

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



ballard center

Changing Lives since 1965



Meet Ballard's Incredible Team of Dedicated Members

Life-Changing Educators

Gini Cook, Education Program Director | **Allie Richardson**, Education Coordinator | **Chelsea Steinbach**, Cook and Education Support | **Josh Baker**, Education, IT, Building & Grounds Support | **Adia Gloeckner**, Lead Educator | **Kenzie Goldsmith**, Educator Float | **Gracie Jeffrey**, Educator Float | **Clara Ketchell**, Educator Float | **Rashai Plymer**, Educator Float | **Karisa Shiraki**, Educator Float | **Shannon Sides**, Lead Educator | **Shelbi Smith-Cromwell**, Lead Educator | **Rachael Washington**, Lead Educator

Outstanding AmeriCorps Members

Jill Hutchins | Lisa Roggenkamp | Sarah Campbell
Solie Edison | Tracy Yang | Zachary Krehbiel

Dedicated Administrative Staff

Isaac Jones, Volunteer Manager | **Claire Gallagher**, Pantry Services Coordinator | **Kathrine Ward**, Family Stabilization Director | **Nick Detrano**, Outreach & Communications Director | **Lori Johns**, Chief Operating Officer | **Kyle Roggenkamp**, Chief Executive Officer

2024 Board of Directors

Michelle Chronister, **Chair** | **Steven Koprince**, **Vice Chair** | **Elly Claussen**, **Treasurer** | **Chris Schmid**, **Secretary** | **Greg Gardner** | **Lauren Davis** | **Walt Jamison** | **Kim Rack** | **Dr. Scott Thellman** | **Jessica Grimes Mooneyham** | **Pam Cullerton** | **Dr. Scott Robinson**

Mission: The Ballard Center partners with individuals and families to achieve stability through early childhood education and needs-based services by cultivating a strong network of organizations, businesses and individuals dedicated to serving our community.

Vision: At Ballard, we envision a community where every child and family have access to resources and support to reach their goals of stability, safety, health, and well-being.

A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

Because of you, our cherished Ballard Family,

If you know me, you know how lucky I am to be here. I'm an outlier in a minefield of poverty statistics, a direct result of people believing in me when I needed it most. My story isn't unique at Ballard. Many on our team are fueled by the trauma of their past, passing down hard-earned wisdom to families in need. It's a powerful legacy of resilience. But here's the truth we can't ignore: **the same people fighting poverty in our community are often still living in it.** I've worked in this field for 20 years and had to become a CEO before I stopped relying on the food bank. That's not right. Our team's sacrifices to serve others aren't acts of heroism—they're evidence of an unjust system that too often makes hard-working people feel unworthy of basic respect and dignity.

In 2024, we decided to change that. We took a leap of faith and asked for your help to bring our staff sustainable living wages. I was terrified that the appeal would fall on deaf ears. But then my mentor Becky Price reminded me, "You can't take a leap of faith if you refuse to believe on the way down." She was right. Because you believed, you responded—not with hesitation but with bold, beautiful generosity. You nearly tripled our highest-ever year-end appeal, accelerating our timeline by a full year. **And now, in 2025, every Ballard teacher and social service provider will earn a living wage**—supported not just by hope but by a long-term reserve fund that ensures this change is here to stay.

But if we've learned anything, it's this: growth without sustainability is just a moment. At Ballard, we don't build what we can't sustain. And we don't ask unless we're ready to show you the return on your belief. So here's what I can promise you: when you give to Ballard, you're not giving to a dream—you're investing in real, daily impact. You can see your dollars at work in every classroom, in every on-site therapy session, and in every family we walk beside. We will never ask you to build something we cannot afford to maintain.

To keep growing responsibly and sustainably, we still need you. Not because we're in crisis, but because we're committed to building wisely and well together.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you for standing with us and for believing we were worth the leap.

Because if we truly stick together,

ANYTHING is possible.



Kyle Roggenkamp
CEO



A LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

As I reflect on 2024, I'm struck by the power of what we can accomplish when we stay focused on our mission. This past year, we not only imagined what was possible — we made it happen. We believed in the vision, we built the plan, and we followed through with determination. And when I say "we," I mean our entire Ballard community: our volunteers, donors, staff, and supporters like you. **Together, we celebrated a major milestone — breaking ground on our new building.** Soon, we'll be able to welcome clients into a space designed for privacy, safety, and dignity. Our children will have secure spaces to learn and grow, and families will feel the care that surrounds them the moment they walk through our doors

But the most meaningful changes aren't just visible in bricks and mortar. They're felt in the impact we're making together. We are dedicating more private donor dollars to crisis funding and child scholarships than ever before. We're raising wages for our teachers and support staff, affirming the value of their expertise and care. We're expanding therapy services for our most vulnerable children and creating a sensory room — a flexible, calming space for one-on-one support tailored to children with special needs and trauma-related behaviors.

