

## Enjoy Our Updated Newsletter Format!

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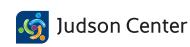
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Dear Friends,

It is with a sense of renewed hope and optimism as Spring approaches that I compose this letter to you – a valued member of our Community of Caring. We have all experienced extraordinary times the last several years, but through it all, you have helped us remain a beacon of hope for those we serve. We never wavered from our mission of helping those in need succeed – thanks to you. You have been right there with us, providing the support, advocacy and encouragement needed to fill our vital role for the over 13,000 children, adults and families we are privileged to work with and positively impact each year.

Now more than ever, people across all walks of life are recognizing and acknowledging the significance of our services – from adoption, autism, foster care, behavioral and primary health, and disability services – and the importance of access to these services – for all.

Our work is mighty and the results of our services are life-changing. Our focal point has always been first and foremost the children, adults and families we serve.

Whether you've been involved with Judson Center for decades or have just recently been introduced to us, we truly appreciate having you in our Community of Caring. Thank you for making our work possible.

We look forward to embarking on our next century of service and commitment to community with you! Look for news in the coming months about the exciting ways we will be commemorating our Centennial Anniversary throughout 2024.

With gratitude,



Lenora Hardy-Foster President and CEO

# Better Together

PRESERVATION WORKERS BUILD SOLUTIONS TO HELP FAMILIES THRIVE

## Keeping Families Together is at the Heart of our Work

Judson Center has been well-known for building families for nearly 100 years. But, did you know we also actively support families in need with preservation efforts? Through our Family Preservation programming, we offer families resources to help nurture a home where children and parents can thrive. Our Families Together Building Solutions Program, or FTBS, offers the in-person care, resources and support to help keep families together, strong and healthy.

#### 12 MONTHS AFTER COMPLETING FTBS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS, 85% OF FAMILIES SERVED HAVE REMAINED SAFELY TOGETHER WITH NO FOSTER CARE PLACEMENTS REQUIRED.

Family Preservation services, like those offered through FTBS, have exponential value because they allow families the time to obtain solutions to their greatest struggles in real-time with help from a caring Judson

Center worker. In most cases, this personalized support means preventing involvement in foster care.

Shevera Lopez, Director of Family Preservation, reveals that the reasons children enter foster care are often preventable. She explains, "The data shows the bulk of Child Protective Services cases are actually opened due to neglect, not abuse. Of these cases, the most sited reason for neglect can be linked to three concerns: lack of housing, underemployment, and inadequate supervision."



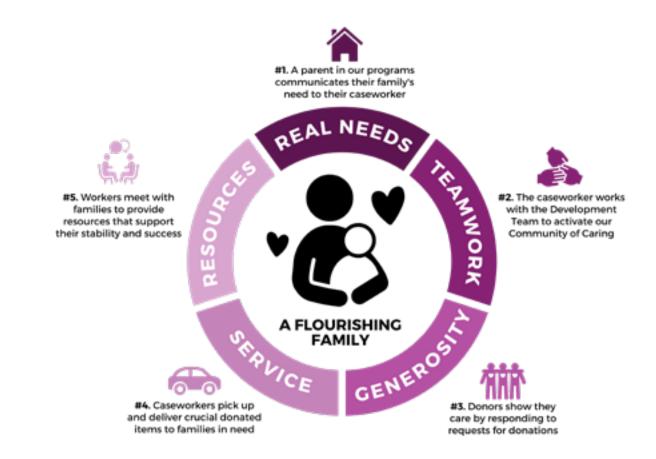
Danielle picking up donated holiday gifts for one of her families.

Our team knows to look beyond the obvious concerns, to underlying challenges that can jeopardize a family's stability. Shevera shares, "We know that to care for the overall health of a family, we have to address the systemic and root issues that are barriers for them."

FTBS workers are fierce advocates who champion the good found within every family. One example of this dedicated work can be seen in the commitment of Danielle Smith-Fells, an FTBS family worker in Wayne County since 2017. Danielle says, "We work with what is good, what parents can do, and what potential a family holds, rather than focusing only on the problems. It's amazing how much progress can be made with this attitude."

