



# ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024



*Transforming Lives*



*Supporting children, families, and adults since 1888*

A Picture of Transformation

It’s a pleasure to share a few highlights from this past year with you, our supporters who help make them possible. We hope what you see in this report is a picture of transformation.

At a time when an increasing number of our neighbors feel divided or disconnected, we are reaching out to include more children, adults, and families in our circle. From schools to group homes, foster homes to counseling offices, enCircle staff and caregivers create a sense of belonging. And a sense of belonging is a first step toward a transformed life.

*For students who have experienced challenges in public schools,* our Minnick Schools’ educators help them find new ways to learn and interact with others. During the ‘23-‘24 year, we opened a new school in Grundy and prepared to open a new school in Lynchburg this fall, helping more children know that they belong in school and can achieve academic success.

*For adults with developmental disabilities,* a sense of belonging means a comfortable home like our own, with daily care and support and a chance to participate in community life. In the past year we have opened new Family Care Homes, as well as prepared to operate our second group home in Northern Virginia, this one in partnership with Arlington County.

*For children who cannot live with their own families due to abuse and neglect or migration to a new country,* our foster families and staff provide a warm welcome, a nurturing family environment, and necessary medical and therapeutic services. Our Treatment Foster Care program has grown, and we now serve unaccompanied immigrant children in both our Richmond and Tidewater programs.

With your help, we are reaching out to our neighbors, walking alongside those who need extra support. Working together, lives are transformed.

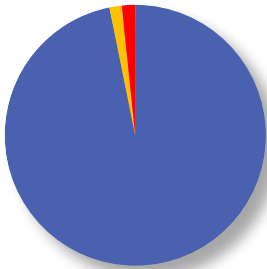
Thank you.



Financials 2023 — 2024

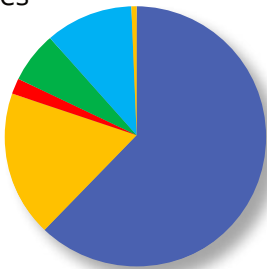
REVENUE

- State & local reimbursement for services  
\$55,361,380
- Fundraising contributions  
\$867,442
- Investment and other income  
\$941,547
- TOTAL REVENUE**  
\$57,170,369



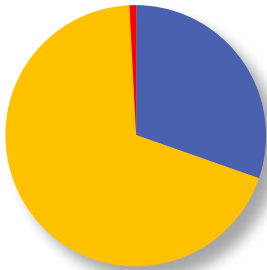
EXPENSES

- Developmental Services (VA and WV)  
\$36,113,808
- Minnick Schools  
\$10,476,653
- Treatment Foster Care, Adoption & Community-Based Services  
\$1,132,210
- Immigration & Refugee Services  
\$3,697,061
- Administrative Support  
\$6,294,384
- Development  
\$377,820
- TOTAL EXPENSES**  
\$ 58,091,936



FUNDRAISING

- Individuals  
\$263,212
- Corporate/Foundation grants  
\$597,011
- Church  
\$7,219
- TOTAL FUNDRAISING**  
\$ 867,442





# COUNSELING

## Holding Space

EnCircle counselors are holding space for communities that tend to be underrepresented in the mental health arena. Counselor Ebony Mack has experienced an increase in Black LGBTQ+ clients. She is a sought-after therapist, partly because of her understanding of cultural norms, media, and experiences shared by the Black LGBTQ+ population.

"I am very familiar with the art, TV shows, and situations they are referencing, so it just helps the conversation flow smoothly," Ebony explained. "I feel connected and comfortable with them."

Ebony feels the increase in counseling services to this particular group can be attributed to more people feeling comfortable with who they are and recognizing the need for guidance in their mental health journey. It's a positive, proactive approach.

"I recognize that this group doesn't have many affirming spaces," Ebony said. "Giving them someone they can connect with and work with is very rewarding." ♦



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### Minnick Schools

- 248 students served
- 8 students returned to home schools
- 5 students graduated
- 57 community engagement activities

### Developmental Services

- 257 people supported in Family Care Homes
- 61 people supported in Group Homes
- 26 people participated in Day Support
- 86 people received Skilled Nursing services

### Immigration & Refugee Services

- 84 families participated in Safe Release program to be able to sponsor unaccompanied children
- 99 families received counseling and support through CARE for Newcomers program
- 505 children and teens supported through Home Study Post Release Services program
- 43 children reunited with families/sponsors through Transitional Foster Care

### Counseling

- 188 children and adults served
- 7 military families assisted
- 17 LGBTQ+ clients served
- 77 Medicaid clients served

### Treatment Foster Care

- 17 children supported in Treatment Foster Care
- 2 adoptions
- 6 families received Visit Coaching Services
- 59 families participated in Post-adoption Case Management

# IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE SERVICES

## The Journey

For an immigrant child, the journey from the home they've known to the United States can be long and filled with uncertainty. Many report not knowing where they'll sleep, not knowing whom to trust and, oftentimes, not even knowing if they'll have another meal.