All of this is helping to reshape the culture within Ballard. Our staff and volunteers feel the shift. They see their hard work recognized and their contributions honored. Our teachers are staying longer and building deep, lasting relationships with the children and families they serve. Our support staff are connecting with teachers in new, collaborative ways. And for the first time since I began working with The Ballard Center, I can truly see a sustainable future — one where stability and care are the foundation of everything we do.

There were moments over the years when I wondered if this kind of change was even possible. Would the community show up? Could we stay the course? The answer is clear: YES. Yes, we can. Yes, we did. Yes, we will. Thank you for being part of this journey. Together, we are building more than a building — **we're building a future.**



Michelle Chronister
Board Chair



2024 at a Glance



67

Children and their families benefitted from our Early Childhood Education program

799

Household members received rent/utility assistance and case management follow-ups

806

Children impacted by our holiday Adopt-a-Family program

7,297

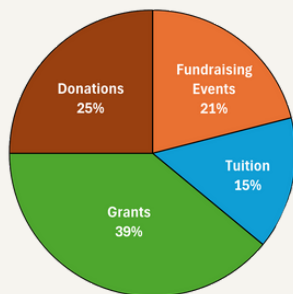
Household members impacted by our pantry services including food, clothing, diapers

12,128

Community members served at our Mobile Food Distribution

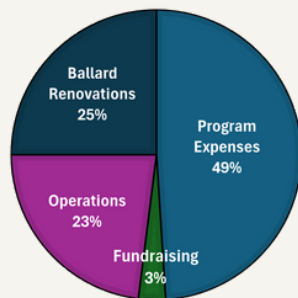
2024 INCOME TOTAL:

\$1,839,101



2024 EXPENSES TOTAL:

\$1,376,585



Remaining \$462,516
transferred to reserve fund
to sustain Living Wage
Initiative for our
hardworking early childhood
educators

LIFE- CHANGING PROGRAMS

Early Childhood Ed.

EVERY SERVICE A CHILD COULD NEED UNDER ONE ROOF

Educational & Social/Emotional
Curriculums



Amazing onsite speech & occupational
therapy from Speech Solutions

USD 497 providing special education
services



Autism Services of Kansas (ASK)
providing onsite daily services



No-cost teeth cleaning & dental wellness checks through Heartland Community Health Center

Take Our Youth Shopping (T.O.Y.S) providing Ballard children a special outing with local law enforcement



Kansas Lions Club vision & interventions screening



Loving Paws Animal Therapy with Handler Donna H. and her dog Rylee



Common Ground Community Garden in John Taylor Park





EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

WHAT ARE THE LONG-TERM IMPACTS OF ATTENDING AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM?

- Investing in early childhood education yields a **13% annual return on investment (ROI)** per child, due to higher lifetime earnings, reduced crime and lower public assistance dependence.
- Early childhood education reduces the need for remedial education and special education services by 29%, **saving public school systems millions annually.**
- Adults who attended high-quality early childhood programs are **14% more likely to graduate high school and 17% more likely to enroll in college** than peers who did not.
- High-quality early childhood education reduces adult crime rates by up to 40%, lowering incarceration costs.
- Adults who attended high-quality Early Childhood Education **earn \$5,000 to \$20,000 more per year on average** than those who did not.

WHAT SETS BALLARD APART

Social & Emotional
Curriculums

Speech Therapy

Occupational
Therapy

Child Development
Screenings

Hearing & Dental
Screenings

Autism
Services

THE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT OF OUR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM

The average cost per student to run our high-quality early childhood education program is \$1,100 per month. This includes our curriculum, educators, all of the wrap-around services such as therapies, crisis supports, and case management supports that sets Ballard apart from your ordinary childcare center.

Per student, Ballard is subsidizing \$500 dollars per month in tuition the second they walk through the door, no questions asked. We offer emergency and annual scholarship programs that further subsidize our education program based on the income of the households.

FAMILY STABILIZATION PROGRAMS

Throughout the year, Ballard's Family Stabilization programs offer a wide variety of essential services

MEETING NEEDS, NOURISHING FUTURES

Ballard's Community Pantry provides critical food support to families and individuals facing hardship in our community. Through access to fresh produce, pantry staples, and household essentials, **we help our neighbors meet their basic needs with dignity and care.** By reducing food insecurity, our pantry not only addresses immediate hunger but also supports family stability and long-term well-being. Every visit is an opportunity to connect families with additional resources, creating pathways toward resilience and self-sufficiency.



