



Callaway Connections

FOSTERING COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS TO LAST A LIFETIME

A publication of Callaway County Special Services

SERVE – Committed to the Needs of our Community

SERVE was founded in 1971 by a group of local churches from many denominations who were committed to working together for the betterment of the community. They were chartered as a non-profit agency in July 1972, with a goal to better define and meet the areas of human needs in Callaway County. They officially opened the doors in January 1973.

Since then, SERVE has grown to offer a variety of services such as a county-wide food pantry, emergency financial assistance and utility assistance for individuals facing financial difficulties, emergency prescription assistance, free or low-cost clothing and household items, disaster relief assistance, and our county's only Public Transportation system.

Their services have grown through the years as the needs of our community have changed, and their commitment to serving has grown with it. The Outreach Program provides information and referrals, offering multiple food assistance programs, car seat referral, disaster recovery assistance, school supplies, holiday food and gifts, cooling fans and financial assistance year-round to low-income individuals and families in Callaway County.

Because of continued growth, they purchased a new location at 400 Gaylord Drive in Fulton. The Trends store has moved in and is open. Transportation, Food Pantry, and Administration will move mid-Summer 2026. CCSS is proud to assist Serve through financial support due to their services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families in our county.

In 2025, Serve received 3 different financial disbursements from CCSS: \$55,000 and \$21,000 for transportation and \$50,000 for having completed 50% of the renovations on the new building. CCSS donated a van to enhance their transportation services and funded \$5,000 for bus maintenance.

Marilyn Bartley, their new executive director, shares, *"We have been promised 4 vehicles funded by CCSS and MODOT by the end of 2025. Transportation services in Callaway County would not be possible without the help of MODOT and CCSS."* Call **573-642-6388** for more information.

Information in this article is from <https://www.moserve.org/about#History>



A Note from Our Executive Director

Looking Ahead to 2026: Building Opportunity, Inclusion, and Community

As Callaway County Special Services looks ahead to 2026, we do so with purpose, optimism, and a continued commitment to empowering people and enriching lives. The year ahead will mark an exciting period of growth, innovation, and collaboration as we expand services, strengthen partnerships, and invest in a more inclusive community for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

One of our key priorities in 2026 is service expansion. CCSS will continue advancing plans for enhanced day services by expanding our day programming. These efforts reflect what we heard during our community needs assessment and are guided by our long-term strategic plan, ensuring services evolve alongside the people we serve.

We are also proud to launch the Inclusive Education Innovation Grant, providing direct support to educators across Callaway County. Through this initiative, CCSS will award up to five \$500 grants to help our educators develop creative, inclusive learning experiences that promote accessibility, belonging, and student engagement.

Our Inclusive Parks Initiative will remain a visible and meaningful investment in 2026. Building on strong municipal partnerships, CCSS will continue supporting accessible and sensory-inclusive play spaces where children of all abilities can learn, connect, and thrive together.

Equally important is our focus on people, the dedicated Direct Support Professionals, educators, partners, and families who make this work possible. In 2026, CCSS will continue emphasizing workforce development, recognition, and collaboration, knowing that strong relationships are the foundation of lasting impact.

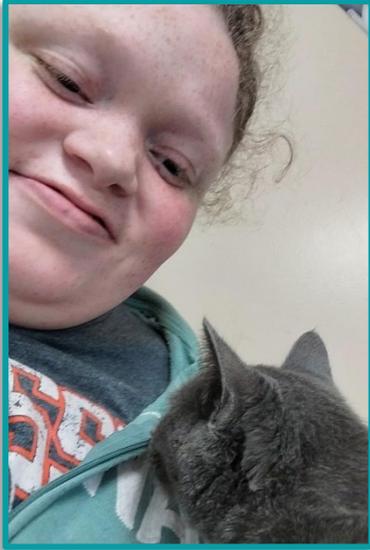
As we move forward, our mission remains clear: to foster a community that values inclusion, dignity, and opportunity for all. We are grateful for the trust placed in CCSS and look forward to the meaningful work ahead in 2026.