Danielle uses her positive approach to help create solutions that keep children safely at home. She says the freedom to support her clients is what makes the difference: "I'm able to tailor my services individually for each client. If someone needs substance use services, but I learn they have housing challenges, I'm able to respond appropriately. I enjoy being able to

> meet a need right when I see it." Workers like Danielle are able to meet these needs because they've spent time with families often, three or more hours a week, listening to them and learning about them. FTBS workers are also available 24/7. This supportive presence sets the table for a collaborative process where parents and workers develop a solution-based plan together. This might include items like developing a safety plan for children in the home, offering parent training, teaching financial literacy and connecting to community resources.



Research shows that poverty plays a significant role in child welfare involvement and can even be mistaken for neglect, causing unnecessary placement of children in foster care. To help remedy this concern, Danielle offers every family she works with a financial education.

DANIELLE SAYS, "ASIDE FROM ENSURING THE SAFETY OF THE KIDS, THIS IS PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT THING I CAN LEAVE THEM – THE ABILITY TO BETTER THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILY, NOT JUST NOW, BUT IN THE FUTURE."

Thankfully, family advocates like Danielle go above and beyond to help their families thrive. She continues, "We teach them how to make a budget, how to use available resources, and how to make the most of the donated support they receive from Judson Center."

Danielle isn't alone in providing for the needs of her clients. It takes a team to help families flourish (see graphic at the top of this page). Judson Center donors play an important role in meeting tangible needs. In December, after donors have responded to requests for donations, Danielle is able to collect holiday gifts to deliver to her families in need. Also, throughout the year she regularly visits Judson Center's free pantry and wish room where she is able to pick up basics like cleaning supplies, bedding, diapers and other items to help the families in her care. The generosity of Judson Center donors and volunteers help Danielle and the FTBS team meet immediate concrete needs which allows families the time to focus on what matters most – the well-being of their children.

Peggy Kerr, Community Engagement Officer, manages these item donation efforts and says, "Danielle and the team are incredibly committed. I am able to share their dedication and passion to serve their clients with our donors who support this program. In turn, our donors love knowing that their generosity makes a big impact and helps strengthen these families."

At Judson Center, we believe that families are better together. We are thankful for our incredible team of family preservation workers who join forces with our donors to serve their clients with passion and empathy. Together, we are building, not just solutions for today, but better and brighter futures for children and families tomorrow!

# **Embracing Autism**

THE JOURNEY FROM AWARENESS TO ACCEPTANCE

## What Does Acceptance Feel Like?

As children, many of us felt the warm welcome of a cardigan-clad host who invited us into his neighborhood and gave us a taste of true acceptance. At the end of every episode, Mr. Rogers would say with a genuine gaze, "You've made this day a special day, by just your being you. There's no person in the whole world like you, and I like you just the way you are."

These simple but powerful words sparked a feeling that every human being craves – the feeling of being accepted. This feeling, of being embraced and accepted as your full self, is especially important for children as they grow and develop. Still, many young people who have been diagnosed with autism continue to struggle to feel accepted at school, at home, and in their community at large. In the past, autism has been viewed as a diagnosis to fear or a disability to change. This mindset has led to children, teens and adults feeling the pressure to hide their autism in order to be accepted. Thankfully, the tides are beginning to turn.

## Making the Move from Awareness to Acceptance

Since the 1970s many community groups, families and autism service providers have recognized April as Autism Awareness Month, using it as an opportunity to educate the public and raise awareness. However, as the prevalence of autism has grown to a staggering 1 in 36, the perspective on autism and autism services has shifted. That's why this April, we are celebrating Autism Acceptance Month. While awareness will always need to be part of our work, we recognize that words matter as we continue to serve individuals with autism in Michigan.

