

SAINT FRANCIS MINISTRIES

# Hi Lites

SPRING/SUMMER 2019

NATIONAL  
ADOPTION  
DAY  
PG 8

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## Our Mission

Saint Francis, providing  
healing and hope to  
children and families.

Saint Francis Ministries publishes the Hi-Lites newsletter four times a year.

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# A Message From Fr. Bobby

SAINT FRANCIS SERVES BY BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS



**The Very Reverend Robert Nelson Smith**

*Dean, President, and CEO*

A good friend of mine says – “It’s all about relationships.” He’s right, I believe that. It helps me know that our vision, “to transform lives and systems in ways others believe impossible” is possible. Although the means by which we achieve this vision may vary, everything we do is rooted in our fundamental mission to provide healing and hope to children and families. Everything.

Most often our efforts involve direct service to at-risk children and families, through programs like foster care, family preservation, and adoption. In this issue, you’ll read about our National Adoption Day celebrations and how two children found a forever family with Kody and Melanie Beltz. You’ll also hear how we commemorate National Foster Care Month by celebrating and honoring our foster and kinship families in Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and Texas. Our appreciation event at the Kansas State Fair has become a popular Saint Francis tradition.

Also, in this issue we discuss our efforts to help reduce the number of children entering foster care by helping states and cities implement the Family First Prevention Services Act - and how we’re now working with the State of Arkansas to provide

15 counties with Family Centered Treatment services. Saint Francis Ministries has always believed that strong families make children’s lives better, so we’re doing everything we can to help families in crisis heal and find wholeness.

As a ministry that holds tight to its genesis story, Saint Francis has always enjoyed a close relationship with the Episcopal Diocese of Western Kansas, its people, and Christ Cathedral in Salina. Earlier this year, we joined with the diocese as it celebrated the consecration of a new bishop, The Rt. Reverend Mark Cowell, an occasion made more joyous by the presence of The Most Reverend Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. You can read all about it starting on page six.

As you can see, our success depends on building good relationships – with those we serve, other organizations and partners, and the Church. Since communication is key to healthy relationships, we have redesigned our website to better convey our message, our mission, and our ministry. Learn more about it in this issue.

We couldn’t accomplish our mission without you. Thank you for your support, your friendship, and for walking alongside us in service to God’s people.

**You remain ever in my prayers,**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fr. Bobby". The signature is stylized and cursive.

# Saint Francis Expertise Supports ‘Family First’

Earlier this year, The Very Reverend Robert N. Smith, dean, president, and CEO of Saint Francis Ministries, traveled to Little Rock to meet with Arkansas First Lady Susan Hutchinson at the Governor’s Mansion. The purpose of Fr. Smith’s visit was to discuss the mission of Saint Francis and ways in which the ministry might support the state’s efforts to implement Family First, new child welfare legislation that aims to reduce the number of children entering foster care.

Enacted February 2018, the Family First Prevention Services Act empowers states and cities to dedicate more resources to family preservation services by providing federal reimbursement for mental health services, substance use treatment, and in-home parenting skill training. Funding for Family First begins in October, so states, regions, and municipalities are busily developing programs in coordination with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) as the agency crafts policies and procedures with which to implement the Act. As a child and family services provider skilled in family preservation, Saint Francis Ministries also has a role to play in the planning and implementation process.

“Many of these states and regions struggle with implementation,” said Dr. Page Walley, president and chief public policy officer for Saint Francis. “So, we meet with them to discuss



*The Very Rev. Robert N. Smith, dean, president, and CEO of Saint Francis Ministries, and Susan Hutchinson, First Lady of Arkansas, meet at the Governor’s Mansion to discuss the mission of Saint Francis and the important work the ministry will soon be doing in the state on behalf of Arkansas children and families.*

different evidence-based practices and how they can be utilized, along with financing – because the states are responsible for 50 percent of the cost. By building relationships with state governments and regional offices of the federal DHHS, Saint Francis serves as both a resource for consultation as well as a provider.”

