

Note From the CEO



At TN Voices, we are taking the energy of renewal and growth from the spring season with us into the summer months. Nothing exemplifies how a seed planted can bloom like this story of impact:

The youth bravely battled a life-threatening illness and required a lot of medical care. Alongside these medical challenges, the youth struggled with sadness, anger and feeling hopeless and afraid. The anger often led to conflict in all areas of their life. During this difficult time, the family also experienced homelessness, and they began to feel overwhelmed and hopeless about their future. And then, something shifted. Through consistent support, encouragement, and connection to resources provided by TN Voices, the family began to rebuild. Today, they are living in brand-new housing and feel hopeful about what lies ahead. The youth has made significant progress, there are no longer behavioral concerns at school, and they have achieved their dream of joining a sports team. In fact, because of their dedication and talent, the youth has even been offered the opportunity for a full ride athletic scholarship when they go to college — an incredible milestone that reflects their resilience and the family's renewed stability and strength. This is what renewal looks like. This is the seed of support, taking root.

We are also honored to have been selected as a recipient of the Reconstruct Thriving Youth Challenge, an initiative that will allow us to embed trauma-informed mental health support directly into transitional housing for youth aging out of foster care. Like seeds taking root after a long winter, this funding will help young adults build the stability and connection they need to truly flourish.

This spring also brought Children's Mental Health Action Week (May 3–9), a powerful reminder that every conversation, every connection, and every small act of support plants a seed in the life of a child. Across all 95 Tennessee counties, our Statewide Family Support Network continues to walk alongside caregivers, offering guidance, peer support, and hope to families navigating complex systems.

Together, we support children, families, and individuals to flourish —building stronger, healthier, and more resilient communities across Tennessee.

Thank you for being part of this season of growth with us.

With gratitude,
Rikki Harris
CEO, TN Voices

Moments That Matter: Creating Connection and Supporting Children's Mental Health This Summer

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In the busy rhythm of everyday life, it's easy to feel pressure to plan the “perfect” summer—filled with trips, camps, and activities. But what children remember most are not elaborate plans. They remember how they **felt**—safe, loved, and connected. These are the **moments that matter**.

Summer offers families a powerful opportunity to slow down, be intentional, and build meaningful connections that support not only joy, but also **children's mental and emotional well-being**.

Why Moments That Matter Are So Important

Children's mental health is deeply influenced by their daily experiences at home. Consistent, positive interactions with caregivers help children feel secure and valued. These small but meaningful moments:

- Build **emotional safety and trust**
- Strengthen **family bonds**
- Support **healthy brain development**
- Help children learn how to understand and manage their emotions

In a time when many children face stress, anxiety, and social pressures, these moments become protective helping them build resilience and confidence.

Making the Most of Summer: Simple, Meaningful Connections

You don't need a full schedule or big plans to create lasting memories. Moments that matter often happen in simple, everyday ways.

Be Present

Put away distractions and give your child your full attention, even for a few minutes. A focused conversation or shared laugh can go a long way.

Create Daily Check-Ins

Ask your child:

- “What was the best part of your day?”
- “Was anything hard today?”

These conversations help children feel heard and understood.

Turn Ordinary Activities into Special Moments

- Cooking a meal together

- Going on evening walks
- Reading bedtime stories
- Playing games or doing puzzles

It's not about what you do—it's about **doing it together**.

Supporting Children's Mental Health Through Everyday Moments

Summer can bring both excitement and disruption. Changes in routine, transitions, or increased free time can sometimes lead to stress or behavioral challenges.

Families can support children's mental health by:

✓ Maintaining Consistency

Even in summer, having predictable routines—like regular mealtimes and bedtimes—helps children feel secure.

✓ Encouraging Emotional Expression

Let children know all feelings are okay. When they feel safe sharing emotions, they are less likely to bottle them up.

✓ Teaching Healthy Coping Skills

Practice simple strategies together:

- Deep breathing
- Taking breaks
- Talking through problems

✓ Modeling Calm Behavior

Children learn how to handle stress by watching adults. Demonstrating patience and self-control teaches them how to do the same.

The Power of Routines and Rituals

One of the most effective ways to create moments that matter is through **routines and rituals**.

Routines provide structure and predictability (morning routines, bedtime routines, family meals).

Rituals add emotional meaning (family movie night, sharing daily highlights, weekend traditions).

These consistent experiences help children feel grounded and connected. Over time, they become the moments children carry with them into adulthood.

Encouragement for Families

You don't have to be perfect—you just have to be present.

