

2026



**GOVERNOR'S
FAITH-BASED AND
COMMUNITY INITIATIVE**

Annual Impact Report

"Government cannot solve our greatest challenges alone, which is why we established the Governor's Faith-Based and Community Initiative in partnership with the General Assembly. Tennessee's greatest resource is found in our people— in faith communities, nonprofits and neighbors who choose to serve those in need. Since 2019, countless families have moved from crisis to flourishing in foster homes, prison visitation rooms, and communities across our state through this important work."

- GOVERNOR BILL LEE, STATE OF THE STATE SPEECH 2026



A letter from our **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

FY2026 — THE YEAR OF MEASURABLE PROGRESS

The Governor's Faith-Based and Community Initiative (GFBCI) exists to unite, mobilize, and serve Tennesseans. GFBCI doesn't run programs, and it doesn't replace what state agencies do. It builds the partnerships that let vulnerable Tennesseans be met by their whole community at once, rather than one office at a time.

For three years, that mostly meant building. Research commissioned. Councils convened. Partners recruited. Technology procured. Standards

written. FY2026 is the year the preparation and progress turned into results and momentum.

Every Child TN roughly doubled nearly every core metric it tracks — inquiries, children served, needs met, dollars mobilized, faith communities engaged — and opened Lumen Flats, the first supportive housing community of its kind in the country for young adults aging out of foster care.

The Volunteer Mentorship Initiative went from two pilot prisons to all fourteen state facilities in eight months. More than 160 organizations applied to run it locally; nine were selected; every warden in

Tennessee was trained on the model.

The Human Flourishing Initiative went from blueprint to a live county alliance — 87 partners in Williamson County, families served within the first three weeks — with Shelby and Knox funded, staffed, and scheduled behind it. And when SNAP benefits were interrupted for more than 690,000 Tennesseans, the network built for the long work proved it could also move in days.

Three initiatives carry this work into specific corners of the state's hardest problems — foster care, reentry, and the long road from crisis to flourishing. Special projects respond when something acute demands it. Underneath all of it is the conviction that Tennessee's deepest resource isn't its government or its programs. It's the people of Tennessee.

Thank you to Governor Bill Lee for his vision and leadership, to the state legislature for continued funding and support, to our state agency and non-profit partners for their service, to the philanthropic community whose generosity made this year's expansion possible, and to every faith leader, volunteer, and local champion who said yes to this work.

The road ahead is long, but together, we are laying the foundation for a Tennessee where no citizen walks alone.

With gratitude and resolve,



Lance Villio

**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR**

Governor's Faith-
Based and
Community Initiative

ABOUT

In 2019, in response to Governor Bill Lee's vision, the Tennessee General Assembly established the Governor's Faith-Based and Community Initiative (GFBCI) to leverage the power and possibilities of Tennessee's faith and community-based organizations, in partnership with state government, to address the state's most challenging issues.

In 2023, the General Assembly approved recurring funding for the GFBCI, ensuring long-term sustainability and support for this vital public-private partnership.

With over 11,500 houses of worship and 30,000+ socially engaged non-profits across Tennessee, GFBCI is uniquely positioned as a nimble and proactive problem-solver for the state's challenges—from children, youth, and families in foster care to the incarcerated men and women in state prison.

GFBCI doesn't run programs, and it doesn't replace what state agencies do. It builds the partnerships that let vulnerable Tennesseans be met by their whole community at once, rather than one office at a time. GFBCI sits inside state government, but its work happens outside it — in church basements, in nonprofit offices, in county courthouses, in the homes of foster families, inside the visitation rooms of fourteen state prisons.

GFBCI is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization funded with public and private dollars and governed by a Board of Directors appointed by Governor Bill Lee.

11,500+

houses of worship in
Tennessee

30,000+

socially engaged
nonprofits

95

counties

MISSION

UNITE. MOBILIZE. SERVE.

The Governor's Faith-Based and Community Initiative mobilizes Tennessee's Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) to unite with the state government in serving vulnerable Tennesseans.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIRMAN

Barry Ray *(Chattanooga)*

Ginger Eley *(Nashville)*

Iris Ray *(Chattanooga)*

TREASURER

Fred Decosimo *(Chattanooga)*

Lang Wiseman *(Nashville)*

SECRETARY

Libby Phillips *(Nashville)*

Tyrone Burroughs *(Memphis)*

Dianne P. Young *(Memphis)*

David Schmid *(Knoxville)*

INITIATIVES

INITIATIVES

INITIATIVES

INITIATIVES

INITIATIVES



EVERY CHILD TN

WHY THIS MATTERS

Nearly 8,000 Tennessee children are in state custody at any given moment — but a system can't raise a child. Custody is a legal status; it is not a family. Every Child TN is the network of nonprofits, faith communities, businesses, and everyday Tennesseans showing up for children, youth, and families before, during, and after foster care.

Each year, more than 5,000 Tennessee children enter foster care — many because of unmet basic needs like housing instability, food, transportation, and child care, not because of unsafe parenting. Once children are in care, roughly 8,000 children rely on only about 5,000 available foster families — a placement gap that is especially severe for teens, sibling groups, and youth with higher needs.

Launched in 2023 and led by GFBCI in close partnership with the Tennessee Department of Children's Services, Every Child TN organizes its work around four foster care priorities — Family Preservation, Foster Family Recruitment, Foster Family Retention, and Foster Youth Transition. Each marks a specific point in the child welfare journey where community involvement is most necessary, and each is led by a trusted implementation partner. Behind every priority sits the same disciplined approach: cross-sector leadership councils, evidence-based investment, and rigorous tracking of outcomes.

THE GAP, IN FOUR NUMBERS

5,000+

children enter foster care in Tennessee each year - often for preventable reasons

8,000

children in care, against roughly 5,000 available foster families

30-60%

of foster families stop fostering each year, nationally

800+

youth age out annually - 70-80% face adverse outcomes within a few years

PROGRESS REPORT

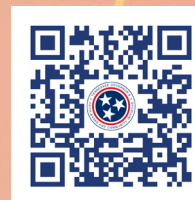
THE YEAR IN REVIEW — FY2026

Every core metric Every Child TN tracks roughly doubled between July 2025 and June 2026 — not because the need doubled, but because the network finally had the reach to meet it. Inquiries more than doubled. Children served with tangible needs more than doubled. Community dollars mobilized more than doubled. Faith communities engaged more than doubled. And underneath the volume, the direction of travel changed. While the number of licensed foster homes fell nationally, Tennessee's grew.

