



O'Connell
CHILDREN'S SHELTER

**"The future belongs to those who believe
in the beauty of their dreams."
-Eleanor Roosevelt**



Six O'Connell Youth Successfully Finish Their High School Careers

As the 2025-2026 school year comes to a close, O'Connell is very excited to announce that six of our young people are either graduating high school or completing the coursework to gain their GEDs. Unfortunately, the national average graduation rate for foster youth is only 50-60%. Because this is a significant step in preparing for future success into adulthood and because it's an especially amazing and difficult accomplishment for foster youth, getting a diploma is a milestone we *love to celebrate!*

If you have an interest in supporting the celebrations of these youth, please contact [Jamie](#) as we'd love to show them how proud the

community is of their tremendous accomplishment.

Hope Grows Here Campaign Update: Building the Future with Elsie's Place

We are so happy to announce that we recently completed our FINAL walk-through inspection of Elsie's Place, O'Connell's new Family Service Center, with Mar Lan Construction and Sabatini Architects. Next up, the BIG MOVE with the help of Professional Moving and Storage. Thanks to donated furniture from CEK Insurance and the wonderful work of Mar Lan and Sabatini, the new digs are going to be amazing. Keep your eyes peeled for the forthcoming announcement of our celebratory ribbon cutting anticipated in late July.

If you'd like to learn more about the next stages of construction--focused on youth spaces, please click below! For example, after the move is settled, O'Connell is thrilled to begin work on the Hope Center this summer. We will be scheduling tours of Elsie's Place and the Ranch property in late May, please reach out to [Maren](#) if you'd like to be included.



Elsie's Place, O'Connell's recently completed Family Service Center-- it's amazing how closely the final product matches the rendering from over a year ago!

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O'Connell was happy to partner with Mar Lan Construction and Sabatini Architects on the Elsie's Place project. Pictured here: Chris Nichols (Project Manager - Mar Lan), Torrez Dawson (Chief Operating Officer - O'Connell), Gina Meier-Hummel (Executive Director - O'Connell), Kelly Hockey (Site Superintendent - Mar Lan), Maren Ludwig (Development Director - O'Connell), Dan Sabatini and Laura Wilson (Architects - Sabatini Architects).

Meet Mackenzie! OCS Truancy Program Coordinator



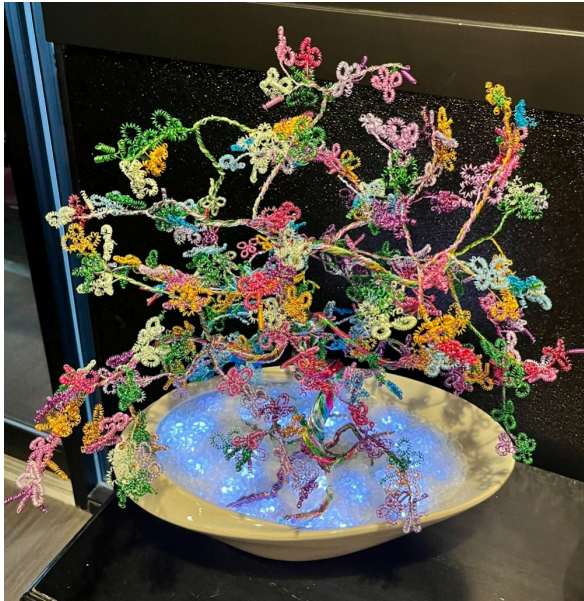
Keeping Track and Keeping Things On-track = Mackenzie's Plan for Success

Mackenzie, aka Mack to her teammates, joined O'Connell fresh out of grad school. First as a prevention case manager and now as the Truancy Program Coordinator, Mackenzie carries a caseload and leads a team of case managers who all work alongside their clients to figure out and resolve barriers to school attendance. Frequently, truancy is a symptom of a larger issue so Mackenzie and her fellow case managers have to be empathetic listeners and creative problem solvers while also setting high expectations to have success with their clients. She's excellent at time management and likes to plan her work weeks well in advance, being intentional about time spent with her clients and her teammates.

Mackenzie explains that her "favorite thing about working in O'Connell is that I get to help teenagers." Especially that she "**get[s] to help teenagers feel like they have a voice.**" She shares a specific example of working with a local teen who struggles with family issues, has had horrible life experiences recently, yet wants to graduate high school and go on to get a diploma or degree of some kind. Together,

Mackenzie and her client built a plan and are successfully working on getting his GED.

Outside of work, Mackenzie enjoys social activities, like hanging out with friends, going to concerts, and crafting. Diamond art is a favorite way for her to pass time. Just like her finished art projects, Mackenzie is a sparkling example of what dedication and hard work can produce.



Are you starting to think about the holidays, too?

The O'Connell team is already getting geared up for another amazing Festival of Trees.

Teaser: This year we celebrate a big milestone! Can you guess how many years this event has been in existence?

Be on the lookout for soon-to-come updates. Our call for trees kicks off in June!

SUMMER.

Summer, summer,
summer

It's like a merry-go-round.



Donate Today

JUST AROUND THE CORNER: SUMMER BREAK!

Help O'Connell Youth enjoy their summer by donating to support summer programming, outings and extracurricular activities.

Stay in the loop!

Follow us on social media to be the first to know about any changes or updates to our organization.



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