

The United Methodist Children's Home was first opened in 1913 to serve as a safe haven for local orphans. This remained our focus through the 1950's until both the youth in residence and the facilities changed as our society changed. Society continues to change, and today we offer many more services than simply residential homes for teens. Today's public sees the words "children's home" and still assumes we are still an orphanage, which has become an outdated concept. Because of that notion, most people don't realize we provide many other valuable services in Mt. Vernon and throughout Southern Illinois. In fact, the "children's home" portion of our services accounts for less than 5% of the total population we serve annually.

So, after much prayer and deliberation, and in an effort to communicate our programs and services more clearly to our local and surrounding communities, our Board of Directors voted unanimously to change our name.

As of April 1st, 2017, the United Methodist Children's Home will be known as

SPERO FAMILY SERVICES!

Rest assured that our proud and strong tradition of faith and affiliation with the United Methodist Church remains constant. Our mission, vision, and commitment to being a faith-based, Christ-centered organization also stays the same as we cherish and honor this heritage.

Spero, is the Latin word for "I hope" which is one of our most core values. Spero is pronounced in a way that also sounds like the word "sparrow". Our new logo resembles an anchor – featuring a cross at the top, and a sparrow's head at the bottom with wings intertwined in the anchor. The rising anchor is a symbol for hope. When a ship's anchor weighs, or is raised up, it signals the beginning of a new voyage, a new adventure...and the United Methodist Children's Home is doing just that – beginning a new adventure, as are the people we faithfully serve. Spero specializes in mental wellness, education and adult readiness services. Here are the programs we offer:

- **Youth Homes and a Transitional Living Program**- Youth ages 12-21 live on our campus and we care for their every need – spiritual, educational, physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing, restoring them to a place where they can return to their families, or find a forever foster family.
- **Spero Academy** – A specialized school on campus for grades 6-12, educating young people with emotional or behavioral needs.
- **Spero Counseling & Wellness Center** – Professionally-licensed outpatient therapy to individuals, couples and groups of all ages. Locations are based in Mt. Vernon, Centralia, West Frankfort, Carmi, with more being added soon!

"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows." Matthew 10:29-31

"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." Hebrews 6:19

- **Bright Start Childcare** – A Gold Circle daycare as rated by ExceleRate Illinois, providing faith-based childcare services for children from birth to school age. Tuition assistance is available through Project Child program.
- **Foster Care** – Recruiting, training and supporting foster parents to care for children and youth.
- **Best Beginnings** – A nurse-family partnership for young mothers offering doula services, and partnering with mom from the first pregnancy test through the child's 2nd birthday.
- **YouthBuild** – a program for youth ages 17-24 to earn a GED and become certified in the construction trade or as a CNA. Free program; stipend given to those participating in the program. Apply online!

• **Family Foundations** – Family support and parenting skills provided in the home through the Nurturing Parent model.

More services are being added this summer as we grow to serve even more individuals and families throughout Southern

Illinois. We invite you take this exciting journey with us as we say, "Anchors Aweigh!" and venture forth into a new era of service growth as **SPERO FAMILY SERVICES**. If you are interested in learning more about becoming one of our volunteer or financial partners in hope, please contact Sandy Sinnett, Director of Development and Public Relations at 618-242-1070 ext. 234.

DATES TO REMEMBER:

Healthy Homes for Healing Hearts Open House – Thursday, April 7th, 2017
see our newly remodeled youth homes!

22nd Annual Golf Classic - Friday, July 7th, 2017

PLEASE VISIT WWW.SPEROFS.ORG TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ALL OF OUR PROGRAMS, EVENTS AND MORE!



SPERO FAMILY SERVICES
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Settling Up with Uncle Sam

Here's How the Government Spends Your Hard-Earned Cash

April 18 is Tax Day and, if you owe, the deadline for sending the rest of your tax bill to the IRS. But unlike your household bills—for groceries, utilities and the like—you may not understand exactly what you're paying for.



The National Priorities Project broke down how much of the 2015 \$4.2 trillion federal budget was allocated to areas like defense, housing, education and interest on the debt, then applied those percentages to the average American's federal tax bill. The typical household paid \$13,000 to Uncle Sam in 2015. Here's how that was allocated:

- ▶ **\$3,728.92 (28.7%) on health programs**
- ▶ **\$3,299.13 (25.4%) on the Pentagon and the military**
- ▶ **\$1,776.06 (13.7%) on interest on the debt**
- ▶ **\$1,040.93 (8%) on unemployment and labor programs**
- ▶ **\$771.26 (5%) on veterans' benefits**
- ▶ **\$598.74 (4.6%) on food and agriculture programs**
- ▶ **\$461.59 (3.6%) on education programs**
- ▶ **\$377.50 (2.9%) on government expenses**
- ▶ **\$250.03 (1.9%) on housing and community programs**
- ▶ **\$207.68 (1.6%) on energy and environmental programs**
- ▶ **\$194.29 (1.5%) on international affairs programs**
- ▶ **\$150.68 (1.2%) on transportation funding**
- ▶ **\$143.20 (1.1%) on science funding**

- Want more specifics?**
Here are some "interesting" expenditures.
- The University of California at Santa Monica decided to train mountain lions how to walk on treadmills—with government funds. The study took months, \$856,000 and served no real purpose.
 - The U.S. government spent \$750,000 to build a new soccer field at Guantanamo Bay. That's a military prison, in case you were wondering.
 - The U.S. Department of Education paid twenty employees \$240 an hour to teach "email writing courses" to federal government employees.
 - The University of New Hampshire was given \$700,000 to study the emission of methane gas from cows. Seriously.
 - Two students from the University of Washington were given \$1.3 million from the National Science Foundation to investigate how a foam koozie keeps a can of cold beer cool on a hot day—findings that were published in *Physics Today*.

