

The JP Journal

Rewriting the stories of children in foster care

SUSTAINED, SUPPORTED & LOVED

Pandemic. Quarantine. Social distancing. All words which became part of our everyday language in 2020—the year our global community came to a screeching halt. But since The James Project (JP) ministry serves foster families, our work became even more critical to keep families connected during a time of regulated isolation. We could not have done this without our team of volunteers and supporters—YOU! Thank you for being faithful, mighty, prayerful people who lift up the JP before our great God. Our ministry experienced...

- ♥ 174 foster children served by Closet 1:27.
- ♥ 105 beds given to foster families.
- ♥ 2,446 volunteer hours logged.
- ♥ *Artsy: An Art Fair for Kids in Care* and the *Very Merry Christmas Party* both successfully took place.
- ♥ Kids helped kids, generosity overflowed, the JP kept going!

It was an extremely difficult year for many, but we encourage you to remember kindness continually displayed by friends and neighbors despite the turmoil and uncertainty. Praise God for his unfailing hand of provision!

A BLESSING FROM AUSTRALIA

Sometimes God reminds us that He has a sense of humor and finds joy in catching his children by surprise. A young fostering couple, Matt and Tess with 3 foster daughters, from Brisbane, Australia reached out to our office by leaving voicemails and sending emails. They said they saw our website and wanted to send us a donation—all they needed was our banking info. Sounds like a scam, right? Finally, Matt called us at 5am Australia time and explained they were going to start a foster parent support ministry and wanted to call it The James Project, but a Google search stated the name was also being used by us. After reading about our mission, they felt God telling them to begin their own ministry by blessing ours. We had a lengthy, eye-opening, heartfelt



conversation with them over the phone. In a few days, we had over \$15,280 US (\$20,000 AUS) deposited in our account from our new friends down under! We are now sharing our experiences in ministry with them so they can develop their own “James Project” in Australia.

Every 2 minutes a child enters foster care...



What can you do to help?



Every 30 minutes a youth ages out of foster care with no family.

What you do in between these critical minutes matters!

Licensed to...



Love
Protect
Heal
Strengthen
Comfort
Teach
Uplift
Encourage
Nourish
Guide
Inspire
Cherish

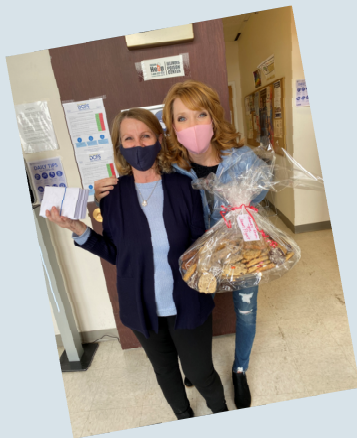


Foster.

VALETINE'S FOR CASEWORKERS



Blessing others with small gestures of love brings joy not only for the recipient but for the giver. The JP delivered homemade cookies, local coffee shop gift cards, and Valentines to caseworkers, investigators, and staff at local foster care agencies to say, "We see the hard work you do each day and appreciate you!" The response of appreciation was overwhelming as we visited **DCFS, Rutledge Youth Foundation, Family Service Center, Center for Youth and Family Solutions, Lutheran Child and Family Services, and Camelot Care Center**. Please lift up these individuals and agencies in prayer as they daily make tough decisions about the hurting children in our county.



NEW BOARD MEMBER: ANGIE COMSTOCK

Our newest member on the JP Board of Directors is Angie Comstock. She is a native of Springfield and has returned to her hometown and her extended family after many years living in California. Angie is an attorney, working as Associate General Counsel for BUNN. Angie is passionate about the mission of the JP and totally walks the walk as she is foster mom to Jazzlynn and is in the process of adopting her. Angie and Jazzlynn attend 1st United Methodist Church. Welcome to the JP family, Angie!



JP'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY BY: SARAH CHANDLER, EDITOR

In 2011, I received a call from Jan Williams asking if I would create and edit a newsletter for a brand-new ministry called The James Project. I had very little knowledge about foster care but knowing the love the founding parents had for hurting children was enough for me to enthusiastically say "Yes, I'll do it!" Our first newsletter was just 4 pages and we had a tricky time finding enough content to fill it. However, the stories within those pages focused on a clear vision as to how the JP wanted to change the face of fostering in Sangamon County. Only the best would do for every family that interacted with the JP. This desire for excellence continues to lead the JP to support and recruit countless foster families. As we celebrate our 10th anniversary in 2021, and I finish up the now *8 page* newsletter, please take a moment to pray over our mission "That None Be Lost." May the JP ministry be blessed for many more years to come. ♥

First newsletter with the original logo!



