



STARR NEWS

FALL 2026



The Power of Partnership

City of Albion Partnership Opens Summer SREC to More Local Youth

Starr Expands Resources Available Through Goodtimer

Starr and GVSU Expand Access to Clinical Training

Calhoun County and Starr Launch Countywide Student Support Partnership

Our Mission

Starr Commonwealth leads with courage to create positive experiences so that all children, families, and communities flourish.

Our Vision

Universal Hope, Boundless Love, and Limitless Success for all children.

Our Theory of Change

When trauma-informed and resilience-focused adults work within trauma-informed and resilience-focused systems, the wellbeing and success of children will increase.

Our Equity Statement

We recognize the past and current struggles of identity groups who have been historically marginalized, impacted by toxic hierarchy, and taken by violence. We believe that equitable environments create opportunities for effective problem solving, sustainable growth, and, in general, a more holistic understanding of the world.



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Starr Commonwealth is a nonprofit organization serving children and families regardless of race, religion, color, national origin, or sexuality. Starr Commonwealth is accredited by the Council on Accreditation. Founded in 1913, Starr Commonwealth is licensed by the state of Michigan. Starr Commonwealth's Albion campus is a Michigan Historic Site. Starr Commonwealth receives funds from social agencies, foundations, corporations, and individuals.



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Dear Friends,

The stories in this issue of Starr News reflect the many ways our mission comes to life.

Sometimes it is deeply personal: a woman finding a safe place to set down the burden of always being “the strong one,” or a young person learning the practical skills needed to build an independent life.

Sometimes it happens across a community: Albion children gaining access to Summer SREC, Calhoun County schools receiving new student supports, or families finding continued care after a behavioral health crisis.

And sometimes the impact reaches much further, as professionals across Michigan strengthen their trauma-informed practices, parents discover Starr’s expertise through new technology, and communities across the country use Transition to Success® to address poverty in a more coordinated and human way.

These efforts may look different, but they are connected by something essential: a belief in the strength and potential already present within every person and community.

That belief has guided Starr for more than a century. What continues to evolve is how we put it into action.

Today, Starr provides direct behavioral health services and Youth Empowerment Programs for children, young adults, and families. We equip educators, clinicians, and other caring adults with knowledge and practical tools. Increasingly, we also help organizations and communities build systems that are more connected, responsive, and centered on the people they serve.

Taken together, the stories in these pages reveal something important about Starr’s role. We are part of a growing network of care, bringing people, expertise, and resources together around the strengths and aspirations of children, families, and communities.

Transition to Success describes this as Coordinating All Resources Effectively, or CARE. Although that language comes from one framework within Starr, the principle reaches across nearly everything you will read in this issue.

Summit Pointe brings clinical leadership and crisis-response infrastructure. Calhoun ISD helps schools share resources and build lasting capacity. The City of Albion expands opportunities for local youth. Grand Valley State University and philanthropic partners make professional learning more accessible. Technology partners help Starr’s expertise reach families in their homes. Across the country, organizations using Transition to Success bring trusted relationships and local knowledge that no national organization could replicate on its own.

Starr contributes what we do best: understanding trauma, strengthening resilience, providing behavioral health and youth services, and helping caring adults and organizations create environments where people can heal and thrive.

This is what an effective CARE network looks like. It is not one organization trying to be everything to everyone. It is each partner bringing its strengths to the table, connecting resources, and sharing responsibility for better outcomes.

That approach allows Starr to remain deeply rooted in Michigan while reaching far beyond our campus. It helps us respond to individual needs while also strengthening the systems surrounding children and families. Most importantly, it keeps the people we serve at the center of the work, not as problems to be solved, but as partners with strengths, dreams, and the capacity to shape their own futures.

None of this would be possible without Starr’s staff, board members, partners, donors, and advocates. You are part of this network, too. Your trust allows us to respond when needs emerge, pursue new opportunities, and continue adapting without losing sight of who we are.

Together, we are coordinating more than resources. We are connecting people, possibilities, and hope, creating the conditions in which children, families, and communities can flourish.



