

THE CONNECTION

DECEMBER, 2019



Ana Holmes posing for pictures in Washington DC at the Smithsonian National Zoological Park and the World War II Memorial.



Anastasia “Ana” Holmes from the Southeast Region, attended the Chafee Program Alliance Federal Meeting in Washington, DC from August 21-23, 2019 as a Youth Ambassador.

At the meeting, Ana and other youth from across the nation shared youth perspectives on ways to improve child welfare outcomes. Ana attended a meet and greet with other Youth Ambassadors and made many new friends and learned the differences and similarities between Missouri’s foster care system and theirs. Sessions included a resource round up, world café conversations, authentic and meaningful youth engagement, and strategic conversations about Chafee and the Child and Family Service Plan.

Ana is a State Youth Advisory Board member and has been on the board since November 2018. She serves as a youth representative for the Children’s Service Family Review Board. This was Anastasia’s first time flying and visiting our nation’s capital. While there, Ana got to do a little sightseeing!

Ana was selected to participate due to her involvement on the State Youth Advisory Board, willingness to work outside of the meetings, responsiveness, and attitude. Although traveling out of state is a rare opportunity, there are ways for youth to get involved throughout the state to have meaningful participation in child welfare outcomes such as your Local Youth Advisory Board.



If you are in care and will be turning 17 between October 1, 2019 and September 30, 2020, then you will be invited to participate in the National Youth in Transition Database survey. This survey is to look at what impact your life skills teaching has had on you and is conducted nation-wide. The surveys will tell us if we need to do more and what we need to do to make our services better. In Missouri, you receive life skills teaching from Chafee providers, Transitional Living Program providers, resource parents, and other community agencies. The survey consists of 19 questions in areas such as employment, education, health insurance, and your support system. It does not ask about your parents or your family. It doesn’t ask why you went into foster care. We will ask anyone taking the survey at age 17, to complete the survey again at age 19 and 21 to update your information and see how you are doing. The information is confidential and will be combined with answers from other young people around the country and looked at as a whole, not looking at your personal information separately. Your case manager will ask you the questions for the survey and help you with any questions if you need help. If you have an email address shared with the Children’s Division, you may also answer the questions electronically. You can view the survey here: <https://dss.mo.gov/cd/older-youth-program/files/nytd-17-survey.pdf>.



They say time flies when you're having fun. Well, no time flies faster than your senior year of high school. As you begin that final year let's take a moment and look at some things that will hopefully make it a great year.

GRADES and CREDITS – Each school requires a number of credits in order to graduate. Make sure you know what your school requires and that you are on track. If you are behind talk with your school counselor to see what you need to do to get current.

SENIORITIS – According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, senioritis is an ebbing of motivation and effort by school seniors as evidenced by tardiness, absences and lower grades. Senioritis is real but you can help yourself by remembering your goals and communicating with others who can help you.

POST HIGH SCHOOL PLAN – What are your plans? College, Trade/vocational school, Military, Job or unknown. As you are preparing to leave high school you want to take time to design a plan for what happens next. If you are unsure talk with your counselor, case manager, placement provider or someone else who supports you. They can assist you with developing that plan. If you are planning to attend any post-secondary schooling you need to complete your FASFA paperwork after October 1st. This is something your Chafee worker can assist with.

TESTING – SAT, ACT, SCHOOL PLACEMENT TEST, ASVAB – MILITARY testing, etc. Even as you are thinking about the test you have to complete for your classes remember there are other tests you may have to take to move forward past high school. The higher your SAT/ACT scores, the better chance you have getting into the college you want. If you don't take the SAT/ACT you may have to take a placement test to get into a school. If you're thinking of the Military, you have to take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test.

DANCE / FUN – Go to your prom, homecoming, sports game, drama performances and any other activity that will allow you to have a good time with friends and make lots of memories.

Websites that can assist you moving forward past high school:

Senior Year College Planning Calendar – Mapping Your Future -

<https://mappingyourfuture.org/collegeprep/seniorcalendarInt.htm>

Top 30 Highest Paying Trade School Jobs and Vocational School Careers -

<https://www.onlinecollegeplan.com/vocational-school-highest-paying-careers/>

Missouri Training & Certifications – <https://www.mo.gov/work/training>

Vocational Rehabilitation - <https://dese.mo.gov/adult-learning-rehabilitation-services/vocational-rehabilitation>



One of the many challenges youth face as they leave foster care is access to affordable, healthy food. Fortunately, you may be eligible for Food Stamp benefits through the Missouri Family Support Division. Your Food Stamp benefit is based off of your income. For example, as a single person if your monthly gross income is less than \$1,307 you would likely qualify for some benefit.