Photo of the founding JP Board Members

FRIENDS OF THE MINISTRY

The volunteers who encompass our Friends of the Ministry help us in so many ways throughout the year. We are grateful for their support in recent months!

Businesses/Groups

A-One Corporate Hardware
Dr. Bryan Albracht
American Mowing
American Water & Air
Chatham Soccer Association
Della Croft/Malouf Bedding
Cummings Carpet One
Custom Cup
Drake-Scruggs Equipment
Henry Enno/ Stifel Nicolaus
Illinois Life and Health Ins. Council
Keller Williams Realty
Kyle Killebrew Realty
Oral and Facial Surgeons of Illinois
Moon Child Photography
Pickett Insurance Group
Plexus Worldwide
Peace by Piece Quilters
Riverside Stables
Share the Spirit
Springfield Art Association
Stitch and Go

Tara Long Photography

Three Twigs Bakery

Individuals

Marscia Anderson
Cheryl Bloink
Clayton Borah
Lillian & MaeBelle Borah
Paula Borah
Lianna Clendenny
Anne Cornelius
Susan Cowles
Bruce Cummings
Bethanie Drake
Michael Enno
Sophia Floyd
Ann and Kathy Full
Amy Gelber
Chris & Toss Green
Lu Ann Groesch
Rose Haas
Dirk Homeier
Olivia Huber
Tina Huber

Shannon Johnson
Aaron & Caleb Kendall
Ashlee Leahy
Jay & Lisa Lipe
Kasey & Ryan Miller
Elizabeth Mitchell
Jon Morrissette
Connie Mulcahy
Andrea Parker
Robin & Sue Pickett
Mark Peters
Stacia Reed
Debbie Rigg
Heather Snider
Hollis Snider
Kathy Sorenson
Lacie Romanotto
UIS Volunteer and Civic
Engagement Center
Lauren Weichold
Zach & Elizabeth Wright
Rose, Lucy & Ella Unal
Ruth Yu

HOW CAN YOU GO BEYOND ENOUGH?

Host a clothing or supply drive—Closet 1:27 can always use diapers, baby wipes, PJs, underwear, jeans, hoodies, polo shirts, athletic pants, and athletic shorts.

Donate gift cards for Closet 1:27 items—Shoe Carnival, DSW, Kohl's, Old Navy and Macy's gift cards are appreciated as they are primarily shoe/clothing retailers.

Host a drive for our JP families—Toilet paper, paper towels, facial tissues, cereal, canned goods, soap products, and hygiene products are always appreciated.

Give to our JP house fund—Our *Beyond Enough Campaign* supports upkeep, maintenance, and mortgage payments on our houses.

Contact us at 217.546.3532 or office@thejamesproject127.com with your questions and ideas!



ABC GRANT RECEIVED

The JP received \$2000 on March 18 from the American Business Club (ABC) in Springfield for our Helen Engelhard Adventure Fund. This fund pays for extracurricular activities for foster kids living in a JP home. Thanks to the ABC Grant, we are now able to provide adventures for our JP Extended Families' children as well. This means activities are available to another 22 children this year! From the Adventure Fund we provide pool memberships each summer and can send children to all types of enrichment programs. This semester we have children participating in dance, gymnastics, karate, and piano lessons. We appreciate ABC and their dedication to blessings many local organizations.



KIDS HELPING KIDS

A sweet Butler Elementary School third grader named **Avalyn Wagenaar** used her Christmas gift money to buy diapers, baby wipes, and loads of socks and underwear for Closet 1:27. Avalyn wanted to spread joy and offer help to others, and her generous heart did just that. Well done, Avalyn!

Destiny Church, a non-denominational church in Springfield, organized a paper-products drive for our JP families and extended families. They collected paper products worth almost \$1800! We were able to abundantly serve 9 foster families representing 36 children. Thank you for such an incredible gift, Destiny Church!



Eagle Scout candidate **Luke Leahy**, 14, planned, organized, and set-up workdays for his Chatham based BSA Troop 97 to build 20 beds/10 bunks beds for the James Project. This took a lot of fundraising, energy, and skill to bring all the pieces together and we think he is a rockstar! The JP extends a huge thank you to Luke and his crew of volunteers, as well as a CONGRATULATIONS as he earns his Eagle Scout rank. Way to go!



The Very Merry Christmas Party had a few leftover gift cards from the store 5 Below. Not to waste a thing, **Lianna Clendenney**, 16, used these to put together 40 goody bags for kids entering foster care. The bags contained things like candy, stuffed animals, toys, and electronic gadgets.