- \$1.37M+ — in private funds mobilized to date to meet the direct needs of 7,150 children and families — with a primary focus on preventing children from entering foster care, in partnership with CarePortal.
- +7% vs. -9% — Since ECTN's launch in February 2023,

Tennessee's licensed foster homes increased 7% while licensed foster homes nationally dropped 9% (2023–2025).

- +7% — ECTN is tracking 7% higher in new licensed homes this fiscal year compared to FY25, through its partnership with The Contingent.
- 497 ECTN churches in FY26, in partnership with Tennessee Kids Belong and CarePortal
- 6 pilots — launched — all privately funded (\$1.5M) — to improve outcomes for youth aging out of foster care in housing, mental health, and access to one supportive adult, in partnership with Belmont Innovation Labs and Access Ventures.
- 18 units of supportive housing opened at Lumen Flats — the first community of its kind in the country using project-based FYI vouchers.

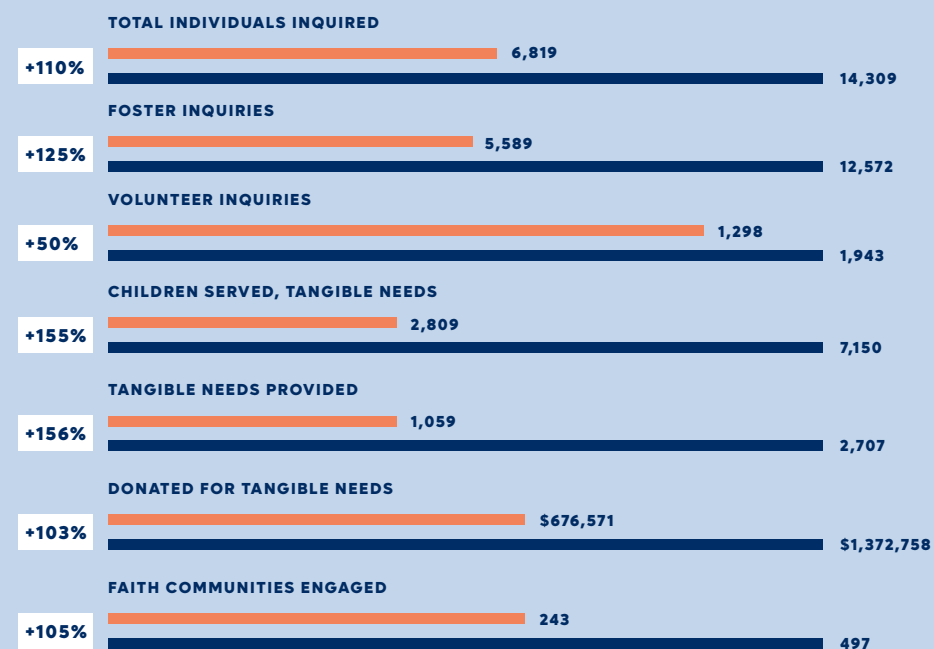




A YEAR OF DOUBLING



JULY 2025 - JUNE 2026



\$1,372,758

Raised and given by Tennesseans, neighbor to neighbor, to meet the needs of children and families in their own counties this year.



WHERE THE WORK HAPPENED

Four priorities mark four points in the child welfare journey. Here is what each of them moved this year.

PRESERVATION

7,150

children served with tangible needs

2,707

tangible needs provided

\$1.37 M+

in community donations mobilized

RECRUITMENT

12,572

foster care inquiries generated

57%

of inquirers said they are willing and able to take children with higher needs

RETENTION

497

total churches involved in Tennessee Kids Belong and CarePortal

2,300

foster families served by wraparound activity

TRANSITION

6

pilot programs operating statewide

\$1.5M

privately funded

18

units of supportive housing opened at Lumen Flats



A Family Discovers Foster Care Is Harder Than Expected, But More Beautiful Than Imagined



A Delivery Became A Relationship



A Boy Rejected By His Mother Only To Find His Forever Family



FOUR PRIORITIES

PRESERVATION

Preserve families whenever possible — helping them remain safely together and reducing unnecessary entries into foster care. CarePortal, ECTN's lead preservation partner, connects children and families in crisis with local churches and community members who can meet tangible needs. Strategically deployed within DCS, CarePortal equips caseworkers to identify and request needs for families at risk of removal — enabling a real-time, community-driven response that helps keep families safely together.

- 7,150 — children served with tangible needs as of June 2026
- 2,707 — tangible needs provided
- \$1.37M+ — in community donations mobilized to provide tangible needs

RECRUITMENT

Recruit foster families — especially for teens, sibling groups, and youth with higher needs. The Contingent, ECTN's lead recruitment partner, leads targeted, data-driven recruitment — using community engagement to grow the number of strategic foster homes in the Tennessee counties with the greatest need.

- 14,309 — individuals engaged through inquiries to date
- 12,572 — foster care inquiries generated
- 50% — of new licensing inquiries from the highest-need counties

RETENTION

Strengthen and sustain existing foster families so they can keep saying yes. Recruiting families is not enough — with 30–60% of foster families leaving each year nationally, and up to 50% exiting within their first year, retention is where stability is won or lost. Tennessee Kids Belong, ECTN's lead retention partner, mobilizes wraparound support networks — equipping churches and volunteers to provide the ongoing care that directly addresses the leading reasons families exit: meals, childcare, and community connection.

- 155 — ECTN churches providing wraparound support in FY26
- 2,300 — foster families served by wraparound activities this year

TRANSITION

Equip youth aging out of care for independence and flourishing. More than 800 youth age out of foster care in Tennessee each year — and by age 21, 31% have experienced homelessness and 36% have



experienced incarceration. Belmont Innovation Labs, ECTN's lead transition partner, leads data-driven strategy and pilot programs to change that trajectory.

Building on the Transitioning Into Adulthood landscape study (2024) and the Investment Solutions for Transition-Age Foster Youth impact case (2025), this year marked the move from research to launch. The Reconstruct Challenge — a funding competition inviting proven organizations to pitch scalable solutions to a panel of experts and investors — launched in October 2025, and by April 2026 six pilot programs were operating statewide, all privately funded, targeting the three gaps the research identified: stable housing, mental health access, and supportive adult relationships.

GFBCI and Belmont University also continue to collaborate on Every Campus for Every Child, a pioneering blueprint to help colleges and universities become foster-friendly campuses — ensuring youth transitioning from care have continued access to supportive, opportunity-rich environments.

