

Footprints

JUNE | JULY 2026



MULTIPLICATION CONTINUES

STEP EXPANDS TO THE ROSE CITY NEIGHBORHOOD

ENOUGH?

STEP ENCOURAGERS IS A TWO WAY BLESSING

CAMP BOUND

STEP SENDS KIDS TO ANNUAL KAA SUMMER CAMP

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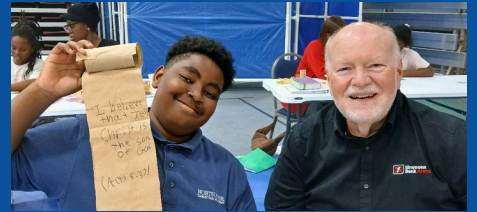
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Camp Bound

STEP partners with KAA to deepen faith this summer

FRONT COVER

A Stephens Elementary Encourager, Rodney Joiner, shares a funny moment with one of his students, Ozelle



Footprints

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STEP Little Rock

First Baptist Church Highland Park

Family Outreach Center

1704 S. Pine Street

Little Rock, AR 72204

STEP Rose City

5021 Lynch Drive

North Little Rock, AR 72117



In Memory

Our hearts and prayers go out to the family and friends of Brandon Copeland, STEP Rose City Mentor Coordinator, who suddenly passed away on June 21. Brandon's enthusiasm for Christ, passion for STEP, and heart for the Gospel will be greatly missed.

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." Philippians 1:21

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SUMMER LITERACY CAMP

How much time? Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. - noon, 1 or 2 weeks

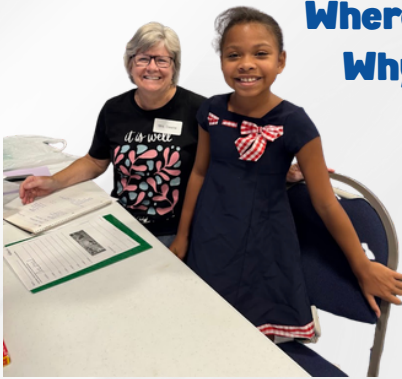
Qualifications? Love a child, no experience necessary

What do I do? Read - Games - Crafts - Have Fun!

When? Mon-Fri, 9 a.m. - noon, July 27-31 and/or Aug 3-7, 2026

Where? STEP NLR, 601 E. 19th Street, NLR

Why? Children are waiting for someone to help them to read



For more Information or to sign up scan the QR code or visit STEPMinistries.org



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In ministry, there are mountaintop highs (like the recent celebration of God's provision for the 3rd mentoring center in Rose City NLR) and difficult lows. This summer has had both. We experienced the incredible high of being able to take 60 STEP youth to Kids Across America camp, and hearing of their decisions for the Lord and seeing them excel as leaders among other youth from around the country. We've seen key improvements put into place at the new Rose City gym location. And, there have been lows. Most importantly, we lost Brandon Copeland, our STEP Rose City Men's Mentor Program Coordinator, on Sunday, June 21st, after he was working outside at home, due to what apparently was cardiac arrest. He finished well - a passionate man of God who absolutely loved working at STEP and was so excited for the upcoming launch of STEP mentoring in the Rose City neighborhood. Our staff is still in shock at the sudden loss, but we are comforted in knowing that Brandon is enjoying being in the presence of the Lord whose goodness and sovereignty he talked about with us all of the time. We would like to ask for special prayers for his wife, Cheryl, and his children and other family and friends. I have taken over coordinating the various restoration

projects for the Rose City gym, and it's wonderful to meet so many contractors who love what we do at STEP, even if some have only recently been introduced to the ministry.

We look forward to an upcoming highlight of the late July/early August Summer Literacy Camp that provides one-on-one reading assistance to elementary students. Also, we continue to pray for critical needed funding and volunteers to launch this coming school year's programs of evening mentoring, in-school encouragers, and after-school tutoring. We are thankful for several key donors who have stepped forward to help fill this gap in funding, but still have a substantial way to go, and continue to ask ALL who love STEP to pray about joining us financially for the first time with a monthly gift, or for partnering with us in an even greater way financially as we reach exponentially MORE kids with one-on-one Christian mentoring.



Mary Carol

Mary Carol Pederson
Executive Director



Enough?

By Nathalie Hunt
Encourager Program Coordinator

That word "enough" is told one way or another to our Encourager students. Week after week the commitment of 30-minute, one on one time with students speaks, "You're worth my time; I like being with you."

The irony of the Encourager Program is I find myself saying to Encouragers, "You are enough." Why is that? Funny enough, young or old, we can disqualify ourselves from opportunities before they begin. I'm told by potential volunteers that they aren't qualified to be an Encourager, they aren't enough. The "not enough" sounds like, "I'm too old; I don't know what they like; I'm not sure about how to be with them or if I'm fun enough, smart enough or good enough with conversation; what if they don't like me." The insecurity is real. Other than the first concern, the insecurities sound like - well- those of the students. The beautiful irony of Encouragers is both the Encourager and the

student step into discomfort, awkwardness as strangers to each other and to being new to the program. But by day 3, they are fast friends. Some after only a day...thirty minutes. You read that right.

