

community.

A publication of Shepherd Community Center



WINTER 2026

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The Future Begins at Birth

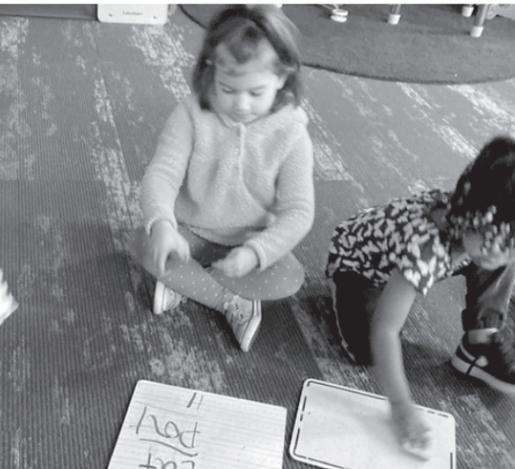
Over the past 40 years, Shepherd has been here – committed, loyal, passionate, and devoted to helping our neighbors break the cycle of poverty and transforming our community. In 2007, Shepherd introduced the Continuum of Care, a comprehensive set of programs that enable us to authentically connect and continuously engage with the lives of neighborhood children, teens, and their families. And that Continuum exists from cradle to career – and beyond **because the future begins at birth.**

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The Future Begins at Birth

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We know that babies grow and learn best when parents and caregivers provide affection, attention, and stimulation, along with good nutrition and proper healthcare. That's why Shepherd developed two essential programs - Project Jordan and Shepherd Community Early Learning Scholars - to support our youngest neighbors and their families from the moment a mother learns she is pregnant through the transition to school.



Me' Storytime helps my daughter to be around children her age and build community alongside me."

Shepherd Community Early Learning Scholars - formerly known as Shepherd Community Neighborhood Childcare at Minnie Hartmann - launched in 2020 to partner with working parents to provide affordable, safe, and loving childcare, but it is so much more than a daycare. This is an opportunity to grow alongside children from six-week-olds through Kindergarteners, teaching them self-efficacy, independence, confidence, love, and giving them hope to create a brighter future.

"When one of our 13-month-olds began practicing how to eat independently, it was messy. Now, that same child proudly wipes the table after snack time and helps hand out cups to classmates," says Diana Reed, Director of Shepherd Community Early Learning Scholars. "These are small steps that lead to big futures and children who believe they can. Our goal isn't just to teach, it's to empower each child to grow in confidence, curiosity, and compassion."

Both programs - as with all our Shepherd programming - instill a love and joy for learning, helping each child in our care develop the skills, education, and confidence they need to build a future of hope free from the cycle of poverty. **Because every child deserves a future, and that future starts at birth.**

Project Jordan, launched in 2007 with the belief that every baby needs and deserves loving, nurturing care to reach their full potential, teaches families how to develop and grow healthy parenting and developmental skills, something most parents have not had the opportunity to experience themselves. Project Jordan goes into our neighbors' homes to provide one-on-one mentoring and offers monthly events, classes, and fellowship for moms and caregivers at Shepherd. It's beyond education alone; it's helping our moms and caregivers know they have a village to care for and support them, too.

"Project Jordan has helped me a ton," said one Project Jordan mom. "I often suffer from depression and isolation alone with my daughter at home every day. So, getting to talk to and build community with other moms has helped a lot with my well-being. Mommy and



Watch a recent Shepherd LIVE sharing how Shepherd cares for our youngest neighbors



meet

Dr. Ashley Overley
board member

Dr. Ashley Overley first connected with Shepherd Community as volunteer in the late 2000s. So, when fellow Board Member and close friend Tim George invited her to join the Board in January 2025, she enthusiastically said "yes."

"I've always been impressed with how relational Shepherd is. Everything starts with loving their neighbors. As a psychiatrist, I know mental and physical health are deeply connected. Only about 20% of health outcomes in a community are determined by traditional healthcare services, while 80% are related to social determinants of health - food, education, childcare, and financial support. Shepherd understands this and is committed to doing that 80% work."

Dr. Overley hopes to use her experience to support Shepherd's mission for decades to come. "I want to ensure Jay has what he needs to pursue expanding Shepherd's capacity to love our neighbors well in a way that glorifies Christ."

Ashley and her husband, Matt, both physicians, live on the near Eastside with their two children. Since 2017, Ashley has served as CEO of the Sandra Eskenazi Mental Health Center. In her free time, she plays viola at Redeemer Presbyterian. Shepherd is deeply grateful for the passion and leadership Dr. Ashley Overley brings to the Board.

A Future of Hope.