- 31% have experienced homelessness by age 21
- 36% have experienced incarceration by age 21
- 800+ age out of Tennessee foster care each year

31%

have experienced homelessness by age 21

36%

have experienced incarceration by age 21

800+

age out of Tennessee foster care each year

Foster care isn't a single problem — it's a chain of decisions. Preservation works before a removal. Recruitment works at placement. Retention works during care. Transition works at the exit. Each priority is measured where it acts.



EVERY CHILD TN: FOUR PRIORITIES. FOUR PARTNERS.

Every Child TN doesn't deliver the work alone. Each of the four foster care priorities is led by an organization that has spent years doing exactly that work — and that now does it at statewide scale, with shared data and shared accountability.

CAREPORTAL — PRESERVATION

CarePortal connects children and families in crisis with local churches and community members who can meet tangible needs. Deployed strategically inside DCS, CarePortal equips caseworkers to identify and request needs for families at risk of removal — turning a case note into a real-time, community-driven response that helps keep families safely together.

FY 2026	7,150 children served	2,707 needs met	\$1.37M+ mobilized
----------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------	------------------------------

THE CONTINGENT — RECRUITMENT

The Contingent mobilizes communities to care for vulnerable children by recruiting and supporting foster families. For Every Child TN, they lead targeted, data-driven recruitment — concentrating effort in the counties with the greatest need and on the placements hardest to fill: teens, sibling groups, and youth with higher needs.



FY 2026	12,572 foster inquiries	57% of inquirers said they are willing and able to take children with higher needs	+7% licensed new homes since FY 2025
----------------	-----------------------------------	--	--

TENNESSEE KIDS BELONG — RETENTION

Tennessee Kids Belong improves outcomes for children in foster care by engaging community partners. For Every Child TN, they mobilize wraparound support networks — equipping churches and volunteers to deliver the ongoing care that addresses the leading reasons families stop fostering: meals, childcare, and community connection.

FY 2026	155 faith communities engaged	2,300 foster families served
----------------	---	--

BELMONT INNOVATION LABS — TRANSITION

Belmont Innovation Labs addresses complex social challenges through research and innovation. For Every Child TN, they lead data-driven strategy and pilot programs for youth aging out of care — running the landscape research, building the investment case, and standing up the funded pilots that follow from it.

FY 2026	Reconstruct Challenge launched	6 pilots operating statewide	\$1.5M entirely privately funded
----------------	--	--	--

Access Ventures, Elmington Capital, and the Every Campus for Every Child collaboration with Belmont University extend this work further.



RECONSTRUCT CHALLENGE

THE CHALLENGE THAT FUNDED THE PILOTS

A funding competition built with Belmont University on a simple premise: Tennessee already knew what these young people needed. What it needed was somebody to build it — and the money to try.

For two years, Every Child TN's transition work was research, led by Belmont Innovation Labs. The Transitioning Into Adulthood landscape study mapped what happens to Tennessee youth who turn eighteen in state custody. The Investment Solutions for Transition-Age Foster Youth impact case narrowed the field to three leverage points: stable housing, mental health access, and a relationship with at least one supportive adult.

Research that stops there is a document. The Reconstruct Challenge is what happens when it doesn't stop.

Launched in October 2025 and led by Belmont Innovation Labs, Reconstruct is a funding competition. Proven organizations — from inside Tennessee and outside it — pitch scalable solutions to a panel of experts and investors. The strongest proposals receive funding to launch their work in Tennessee, along with implementation support and independent impact evaluation from Belmont.

The design is deliberate. Rather than writing one program and hoping it works, Reconstruct funds several at once, measures them

against the same three gaps, and lets evidence decide what scales. More than 800 Tennessee youth age out of foster care every year. By twenty-one, roughly a third have experienced homelessness and more than a third have experienced incarceration. Those numbers have held steady for a long time. Reconstruct exists to make them move.

HOW IT WORKS

STEP	WHAT HAPPENS
01 Name the gap	Two years of research narrow the problem to three leverage points: stable housing, mental health access, one supportive adult.
02 Open the field	Proven organizations from inside and outside Tennessee pitch scalable solutions — not concepts, but work with a track record.
03 Fund the pitch	A panel of experts and investors selects. Awards are private capital, and the pilot launches in Tennessee.
04 Measure it	Belmont provides implementation support and independent impact evaluation. What works is what scales.



RECONSTRUCT CHALLENGE

THE AWARDED PILOTS

FOCUS: SUPPORTIVE ADULTS

Connect Our Kids provides software and training to help caseworkers map kinship networks and identify supportive adults for youth.

Forward Steps offers the Guardian Scholars Program, providing emotional support, mentoring, career guidance and financial assistance as students with foster care experience transition into adulthood and pursue postsecondary education.

OCJ Kids provides youth aging out of foster care with cell phones and monthly plans to aid in connecting to mental health resources and a caring adult, creating a consistent touchpoint for support.

FOCUS: MENTAL HEALTH

TN Voices integrates clinical services, peer mentorship and digital wellness tools into transitional housing.

FOCUS: HOUSING

Jonathan's Path pilots family-based housing where youth live with consistent caregivers.

Elmington Elevates is developing an affordable housing community using Foster Youth to Independence vouchers.

OCTOBER '25
CHALLENGE LAUNCHED

\$1,500,000
AWARDED, ALL PRIVATE

6
PILOTS
STATEWIDE

3
GAPS
TARGETED



LUMEN FLATS

A FIRST-IN-THE-NATION HOME FOR YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

Every year, more than 800 Tennessee youth age out of foster care — turning 18 without ever achieving a permanent family, and entering adulthood largely on their own. The outcomes are stark: by age 21, more than a third are without stable housing, roughly half are unemployed, and 70–80% face homelessness, addiction, incarceration, or trafficking without proper support. This year, Tennessee answered with something no state had built before.

In FY2026, Every Child TN conceived and opened Lumen Flats — the first dedicated supportive housing community in the country using project-based Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers. Located in Knoxville and developed in partnership with Elmington Capital, Lumen Flats pairs stable, dignified housing with onsite wraparound services — so young adults leaving foster care don't just get a lease, they get a launchpad: a stable address, supportive adults, and a clear path into adulthood.

Lumen Flats was made possible by a first-of-its-kind funding coalition: a private investment from Coca-Cola Consolidated and a \$1 million contribution from the City of Knoxville — public and private capital braided together around a single conviction: that no young person should leave state custody for the streets.