With gratitude,

Elizabeth A. Carey
President & CEO

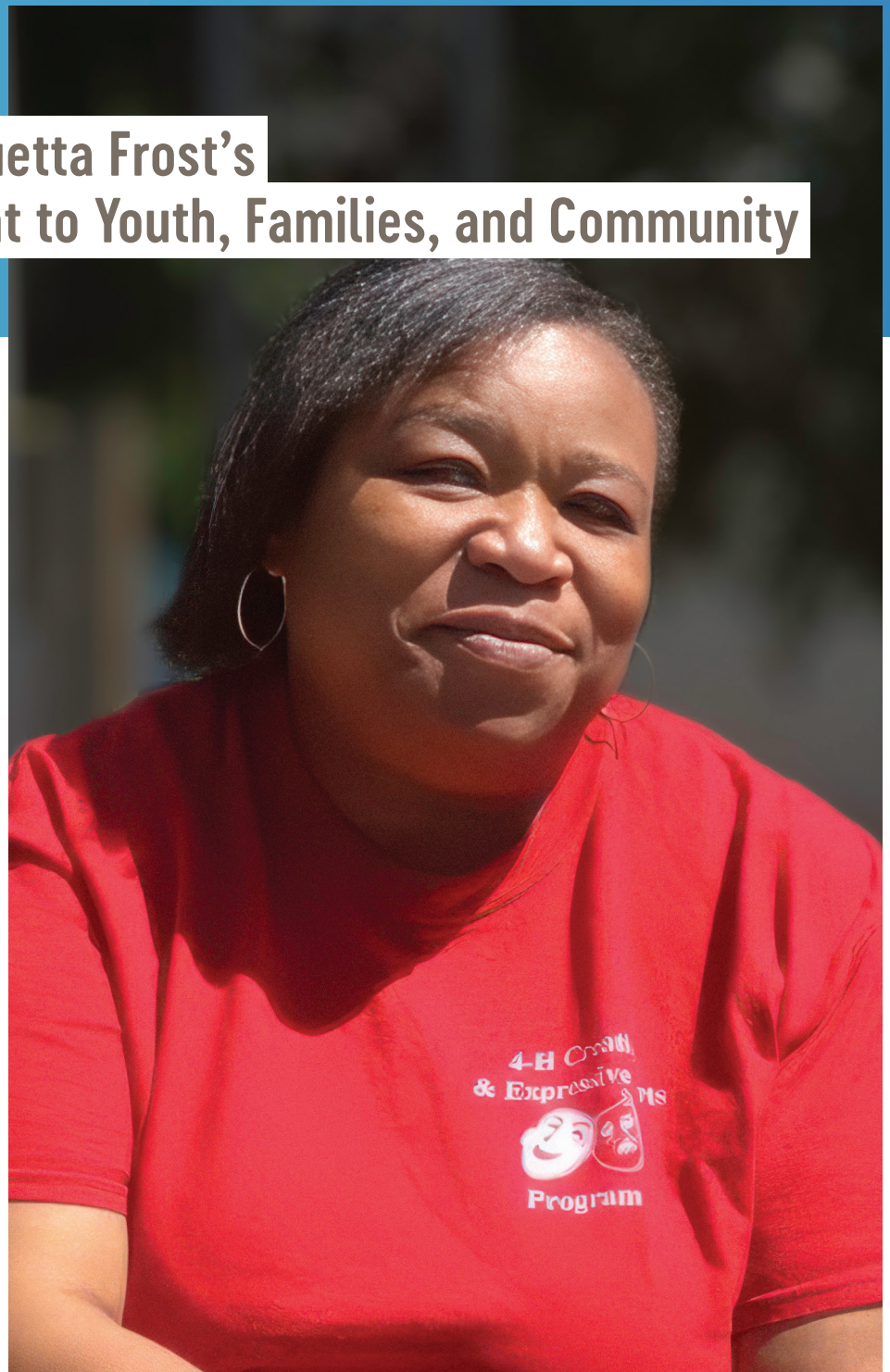
Standing Tall: Marquetta Frost's Lifelong Commitment to Youth, Families, and Community

For Marquetta Frost, changing lives has never been about standing in the spotlight. It's about helping others discover their own.

For more than four decades, Frost has devoted herself to creating opportunities for children and families throughout Albion and Calhoun County. Whether mentoring youth through Michigan State University Extension's 4-H programs, serving with AmeriCorps, organizing community initiatives through her church, or inspiring audiences through music and the performing arts, she has consistently demonstrated one simple belief: every young person deserves someone who believes in them.