"People just don't realize how hard these children's lives are in their own countries," said Rhaisa Lopez, a medical coordinator with enCircle's Transitional Foster Care team, a group that works to provide a safe environment for immigrant children as they await placement with a relative already living in the U.S. or a foster family. "For these young children, their situation has to be severe enough that it's worth taking the risk."

That was the case for one little boy who arrived at enCircle's Richmond facility from South America at the age of seven. While most children stay at the center for about a week, this young one stayed for a little more than a month, which gave the Foster Care Team plenty of time to get to know him.

"At first, it was hard," said teaching assistant Meybelin Galdamez. "He refused to eat, hid under tables and wouldn't cooperate with a medical examination. It can be frustrating, but you have to realize you're working on their time."

Eventually, a certain level of trust developed, and the young boy began to flourish.

"I think he just learned that he could be a little boy," said enCircle Clinician Roxana Amundsen. "He'd been through a lot in his short life, and it took time for him to realize he was in a safe place where he could be himself."



As for his teachers, his progress provided them with a sense of accomplishment.

"It's a great feeling to see those changes, because it lets you know that what you're doing is working," said Galdamez. "Seeing him improve, we were all able to look at it and say, 'We did that!'" ♦

*During enCircle's first year of providing Transitional Foster Care, the team of staff and foster parents supported 43 children making the journey to find relatives in the United States.*

## enCircle CHAMPIONS AWARD

The newly established **enCircle Champions Award** honors people, businesses, and church families that provide dedicated support to the organization's mission to make the world a more loving place.

During the 2023-24 fiscal year, a special thank-you and congratulations were extended to the following:

Individual Donor: **David Pruett**, retired CFO for enCircle  
Business Partner: **Synergy Technical**



# TREATMENT FOSTER CARE

## A Transformed Life

Kayla was known as a runner, not in the athletic sense, but one who runs as a means of escape. At age 14, Kayla was placed in a foster home. She ran away. At a friend's persuasion she turned herself in, but that led to time in detention until they could find a new placement. That's when Shirley Smith, a foster parent with enCircle, received a call and opened her home to a frightened teenager, now wearing an ankle monitor.

"Keep a close eye on her, she's going to run," was the recurring phrase from Kayla's social workers. Shirley understood her history and knew Kayla wasn't interested in finishing high school. It was a fair warning, but Shirley saw something more.

Kayla was set to enroll in Nandua High School on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, but she wasn't interested. She was satisfied getting her GED. Still, Shirley countered, showing Kayla how many credits she had already earned and how close she was to graduating. It took some convincing, but Kayla agreed to give high school another try.

The first year was admittedly "shaky," according to Shirley, as they worried that she may run again. Instead, Kayla began to make friends, attend church, and even took on a paid internship as a teaching assistant at Nandua Middle School.

"It was a complete turnaround," Shirley said. "She was social, getting good grades, and was more active. She was not the same Kayla."

Her transformation continued as she started a new job, opened her own savings account, and graduated from high school.



"I was so proud of her," Shirley said. "You could tell she was happy holding her diploma and felt good that she graduated. I just cried, knowing how far she had come."

Kayla explained that all she wanted was a normal teenage life where she could learn and grow, and Shirley understood that. Shirley gave her the space to get involved in the community, be with her friends, and ride horses again.

"I've learned from my mistakes," Kayla said. "I understand now that I don't have to run away from my problems. I can talk through them and continue to grow as a person."

Kayla is now hoping to get into a certified nursing assistant program at a local community college. Knowing there is a waitlist, her back-up plan is to get her driver's license and save money for a car so she can commute to Tidewater Community College in Virginia Beach. Then, she wants to transfer to Old Dominion University and pursue a career in nursing, particularly geriatrics. Since she was a little girl, she has wanted to help older people.

For a girl who didn't think school was for her, Kayla stayed the course. From the real challenges of growing up, she did not run. ♦

### ENCIRCLE'S FOSTER CARE PROGRAMS AND SERVICE AREAS

**Treatment Foster Care** • Provides services for children/teens in Virginia's Foster Care system who have been removed from their home because of abuse and/or neglect. *(Richmond, Tidewater)*

**Transitional Foster Care** • Provides services for immigrant children seeking relatives in the U.S. Placement is temporary, from two weeks to two months, with the goal of uniting them with their family or sponsor. *(Richmond)*

**Long Term Foster Care** • Provides services for immigrant children who are unable to be placed with relatives or sponsors. These children typically remain in care until they are 18 years old. *(Tidewater)*

# DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

## You're Welcome

The words "You're welcome" naturally follow a "Thank you." In this instance, however, "You're welcome" came first. Those may not have been the exact words spoken, but the feeling was certainly conveyed. "You're welcome." Meaning, I welcome you — I've been looking forward to seeing you.