Warm regards,

Mike Ledele

Executive Director





The Transformative Power of Volunteering

Volunteering is a powerful tool that can significantly enhance the lives of those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). By engaging in volunteer activities, individuals can experience a range of benefits that contribute to their overall well-being and integration into their community.

Building Connections and Community

One of the benefits is the opportunity to build connections. Adults with IDD can face social isolation, but volunteering allows them to interact with a diverse group of people. These interactions may lead to lasting friendships and support systems.

Enhancing Social Skills

Volunteering provides a practical environment for developing essential social skills. Activities that require teamwork and communication help improve the ability to interact effectively in various settings.

Boosting Self-Esteem and Confidence

The sense of accomplishment that comes from successfully completing volunteer tasks can significantly boost self-esteem and confidence. Seeing the positive impact of efforts reinforces a sense of self-worth and capabilities. This boost in confidence can have a ripple effect, encouraging individuals to take on new challenges and opportunities.

Creating a Sense of Purpose

Feeling valued and needed is essential for everyone, and volunteering provides a chance to contribute meaningfully to their community. This sense of purpose can reduce feelings of isolation and increase a sense of inclusion and feeling like a valued member of society. Those who volunteer regularly have a 27% better chance of gaining employment. *(from "Take a look at these 40 volunteer statistics" through VolunteerHub by Eric Burger)*

Improving Overall Well-Being

The emotional benefits of volunteering, such as increased self-esteem and a sense of purpose, contribute to better overall mental health and well-being. Engaging in volunteer work can lead to a more positive outlook on life and improved emotional resilience.

Life Enrichment Center Volunteers

Those served at CCSS's Life Enrichment Center volunteered for over 900 hours in 2025 at a variety of non-profit organizations. Volunteering is one of the favorite activities of those served.



Get Involved

If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering, there are many organizations that welcome the participation of adults with IDD. Look for community centers, non-profits, and volunteer organizations. More specifically, look for a cause you are interested in or an opportunity to do a task you like or can improve your skills. By getting involved you can create a more inclusive and supportive community for everyone.

Some ideas for local volunteer opportunities are Callaway Senior Center, SERVE, Kiwanis Club, and Meals on Wheels.

Volunteering is not just about giving back; it's about building a better, more inclusive world where everyone can thrive. Let's embrace the transformative power of volunteering and make a difference together!

Information from "Why is Volunteering Important? Improving the Lives of IDD Adults" 6/11/24 from buzzbridgefarms.com

A Journey of Growth and Leadership at Life Enrichment Center



Pictured: Lisa Spires, Bethany Coffelt, & Melanie Stotler

CCSS loves to promote employees within our agency. Lisa Spires, Melanie Stotler, and Bethany Coffelt are recent examples of growing into positions of increased leadership and responsibility.

In just 5 years, Lisa has exemplified this type of growth. Starting her journey as a Direct Support Professional (DSP) in 2020, she quickly demonstrated a strong work ethic, a hunger for learning, and genuine care for those we serve. Her dedication and performance earned her promotion to Community Networking Coordinator in 2023, where she expanded her knowledge and service.

With continued commitment to excellence and a passion for developing others, Lisa has stepped into the role of Assistant Director of Day Services (ADDS). Lisa says, *“From where I started to where I am now – five years of growth, gratitude, and loving the work that keeps me inspired!”* Please join us in congratulating Lisa on her well-deserved promotion and continued success!