To start building those relationships, Fr. Smith sent letters to newly-elected governors in November, offering the nonprofit ministry’s expertise as a resource for crafting child welfare public policy and implementation of Family First.

Most recently, Dr. Walley met with child services professionals in Missouri to discuss ways Saint Francis can help the state with Family First logistics.

“We’re talking with those people providing mental health, substance use, and parent skills services - which are the three categories the new funds will cover - to see where they are with their understanding of the Act and how well their evidence-based practices comply with the requirements.

“So much of this work is based on relationships,” Walley added. “Marlo

Nash, Saint Francis’ national director of partnerships and policy, has contacts in Oregon made during her tenure as the policy director for Alliance for Strong Families and Communities. She helped us start a conversation with Oregon. Additionally, I have connections with leaders in Kentucky, New Mexico, South Dakota, and Arkansas which have enabled us to begin building relationships in those states as well.”

Those connections have paid off for children and families in Arkansas. The state recently awarded a contract to Saint Francis Ministries to provide intensive in-home family preservation services in more than a dozen counties as part of the state’s early adoption of Family First.

“Saint Francis is well-positioned, as a provider, consultant, or partner, to help other states and regions with implementation of the Act,” said Walley. “And we’re doing that one relationship at a time.”

**“Saint Francis is well-positioned, as a provider, consultant, or partner, to help other states and regions with implementation of the Act.”**



## Saint Francis now serving in Arkansas



Saint Francis Ministries has partnered with the State of Arkansas to provide Family Centered Treatment services for 15 counties in the state’s northern Ozark and Mississippi Delta areas, including the communities of Pocahontas, Mountain View, Melbourne, New Helena, Monticello, and Forrest City. Under the contract awarded by the Arkansas Division of Children and Family Services, Saint Francis will provide in-home family preservation services to families in crisis and facing removal of children from the home.

# Saint Francis Welcomes New Bishop



*Bishops from several dioceses attended the consecration of The Rt. Rev. Mark A. Cowell as the Sixth Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Western Kansas. Pictured with the newly installed bishop are, left to right, The Rt. Reverend Edward J. Konieczny, Diocese of Oklahoma; The Rt. Rev. Michael Hunn, Diocese of Rio Grande; The Rt. Reverend James Adams, Fourth Bishop, Diocese of Western Kansas; The Most Reverend Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church; Bishop Cowell; and The Rt. Reverend Michael Milliken, Fifth Bishop, Diocese of Western Kansas.*



*Other bishops in attendance included, from left, The Rt. Reverend Martin Fields, Diocese of West Missouri; The Rt. Rev. J. Scott Barker, Diocese of Nebraska; and The Rt. Rev. Larry Benfield, Diocese of Arkansas.*

*Top Left: President of the Saint Francis Foundation and Dean of Christ Cathedral The Very Reverend David Hodges serves as master of ceremonies.*

*Top Right: Saint Francis Ministries Dean, President, and CEO The Very Reverend Robert N. Smith greets guests at the reception following the consecration service.*

The Very Reverend David Hodges welcomed Episcopalians and invited guests from across the United States to Salina last November, where he served as master of ceremonies for a unique event. As chief development officer for Saint Francis Ministries and president of The Saint Francis Foundation, Fr. Hodges is already used to wearing multiple hats, but few might be aware that one of those hats is a biretta, the three-peaked cap often worn by deans. As the 18th dean of Christ Cathedral, Fr. Hodges manages the home church of the bishop of the Diocese of Western Kansas.

It was in that capacity that he organized the ordination and consecration of the diocese's sixth bishop, The Rt. Reverend Mark Cowell, which was led by The Most Reverend Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church. As such, Bishop Curry served as chief consecrator, but many will remember him as the person who delivered the sermon at the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle last year at St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle in the United Kingdom.

Assisting the Presiding Bishop as co-consecrators were The Rt. Reverend James Adams, Fourth Bishop of Western Kansas; The Rt. Reverend Martin Fields, Bishop of West Missouri; and The Rt. Reverend Michael Milliken, Fifth Bishop of Western Kansas and a former member of the Saint Francis Ministries board of directors.