The idea traces directly through ECTN's transition work: identified as a leverage point in Belmont Innovation Labs' landscape research, developed as a pilot in the Investment Solutions for Transition-Age Foster Youth impact case, and delivered — from concept to ribbon cutting — inside this fiscal year.

FUNDING COALITION

FIRST

dedicated apartment community
of its kind in the country

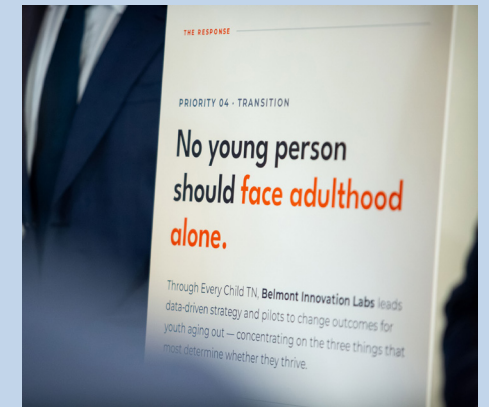
18

units of supportive housing

LUMEN FLATS

"It's about the opportunity to impact and change the trajectory of people's lives."

— Ben Brewer, President & Co-Founder, Elmington Capital



EVERY TEAM FOR EVERY CHILD

WHEN THE WHOLE STATE SUITS UP

The Tennessee Titans, the Memphis Grizzlies, the Nashville Predators, and Nashville Soccer Club have been joined by Chattanooga FC, the Knoxville Smokies, Chattanooga Lookouts, and the Nashville Sounds — eight teams, four cities, all three Grand Divisions, across football, basketball, hockey, soccer, and baseball.

What these organizations share is a stage. On any given night, they hold the attention of more Tennesseans than a state agency, a press release, or an annual report ever will. Every Team For Every Child puts that stage to work for children in foster care.

Sports moves culture faster than policy can. A recruitment message delivered from center court, or a foster family honored at midfield, reaches Tennesseans who will never read a state report — and tells them, in the place they already gather, that showing up for a child in care is an ordinary thing that people here do.



THE ALLIANCE

TEAM	LEAGUE	GRAND DIVISION
Tennessee Titans	NFL	Middle
Memphis Grizzlies	NBA	West
Nashville Predators	NHL	Middle
Nashville Soccer Club	MLS	Middle
Nashville Sounds	Triple-A baseball	Middle
Knoxville Smokies	Double-A baseball	East
Chattanooga FC	MLS NEXT Pro	East
Chattanooga Lookouts	Double-A baseball	East



Every Child TN — Recap



VOLUNTEER MENTORSHIP INITIATIVE

WHY THIS MATTERS

Rentry is a make-or-break moment. Tennessee has one of the highest incarceration rates in the country — over 50,000 Tennesseans are under correctional supervision at any given moment, and thousands of men and women are released each year, most without a single trusted person waiting on the outside. Without a steady, non-governmental relationship, returning citizens face isolation, unemployment, and a higher risk of re-incarceration.

The Volunteer Mentorship Initiative (VMI) is a statewide partnership between GFBCI, the Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC), and community-based nonprofits. It pairs everyday Tennesseans with incarcerated men and women preparing for release — not as experts, not as saviors, just steady people willing to show up. Relationships begin up to 12 months before release and continue for at least six months after, offering stability, hope, and accountability during one of life's most vulnerable transitions.

WHY MENTORSHIP MATTERS

Tennessee's three-year prison recidivism rate stands at 29.6% — a 10-year low, but still nearly one in three returning to incarceration

(TDOC, 2023). The research is clear on what changes that.

31%

lower odds of returning to prison for those who received visits - with each additional visit reducing the odds further (Bales and Mears, 2008)

44%

decrease in rearrests for those who maintained relationships with volunteer mentors through release - Minnesota's InnerChange study (Harvard IOP, 2019)

FROM TWO PRISONS TO FOURTEEN

BUILDING A STATEWIDE INFRASTRUCTURE OF HOPE

A year ago, the Volunteer Mentorship Initiative was running in two state prisons. By the close of FY2026 it had a director, a funder, a review committee grounded in lived experience, a proprietary training curriculum, a statewide learning management system, a mobile app, nine local partners, and every warden in Tennessee trained on the model.

That sequence matters. VMI did not scale by asking fourteen facilities to improvise. It scaled by building one standard — the same screening, the same training, the same expectations — and then handing the local work to organizations that already live in those communities. GFBCI provides the framework, the platform, and the standards. VMI is the why and the how. The who is local.



FROM FUNDING TO STATEWIDE

“I’ve been a warden in three different states, at different prisons, and none of them deal with what we do with these guys when they walk out the door — having that mentor. This is a really good program... you’ll see.”

— Warden Nelson, Riverbend Maximum Security Institution

DATE	MILESTONE
December 2025	Funds received from private philanthropy
January 2026	Raul Lopez hired as VMI Director, bringing two decades of prison ministry leadership.
February 2026	Review Committee assembled and trained; grant infrastructure built on Submittable.
March 2026	Application opens; all fourteen wardens trained in Nashville; Science of Hope curriculum filmed.
April 2026	Window closes with 160+ submissions; nine partners selected after three independent reviews each.
May 2026	Two-day partner training — all nine together for the first time.
June–July 2026	Facility onboarding, Riverbend (June 2) through Mark Luttrell (July 16).
August 2026	Statewide availability.

FOURTEEN FACILITIES. NINE LOCAL PARTNERS

Following a competitive statewide selection drawing more than 160 applications, the VMI Review Committee named nine implementation partners. Each runs the initiative inside its assigned facility — recruiting, training, and standing beside the mentors in its own community.

THE MENTOR PIPELINE

ALL 14

state prisons

9

implementation
partners

160+

organizations
applied

300

mentors in the
pipeline

14

wardens trained
in person

\$1.55M

from private philanthropy

8MO

funding to full
onboarding



The Unlikely
Friendship



WHAT MENTORSHIP LOOKS LIKE

Real mentorship is quiet, consistent, and unglamorous. Mentors meet one-on-one inside the facility, once a month for two hours, and commit to at least 18 months — twelve months meeting inside, followed by six months of continued contact after release, the period where outside support matters most.

