



hephzibah heartbeat

NEWS FROM HEPHZIBAH CHILDREN'S ASSOCIATION

Helping children thrive and families flourish since 1897

SUMMER 2017

Hephzibah Welcomes NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we enter our 120th year of promoting the safety, health and happiness of children and families, we are thrilled to announce the appointment of **Merry Beth Sheets** as Hephzibah's new executive director.

"Merry Beth Sheets' experience, compassion and savvy will ensure that Hephzibah continues to thrive," says Tom Yates, president of Hephzibah's Board of Directors. "Ms. Sheets is a leader who has dedicated her career to helping children and others in need. Under her leadership, Hephzibah will continue to enhance the safety and well-being of children while preserving the dignity of parents and families."

Sheets began her service as executive director on June 30, after the retirement of Mary Anne Brown, who enhanced the lives of thousands of children and families during her 40-year tenure at the helm of Hephzibah Children's Association.

Prior to joining Hephzibah, Sheets served as executive director of Rosecrance, Inc., a private, not-for-profit provider of substance abuse and behavioral health services in Illinois, Wisconsin and Iowa. In this position, she led the startup of a 30-bed recovery home and outpatient treatment center in Lakeview.

Previously, she served as vice president of clinical services and quality assurance at Pillars, a nonprofit provider of mental health and social services in Chicago's western suburbs, and managed behavioral health services for Presence Health. She holds a bachelor's degree in juvenile justice and delinquency prevention and a master's degree in behavior analysis and therapy from Southern Illinois University.

Throughout her career, she has worked with children, adolescents, adults and families—as well as individuals with severe developmental disabilities—in a variety of social service settings. She has managed a comprehensive array of programs, including specialized foster care, group homes, a respite/crisis center, outpatient clinics, residential and housing programs and prevention programs.

"Hephzibah is recognized throughout the state of Illinois for the strength and depth of its programs, and for its experienced, dedicated staff of child welfare professionals," says Sheets. "It is my great honor to be a part of this remarkable team.

"This is a turbulent and uncertain time," she adds. "While demand for our services is growing, we must address continued funding threats and budget challenges. I am excited to be in a position to harness the collective creativity, ingenuity and passion of Hephzibah's staff, auxiliaries and volunteers as we continue to fulfill our mission of helping children thrive and families flourish in the decades to come." ♥



Hephzibah Executive Director Merry Beth Sheets



upcoming events

AUG
7

Foster Parent Information Session

Monday, August 7

6 to 8 p.m.

Want to know more about foster care and how it works? Attend this information session to learn about the joys and challenges of foster parenting.

Contact Margeret Motto at mmotto@hephzibahhome.org to register.

SEPT
11

Volunteer Information Session

Monday, September 11

6 to 7 p.m.

Interested in becoming a Hephzibah volunteer? See how you can enrich the life of a child in need at our September information session.

Contact Hannah Weigel at hweigel@hephzibahhome.org to register.

DEC
6

Save the Date Bring-a-Gift Party

Wednesday, December 6

6 to 10 p.m.

Kick off the holiday season with friends and family and help make the holidays merry for Hephzibah's kids. Bring a new toy or a gift card for a child in need.

MARCH
3

Save the Date Heart of Gold Ball

Saturday, March 3

6 p.m. to midnight

Join us for our annual gala and enjoy spectacular skyline views, delicious food and drinks, unique auction prizes and more.

Find out more at hephzibahhome.org.



Davion Talbert will play Division II football at Lincoln University.

Ready to TACKLE THE FUTURE

Davion Talbert's journey from foster care to higher education

WHEN DAVION TALBERT FIRST ARRIVED AT HEPHZIBAH HOME in 2007, he was a frightened eight-year-old with an uncertain future.

What a difference a decade can make. This summer, the Oak Park River Forest High School graduate is heading to Lincoln University in Missouri, where he'll be playing Division 11 football on an athletic scholarship.

Talbert's extraordinary achievement comes as no surprise to Hephzibah staff members, who watched him grow from a boy struggling to overcome his early hardships into a self-assured young adult with a promising future.

"Davion has such incredible resilience," says Diagnostic Treatment Center Supervisor Reena Hilton. "When he lived at Hephzibah, his jokes and songs always made our days brighter. He has overcome so many obstacles to achieve this goal."