It wasn't about what was being delivered. Not at all. It was about the person making the delivery. And that person was one of the participants in enCircle's Lynchburg Day Support program who chose to spend the morning volunteering for the Meals on Wheels program.

The meal recipients were greeted with Marquitta's sweet voice, Ed's kind eyes and Jasmine's stunning smile. Immediately, they had received much more than a meal and they knew it.

"Even more than this meal, I look forward to seeing you all," said one of the Meals on Wheels participants as she waved to each one in the group. "All of you are a thrill."

Getting out in the community and helping others is what the Lynchburg Day Support participants say they enjoy the most.

"They quickly help each other and anyone else they see," explained Brinda Harris, Direct Support Professional, who was assisting them with the deliveries. "They know how to turn even a bad day into a good one."

Brandon and his Direct Support Professional, Breon, enjoyed a day at Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, thanks to **Julie's Abundance Project**, a fund created to open doors for opportunities and experiences that may not otherwise be possible.



"It's all about working together. Right, Marquitta?" Brinda asked. "Right!" was the quick and enthusiastic response. "I like helping because my family taught me to treat people the way I want to be treated," Marquitta adds.

No wonder they are earnestly welcomed. They bring so much more than food. They bring joy. ♦





## A Good Cause

Providing shelter from a brutal winter or a scorching summer is kind, especially when it's for a vulnerable animal, like a dog. And kindness came easily for students at Wytheville Minnick who were asked to paint doghouses to be given to families who could not afford one. There would be no compensation for their effort, but the students knew they had already been paid. Their hearts were fully engaged, and their ideas were creatively flowing before they ever picked up the first brush.

Kindness was a given. It was the paint colors, trim, door emblems, and bedding types that were in question. But what they thought the dogs might like best... well, that was always their answer. Compassion guided their work. They were thrilled to be a part of what they called "a good cause."

"I like helping puppies with no home," said Kody, an 11th grader at Wytheville Minnick. "Now they'll have their own place. It makes me happy to make them happy."

This collaboration between Wytheville Police Department, Animal Control and Lowe's invited local high school students to build the doghouses before the Minnick students painted them. The project tackled a community issue in a positive way.



"Our intent was to give people a solution (a doghouse), rather than a ticket for not sheltering their pet," said Wytheville Animal Control Officer Isaac Diamond.

The project was one of several for Minnick's Career and Technical Education class. They have also started a car wash business, visited a local barbershop, learned about the job search process, and built a storage shed for the school. This same shed was used to store the doghouses throughout the painting process.

Bill Sutherland, then Wytheville Minnick's principal, said this would be an ongoing project for the students, and they intend to provide hands-on assistance at the shelter. He considers it an opportunity to develop job skills and get involved in the community.

"It's nice to help people or animals in need," said Noah, an 11th grader at Wytheville Minnick. "It makes me feel really good about myself." ♦



To her teachers: "Thank you, from the deepest part of my heart, for all you do and the sacrifices you make." To her fellow students: "I can't wait to see you in the adult world one day. You all are amazing."

*Miriam Kelly, 2024 Minnick graduate*

MINNICK LOCATIONS: Roanoke • Lynchburg • Grundy • Wise  
Bristol • Harrisonburg • Wytheville



Lutheran Family Services of Virginia, doing business as enCircle, is a proud mission partner of the Virginia Synod of the ELCA.

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Roanoke, VA 24018



You are the difference for the children, teens and families served by enCircle. In the midst of challenges, they find essential information, support and hope, basic ingredients we all need to live full, abundant lives. Your participation in events, financial and in-kind gifts, service projects and just your words of encouragement make our world a more loving place. No matter your contribution, you are helping transform lives. We see it every day in children's smiles, parental relief and student success.

If you have not done so, we hope you will take just a moment to visit our website at [enCircleAll.org](https://enCircleAll.org) and follow us on your favorite social media platforms. You will find pictures, stories and videos that beautifully illustrate the special work we do together. Thank you for being a part of our enCircle family.

*For quick access to our online donation page, scan this code.*



For more information on ways to give, please call (540) 562-8477, email [philanthropy@enCircleAll.org](mailto:philanthropy@enCircleAll.org), or you may continue your support by visiting [enCircleAll.org/donate](https://enCircleAll.org/donate).

Lutheran Family Services of Virginia, doing business as enCircle, is a proud mission partner of the Virginia Synod of the ELCA. EnCircle is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.