

THANK YOU FOR BEING A FRIEND NEWSLETTER

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Friends of Tennessee's
BABIES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

1st Quarter 2025



2025 Butterfly Run

It was a glorious day full of lovely weather, incredible families and fast runners for the 2025 Butterfly Run and Celebration Walk. The 2nd Annual event was even bigger and better than last year with over 250 participants. State records were even broken by some of our amazing runners! It was wonderful to see so many of our special families gathering to join us in our Celebration Walk and Butterfly Cove family play area. Thank you to the wonderful businesses who supported our Butterfly Cove area and provided so many fun activities. Thank you also to our amazing sponsors including Axle Logistics, Pinnacle, and TDS. We could not do these exciting events without the generous support of organizations like you! Click [here](#) to see a highlight video of this flutteringly beautiful day!

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"It was so fun and I hope it grows bigger every year!"
- FOTB Family



 **BUTTERFLY RUN**
Because Babies Can't Wait!



2025 Planning Retreat

On February 1st, our board met for the FOTB Annual Planning Retreat. In addition to meeting our new board members and advisory council members, our leadership planned out all of the exciting activities for 2025 along with exciting ideas of how

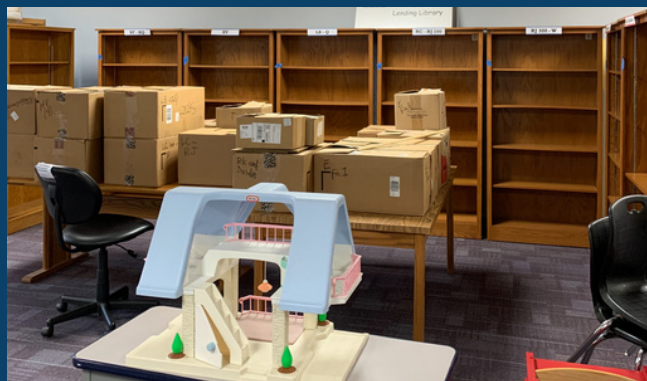
we can commemorate 30 years of serving special families in East Tennessee as we celebrate this important milestone.



Mark your calendars for the 2025 Family Encouragement Conference at Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church on June 28th!

FOTB LENDING LIBRARY HAS A NEW HOME!

Thank you to our amazing volunteers Robin and Mark Hamrick, Christy Blankenship and Martha Emrey who helped us pack up and rehome our lending library. One of our services is providing an extensive library of books to our area families. The collection covers a wide variety of topics addressing issues such as specific needs with diagnoses, parenting, navigating IEPs, and even more. We are thrilled to now have a permanent home for our library at Tennessee School for the Deaf in the Edmunds Building 420. To access our lending library, please visit our website at the bottom of the resources tab!



Grant Update!

We are incredibly excited to announce that we received several grants to support our various programs at FOTB. We were awarded a sizable grant from The United Way for General Operations, the Phase II grant from the Trinity Foundation for training for Early Intervention professionals, the KUB/TVA grant for NICU care packages and a grant from Sertoma International to provide printed materials to families of children with hearing loss and the professionals who serve them. Thank you to all of these organizations for coming alongside us to serve this community!



To see highlight reels from our events and keep up with all of our happenings, scan the QR code and like and follow us on Facebook and Instagram. Please tell your friends too!



We're celebrating a HUGE milestone!



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BABIES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

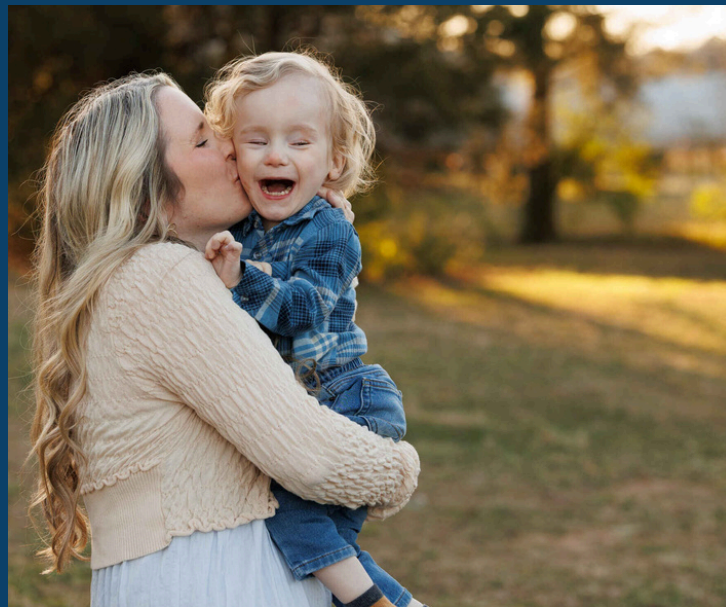
As we embark on our 30th year serving babies with special needs, we have been thinking of special ways to honor this significant milestone. One of our first efforts was creating this special logo for all of our digital and print media for this year. Thank you to our talented graphic designer Ashley Kibodeaux for helping us create this design. Keep your eyes out for it throughout the year!

Mother's Day Fundraising Campaign: Send a message of love and support babies!

Each year, FOTB recognizes a local artist from our Special Needs community with our Mother's Day card fundraising campaign. This year, we are honored to be featuring stunning artwork by Pace Johnson, a Knoxville artist with Autism. For every \$10 you give, you will receive this beautiful greeting card to send to a special nurturing person in your life. A donation to Friends goes straight to the good work of helping families in crisis. You can help us purchase special equipment, give immediate support to families who must travel for care or stays in hospitals, provide respite for parents, education to care givers, and host a year full of family events where literally thousands of family members and their special children can relax, have fun, and network with other families. Just click [here](#) to make your donation and receive your beautiful greeting card/s in time for Mother's Day!



Grady's Story



“Grady is a joy!” declares his mom, Katie. “He has the biggest smile that takes up his whole face and the most contagious laugh! He loves people and he is truly so, so happy.” Born with an auto-inflammatory condition, cerebral palsy, and severe visual impairment, that beautiful smile is about the only thing that has come naturally to Grady. Everything had to be painstakingly taught – even the most basic skills like eating, standing, or grasping a toy. “It was scary,” Katie remembers. “We went from a completely typical pregnancy to an emergency C-section and seven weeks in the NICU. When Grady was finally released, I vowed to put the days of sadness and fear behind us, go home, and focus on being a mama.” Easier said than done. Most new moms don’t have to learn how to give a tiny six pound baby two injections every day. Imagine having to jab a needle with perfect precision into a leg that is so, so small, and doesn’t stay still. But Grady couldn’t live without the medicine, so his parents quickly became pros. Then, about seven months later Grady had a serious health crisis that landed him right back in the hospital with an additional diagnosis of epilepsy. Feeling helpless and overwhelmed is common for parents like Katie, and the depth of isolation is real. Every excursion out into the world with a medically fragile baby is like climbing Mount Everest. Only you don’t have sherpas to help with your equipment or guides to show you the way. “When we were at our lowest point our early intervention therapists told us about Friends of Tennessee’s Babies with Special Needs,” Katie recalls. “What a gift! The Family Encouragement Conference is our favorite. A whole day of workshops, networking, resources, delicious food, and socializing. The information and advice we got from other parents with medically involved children was far more valuable than anything we could find online or even in a doctor’s office,” says Katie. When we asked Katie what advice she might share with other parents in a similar position, she quickly replied, “I learned pretty early how triggering comparisons and not reaching milestones can be. Grady will never be on track with other kids. Once you can really, truly release that you can focus on all the things these very special kids can do.”

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