Talbert still remembers the moment when he dared to give voice to his dream of a future in football. "I was playing with Pete, my primary Hephzibah staff member," he recalls, "and I told him that I wanted to play football."

Later, when Hephzibah foster parents Gail and David Hibbler welcomed the aspiring athlete into their home and their hearts, they encouraged him to hold fast to his dream. Buoyed up by their belief in him, he joined the Oak Park River Forest Little Huskies Youth Football program—and the rest is history.

Although his studies and successful high school career as a wide receiver kept him busy, Talbert still found time to give back by mentoring the children in Hephzibah's group homes.

With only 10 percent of all foster children continuing on to college after high school (compared to a national average of 66 percent), Davion is beating the odds. The first member of his biological family to attend college, he is contemplating a major in civil engineering. "I like designing things, and I like critical thinking," he states.

"Davion has always worked hard and advocated for himself," notes Gail Hibbler. "At our daughter's college commencement ceremony five years ago, Davion leaned over to my husband, David, and asked, 'Dad, do you think I can do this someday?'"

As Talbert heads off to college, he'll be taking many of the lessons that he learned at Hephzibah with him. "My experiences at Hephzibah made me who I am today," he reflects.

Talbert has also had a profound impact on Hephzibah. "Davion is a role model," states Hilton. "His success story shows the other children in our group homes that they can be powerful and resilient too." ♥

Summertime is SIBLING TIME! Camp HepSIBah brings brothers and sisters together

SIBLING BONDS are among life's most enduring connections. Yet 75 percent of all children in substitute care are separated from one or more of their siblings because many foster families don't have the room or the resources to care for sibling groups.

To help **mend these broken sibling bonds**, we have created **Camp HepSIBah**, an annual summer camp experience for siblings living in different group, foster or adoptive homes.

Thanks to the generous support of our

donors, approximately 75 of the children in our care will be heading to Camp HepSIBah this summer to experience the healing power of nature while sharing traditional camp activities such as rock climbing, archery, canoeing, cookouts and gathering around the campfire for songs and s'mores.

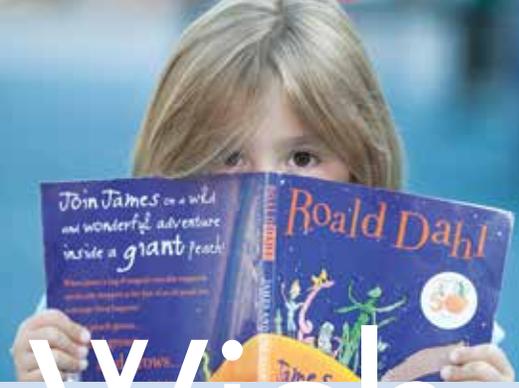
During this **four-day summer camp experience**, the children will have a chance to reconnect and form deep emotional bonds that will support and sustain them throughout their lives. These strengthened sibling relationships are crucial to a healthy sense of who they are



Camp HepSIBah gives siblings living in different group, foster or adoptive homes a chance to reconnect and create shared summer memories that will last a lifetime.

and where they came from.

The experiences that they share with their brothers and sisters at Camp HepSIBah can make a lifelong difference in the way that they view themselves and give them a **much-needed sense of connection and belonging.** ♥



Wish list

BACK TO SCHOOL

- ♥ Glue sticks
- ♥ Graph paper (notebooks or loose leaf)
- ♥ Kleenex
- ♥ Scotch tape
- ♥ Index cards
- ♥ Clorox wipes
- ♥ Post-it notes
- ♥ Highlighters
- ♥ Red pens
- ♥ Kids' scissors
- ♥ Colorful backpacks
- ♥ Dry-erase markers
- ♥ Earbud headphones
- ♥ Markers in sets of 8
- ♥ Colored pencil sets
- ♥ Composition books (not spiral notebooks)

GENERAL WISHES

- ♥ Summer pajamas (boys and girls, sizes 10-18)
- ♥ New boys sleeveless undershirts (sizes 8-14)
- ♥ Kitchen and bath washcloths
- ♥ Fidget spinners
- ♥ DVDs of newly released children's movies (G or PG)
- ♥ MP3 players or iPod Shuffles
- ♥ Shorts/leggings and shirts (boys and girls, sizes 10-18; new or lightly used, no rips, tears or stains)

To donate items, please contact Deb Poe at dpoe@hephzibahhome.org.