That unwavering commitment is why Starr Commonwealth is proud to recognize Frost with this year's Stand Tall Award, honoring individuals whose lives of service strengthen children, families, and communities.

Frost's journey began long before youth development became her profession. As a teenager, she and a friend launched Rap in a Positive Perspective, using music and positive messages to encourage young people to make healthy choices. At a time when rap music was gaining popularity, the duo chose to use the art form as a vehicle for hope, leadership, and community engagement. It was an early glimpse of what



would become her life's work—using creativity to help young people discover their voices.

That commitment eventually led Frost to earn her bachelor's degree in Human Services Administration from Siena Heights University, further preparing her for a career centered on strengthening people and communities.

Music and faith have remained constant threads throughout Frost's life. An active member of Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church in Albion, she has long combined both with service to others, helping organize community outreach efforts and contributing her talents to youth and community events.



Those who know Frost personally see the same dedication that has defined her professional life.

“Sister Marquette Frost is one of the hardest working, most dedicated and most sweet-hearted people ever,” said Pastor Bobby McKenzie of Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church. “Her commitment to helping anybody and everybody—especially those in the Albion community—is unparalleled.”

Starr Commonwealth Graphic Designer Danon Reid came to know Frost after joining Macedonia in 2017. The two participated in choir and dance ministries and collaborated on creative projects, including a video documenting the history of the church.

“I am impressed by her public speaking ability and admire her fearless spirit,” Reid said. “The youth of Macedonia love and appreciate her.”

That connection with young people is also at the heart of Frost’s work as a 4-H Program Associate with Michigan State University Extension. Through Albion’s nationally recognized Creative & Expressive Arts program, young people do far more than prepare for a performance. They write original productions, choreograph dances, compose music, mentor younger participants, and solve challenges together. Along the way, they develop confidence, communication skills, leadership, and a sense of belonging.



Perhaps the greatest measure of the program’s success is that many former participants return as mentors themselves. The next generation is now being guided by those whose own lives were shaped by Frost’s encouragement—a legacy that continues to grow with each passing year.

Her influence extends well beyond the arts. Through AmeriCorps and community partnerships, Frost has helped strengthen educational opportunities, promote mental health awareness, support neighborhood initiatives, and bring people together around a shared vision of a healthier, more connected Albion.

That spirit mirrors Starr Commonwealth’s mission. Like founder Floyd Starr, Marquette Frost believes in the potential within every

child—and in the difference a caring adult can make by investing time, offering encouragement, and creating opportunities to grow.

The Stand Tall Award recognizes individuals whose lives inspire hope through service, compassion, and leadership. Frost’s legacy can be seen not only in the programs she has helped build, but in the young people who have found their confidence, discovered their gifts, and returned to help others do the same.

In honoring Marquette Frost, Starr Commonwealth celebrates a community leader whose greatest performance has never been on a stage—it has been a lifetime spent helping others stand tall.

City of Albion Partnership Opens Summer SREC to More Local Youth

When communities listen to families and work together around what young people need, new opportunities can take shape.

That is exactly what happened this summer through a new partnership between Starr Commonwealth and the City of Albion, which sponsored 25 Albion youth to attend Starr's Summer Student Resilience and Empowerment Center (SREC) program.

The partnership grew from a recreation roundtable hosted by the city earlier this year. Families, community partners, and youth-serving organizations gathered to discuss what was working well for Albion's young people—and where gaps remained.

One need quickly emerged: more opportunities for children to strengthen resilience, self-awareness, emotional regulation, and leadership.

pay. Transportation was also provided, helping remove common barriers that can prevent children from participating in summer programs.

On July 15, Theriot visited Starr's Albion campus to see the partnership in action. She observed students participating in activities, spoke with Starr leaders and program staff, and saw first-hand how Summer SREC blends recreation with intentional social and emotional learning.

Students from communities throughout Calhoun County attend Summer SREC, where hiking, swimming, fishing, music, art, educational games, and other experiential activities become opportunities to practice skills that support success well beyond summer.

Theriot said she was struck by the growth she saw in Albion students—from increased confidence and communication to stronger leadership and emotional regulation. She also heard stories of children trying new experiences, including catching their first fish.

