

# ALEXANDER CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION

September 2026 eNews



## LETTERS FROM LYNN: SEPTEMBER 2026

Connection is an interesting word. It can mean many different things depending on the context in which it is used. When I think of connection, it means more than just a linking of things together. It is a deep, meaningful bond that is formed and is the key to a long and successful relationship. It is what makes us human, the ability to form a unique bond with someone and to be there when it counts. My connection to my family and friends is what helps me get through tough times and what brings me joy in good times. I feel incredibly blessed to have thoughtful and special connections in my life.

Recently, I witnessed a strong connection that one of our team members has with the kiddos we serve. She really wanted to give them a special evening that many of the kids in our programs may never or have ever experienced in life: a simple school dance. A time to dress up and have their hair and make-up done, to dance, take pictures in a photo booth, and eat special treats. It was a dream she had, and she worked hard to bring her vision to life thanks to the generosity of a grant from the Charlotte Merchants Foundation. She has a connection with the kids in our Psychiatric Residential Treatment program and wanted to help these kids deepen their connection to each other through a joyful and fun evening. I watched the excitement in their eyes as they walked the red carpet and had their pictures taken. How they moved shyly to the music at first and then let go and danced freely. It was a magical night of laughter and creating memories.

Thank you to all of you who connect with our kids, our staff, and our mission. Connection with others and the connections we have in our community are one of the many things that make Alexander Youth Network a special place. Your connection to our children aids in their development of coping strategies to manage their emotions. Alexander is a part of their journey in the healing process, and connections with volunteers, staff and each other will make what they learn with us more sustainable.

I treasure the connections that I have here at Alexander and have seen firsthand how those connections are making an impact on children across the state of North Carolina.

Gratefully,  
Lynn

# VOLUNTEER CORNER

This month we had the privilege of welcoming a group from Bank of America to campus! Led by Alexander Children's Foundation board member, Michael Hennessy, this incredible group of volunteers helped paint our indoor pool locker rooms and brought plenty of energy to a friendly game of kickball with our kids.

Thank you to all of the team members, both returning volunteers and those visiting Alexander Youth Network for the first time, for spending your afternoon helping beautify an area of campus that our kids use regularly and for taking the time to connect with them through a fun game of kickball. Your time, hard work, and enthusiasm made a meaningful difference for our campus and the children we serve.

We hope to welcome you back to campus in the future!

If you are interested in joining the fun of corporate volunteering, please contact Ashley Nieves, Volunteer Engagement Officer, at [anieves@aynkids.org](mailto:anieves@aynkids.org).



If you're looking for ways to get involved at Alexander Youth Network as an individual, consider becoming a lunch or dinner buddy!

Lunch and Dinner Buddies spend an hour each week building connections, modeling healthy social skills, and reminding our kids that they matter. If you're looking for a meaningful way to make a difference in a child's day, and often their entire week, we'd love to welcome you into our volunteer community. Just one meal a week can provide a child in our program with the support, encouragement, and connection they need to thrive. Having a meal buddy helps our kids learn how to build healthy relationships, develop trust, and experience consistency and routine, which many have lacked in the past. It's a little meal time, a lot of fun, and it makes a tremendous impact! For more information, please reach out to Ashley Nieves at [anieves@aynkids.org](mailto:anieves@aynkids.org).

## SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

Alexander Youth Network is proud to recognize Sidley Austin for their continued generosity of sponsorship and shared commitment to creating stronger communities and brighter futures for children and families. Guided by a culture of excellence, integrity, collegiality, and service, Sidley Austin is dedicated not only to delivering the highest quality professional service, but also to using their skills and talents for the betterment of the communities they serve.

Sidley Austin is a global law firm, supported by 21 offices strategically situated in key commercial, regulatory, and financial centers around the world. Sidley Austin has an expanding footprint in the Charlotte region and beyond, with the company boasting approximately 2,300 lawyers globally.

Sidley Austin's involvement with Alexander Youth Network has evolved over the years from a simple introduction from one of our board members to sponsorship and personal engagement with Celebrating Our Kids. And we aren't done yet, with future volunteer opportunities, engagements, and outing potential in the near future.

Through Sidley Austin's support, children and families across North Carolina gain access to critical mental and behavioral health services that help them navigate challenges, strengthen relationships, and build lasting resilience. Together, we are creating pathways of hope, fostering healing, and helping young people reach their full potential.

We are deeply grateful to Sidley Austin for standing with us as we build bridges to hope and healing for the children and families we serve.

# SIDLEY

If your company is interested in sponsoring Celebrating Our Kids in 2027, please reach out to our Director of Development, Brooks Shelley, at [bshelley@aynkids.org](mailto:bshelley@aynkids.org).

