

THANK YOU FOR BEING A FRIEND NEWSLETTER

WWW.HELPINGBABIES.ORG



ZOO DAY WAS A ROARING SUCCESS!

On April 18, more than 1,700 children, parents, caregivers, and supporters joined us for one of our most joyful traditions. Zoo Knoxville welcomed our families with open arms and created a space where everyone could explore, play, and connect at their own pace. We were thrilled to provide a day where our families felt supported, included, and free to enjoy the day exactly as they needed. Zoo Day is always more than a visit to the zoo. It's a chance for families who share similar journeys to meet one another, build community, and celebrate their children in an environment designed with understanding and care. Seeing new friendships spark and longtime friends reunite is one of our favorite parts of this event.

A heartfelt thank you to Variety of East Tennessee Children's Charity, whose commitment to children with special needs continued to open doors for meaning experiences like this one. Also, thank you to the Greater Knoxville Sertoma Club who generously provided snacks and handed them out with smiles and encouragement.

And finally...to all of our volunteers, thank you. Your energy, compassion, and willingness to show up for our families make Zoo Day unforgettable year after year!



Friends of Tennessee's
BABIES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
2nd Quarter 2026



In This Issue:

- Zoo Day!
- Chandler Farms Day!
- Take Me Out to the Ballgame!
- East Tennessee Service Leaders
- Aloha! FEC is a huge success!
- Literacy Kits Arrive
- Grants and Gifts Come Pouring in for Our Babies!
- Get Ready for Jazz Baby 2026!





Chandler Farm Train Day: A Magical Journey for Our Families

On April 25, families from across East Tennessee joined us for one of our most beloved traditions...Chandler Farm Train Day. Hosted in partnership with Tennessee Hands & Voices and the incredible Deaf Mentors from the Parent Outreach Program, this day welcomes families of children who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing to enjoy an incredible day of trains, yummy food, and incredible friendship! Even with the rain and chilly weather, more than 150 parents, children, and caregivers bundled up, showed up, and made the day absolutely unforgettable. With 10-15 dedicated volunteers keeping everything running smoothly, the event was full steam ahead.

Chandler Farm is a beautiful outdoor wonderland of trains and fun... a place where imagination jumps the tracks and joy whistles through every corner. Children explored the fantastic world of trains, rode on them as they rumbled down the tracks, and soaked in the magic that the Chandler family lovingly creates year after year. This farm has a way of turning an ordinary day into a storybook adventure. We extend our deepest gratitude to Dirk and April Chandler and Bud and Amy Chandler, whose generosity and hospitality make this event possible each year. Their farm, their kindness, and their commitment to our families create a tradition that feels timeless...a place where memories are made and hearts are refueled.



Would you like to be a "friend" to Tennessee's Babies with Special Needs? It's EASY! Just visit our website www.helpingbabies.org and click on the volunteer/give tab at the top of the page. You can make a big difference in the life of Tennessee's babies!

Grants and Gifts for Our Babies

The generosity of our East Tennessee community continues to make a profound difference in the lives of the babies and families we serve. This season brought several meaningful gifts that strengthen our mission and remind us how deeply our partners believe in this work.

Friends of Tennessee's Babies with Special Needs was honored to receive a \$2,000 grant from AKIMA, presented by Yvette Fields. AKIMA's long tradition of supporting women, children, and community programs makes their partnership especially meaningful to us.

We are also grateful to The Garden Club, who awarded FOT Babies a \$1,000 grant to purchase pumpkins for our children to take home at our upcoming Pumpkin patch day. Their commitment to nurturing growth, both in gardens and in communities, shines through in their generosity.

A heartfelt thank-you goes to Katie Givens with Statemint Monroe County. Through her Charity Pre-Sale Fundraiser, she contributed \$1,855 to FOTB. There's not much better than shopping and supporting babies!

Each of these gifts helps us provide essential resources, connection, and care to babies with special needs across East Tennessee. We are deeply grateful for every partner who chooses to invest in brighter futures for our children.



The local chapter of Variety charity awarded FOTB with a \$5,000 check on June 30th. Variety – the Children's Charity empowers children who are sick, disadvantaged or living with disabilities to live life without limits.



The Greater Knoxville Sertoma Club continued their tradition of service by presenting Friends with a \$2,500 check from the Bill Williams Fishing Tournament, held on March 21st. Their ongoing support helps us reach more families each year, and continues the legacy of our dearly missed friend, Bill Williams.

FOTB Delivers Literacy Kits to Support Our Special Families

This month, April Kringen delivered 24 Literacy Kits to the Friends of Tennessee's Babies office to be distributed to Early Intervention Regional Agencies serving families across the East Tennessee district. These thoughtfully assembled kits will help parents and caregivers engage their child with special needs in a multi-sensory, enriching reading and language experience.