"It is just amazing to see how the children just grew and blossomed," she said.

The partnership is also extending beyond the students who attended Summer SREC. Starr provided trauma and resilience training for City of Albion recreation staff, helping equip more of the adults who work with local youth to create environments where children feel safe, supported, valued, and capable.



For Theriot, that shared investment has implications far beyond a single summer.

"As we build stronger children, we build stronger families," she said. "We build resilient and prosperous communities."

It is a simple idea with lasting potential: communities are stronger when organizations bring their strengths together around children.

And for Starr and the City of Albion, this summer is only the beginning.



For Albion City Manager Dr. Sheryl Theriot, Summer SREC offered a natural fit.

The city sponsored 25 students entering fourth through ninth grades, regardless of the school district they attended or their families' ability to

F.O.C.U.S. *Forward*: Building Independence, One Step at a Time

For young people working toward independence, success is often built through small, practical steps—learning to manage a budget, care for a home, ask for help, and follow through on responsibilities.

At Dean Hall, Starr Commonwealth's F.O.C.U.S. *Forward* (Forging Opportunities for Career Upskilling and Success) program is helping young people build those skills while addressing the barriers that can stand between them and a stable future.

F.O.C.U.S. *Forward* connects young people ages 16–24 with education, skilled trades training, employment pathways, and individualized supports designed to promote long-term success.

At Dean Hall, life-skills instruction has evolved into a highly individualized, hands-on approach. Staff work alongside participants on the everyday skills each person needs most.

For one young man, that meant learning how to properly wash, dry, fold, and put away laundry. Others have received practical guidance on cleaning bathrooms, washing dishes, and maintaining their living spaces.

Financial independence is another important focus. Through weekly budget check-ins, participants are learning how to balance spending with rent, groceries, bills, and other necessities, building habits they can carry with them long after leaving the program. One participant's journey demonstrates what these supports can make possible.

Before F.O.C.U.S. *Forward*, he was experiencing homelessness and had left high school. When he entered Starr housing, he was welcomed into a supportive environment by staff and fellow participants. This summer, he reached an important milestone: moving into an apartment of his own. Now, having joined the workforce and preparing to welcome a child, he is taking greater ownership of his future.

He has been furnishing his apartment by connecting with community resources, including free stores and thrift shops, a process that requires him to identify what he needs, reach out for assistance, and advocate for himself. The shared space at Dean Hall has also strengthened the connection between F.O.C.U.S. *Forward* and Starr Behavioral Health.

Having behavioral health services in the same location removes a significant transportation barrier for participants while allowing staff to reinforce appointments, respond quickly to changing needs, and help young people stay focused on their goals. Participants are also giving back. This summer, they partnered with Citizens To Beautify Albion, watering downtown planters during stretches of 90-degree heat and helping clear rocks and trash from a future community flower garden.

From learning to do laundry, accessing mental health support, finding employment, and serving the community, these everyday experiences are creating something much bigger: confidence, responsibility, connection, and a stronger path forward.



From “The Strong One” to an Advocate for Healing: Tikresha’s Journey with Starr Behavioral Health

For most of her life, Tikresha had been “the strong one”—the person others relied on, who pushed through difficult moments without letting people see how much she was carrying. Then, in 2024, she received a shocking heart failure diagnosis. A ten-day stay in intensive care left her confined to a hospital bed and confronting emotions she could no longer push aside.

“I went through a lot mentally being bed-bound in the hospital,” she recalled. “I’m the type of person that always tries to be strong and have tough skin.”

Eventually, Tikresha told her cardiologist, “I think I’m depressed, and I want to try therapy.”

Finding support proved difficult. She contacted provider after provider, only to find practices full or unavailable. Some never returned her calls. Then Starr Behavioral Health called.

Tikresha began virtual therapy with Lindsay Tregenza, LMSW and Clinical Supervisor of Starr Behavioral Health in Southeast Michigan, and later connected with DeQuay Jones, Director of Behavioral Health Operations & Holistic Wellness, for in-person spiritual and holistic therapy. Together, they provided something Tikresha hadn’t realized she needed: a place where she didn’t have to be strong.

“I just want to talk to somebody that doesn’t know me, but can understand me,” she explained.

