster families in 2019!

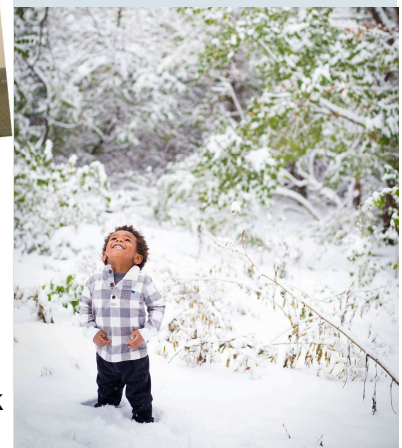
### Our Mission

The James Project recruits and supports dedicated foster parents through the provision of homes and services.



### THE WONDER OF A CHILD

For a child, the winter snow transformed the world outside their windows into a magical land of white. Taking a step out into its powdery depths, the snow also meant snowmen, snowball fights, and hot chocolate. May we remember these simple pleasures God gives us each day, whether it is dusting of snow or glorious sunshine in the sky. Thank Him always!



~ Snow Angel, Gray Miller as photographed by adoptive mom, Kasey Miller

## LIFE GROUPS AND BUSINESSES MAKEOVER ROOMS

### CLOSET 1:27 UPDATE

One of the best resources of the JP is Closet 1:27. Created in 2012 to fill a need for providing clothing and supplies for new foster children, it has served **670 children**.

How can you help keep our Closet stocked? By hosting a “drive” for one or more of the following items:

- Diapers
- Pajamas
- Underwear
- Paper Products
- Cereal
- Soap products
- Hygiene products

Please contact us at 217.546.3532 for more information or to share your ideas with us!

Forty-eight talented volunteers in groups representing businesses, churches, families, and friends participated in the Adopt-a-Room program at our newest home. Every room was updated, overhauled, and beautified until it looked like a scene out of a hit show on HGTV! New paint, carpet, vanities, lighting fixtures, and wall coverings were added, not to mention furniture, window treatments, towels, bedding and artwork. A lot of time, energy, and love went into this home and we offer gratitude to all who helped with the dramatic transformation!

### ADOPT-A-ROOM VOLUNTEERS

*Josh Amore, Tom & Elizabeth Bazan, Erica Blakely, Bob & Donna Biggs, Cinric Painting, Cogency Global, Anne Cornelius, Sue Cozzens, Susie Cross, Jody Dabrowski, Geri Delano, Maria DelBeccio, Sarah & Kevin Donaldson, Amy Edwards, Mark Fanale, Kaitlyn Finley, Kathie Fleck, Jason & Brandy Fletcher, Madi Fletcher, Gaspere Gallina, Paul Gaumer, Shirley Green, Sarah Harkness, Allison & Josh Hetzler, Lequancy Hill, Illinois Educator's Credit Union, Tiffani Johnson, Kara & Jason Kincaid, Malayan Marti, Chip & Julie McClure, Andrea Mlacnik, Nadine Neumeister, Tina Newingham, Nu-Tub, Andrew Peachey, Kim Peters, Pam Robert, Diane Schleyhahn, Sara Schlichting, Staff Carpet, Jeff & Shari Stauffer, Karun & Curtis Tillett, Wanda Tracy, Stephanie Wise, Terri & Eric Woolbright*



Shopping at [smile.Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/smile) earns dollars for the JP! Simply choose James Project, Inc. in Pawnee, Illinois and 0.5% for every dollar spent is donated to the JP. While it may not seem like a lot, every dollar goes toward helping more fostering families.

## FOSTER CHILD THRIVES THROUGH BASKETBALL

Great coaches can make a huge difference in the life of an athlete—especially a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade boy who is in foster care and has cerebral palsy. The Lee family has fostered “J” for a year and he has blossomed in that time through their gift of love and that of two remarkable Butler Elementary basketball coaches named Kevin Norris and Anesha Sullivan. Both Kevin and Anesha took a special interest in “J” and helped him play a sport he really loves. Without their dedication, “J” would have been on the sidelines. The JP salutes these basketball heroes!



## KIDS HELPING KIDS

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The Girl Scout Promise is something many of us are familiar with: “On my honor, I will try; to serve God and my country, to help people at all times, and to live by the Girl Scout law.” Brownie Troop #6929 led by Lydia Dailey Hicks lived out the Promise as they adopted a JP foster family for Christmas. The girls used their hard earned cookie money to purchase multiple gifts for each of the 6 children. Well done Girl Scout Brownies, well done!