IT'S WHAT'S INSIDE >>>

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Humor Me

Three Reasons Your Brand Should Be Funnier on Social Media

It's National Humor Month—time to get your funny on.

Actually, when it comes to content marketing and social networking, you should consider humor to be fashionable every month, not just in April. Humorous content gets shared more because people are more likely to retweet or re-post something funny. That's a big boost for your brand and business, right? It expands your reach. Almost all content that goes viral includes an element of humor.

But that's not all: There are other advantages to making your customers laugh. Here are two of them.

Laughter triggers emotional responses. Humor creates positive feelings. Laughing releases endorphins, relaxes the body, boosts the immune system, helps relieve stress and generally makes people feel good. These physiological and chemical responses are unconscious and create a pleasant emotional response. By using humor in your content on social media, you associate pleasant feelings with your brand.

Humor makes your brand memorable. Research has shown that people tend to forget negative memories but retain good ones. Making your audience laugh will help them to remember you. Take Super Bowl commercials, for example—humor is always a big deal. Regular advertising goes for laughs about 20% of the time while roughly 50% of Super Bowl ads do, according to Ace Metrix, a company that assesses the effectiveness of video ads. Why? Because companies spend big bucks to make an impact during the Super Bowl, and advertisers know that the funniest ads are the most memorable.

WORDS TO LIVE BY
"Laughter is the shortest distance between two people."
—VICTOR BORGE

April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month

Sober fact: Drunk drivers are not the only danger on the road. As many as one in four accidents are caused by distracted drivers.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, distracted driving is "any activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving." Experts have warned repeatedly of the dangers of texting and driving—and for good reason—but other common distractions can impair a driver's ability, including eating, smoking, attending to children, applying makeup, using a navigation system and adjusting music or temperature controls.

Distractions fall into three categories:

VISUAL: Taking your eyes off the road.

MANUAL: Taking your hands off the wheel.

COGNITIVE: Taking your mind off what you are doing.

This is why texting has such a bad reputation—it involves all three types of distractions, all at one time.

For a quick reality check, take a look at these statistics from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention and Distraction.gov:

- Each day, distracted driving causes about 9 fatalities and 1,153 injuries.
- When sending a text, the average person looks away from the road for 5 seconds. If you're texting and driving at 55 m.p.h., you could travel the length of a football field without looking at the road.
- A 2015 Erie Insurance distracted driving survey reported that drivers do all sorts of dangerous things behind the wheel including brushing teeth and changing clothes.
- Eating, reading and applying makeup increases the likelihood of a crash by two or three times.
- Kids cause parents to take their eyes off the road for an average of 3 minutes, 22 seconds during a 16-minute car ride, or 21% of total driving time.

This month is a good time to evaluate your driving habits, identify your biggest distractions and take steps to be the safest driver possible, for both your family and the others on the road.

FIVE SAFE DRIVING TIPS

- 1 Keep a 2-second cushion between you and the car in front. Make that 4 if the weather is bad.
- 2 Have necessary items within reach, like toll fees or garage passes.
- 3 Adjust your seat, mirrors and climate controls before putting the car in gear.
- 4 Secure things that may move around while your car is in motion.
- 5 Use Uber, Lyft or a friend if you're too impaired or tired to drive. It'll be easier to come back for your car than to deal with the consequences of an accident.



SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

In Alaska, texting and driving can result in a \$10,000 fine.

The Five Most Important Digital Marketing Skills for 2017

As technology and digital marketing evolves, your employees may have to as well—or at least the skill sets they're acquiring. Is employee training in order? Here are the top five digital marketing skills experts say will be crucial in 2017 and beyond.

- 1 **DATA ANALYSIS.** Arguably the most important skill in digital marketing right now is data analysis. This allows marketers to answer the most important question: "Is this working?" An accurate answer results in more effective and targeted marketing campaigns, improved customization capabilities, reduced bounce rates and higher customer retention.
- 2 **BASIC HTML/CSS KNOWLEDGE.** You don't need your marketing team to be able to create a website from scratch, but having marketers on your team with basic coding skills will help your business present messages more clearly through visual design—an important part of digital marketing.
- 3 **MARKETING AUTOMATION TOOL USAGE.** More businesses are relying heavily on automation because it allows their marketing teams to do better work in less time. Automated emails, social media campaigns and content marketing generate more and better leads. Tools from the likes of HubSpot, Marketo and Pardot, paired with Salesforce, are now commonplace in businesses, and people are becoming more proficient at using them.
- 4 **CONTENT MARKETING.** Creating quality content about subjects relevant to your target audience helps your business pull in customers better than pushing out advertising they've learned to ignore. Investing in digital marketers with writing skills will lead to an increase in traffic to your website and higher organic search engine rankings for your business.
- 5 **SEO.** To get your content, website, products and apps to rank in search engine results pages (SERPs), you must have marketers skilled in SEO. The importance of SEO skills is expected to increase drastically in 2017 as search engines become smarter and their algorithms continue to undergo updates.



PROOF POSITIVE

Did you know?
Color ads are read up to 42% more than similar ads in black and white.



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