



Winter 2026

TRUE TO LIFE

A publication of the Evangelical Child and Family Agency

A New Day for Love in Action!

Join Us for Breakfast!!

Saturday, April 18th ~ 9:00 am to 12:00 pm at Embassy Suites in Naperville

We are thrilled to announce an exciting update for our annual Love in Action event. After many wonderful years of gathering on Friday evenings, 2026 will bring a fresh new experience designed to make the event even more accessible and uplifting for everyone.

Love in Action 2026 will take place on Saturday, April 18th. This year we are trading Friday night traffic for a bright and energizing Saturday morning! We cannot wait to gather with you for a time of fellowship, reflection, and inspiration. We look forward to seeing you bright and early on April 18th, as we celebrate the “Love in Action” that continues throughout the year!

We are finalizing the details for registration and schedule updates. Keep an eye on your inbox and our website — more information will be coming soon.

WHAT'S NEW: A FRESH MORNING FORMAT

While the heart of Love in Action remains the same, a time to reflect on all God has done through ECFA, our updated schedule will offer a refreshed experience.

❖ *Delicious Breakfast* - Instead of an evening dinner, we will enjoy a warm, welcoming breakfast together — perfect for a family-friendly start to the day.

❖ *Heartfelt Stories of Impact* - Hear directly from individuals whose lives have been transformed; highlighting the powerful ways your support makes a difference.

❖ *A Time of Worship* - Joins us in a time of worship as we unite our hearts in gratitude and praise.

*Pickleball!!
February 14th*

Details on Page 3



Auction Recap

AN EVENING OF GENEROSITY: TOGETHER WE RAISED OVER \$63,000 FOR ECFA

What a truly special evening it was! On Friday, November 14th we gathered at Abbington Distinctive Banquets for our annual fundraiser — the night was filled with joy, laughter, and an outpouring of love for ECFA. The room was buzzing with excitement as more than 200 guests came together to support our mission. With nearly 200 silent and live auction items up for bid, the evening was marked by friendly competition, shared smiles, and a spirit of generosity that could be felt throughout the room.

The highlight of the evening was the live auction. Our returning auctioneer, Todd Scheel, once again brought energy and enthusiasm to the room, inspiring guests to bid boldly and generously. We were especially delighted to see the return of beloved auction favorites — homemade pies and cinnamon rolls — which continually bring fun and tradition to the evening.

A MATCHING CHALLENGE THAT MADE A LASTING IMPACT

A significant focus of the night was raising funds for much-needed building improvements. We are deeply grateful to our generous partners — The ECFA Foundation, Ozinga Foundation, and the NKC Family Foundation — who together offered a \$21,000 matching challenge.

Because of your immediate and heartfelt response during the “spot auction,” we not only met the challenge, we exceeded it! In that moment alone, more than \$26,000 was raised, providing resources needed to complete every project we had hoped for.

Thanks to the collective generosity of everyone involved, the evening was a tremendous success, raising a net total of over \$63,000.

From the bottom of hearts, thank you to every guest, donor, volunteer, and foundation partner who made this night possible. Your generosity ensures that ECFA can continue serving families and individuals in a safe, welcoming space — and reminds us just how powerful a caring community can be.

*Dan Vallaro,
Director of Operations*





Pickleball !!

2nd Annual Heart for Life Pickleball Fundraiser

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2026 AT *Sure Shot*
2244 CORPORATE LANE ~ SUITE 100, NAPERVILLE 60563

ENTRY FEE:
\$30.00 PER PERSON

GET YOUR PADDLES READY! AFTER THE INCREDIBLE SUCCESS OF LAST YEAR'S INAUGURAL EVENT — AND OVERWHELMING INTEREST FROM OUR COMMUNITY — WE'RE EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE 2ND ANNUAL HEART FOR LIFE PICKLEBALL FUNDRAISER IS BACK AND MOVING TO A LARGER VENUE!

What your \$30 Entry Includes:

- **Tournament Entry** ~ Guaranteed spot in the pickleball tournament.
- **Snacks & Refreshments** ~ Complimentary treats and drinks to keep you energized.

Thanks to your enthusiasm, we've secured the fantastic facilities at Sure Shot, allowing for more players, more games, and even more fun!

Register Today — Spots are Limited!! Secure your spot today.

Registration Deadline: Friday, January 30, 2026

WE WILL ONCE AGAIN HAVE A RAFFLE (\$1 PER TICKET) FOR FUN PICKLEBALL ITEMS AND GIFT CARDS.

READY TO PLAY FOR A GREAT CAUSE? — SCAN THE QR CODE TO THE RIGHT OR CALL US AT 630-653-6400. WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU BACK ON THE COURT FOR ANOTHER FUN-FILLED AND IMPACTFUL TOURNAMENT!



A Firm Foundation

The ECFA Foundation was established to provide long-term support to ECFA. This year the Foundation is providing support to our counseling program in order to provide affordable counseling to those facing economic challenges.

The Foundation is also providing support to our PSS and Adoption programs, our fundraising events, and our

marketing efforts; a true "Foundation" for ECFA as we serve our communities.

For information about how to direct a gift to the ECFA Foundation, please contact Dan Vallaro at 630-653-6400, visit www.evanca.org/ecfaFoundation, or scan the QR code to the right.