Lianna completed 7 service hours for Key Club. Pictured is her friend **Makenna Homeier** who also completed services hours through her home-school of Liberty University Online. Their friends **Michelle Goutsalenko** and **Sophia Floyd** were also a part of the project. The girls did a marvelous job creating these bags of gifts and treats! We know they will help bring a smile to many kids' faces as they are welcomed into a new foster home.



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: (* denotes gift over \$5000)

American Mowing	Mark W. Groesch Family Foundation	Paul & Colleen Paoni
American Business Club	Larry & Rose Haas	Pickett Insurance Group
Blake Anderson	Tom & June Harmon*	James Potter
Be One, Inc.	Andrew & Lisa Hartman*	Jerry & Lisa Quick
Bob & Donna Biggs	Shaun & Shari Hill	Rockefeller Philanthropy Fund*
William & Cheryl Bloink	Forrest & Mary Lou Holsapple	Ron & Therese Romanelli
Kimberly Blomberg	Trevor Hovland*	Jimmy Rousey
Gary & Paula Borah	Matt & Teagan Hubner*	Scheels Springfield
Capestrain Family Fund	Mary Christine Hudgins	Carol Shipp
Cardinals Care	INB Bank	Norm & Carol Smith
Cherry Hills Church*	Gene & Cindi Jones	Al & Sandy Stevens*
Clearlake Church of Christ	Kellner Fund	Mike & Susan Sunley
Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln	Warren & Deb Knoles	Andres & Maoxiim Tellez
Cornerstone Community Church	Mark & Marla Krell	Ticket to Dream
Mike & Carol Diedrichsen	Michael & Jennifer Lair	Karun & Curtis Tillett
Bruce & Bethanie Drake	Lakeside Christian Church	Tracy Family Foundation
Dungan Family	Jason & Ashlee Leahy	Curt & Deb Trampe*
Helen Engelhard Family	Luke 12:48 Fund	Trowbridge/Howse Family
First United Methodist Church	John & Elaine Mellinger	Neville & Cheryl White
Randy & Kathy Germeraad	Jim & Annette McDermott	Jordan Williams & Kate Dunne
Len & Karen Giannone*	Emily Mosher	Russ & Jan Williams*
Dave & Sue Griffen	Cari Netherton/Plexus	Jami Winchester Team
		Eric & Terri Woolbright

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?

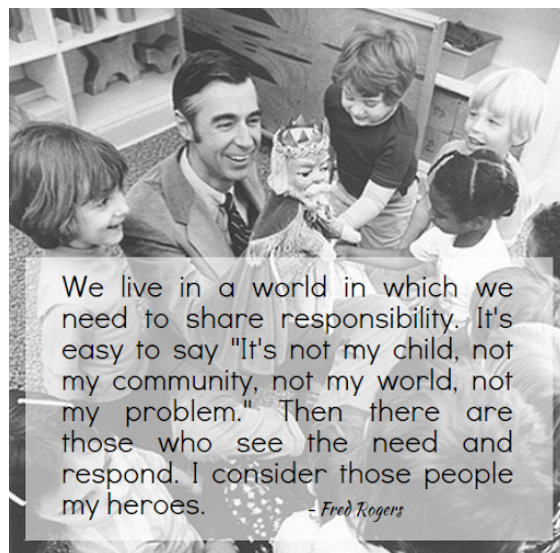
Donate online via

PayPal

thejamesproject127.com/support

You can also make checks payable to:

The James Project
907 Clocktower Drive, Ste. C
Springfield, IL 62704



We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say "It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem." Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes.

- Fred Rogers

Beyond Enough Kick-Off Event

A prayer and worship service was held at Cherry Hills Church on February 26 to officially begin the JP's 2021 Beyond Enough Campaign. JP house families, prayer partners, and board members came to listen to inspiring words about what it means to go Beyond Enough—Enough foster families, enough volunteers, enough resources, and enough church partnerships to serve the ever-growing number of foster children coming into care. Beyond Enough embraces one of our core values of helping stabilize foster families, which leads to decreased disruptions in the lives of foster children. We hope you and others will partner with us this year and beyond as we serve.



THE NICHOLS ~ A JP EXTENDED FOSTER FAMILY

Rachel and Sam Nichols had separately traveled to third world countries and had hearts for orphans before they even met and were married. When their twin daughters were in kindergarten, the Nichols received their fostering license. Their first call was for a set of 4 month old twins who had been abused, neglected, and had a number of medical issues. The Nichols said yes to fostering the babies as they had already conquered the "twins thing" once, so why not do it again! Today, the family has 6 children—3 biological and 3 foster-to-adopt. The Nichols have come to be a JP Extended Family because of the difference they make. While they do not live in one of our JP homes, they foster multiple children and we are ready and able to bless their work as a foster family.