7,296
INDIVIDUALS
SERVED

2,324
FAMILIES FED



KEEPING FAMILIES HOUSED AND CONNECTED

Through our emergency housing and utility assistance programs, Ballard provided critical support to 282 households across our community this year. Under the leadership of Family Stabilization Director Kathrine Ward, these efforts helped prevent eviction and utility shutoffs, protecting individuals and families at risk of losing their homes or essential services.

These resources are available to all community members, regardless of household composition—because housing and utility stability are essential to health, safety, and long-term well-being.



Kathrine Ward
Family Stabilization Director



282
HOMES PROTECTED
FROM EVICTION
AND SHUTOFF

\$244,116
TOTAL RELIEF
DISTRIBUTED



Through wrap-around services, Ballard walks alongside families, offering support that meets both urgent needs and long-term goals.



COMMUNITY CARE THAT GOES THE DISTANCE

We remain committed to tackling the underlying causes of family instability, **which means meeting families where they are at.** Our Mobile Food Pantry assures that anyone, near and far, has access to our pantry services.



HOLIDAY SUPPORT THAT STRENGTHENS FAMILIES

Ballard's Holiday Bureau program brings joy and relief to families who are struggling during the holiday season. Through this adopt-a-family model, we help ensure that **children and parents alike can experience the joy and dignity of the holiday season.** By matching generous donors with families in need, the Holiday Bureau strengthens community bonds and brings comfort and celebration to households during a time that can otherwise be challenging



806 CHILDREN RECEIVED AN AMAZING HOLIDAY



FAMILY STABILIZATION

WHAT ARE THE LONG-TERM IMPACTS OF BALLARD'S FAMILY STABILIZATION PROGRAMS?

There is strong evidence that crisis assistance programs such as rent and utility assistance, emergency funding, and clothing pantries have long-term positive effects on individuals, families, and society as a whole.



RENT AND UTILITY ASSISTANCE STATISTICS

- Rental assistance **reduces childhood instability, leading to higher high school graduation rates and lower future reliance on public benefits.**
- Families who avoid eviction report a 60% decrease in parental stress, and their children are **50% less likely to enter foster care.**

EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (CRISIS FUNDING) STATISTICS

- Preventing eviction through emergency aid saves **\$10,000-\$20,000 per family in shelter and emergency services costs.**
- Every \$1 invested in crisis assistance (emergency aid) saves \$3-\$5 in future social service costs.

FOOD AND CLOTHING ASSISTANCE STATISTICS

- Access to clothing and hygiene resources reduces absenteeism by 30% in low-income schools.
- Families receiving food assistance experience 20% fewer hospitalizations for preventable conditions like malnutrition.
- Children with access to sufficient nutrition score 17% higher on standardized tests and are less likely to be diagnosed with learning disabilities.

282

Total Households in Crisis

\$244,116

Total Amount Distributed

\$867

Avg Amount Per Household



THE LIFE-CHANGING STORY OF A BALLARD FAMILY



FIVE YEARS AGO,

a Lawrence, Kansas couple had their lives forever changed when the Department for Children & Family Services (DCF) reached out to them about fostering two brothers, ages two and three, who had experienced severe developmental trauma and autism. The couple didn't hesitate, despite the challenges, and soon found themselves navigating an entirely new reality. The boys arrived with nothing but the clothes on their backs, their past filled with neglect and pain.

They had cried for months without comfort, never knowing the warmth of a loving embrace. But in the arms of their new parents, they slowly learned to trust, to feel safe, and to cling to the love that would never let them go.

As the family adjusted, they faced another hurdle of finding the appropriate early childhood education center as many programs weren't equipped to handle the boys' trauma and complex needs. This all changed when the couple discovered the Ballard Center. **More than just a school, Ballard became a lifeline**, providing essential developmental screenings, autism therapy, and even support for the parents. Our CEO personally reassured them that everything was going to work out, offering a direct line of support showcasing Ballard's deep commitment to helping their family.

HOWEVER,

the challenges didn't end there as the State of Kansas initially planned to return the boys to their unsafe home. Determined to protect them, the couple fought back with Ballard standing beside them. Ballard's pro-bono legal team worked tirelessly, and after nearly a year, justice prevailed and the boys were returned to their foster family, the only home where they had ever felt truly safe.

In the years since, the boys have flourished. Safe, loved, and finally free from the fear of losing the family they had come to call their own, **they continued to grow in ways once thought impossible.** Ultimately, their biological parents relinquished their rights, securing the boys' future.