Food Stamps are loaded onto an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card each month and cannot be withdrawn as cash. Funds cannot be used to purchase alcohol, tobacco, hot prepared foods, foods prepared to be immediately eaten, vitamins, medicines, supplements, or non-food items such as paper products, soap or dog food.

If you are an Able Bodied Adult without Dependents (you are only responsible for yourself) you are required to participate in at least 80 hours a month in work or training to keep your Food Stamp benefit. You must provide work or training documentation to the Family Support Division.

If you are at least 16 years old you can meet this requirement by participating in the Missouri SkillUp program. SkillUp is a voluntary program that provides access to job coaches. SkillUp can also assist with job training, child care, transportation expenses, and work expenses.

The work requirement may be waived if you are disabled, pregnant, a full-time student, caring for an ill family member, receiving unemployment, attending substance abuse treatment, or homeless.

Even if you don't qualify for Food Stamp benefits there are food banks across Missouri that can assist you.

To learn about how to apply for Food Stamp benefits or the SkillUp program or to find a food bank near you go to mydss.mo.gov/foodassistance. You can also call 855-FSD-INFO (855-373-4636) or go into any local Family Support Division office.



You can find contact information for Children's Division Older Youth Transition Specialists throughout the state and Central Office at this link: <https://dss.mo.gov/cd/older-youth-program/counties.htm>

Missouri Reach Credential Completion and Employment Program (CCE)

Do you want to further your education but know that a traditional degree is not for you? Do you want to be able to receive a certificate or credentials that will allow you to enter into the workforce? If you said yes to either of these and are currently between the ages of 19-25, then Missouri Reach Credential Completion and Employment Program, also known as CCE may be for you. CCE was developed to help youth like yourself pursue an education or training pathway. It is a short term program that helps youth earn a recognized certificate and/or specialized training that leads to employment. Program participation is limited to 12 months, which includes both pre and post-training time. During the 12 month period, the maximum award amount is \$8000. The credential must also be earned in less than 9 months. In order to be eligible for Missouri Reach CCE, you must:

- be between the ages of 19-25 with the credential being earned by your 26th birthday
- currently be in Children's Division custody, exited custody after the age of 18 or obtained legal guardianship or adoption after the age of 14

Applications must be completed online through the Foster Care to Success website: <http://www.fc2sprograms.org/missouri/>.

For more information call 800-950-4673 or visit <https://dss.mo.gov/cd/older-youth-program/credential-completion-assistance.htm> or <https://www.fc2sprograms.org/mo-reach-credential-completion-and-employment-program/>.



Since the new Normalcy law passed in 2016 so much has changed! Or has it?

Many youth have been given more freedom and privileges to participate in after school activities, go on school trips, get their driver's license, date, and hang with friends. And hopefully no one has been put in the awkward position of having to ask for a background check on a coach or friend's parent before taking a team trip or going to a sleepover.

But no system is perfect and Children's Division wants to continue to improve the older youth experience in foster care. In the next few months a short normalcy survey will be released and CD wants to hear from you! You will answer a few questions about who makes the day-to-day decisions in your life, and about your experience with things like school activities and social life.

A few important things to remember: 1. All answers are anonymous. That means no one will know your answer unless you tell them. 2. All answers and opinions are valid and important. YOUR experience matters. 3. You can make a difference. By taking the survey, you can help shape new ways of doing things so that all youth can have a better experience in foster care.

Once all of the results are collected they will be shared with youth, staff and other partners to decide what needs to be done next to address challenges and build on what is going well. Your Case Worker will share the normalcy survey with you when it's time.

In the meantime, you can talk with your Case Worker or Chafee worker anytime about your experience, ask questions when things don't make sense and check the "What's It All About" A Guidebook for Youth In Care for information.

YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

At the September State Youth Advisory Board meeting, new officers took over the leadership of the board. Officers were selected by majority vote from other members after campaigning for positions. Let's meet our State Youth Advisory Board Officers:



Hi. My name is Anika James and I am the Chair of the State Youth Advisory Board. I am also from the Northeast Region. I am 17 and a senior and live in Columbia, Missouri. I have been in foster care since I was 8 years old. I am strong, caring, loving, and a very outgoing person. I believe I'm easy to talk to and that I could make a difference in this board. Some of my favorite activities are drawing, swimming, playing sports, and having tons of fun with friends. This my 1st year of being Chair. **As Chair, Annika is responsible for leading the meeting, interviews of potential new members, calling for and counting votes during the meeting, recognizing speakers, and maintaining order in the meeting.**



My name is Destiny. I'm 18. I attend Hazelwood Central High School and am in the 12th grade. I am Co-Chair of the State Youth Advisory Board and on my Local Youth Advisory Board in St. Louis. On my local board we participate in many volunteer opportunities like the Hot Chocolate Run which is an event where people run to raise money for charity. I went for the last two years and it's a great experience to meet new people. It shows you that the fun doesn't end even if it might be cold. Also, we participated in Child Advocacy Day. I have been there for the last two years. It is a great experience for everyone. We learn how to speak for ourselves and we learn how to work together as a team. We also put together a camp last year and it was like a recruitment for new members and it was successful. We got so many new people who was interested. The camp was successful and I enjoyed it. It showed us how team work is an important key to being on a board. I am overly excited to be Co-Chair of the State Board. When we did nominations, my heart went heavy and my mind started racing like the time my Chafee staff asked me to join the youth board. I knew I had a purpose to help kids like me so they won't have to go through everything I had to go through being raised in the system. I can't wait for the upcoming events on the board and I will be fully committed no matter what. **As the Co-Chair, Destiny assists the Chair with duties as necessary and fills in as the Chair when the Chair is absent.**



Hello, my name is Latreace Ward. I have been a member of the State Youth Advisory Board since March 2019. I am also a member of the Saint Louis Region Local Board with the Epworth Agency since February 2019. We have did many things such as community service, fundraisers, and participated in Child Advocacy Day. I have a strong voice and love working with others to advocate for what's right. I am a nineteen year old sophomore in college taking up a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. I currently work for Transportation Security Administration in the Department of Homeland Security. I own and bought my first car in December of 2018. I am in the TLP/ ILP Program with Every Child's Hope agency. I plan to help and encourage as many people as I can to create a positive atmosphere for the world. I am a goal- oriented, dedicated, self- sufficient young adult determined to establish a successful life and legacy for myself. **As the Censor, Latreace assists the Chair in maintaining order, circulates the room during meetings to sustain attention, holds instructions for Robert's Rules of Order, distributes handouts and other materials, ensures the meeting starts on time and members are at the meeting location on time, orientates potential new members by reviewing the handbook, and facilitates interview order for potential new members.**

Bekka B. enjoys writing, reading, food, and photography. When she is older she wants to become a Special Education teacher. One of her enjoyments is being around friends and family. As she helps with the media, she wants to encourage the kids through her writing. She was adopted on April 1st of this year and has 4 brothers. One day she thrives to be an author and write about the foster care system and her story. She is 17 years old and lives in the Southeast Region. Her position is Media Specialist. **As the Media Specialist, Bekka is responsible for writing articles about youth achievements and State Youth Advisory Board happenings for newsletters, creating brochures, and other items to share information.**

I am Kelsey G. I'm 17 and live in Adrian, MO. I like to sing, clean and read. My future goals are to go to college and get a degree in social work or nursing. The main thing I like about SYAB is that you can speak your ideas and speak your voice and let it out there. I want to make it where kids are not afraid to speak their minds. **As the Scribe, Kelsey takes the minutes of the meetings, types other information as needed, and takes attendance.**





State of Missouri OFFICE of CHILD ADVOCATE

The Office of Child Advocate is the third party review to Children’s Division. They are separate and not part of Children’s Division (CD), The Department of Social Services, or the Juvenile Office (JO). They review hotline investigations and foster care case management. The types of things they can review are concerns regarding a child’s or youth’s safety; placement with relatives; contact with siblings and family members; movement of case toward reunification or adoption; and ensuring the State is meeting the child’s or youth’s needs.

The Office of Child Advocate does not disclose the identity of a caller. By law they cannot tell CD, the JO, or anyone else involved in the case who called their office. Anyone can call the Office of Child Advocate with concerns – parents, relatives, teachers, and even you.

The Office of Child Advocate will review the case records, speak with the team members, communicate with the caller, and issue a letter to Children’ Division and the Juvenile Office. The letters let the team know if the Office of Child Advocate agrees with how the case is being handled, has concerns, or recommendations.