A Season

HOW CHRISTMAS WAS FOR OVER 230



Every December, Evangelical Child and Family Agency prepares for the swirl of generosity that surrounds our annual Toy Drive—but this year felt different. There was a spirit of quiet joy woven into every moment, from the first gift dropped off to the last toy carefully wrapped and delivered.

And that joy came from you.

Because of your generosity, more than 1,250 gifts poured in—enough to bless over 230 children with toys, clothing, and special items chosen just for them. Each child's Christmas was shaped not just by what they received, but by the love behind every donation.

The numbers tell one story—230+ children and more than 1,250 gifts—but the true impact is harder to count:



Season of Joy

WAS MADE BRIGHTER FOR CHILDREN!



✧ *Parents who felt relief knowing their children would experience a joyful Christmas*

✧ *Kids who received not just things, but reminders that they are seen, valued, and loved*

✧ *Families who experienced Christ's compassion through the kindness of strangers*

This toy drive is always a blessing, but this year it felt like God multiplied every act of generosity. Thank you for making a difference.

To those who purchased gifts, your kindness transformed what could have been an ordinary holiday into something extraordinary for hundreds of children. Your generosity reflects Christ's love in action. We are deeply grateful and already looking forward to next year.





Toy Drive Supporters

302 SOUTH

MSP – CROSS FIT

302 WHEATON

MSP – WHEATON

LOMBARD BIBLE CHURCH

MSP – LISLE

180 RED FIT

G-CAT CONSTRUCTION

H4 TRAINING

THE WHEATON MOMS

ORANGE THEORY – BARTLETT

FRIENDS AND FAMILY OF ECFA

ORANGE THEORY – ROSELLE

YOUR GENEROSITY AND PARTNERSHIP WITH ECFA IS SUCH A BLESSING
TO THOSE WE SERVE. WE APPRECIATE YOU MORE THAN WORDS CAN SAY!



ECFA PARTNERSHIPS

THE CHRIST FOUNDATION and the **NKC FOUNDATION** have partnered with ECFA providing matching grants to our fundraising efforts.

The Christ Foundation, in 2024, pledged \$100,000 over a three year period. The first year you stepped up and matched \$50,000. This year the match is \$30,000 and we have raised \$14,408 so far. The match period ends May 31, 2026.

The NKC Foundation is matching \$50,000 and we have raised \$32,853 towards this match.

These two foundations are making your donations go twice as far, making a significant impact on the families we serve. If you would like to be part of this giving opportunity, scan one of the QR codes to the right, or visit our website at www.evanca.org/donate.



The Christ Foundation



The NKC Foundation

Bearing Fruit

Dear Reader,

I recently had the privilege to speak with a former foster/adopted woman, “Sally”, who was very grateful for the introduction to Jesus Christ while in her foster-adoptive home. Due to those early seeds being planted within her, she totally committed herself to Christ after she grew up. Today she is dependent on the Lord and trusting Jesus every day. Sally is praying for more Christian families to step forward to adopt foster children who need a permanent family. She shared some thoughts for me to pass on to the readers of this newsletter:

“Pray for your new child(ren). Pray for grace when they present challenging behaviors. Don’t be offended if they want to meet their birth parents (if they do not have an open adoption now). That does not mean they do not love you. It is not unusual for your adopted child(ren) to feel a sense of rejection at some point in their lives because their birth parents did not keep them. Pray

also for ECFA to have discernment when assessing a prospective family to adopt a child and especially children who are older and have experienced trauma in their young lives.” The verse Sally would like to share with you is:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; acknowledge Him in all your ways, and He will direct your paths.” Proverbs 3:5, 6

*Barb Hellmer, MSW, LCSW
Director of Professional Services*

OUR FIRST COAT DRIVE!!



We completed our first official winter gear drive, collecting approximately **75 winter coats and 25 pairs of snow boots**. The coats and boots donated allow children at school and daycare to go outside to play, and help youth stay warm as they walk to/from school or bus stops.

Thank you to all who donated this year! If your church or business would like to host a winter coat/boot drive in the fall of 2026 we would greatly appreciate the support so we can help the families we serve stay warm no matter how early winter weather starts.

Memorials and Tributes

In Loving Memory

Beverly Ozinga & Henrietta VanderMolen

From: Cornerstone Center Foundation

Beverly Ozinga

From: Connie Weaver

Catherine Harast

From: Kenneth Gogots

Charlie Kirk

From: John & Tamara McParland

Daniel McParland

From: John & Tamara McParland

Edna Brandt, Carole & Michael Noonan

From: Suzy McLaughlin

Evelyn Boonstra

From: Charles Slager c/o Deb Slager

Geri Sorensen

From: David Sorensen

Jenna King

From: Robert & Meredith Capocci

Jenny Tietjen

From: Ann Marie Deming

Lucy Askin

From: Yoshiaki & Mari Takei

Rev. Herbert Gotaas, Eleanor Gotaas, Phyllis Gotaas

From: June White

Willa Mae Fletcher

From: Pamela A. Fletcher

In Honor of

Brian Barnes

From: John & Tamara McParland

Kathy & Gary Bulman

From: Gregory (Doug) & Linda Haney

SAVE THE DATES

PICKLEBALL - SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2026

LOVE IN ACTION - BRUNCH - SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 2026 - 9:00 TO NOON

TOP GOLF - THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2026 - DETAILS TO COME!

AUCTION - FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2026

ECFA True to Life – Winter 2026 – First Quarter 2026 Vol. 54, No. 1

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