GIVE OUR KIDS SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT

Go to [smile.amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) and choose Hephzibah Children's Association as your charity. Every time you shop, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to Hephzibah, at no cost to you.

HEPHZIPALOOZAH!

A celebration of children and families

HUNDREDS OF HEPHZIBAH FANS turned out in force to celebrate Hephzibah's mission and bid a fond farewell to retiring executive director Mary Anne Brown at Hephzipaloozah in June.

The event—hosted by Hephzibah in collaboration with the Pleasant Business District—was an overwhelming success, thanks to the tireless efforts of more than 50 volunteers and generous sponsorships from the Carleton Hotel, Ebert Studios, Pillar Financial Advisors, Pleasant Business District, Pleasant Home Foundation and Vantage Oak Park.

Families with young children gathered in and around Mills Park for a carnival featuring games, activities, pony rides, cotton candy and two wildly popular bounce houses, while others headed to the festival on Marion Street to socialize, purchase food from local vendors, sample the brews from the beer truck and listen to live music. Ebert Studios documented the day with free portrait sittings.

At sunset, friends, community members and former Hephzibah Home residents gathered to pay an emotional tribute to Brown for more than 40 years of leadership at Hephzibah.

"This truly was a special day, and I'm so grateful for all of the good wishes," she told the crowd. "I am incredibly touched by all of the ways that everyone has made my last weeks on the job so memorable."

Hephzibah extends a special thank you to Hephzipaloozah event committee members Paul Beckwith of The Sachem Company, Jeff Ebert of Ebert Studios, Dennis Murphy of Poor Phil's restaurant, Heidi Ruehle-May of Pleasant Home and Katie Skoglund of Funkey Solutions for their leadership and generous support. ♥



Retiring Hephzibah Executive Director Mary Anne Brown and Oak Park Mayor Anan Abu-Taleb enjoy the festivities at Hephzipaloozah, a free, community-wide celebration of children and families.

SCENES FROM HEPHZIPALOOZAH



Board of Directors

Terry Brown
Sherry Carbery
Carol Dunning
Jennifer Ellis-Jackson
Lisa Emerson
Mark Fisher
John Ide
Kenna MacKinnon
John McConville
Beth Pecenka
Donna Rolf
Eric Sorensen
Byron Taylor
Cheryl ter Horst
Audrey Williams-Lee
Tom Yates

Executive Director

Merry Beth Sheets

Summer 2017

Hephzibah is going green!

Visit us at hephzibahhome.org to sign up for our e-newsletters.

To update your mailing preferences, please contact

Barb Krause at bkrause@hephzibahhome.org.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE in a Child's Life

Volunteer mentor opportunities available

EACH YEAR, Hephzibah's **Foster Care Program** helps nearly 100 traumatized children make a successful transition into loving foster and adoptive homes. To help ensure the success of each placement, we provide an extensive array of foster care support and stabilization services, including a **Volunteer Mentor Program**.

As a volunteer mentor, you'll be matched with a child in our foster care program. Once a match is made, you'll spend quality time together, engaging in developmentally appropriate activities such as reading, homework, games or art projects. As you get to know one another better, you'll also share community-based activities such as shopping, eating out at local restaurants, seeing a movie, visiting a museum or attending a sports event. We ask that our volunteer mentors make a minimum time commitment of one to hours, two or three times a month, for a minimum of one year.

"Children in foster care need love, support and constancy—and **mentors are members of the team that helps them heal and learn to trust again**," says Volunteer Manager Hannah Weigel. "Mentors can have a significant impact on a foster child's life by spending quality time with the child on a regular basis."

"My favorite part of mentoring is each time I have a 'first' with my mentee," says one volunteer mentor. "Each breakthrough brings me great joy: the first smile, the first hug—and that first expression of trust."

If you are interested in mentoring a child in need, please contact Hannah Weigel at hweigel@hephzibahhome.org or Foster Care Recruitment and Support Specialist Margaret Motto at mmotto@hephzibahhome.org. ♥