# National Adoption Day

## KANSAS CHILDREN FIND LOVING, PERMANENT FAMILIES

Dozens of children were adopted in November during National Adoption Day celebrations organized by Saint Francis Ministries across Kansas. In Wichita alone, 34 children joined 21 forever families at the sixth annual Adoption Day event hosted by Saint Francis at Exploration Place. Emceed by Susan Peters, former local news anchor and founder of the non-profit Susan's Kids, the Wichita event was the culmination of more than 400 adoptions facilitated by Saint Francis in 2018.

"We've been celebrating National Adoption Day in Wichita for more than a decade," said Assistant Director of Adoption Justin Thaw. "We look forward to honoring those parents and siblings who welcome new brothers and sisters into their families on that day and on every other day of the year. It's always such a happy day, full of smiles and tears of joy."

Saint Francis offices in the West Region of Kansas also organized their own Adoption Day celebrations in Salina, Great Bend, and Hutchinson. As in the Wichita Region, judges, attorneys, and court personnel volunteered their time to help finalize adoptions for multiple children and families.

Of the nearly 400,000 children in foster care nationwide, more than 110,000 await adoption. Traditionally



*Judge Patrick Walters, center, finalized the adoptions of Landon and Bella Beltz during the sixth annual National Adoption Day celebration hosted by Saint Francis Ministries in Wichita.*

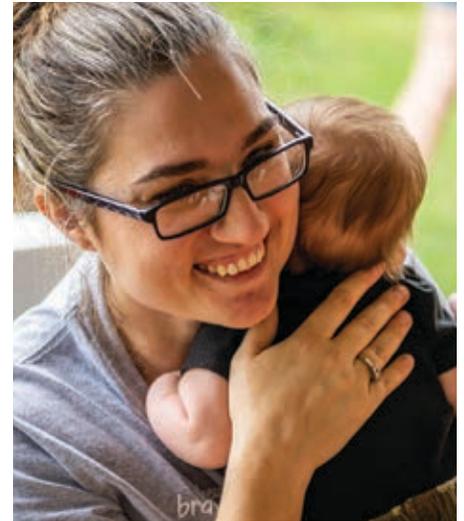
scheduled on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, National Adoption Day helps raise awareness about the need for adoptive parents and honors those who make room in their hearts for new sons and daughters. Saint Francis currently serves about 220 children who are still waiting to join a loving, permanent home.

"The need for adoptive families has never been greater," said The Very Reverend Robert N. Smith, Saint Francis president, dean, and CEO. "The primary qualifications for

prospective parents are an open heart and a loving spirit. Those who expand their families through adoption realize the pure joy of welcoming new sons and daughters into their lives. We pray these unions will be forever blessed and will inspire more families to open their hearts and homes to other children seeking a life-long family bond."

**To learn more about children in need of adoption, visit [www.SaintFrancisMinistries.org](http://www.SaintFrancisMinistries.org).**

# Saint Francis Honors Foster and Kinship Families



More than 440,000 children and youth are currently in foster care in the United States, so during the month of May, Saint Francis Ministries joined with other child services organizations around the nation to honor all the foster and kinship parents, clinicians, and social workers who work each day to find safe, secure, and loving homes for children in need.

Since 1988, when President Ronald Reagan issued a proclamation establishing it as National Foster Care Month, May has been set aside

as a time to acknowledge family services professionals and volunteers and to educate the public about the concerns of children in foster care.

Each year, Saint Francis goes a step further by sending thank-you gifts and letters of appreciation to our foster and kinship families in Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and Texas. Families in Oklahoma and Kansas also get the chance to attend appreciation

events in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and at the Kansas State Fair in Hutchinson.

This year's Foster Parent Appreciation Day at the Kansas State Fair will take place on Saturday, September 7. Inaugurated six years ago, it has become a popular tradition among foster families in Kansas and features a free t-shirt for foster parents, fair admission, and a barbecue lunch for the entire family.



