



Callaway Connections

FOSTERING COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS TO LAST A LIFETIME

A publication of Callaway County Special Services

Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopment Opens New Facility-Columbia

The Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopment has officially opened a new, state-of-the-art building in Columbia, Missouri, significantly expanding access to autism and neurodevelopmental services for families across the state. The new facility is located within the MU Health Care South Providence Medical Park.

At 74,000 square feet, the new Thompson Center building allows the organization to more than double the number of patients served each year, helping address long waitlists and the growing demand for diagnostic and treatment services. The expanded space includes additional patient rooms, increased staffing capacity, and specialized areas designed specifically for children and individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities.

One of the most important additions made possible by the new building is Missouri's first intensive outpatient program for autism, offering a multidisciplinary, integrated model of care under one roof. Families will also benefit from expanded services such as comprehensive diagnostic evaluations, psychology and medical services, applied behavior analysis (ABA), family resource navigation, professional training, and cutting-edge research opportunities.

This expansion strengthens the Thompson Center's mission to support individuals with developmental disabilities and empower families through compassionate care, education, and research, making a meaningful impact for thousands of Missouri families now and in the future.

Contact Information:

Address: 701 Veterans United Drive, Columbia, MO 65201

Phone: (573) 884-6052

Website: <https://thompsoncenter.missouri.edu/>

Information from local news stations, Thompson Center Website, and University of Missouri-Columbia website.



America at 250: Expanding Promise for All



As America celebrates its 250th anniversary, it's a good time to reflect on how far our nation has come. For individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), this milestone highlights progress toward inclusion and equal rights, while reminding us that true opportunity and belonging should be accessible to all. People with IDD have positively helped shape our nation's history and will continue to shape our future.

This anniversary is not just about celebrating history – it's about continuing to build a future where every person can live, work, and participate fully in their community.

To find information on Missouri's "America 250" activities by the America 250 Missouri Commission, go to <https://showme250.mo.gov/>

A Note from Our Executive Director

Independence, Self-Advocacy, and the Freedom to Choose

This summer, our country will celebrate a historic milestone. On July 4, 2026, the United States will mark 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

This anniversary gives us a meaningful opportunity to think about what independence truly means, not only as a nation, but as a community.

At Callaway County Special Services, we believe independence is about more than doing things on your own. Independence means having choices. It means being heard. It means receiving the right support, in the right way, while honoring each person's dignity, goals, and voice.

For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, independence is often closely connected to self-advocacy. Self-advocacy means having the opportunity to speak up about needs, hopes, concerns, and dreams. It means being included in conversations and decisions about daily life, services, work, relationships, and community involvement.

Every person communicates differently. Some people use spoken words. Others use gestures, technology, pictures, behavior, or trusted supporters. No matter how a person communicates, their voice matters.

Families, providers, educators, employers, neighbors, and community leaders all have an important role to play. We support independence when we listen first. We encourage self-advocacy when we offer real choices, respect personal goals, and give people time and space to respond.

As our nation prepares to celebrate independence, we also celebrate the independence of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities right here in Callaway County. We honor their right to choose, participate, contribute, and belong.

A strong community includes people of all abilities. It values every voice. It creates room for each person to live with purpose, connection, and dignity.

This summer, as we celebrate freedom, let us also recommit ourselves to listening well, supporting choice, and helping every person have a voice in their own life.

Warm regards,

Mike Lederle

Executive Director



Learn About Easterseals Midwest

By Jamie FitzGerald, Autism Services Director, Easterseals Midwest



Easterseals Midwest is part of a more than 100-year-old network of disability service providers.

Our services are custom designed in and for the communities we serve. We support nearly 25,000 children and adults with disabilities across Illinois, Kansas, and Missouri, helping to build a world where all people have equal opportunity to realize their goals, dreams, and aspirations.

In Central Missouri, we provide personalized autism services that build communication, social skills, and family support—helping children thrive in their communities. Our team creates individualized plans to develop and improve communication and social skills while troubleshooting problem behaviors.

Under Central Missouri Autism Project funding in Central Missouri, a funding source that individuals with an autism spectrum disorder and their families can access, families receive services like parent training, family resource services, social skills groups, respite, and community inclusion. These services are funded through the state and delivered to families in their homes and community at no cost to them.