PARTNER	FACILITIES SERVED	
Men of Valor men-of-valor.org	Riverbend Maximum Security Institution (Nashville) · Trousdale Turner Correctional Center (Hartsville) · Whiteville Correctional Facility (Whiteville)	
Tennessee Prison Outreach Ministries tpom.org	Lois M. DeBerry Special Needs Facility (Nashville) · South Central Correctional Facility (Clifton) · West Tennessee State Penitentiary (Henning)	
HopeWorks · whyhopeworks.org	Hardeman County Correctional Facility (Whiteville) · Mark Luttrell Transition Center (Memphis)	
This Is Living Ministries thisislivingministries.org	Bledsoe County Correctional Complex — male and female sites (Pikeville)	
True Purpose Ministries truepurposeministries.com	Morgan County Correctional Complex (Wartburg)	

A.C.T.I.O.N. Coalition · actioncoalition.org	Northeast Correctional Complex (Mountain City)	
The Belonging Co. · thebelonging.co	Debra K. Johnson Rehabilitation Center (Nashville)	
Dismas House · dismas.org	Turney Center Industrial Complex (Only)	
Recovery Is the New High recoveryis thenewhigh.com	Northwest Correctional Complex (Tiptonville)	

Every participant works from a VMI Individualized Growth Plan addressing the tactical foundations of reentry — housing, substance recovery, transportation, employment — while the Science of Hope curriculum speaks to aspiration: setting meaningful goals, developing clear pathways to reach them, and cultivating the willpower to see them through. Dr. Chan Hellman of the University of Oklahoma developed and personally filmed the proprietary three-module curriculum built specifically for VMI mentors.

Mentors are supported by regular check-ins with their local team and a dedicated coordinator, and equipped with the VMI app for peer support and resources. Across all facilities, VMI has had zero safety incidents involving mentors.



BUILT WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

VMI has been co-designed with people who have lived the reentry journey. Through the Justice Impacted Council, GFBCI asked Tennesseans returning from incarceration what they received — or didn't — that most influenced their success, and built those insights into screening, training, and post-release support. This year, that voice moved from advisory to operational: Council members served on the VMI Review Committee that selected the nine implementation partners.

THE COMMITMENT, IN FOUR STEPS

STEP	DETAIL
One-on-one, inside	Meetings take place in a designated visitation or program room. Never alone in unsupervised areas.
Once a month, two hours	Typically 5–7 PM on a weekday evening, to accommodate working schedules.
Twelve months inside	Relationships begin up to a year before release, so trust exists before the hardest day arrives.
Six months after	Continued contact through the transition — the window where outside support matters most.





JUSTICE IMPACTED COUNCIL

The Governor's Faith-Based and Community Initiative established the Justice Impacted Council to provide strategic advice, lived experience perspectives, and recommendations to the Volunteer Mentorship Initiative, which is aimed at supporting justice-impacted individuals through mentorship and connection to community resources.

The Council also helps inform government and reentry programs by identifying barriers, advocating for impactful changes, and ensuring that services and policies are responsive to the needs of individuals returning from incarceration.

In FY2026, the Council's role moved from advisory to operational: roughly twenty Council members with lived experience of incarceration, drawn from across the state, anchored the VMI Review Committee — reviewing and scoring the implementation partner applications and shaping the mentor screening, training, and post-release standards now being adopted across all fourteen facilities.

- ~20 council members with lived experience
- 160+ applications reviewed and scored
- 3 independent reviews minimum, per application





HUMAN FLOURISHING INITIATIVE

WHY THIS MATTERS

Most families facing crisis aren't presenting one problem — they're juggling several at once: a job loss, a missed rent payment, a car that won't start, kids who've outgrown last year's shoes. The federal anti-poverty system has grown into more than 80 programs spending over a trillion dollars a year — each with its own application, its own eligibility rules, its own definition of success. A family in crisis doesn't see a system. They see a maze. And too often, they navigate it alone.

Tennessee's safety net was built program by program, not family by family. The Human Flourishing Initiative (HFI) changes that — uniting state agencies, faith communities, and local nonprofits into county-level alliances, so every family has one coordinated team behind them, from crisis all the way to flourishing. Families can enter through any door — school, church, court, or agency — and be connected to the full continuum of care, regardless of where they begin.

HUMAN FLOURISHING INITIATIVE:
To guide Tennessee families from crisis to flourishing by equipping counties to lead local ecosystems of care—powered by community connection, aligned state systems, and a “no wrong door” approach to personalized support.

THE SAME FAMILY, THROUGH AN HFI ALLIANCE

The same family is met by one family advocate at the backbone organization. The advocate runs the diagnostic, then assembles the team.

- The local housing authority works with the landlord on rental assistance.
- A faith-based community partner closes the immediate gap on shoes, groceries, and other essentials.
- The Department of Labor and Workforce Development connects the parent to a Job Corps placement.

Every partner sees the same plan in HopeHub. In 30 days, the advocate runs the assessment again — and the team adjusts based on what is working.

One family. One coordinated plan. One Tennessee showing up — together.

THREE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SOCIAL SAFETY NET SYSTEM

- Programs operate in silos. Each agency has its own intake, eligibility, and metrics. Families repeat their story dozens of times.
- Success is measured in services delivered — not in whether a family is actually thriving five years later.
- Public supports plateau at stability. They were never designed to help families move from surviving into flourishing.

HOW IT WORKS

HFI isn't a new program layered on top of existing ones. It's a methodology for connecting what already exists in a county. Each county selects a trusted, non-governmental backbone organization as its convener. The backbone maps every local asset — nonprofits, ministries, agency offices, housing authorities, food pantries, workforce programs — and invites each to join the county's HFI Alliance. Every alliance member is trained on HopeHub, the shared case-management platform that holds referrals, assessments, coordination, and outcome tracking in one place.

When a referral comes in, a dedicated family advocate runs a comprehensive diagnostic — measuring need across 13 domains of self-sufficiency (the Thriving Scale) and well-being across 6 domains (the Harvard Flourishing Index). The advocate assembles the right team of alliance members around that specific family, and every 30 days the family is reassessed on both axes. Success is measured by real progress in people's lives — housing, work, wellbeing — not

just service volume. It's how a county can prove, not assert, that the alliance is working.

- 13 — domains of self-sufficiency, the Thriving Scale
- 6 — domains of well-being, the Harvard Flourishing Index
- 30 — days between reassessments

FROM BLUEPRINT TO ALLIANCES

Giving families a single coordinated team instead of a maze of separate agencies.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

A year ago, the Human Flourishing Initiative was a methodology on paper. This year, a Tennessee county ran it.

