



“Health is Wealth”

SOCCEED, 2025

Good morning!

I can hardly believe that 2024 is coming to a close and soon we will be in 2025. Thank you for everything that you do to serve people in our respective communities and often doing so under some very trying circumstances. These circumstances often present as seemingly insurmountable yet you always find the way to make the impossible happen. I am privileged to work with and learn from all of you each and every day. Learning never stops and continues well beyond classrooms and books. As a part of that continuous learning process, SOCCEED has been very fortunate this year to have had phenomenal guest speakers to help all of us do what we do even better and thereby having greater impacts on individuals, children, and families. Before we get to the plans for 2025, here is a review of 2024:

2024 in Review: Featured Presentations

Year’s Theme: You can’t have community without unity



January:

- **Jen Black, Executive Director, Alliance of SW Missouri.** Jen spoke about multiple things with an emphasis on disaster responses during the Joplin tornadoes and the impact of this disaster on children. Things such as the potential for long-term trauma effects were discussed along with best practices to help children successfully process and emerge from disasters and traumas of all sorts.
- **Ashlynn Stilles, Kinship Navigator Program Manager at Foster Adopt Connect
Jennifer Adams, Director of Family Supports at Foster Adopt Connect
Aly Romero, Fostering Prevention Program Manager at Foster Adopt Connect**
The team spoke about the plethora of services and trainings available via their agency including supports and therapy to help keep families together.

February:

- **Nationally recognized expert on children and disasters, Dr. Lori Peek.** Dr. Peek is a Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Colorado, Director of the Natural Hazards Center, and is a Principal Investigator for the SSEER Network (Social Science Extreme Events Research) as well as ISEEER or, the InterDisciplinary Science and Engineering Extreme Events Research Network. Further, Dr. Peek is the Principal Investigator for CONVERGE to advance the social sciences, engineering, inter-disciplinary hazards, and disaster research to coordinate teams in major disasters. She is known nationally for her expertise on children's unique reactions to disasters and keeping families together in healthy and positive ways. Dr. Peek's presentation helped everyone working with children be it as social workers, emergency managers, or all other capacities better understand the needs of children in disasters and especially incorporating these understandings into mitigating disaster impacts and have improved planning processes.
- **Dawn Miller, Vice Chair of the Kansas City Regional COAD or Community Organizations Active in Disasters.** Discussed was what the COAD does, why it is important for people to be involved with the COAD, and how they can increase that involvement.

March:

- **Sadie Martinez, Access and Functional Needs Coordinator: Colorado Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.** Our theme for the month was disability is not inability and this tied into our yearly theme that you cannot have community without unity and unity means everyone. Discussed were access and functional needs of people in disasters and emergencies and their safety before,

during, and after disasters. This discussion equipped all of us in whatever roles that we have and no matter what size agency or institution we are from, to create plans that keep everyone safe during times of crisis. The CMIST framework was detailed in these discussions to improve disaster services for people with a multitude of access and functional needs.

- **Dr. Jana Burke, Consultant and Researcher: Great Plains Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Center in Columbia, MO.** Discussed were laws protecting people with disabilities of all kinds and provided training on fighting the stereotypes that some have about people with disabilities.
- **Gary Brock, Director of Education, Kansas City Public Television.** KCPT has an amazing plethora of programming and materials to educate children and others on so many topics. One focus of this presentation was on children with special needs and empowering them to reach their goals.

April:

- The month of April is recognized as having “Earth Day” however, we focused on our greatest natural resource as being people and their mental and physical well-being.
- **A panel discussion team came from Eitas of Kansas City. This specifically included the following panelists:**
 - **Malinda A. Barnett, Community Outreach Supervisor-Eitas-Developmental Disability Services of Jackson County**
 - **Jennifer Seidel, Eitas-Benefits Specialist**
 - **Nicole Noblet, Eitas-Peer Resource Specialist and as someone with lived experiences with disabilities**
 - **Jemina Nesthawt, Community Outreach, Benefits, and Peer Resource Specialist-Eitas**

The panel in part responded to pre-submitted questions from our membership on a wide range of topics related to people with all sorts of disabilities. We further talked about discrimination, stereotypes, and over coming

these things so that everyone has the same access to resources to achieve their goals.