Learn more about National Foster Care Month by visiting [childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth](http://childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth).

"It means that I get to be with somebody who loves me and cares about me."



## 'When You Meet Your Kids, You'll Know It'

Landon was the only child to walk through the Beltz door with luggage in his hand. He arrived at their Wichita home with his little red suitcase, packed and ready to leave again at a moment's notice. That had, after all, been the pattern up to now.

"He was very shy and reserved," said Melanie Beltz. "He didn't say much at first, but he was polite and helpful. I remember that he had a slip of paper with his grandmother's phone number on it. He kept it in his shoe, and that just about broke my heart."

Foster parents for more than three years, Melanie and her husband Kody have seen much that could wound a heart. They began foster care with the sole intention of fostering to adopt, but soon discovered that there were lots of kids in need of their immediate help. Besides, they'd just moved into a big house, and they had the room. So, they started taking in children in need of police protective custody (PPC). Some nights, six to eight kids might fill their house, ranging from infants to teens. Their best guess is that they've cared for around 300 children so far.

All the while, they waited and hoped for the opportunity to adopt. Like many, Melanie and Kody first sought an infant. Then, they began meeting the kids.

"In foster parent training, they told us that after age seven, most kids' chances of adoption are slim," said Kody. "That was hard to understand. Even at 18, most of us have more time ahead of us than behind us, and the idea that someone might be too old to belong to a family or to be loved just doesn't make sense. So, we decided we wouldn't limit ourselves to infants. And then, through PPC fostering, we met some really great kids, so we just kept bumping up the age."

Still, they waited.

"They told us in training that when you meet your (adoptive) kids, you'll

know it," said Kody. "They said it was like falling in love with somebody, and I didn't understand that at the time. I mean, there were kids along the way that we liked a lot and that we felt close to, but for one reason or another, it didn't work out. But when I met Landon, I knew what they were talking about. I felt like I'd known him forever."

Landon, 11, had been at the Beltz home for three days when Kody invited him to stay long-term. Landon hesitated, then said he felt he needed to move on.

"I told him that we understood," said Kody. "I said he deserved a home, and if it wasn't here that was fine."

That evening, the family prayed together that Landon would find a place to call home, a place where he could belong. Then they went to bed, fully expecting their Saint Francis worker to pick up Landon the next day and take him elsewhere. But, as Kody prepared to leave for work in the morning, Landon waited outside their bedroom door and asked to speak with him.

"Last night," he said, "you prayed that I would find a place to call home ... I think I already have."

Kody said he's never dialed a number so fast in his life as he called Saint Francis to tell their worker that Landon was staying put.

Three months later, the Beltzes fell in love with their other child.

"There was a lot in Bella's file that didn't sound good at all, a whole laundry list," said Melanie. "But I picked up this little blond girl who had her face painted up like a cat, and she just

looked up at me and said, 'Hi!', and it was the sweetest thing ever.

I thought, 'This can't be the girl they've described.' Anyway, we were only supposed to keep her for three days, and I figured we could handle that. But then, she and Landon got along so well that we asked her to stay. As it turned out, she was an easy sell.

"Actually, she was adamant about it. She said she loved her big brother, us, and everything about the house. She's a very loving girl, always has been."

"Bella's story is a good reason why we should never judge a book by its cover," said Kody. "Just because a piece of paper says something about a child, doesn't necessarily make it so. Have these kids had experiences that other kids their age haven't? Yes, absolutely. But they also have a lot to share and a lot of love to give. I'm here to tell you that it's worth the time and energy to get to know them. You'll be rewarded for it."

Last November, the entire Beltz family received their reward as the adoptions of Landon, now 13, and Bella, 10, were finalized at Saint Francis Ministries' National Adoption Day celebration at Exploration Place in Wichita. They followed it up with a trip to the trampoline park, something the kids had been looking forward to for a while.

Just like they'd been looking forward to finally finding their forever family. That's why the day is especially important to Landon and Bella.