#### IF THE PAST WAS ABOUT RAISING AWARENESS, THE FUTURE IS ABOUT EMBRACING AUTISM AND CELEBRATING THE DIFFERENCES OF PEOPLE WITH AUTISM.

## NEURODIVERSITY

Neurodiversity is the idea that it's normal and acceptable for people to have brains that function differently from one another.

AUTISM IS JUST ONE TYPE OF NEURODIVERSITY!



Sarah Sorise, Director of Autism Connections explains, "For too long the focus has been on fixing or finding a way for individuals to act "normal" by society's standards. But, it's now widely understood that this approach hurts people with autism. Thankfully, once we know better, we can do better. We don't see our client's autism as a problem to solve. Instead, we embrace them fully, and help give them tools to flourish, autism and all."

AS SARAH EXPLAINS, "WHEN WE CHOOSE TO SEE AUTISM AS SOMETHING TO BE EMBRACED, NOT SOMETHING TO BE ERADICATED, WE ARE ABLE TO BETTER EQUIP THEM TO COMMUNICATE THEIR NEEDS AND CONNECT WITH THE WORLD. THIS APPROACH PROMOTES DIGNITY, FOSTERS INCLUSION, AND HELPS US WALK BESIDE OUR CLIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES INTO A NEW, BRIGHTER FUTURE."

## How Does ABA Promote Acceptance and Inclusion?

At Judson Center, children and young adults with autism are offered a place where they can come and thrive as their full neurodivergent selves. One of the core services offered to support this environment is Applied Behavior Analysis, or ABA. Our team of certified autism professionals make sure that every treatment plan is just as unique as the person it's created for. In fact, the therapy provided is rooted, not in correction, but in connection. Judson Center staff looks beyond behaviors to identify a client's unique connection needs.

## Ways to Embrace Autism and Foster Acceptance

LANGUAGE MATTERS The words we use have impact. We should all strive to use language that respects each member of the autistic community. Person-first language refers to terminology that puts the person ahead of the diagnosis. It aims to frame the diagnosis as something the person "has" rather than something that they "are." (ex: "a child with autism") Identity-first language refers to terminology that puts the diagnosis or identity at the forefront. (ex: "an autistic child") Either language approach is acceptable. Individual preferences are always the first priority and it is important to honor the individual on a case-by-case basis. If you aren't sure, it's perfectly acceptable to ask a person's preference.

**THOUGHTS MATTER** It's healthy to acknowledge our differences, but we should never see someone as less than ourselves. When interacting with someone on the spectrum, do a thought check. The way you think about someone greatly influences how you treat them. Push any judgment and stereotypes aside and ask, "What is awesome about them?" or, "What can I learn from them?" **ACTIONS MATTER** Saying we are accepting is important, but we must also back up our words with action. Treat your friend, co-worker or child with autism just as you would anyone else in your life by working to include them. It's good to make accommodations and consider their preferences as needed, but never let their autism be a reason they aren't included.

AS SARAH REMINDS US, "IT'S HUMAN NATURE TO WANT TO FEEL PRIDE FOR WHO WE ARE AND KNOW THAT WE HAVE A SAFE PLACE IN THE WORLD. A PLACE WHERE WE CAN REMOVE OUR MASKS AND BE OUR FULL SELVES. THE AUTISTIC COMMUNITY DESERVES TO FEEL THAT WAY JUST AS MUCH AS WE DO."

In April and always, we are committed to fully embracing the difference of the individuals with autism we have the privilege of knowing, learning from, and serving at Judson Center.

So, we echo Mr. Rogers' sentiment and say to every person on the autism spectrum:

"You make the world a special place, by just your being YOU. There's no person in the whole world like you, and we like you just the way you are."

## FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR AUTISM SERVICES, PLEASE CALL 248.554.4339.

MEET THE DIRECTOR OF AUTISM CONNECTIONS Sarah Sorise, MA BCBA LBA

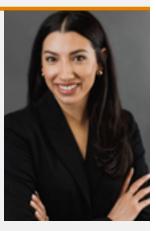
While attending Western Michigan University, Sarah entered an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Practicum and had her first experience working with clients with autism.