On March 21, 2024, the moment they had fought so hard for finally arrived. The adoption was officially finalized, recognized by the State of Kansas. In a courtroom filled with emotion, the judge commended the couple's dedication, acknowledging the incredible fight they had endured.

This family's journey is a testament to the power of love, perseverance, and the unwavering support of Ballard. **Because Ballard never gave up on them, they never had to give up on each other.** Today, they are forever grateful and encourage others to continue believing in the organization that helped make their family whole.

SOMOS



LAWRENCE



SOMOS Lawrence ha permitido que el Centro Ballard sirva a cientos de hogares a los que no podríamos servir sin su apoyo. Las barreras lingüísticas son reales, las barreras culturales son reales, y nos sentimos muy honrados de que este grupo impulsado por voluntarios aborde estas barreras a nuestros servicios que cambian la vida.

SOMOS Lawrence has allowed the Ballard Center to serve hundreds of households we would not be able to serve without their support. Language barriers are real, cultural barriers are real, and we are so honored to have this volunteer driven group address these barriers to our life-changing services.

Misión: ‘Somos Lawrence’ aboga para que la comunidad hispanohablante de Douglas County disponga de acceso eficiente y culturalmente informado a la variedad de servicios disponibles en nuestra región.

Visión: Contribuir a una comunidad segura, estable y atenta a la realidad económica, social y cultural de vecinos cuya primera lengua no es el inglés, y con atención especial a la realidad de l@s vecin@s hispanohablantes de Douglas County. Participamos en una variedad de iniciativas para superar, entre otras, las barreras lingüísticas, culturales, burocráticas y/ o económicas que impiden el acceso equitativo a servicios en nuestras comunidades.

BALLARD VOLUNTEERS 2024 WRAPPED



**TOTAL HOURS
SERVED:**
19,351

**\$648,065
VALUED
IMPACT**

AWARD WINNING SERVICE

*Ballard is incredibly proud of the 2024 Galluzzi Volunteer of the Year **Kim Rack**. Named in honor of the late Wallace Galluzzi, this award celebrates the outstanding achievements of Douglas County volunteers while showcasing exceptional volunteerism as an important way that individuals can make positive impacts in their community.*

***Kim is an integral part of Ballard's core volunteer team**, providing excellent front desk support, amazing donor gifts and recognition development, and directs Ballard's art program with our early childhood education students (ages 2-5).*

POURED HEART AND HUSTLE INTO

- **Administration**
- **Kitchen**
- **Pantry Services**
- **Board/Committees**
- **Community Special Projects**



KIM RACK

HEROES

AMONG US

Jane Wegner



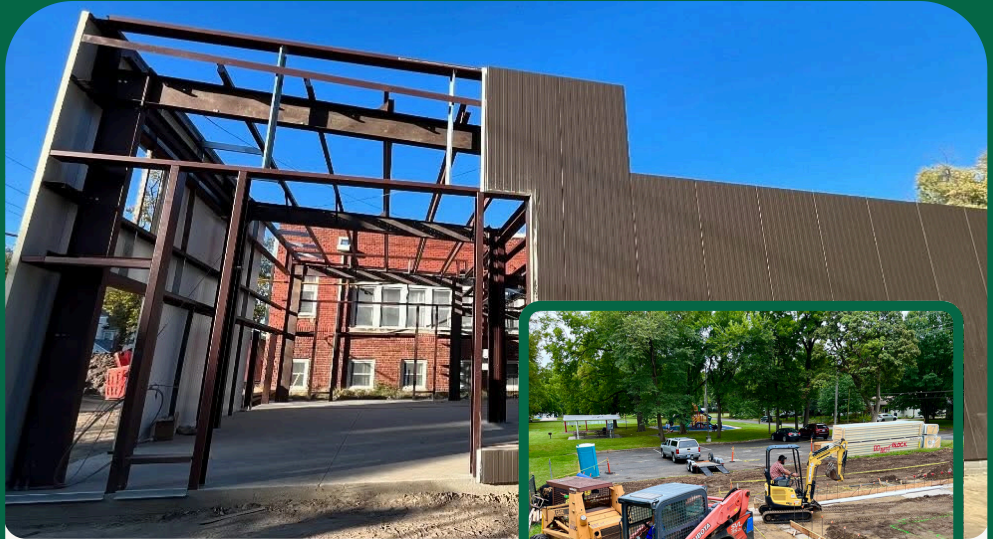
Jane is a wonderful, caring, skilled, and hardworking volunteer who has been delivering extraordinary classroom support for Ballard's Early Childhood Education Program since Fall of 2024. Jane has over 30 years of outstanding experience as a licensed Speech-Language Pathologist, responsible for evaluating and treating patients with language and speech impairments or disorders. Jane is a former University of Kansas (KU) Professor of Speech Language and the Director of KU's Schiefelbusch Speech-Language Hearing Clinic before honorably retiring in 2021. Jane has a passion for serving others and is a long-standing and proud member of the Lawrence Sertoma Club, a civic-minded organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for those at-risk or impacted by hearing loss.