You can ask the Office of Child Advocate to review a case by calling 866-457-2302 or emailing oca@oca.mo.gov. You can also fill out a complaint form and find out more about them on their website at: www.oca.mo.gov.

SELF-CARE

Many of us have so many responsibilities in life that we forget to take care of our personal needs. We are all less able to handle the stressors that come our way when we're already depleted by physical and emotional exhaustion. We are more resilient and more able to handle life's stress when we are feeling our best both physically and emotionally. There are many great resources to read or listen to on self-care. Guy Winch, Psychologist, asks us to take our emotional health as seriously as we take our physical health in this Ted Talk: https://www.ted.com/talks/guy_winch_the_case_for_emotional_hygiene?ref=error=playlist-the_importance_of_self_care#t-235995

Taking time out to care for yourself can remind you and others that you and your needs are important, too. Having a well-cared-for body can make you feel good about yourself and your life, and conveys to others that you value yourself. This can contribute to long-term feelings of wellbeing.





Many young people feel like they don't get much say in the decisions that are made about their lives during their time in foster care, which can be very frustrating. The Team Decision Making process (TDM) has built-in ways of helping young people, just like you, to become more involved in their team meetings.

The purpose of the Team Decision Meeting is to involve birth and extended families and community members, along with resource families, service providers and Children's Division staff, in placement related decisions, to ensure a network of support for the child/youth and the adults who care for them.

Meetings are held for ALL decisions involving a child/youth leaving home, and those involving all changes of placement. The TDM is held BEFORE a move occurs unless there is imminent risk or an emergency in which it is held in the next working day and always before the initial court hearing in court involved cases.

The meeting is led by a facilitator who is not a case-carrying social worker or supervisor and is experienced in child welfare practice. A six stage model is followed.

Team Decision Making meetings are designed to support you and help you plan for your future. It is important for you to be involved in planning, organizing, and participating in your meeting. A place to begin getting the team to work for you is to:

Talk with the person on your team that you are closest to about how you want to be involved in your meetings. This person can be your "support person." If no one on the team supports you, let your team know you want to invite someone as a support person or ally to come to your meetings.

Team Decision Making meetings can be triggered by safety concerns for a family or when a child changes their placement. They follow a specific process to allow you and the team to express their concerns and worries about the family situation. The family's safety capacities and support are used to attempt to alleviate the situation presented. After all information and worries are shared, the team reaches a consensus on the best plan.

"At first I didn't understand why this is happening, but now I get it."

This is a quote from a youth in Missouri after a TDM that held for them. It illustrates one of the core principles behind all team meetings in that sharing information and transparency is critical to ensuring the best outcomes for kids and families.

This process is currently practiced in several locations around the state. There are other locations in process of implementing this at this time. Be sure to ask your case manager about Team Decision Making and how it can help you. You can see some tips for your team meetings here:

<https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/proj3-youth-guide-2013.pdf>

Meet Jasper Gain, Missouri's FosterClub All-Star 2019!



The FosterClub All-Star Internship Program was founded on the belief that youth who have successfully transitioned from foster care to responsible young adulthood are best suited to impact the transition of their younger peers. Since 2004, FosterClub All-Stars have been reaching out to other foster youth through conferences, training, and events. Missouri has sponsored a young person for this opportunity since 2006.

Interns receive leadership training, help improve outcomes for foster youth transitioning out of care, educate peers and industry professionals, and change public perceptions about foster youth across the nation at conferences and events all summer long. The internship is a seven week paid experience in Seaside, Oregon for youth 18-24. If this sounds interesting to you, apply next year! Applications are typically accepted from January 1, 2020 until the middle of February, 2020. For more information: <https://www.fosterclub.com/all-star-internship>

Jasper is currently attending school at Missouri State University. She plans on graduating in 2021 with a Bachelor of Science in International History and a Bachelor of Science in Communication Sciences and Disorders. Her emphasis is Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, so she Minors in Sign Language Studies. When she finishes her undergrad program, she would like to pursue graduate school, and eventually a doctoral program. Her biggest goal is to be a history professor at a deaf university.

Jasper has a passion for education and traveling, so she tries to study away when she can find scholarships to support it. So far, she has studied special education in Nicaragua, cultural diversity in education in South Africa, and political history in Israel. She also spends a lot of her time volunteering with organizations such as Ipourlife, Ozarks Food Harvest, Cornerstones of Care, the Dickerson Park Zoo, and as a tutor at a local school. She runs an international true crime podcast that is up and coming.