You are enough, Reader. You have yourself to give to the children. Just be YOU! They simply need someone to listen to them and to be with them, side by side or across the table. You have an opportunity to speak life and hope into these children. What's wonderful about becoming a volunteer for Encouragers is that it's a ministry. Meaning, if you love Jesus, He equips us to love others. That's what being an Encourager is. We are taking His love to the children through interactions of conversation and pastimes of creating, critical thinking, laughing, and imagination through using reading & games. In this framework, ordinary people like yourself are who these children need. Age is not a factor to them. It disappears. And the other things you think keep you from considering being an Encourager easily could be valid. But what if they're not as big of a barrier as you think: enough time, enough health, enough etc.? What if we "what ifted" more? What if you just started in faith with today and trusted God with tomorrow? Ed Fryer has been an Encourager for 16 years. He's thoughtful about his priorities. "My dance card stays very full, but if asked which activities I would be willing to give up, Encouragers would be the very last on that list." He then laughs as he remembers, "My favorite exchange with a student was when I told my little man that I would see him again



next Wednesday and he said, "But Ed, I'm here every day." Another sweet moment was when, "One of my boys told me that I was like family to him and that I had been there for him when his real family just couldn't be...there is real beauty in every one of these kids, and Encouragers is the best possible means to bring it to the surface."

Together we are enough to make a difference in our communities through our schools. Principals are overwhelmed with the needs of their students. Teachers are being stretched more than ever to manage behaviors. Mrs. Jernigan, Assistant Principal at Clinton Elementary, couldn't have the Encourager Program soon enough. Even in April, with only 6 weeks left of the school year, she wanted her students to have support right then. No time is too little. They are struggling with so much. Rick Jensen, an Encourager for 3 years and at two elementaries, reflects on this reality, "At their age, they are most vulnerable; yet, most reachable because they still need and want somebody to believe in them. The need is bottomless - we need more help from those

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2

"Each one should use whatever gift they have received to serve others." 1 Peter 4:10

I do this because, together, these verses tell me to go where the burdens and hurts are; that I can rely on God to equip me for His work and to actually use His gifts and my life experience for others and His purposes. The side-benefits are wonderful and worth every minute I put into this. - Rick Jensen (photo right)



who have a heart to invest and rescue these precious souls."

Ms. Jackson, Principal at Fulbright Elementary, was so proud this May as she showed me the wall of achievement. She attributes her students' success to the positive attention and intentions of the Encourager Team there from St. James UMC. The Encourager Program provides the tool to connect students to volunteers by helping churches partner with schools. All it takes is one person to step up to their pastor and ask how can we help our kids? It takes only two people and leadership support to begin an Encourager Program at an

elementary school. What a perfect mission field: diversity, hungry, broken hearted, unhoused, lost. You are enough for the least of these. Even as you navigate your own life: sickness, unknowns, full-time job, family, a way can be made to be with an Encourager Team and then, with a child or two. Many Encouragers this year have battled cancer, stages of heart failure, loss and the Encourager Team pulls together to help (because that's what the church does). Rodney Joiner, couldn't wait to be an Encourager. He was discouraged though by health issues. After prayerful days, he stepped out in faith (what ifted), impassioned to give "to help the youth in today's world and help them be comfortable in how to handle different conflicts in their lives. To build confidence and inspire them for their fullness and greatness." Rodney impacted two boys' lives, Ozelle & Jonathan, in the time he had. Look at the picture (front cover). It all adjusts as needed. At most, a child and an adult had a chance at a relationship and were impacted for the good. The enemy doesn't want us to

start. Right? We're already good at disqualifying ourselves. Let's not give him a foothold. Won't you consider being an Encourager? Not only will you brighten their day, they'll brighten yours! STEP Encouragers is a proven program that has helped kids in elementary schools for over 40 years. We believe that Christ works through all things; even if we don't see immediate results, how can being there for a child not make an impact for good? We have to believe enough (faith) that we are enough for students who want to believe they are enough.

If you'd like more information on the STEP Encourager Program, contact NathalieHunt@stepministries.org.

Multiplication Continues

STEP'S Expansion Into Rose City



Sign found on Lynch Drive a few blocks from STEP Rose City

STEP is excited about expanding into our third mentoring site with the launch of STEP Rose City! Through the generous support of a donor, STEP has purchased and is restoring the former Calvary Baptist Church gym located at 5021 Lynch Drive in the heart of the Rose City neighborhood of North Little Rock.

Rose City quickly emerged as a community where STEP's ministry could make a significant impact. The needs in the neighborhood are considerable. According to NeighborhoodScout.com, Rose City has a higher concentration of children in poverty than 97.2% of U.S. neighborhoods and a higher rate of divorced residents than 99.3% of neighborhoods in the United States. These statistics reflect the very challenges STEP was created to address: serving under-resourced children and families who are facing the devastating effects of poverty, violence, fatherlessness, and poor educational support.

