

## Edgewood Children's Center

### For the Kids

by Tony DiMartino  
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Not every child is sunny and cherubic, like the ones you see in commercials; not every parent can make it all better with a time-out, a cookie and a hug. In real life, some children have problems so disruptive that they can tear a family apart. These kids need help far beyond what most families are equipped to offer. For 175 years, Edgewood Children's Center has provided them with a safe, healing haven.

"Edgewood provides critical support and education for severely troubled children with a broad range of emotional or behavioral disorders, sometimes caused or worsened by abuse and neglect," says chief development officer Ellen Reed-Fox. "We work with their families, too, you can't help kids in a vacuum. If the home environment is abusive or otherwise unsafe, we'll place the child in a good foster home or with a responsible, loving relative. Our goal is to restore children and strengthen families through therapy, special education, case management and community-based support services."



Edgewood, which began as an orphanage in 1834, now serves more than 300 children a day, 20 of them in full-time residential care. "Many of these kids have gone through a number of unsuccessful foster and educational placements before they came to us," Reed-Fox says. "If we can't prevent separation from the family through our preventive intervention program, we try to get them back to their families and their home school district as soon as we can. But that's not always possible." When termination of parental rights is the only option, Edgewood helps find permanent homes.

Edgewood's staff includes licensed clinical social workers, counselors, case managers, and certified special education teachers, as well as psychiatric, educational, medical and psychological consultants. "We also partner with other agencies to help the kids and their families," Reed-Fox says. "We can't do it all, the need is so great."

To help raise funds and awareness, Edgewood hosts 'In the Vineyard,' a wine and food tasting, Saturday, Nov. 14, at Plaza Frontenac. The event, co-chaired by Stephanie Sterkel and James Sheffield, offers more than 90 wines from around the world, paired with cuisine from many of St. Louis' top restaurants. In addition, live auction participants can bid for a walk-on role in the award-winning TV show *Mad Men*, donated by actor Jon Hamm and AMC. "A lot of the same people have been involved year after year, we're so fortunate to have their support," Reed-Fox says.

Tickets start at \$100; a premium wine tasting, featuring rare vintages, is available at the \$200 ticket level. Wines are provided by several local distributors, including A. Bommarito Wines, Appellations, Classique, Glazer Midwest, JJ Gazzoli Imports, Major Brands, Missouri Beverage Co., Mount Pleasant Winery, Pinnacle Imports, Premier Cru, Seven Seas and Vintegrity. Participating restaurants include Annie Gunn's, Anthony's Bar, Araka, BC's Kitchen, Bissinger's, Brio, Cardwell's at the Plaza, The Crossing, Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar, Harvest, Herbie's Vintage '72, Monarch, Niche, Portabella and Villa Farotto. Sponsors include Schnucks, McCarthy Building Companies Inc., Edward Jones, HOK, Johnston Family Foundation, AmerenUE, and Commerce Bank.

"We raised \$120,000 last year; we hope to do the same or even better this year," Reed-Fox says. "In the Vineyard is a great way to have fun while strengthening families in our community. And it's a cause everyone can relate to, ultimately, all of us want a safe, happy home for our children. Kids are at the heart of everything we do at Edgewood, and they always will be."