Williamson County proved the method runs. Eighty-seven organizations joined the alliance. Families were being served within the first three weeks. Shelby and Knox followed with funded backbones, trained alliances, and launch dates on the calendar.

The quieter achievement is the shared infrastructure underneath. Three state departments — Human Services, Children's Services, and Labor & Workforce Development — committed to working from the same platform as county-level community alliances: the same diagnostic, the same plan, the same live data.

DASHBOARD STRIP

- \$2.5M — two-year, three-county pilot; \$1.34M private, balance braided from CSBG, TANF, and direct appropriation
- 3 — backbone organizations selected and onboarded

- 87 — alliance members in Williamson County
- 3 — state agencies committed to shared use of HopeHub
- 200+ — at the Shelby County pre-launch collective impact meeting
- 60+ — at the Knox County pre-launch collective impact meeting

WHY THREE PILOT COUNTIES — AND NOT ONE

A model isn't statewide-ready until it's been proven across the kinds of places Tennessee actually contains. HFI is piloted simultaneously across all three Grand Divisions and all three community types — so what we learn translates to all 95 counties.



Williamson County:
www.flourishtn.org/williamson



Knox County
www.flourishtn.org/knox



Shelby County
www.flourishtn.org/shelby

WHAT'S AN ALLIANCE MEMBER?

An alliance member is any organization in the county that touches the life of a vulnerable Tennessean and agrees to work as part of one coordinated team.

That includes nonprofits and ministries, clothing closets and food pantries, housing authorities, health clinics, recovery programs, workforce boards, schools, legal aid offices, and state agency field offices. Some are large institutions. Some are a single church with a benevolence fund. Membership costs nothing.

What membership requires is a way of working. Each member is registered and trained on Hope Hub and holds its own access. From there, a member does two things: it can refer new families into the system, and it can be assigned to families who need the specific services or resources it provides. When a family advocate builds a care team, alliance members are who that team is drawn from.

The practical effect is that a family tells their story once. Consent is obtained before any information moves between partners, and the family can withdraw it at any time. Every member sees the same plan, works from the same assessment, and can see whether the family is actually moving — rather than each organization tracking only the piece it touched.

HOPEHUB AND RESTORE HOPE

HopeHub is the connective tissue of an HFI alliance. Built by Restore Hope out of its 100 Families model, it is a shared case management platform that holds referrals, diagnostic assessments, service coordination, and outcome tracking in one place — so every partner working with a family sees the same picture rather than a fragment of it. HFI identified, secured, and embedded HopeHub as the anchor technology and process for the initiative, with guaranteed utilization from the Department of Human Services, the Department of Children's Services, and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development. That is the quiet achievement of this year: three state agencies and county-level community alliances working from the same diagnostic, the same plan, and the same live data. It has not been done in Tennessee before.

Restore Hope brings a model that has already been proven at scale. HopeHub brings the discipline: a family's needs, the team assembled around them, and their movement over time, all in one record that updates every thirty days.



01**IDENTIFY A BACKBONE ORGANIZATION**

Each county selects a non-governmental, community-based convener — typically a trusted local nonprofit or faith-based organization. The backbone does not have to provide direct services itself. What it must have is the relational capital and credibility to bring every other resource partner to the table.

02**MAP EVERY LOCAL ASSET**

The backbone identifies every community resource that touches a vulnerable Tennessean in the county: nonprofits, clothing closets, faith-based ministries, state agency offices, local housing authorities, food pantries, workforce development programs. Each is invited to join the county's HFI Alliance. The goal is a complete picture of every form of support already available, for every kind of vulnerability.

03**TRAIN THE ALLIANCE ON HOPEHUB**

Every alliance member is registered and trained on HopeHub, the shared case management platform that holds client referrals, diagnostic assessments, sensitive family information, service coordination, and outcome tracking in one place. Each member has their own access.

04**OPEN THE ALLIANCE FOR REFERRALS**

Once the initial alliance is established, referrals begin. The alliance keeps growing as new partners are identified — but families do not have to wait for the network to be complete to start being served.

05**FAMILY ADVOCATES COORDINATE THE RESPONSE**

A dedicated family advocate at the backbone runs a comprehensive diagnostic, then assembles the right team of alliance members around that specific family. The advocate's job is not to solve every problem. It is to read what the assessment reveals and bring the right partners in.

06**REASSESS EVERY 30 DAYS**

The family is reassessed on both axes. HopeHub tracks the movement. The alliance can see whether the coordinated work is producing real change, or whether the plan needs to shift. This is how a county knows the difference between services delivered and lives moving.

SPECIAL PROJECT: FEEDTN

When the Safety Net Paused, Tennessee Didn't.

Not every challenge fits inside a long-running initiative. When something acute hits Tennessee, GFBCI moves fast to coordinate the response. In the fall of 2025, when federal SNAP benefits were interrupted, hundreds of thousands of Tennessee families — many already living without margin — faced an immediate question: how do we eat this month? For the network GFBCI has spent years building, the answer didn't require a new program. It required activation.

On October 30, 2025 — with more than 690,000 Tennesseans facing food-assistance disruption from the federal shutdown and SNAP freeze — Governor Lee's office announced the launch of FeedTN.org. Built and coordinated by GFBCI, FeedTN mobilized Tennessee's food banks,

faith communities, and nonprofits to bridge the gap: a single front door where families could find food near them, and where churches, donors, and volunteers could find the fastest way to help.

The response was immediate and statewide. Thirteen news outlets covered the launch on day one — from Nashville, Knoxville, Memphis, and Jackson to the Tri-Cities and rural counties. The Department of Human Services, the United Way of West Tennessee, regional food banks, state legislators, and nonprofit newsletters all pointed Tennesseans to the same address. When the legislature and the Governor's office announced stabilization of benefits, traffic tapered — exactly as it should. FeedTN was built for a window of acute need, and it met it.

- 690,000+ — Tennesseans faced food-assistance disruption during the SNAP freeze
- ~75,000 — estimated total visitors from launch through restoration of benefits
- ~45,000 — estimated visitors in the first week alone
- 19 — news stories in the first two weeks; 13 on launch day



Watch FeedTN.org video

FeedTN is what the GFBCI model looks like under pressure: relationships built in ordinary time, activated in extraordinary time. The same trust, the same network, and the same conviction — that Tennessee's deepest resource is its people — turned toward a single urgent need.