What has encouraged us most throughout this process has been the warm reception we have received from the community. Local leaders,

churches, and residents have expressed excitement about STEP's arrival in Rose City and the opportunities it will bring for their children and families.

This summer will be a busy season as renovations are already underway and will include a new roof, HVAC system, flooring, fresh paint, and other improvements needed to create a welcoming, safe, and effective environment for ministry. Our goal is to launch our mentoring program this fall, beginning with students in 3rd through 5th grades. The program will meet on Tuesday evenings from 5:30–7:00 p.m.

As we prepare for this exciting new chapter, pray for our team, for new mentors, new church partners, and for the children and families of Rose City who will be served through this ministry. We believe God is opening a door for STEP Ministries to make a lasting difference in Rose City. Thank you for your continued support and partnership as we continue our mission of transforming the city through the hope of the Gospel, one mentoring relationship at a time.

One of the best ways to participate in our expansion into Rose City is to help underwrite the operational expenses of a new mentoring center. Below gives you an idea of some of our startup costs. To support our efforts in Rose City, prayerfully send your special gift to STEP's General Fund today!

Bibles	\$750
Tables (20)	\$1000
Chairs (60)	\$1200
Projector	\$1000
Powerful Laptop	\$1500
Sound System	\$700
Desks (3)	\$450
Desk Chairs	\$150
Printer/Copier	\$500
Office Supplies	\$350
Carts (2)	\$300
Storage Shelves	\$200
Cleaning Supplies	\$100
Sofa/End Tables	\$400
TV & Cart	\$400
Male/Female Mentor	
Coordinators	\$120K

A SWING FOR STEP

9th Annual STEP Golf Tournament

On May 18, 2026, STEP Ministries welcomed golfers, sponsors, and community partners to the beautiful Chenal Country Club for our 9th Annual Golf Tournament, proudly presented by Genesis Datacom. The event was a tremendous success and an incredible day of fellowship, fun, and purpose.

This year, 21 teams joined us on the course, enjoying a first-class experience that included breakfast, lunch, and a great day of golf. We were especially encouraged to see a 30% increase in sponsors from local businesses who are passionate about serving our community.

More than just a golf tournament, this event serves as a meaningful opportunity to introduce STEP to

businesses, community leaders, and potential partners who share a desire for making a difference in Central Arkansas. Throughout the day, new relationships were formed that will help strengthen our impact for years to come.

“THE TOURNAMENT IS A MEANINGFUL OPPORTUNITY TO INTRODUCE STEP TO BUSINESSES, COMMUNITY LEADERS, AND POTENTIAL PARTNERS.”

Thank you to our golfers, sponsors, volunteers, and partners, as together, we are working to end violence, create futures, foster literacy, and impact our city with the Gospel, one relationship at a time! We look forward to seeing you again next year!



CAMP BOUND

STEP TO KIDS ACROSS AMERICA CAMP

This June, 52 STEP students and 7 staff members traveled to Kids Across America (KAA) in Golden, Missouri, for an unforgettable week of fun, faith, and transformation. KAA is a Christ-centered camp dedicated to serving urban youth through sports, Bible study, worship, and discipleship, and our students experienced all of it in powerful ways. Our students were encouraged to grow in confidence, character, and their relationship with Jesus Christ.

The highlight of the week came when several of our students chose to "ring the bell": a special tradition at KAA signifying their commitment to Christ and their desire to live in obedience to Him! We are grateful for God's work in the lives of our students!

Experiences like this don't happen without the generosity of faithful donors! Thank you for making it possible for STEP students to attend camps like KAA, where lasting memories are made and lives are forever changed.





STEP Ministries, Inc.
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**CHANGING THE
HEART OF THE CITY
THROUGH THE HOPE
OF THE GOSPEL
ONE MENTORING
RELATIONSHIP
AT A TIME.**

STEP IN EACH MONTH

Since 1986, we've seen God do amazing things through STEP Ministries. Lives have been changed, neighborhoods restored, families united, love given freely, and transformation take place!

And God is multiplying our impact as we see Him move us into Rose City. We are actively seeking additional funding to sustain that growth next year. That is why we're asking you to prayerfully consider becoming a monthly partner.

Your monthly support helps us continue serving our our mission of reaching under-resourced children with mentoring and literacy, equipping volunteers, building church-school partnerships, after school snacks and meals, retreats and camps, and provision for our staff.

Monthly support provides financial stability that enables better planning and better opportunity for us to respond to the needs of our community and our organization. As a monthly donor, you'll be engaged with stories from our ministry each month that will keep you connected to STEP and be inspired by all that God does every month.

This isn't just about funding an organization. It is about investing in God's Kingdom and His work in your own community.

Thank you for praying for STEP, praying for the families we touch every week, and praying about "stepping in" as a faithful monthly partner.

You can set up a recurring monthly gift online at STEPMinistries.org or by scanning the QR code below. You may also send in monthly gifts to:

STEP Ministries
P.O. Box 122
North Little Rock, AR 72115