Sarah Campbell

This incredible woman has been volunteering at Ballard for a decade now. She has saved our agency thousands of dollars in paid staff time, doing things that only an incredibly skilled volunteer could do for us. From running our front desk, to providing follow-ups for families we helped escape crisis, to setting up every barrel drive partners for our pantry. You know those big orange and blue barrels out in the community you see each month? Sarah leads this life-changing work, ensuring over 8,000 households that rely on Ballard's community pantry each year have access to food, clothing, and basic life necessities.

Ballard is very proud to share that Sarah is the 2024 recipient of the Brad Finkeldei Hero of the Year Award, this is well-deserved! So much so that we recruited Sarah for Ballard's own AmeriCorps Program operating through 2025!!



Building a Strong Foundation for the Future

Organizational Growth

2024 marked a major milestone in the Ballard Center's history with the launch of our long-anticipated pantry addition and renovation project. On March 28, 2024, we celebrated the official groundbreaking alongside **Kansas Governor Laura Kelly**, ushering in a new era of expanded services for families in Douglas County.

At the center of this 1,800 sq. ft. expansion is our new trauma-informed pantry space, designed to provide a more dignified, accessible experience for families facing food insecurity. This addition will significantly enhance our ability to serve the community with compassion and care.

Additional features of the expansion include:

- A dedicated donation sorting and organizing area for volunteers and staff
- Confidential office spaces for case management and crisis assistance programs

These improvements will centralize all Family Stabilization services, increasing efficiency and impact for those we serve.

We extend our deepest gratitude to C.T. Design and Development, Kanmoco, and our generous community of supporters. Your continued belief in our mission is turning this vision into reality — and laying the foundation for generations of stability and hope.



AmeriCorps



KANSAS VOLUNTEER COMMISSION

SERVICE STARTS HERE

Organizational Growth

In 2024, The Ballard Center is very proud to announce that our life-changing organization was selected by the Kansas Volunteer Commission (KVC) to receive a **2024-2025 AmeriCorps Subgrantee planning grant award**. We are incredibly thankful to be awarded this AmeriCorps grant because it directly allows us to operate our very own onsite AmeriCorps Kansas program that focuses on helping to alleviate food insecurity in Douglas County, KS.

We have successfully recruited and employed the following six outstanding and very civic-minded AmeriCorps members:

| **Jill Hutchins** | **Lisa Roggenkamp** | **Sarah Campbell** | **Solie Edison** | **Tracy Yang** |
Zachary Krehbiel |

This is an incredible accomplishment for our grassroots nonprofit because it took approximately 18 months of strategic planning, meeting program requirements, and strong grant writing capabilities.



THE TIME IS **NOW**

Ballard's Living Wage Initiative



The Ballard Center is proudly celebrating 60 years of delivering high quality early childhood education and need-based services to children and families in need within Douglas County, Kansas communities. To celebrate, Ballard seeks to become the **very first Early Childhood Education program (Preschool) in Lawrence, Kansas** offering truly affordable childcare alongside a living wage for our hardworking educators.

In 2024, the statewide average for an early childhood educator equated to only \$11 per hour. We are actively working on changing that as our education team has always put themselves on the front lines of the most extreme cases of behavior, trauma, and abuse.

Together, we can pay our early childhood educators at the Ballard Center a living wage without raising a single cent of tuition for children and families enrolled in our award-winning education program.

\$19/HOUR
(Living Wage in
Douglas County)





NORTH LAWRENCE HAS

DRIVE

AS BALLARD GROWS IN CAPACITY AND SERVICE TO OUR COMMUNITY, WE ALSO WANT TO TAKE A MOMENT TO BRAG ABOUT OUR AMAZING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS RIGHT HERE IN NORTH LAWRENCE, THE MOST BEAUTIFUL NEIGHBORHOOD ON EARTH TO US.



CHANGING LIVES *Gala*

On June 7, 2024, over 400 guests convened at the Jayhawk Club and showed Ballard just how much this community supports their life-changing work by donating an astounding total of \$408,280!! The audience was charmed by the Ballard Children, moved by the Gala speakers, and they raised their paddles high!

Thank you to everyone who reminded Ballard that **if we stick together, truly anything is possible!**

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ballard center

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