



Community Connections — May 2026

Network Spotlight: Amethyst Place

Amethyst Place provides safe housing, healing, and hope to women and children working to break generational cycles of poverty, substance abuse, and trauma.



"It costs more to do nothing" was the bold theme of [Amethyst Place's](#) 2024 Impact Report. The societal savings made possible by the agency's life-improving programs are impressive, but they aren't the whole story.

Along with cost savings, the Amethyst Place approach to stabilizing families

also generates impressive numbers for substance abuse recovery, family reunification, and housing stability. From 2019 - 2024, the agency surpassed national averages in all three categories, validating its program strengths and testifying to participants' ability to turn adversity into triumph.



Meet Erin Hestand, Family Achievement Manager.

Erin (pictured here, far right) says the Amethyst Place team is focused on success from the moment a family moves in. That includes encouraging every family to help define what their success will look like.

[Read Erin's conversation](#)

Ready, Set, Heal! Helping Children Process Trauma Through Play Therapy



Children can't always verbalize or express to a therapist what's troubling them. But thanks to play therapy, they can often show how

Dr. Gil recently conducted training at the Kansas Association for Play Therapy Conference in Wichita, which was attended by CADA Caree

therapy, they can often show how trauma affects them. This adaptive way of expressing themselves provides children with a powerful yet familiar tool with which they can begin to heal.

Within the CMHF network, several agencies including MOCOSA, CAPA Cares, [KC Care](#), and [The Children's Place](#) utilize play therapy. "Play therapy techniques and interventions can be used with all ages, often lending avenues of healing for long-held childhood wounds in our adult clients," says Lin Orłowski, Assistant Director of Counseling-Child Services at [MOCOSA](#).

Just as children of all ages can benefit from play therapy, the play itself also takes different forms, including toys, games, and art. In a 2021 online interview, play therapy expert Dr. Eliana Gil described a simple balloon game she sometimes uses to break the ice with families who have been mandated to attend therapy.

which was discussed by [Sara Rosales](#) staff.

In the game Dr. Gil described, she tosses a balloon to a family that is initially reluctant to participate and encourages them to keep it afloat. As she adds more balloons, the family instinctively moves their bodies, breathes, and excitedly plays with the balloons. By the time she concludes the exercise, the family is more relaxed and receptive to their situation.

Play is a naturally occurring experience that allows therapists to meet a child where they are developmentally. Thanks to its versatility, elements of play therapy can be incorporated throughout a child's healing journey — from initial assessment to therapeutic intervention and even in combined approaches. Orłowski said she hopes and expects the field of play therapy to continue to grow.

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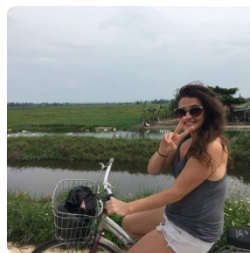
May is Mental Health Awareness Month



Depression is one of the most common mood disorders. But no one has to handle it — or any mental illness — alone. Follow or share the link below to a full spectrum of year-round NIMH mental health resources.

[Find additional NIMH mental health resources](#)

Staff Spotlight: Patty Robertson



What's your favorite KC restaurant?
The French Market

What book, show, or movie would you recommend?
Broadchurch (hidden gem)

What's a unique fact about you?
I know how to read palms

What are your pets' names?
Liam and MoMo

Patty is a Program Liaison with CMHF, where she focuses on strengthening grantmaking operations and supporting effective, community-centered funding strategies. She brings more than 15 years of experience in global philanthropy and nonprofit leadership, with a background in managing complex grant portfolios, designing systems and processes, and advancing initiatives that drive meaningful social impact at organizations such as World Wildlife Fund, Water.org, and SecondMuse.

Outside of work, Patty is usually chasing after her two young kids and keeping up with two energetic dogs, running mostly on caffeine and not quite enough sleep. She loves spending time with her family, sneaking in yoga when she can, and reading whenever a quiet moment appears (which is not often). She also

... enjoys gardening and goes into every season convinced this will be the year it all thrives. Her plants, so far, remain unconvinced.

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