"On my first day, I heard a child speak their first words and I was sold. The connection formed between everyone involved in this special moment was so formative for me. I fell in love with this work and never looked back."

Sarah graduated with honors and received her Master's Degree at Ball State University and started as a Behavior Technician at Judson Center in 2013. She has continued to further her career within the program, working her way from a Board Certified Behavior Analyst, to a Site Supervisor, to Program Manager. In 2022, she was named the newest Director of Autism Connections.

This April, as Sarah celebrates 10 years of serving children and youth with autism, and their families, the name Autism Connections means even more to her now.

"It all starts with a connection. When someone is diagnosed with autism, it can be difficult to make meaningful connections. We offer services that help create connections – to other people, to the world, and to more opportunities."



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## **Same Day Open Access** PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES WHEN PEOPLE MOST NEED IT

Same Day Open Access appointments are one of the ways Judson Center provides person-centered care when people need it most. A person can receive an appointment on the day they call or stop in.

The model benefits those seeking mental health services because when a person has made the decision that they need counseling, they're more likely to follow through with the services if they can get in for an appointment quickly. According to Jamila Stevens, Judson Center's Director of Integrated Care Services, "If people have to wait for a long period of time, usually that desire or ability to come in for services evaporates. You really want to be able to provide a service when a person is ready, so it meets them where they are."

Because the model breaks away from the traditional approach of calling for services and waiting for an appointment, it is complex to implement. Judson Center is piloting the model two days each week, with plans to expand. During designated times on Mondays and Thursdays, people can come to Judson Center's Warren Family Health location (12200 E. 13 Mile



Road) for mental health care and receive an intake appointment on the spot, as opposed to making an appointment. This moves the consumer into a mental health treatment plan sooner, and removes the chance that they may change their mind if they have to wait.

Judson Center has been working toward Same Day Open Access since it was awarded a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) grant in 2020. With help from external experts, it formulated and fine-tuned its strategy over time and operationalized the model in late 2022.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SAME DAY OPEN ACCESS, PLEASE CALL 586.573.1810

## MEET THE DIRECTOR OF INTEGRATED CARE SERVICES Jamila Stevens, LMSW

Jamila Stevens began as Judson Center's Director of Integrated Care Services in June of 2022, bringing a variety of experience in operationalizing and creating mental health programs, and most recently running her own private practice. She not only brings a true passion for the work, but an innovative mindset around problem solving. "I'm a little bit more fearless when it comes to trying new approaches."

She considers herself a collaborative leader, with a strong belief in listening to her team, taking in their feedback, and using that feedback to develop systems that provide the best service possible. She is also a servant leader: "I believe in

supporting my staff and doing whatever is needed to help them. If I have to answer phones, I answer phones; whatever I need to do to make things work, I'm willing to do that."

One aspect of Judson Center's culture she notices and appreciates is that staff members go above and beyond to help not only consumers, but each other. "They go out of their way to be supportive. It is a great value in an organization to see that at all levels."

## YOU CAN HELP US BUILD OUR TEAM!

Judson Center is hiring new team members who are passionate about serving others. If you know someone who wants the work they do to make a real difference, share our career opportunities with them. Visit www.judsoncenter.org/careers-and-jobs/ or scan the QR code below to share current job openings.

> Scan Mel to view open positions



## YOU CAN HELP US SPREAD THE WORD!









@JudsonCenter BrighterFutures

- @Judson\_Center
- Judson Center
- @JudsonCenter

In 2023 the social media content for our Autism. Child & Family, and Health programs found a new home under the main accounts of Judson Center. Make sure you're following our accounts listed above to stay connected with our exciting work in the community!

# Give a Day | Change a Life

We often take for granted our ability to have our children cared for by relatives, a friend, a babysitter. But what if that wasn't an option?