That sense of being understood reflects the approach Lindsay brings to her work at Starr. “We want to see the whole person. We want to learn their story. We remain curious,” Lindsay said. Her role, she explained, is to listen, provide support, and create “a safe space without judgment.”

For Tikresha, that space has allowed her to process the fear, uncertainty, and emotions she had spent so much time carrying on her own. DeQuay describes healing as a “journey of discovery”—an opportunity to reconnect with parts of ourselves that trauma, grief, and other life experiences may have pushed aside.

For Tikresha, that journey is showing up in unexpected ways. Inspired by her health experience, she launched a freshly pressed juice business.

After sharing what she was making on social media, she sold more than 100 bottles in her first two weeks.

“[My therapists] motivated me and gave me that push,” she said. “The confidence to even try it.”

She has also documented her health journey publicly. One video contrasting footage of her dancing at a club with her hospitalization in intensive care received nearly one million views, prompting others to share their own experiences with heart failure, transplants, and recovery.

Today, Tikresha has become an advocate for therapy herself, frequently encouraging others to seek support. Therapy hasn’t removed the realities of her heart condition or the uncertainties she faces. It has changed how she carries them.

Tikresha still considers herself strong. But strength no longer means handling everything alone. It means asking for help, allowing herself to be heard—and sharing her story so someone else might feel empowered to do the same.



Reaching Families in New Ways: Starr Expands Resources Available Through Goodtimer

Helping children thrive means reaching the adults in their lives with useful support at the moments they need it. Starr Commonwealth's ongoing partnership with Plus Up, creator of Goodtimer, is opening a new way to do just that.



Goodtimer is an interactive behavior-support game and app for children that helps families establish routines and encourage healthy habits. Its companion app allows parents to customize the experience, track progress, and access resources for navigating challenging behaviors.

Recently, Starr expanded the resources available to Goodtimer families by providing a new series of short educational videos for the app. The videos bring Starr's expertise directly to parents and caregivers, helping them look beyond the behavior they see and consider what a child may be communicating.

One video features Starr Trauma & Resilience in Education Senior Consultant Erica Ilcyn exploring a foundational principle of Starr's work: behavior is communication.

Rather than viewing a meltdown, refusal, withdrawal, or other challenging behavior simply as something that needs to be stopped, Erica encourages adults to consider the unmet need underneath it. Physical needs, safety, belonging, and esteem can all influence how children behave.

That shift—from reacting to behavior to becoming curious about it—is an important part of a resilience-focused mindset.

The collaboration also allows Starr to meet families in a place they are already turning for support. Many Goodtimer users may never have attended a Starr training or encountered Starr's resources before. By pairing Goodtimer with Starr's expertise, practical trauma-informed and resilience-focused guidance can reach parents and caregivers in everyday moments at home.

Sometimes expanding impact does not mean creating a new program. It means bringing the right strengths together—and making helpful ideas easier for families to find, understand, and use.



Expanding Access to Clinical Training Across Southwest Michigan

This spring, more than 80 professionals gained access to Starr Commonwealth's Clinical Foundations of Trauma and Resilience training at no cost through a partnership with Grand Valley State University (GVSU).

The response was strong. More than 91% of participants rated the training as highly valuable and beneficial, and 95% said they would recommend the course to colleagues.

Feedback consistently described the content as relevant, practical, and transferable to real-world settings, while Jenny received high marks for making the material clear, approachable, and engaging.

The significance of those numbers reaches beyond the training room. Each professional returned to a workplace, school, clinic, or community carrying new ways to understand trauma and support resilience.

By combining resources, expertise, and access, Starr, GVSU, and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation helped strengthen a network of caring adults across Michigan—extending the potential impact of the training to the children, families, and communities they serve.

The collaboration brought together Starr's trauma-informed, resilience-focused expertise, GVSU at the Battle Creek Innovation Hub, and philanthropic support to make the training more accessible to clinicians, social workers, and other youth-serving professionals across Michigan.

Participants could choose between a two-day, in-person experience at the Innovation Hub and a three-day online option. Senior Starr Trainer and Director of Clinical Services Jenny Sloan facilitated the training, helping participants connect new concepts to the realities of their everyday work with clients, students, families, and communities.