- **Latrisha L.D. Phillips, M.A.E.D, First Episode Psychosis Team Lead.** Discussed was mental illness in youth and a specific program to address this in our communities. Highlighted was the importance of early intervention and warning signs to be mindful of that a youth is needing this assistance.
- **Sarah Albin, Integrated Specialist III-MARC’s Ageing Department.** Program development and specifically, the Grandpass program were reviewed. This is a program that can help support seniors who are caring for/raising their grandchildren.

May:

- Part of the focus this month was on children's development over the summer break and having safe/fun/educational activities over that break.
- **Dana Silverblatt, Director of Youth and Young Adult Initiatives-Behavioral Health Network of Greater St. Louis.** This discussion added to the month's focus and helped people to better understand youth development and the amazing new programming available to foster positive youth mental health, preparing for adulthood.
- **Helen Li, Youth Librarian-Central Library in Kansas City.** Each year and actually throughout the year, the local library branches offer incredible programming for youth and families that is free and easily accessible. This is and will continue to be a tremendous community asset as so many of the families that we work with are unable to afford programming especially over the summer with added expenses such as food (kids are not in school and many do not receive the breakfasts and lunches they otherwise have when in school).

June:

- June is National Safety Month and our take on that was to focus on violence reduction in our communities.
- **Daniel Watson and Will Edwards: KCPD.** Discussed was the importance of situational awareness and crime reduction strategies. Improving the safety of all communities and providing opportunities for people were also discussed.
- **Dr. Monique Johnston, Executive Director: Youth Ambassadors.** The organization's programming for youth was discussed as well as risk factors and the importance of having options for youth and community support.
- **Debbie Bayless, Mediator and Community Cohort Manager: Center for Conflict Resolution.** The many available options through the agency to help build resilient communities through successful mediations of conflicts and anger were the focus.

July:

- **Jonathan Kurtz: National Weather Service.** Severe weather season and how to stay safe during such was thoroughly reviewed. How people can access information to keep safe was also discussed.
- **Mary Mogg: Trainer: Show Me Healthy Kids.** Critical programs available to youth in the custody of the state were reviewed. These programs help to ensure mental and physical wellness. One specific program that was discussed was Adolescent to Adult or a2A. LGBTQ services were also reviewed.

August:

- The focus this month was on children's successful return to school and all of the factors that can come into play.
- **Adam McClun, Director of Programs and Operations: KC Common Good.** Discussed were the root causes of violence in the community. Also reviewed was the KC360 program that in part helps to build more resilient communities. Working for Youth that is in partnership with the Real World Learning Program via the Kauffman Foundation was also discussed in detail.
- **Dr. Justin Heinze, Director: National Center for School Safety, NCSS Executive Team, School Violence Expert.** Discussed was school violence and what we can as a community do to reduce this true community disaster. This extended the conversation that we had in a prior session where national school safety expert, Kenneth Trump had spoken.

September:

- This month recognized that it is "Disaster Preparedness Month."
- **Melissa Cable, Refugee Services-Preferred Communities Manager: Della Lamb Community Services.** Discussed was the trauma experienced by people in general but especially trauma that has often been experienced by children and families being relocated to the Kansas City community. How this trauma may differ from other forms of trauma was discussed as well as best practices for response. Reviewed were also the many programs that Della Lamb has to help people of all ages that have experienced disasters.
- **Bary Kramer, Program Specialist: Department of Mental Health and Red Cross.** Discussed were Red Cross services when responding to people who have experienced different kinds of disasters. Special emphasis was on trauma in children who have experienced disasters and Bary provided numerous excellent resources for future reference (these are posted on the website).

October:

- **Lorraine Rohde, Behavioral Health Liaison: Swope.** Discussed was severe mental illness in children and older adolescents and its potential impact on healthy development. The many community programs available were presented and discussed that help youth of all ages develop healthy coping mechanisms despite a multitude of risk factors that may be present.
- **Mary Williams, Specialist: Family Conservancy.** Trauma informed practices were discussed in detail as it pertains to children, families, and communities. There was a

special emphasis on the early childhood period. Mary has been on Fox 4 speaking about this and shared many wonderful resources.

- **Jennifer Sanchez, Connect Specialist: Evergy.** Evergy has been and continues to be a wonderful partner in serving our respective communities. Reviewed were programs available to people struggling to pay their bills so that people can stay safe and warm over the cold winter months. This information imparted on us then equipped us to better serve children and families as we had the knowledge of current offerings to keep people connected who might not otherwise be.