RECOVERY AND RESTORATION AFTER DISASTERS

When tornadoes, ice storms, floods, or other disasters strike Tennessee, GFBCI coordinates between the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA), faith-based response networks, and community organizations to make sure relief reaches the people who need it.

The GFBCI-TEMA partnership — formalized in February 2025 when TEMA designated GFBCI staff as Emergency Services Coordinators (ESCs) — continued through FY2026, keeping houses of worship, especially in rural and underserved areas, equipped with the tools, relationships, and knowledge necessary for disaster resilience and recovery. By bridging emergency management with trusted faith-based networks, this partnership not only enhances response capabilities but ensures that houses of worship receive the support they need to serve others in times of crisis.

JANUARY 2026 ICE STORM RESPONSE

When a major ice storm struck Tennessee in January 2026, the partnership was activated once again. GFBCI coordinated with TEMA to connect houses of worship in affected communities with opportunities

for resources and emergency financial assistance — ensuring that the congregations serving as anchors for their neighbors through the storm were themselves equipped to recover, reopen, and keep serving.

- February 2025 — GFBCI staff designated Emergency Services Coordinators by TEMA
- January 2026 — ice storm response activated statewide
- 39 houses of worship connected to resources



FAITH & COMMUNITY SUMMITS

WHEN PROBLEMS ARE TOO BIG FOR ANY ONE SECTOR

This year, GFBCI convened the 2025-2026 Tennessee Faith & Community Summits — a one-of-a-kind, invitation-only gathering series held across all three Grand Divisions and drawing more than 1,350 attendees combined.

The theme, “Facing the Wicked Problems of Our Time,” recognizes that some problems are simply too big for any one organization or sector to solve alone. These “wicked problems” — issues that are deeply interconnected, constantly evolving, and resistant to simple solutions — sit at the heart of GFBCI’s work, with a focus on child and family well-being.



What Are “Wicked Problems?”
Scan to learn more

Meaningful progress requires something different: government leaders, elected officials, pastors and faith leaders, nonprofit organizations, and private philanthropists in the same room — building relationships, sharing perspective, and aligning around a common purpose. Throughout each Summit, attendees heard from leaders across the state, including Governor Bill Lee, alongside powerful stories from Tennesseans with lived experience.

ATTENDANCE ACROSS THREE GRAND DIVISIONS



Over 1,350 attendees combined across the four Summits — faith leaders, elected officials, nonprofit executives, and philanthropists, convened by invitation

FOUR SUMMITS. ONE CONVERSATION.

Each Summit was a space designed to connect the right people, foster collaboration, and create the conditions for real, sustained progress — through local sector-leader talks, cross-sector table discussions, and direct engagement with local and state government leadership.

MIDDLE TENNESSEE

MIDDLE TENNESSEE FAITH & COMMUNITY SUMMIT

Thursday, April 23, 2026 · Nashville First Baptist Church,
Nashville

330 — attendees

Community Investment Award: For Others

Speakers: Governor Bill Lee · Department of Human Services
Commissioner Clarence H. Carter · Chad Spencer (For Others) · Carole
Peterson (Uprise Nashville) · Elizabeth Keck (The Belonging Co) · Senator
Jack Johnson (Tennessee State Senate)



When Faith and State Unite



EAST TENNESSEE

EAST TENNESSEE FAITH & COMMUNITY SUMMIT

Tuesday, July 7, 2026 · Bridgewater Place, Knoxville

420 — attendees — four summits

The East Tennessee Summit closed out the statewide series — convening faith leaders, government officials, business leaders, and nonprofit leaders from across the region.

A Rural Pastors Roundtable was co-located the same morning, bringing the voices of East Tennessee's rural congregations directly into the conversation.

Community Investment Award: Coca-Cola Consolidated
Speakers: Governor Bill Lee · Department of Human Services Commissioner Clarence H. Carter · Mayor Indya Kincannon (City of Knoxville) · Mayor Glenn Jacobs (Knox County) · Dr. Keith Barber (President & CEO, East Tennessee Foundation) · Danita McCartney (President & CEO, Knox Area Rescue Ministries) · Bishop Evans Kariuki (Pastor, Eternal Life Ministries) · Chris Martin (Founder & President, Knoxville Leadership Foundation) · Dr. John Mark Harrison (Pastor, First Baptist Concord)



WEST TENNESSEE

WEST TENNESSEE FAITH & COMMUNITY SUMMIT

Tuesday, May 19, 2026 · Memphis Botanic Garden, Memphis

250 — attendees

Community Investment Award: Peer Power

Speakers: Governor Bill Lee · Department of Human Services
Commissioner Clarence H. Carter · Mayor Paul Young (City of Memphis)
· Karin Conlee (CEO, Unite Memphis) · Bill Courtney (Coach and
Philanthropist; Host, Army of Normal Folks) · Rufus Smith (Pastor,
Hope Church) · David Jordan (President & CEO, Agape Child & Family
Services) · Dianne Young (Senior Pastor, The Healing Center)



RESEARCH: MEASURING FAITH'S IMPACT

THE UT SWORPS RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

For decades, Tennesseans have known that faith communities carry an enormous share of the state's care for its most vulnerable neighbors. What no one had done was measure it. In partnership with the Tennessee Department of Human Services and the University of Tennessee's Social Work Office of Research and Public Service (SWORPS), that changed this year.

The multi-phase study asks four questions: What do Tennessee's faith communities contribute in time, talent, and treasure? How much do they contribute? How are recipients impacted? And how much do these contributions save Tennessee taxpayers?

PHASE I — RELEASED FY2026

- 8 — focus groups
- 297 — participants
- 76 — congregations and faith-based organizations

AMONG ITS FINDINGS

- Faith communities function as a vast but largely undocumented service sector — working across six major domains: basic needs, substance use and mental health, reentry, youth programming,

- foster care support, and advocacy and partnership-building.
- Faith is the primary driver of the work, not incidental to it — service framed as calling and covenant is the engine behind organizational persistence and volunteer commitment.
- Trust is the foundational asset of faith-based service — reaching people the formal system has failed or who actively avoid it.
- In a number of rural Tennessee counties, faith-based organizations are not supplementing the safety net — they are the safety net, serving as the only local provider of core services like food, housing, and substance-use ministry.