Easterseals Midwest also has an intensive Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Therapy clinic located in Columbia, Missouri, where children ages two through six can receive 15+ hours per week of individualized intensive ABA Therapy to support their individual communication, social and adaptive goals. ABA Therapy services are funded through private insurance and Medicaid.

Easterseals Midwest is leading the way to full equity, inclusion, and access through life-changing disability and community services.

For more information about the services offered in Central Missouri or to enroll, please contact Kaylee Western, Manager of Family Resources, at kaylee.western@esmw.org or 573-874-3777.

Health Matters: Choosing Healthy Drinks

What you drink is just as important as what you eat. Sugary beverages add extra calories with little nutrition and can increase the risk of weight gain, diabetes, heart disease, and dental problems. Healthier drink choices help with hydration and provide nutrients that support overall wellness.



Better Beverage Choices

- **Water:** The best option - no calories or added sugar
- **Infused water:** Add fruit or cucumber for flavor
- **Herbal teas:** Naturally low in calories and sugar
- **Low- or non-fat milk:** Provides calcium & protein
- **100% fruit juice:** In small portions due to natural sugars

Staying mindful of beverage choices is a simple step toward better health.

- **Low-sugar smoothies:** Blend fruits and vegetables
- **Unsweetened coffee or tea:** Skip added sugars and creamers

Simple Tips

- Choose water most often—carry a refillable bottle
- Check nutrition labels for added sugars

Free food distribution 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 5:00-6:00 PM – free
meals offered twice weekly at the Community Center

To submit an event email: info@callawaysb40.org

ARTS FOR ALL ABILITIES-

Studio Time 9:30-10:30a at Presser Arts Center

JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
No Studio Time due to Productions	AUGUST 6TH: Coffee Filter Butterflies	SEPTEMBER 3RD: Ceramic Mugs
	AUGUST 13TH Flower Sun Catchers	SEPTEMBER 10TH: Water Color Painting
	AUGUST 20TH: Rain Maker Tubes	SEPTEMBER 17TH: Shaving Cream
	AUGUST 27TH: Sensory Bottles	SEPTEMBER 24TH: Ice Painting



250th Independence Day Events to Watch:

-7/3/26 8-9:30pm **"A Capitol Fourth"** on PBS

-7/4/26 **"National Independence Day Parade"** at
<https://july4thparade.com/>

-7/4/26 7-9pm **"Macy's 4th of July Fireworks"** on NBC

*"When we focus on abilities instead of disabilities,
we can open doors and create opportunities."*

- Temple Grandin

Upcoming Community Events

June

-6/26 **Holts Summit Fireworks**-Greenway Park

July

-7/2 **6:00p Free Concert Series**-Capitol Regional
Amphitheater

-7/3-7/4 **FreedomFest at Riverfront Park**-Hermann

-7/4 **11:00a David Beaver Memorial Independence
Day Parade**-Fulton (Tenth & Court St.)

-7/4 **At Dark-Fireworks hosted by Mexico Optimist
Club**-Mexico Optimist Ball Fields

-7/4 **"Fire in the Sky"**-Stephen's Lake in Columbia

-7/9 **5:00p Let's Flamingle Shopping in the Brick
District**-Fulton

-7/10 **11:00a-3:00p Free Customer/Community
Appreciation Lunch**-Exchange Bank of MO-Fulton

-7/12 **7:00p July Community Hike (McKay Lake
Greenway)** (.6mi paved)-Jeff City (meet at parking
lot near dam)

-7/24 **8:45p Stars Under the Stars**-Free movie at the
capitol lawn "Angels in the Outfield" (Jeff City)

-7/24-7/25 **8:00p Callaway County Rodeo**-Adults
\$15, Kids (10-15) \$10, 9 & under free

August

-8/6 **6:00p Free Concert Series**-Capitol Regional
Amphitheater

-8/21 **8:45p Stars Under the Stars**-Free movie at the
capitol lawn "Minecraft" (Jeff City)