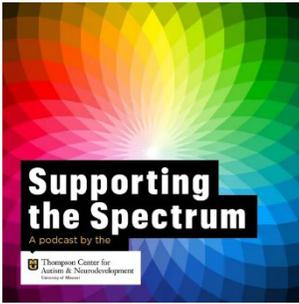
Melanie has been with CCSS for 3 years, first as a DSP, then as Lead DSP, and now as our Community Networking Coordinator. Melanie brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to her position. She has genuine empathy for those we serve and a passion to see them succeed in our community. She encourages inclusion and trying new things in a fun way that helps those served expand their horizons. Melanie states, *“Serving others – especially those with intellectual and developmental disabilities – is my true passion. Stepping into the role of Community Networking Coordinator allows me to bring compassion, connection, and community integration together so every person has opportunities to grow, belong and shine.”*

Bethany started as a DSP 2 years ago and was recently promoted to Lead DSP. Bethany looks forward to helping other DSPs learn and grow in their positions. Bethany displays compassion and a fun sense of humor to her coworkers and those served, making her an easy person to go to for assistance. Bethany says, *“Being a DSP is life changing. You get to go to a place every day where you learn love, compassion, empathy, patience, and reliability. You get to build relationships with some of the most amazing friends on earth that a lot of people miss out on. Being a DSP is more than a job; it’s a career that builds you into a stronger and better person and teaches you that one person CAN make a difference. With my promotion to Lead DSP I hope to build and guide my fellow DSPs and always remind them to be proud of the work they do, the person they are and the difference they make.”*

Did You Know??? Area Agency on Aging – Aging Best

Typically, to be eligible for services from Area Agencies on Aging, you must be older than 60 years. Our local agency that provides this federally mandated service, through Missouri’s Division of Senior and Disability Services, is Aging Best, located in Columbia, which works with Callaway County Senior Center to provide services. Core services they provide to those 60+ years old, who are eligible, are congregate meals, home delivered meals, information and assistance, in-home services (Non-Medicaid), legal assistance, long-term care ombudsman program, and transportation.

The **Family Caregiver Services Program** helps support adult caregivers to prevent burnout and allows them to take care of themselves so they can provide the best care for their loved one. Those eligible are 18+ providing care to those 60+ who struggle to perform activities of daily living, 55+ caring for a relative under 18, 18+ caring for an adult with dementia, and 55+ caring for an adult child with disabilities (age 18-59). Possible services through this program are respite, counseling, information, support groups, supplemental services, friendly calls/visits, case management, and education. Aging Best 800-369-5211, www.agingbest.org or www.facebook.com/agingbest.org/.



Listen Up - Podcast News: Supporting the Spectrum

Supporting the Spectrum podcast is hosted by the Thompson Center for Autism and Developmental Disorders Training and Education Division at the University of Missouri in Columbia. While the podcast is primarily tailored to families and professionals providing direct support to individuals with autism, it is available to any listener wanting to learn more. Podcast topics include challenging behaviors, misconceptions about autism, navigating college with autism, and perspectives from people with autism, their siblings, and parents. Access the podcast at: <https://podcasts.apple.com/il/podcast/supporting-the-spectrum/id1545667970> or <https://music.amazon.com/podcasts/499b31af-92c7-41b8-a5be-cc6224464e40/supporting-the-spectrum> or <https://open.spotify.com/show/1sIrovfVAKvht1ZVzvQGZK?si=u4vehqM1QwyTXoh1Sac0IQ&nd=1>.

Leprechaun Smoothie

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 2 cups spinach
- 3 kiwis
- 1.5 cups milk
- Whipped cream
- Freeze dried strawberries



Instructions

1. Add spinach, kiwis, and milk to blender and blend until smooth.
2. Transfer to your favorite clear cup!
3. Top with whipped cream and crushed freeze dried strawberries.

**3rd Annual
Flapjacks with
First Responders.
Thank you,
Callaway County
First Responders!!!**



Apply for Summer Camp Scholarships!!!

CCSS will be accepting applications for camp scholarships. Camps fill up quickly! If you want to attend and need a scholarship, please contact your Service Coordinator through Center for Human Services or Janelle Wilson at CCSS.



