

NEWS RELEASE

Disciples Benevolent Services
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Disciples Benevolent Services Appoints Steering Committee to Look for New Ways to Serve St. Louis Community Through ECHO/Emergency Children's Home

St. Louis, Mo. – The DBS Board of Trustees has named nine St. Louis-area Disciples to serve as a steering committee to consider the future of ECHO/Emergency Children's Home.

The committee, comprised of local Disciples ministers and lay persons, has been asked to prayerfully consider ministry options that would meet the needs of the local community, would have the support of local Disciples congregations, and would be financially feasible. The committee is in the process of arranging a professional needs assessment to help determine where the gaps are in services for all ages – particularly for children – in the community. Once the steering committee's work is complete, they will make their recommendation to the DBS Board of Trustees.

ECHO has been providing services and residential programs to St. Louis children and youth since 1889, when it opened as an orphan's home. A national trend of placing children in foster and permanent settings rather than congregate settings has created a steep decline in both referrals and funding. This trend affects both residential and transitional living programs. The Olive Branch, which provides temporary housing for expectant adolescents is also located on the ECHO campus and is similarly affected, as are other St. Louis agencies. As of June 1, no children or youth are in residence at ECHO or The Olive Branch.

Dennis Hagemann, President and CEO of DBS, said, "The prime location of the eight-acre ECHO campus has always been a haven for the community. As trends and needs changed over the years, ECHO changed to meet those needs and those of the surrounding community. We are

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actively looking at how area Disciples, DBS and ECHO may best serve the community now and in the future.”

Penny Ross-Corona, Southeast Gateway (SEGA) Area Minister and committee member, said in a recent communication, “Friends, we have come full circle...from 121 years ago with six women in a prayer circle who began meeting the needs of children. Please join the prayer circle now as together we work toward identifying and meeting current needs in our community.”

ECHO/Emergency Children's Home and The Olive Branch are service units of the (National Benevolent Association) Disciples Benevolent Services. DBS, headquartered in Maryland Heights, Mo., is the 121 year-old social and health services general unit of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

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