November:

- **Seth Sonnevile, Program Director for The Center for Well-Being: CMH.** The focus this month was on care for the caregivers. The reason for this was as treatment providers, we are often last on our lists because our passion to serve others takes precedence. That coupled with the additional stresses that the holiday season can bring makes the need for care even greater. Seth discussed programming to help reduce holiday stress and stress in general. This programming promoted wellness for the people who are ordinarily focused on the wellness of others but need it just as much!

December:

- **December** is traditionally our “un-meeting” month where there is no formal agenda or presentations because it is so close to the holidays. The room is open though in case there is an urgent need of some sort that may have just come up, to share resources, anything! As a small way to thank everyone for what they do in the community and for what they bring to this group, charitable causes of member’s choosing were again supported through the distribution of \$2000. An complete accounting of that once complete will be posted or sent (anticipated by the end of the week because we do still have \$300 left to distribute). **More than thirty organizations were supported this year!** The following information was presented in our mini-meeting:
 - The theme for the new year being, “Health is Wealth.” Health can take many forms!
 - The SOCCEED’s upcoming sponsored health fair is on April 12, 2025 from 9-2 at the Mattie Rhodes Cultural Center. More information and a “save the date” flyer will be distributed in approximately February 2025.
 - FEMA Region 7/SOCCEED training (Part 2, but you do NOT have needed to have attended Part 1 for this to make sense) coming up in 2025. This will again be completely FREE of charge and in part further assist organizations with developing emergency plans of operation or refining ones they may already

have. There will be guest speakers presenting on childhood trauma, resiliency, and more.

- We do still have some ability to assist with the holidays if you know of an individual or family in need. As we draw closer to the holidays, this assistance is limited.
- Our next meeting is on January 21st, 2025 at 1 p.m. on Webex.

Other Accomplishments/Areas for Growth

The group has added to its community-based initiatives and now has close to two dozen. **Our very first initiative was the Ray Way Resource Directory which has been a weekly publication since June of 2020** and has not missed a single week. This directory has more than two dozen categories and has expanded to just under 90 pages in 2024. It is used by multiple social service agencies, local/city government, schools, and more. The Ray Way is completely free and can be subscribed to via email or easily downloaded from our site. This provides critically needed resources and current information that promotes health and wellness via resources for things such as shelter, food, clothing, mental health care, and more. **Our newest resource is the initiative, “Cancel Cancer.”** As a part of that newest initiative, we are sponsoring a **health fair that will take place on April 12th, 9-2, at the Mattie Rhodes Cultural Center**. This is a free event that will provide access to screenings, health information, general resources, and more. One of the groups participating in this event is Gilda’s Club, a prominent group here in Kansas City that assists people with cancer and their families.

In **May of 2024, we sponsored a day-long workshop in partnership with FEMA Region 7** that focused on the unique needs of children in disasters and how to incorporate those needs into emergency planning. In the **spring of 2025, we are again sponsoring a cost-free, day-long workshop with FEMA Region 7** that will continue this discussion. It will further help agencies and organizations of all sizes to develop or continue to develop plans of how best to serve children and families during times of disasters. Further the workshop will assist with in being able to continue critical operations and services in disasters and emergencies.

In 2024, we changed our name! We started out as the Jackson County Systems of Care however, in January of 2024, Children and Youth in Disasters formerly with MARC joined us and we essentially became the Jackson County Systems of Care and Children and Youth in Disasters. Not that the name doesn’t just roll off the tongue...it was obvious we needed a new name especially since our reach is well-beyond just Jackson County and extends now also much further than previously into Kansas. After discussions, we arrived at the name SOCCEED or Systems of Care in Community Emergent Events and Disasters. I think we will always be known as the SOC and because we do have extensive name recognition under that, it made sense to retain SOC in the new name.

Our website was revamped in 2024 in light of the addition of Children and Youth in Disasters and our name change. Additionally, a brochure was created that helps with building partnerships and spreading the word of who we are and what we do. This has opened many doors such as being able to sponsor attendance at events such as “The Little War” at the Kansas City National WW1 Museum and Memorial. This is an incredibly powerful and educational exhibit that portrays how the war impacted children from a psychological standpoint.

