

CHILDREN MATTER MOST

Children Matter Most is a missional initiative of the INUMC to equip and resource local churches in the ministry to and with children. As we have concluded our goals in 2023, we have chosen to focus on helping leaders by addressing partnerships with schools, supporting INUMC camping ministry, and addressing mental health throughout 2024. We will continue to address food insecurity and nonviolence. We want to support the work that God has already begun and encourage and inspire leaders and churches to continue in their commitment to Children Matter Most.

- We will continue to value partnerships and collaboration with organizations and movements furthering the care of children. We will engage in cooperative ministry, including with the United Women of Faith and in efforts to help promote Child Safety and Gun Violence Awareness. We will continue to walk with and expand our relationships with our Indiana Children’s homes. In 2024, we will learn more about the needs of our INUMC camping ministry and address how we can be ambassadors for children as we relate to this ministry.
- Children Matter Most has worked within the conference to address church safety through child and youth protection, nonviolence efforts, and gun violence awareness. Our hope is that churches will invest in updating their policies and take action to address violence as it appears in our communities. The INUMC has started a Gun Violence Task Force. We will continue to offer Child Protection Seminars to help churches consider how to update their policies and train their leaders.
- The Dream and Do Award became available for applications in 2023. The Dream and Do Award provides an opportunity for children and young people to receive a grant to help further the ideas young leaders have around mission, justice, and community. The team has approved at least ten recipients.
- We support the work of 3 Indiana United Methodist Children’s Homes. Each of these homes provide housing, education, and health resources for children and youth who need an alternative to traditional foster care and education. Leadership from each Children’s Home is represented on the Children Matter Most Team.
- Throughout 2023 we have asked everyone to consider “Who are our Children?” with the hope that churches will recognize they are a part of the movement of Children Matter Most by seeing children in their communities who need their support and care. We continue to provide resources to help churches consider their next steps in this mission. We believe partnering with schools is a valuable way to live out our commitment to children and will continue to emphasize ways churches can make these connections.
- In 2024 we will ask everyone to consider one thing they can do to help children in their community. The Children Matter Most Team will provide tools for churches to help them challenge everyone in their congregation to choose a next step fitting with their gifts and resources to help a child.

- 1 • A Mental Health Summit is being planned by the Children Matter Most Team to address the mental
2 health crisis of children and youth in Indiana. An initial date has been set for September 28, 2024.
3 The Summit will educate, inspire, and equip adults to recognize how they can respond to the mental
4 health needs in their communities and churches. Our greatest hope is that a movement of caring for
5 the mental health of children and youth in Indiana will be launched.
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- 7 • Children Matter Most is working to expand our communication by providing informative and
8 inspiring stories and learning experiences. We will offer articles for publication and challenge other
9 conference ministry areas to create resources relevant to children.

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11 *Children Matter Most Team*

12 Jen Huff – Chair of Children Matter Most Team – 2020 – July 1, 2024

13 Stacy Downing – New Chair of Children Matter Most - July 1, 2024

14 Angelo Mante, Edna May, Susan Bennett (23), Sara Daniels, Christy Huston, Ramie Cooney, Zachary
15 Manton (23), Lori Gratsy, Harriet Wilkin, Gary McRae, Nancy Brailsford, Katie Swisher, Bishop Trimble,
16 Shannon Stringer, Emily Krach

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18 Submitted by Emily Krach