Each kit is designed to strengthen early literacy skills through hands-on materials, visual supports, and interactive activities that make reading both accessible and joyful for young learners. The Literacy Kits were sponsored through a grant FOTB received from Concord-Farragut Sertoma Club. We are deeply grateful for this support, which allows us to place valuable tools directly into the hands of families and professionals who are building strong foundations for their children every day.



The Place
is Looking
So Spiffy!

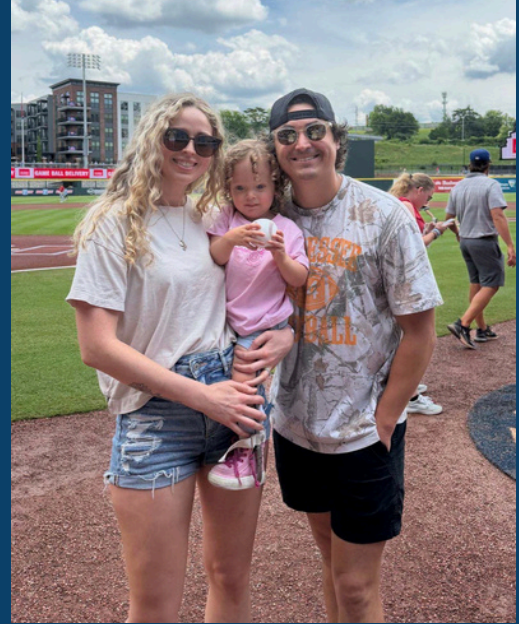
Thank you Pilot for your employees volunteering to help FOT Babies! They did a great job in helping to beautify our grounds by power-washing our front entrance, weeding, pruning, and mulching our landscaped areas, and pulling vines from the trees on the perimeter of our property. It looks wonderful and we greatly appreciate your dedication to helping us keep our grounds looking so lovely!



Take Me Out to the Ballgame!



On June 7th, Friends of Tennessee's Babies with Special Needs enjoyed a wonderful afternoon at the Smokies Baseball game, generously sponsored by the Concord-Farragut Sertoma Club. It was a beautiful Sunday filled with sunshine, laughter, and community spirit.



Nearly 500 friends joined us at the ballpark as the Smokies took on the Birmingham Barons, delivering an exciting game that kept our crowd cheering all afternoon.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Smokies staff, the 16 volunteers who helped serve our families, and our incredible sponsors for making this event possible. Your support ensures that our families have opportunities to connect, celebrate, and enjoy experiences that are welcoming and accessible.



One of the highlights of the day came when one of our special babies, Jaycee, proudly took the field to throw out the first pitch. FOTB events like this remind us how powerful community can be and how much joy our families bring wherever they go!





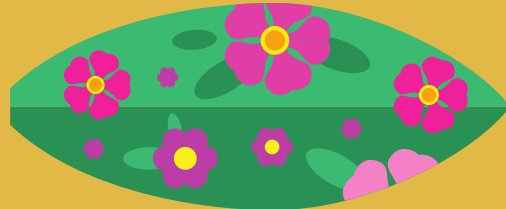
On June 25th, we hosted our annual Family Encouragement Conference at Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church, sponsored by the Concord–Farragut Sertoma Club and John and Sherri Murphy. We were honored to partner with CSPC and Joni & Friends to bring this meaningful day of support, learning, and connection to caregivers across East Tennessee.

This year's theme, ALOHA...**A**cceptance, **L**ove, **O**hana, **H**ope, and **A**dvocacy, reminded us that with family, you never walk alone. That spirit filled every room, every conversation, and every moment of the day.

Our keynote speaker, Mary Donnet Johnson, inspired attendees with a powerful message of hope, resilience, and encouragement. Her words set the tone for the day before more than 70 caregivers had the opportunity to choose from 15 breakout sessions including topics like strengthening relationships, behavior strategies, navigating IEPs, building resiliency, and planning for your child's future.

In addition to the educational sessions, caregivers enjoyed a variety of spaces created just for rest and renewal including free mini-massages, and a Coffee & Conversation Room where attendees could connect with one another. The vendor fair offered resources, tools, and support from organizations across the region that serve our special community.

We are incredibly grateful for our FEC committee, staff, volunteers, exhibitors, speakers, massage therapists, and all who provided door prizes and goody-bag items. Your generosity and teamwork made this day truly special. The Family Encouragement Conference continues to be one of our most cherished traditions, and we already can't wait for next year.



East Tennessee Service Leaders Conference

On June 12th, Executive Director Robin Hamrick attended the East Tennessee Service Leaders Conference at Maryville College. This all-day leadership event brought together service-minded professionals from across the region for learning, collaboration, and community building. Robin connected with fellow leaders, gained fresh insight into strengthening FOTB's impact, and explored new ways to make our organization more technology-savvy, efficient, and accessible for the families we serve. We're grateful for opportunities that help us grow, innovate, and better support our community.



JOIN US FOR JAZZ BABY!

*Scan here for
tickets!*



You are Invited



Friends is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization working to enhance the potential of infants and young children with disabilities by offering vital support to their families and the early intervention professionals who serve them.



SEE YOU THERE!