A THREE-PHASE STUDY

PHASE	STATUS
Phase I — released FY2026	A qualitative study of what Tennessee's faith communities actually do, drawn from focus groups across the state. Publicly released this year.
Phase II — underway	A statewide survey quantifying faith communities' contributions in time, talent, and treasure.
Phase III — to follow	An economic analysis of what these contributions save Tennessee taxpayers.

What Phase I established is that the contribution is real and structural. What Phase II will establish is its size. What Phase III will establish is its value to the state.



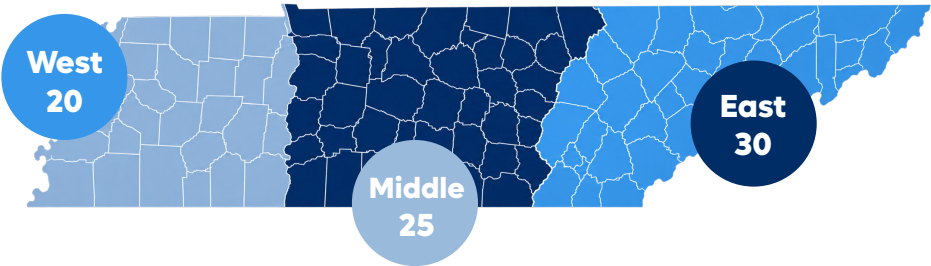
STATEWIDE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Over the past year, the Governor’s Faith-Based and Community Initiative worked across all three Grand Divisions — East, Middle, and West Tennessee — to strengthen relationships, deepen trust, and align community action through events, conferences, and targeted outreach. From July 2025 through June 2026, GFBCI’s three Regional Directors engaged 2,984 faith leaders across Tennessee, directly supporting implementation and growth of the Human Flourishing Initiative, the Volunteer Mentorship Initiative, Every Child TN, and the Faith & Community Summits.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

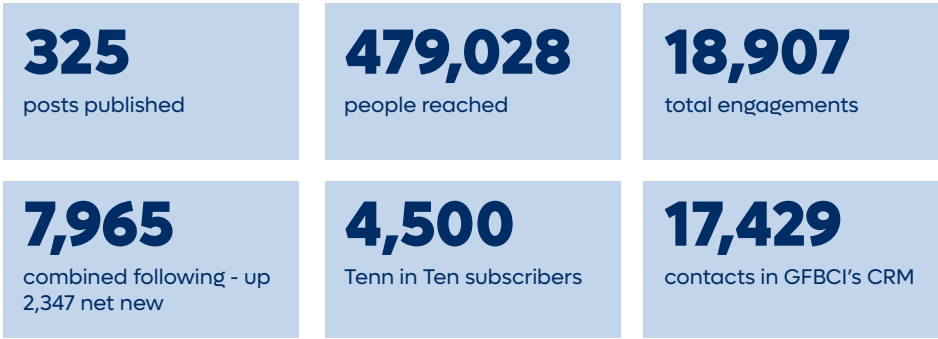
ACTIVITY	FY2026
Faith leader meetings	184
Community meetings	204
GFBCI coordination meetings	184
Events attended · events hosted	55 35
Public presentations	22
Every Child TN meetings · VMI meetings	27 22

75 COUNTIES ENGAGED

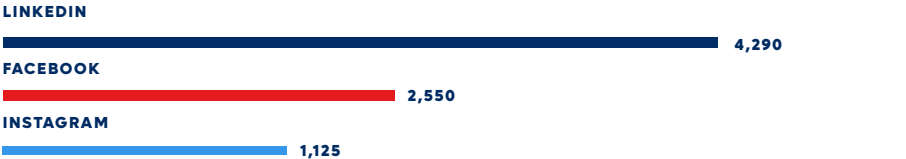


TELLING THE STORY

Telling the story of this work is part of the work - every post, video, and email is an invitation for another Tennessean to find their way in.



FOLLOWING BY PLATFORM



BUDGET

With public investment from the State of Tennessee and generous private support, we stewarded every dollar for maximum impact — prioritizing outcomes, transparency, and accountability. GFBCI spending centered on the people and partnerships that drive results, with lean operations maintaining the infrastructure and compliance needed to serve well.

FY2026 also marked a step-change in the private capital flowing to the initiatives GFBCI convenes: significant private philanthropy was committed across Every Child TN, the Volunteer Mentorship Initiative, and the Human Flourishing Initiative this year — including Coca-Cola Consolidated, For Others Foundation, the Maclellan Foundation, The Signatry, the Flourish Fund, Access Ventures, and community giving through CarePortal.

PRIVATE CONTRIBUTION

\$1,281,399

STATE FUNDING

\$1,787,000

TOTAL INCOME

\$3,068,399

PAYROLL

\$1,200,203

BENEFITS

\$456,703

OPERATIONS

\$129,828

PROGRAM

\$1,233,253

TOTAL EXPENSES

\$3,019,987

STAFF



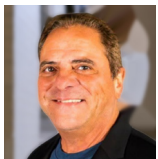
Lance Villio
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
(APPOINTED BY GOVERNOR BILL LEE)



Erik Lokkesmoe
**SENIOR ADVISOR, COMMUNICATIONS
& STRATEGY**



Kathleen Clancy
DIRECTOR, EVERY CHILD TN



Raul Lopez
**DIRECTOR, VOLUNTEER
MENTORSHIP INITIATIVE**



Dr. Edward Stephens III
REGIONAL DIRECTOR, WEST TN



Camilia Aguilar
REGIONAL DIRECTOR, MIDDLE TN



Dr. Emily Hager
REGIONAL DIRECTOR, EAST TN



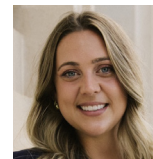
Brenton Collyer
DIRECTOR, OPERATIONS



Abby Chapman
**PROJECT COORDINATOR,
EVERY CHILD TN**



Robyn Small
**SPECIAL PROJECTS
EVERY CHILD TN**



Gracyn Martin
**PROGRAM MANAGER
VOLUNTEER MENTORSHIP INITIATIVE**



Maura Hoving
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT



Anna Ferguson
**OFFICE MANAGER /
SPECIAL EVENTS**



GOVERNOR'S FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

WILLIAM R. SNODGRASS TENNESSEE TOWER

312 Rosa L. Parks Avenue 16th Floor, Nashville, TN 37243

web: governorsinitiative.org email: staff@governorsinitiative.org



@TNgovernorsinitiative



@Governorsinitiative



@governorsinitiative/



@governorsinitiative

INITIATIVE SITES:

EveryChildTN.org · mentortn.org · flourishtn.org