"It means that I get to be with somebody who loves me and cares about me," said Bella. "And that cares about Landon, too."

# Help Support KidzKamp

This summer, about 70 children will gather in Salina for Saint Francis Ministries' annual KidzKamp, a residential camp experience created specifically for children in foster care. Thanks to KidzKamp, girls and boys ages 8-12 get a well-deserved break from strife, worry, and stress. In short, they can forget their adult-sized concerns and just be kids for three glorious sun-soaked days.

This year's theme is "One World, One Love", a nod to the programs and services Saint Francis provides to refugees in

Wichita and to children and families in the U.S. and Central America. Scheduled for June 21-23, the camp will offer a full slate of fun activities, including outdoor games and contests, arts and crafts, learning and skill-building sessions, a talent show and carnival, and a field trip to Kenwood Cove Aquatic Park in Salina.

No child is ever charged to attend KidzKamp. That's why Saint Francis relies so much on our friends and partners to help ensure that every child who wants to attend can.



Want to help? Simply visit [SaintFrancisMinistries.org](http://SaintFrancisMinistries.org) to donate online.



## How Else Can I Help?

Saint Francis relies on your support to continue our great work that includes:

- Providing living and job services to adults with intellectual and development disabilities
- Offering transition guidance for young adults as they age out of the foster care system
- Incorporating multiple therapies, including art, equine, and gardening, at Clover House, a residential program for girls who have survived sexual abuse
- Delivering in-home learning for families in crisis, on topics like nutrition, substance use, parenting, and budgeting

- Assisting in the resettlement of refugees who've fled persecution and violence in their home countries
- Helping families in Central America avoid the dangers that accompany severe poverty, such as sex trafficking, the risk of gang violence, and domestic abuse



Learn how you can help at [www.thesaintfrancisfoundation.org](http://www.thesaintfrancisfoundation.org).

# Salina West Offers Wide Variety of Programs



## Jerry Slaight

*Director of Saint Francis ministries' Salina West treatment facility*

Jerry Slaight joined the Saint Francis Academy in 1997, where he went to work as direct care staff in Ellsworth. More than 20 years later, he serves as director of Saint Francis Ministries' Salina West treatment facility, where he manages a staff of 178 social workers, therapists, and support personnel providing intensive clinical care to children and youth dealing with trauma and behavioral issues.

### Why is residential treatment so important to the mission of Saint Francis Ministries?

Because residential treatment began with Fr. Bob Mize, and our work continues his ministry. It supports our Trauma Systems Therapy and enables us to provide healing and hope to youth and families 24 hours a day.

### What are some of the treatments and programs Salina West provides?

We offer a wide variety of programs. Our therapists come from diverse backgrounds and bring a load of experience to help our youth. We provide crisis intervention and several therapeutic tools including Heart Group, chemical dependency groups, emotion regulation groups, and sexual abuse groups. We are also rolling out our Trauma Systems Therapy, which is a model used to help caregivers and clients identify past trauma events and respond to those events. Part of the TST process is helping clients discover their strengths and building supportive interventions around them.

### What do you think is the biggest misperception about your job?

People have told me, "I don't know how you do your job, I could not handle those kids." They think we just house them and that's it. We do so much more for them and expect a great deal from our staff.

### What do you find most rewarding about your work?

Keeping youth safe and providing them with a secure place to stay. It's satisfying when they get to go home and become successful, especially when they contact us to tell us how well they are doing.

### How has working with traumatized children at Saint Francis affected you?

It takes a certain type of person to want to work in our field. The youth we serve need both our unconditional love as well as our skills to provide the treatment and security they need. Spirituality plays a huge role in what we do. We begin each day with God, praying before each meal and with the youth, if they so desire. Prayer is essential to what we do.

### What would you most like people to know about Saint Francis and the children at Salina West?

That I look forward to coming to work every day and that if by the end of each shift, every child in our care feels safe, we have done our job.