“Every person can make a difference, and every person should try.” ~John F. Kennedy

FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED BY: SARAH HOMEIER, JP MINISTRY AND FAMILY DIRECTOR

Are you interested in becoming a foster parent or know someone who is? The Covid-19 pandemic has catapulted the foster care situation in the U.S. from a crisis to a full-blown emergency.

Typically, there are around 500 children in foster care in Sangamon County with only 250 licensed foster homes. Currently there are 625 foster children in Sangamon County and the number of foster homes has not increased causing a significant shortage. Even taking one child into a safe and secure home is one less child in a horrible living situation. One of the missions of the JP is to recruit and mentor parents through the entire fostering process. We meet one on one with you to answer all your questions, while debunking foster care myths, the good, the bad, and the rewards which come with fostering. We will help you see if fostering is right for you. Our help doesn't end once you make the decision to foster. We walk with you through becoming licensed, receiving your first placement, and beyond. The more resources you have, the better equipped and more secure you will be in the fostering journey. Please contact us at 217.546.3532 or office@thejamesproject127.com if you feel the call to be a part of a foster child's life.

THANK YOU FOR SERVING!

Our final two original JP board members are stepping down after 10 years of service. Karen Giannone and Bethanie Drake both brought incredible perspective to the board because of their vocations, various volunteer efforts throughout the Springfield community, and a love of children. We were blessed by their presence on the board and wish them all the best as they continue sharing God's love with others!



Karen & Bethanie

IT WAS A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS



Neither Covid-19 restrictions nor cold weather dampened the spirits of volunteers who wrapped presents, donated gifts, and prayed for foster families during the Very Merry Christmas Party hosted by Cherry Hills Church.



Generous members of our community gave abundantly to our adopt-a-child Christmas program—all 43 children who needed gifts were provided for! HyVee gave additional groceries to our families and Aldi gift cards made it to foster

families before Christmas. Every smile from the children and parents during the drive-thru event put joy in our hearts.

AN ABUNDANT THANKSGIVING

Fourteen Thanksgiving Dinners were provided by the Illinois Life and Health Insurance Counsel to our JP home families and our extended families. Each dinner contained a turkeys, potatoes, corn, and cookie dough. The choice and quantity of products donated was exceptional and our families were so grateful! Laura Minzer and Susan List volunteered to act as the rendezvous point for the pickup for our families. Thank you to the Counsel for making Thanksgiving a little sweeter for our JP foster families!



MEET THE NEWEST JP FAMILY

Fostering has been a way of life for Van & Jennifer Converse throughout their married life. For 11 years they have cared for many children varying in age and life story. Jennifer says that when she was still a child, God put a love of children in her heart and a desire to particularly help children in distress.

The Converses adopted and raised a daughter who is now an adult. They are currently caring for a sibling group of three boys, ages 8 months to 8 years old.

Van works at HyVee and Jennifer works at Silverleaf Day Care in Rochester. Their family attends New Beginnings Apostolic Church.

We are excited to welcome the Converse Family into one of our JP Homes!

The James Project

907 Clocktower Drive, Suite C
Springfield, IL 62704

Ph: 217.546.3532

Email: info@thejamesproject.com

www.thejamesproject127.com

Board of Directors

Marscia Anderson Tom Bazan
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Jan Williams

Newsletter Editor

Sarah Chandler



"It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

Deuteronomy 31:8

SHARE THE SPIRIT DAY AT SHOE CARNIVAL



Pictured from left to right: *Tonya Voepel; Founder of Share the Spirit, Jan Williams, Terri Enno, Tom Walters; Board Member of Share the Spirit.*

As every parent knows, growing children need new shoes every few months. A foster family experiences this many times over in their homes each year! The JP was delighted to receive a gift from the Share the Spirit Foundation which helps children in need. Our JP kids each received a brand-new pair of shoes from Shoe Carnival this past November and it was an exciting day to be sure!

Share the Spirit Foundation (www.sharethespirit.info) was founded in 2003 by sisters-in-law Karen Voepel and Tonya Voepel. The foundation focuses on providing new shoes and socks to children in their home communities of Colorado and Illinois. They work with schools, community organizations, volunteers and donors to give assistance with dignity and respect while teaching the younger generation these same skills. Thank you to Share the Spirit for the gift of new shoes!