Jasper went into foster care at 15. At the time there was not an available foster home, so Jasper had to stay at a teen homeless shelter. She dropped out of high school during this time. From there she went into a group home where she stayed for a short amount of time before convincing a neighbor to sign up to be a foster parent. Her foster mom helped her enroll back into school where she made up all of her credits in one semester. After getting back on track, her foster mother's mental health began to decline, and she could no longer stay in the home. She reached out to her biological mother's ex-husband to ask him to become her foster father. He was hesitant, but after some convincing from Jasper and her case worker he changed his mind. He was granted guardianship when Jasper was 17. Jasper dropped out of high school a second time during her junior year. She joined Missouri Options which is a program that allows students to study for the GED test. When they take it and pass they can get a high school diploma. She anticipated the program to take a year, but completed it in several weeks. This caused her to graduate high school a year early. She went to a nearby community college during what would have been her senior year. After being in college a couple years, Jasper had to put a break in her education when she was diagnosed with stage 4 Ovarian Cancer. She moved back home from college to go through chemotherapy. After five months of treatment she was miraculously declared cancer free! Shortly after her biological father passed away, leaving behind her younger sister. Jasper stepped up to take guardianship of her sister and moved back to her college town in order to continue pursuing her degree.

CONGRATULATIONS JASPER!!!



An interview with Phil Garrett by Sarah Ballard, Older Youth Transition Specialist, St. Louis

Let me introduce to you a legend; a legend in the older youth world which is a very important one! Phil has worked for the same agency for over forty years!!! Phil had his “work anniversary” on August 28th which marked 41 years. Phil started out as a child care worker then moving into early education. After early education he returned to residential as a care manger. Currently he is the intake coordinator with the Stepping Stone’s Transitional Living Program through Every Child’s Hope (ECH). He has been in this program since 2007. Phil is highly respected and valued in St. Louis, touching youth’s lives for over forty years.

I asked Phil what his favorite part of working with older youth is: *There is something uniquely appealing about the older youth. I get a kick out of their sometimes contradictory behaviors due to the nature of their development. They can do things that cause you to slap your forehead, then turn around and impress you with a display of great judgment. I like that our interventions can sometimes have a more immediate impact than in other programs. For example, we often provide housing for youth living in untenable situations.*

I asked Phil what he finds challenging: *Probably the biggest challenge in this work is determining when we are “helping” too much. Autonomy is a huge intrinsic motivator for all of us and especially for the young adult determined to show, “I’ve got this.” We build relationships so that youth might be open to our feedback. We provide information and skills training. We provide awareness of possible choices and potential results. Then we let the youth make choices. I believe in the “dignity to fail.” Therein can lie some of life’s greatest lessons. Having said that, there is no question we sometimes step in to provide that safety net so youth avoid a potentially disastrous, life-altering decision. We do often provide “another chance.” It’s never easy to determine when that is just rescuing a youth from appropriate consequences or when it is providing that last push of compassion that will help make a difference.*

I asked Phil about his secret to working with older youth because he does it so well: *I don’t think there is an earth-shattering secret to working with youth. The key to all relationships is first, you listen. This shows respect. The youth get a sense that, in general, you are on their side. They know I am trying to understand what life is like for them. I have a good sense of what motivates youth. I also must carefully listen and observe each youth to learn what really MATTERS to that individual. I also am listening for what the youth say has worked for them and what their positive qualities are. This engenders hope. When the time comes when you might offer new information or a different perspective, then you have earned the right to do so.*

I asked Phil what he thinks are the best parts of the Steppingstone Transitional Living Program and what makes it successful: *The strength of Steppingstone is the quality of our staff. We are fiercely dedicated to helping our clients. We build relationships with the youth and express faith in them, even through the toughest times. Our staff have varying styles that fit well with a variety of youth. We have many former clients who maintain contact with us for years, even decades.*

Along with Mr. Garrett, this program also has several dedicated staff members which he mentions above. ECH is one of seven transitional living programs in St. Louis. St. Louis is very fortunate to have this program along with the others to serve the varying needs of our youth. Not only do they serve St. Louis youth, but they serve youth from other parts of the state as well that wish to live in St. Louis or may not have an option in their part of the state.



Chris Lawson, 2018-2019 State Youth Advisory Board Chair, provides opening comments at the 2019 State Youth Advisory Board Youth and Adult Leadership and Empowerment Conference “We Were, We Are, We Will Be.”