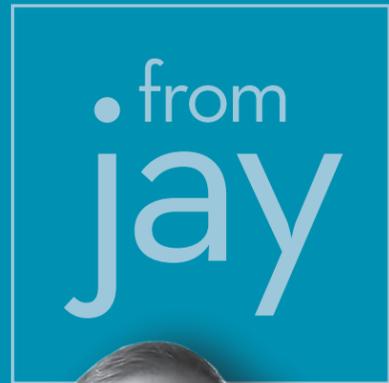
Shepherd Community believes every baby needs and deserves loving, nurturing care to reach their full potential. That's why Shepherd is working with our youngest neighbors to make a lifetime impact.

This investment begins before a child is born, partnering with moms-to-be to ensure they receive the care and support they need to give birth and raise a child. Project Jordan provides child development training, mother-to-mother fellowship, and mentoring. Run by a Shepherd employee who is also a young mother, Project Jordan is a unique program that creates a learning community where children are the beneficiaries. We aim to equip our mothers with the skills, support, and care they need to support their children's development and to be their first and best teachers.

We also partner with our neighborhood families through Shepherd Community Early Learning Scholars. From six-week-olds through Kindergarten, Early Learning Scholars supports our neighbors who work by providing a safe program that cares for their children and fosters a love of learning. Even our youngest infants' class works every day on foundational literacy, learning, and developmental skills for future success. This program is both unique and critical, as it employs many of our neighbors and offers training, certifications, and stable income to support their families and ensure long-term sustainability.

Whether through Project Jordan, Early Learning Scholars, or our Pre-School, Shepherd is helping our families know they have a village that cares for and supports them and their children.

Because every child deserves a future - a future full of hope and free from poverty.



Jay Height
Executive Director

Development

Lunch & Learns 2026: Poverty 101

Our 2026 Lunch & Learns will once again be a FREE 8-session journey into Shepherd's Poverty 101. Through research, authors,



perspectives, and 40 years of experience at Shepherd, Poverty 101 is an opportunity to understand poverty, why it matters, and the assets needed to break the cycle. **Every Lunch & Learn session will take place on the second Friday of each month (March - October 2026) from noon to 1:30 pm and will include a complimentary lunch. Please RSVP by March 1 at ShepherdCommunity.org/Poverty101 or contact Kolton Williford at koltonw@shepherdcommunity.org.**



Shepherd Christmas serves children around the world!

Did you know that families who shop at the Christmas Store make a \$5 donation for each child they shop for? Shepherd does not keep these funds; instead, they are distributed to nonprofit organizations and ministry partners worldwide. This year, the donations supported a church partner in Zagreb, Croatia, helping provide Christmas celebrations and share the message of hope found in Christ with Ukrainian refugees living there. This is just one way Shepherd families can give back and make an impact far beyond our neighborhood.

This Christmas, Shepherd served 2,600 neighborhood children through our Christmas Store and provided holiday food totes to more than 500 students. Thanks to our generous partners for providing toys, donations, volunteer hours, and food supplies to make the holidays a time of joy!

Volunteers

Volunteer to Make a Difference

After-School Homework Help: Assist elementary, middle, or high schoolers with homework, Mondays - Fridays from 3:30 - 4:30 pm. Pick days that work for your schedule.

After-School Elementary Clubs:

Teach elementary students (grades K-5) special skills or hobbies in a once-a-week enrichment club, Mondays - Fridays, 4:30 - 5:30 pm. Clubs could include

cooking, gardening, photography, Lego, survival skills, or other activities.

Neighborhood Support: From picking up trash to assisting with small repairs or landscaping, you can support our neighbors by using your skills and time. These opportunities can be scheduled in advance or on demand and are ideal for individuals, families, or small groups.



Be inspired!

Experience impactful stories of hope and inspiration!

Visit Today: UpliftIndy.org



Sign up for these volunteer opportunities and more at ShepherdCommunity.org/Volunteer

Give In-Kind to Shepherd



Needed Items

Study Bibles for Project Jordan moms • Band-Aids • Plastic Spoons and Forks • Post-It Easel Pad • Toilet Paper

Find more needed items at shepherdcommunity.org/give/critical-needs

Shepherd is a faith-based, non-profit organization established in 1985 with a simple but staggering goal: **to break the cycle of poverty** on the near Eastside of Indianapolis. Located centrally within the community it serves, Shepherd offers programs for children, teens, adults, and families. Our primary tools?

Education and love.



4107 E Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46201

317.375.0203

www.shepherdcommunity.org

breaking the cycle of poverty

shepherd
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Thank you to our partners for making Shepherd's newsletter possible.