Parents and guardians of children who are medically fragile or have developmental disabilities can be overwhelmed with the continuous care required for their loved one. It can also be very difficult to find quality care to support the caregivers when they need a break or must attend to other family needs. Judson Center's Lahser Children's Respite Home provides temporary relief by providing parents and caregivers with a much-needed break from the day-to-day stresses that come with caring for a child or adult with a developmental disability or physical impairment.

Since 1986, Judson Center has been providing children's respite care at Lahser Children's Respite Home in Beverly Hills. It's the only children's respite home in Oakland County. The home is barrier-free and staffed by well-trained, attentive and compassionate individuals who pay attention to the specific needs of each guest. During their stay, each child is given individualized personal care and supervision based on their specific needs, with a concentration in the areas of homemaking, language development, social skills, orientation to community participation, and applicable behavior plans. Educational and recreational programming is provided in order to ensure continued growth for the children under our care.



The cost to deliver a day of quality care to a child at Lahser Children's Respite Home is \$250. YOU can **Give a Day Change a Life** with your donation today!

Testimonials from the Jahser Respite Home

"Lahser Respite Home is not a luxury. For many of us it is a necessity." ~ Respite Family

When asked about the stability of the home's staff: "Families feel staff are an extension of their family and staff who feel the same way in return."

~ Laura, Former Respite Home Manager of 40+ years

"Judson Center's respite team are angels for providing this service!" ~ Respite Parent

## **Brighter Futures** OUR COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

A MONETARY CONTRIBUTION TODAY has a lasting impact on the lives we change. Your gift provides the necessary resources to provide quality care in each of our program areas.

Each dollar donated makes a difference.

Each dollar raised is life-changing.

Each dollar given is more than hope, it is help and a commitment to community.

A gift to the Judson Center's Brighter Futures Fund supports efforts like:

\$35 \$50 \$75 \$100 \$250 \$500

Provides diapers for children in our care.

Provides gift cards to promote encouragement and help with necessary needs like new shoes, shirts and pants for youth in our care, and adults going on an interview.

Provides food and toiletries to consumers who visit our pantry.

Provides materials for pre-school age children with autism to learn, grow and connect with their world.

Provides one day of personalized care for a child at Lahser Children's Respite Home. **Give a Day Change a Life** 

Provides art supplies, therapeutic games and intervention books to enhance behavioral health services.

## **MAKING A GIFT IS SIMPLE TO DO!**

Mail the enclosed envelope Text JCGIVE to 50155

- Donate now at www.judsoncenter.org
- Call Kelly Kinnear at 248.837.2030

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# Holiday Wish Wrap-up

Donors and volunteers were in abundance this past holiday season for our Holiday Wish Program! Thank you for helping to make the season bright for our Judson Center and Child Safe Michigan children, adults and families!

Our generous Southeastern Michigan community provided:

- Holiday and household items for 25 adopted families in our Adopt a Family program.
- Distributed individual gifts to over 1,000 children and adults in our care.
- Stocked the shelves of our Wish Room with hundreds of gifts for children and families.
- Stocked the Pantry with diapers, toiletries, household items and non-perishable food.
- Gave toys, coats and pajamas from the dozens of drives held on our behalf to children and families receiving supportive services from across the agency including: Autism Connections, Adoption, Behavioral Health, Family Preservation and Foster Care.





**1.** Sisters Rochelle and Raynetta Bates donated gifts for kids in foster care from their non-profit, ALLNETTE.

2. Bob Taylor, the President of the Grosse Pointe Board of Realtors, (GPBR) delivered the bounty of gifts collected at the GPBR holiday party for our Wish Room.





**3.** Mary Liz Curtin, owner of Leon & Lulu, and her daughter Keara, pose for a thank you photo during the charity benefit shopping day to raise money for Judson Center.

**4.** Remi Johnson delivered gifts that she helped collect for the wish room on behalf of her team at Warner Brothers, Discovery.