We are able to accomplish what we do through our growing membership as well as partnerships. Today, SOCCEED has grown to 436 individual members which is incredible when you consider we stood at about 36 in January of 2020. Because of all of **you**, we are able to do things like provide essential resources that sustain families in many ways and improve lives. We have been and will continue to remain very active in the communities that we serve and assist in whatever way possible. One such way that happened in 2024 was when we were alerted to Half-Price Books throwing new, useable items into the trash that did not sell within a specified time-frame. Through interactions with the stores and Fox 4 Problem Solvers, there is a form that nonprofits can complete to request materials free of cost thus saving them from the trash. These are books, puzzles, and more that are now going into the hands of organizations and children in need.

There is always room for growth and improvement. One such example of this is to improve outreach efforts to further incorporate consumers in our meetings and initiatives. There has been an effort towards this via direct outreach with neighborhood associations. The premise behind this are the voices of people directly experiencing the violence, substance abuse, mental health issues, and more in surrounding communities is critical to what we do. Hearing about the needs and concerns of people walking it, experiencing it every day, their realities, is a voice we need to hear more of so that we can design programs and direct efforts to where they are most needed. Our latest initiative as mentioned earlier, Cancel Cancer is an area that I envision growing into something highly impactful in 2025 and beyond. Currently, we connect individuals and families experiencing cancer with resources such as durable medical equipment, emotional support, and more. On April 12th, we are sponsoring the previously mentioned health fair. I plan on it some day growing further to include things like a benefit walk, anything that fills in the gaps that exist in services and supports. Cancer is something that can effect anyone directly and/or indirectly even if we do everything in our power to avoid it. Until the day comes when it is completely eradicated, the best we can do is fight it every inch of the way through education, resources, and holding each other up through the journey.

Financial Recap of Donations Made on Behalf of Members

To recap, SOCCEED had \$2,000 to distribute to charities of member's choosing. They made the request, the donation was made, and then the receipt was sent to the original requester showing proof of the transaction. This is a yearly tradition to thank members for everything that they do throughout the year. I wish it could be more!

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SOCCEED Donations on Behalf of Members December 2024

Starting Amount to Be Distributed: \$2,000.00

\$2,000.00

Date	Donation Amount	Member Requesting	Organization Receiving Donation	Total Left
27-Nov	\$50.00	C. Marks	True Light Family Resource Center	\$1,950
3-Dec	\$25.00	S. Foster	Bishop Sullivan Food Fight Camp	\$1,925
3-Dec	\$75	J. Padley	Ability KC Rose Fund	\$1,850
3-Dec	\$50.00	W. Hawkins	Hope Faith	\$1,800
3-Dec	\$100	S. Spitz	Our Spot KC	\$1,700
3-Dec	\$50.00	P. Seymour	River of Refuge	\$1,650
3-Dec	\$100	M. Smith	Pediatric Place Family First Initiative	\$1,550
3-Dec	\$50	S. Smith	Lafayette County Enterprises/Shelter	\$1,500
3-Dec	\$50	M.M-P	Foster Together	\$1,450
3-Dec	\$50	G. Webster	Youth Guidance	\$1,400
3-Dec	\$100	B. Alexander	MOCSA	\$1,300
3-Dec	\$50	H. Hochstetter	Front Porch Alliance	\$1,250
3-Dec	\$50	L. Clifton-Thompson	NE Comm Center: Harmony Proj KC	\$1,200
3-Dec	\$50	E. Hurd	Circle of Hope	\$1,150
3-Dec	\$50	M. Kissner	CAPA	\$1,100
4-Dec	\$50	J. Herrera	KC Hispanic Development Fund	\$1,050
4-Dec	\$50	C. Garrett	Dave's Place	\$1,000
6-Dec	\$50	M. Buehler	Women's Employment Network	\$950
9-Dec	\$100	C. Green	Sparkwheel	\$850
9-Dec	\$50	B. Poitras	Metro Lutheran Ministries	\$800
9-Dec	\$50	C. Koehn	Della Lamb	\$750
9-Dec	\$50	L. Budenbender	Lutheran Family & Child. Serv. of MO	\$700
10-Dec	\$50	A. Martin	Reconciliation Services	\$650
10-Dec	\$50	A. Mosby	Center for AA Health-KU	\$600
10-Dec	\$50	T. Lawson	Legal Aide of Western MO	\$550
10-Dec	\$100	E. Chesnut	KS Public Health Association	\$450
20-Dec	\$100	M. Carling	River of Refuge	\$350
20-Dec	\$50	M. Kroger	Co-Parenting Ikigai KC	\$300