The 2019 SYAB Conference “We Were, We Are, We Will Be” was held July 29-31, 2019 in Jefferson City. Over 200 guests from across the state enjoyed 3 days of activities. Jennifer Tidball, Acting Director, Department of Social Services and Christy Collins, Deputy Director, Children’s Division provided opening remarks. The University of Missouri Interactive Theater Troupe performed a skit on heterosexism. Sheltered Reality shared “a drum lesson to change the world.” The Coterie Theatre and Kansas University Medical Center presented the Dramatic Health Education Project. Workshops were presented by each region of the SYAB with topics on mindfulness, uniqueness, making the system work for you, support connections, zen, and life skills navigation. All workshops were developed and facilitated by the youth on the board. Evening activities included dodge ball, bingo, a carnival, and a dance.

Many Children’s Division Circuits and agencies donated door prizes which were used in a minute to win competition. Thanks to this generosity, every youth in attendance received a prize.

If you were not able to join us this time, we hope to see you in July 2021!

Home Visiting

Did you know that Children’s Division funds an in-home, educational service for any pregnant or parenting youth of children under the age of 3? The Home Visiting program is a voluntary program that not only provides an array of parenting educational opportunities, but also provides an opportunity for networking and incentive goodies! Each Home Visiting provider incorporates an incentive plan in their program, including developmentally appropriate items such as books and toys, health and safety items including diapers and wipes, transportation assistance, and so much more! Evidence based educational models are used by every Home Visiting provider to ensure that every enrolled family receives the best parenting education available to pregnant women and parents of young children. If you are a parent of a child under age 3 and would like to learn more, please check out the Home Visiting program at <https://dss.mo.gov/cd/child-care/help-for-families/home-visiting.htm>.



What's all the Buzz about Trauma?

Many of us are hearing more and more about trauma. But what is trauma, and why do we need to understand it? This first article and future articles will share information about this topic and what you can do for yourself and/or to help others who have experienced traumatic events or experiences in their lives.

Trauma is often defined as a psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of usual human experience, often involving **a sense of intense fear, terror and helplessness**. For some people, they may not have been the target of the traumatic event but witnessed it. For example a child may be living in a home where there is domestic violence although they themselves are not the target of the violence. The child may still feel unsafe and have overwhelming fears related to a loved one's safety.

Trauma is becoming more common in our lives and can happen at any age. Science tells us that those traumatic experiences that occur in early childhood are more likely to result in some negative change in the child's functioning. The average age of first trauma is five years old. Data indicates that by the age of 18 years one out of three youth will have experienced at least one type of trauma. We also know repeated experiences of trauma and the more types of trauma experienced can increase the likelihood of negative impacts on our relationships, emotional well-being, ability to learn and function in school and our physical health.

Potential Trauma Events or Circumstances

- Abuse
- Neglect
- Abandonment
- Witnessing Domestic Violence
- Substance Abuse in the home
- Incarcerated Family Member
- Deployed family member
- Family member who is mentally ill or suicidal
- Homelessness
- Chronic and/or severe poverty
- Prejudice or harassment based on race, gender, culture, or sexual orientation or identity
- Car Accident
- Crime Victim
- Natural Disasters

In future newsletters we will learn more about how we can protect ourselves from being overwhelmed by stress and traumatic experiences, how trauma can impact the development of our brain, how we can heal from the negative effects of trauma and what our communities needs to know and do about trauma. If you would like to learn more about trauma now, you can go to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network website <https://www.nctsn.org/audiences/youth>. On this link is a video that you may be interested in watching in which youth and young adults talk about their own experiences with trauma <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/never-give-complex-trauma-film-youth-youth>. If you feel overwhelmed and want to talk to someone please reach out to your caseworker or others. You can also contact the Teen Line <https://teenlineonline.org/>.



Okay, so school has started. You had really hoped to have a job lined up, but, hey, life happens, and, for whatever reason, the job didn't come through for you. And now you are experiencing feelings of rejection, failure, or complacency. Feels terrible, right?

Guess what? There is a way to help yourself feel better about yourself, while at the same time improving your chance for success later in life! Did you know that studies (<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/volunteering-may-be-good-for-body-and-mind-201306266428>) show that helping others (altruism) can help people connect socially, which may prevent loneliness, as well as alleviate mental health concerns, like depression?