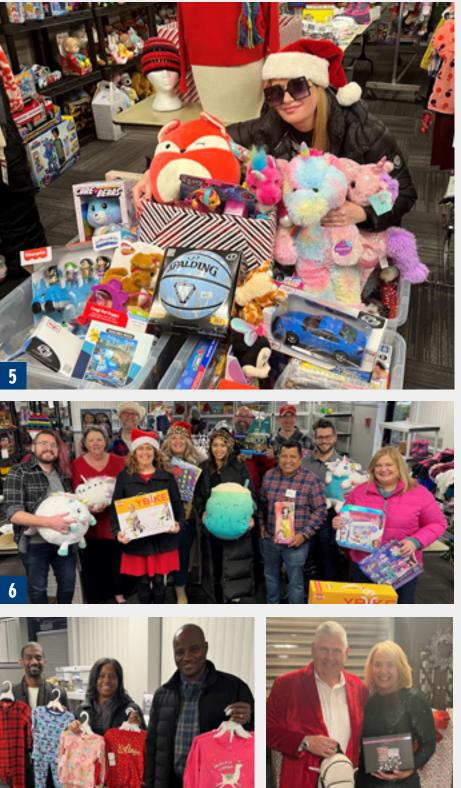
**5.** Rochester Hills Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge Ram, delivered their toy drive by way of their team member who spearheaded the collection, Catherine Fetsco.

**6.** "Royal Oak Residents for Royal Oak" Facebook group delivered their toy drive collection, and team members from Plastic Omnium helped to unload and stock the shelves in our wish room.

7. Third New Hope Baptist Church in Detroit collected pajamas and clothing for our children and families. Thank you to Lead Pastor QuanTez Pressley and members LaVera and Eric Rayford.

**8.** Tom and Kristin Wikol of Beverly Hills hosted a holiday party, and asked their guests to bring a gift for Judson Center's Wish Room.





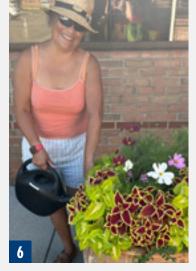
# **Volunteer Voices**

HAPPINESS IN THE FORM OF SELFLESSNESS!



- 1 Aaron Helander, David Chisholm and Samie Johnston enjoy some time together after volunteering to raise funds at the Child Safe Michigan Gala in September.
- **2** Barton Malow helped stuff Back to School backpacks for our youth in foster care!
- 3 Dave Colucci and Alan Garbacik volunteered at the putting green contest sponsored by the Bank of Ann Arbor at the Judson Center Corporate Golf Challenge.
- 4 DTE volunteers helped set up our Back to School Extravaganza in August.
- 5 Volunteers Jeanna Biliti and Steven Harris sold raffle tickets at our Judson Center Gala in November.
- **6** Lisa Morin volunteered to maintain our garden pots and picked up trash that collected on our grounds throughout the summer.





- 7 University of Detroit Mercy nursing school students Zach Hollman and Luke Klinkhammer volunteered to pass out cider and donuts at the Halloween event for our children in foster care.
- 8 Open Dealer Exchange helped organize our Back to School Supplies.
- 9 Reboot volunteers helped organize the Wish Room in July.
- **10** Sarah and Lexi from Gongos planted our summer pots.
- **11** Tricia Ruby was recognized as a Distinguished Volunteer at the Association of Fundraising Professionals Detroit Chapter's National Philanthropy Day event held in November for her outstanding volunteer contributions to Judson Center.
- 12 Students from Asian Intervarsity and the Christian Fellowship, who also attend the University of Michigan Ann Arbor, organized the book drive from Barnes and Noble in January 2023.













# Event Wrap-up

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2022

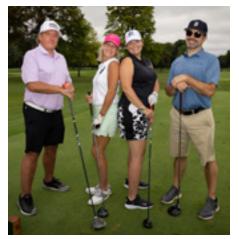
Judson Center's Corporate Golf Challenge, presented by Barton Malow, Huntington Bank & Ruby + Associates, was held at Pine Lake Country Club on Monday, August 29. The outing raised more than \$160,000 and included an enjoyable day of golf including the annual Helicopter Ball Drop! It was a great day to come together to celebrate Judson Center with friends, sponsors, volunteers and board members.