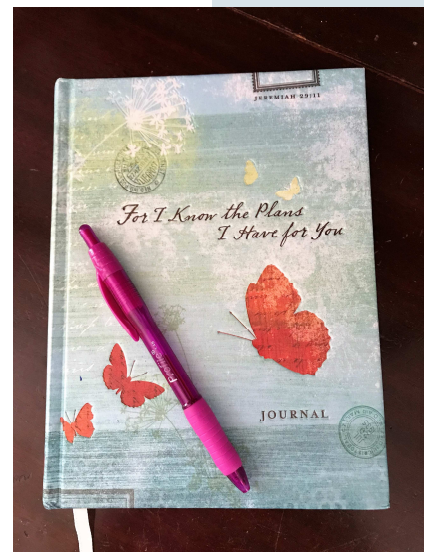
## DIARY OF A FOSTER MOM BY: KASEY MILLER

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If you’ve ever wondered what a foster parent’s day is like, I can assure you that most of us don’t have the time or energy to keep a diary. But if we did, it might go something like this:

Dear Diary,

Today was exhausting! I did the things that most working moms do. I cooked. I cleaned. I changed diapers and bathed children. I braided hair, searched for lost stuffed animals and missing jerseys. I helped with homework, sang songs, read bedtime stories and wiped runny noses. I graded papers and planned lessons, met with a few parents, and broke up a fight. Then I did the other stuff. I met with a caseworker who was just as exhausted as me. I scheduled a therapy appointment for our daughter who has trouble with attachment. I took a drug exposed infant for a follow-up appointment at the NICU. I FaceTimed with a birth mom. My day was exhausting. But it was also exhilarating. I watched a toddler who has just learned to stand, dance with her siblings with reckless abandon knowing that she would probably fall. I listened as my 3 and 4-year-old children told a stranger that they are ADOPTED with big, excited voices because they are so proud of that (still relatively new) fact. I rocked the sweetest baby to sleep—A baby that is not my own but that I love as much as if he were. I laughed until I cried with my oldest as we played a game together, just he and I. Today was exhausting but today was also filled with little treasures and that’s pretty much the story of my life. ♥



## PRAYER TEAM OPPORTUNITY

We are reminded in 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 to “Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.” The JP heeds this call and has a Prayer Team who lifts up the needs of foster families in prayer. With the wondrous variety of prayer warriors we are fortunate enough to connect with, continual prayer for the JP becomes more of a reality. We invite all who love children and families to join our prayer team. Simply email us at: [info@thejamesproject.com](mailto:info@thejamesproject.com) to be on our email list and hear about the most fervent needs of the ministry and our JP families. We may not all be called to be foster parents, but we can all pray!

***Our Neighbors are the backbone of our ministry as their regular giving provides stability to our ministry as a whole. Won't you be our Neighbor?***

Donate online via



[thejamesproject127.com](http://thejamesproject127.com)

Click on the Support tab

## OUR NEIGHBORS

While you may not live near one of The James Project homes, you can become a Neighbor just the same, with a \$1000 donation or more. We humbly thank the following supporters for being a part of our Neighborhood:

American Business Club of Springfield

American Water and Air

Blake Anderson

Michael & Sandy Barker

Gary Borah

Cheryl Bumgarner

Capestrain-Tracy Fund

Cardinals Care

Cherry Hills Church\*

Cornerstone Community Church

Bruce & Bethanie Drake\*

First United Methodist Church

Germeraad Family Fund

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Sharon & Elvin Zook

*\*Denotes gifts over \$5,000*

## SUPPORT DINNERS BRING FOSTER PARENTS TOGETHER

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We are excited to announce that the JP has officially begun to offer monthly Support Group Dinners to Sangamon County foster parents. Finding support in the area of foster care is extremely difficult! The struggles foster parents face along with the emotions they experience from all they do and the traumas their children come from is hard to process. They can't just talk to anyone about this heavy and challenging job.