During the in-person training, breakout sessions created space for thoughtful discussion, personal stories, and practical application. Participants explored the factors that help young people build resilience and strategies for creating environments where people feel safe, supported, and empowered.



Transition to Success Is Changing the Way Communities Address Poverty

What if the question wasn't, "What's wrong with this person?" but instead, "What happened to them—and how can we help them achieve their dreams?"

Across the country, communities are asking that question through Transition to Success® (TTS), a framework that helps organizations respond to poverty through greater coordination, shared language, and person-centered support. Since becoming part of Starr Commonwealth earlier this year, TTS has continued to expand its national reach, bringing healthcare providers, schools, nonprofits, faith communities, government agencies, and businesses together around a shared goal: helping individuals and families move from surviving to thriving.

Rather than treating poverty as personal failure or approaching housing, education, transportation, employment, healthcare, and other needs in isolation, TTS helps communities coordinate the resources they already have. Individuals identify their own goals and dreams, then work with trained coaches and community partners to build a pathway forward.

In Memphis, what began with one social worker introducing TTS to a local foundation has grown



into a community-wide movement. More than 40 organizations now work through a common approach, bringing health, education, human services, faith organizations, and government partners to the same table. The result is greater collaboration, fewer duplicated efforts, and more coordinated support for families.

In Hawaii, Child & Family Service has partnered with over 900 families to pursue their dreams. Early independent evaluation results showed that 80% of participating families achieved at least two of their stated goals during

the program's first year—evidence of what coordinated, person-centered support can make possible.

In Detroit, faith leaders are integrating TTS into neighborhood ministries, pairing practical support with trusted community relationships. The setting is different, but the principle is the same: organizations can do more when they work from a common framework rather than asking families to navigate disconnected systems on their own.

That same work is beginning within Starr. Transition to Success is being integrated into Starr programs, where certified TTS Coaches are helping young people identify goals, navigate barriers, and build personalized pathways toward greater stability and success.

These communities are separated by thousands of miles, but they share a common lesson. TTS is not another program layered onto existing services. It is a way for people and organizations to bring their strengths together, measure progress, and organize support around each person's aspirations rather than their deficits.

For Starr, that makes TTS a natural extension of a mission rooted in the potential of children, families, and communities. Meaningful change rarely happens in isolation. It grows when people share responsibility, connect resources, and move forward together.



Beyond the First Step: Finding Calm After A Storm

A new partnership between Summit Pointe and Starr Commonwealth will help Calhoun County children and caregivers move beyond an immediate mental health issue toward stability, ongoing care and recovery.



Community Mental Health providers are a critical part of Michigan's health safety net, responding to crises, coordinating urgent care, and connecting people with essential services. In Calhoun County, Summit Pointe has continued to strengthen that system in partnership with hospitals, schools, first responders and community organizations like Starr.

Now, a new partnership with Summit Pointe and Starr Commonwealth will help address an important need: providing short-term support and stabilization to young people and families during difficult periods following an urgent mental health issue.

When a young person experiences a crisis or mental health issue beyond their ability to cope, the first priority is immediate safety. Summit Pointe's First Step Psychiatric Urgent Care Center offers assessment and support, while its mobile crisis team can respond directly in the community. During crises, these services are critical to help determine what a young person needs, develop a safety plan and connect the family with appropriate care. But the first response is only the beginning.

A young person experiencing a mental health issue may also not be in crisis or require hospitalization, but they still need a safe, structured environment and routine support. When mental health concerns arise, caregivers may be exhausted or uncertain about what comes next, and families can face a difficult wait before outpatient treatment or another long-term service begins. A new short-term support and stabilization service was needed in Calhoun County to fill that gap.

Supported by congressionally directed funding being awarded through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Summit Pointe and Starr will establish a new program for Calhoun County families and children ages 8 through 21.

Following assessment and referral from Summit Pointe, eligible families will be able to receive voluntary services through Starr, primarily on its Albion campus. Starr staff will provide daytime and after hour short-term support, family stabilization, resilience coaching, care coordination, and supported transitions to other behavioral health and community resources as needed.

These services represent the second, third and fourth steps after the immediate issue—giving young people and caregivers time to breathe, regain stability, and create a clearer path toward continued care.

Evening and weekend availability will also provide families with options when traditional services may be less accessible, and stress is often at its highest.

