

MAY Newsletter

May we share some good news? Spring has sprung, and our mission is growing strong! With warmer days ahead, Peoria Friendship House is blooming with exciting updates, community recognition, and heartwarming partnerships. Here's what May has brought us!



PLANTING SEEDS OF CHANGE

This spring, we officially kicked off work on our brand new Outdoor Recreation Center and Garden! While the project was first announced with a groundbreaking ceremony in October 2024, the warm weather has finally allowed us to dig in—literally. Our first step is creating the garden and green space, a vibrant area where both nature and knowledge can thrive. Our K–8th grade STEAMS Academy students have already rolled up their sleeves and are learning the responsibilities of tending to a garden, watering plants



and watching the magic of growth firsthand. They're not just getting their hands dirty—they're gaining valuable life skills like patience, responsibility, and teamwork that will serve them well in and outside the classroom.

But we're not stopping at the garden! We're also working hard to re-landscape the entire green space, making it a more enjoyable environment for

students to play, relax, and connect with nature. The goal is to create a beautiful yet functional area where students can be active and engage with the world around them.

Once the garden and green space are complete, we'll move on to the next exciting phase—renovating the playground! This will include brand-new equipment and a dedicated outdoor exercise space to encourage physical activity, fitness, and fun.

This entire project has been made possible through with BUILD Peoria, after we won by public vote to be their 2025 project of the year. We're incredibly grateful to the community for their support, and we can't wait to see this space come to life in the coming months!



2 CORINTHIANS 9:6

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.



HONORED FOR SERVICE

This month, The Peoria Friendship House was proud to receive the Chief's Outstanding Community Service Award from Peoria Police Chief in recognition of our longstanding partnership with the department and our dedication to serving the Peoria community.

At the heart of this partnership is the work we've done with the Peacekeepers Program, a restorative justice initiative that offers eligible juvenile offenders a second chance. Together with the Peoria Police Department, we guide youth to take accountability, connect with positive role models, and find a path toward a brighter future. Our role is to walk alongside



these young individuals, offering one-on-one mentorship, access to needed social services and community service opportunities, and a supportive space to grow and make better choices.

We're grateful for this recognition and for the ongoing collaboration with the Peoria Police Department, and we will continue to be united by a shared mission of creating lasting change in the Peoria community.

UPCOMING EVENTS



BEGINS
6/2
8AM-5PM

STEAMS Academy Summer Camp

We will be hosting our Summer Camp for K-8 students. Registration is full. Please contact us at 309-671-5200 Ext. 219 for more information.

6/4 &
6/19
9AM-12PM

OSF Care-A-Van Mobile Health Clinic

The OSF mobile clinic will be parked outside our building to provide free walk-in health screenings, immunizations, and to assist in healthcare planning.

S.T.E.A.M.S CORNER

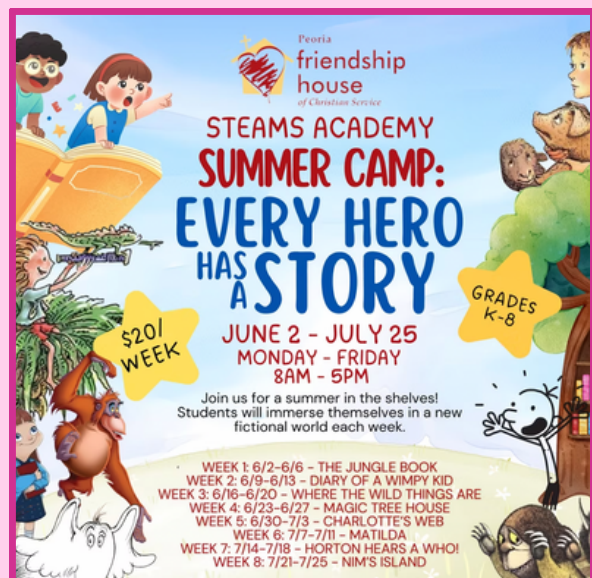
As the school year comes to a close, our STEAMS Academy have been busy learning and exploring through hands-on activities that bring science, technology, engineering, art, and math to life. From engineering robot hands with straws and string to designing Ferris Wheels out of popsicle sticks to crafting bubble-blowing tools from pipe cleaners, our students have tackled each challenge with imagination.

At the heart of STEAMS is the belief that kids learn best by doing. We encourage trial and error, letting students test their ideas, make mistakes, and find creative solutions. This process builds critical thinking and confidence that sticks with them!



REGISTRATION FULL!

Once again, our STEAMS Academy Summer Camp has reached full enrollment—and we couldn't be more excited! This year's theme, "Every Hero Has a Story," will take students on a journey through fictional worlds while showing how to be the heroes of their own lives. We can't wait for another full house summer of fun!





CELEBRATING FIVE YEARS!

This month, we celebrated Marcellus Sommerville's 5-year anniversary as CEO of Peoria Friendship House! We're grateful for his leadership and all we've accomplished together over the past five years. We look forward to seeing what the next five years bring! Congrats, Marcellus!

KENDRICK GREEN CAMP 53

On May 10, the field at Peoria Stadium came alive with energy, encouragement, and excitement for the Kendrick Green Camp 53! Hosted in partnership with the Peoria Friendship House, this



donation-based youth football camp is led by NFL player and Peoria-native Kendrick Green of the Buffalo Bills.

The camp reached full registration capacity and welcomed boys and girls ages 6-14 for a day of drills, conditioning, and fun! Kendrick, along with a team of volunteer coaches, shared their time and talents to give local youth a

hands-on, professional football experience.

We're so thankful to Kendrick for returning each year to give back to his hometown and make this unforgettable experience accessible for so many young athletes.





BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: ART OAKFORD

We are honored to highlight Art Oakford in this month's Board Member Spotlight. A proud Peoria native with generational roots in the community, Art has dedicated much of his life to giving back. Alongside his late wife Judy, the Oakfords became known throughout Peoria for their decades of service and leadership in nonprofit and social service organizations. Their exemplary display of compassion continues to inspire. Art brings a wealth of experience and perspective to the Peoria Friendship House Board. His thoughtful insight is a true asset to our mission, and we're incredibly grateful for his continued dedication to the Peoria community!



STAFF SPOTLIGHT: PARIS WILSON

Paris first joined the Peoria Friendship House through our Pathway to Your Future program for high schoolers. After graduating from the program in 2022, she returned to us full-time in 2024 as the lead teacher in our 2nd-3rd grade classroom and as a Parent Mentor Program Coordinator. Paris brings joy and energy to everything she does. Her fun-loving spirit, sense of humor, and ability to brighten any room make her a beloved part of our team. We're so grateful for the positivity and light she brings to our students and staff every single day!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

None of this would be possible without the continued support of our donors, volunteers, and community partners. Your generosity helps us plant seeds of hope, build brighter futures, and create lasting change in Peoria.

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