Obstacles which prevent parents from attending a typical support group are child care and food, so we made it our goal to offer both so parents could get much needed support and community. With the help of First United Methodist Church in Springfield and onsite coordinator Amanda Reed, the support dinners have a wonderful place to be held. A grant from the Community Foundation of the Land of Lincoln (The Germeraad Family Fund, The Capestrain-Tracy Family Fund, and The Springfield Tracy Fund) enables us to provide a catered meal for the parents, qualified child care and food for the kids, and an educational speaker. During dinner, foster parents can freely talk, ask questions, and offer support and guidance. Recently, we have also added the opportunity to obtain foster licensing credits for each parent to help them keep their licenses up to date. If you would like more information on how to attend or volunteer at a monthly support group, please visit our website: [www.thejamesproject127.com](http://www.thejamesproject127.com)

### What Foster Parents are saying about the Support Dinners...

"It was so nice being with others that totally understand the whole (fostering) experience. From the children we love to the casework, to the birth parents—I understood and felt the pain on a certain situation that a fellow foster parent was going through that day." ~BJ Martin, Foster Mom

"We feel more a sense of community after attending the dinners put on by the JP—like we are not alone. Others are going through or have gone through the same thing before us. We look forward to them and appreciate the support and encouragement given on these evenings." ~Sam & Rachel Nichols, Foster Parents

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## ADVENTURE FUND IN NEED OF A BOOST

The JP loves to go above and beyond for the foster children who live in our homes, which is why we have our Helen Englehard Adventure Fund. The Adventure Fund makes it possible for the JP foster families to give their kids opportunities to expand their horizons through sports, lessons, and family fun. In 2018, the Adventure Fund was able to give 10 children 15 different extracurricular activities ranging from archery and gymnastics to 4H. We also provided the JP families with pool passes for the entire summer. It is our desire to provide more of the same adventures this year but we need help to sustain our Adventure Fund. To donate, please contact our office or give electronically at [www.thejamesproject127.com](http://www.thejamesproject127.com).



## WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO ~ A TESTIMONIAL FROM ANGIE COMSTOCK, FOSTER MOM



### RECRUITMENT AND MENTORING OF NEW FOSTER PARENTS

In 2018, we interviewed and mentored 10 new sets of foster parents. We have guided 53 new foster parents since 2012 and we hope to recruit more parents to heed the call of stepping into the roll of foster parent.

The JP has been such a blessing in our lives. As soon as JP co-founder Jan Williams learned I was thinking about fostering, she immediately put me in touch with Sarah Homeier to learn more. Sarah was so kind and took time out of her extremely busy schedule (8 kids and 2 businesses, The Closet and The Call!) to not only speak with me on the phone, but also meet with me to share her personal experience, information about the process, what to expect and tips to help me prepare. She invited me to Empowered to Connect which was an amazing experience and priceless help! Before I could blink an eye, 2 kiddos were placed in my care and off to the races we went! Shortly after their arrival, The Closet delivered 2 twin beds, beautiful cherry headboards, and mattress covers. The kids were overjoyed, shrieking, "These are for us?!?" It was so precious to watch their excitement and appreciation to have beds of their own. I continue to be deeply touched by each sweet soul at the JP and the personal care and support they have provided along the way. Many thanks & blessings to all of you!



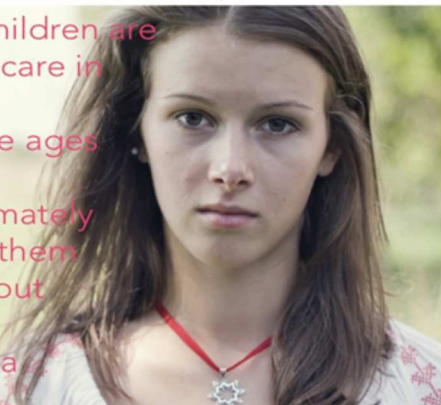
### A GREAT FOSTER PARENT IS A LIFE-CHANGER

Encouraging foster parents is one of the cornerstones of the JP ministry. We love to hear success stories of foster children growing up to have full and happy lives and one such story came to us as we were chosen as the Charity of the Month through WNNS. Fiona Irwin, who is a part of Mid-West Family Broadcasting, went into foster care when she was 15. She related to us just how a loving and supportive foster family can make all the difference:

"Having a foster family that wrapped their arms around me during a very difficult time, changed my life. I was only with them for a very short time, but they are who I consider my parents. Without their love, guidance, and continued support, I would not be where I am today. I am now 51 and we are still very close, and they are a huge part of my life. Being a Foster Parent is giving a child the gift of love and stability which changes their entire world."

If you have a fostering family within your circle of influence, love them and support them. Those parents could very well be life changers!

15,176 children are in foster care in Illinois. 14.5% are ages 13-17. Approximately 1,013 of them will age out this year without a family.