# THE IMPACT YOU MAKE: SAMMY'S STORY

Sammy is a petite, delightful, sweet, and engaging young man. He came to Alexander Youth Network when he was just 6 ½ after his mother was incarcerated due to drug activity. Sammy and his siblings experienced abuse, neglect, and homelessness. Much more than anyone should have to deal with, especially at such a young age. These experiences left Sammy angry and unable to effectively communicate what he needed. He could not express his emotions as most children his age can and had a difficult time relating to his peers. When things weren't going his way, he became easily angered and would often become physical.

His therapist recommended that Sammy get a lunch buddy because he didn't have any other family that could participate in his treatment plan. His future was uncertain and the treatment goal for Sammy was to develop the necessary skills to manage his emotional outbursts and aggression. When he mastered this, he would be discharged to a foster family once one could be identified closer to his siblings.

Mel became Sammy's lunch buddy after a careful matching of his needs. As a mother of three boys, she wanted to be paired with a young man that was close in age to her sons. She felt she could connect easily with him and understood what types of things boys Sammy's age like to do. Mel and Sammy started by reading books together, playing games, and enjoying a mutual love of ice cream. Sammy began to ask if Mel could come visit more than once a week. He had never had someone that was there for just him, giving him undivided attention to sit and read or play with him. Sammy felt safe with Mel. He began to trust her and shared things with her.

Mel encouraged Sammy in his treatment and reinforced the skills he was learning. She complimented him when he controlled his anger with his peers in the cafeteria and encouraged him to share what he was feeling instead of acting impulsively. They formed a bond, a connection that led to trust and understanding. Sammy began to feel like what he wanted mattered and that he was loved. Mel commented on how smart Sammy was to his therapist and they found new ways to inspire Sammy to continue to work hard in school and get along with his peers.

Mel and Sammy have continued to stay connected to each other now that Sammy has gone to live with his foster family. He told Mel how much he misses her, wants to read with her on their phone calls and shares his newfound love of music with her. Their connection is a special one. Mel's impact on Sammy cannot be measured in words; it is measured by their continued relationship after his discharge. An hour a week made a huge difference in his progress and success in developing the skills he needs to get along better with other children. His journey is not over yet, but Sammy is on the path to healing.

# DAFdayCLT

## What is DAFdayCLT?

Created in 2024, DAFday is a national movement that encourages Donor-Advised Fund (DAF) holders to recommend grants from their DAFs to the nonprofits and causes they care about most. It is estimated that DAFs are holding \$326 billion nationwide. These dollars are all intended for philanthropy, but are often left waiting to be distributed. DAFdayCLT makes this national movement local, bringing together Greater Charlotte area nonprofits, foundations, wealth managers, family offices, and other DAF sponsors together to encourage DAF giving during October 5-9.

If you have a DAF, we hope you will consider making a grant from your DAF October 5-9. Making a grant today helps provide critical mental health services to more than 5,000 children across the state each year. To find Alexander Youth Networks' tax information, [please visit our website](#).

Want to learn more about DAFdayCLT or Donor-Advised Funds? Visit [dafdayclt.com](https://dafdayclt.com)

Thank you for helping Alexander Youth Network build the bridge to hope and healing for the children we serve!

## CAMPUS TOURS

Join us for a tour of Alexander Youth Network! Tours are scheduled for the first and third Thursday of the month. This is a great opportunity for a personalized, guided tour where you can ask questions and learn about all the amazing programs and services provided by Alexander Youth Network.

All tours of Alexander will take place on the Charlotte campus, located at 6220 Thermal Road, Charlotte, NC. Campus tours are 1 hour long. You can [sign up for a tour by visiting our website](#). If you would like to come for a tour, but are not able to make one of the scheduled dates, please contact Kaitlyn Dixon at [kcoppadge@aynkids.org](mailto:kcoppadge@aynkids.org) or 704-227-9159.

The October tours will be on the 1<sup>st</sup> at 12:30 pm and the 15<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 pm. Tours in November will take place on the 5<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 pm and the 19<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 pm.

DAFdayCLT

OCTOBER 8, 2026

## What's a DAF?

A Donor Advised Fund is a charitable account. If you have one, you already gave your money away. Now it needs a destination.

### 01 Log in to your fund

This is your DAF sponsor's, or wealth manager's, portal.

### 02 Recommend a grant

Search for your favorite Charlotte nonprofit and name your amount. Two minutes, no checkbook.

### 03 Tell us it's you

Include your name so we can say thank you. Grants sometimes arrive anonymous.