



TENNYSON  
CENTER *for*  
CHILDREN



**GROWTH**

**NEWSLETTER** SPRING 2021



# FROM THE CEO

In many ways, 2020 was a year of “doing more with less.” Many businesses had to pivot, reduce capacity, or even close. Our networks of friends and family had to adapt, tighten their social circles, and lessen in many facets of their lives as well. The families and kids we are honored to serve were particularly impacted by isolation and limited access to basic needs. But instead of seeing darkness, our kids, families, and staff have met these challenges by moving into light with open hearts and minds, finding creative solutions that can only be described as inspiring.

For Tennyson and other residential facilities like ours, big changes through the Family First Prevention Services Act mean that we will be required to serve fewer kids in our residential treatment program. We will only be allowed 16 beds maximum. While this is a big shift, we believe it is for all the right reasons. It’s a mandate meant to ensure that children remain with families instead of in residential care, which is what’s best for kids and families. Tennyson fully supports this change and believes it will lead to creative solutions across the sector that ultimately result in a system of child wellbeing.

While a change like this appears to be doing less for kids, we are in fact doing more by ensuring kids and families stay together while providing them

with a pathway to long-term success. As such, we partnered with Families Together in 2020 to better support our community based families in new ways. Recently we opened an assessment center to help keep kids with families and out of residential care and launched outpatient services that will serve both children and adults. In 2021, we will be implementing Child First, a model focusing on early childhood intervention and prevention. Finally, **Rewiring** is entering its second year with several of our ten participating counties launching supports like family resource centers and Granny Armies.



In this new year, we are excited to grow in new and better ways that support child and family wellbeing. Thank you for the care, optimism, and support you bring. Together we are building a better world for children, families, and communities. We look forward to a year full of growth and transformation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward D. Breslin".

Ned Breslin  
President & CEO, Tennyson Center for Children

# AMY'S STORY

Amy struggled when she first started attending school at Tennyson. She would not make eye contact or speak to the staff or her peers. If Amy was asked a question, she would either respond with a few words or hide beneath her jacket.

In the beginning, Amy frequently expressed anger. She would usually play by herself during recess because she would get frustrated by the other kids and throw things. Amy would spend most of her days writing stories and refused to do her classroom assignments.

After a few months, once she'd built trust and worked with her teachers and therapist at Tennyson, Amy shifted from hiding under her coat to covering her face with a scarf. While this went on for several months, she was starting to make progress in other areas. Slowly,

Amy began to engage more with staff and peers. She started accepting 1:1 support and began completing her assignments. She was also able to go to recess without getting upset or frustrated, something that had been challenging in the past because of the loud noises and the unpredictability of play.

Now, Amy is really coming out of her shell. She is speaking in front of the class, participating in group, and completing her classroom assignments and homework each day. Plus, Amy has a great sense of humor! Every day she keeps her class laughing with her funny sayings and stories. Teachers are happy to see the strides Amy is making and look forward to her seeing her grow even more at Tennyson.

# STAFF SPOTLIGHTS



**Don Ronyak** | Director of Human Resources

“ An organization with a meaningful purpose supporting kids and families - that is what keeps me coming back day after day. I joined Tennyson Center in 2018 and have found great pride in the work we have been able to deliver in modernizing the Human Resources Department. HR provides a variety of risk mitigation and employee services while working daily with frontline staff, senior leadership, directors, and supervisors to accomplish great work through exceptional employee performance. The staff at Tennyson are ‘best in class’ and you will find no more care, compassion, grit, and determination elsewhere. It is exciting and totally rewarding to be part of a team that sacrifices daily for the good of other people. This ‘small but mighty’ nonprofit was a

wonderful transition for me after spending 20 years in government at the state and local level. During my time at Tennyson, I have been able to support the work of operations, technology, marketing, development, residential, and community based services by delivering modern-day HR best practices. The first day I came on board I remember sitting in a conference room and signing about 42 different pieces of paper to meet all the regulatory requirements of the day. I thought to myself, ‘We can make this process better,’ and we have. Today, 100% of this paperwork is done electronically prior to an employee’s first day. We have also completed numerous other HR projects to eliminate waste, save money, streamline services, and become more

efficient which has resulted in more time and resources for staff to dedicate to kids and families. As a father of four teenage boys, time is always a challenge and seems like we can never have enough. Most recently we have connected with a new Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) that provides emotional and other support to staff in need. This EAP, in concert with our amazing Chaplain, Kara Larson, has helped reshape this much-needed service to more efficiently and effectively assist employees whenever and wherever help is needed. I am continually excited to be part of this transformational agency and have great respect for the work and the people serving others in their times of need.”

## WE'RE GROWING!

**As we head into 2021, Tennyson Center is excited share some of the ways we are expanding this year to support kids and families in even more ways!**

### Assessment Center

We all know that avoiding residential altogether is what’s best for kids and families. Our new Step Forward Assessment Center was developed to do just that. This program allows kids without a family to stay at our assessment center for 30 days while advocates work to find the right foster family for that child. This means more kids are staying with families and out of residential homes. So far, the program has been a success and has saved counties \$40k per child!

### Outpatient

We understand the challenges of tackling emotional needs while trying to meet basic needs! To address this, we are now offering clinical Outpatient Services which are available to children, adults, and families to support them in reaching their goals! Services include personalized care coordination, ensuring that the various needs of clients and families are met.

### Every Family Forever

Tennyson has expanded the offerings of our Community Programs and Rewiring to provide Every Family Forever: the right supports when a family or child needs them! In order to keep more kids home and thriving with their families, we are offering free supports to families who need them. Every Family Forever provides family therapy, individual therapy, crisis support, coaching and skill building, and more!



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## TENNYSON VALUES

**Be courageous.**

**Have grit.**

**Show compassion.**

**Share joy.**

**Do what's best for kids  
and families.**

## DONOR SPOTLIGHT



### Triunity, Inc. | Supporter

“Triunity, Inc. has a long-standing commitment to community service and public outreach. One of our core values is to make a difference in the communities of our employees and clients. We strongly believe that the children in our communities are the future of this country and we need to take great care of them. Therefore, Triunity’s Community Support Team is proud to partner with Tennyson Center for Children during the 2020/2021 school year! Triunity has adopted a classroom of students that have been provided with treasure boxes, mp3 players, and stuffed animals. We also participate in a monthly reading buddies program, art, STEM, and LEGO projects, Operation Santa, and holiday parties.”

**“When I look back on my career, this will always stand out as a high point.”**

**- Jonnie Thomas,  
Triunity Principal**

**“All of life is about God, family, and friends. It is hard to stand by and not do for kids who don’t have family. We are just trying to do our small part to make a difference for them.”**

**- Marvin Thomas, Triunity CEO**

*Thank you, Triunity! We are deeply grateful for partners like you who positively impact the lives of children and families.*

# TRIUNITY