## FRIENDS OF THE MINISTRY

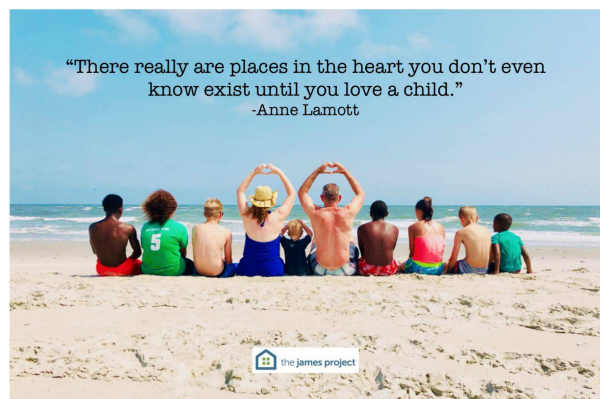
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The volunteers who encompass our Friends of the Ministry help us in so many ways throughout the year. Here is just a snapshot of how they served in 2018...

- During the school year, **76 meals** were provided by Central Baptist Church and delivered by our volunteers. During the summer months, **44 Wednesday evening meals** were prepared and delivered by volunteers.
- JP volunteers supplied 2-3 Christmas gifts for 33 children.
- Countless articles of clothing were sorted, picked-up from the JP office, delivered to The Closet, then delivered to the home of a foster child by our amazing volunteers.
- **222 mattresses** were given to foster families.

We are grateful for the following churches, businesses, and groups who supported the JP in a variety of ways in recent months:

A-One Locks	Lu Ann Groesch	O'Charley's
Katie Ambrose	Heyl, Royster, Voelker & Allen	Mario Perrino
Hannah Bachman	Hewartland Credit Union	Mark Peters
Susan Bachman	Hope Presbyterian Church	Debbie Rigg
Crystal Bland	Melissa Hostetter	Deidre Rosenberger
Blessings on State	Hy-Vee	Rotary South
Cheryl Bloink	IL Educators Credit Union	Erica Rovey
Paula & Gary Borah	Emily Jewel	Heather Sarra
Bunn Capitol	Angela Johnson	Donna Smith
Burgess Plumbing/Heating	Living Faith Baptist Church	Shyla Summers
Joanne Carter	Emily Lynch	Sunrise Rotary
1 <sup>st</sup> Christian Church	Susan Kepner	Lois Stone
Church by Waters Edge	Kyle Killebrew	Cara Tabatabai
Dana Clinard	Mark Kincade	Tailored Printing
Susan Cowles	Peace Lutheran Women	Tara Long Phgotography
Mary Cumming	Peace by Piece Quilters	Sarah Teeter
Dillon's Pizza	Magna Dental	Mary Jane Thomas
Karla Dirks	Mid-West Family Broadcasting	Karun Tillett
Tom & Linda Dunne	Elizabeth Mitchell	Ruth Yu
Ginger Engle	Esperanza	
Williamm Farr	Morales	
First United Methodist Church	Nelson	
Lori Frederking	Resource	
Ann Full	Center	
Shannon Furbeck	Tina	
Amy Gelber	Newingham	
	Noonan True	
	Value	



## The James Project

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“Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God’s law.” ~Romans 13:8

### Practical ways to support foster families

- \*Get certified for babysitting or respite
- \*Assist with yard work
- \*Help with laundry
- \*Bring a meal or a coffee
- \*Accompany to dr visits & court dates
- \*Offer to help with homework
- \*Gas or grocery gift cards
- \*Tickets to a community event
- \*Gift a stash of paper plates
- \*Invite the family over
- \*Send encouraging cards in the mail
- \*Offer your unique talent to foster families, whatever that may be

**We are not all called to foster or adopt, but we can all help in some way.**

## SPREADING LOVE ON VALENTINE’S DAY!

Being a caseworker for one of the local child service agencies is a tough job. The JP wanted to show our appreciation for their efforts by delivering homemade cookies and a \$5 gift card from a local coffee place on the ultimate day of love—Valentine’s Day! Our delivery volunteers were met with smiles as we surprised the caseworkers with our small tokens of gratitude. The JP thanks our bakers and delivery cupids for their great baking skills and hearts of gold:

Karen and Emma Kern

Amy Gelber

Debbie Rigg

Grace Lutheran Women

Mary Cumming

Tina Newingham

Staci Ushman

Connie Crawford

Samantha & Frankie Boston