#### SAVE THE DATE | Monday, August 28, 2023 | Shepherd's Hollow Golf Club | Clarkston



*From left to right:* Ryan Michael, Mark Stiers, Brian Miller, Romano Curti



From left to right: Casey Hurbis, Beckie Ghazal, Tricia Ruby, Jeff Gasparott





Child Safe's Legends of Tomorrow Gala – Around the World took place on Friday, September 9 at the Townsend Hotel and raised more than \$352,000 to benefit foster care, adoption and mentoring services. Guests enjoyed

delicious cuisine and musical performances from around the globe. We were honored to be able to bestow Jim Wolfe and Katie Valenti with Angel Awards in gratitude for their service and dedication to youth in foster care.

around where

#### SAVE THE DATE | Friday, June 9, 2023 | M1 Concourse | Pontiac



*From left to right:* Lenora Hardy-Foster, Jim Wolfe, Keith Pomeroy



Event Co-Chairs, E. Elizabeth & Corey Curnutte



*From left to right:* Lenora Hardy-Foster, Katie Valenti, Pierre Boutros

# Event Wrap-up

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2022

Child Safe's Pull! for Kids Clay Shooting Tournament presented by Huron Valley Guns was held on Thursday, September 22 at The Detroit Gun Club and raised \$80,000 to support foster care, adoption and mentoring services. Guests enjoyed a beautiful day of friendly competition concluding with a delicious open grill steak and salmon dinner.



#### SAVE THE DATE | Thursday, September 21, 2023 | Detroit Gun Club | Walled Lake



From left to right: Dr. John Harb, Alex Kyriakopoulos, Paul Lanzon, Richard Najarian, Jeff Nercesian



Judson Center's Annual Gala, A Night to Embrace, presented by David Provost & Huntington Bank was held on Friday, November 11 at The Henry in Dearborn. The gala raised more than \$386,000 to benefit the more than

13,000 children, adults and families we serve each year. The evening was an extraordinary celebration of Judson Center, its donors and those we serve.

SAVE THE DATE | Friday, November 3, 2023 | The Henry | Dearborn

A NIGHT TO Embrace!



Judson Center and Child Safe board members



Lenora Hardy-Foster, David Provost

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR 2023 Signature Events

THE YEAR AHEAD

Tickets and sponsorship opportunities are still available. Register online at the link below.



Register online at the link below.

Thursday, September 21, 2023 THE DETROIT GUN CLUB childsafemichigan.org/pull-for-kids



Tickets and sponsorship opportunities available. Register online at the link below.

> Monday, August 28, 2023 SHEPHERD'S HOLLOW judsoncenter.org/golf



Tickets and sponsorship opportunities available. Register online at the link below.

> Friday, November 3, 2023 THE HENRY judsoncenter.org/gala

# Judson Center

judsoncenter.org | 866-5JUDSON

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Judson Center helps children and families reach their greatest potential.

Through high-quality, person-focused services in adoption, foster care, autism, disabilities, substance use disorder, behavioral and physical health, Judson Center is proud to provide brighter futures for the children, adults and families we serve.

AUTISM CONNECTIONS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES DISABILITY SERVICES FAMILY HEALTH



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#### JOIN US FOR OUR SIGNATURE EVENTS:

- Child Safe Michigan's Legends of Tomorrow Gala | Friday, June 9, 2023 | M1 CONCOURSE
- Child Safe Michigan's 1st Annual Pickleball Tournament | Monday, July 31, 2023 | TAM-O-SHANTER
- Judson Center's Corporate Golf Challenge | Monday, August 28, 2023 | SHEPHERD'S HOLLOW
- Child Safe Michigan's PULL! for Kids! | Thursday, September 21, 2023 | THE DETROIT GUN CLUB
- Judson Center's A Night to Embrace Gala | Friday, November 3, 2023 | THE HENRY