**Disability Rights
ARE
Human Rights!**

2026 Disability Rights Legislative Day – Save the Date: February 25, 2026

Advocates and Self-Advocates, come to the Missouri State Capitol to have your voice heard. Join in a rally and have opportunities to speak to your legislators about what matters to YOU. Our legislators need to hear our voices so they can work to make changes for us. If you cannot attend in person, there will be a way to attend virtually. Watch the website for more information. **Keep up to date:** <https://drlrd.org/>

**Free Food Distributions
near you!**

Serve, Inc. in Fulton – Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 9:00-12:00 PM

Shiloh UMC in Holt Summit - 2nd Thursday of the month from 1:00-3:00 PM

AmVets in Mokane - 2nd Thursday of the month from 12:00-1:30 PM

Pleasant Grove UMC in Hatton - 3rd Thursday of the month from 1:00-2:30 PM

New Testament Church in Auxvasse - 3rd Thursday of the month (need to call to get on a list, most of these get delivered to seniors, but could also be picked up

Open Table - Monday-Thursday 5-6pm – free meals offered twice weekly at the Community Center

To submit an event, email: info@callawaysb40.org by 3/1/26

Upcoming Community Events

-Tuesdays **Hambo Latham** at Callaway Senior Center
-Saturdays **Fulton Farmer's Market** 8am-12pm
Court Street

-1/1/26 **First Day Hike-Rock Bridge State Park** 12p-3p 3.75-mile hike on Deer Run Trail (ages 4+)

-1/12/26 **Teen Art Club** 5:30pm (supplies provided)
MO River Library

-2/6/26 **Valentine Dance** (see below)

-3/17/26 **St. Patrick's Day Parade** – Fulton

-3/20-22 **ISI Capital City Classic Competition**-ice skating competition-Free to watch – Washington Park Ice Arena – Jefferson City

-3/26/26 **Benefits Made Simple** (see next page)

-3/28/26 **Free Outdoor Movie (Monsters Inc)** 7pm at Jefferson Landing State Historic Site – bring chairs



Free Magazine

Exceptional Parent Magazine (EP Magazine) is a free digital magazine that provides information, resources and inspiring stories on disability and special health care needs for all ages. Sign up by going to www.epmagazine.com and clicking on “EP for Free”.



PRESSER ARTS NEWS

-**LOVEBUG DANCE** – 2/20/26 5:30-6:30PM

-Studio Time Creations – 9:30-10:30AM Thursdays:

--Jan 8 - Sensory Painting

--Feb 5 – Heart Sun Catchers

--Feb 12 – Making Valentines

--Mar 5 – Clover Creations

--Mar 19 – Rock Painting

www.presserpac.com 573-581-5592



PLEASE JOIN OUR
Valentine's Day Dance Party
FEBRUARY 6TH

DJ JAY FROM COLOSSAL SOUNDS WILL BE PROVIDING MUSIC AND CCSS WILL BE PROVIDING A NACHO BAR, CUPCAKES AND REFRESHMENTS

FROM 5:30 PM-7:30 PM
AT LEGENDS REC-PLEX
808 STATE STREET
FULTON, MO 65251

Benefits and Work Made Simple

**An informational event for
Individuals, Students, Teachers, Families,
Support Staff & Providers**

Fear of losing one's needed government benefits can prevent individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities from exploring the possibility of work.

Come learn some basic differences between SSI and SSDI, how individuals can work and have more income, and have the opportunity to ask questions.

WHEN: 5:30pm – 7:30pm on Thursday, March 26, 2026

WHERE: Callaway Electric Cooperative (1313 Cooperative Dr., Fulton)



Sandy Keyser is the Employment First Specialist for the Division of DD. She started working for DMH in 2004 as a Support Coordinator, where she helped transition-age youth & young adults connect with needed services. She transitioned to the Employment First Specialist in 2012, where she completed coursework to become a Benefits Planner and has been using that knowledge to help individuals navigate different options regarding working & maintaining access to needed benefits.

Pizza and drinks will be served.

Spots are limited. Reserve your spot today!!

Email info@callawaysb40.org or Call 573-642-1792





- ❖ What do snowmen eat for lunch?
- ❖ What do you call a snowman on Rollerblades?
- ❖ What do you call a snowman temper tantrum?

*Icebergers!!!
A snowmobile!!!
A meltdown!*