As of December 20th, \$300 was remaining and with no outstanding requests after a reminder on December 17th, I did the following:

20-Dec	\$75	XXX	Bishop Sullivan Food Fight Camp	\$225
20-Dec	\$100	XXX	Red Cross of KC	\$125
20-Dec	\$125	XXX	Gilda's Club KC	\$0

The additional donation to Bishop Sullivan was made because the prior request had only been \$25 and that was lower than other requests. The Red Cross and Gilda's Club were chosen at random from charities that had not been selected.

Plan for 2025

The theme for 2025 is “Health is Wealth.” This was selected for a few reasons and one of those is simply that health unlocks the potential for so much. This could be mental and physical health or one of many other forms of health. When these pieces come together, the individual wins as does the community. Imagine a community with improved health regardless of the form. Imagine what that makes possible versus the opposite. Our focus in the new year is on the different forms that health can take and promoting the achievement and sustainment of that.

To kick things off in January, we are further helping to prepare service providers for the many stressful situations they will encounter throughout the year so that they maintain their own respective well-being. Some of these mentioned situations will include disasters and emergencies of all sorts be it weather-related or something else. SOCCEED will bring to all of its members, a phenomenal training that will be incorporated into the first part of our January 21st meeting:

- **Heroic Imagination Project:** HIP is an internationally known program (for more information please refer to: <https://www.heroicimagination.org/>) HIP in part seeks to build capacity in responders from all types of disciplines to be empowered, increase their own resilience to secondary traumas, further develop crisis response skills, and more. **Ellie Jacques, HIP Trainer, Administration, and Board Member** will be conducting a completely free of cost training to SOCCEED attendees. This will focus on how to even better effectively manage the stressors and trauma experienced while providing services during disasters and emergencies and situations that may not be traditionally defined disasters but, are for that particular family or community.

HIP is closely aligned with Suzanne Bernier’s work (<https://www.suzannebernier.com/speaking-engagements> and <https://www.suzannebernier.com/services>). SOCCEED is pleased to welcome **Suzanne Bernier, Certified Emergency Manager (CEM) through the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM), as well as a Certified Business Continuity Professional (CBCP) through the Disaster Recovery Institute (DRI) and a Certified Crisis Management & Communications Professional (CMCP)** to our January meeting. Suzanne is an award winning and internationally recognized emergency management and business continuity consultant, instructor, and speaker who has worked closely with FEMA and is well-known for a program called Stars of Hope (please see the following link for more information: [Stars of Hope – Healing Art \(starsofhopeusa.org\)](http://starsofhopeusa.org)). This program works with communities affected by disasters and other significant events. Suzanne was an intricate part of the response/recovery efforts to the Joplin Tornado in 2011. She

further helped to found a “Disaster Heroes” award in dozens of Missouri schools that recognized the resilience of responders from all disciplines.

In March, 2025 one of the guest presenters that we will be welcoming is Jonathan Kurtz, NOAA Federal. Mr. Kurtz will be speaking about spring severe weather season, safety, and further helping us to prepare for all of this via a distribution of free weather radios. Other topics being planned for 2025 include but are not limited to representatives from national programs for the reduction of community violence, the success of schools in highly impoverished neighborhoods, the empowerment of children impacted by traumatic events and disasters so that they are not robbed of the childhoods that they so deserve, breaking the cycle of generational poverty and trauma, and much more. Not every month has been booked and I can almost always be flexible so, if you or your organization would like to present and have a topic in mind, never hesitate to reach out and I will make it happen.

Thank you for the incredible work that all of you do throughout the year. I know that sometimes it may feel like you are spinning your wheels but know that you DO make a difference, a HUGE difference. Michele Amitrani, said, “whoever changes one life, changes the whole world.”

Happy holidays and happy early New Year!

Sincerely,

Jennifer

Jennifer L. L’Heureux, Ph.D.

Chief of Children’s Community Operations-Northwest

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