Surveys indicate 55 percent (https://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/05_1130_LSA_YHA_SI_factsheet.pdf) of adolescents enjoy volunteering. And according to a recent study, when it comes to helping others, teens may benefit psychologically from spending time helping strangers.

The study, published in the *Journal of Adolescence*, suggests that altruistic behaviors, including large and small acts of kindness, may raise teens' feelings of self-worth. However, not all helping behaviors are the same. The researchers found that adolescents who assisted strangers reported higher self-esteem one year later.

"Surprisingly, teens who helped friends and family members did not report the same emotional change," says Dr. Laura Padilla-Walker, a psychology professor at Brigham Young University and one of the study's researchers.

So, even if you were not able to get that job, you can still find ways to volunteer and to help others. Doing so will not only help you feel better about yourself, but any structured/supervised volunteer activity can be used as a job reference on later job applications.

Here's a link to a site that shows 53 ways you can positively impact your community:

https://upwithpeople.org/uwp-blog/53-ways-impact-community-every-day/?gclid=EAlaIqObChMI_cOR8rb44QIVSJ7ACh1pkgizEAAyAAEgJkNPD_BwE

Here are several of my favorites:

- **Make It a Habit to Respect All People** – This includes while driving, walking, interacting with people in line. Small ripples of respect can make a big difference in your community.
- **Make It a Habit to Perform Random Acts of Kindness** – Ideas include: wheel out a neighbor's trash bin, shovel a neighbor's sidewalk after a snowstorm, pick up trash in your neighborhood, pay for a stranger's coffee.

For hundreds of ideas check out [RandomActsofKindness.org](https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/kindness-ideas): <https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/kindness-ideas>.

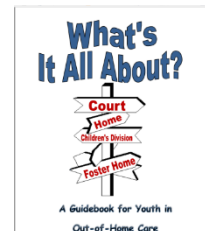
- **Volunteer At Least Once A Month** – If you pick only one thing from this list, then choose this. Get involved in your community in causes you care about. Don't know where to begin? Try [VolunteerMatch.org](https://www.volunteermatch.org), [AllForGood.org](https://www.allforgood.org), or [DoSomething.org](https://www.do-something.org).
- **Let Someone Cut In Front Of You In Line** – This will boggle the person's mind and fill your heart.
- **Recycle** – A cleaner environment is good for us all.

So, even if you were not able to get that job this summer, you can still find ways to volunteer and to help others. Which ones will you do this school year?

Resources to Stay Informed

“What’s It All About?” A Guidebook for Youth in Out-of-Home Care

The “**What’s It All About?**” **guidebook** can help you during your time in out-of-home (foster) care. This guidebook should help answer some of your questions. It covers subjects that may be of special interest to you, such as school, money, clothing and preparing for your future. All youth, age 14 and over, should receive this guidebook due to being in out-of-home care and in Missouri Children’s Division custody. Although accurate at the time of publishing, the guidebook is subject to change at any time with laws and policy changes. If you have any questions after reading this handbook, please talk to your Children’s Service Worker, foster parent/resource provider or Chafee Specialist. You can find it at this link: <https://dss.mo.gov/cd/older-youth-program/files/wiaa-out-of-home-care-guide.pdf>



Like the “**Missouri’s Older Youth Program**”

on **Facebook** to stay up to date on what is happening!

Children’s Division and Older Youth Program’s Webpages

- ❖ Start at <https://dss.mo.gov/> - browse the information that looks interesting to you.
- ❖ Click on the blue “**Children**” link from the home page and continue exploring this page: <https://dss.mo.gov/cd/>
- ❖ From the Children’s Division homepage, click on the “**Older Youth Program**” box with the picture of the youth – lots of information at this link: <https://dss.mo.gov/cd/older-youth-program/>

The Children’s Division Child Welfare Policy Manual is available to you at this link <https://dssmanuals.mo.gov/child-welfare-manual/child-welfare-manual-2019-update/>

Most of the of the information pertaining to older youth can be found in this section: <https://dssmanuals.mo.gov/child-welfare-manual/section-4-chapter-5-older-youth-program-overview/>



“The Connection”

Newsletter for Older Youth Ages 14 and Older



The Children’s Division produces a newsletter 2-3 times a year. This newsletter is another way to keep youth informed of their rights and services available to them. It also provides an opportunity for youth to share experiences with other youth in the state.

“**The Connection**” is found at: <https://dss.mo.gov/cd/older-youth-program/older-youth-news.htm>