The new program is expected to begin serving clients no later than January 1, 2027, reaching approximately 125 Calhoun County youth and families during its first year.

Summit Pointe will provide assessment, clinical oversight and referrals, while Starr will lead implementation and service delivery.

Together, this partnership is creating something Calhoun County families routinely need: a safe place to turn, regain their footing and take a breath before moving forward.

Calhoun ISD, Starr, and Summit Pointe Strengthen Countywide Student Support

Schools across Calhoun County are working harder than ever to meet the growing mental health and behavioral needs of students. But for many districts, the challenge is not a lack of commitment. It is a lack of capacity.

A new countywide partnership brings together resources from the Calhoun Intermediate School District (CISD), Starr Commonwealth, and Summit Pointe to help close that gap. By combining educational resources, youth empowerment programming, and behavioral health expertise, the partners are building a more coordinated system of support for students, families, and schools throughout Calhoun County.

Approved by the Calhoun ISD Board of Education in August 2026, the partnership will provide significant resources through 2027 for local districts to access Starr's Youth Empowerment Programs, including the Student Resilience & Empowerment Center (SREC).

Participating districts will be able to refer students to Starr's SREC program at the Battle Creek Family YMCA, with transportation assistance from CISD helping ensure access

regardless of where a student lives. The partnership will also support Summer REC on Starr's Albion campus and "REC on the Road," which brings intensive support directly into participating schools.

Many students referred to SREC are navigating more than challenges at school. They may also be experiencing trauma, anxiety, depression, family instability, or other mental health needs that require support beyond what a youth empowerment program can provide.

Summit Pointe plays an essential role in ensuring those needs do not go unaddressed. Working closely with Starr, CISD, and participating schools, Summit Pointe helps connect students and families with appropriate behavioral health services, regardless of their ability to pay. In some cases, those services may be coordinated with or integrated into Starr programming. In others, a student or family may need continued clinical care and support beyond the program.

This coordination helps create a continuum in which schools are not left to navigate complex needs alone and families have clearer pathways to appropriate care.

The partnership also extends beyond direct student services. Participating schools will have access to Starr's trauma-informed and resilience-focused professional learning, including opportunities for educators to become certified

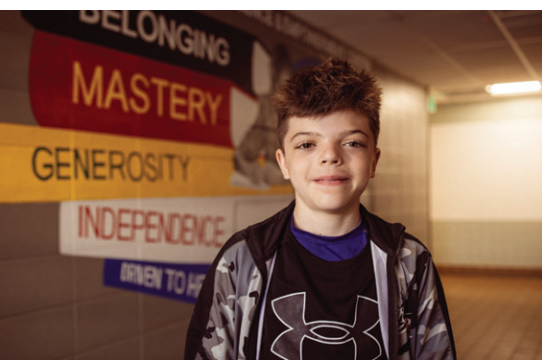
as Specialists, Coaches, and Trainers. Schools seeking deeper implementation support may receive matching funds from CISD, providing a \$1-for-\$1 match for customized assessment, planning, on-site coaching, and systems-level improvement.

That support can help schools strengthen classroom management, align behavioral and restorative practices, support school leaders and apply trauma-informed principles to real challenges involving students.

By pooling resources, the partnership creates an economy of scale that individual districts may not be able to achieve on their own. Starr can support multiple schools and districts, professional learning can be shared countywide, transportation and programming can be coordinated more efficiently, and Summit Pointe can help connect students and families to the broader behavioral health system.

The partnership is also designed with sustainability in mind. By developing knowledgeable teams within schools, coordinating access to behavioral health care and equipping local educators to lead the work, the effort can build lasting capacity beyond the initial funding period.

For CISD, Starr and Summit Pointe, the vision is both ambitious and practical: every participating district, regardless of size or budget, should have access to a coordinated system that helps students heal, grow, and succeed.





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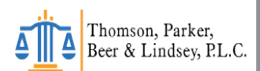
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If you rebuild it,
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More than a century ago, Floyd Starr understood something powerful: children need more than services. They need a place where they can belong, discover their strengths, and imagine a different future.

The Emily Jewel Clark building was part of that early vision for Starr's Albion campus. Today, restoring it is an opportunity to carry that belief forward, creating a renewed space where children can once again gather, grow, and build resilience.

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