# Saint Francis Recognized for Performance Excellence



*Saint Francis COO Tom Blythe, center, poses with Missouri Lt. Governor Mike Kehoe and Midwest Excellence Institute CEO Sherry Marshall at the Missouri and Kansas Quality Awards Banquet in Columbia, Missouri. Saint Francis Ministries was a 2018 award winner for performance excellence.*

The Midwest Excellence Institute (MEI) named Saint Francis Ministries a Tier 2 award winner at the 2018 Missouri and Kansas Quality Awards Banquet in Columbia, Missouri.

MEI is a not-for-profit organization that helps Missouri and Kansas businesses and nonprofits achieve performance excellence through the National Baldrige Performance

Excellence Program. The Baldrige system addresses seven components of performance that include among others, leadership, strategy, customer satisfaction, and results.

Participating organizations may apply for one of three tiers. Tier 1 meets basic requirements, Tier 2 addresses basic and overall criteria requirements, and Tier 3 responds to basic, overall, and multiple requirements. Saint Francis Ministries was one of five 2018 Tier 2 winners.

According to MEI CEO Sherry Marshall, award recipients are “industry role models, setting a standard for employee engagement, efficiency, and high customer satisfaction ratings.”

Chief Operating Officer Tom Blythe attended the banquet and accepted the award on behalf of Saint Francis.

## Saint Francis Unveils New Website

Now that Saint Francis has a new name and logo, it seems appropriate that the ministry have a new website as well. Earlier this year, Saint Francis Ministries unveiled a newly designed website: [SaintFrancisMinistries.org](http://SaintFrancisMinistries.org), which more fully reflects our modern mission of service to children and families in the United States and beyond.

What began more than seven decades ago as a ministry to troubled boys has become a ministry providing programs and services to boys and girls, adults

with intellectual disabilities, survivors of sex trafficking, refugees from violence and oppression, and at-risk families in six U.S. states and Central America. As a result, Saint Francis needed a more encompassing name, along with a new website with which to more fully engage the world.

“We designed our new website with an eye to ease of navigation, while ensuring that there’s ample information about each of our programs,” said Director of Marketing Vickee Spicer. “We wanted each



visit to the website to be an inviting, transparent, and pleasant learning experience.”

Visitors to the website can also access online versions of Hi-Lites, annual reports, news about Saint Francis Ministries, and profiles of foster, kinship, and adoptive families.

# 'Christmas for Kids' Delivers Gifts to Thousands of Saint Francis Children

Each year, Saint Francis Ministries provides more at-risk children with a joyful Christmas by ensuring that every child in our care receives a present under the tree. As the number of children we serve grows, so does the need. Thanks to you, our friends and donors, Saint Francis is able to meet that need. Your generosity made Christmas extra special for thousands of Saint Francis children and families in Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Texas, and Central America.

Christmas for Kids 2018 brought in more than \$160,000 in in-kind and monetary contributions that were then used to provide presents for children who might otherwise receive nothing during the holiday season. More than 7,000 of those children were from Kansas alone. Saint Francis also hosted Christmas parties for families and provided gifts for children in several Kansas communities, Oklahoma, and nearly 600 children in El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Guatemala. Children and families in Texas, Nebraska, and Kansas City also received presents and gift cards.

Every year, Christmas for Kids reminds us what we can accomplish when individuals, businesses, congregations, and organizations unite in the spirit of community to share our abundance with the most marginalized and vulnerable of God's children. Thank you for partnering with Saint Francis to bring joy into the lives of at-risk children.





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## Annual Report Now Available Online

At Saint Francis Ministries, we work hard to be faithful stewards of the earth's resources, as well as our own. That's why we have created a user-friendly, easily accessible version of our Annual Report that you can now view online anytime. To read any of our annual reports, simply visit [www.SaintFrancisMinistries.org/newsroom/annual-reports](http://www.SaintFrancisMinistries.org/newsroom/annual-reports).

If you still prefer a paper copy, please contact Cassee Cole, and we'll happily send one your way.

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