September

-9/3 **6:00p Free Concert Series**-Capitol Regional
Amphitheater

-9/12-9/13 **2026 Show Me State Air Show**-Jeff City
Memorial Airport

-9/12 **9a Ashland Fall Festival**-Ashland City Park

-9/17 **1p-5p Callaway Disability Resource**

Showcase: Navigating Possibilities- Callaway YMCA

-9/18-9/19 **8a-4p Zenith Aircraft Homecoming &
Open Hangar Days** (free festival & airplane show)

-9/26 **10a-2p Callaway County Disaster
Preparedness Expo**-Callaway YMCA

Chicken Pesto Wrap

Ingredients:

- 1 cooked chicken breast, shredded
- 2 Tbsp sour cream (plain yogurt or mayo works too)
- 2 tsp pesto
- 2 thin slices mild cheese
- 2 flour tortillas
- Handful chopped red pepper or sweetcorn kernels
- Lettuce leaves



Instructions:

1. Mix together the shredded chicken, sour cream, yogurt or mayo with the pesto. Season.
2. Lay a slice of cheese on each wrap, then divide the chicken mixture between them.
3. Sprinkle with red pepper or sweetcorn, then top with the lettuce leaves. Be careful not to overfill or it will be tricky to contain all the filling. Wrap and roll each one, then enjoy! Makes 2.



Welcome to the Team, Harley!

We are excited to welcome Harley to the Life Enrichment Center (LEC) team as our new Community Networking Coordinator! Harley is already making a positive impression, jumping in to learn his role and consistently offering a helping hand with additional projects. His willingness to contribute and support the team has made him a fantastic addition.

Harley brings a strong background in human services and a genuine passion for helping others. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Grand Canyon University and has previously worked as a Caseworker with Arthur Center Community Health in Mexico, Missouri, as well as a Child Advocate with Preferred Family Healthcare in Jefferson City. These experiences have helped shape his commitment to community connection and advocacy—skills that will serve him well in his new role at LEC.

Outside of work, Harley enjoys a full and active life with his family. He has been married to his wife, Kourtney, for five years, and together they share their home with two lovable goldendoodles, Appa and Lilo. As the oldest of four siblings, Harley values family time and enjoys staying connected with his loved ones.

In his free time, Harley likes to unwind with fishing, frisbee golf, word puzzles, and video games, bringing a well-rounded and approachable energy to our team.

Please join us in giving Harley a warm welcome—we are thrilled to have him at LEC and look forward to all the great work ahead!





Callaway County

Disaster

Preparedness Expo

Saturday
September 26, 2026

YMCA of Callaway County
1715 Wood St. Fulton MO
10 a.m.—2 p.m.

Fostering Family & Individual Preparedness, Safety & Resilience

Disaster Preparedness Information

Community Resource Booths with Fun Activities

Emergency Vehicle Tours

Meet the First Responders!!!



FUN FOR ALL





CALLAWAY DISABILITY RESOURCE SHOWCASE:

NAVIGATING POSSIBILITIES

FREE Community Event – All Are Welcome!
Thursday, September 17, 2026
1:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Join us for a fun, welcoming, disability-friendly event focused on intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Connect with families, individuals, and service providers to explore community supports and resources – all in one place.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND



Families with children with disabilities



Teens & young adults planning for life after high school



Adults with IDD



Service providers & advocates

RESOURCES AVAILABLE



Employment services



Autism services



Recreation



Therapy services



Transition services



Financial & legal support



Advocacy

SPECIAL GIVEAWAYS



First 50 attendees:
FREE Sensory Items



First 200 attendees
FREE Event Bag



Free drawings for
Gift Bags

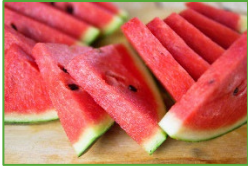
**PLAN TO ATTEND –
IT'S FREE**



YMCA of Callaway County
1715 Wood St.
Fulton, MO 65251

Learn more at: www.callawaycountyspecialservices.org





- ❖ What is the favorite summer food for ghosts?
- ❖ What is the favorite picnic spot of the sharks?
- ❖ What do the mermaids use to call their friends?

*I scream!!!
Finland!!
Shell phones!*