This summer, focus less on doing more and more on being intentional. A child doesn't need constant entertainment; they need **connection, attention, and care**.

Even small investments of time can have a lasting impact:

- A 10-minute conversation
- A shared laugh
- A hug after a tough moment

These are the building blocks of strong relationships and healthy minds.

A Lasting Impact

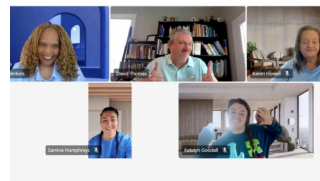
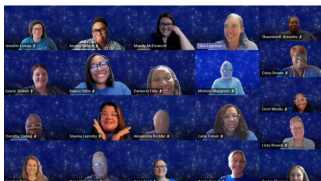
Moments that matter are not defined by how big they are, but by how meaningful they feel. When families create space for connection, children develop the emotional tools they need to thrive—today and in the future.

This summer, choose connection. Choose presence.

Because the moments you create now will shape your child's sense of safety, belonging, and well-being for years to come.

April was Child Abuse Prevention Month — a time to raise awareness, strengthen communities, and recommit to protecting the children and families who need us most.

At TN Voices, our incredible team truly showed up for the cause: 16 teams completed the Wear Blue Challenge, standing together in solidarity across all 95 counties. Here are some snapshots of our incredible heroes wearing blue for such an important cause!



Children's Mental Health Action Week

Children's Mental Health Action Week is a national observance dedicated to raising awareness, reducing stigma, and championing the mental health needs of children and families. To celebrate this important week (May 3–9, 2026), programs within our Youth and Family Services area of care made an impact across Tennessee — organizing incredible events that brought communities closer and put children's mental health front and center.

From children's art showcases and stigma-breaking programs for kids and caregivers, to resource fairs with local partners and a full community wellness festival complete with a free 5K, games, and a bounce house — our teams made their presence felt across the state in a big way. It was a week that reminded us why this work matters.



Program Highlight

Nurtured Beginnings



TN Voices' Nurtured Beginnings program offers attachment-based clinical services for families with young children in Hamilton County.

Through regular in-home sessions with a trained therapist, caregivers receive hands-on guidance and therapeutic support to better understand their child's behaviors and cues — building the kind of connection that sets the foundation for healthy development. The program takes a collaborative, strengths-based approach, meeting families where they are and tailoring skill-building to their unique needs.

Nurtured Beginnings is available to families with children ages 0–5 who are Hamilton County residents with BlueCare/TennCare Select, United Healthcare Community, or Wellpoint coverage.

To learn more or make a referral, visit tnvoices.org or call 615.269.7751.

Beyond The Screen Challenge

TN Voices challenged teens across Tennessee to give up screens for 7 days during the month of May — and the responses blew us away. We received so many heartfelt, honest, and meaningful testimonials from young people who took on the challenge and came out with a new perspective.



"With less screen time I found myself actually analyzing my feelings instead of running away from them, which helped me better understand myself and others."

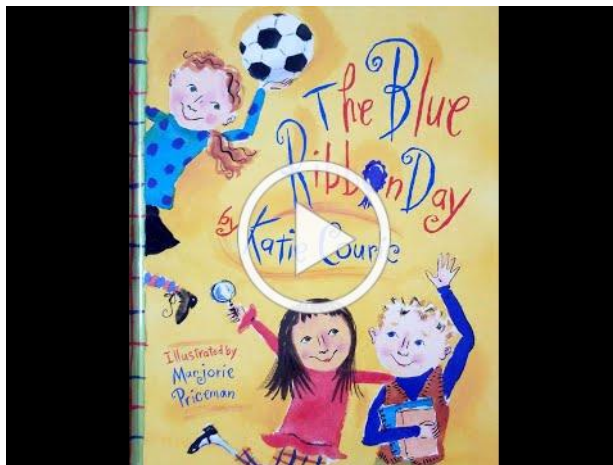
Nia Do

This is one of the powerful voices that came through the challenge:

"I realized that I usually use my phone to hide from feeling left out on what everyone gets to see, but after a week I learned that I don't need to know, I just wanted to know those things. At the beginning I did feel some sort of attachment to my phone to where I struggled the first couple of days to function. I often caught myself trying to reach for a device that wasn't there. I realized that was an issue and I wasn't living to my full potential. Eventually tasks like sleeping became easier knowing I didn't have to check every notification, which showed great results because I woke up with plenty of rest. I used my phone to prevent me from overthinking because as a teenager you hold yourself to a high standard. With less screen time I found myself actually analyzing my feelings instead of running away from them, which helped me better understand myself and others. Although homework was a struggle since I was so used to the help from a device, not being on the screen did help with other hobbies like reading that I often did not have time for due to me always being online. My room got cleaner because I was now more aware of my surroundings and lived in the moment. Not only did it have an effect on the environment around me, but it helped with my self esteem. Scrolling was fun and all until you're comparing yourself to someone you don't know. Taking a break from the screen meant I didn't have to worry about small insecurities like my weight or why I can't look like the other girls. Even though there were lots of positives to the experiment, there was one downside. It's odd to think that you can have separation anxiety from a non-living item, but I very much felt that with my phone. Though taking a break from social media helped me with other things, my anxiety was very high. I often sat wondering if I missed out on events and overall felt the need to have some device in my hand. I don't think I would call it an addiction — I just was so used to it that I didn't comprehend that it was a part of my day to day function. Sometimes I felt uncomfortable because I never gave myself the chance to think on a deeper level with me always being on my phone or tablet. Being able to come out of my small-minded self and show how much I could feel without my phone led me to realize I didn't need it to live. Although there were lots of ups to no screen time for a small amount of time, there would be bigger results with a bigger amount of time." Nia Do

Online Library Resource

The Blue Ribbon Day by Katie Couric



The Blue Ribbon Day: A book to help children navigate disappointment, build self-confidence, and discover that everyone has a unique talent waiting to be found, by Katie Couric. Illustrated by Marjorie Priceman.

[View more resources in our online library here!](#)

Upcoming Trainings

Standing Strong:

A Parent's Guide to Supporting Children Affected by Bullying

June 30th, 11 am 1 pm CT on Teams. Register [here](#).

For questions, please contact Sabrina Moore at sabrina.moore@tnvoices.org.

Nurturing Parenting: Virtual training

This is an evidence-based class that builds protective factors in families that, when present, increase the health and well-being of children and families. It is an innovative approach to empower parents in creating a competency-based parenting plan to meet the specific needs of their family. Each class meets twice a week (2.5 hours per session) for 4 weeks.

Starting July 6th, (Mondays and Tuesdays), 4 pm – 6:30pm CT. Register [here](#).

For more information, contact Carolyn Lawson at carolyn.lawson@tnvoices.org.

Starting July 16th, 10 am ET; Every week on Thu, 10 occurrences; Register [here](#).

For more information, contact Eva Rodriguez at erodriguez@tnvoices.org.

Starting Aug 3rd, 4 pm ET; Every week on Mon, 7 occurrences; Register [here](#).

For more information, contact Eva Rodriguez at erodriguez@tnvoices.org.

Aug 7th, 1 ET; Every week on Fri, until Sep 18, 2026, 7 occurrence(s); Register [here](#).

For more information, contact Eva Rodriguez at erodriguez@tnvoices.org.

Mental Health First Aid (Adult)

Adult Mental Health First Aid (AMHFA) trains adults to support other adults experiencing mental health or substance use challenges or crises. Certification equips you to identify common concerns, reduce stigma, recognize warning signs, and apply a 5-step action plan to assist youth in need, including those at risk of suicide.

We will be providing free **In Person** AMHFA Trainings in Knoxville (9919 Kingston Pike):

July 6th & 7th (half days)

July 8th (full day)

July 18th (full day)

For any of these in person classes, register [here](#).

For questions about these MHFA classes, please contact Melinda Sidwell at melinda.sidwell@tnvoices.org.

For interest in scheduling additional MHFA classes across the state, please contact Tammy Bass at tbass@tnvoices.org.

Teen Connect

Teen Connect is for parents/caregivers of teenagers ages 12-18 who have challenging behaviors that put them at risk of out-of-home placement or whose children are already placed outside of the home. Teen Connect teaches parents how to respond to a teenager who is struggling behaviorally or emotionally, using empathy. It teaches how attachment relates to teen development, as well as helping the parent to better identify the need the teenager is expressing through their behavior.

Teen Connect is a ten-week long, free online program. Classes are offered during the day as well as in the evening.

For more information or to make a referral, please contact Monique Jenkins, mjenkins@tnvoices.org or Karen Howell, karen.howell@tnvoices.org

Upcoming Classes:

Wednesday's 11am CST/12pm EST - beginning 7/1/26

Thursday's 5pm CST/6pm EST - beginning 7/2/26

Monday's 11am CST/12pm EST - beginning 7/6/26

Tuesday's 5pm CST/6pm EST - beginning 7/7/26



TN Voices | 615-269-7751 | tvc@tnvoices.org | www.tnvoices.org



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