

Blind Early Services TN

2024-2025 Annual Report

Inside...

- 1 *Our Roots*
- 2 *Our Reach & Real Impact*
- 3 *Our Road Ahead*



Our Roots

From our Executive Director



Dear BEST Friends,

We are honored to share the incredible impact you—our donors, partners, collaborators, and supporters—have made possible over the past fiscal year. In our mission to serve Tennessee’s youngest children with vision loss, we remain steadfast and laser-focused. This year, Blind Early Services TN (BEST) walked alongside more than 350 families across the state—our largest reach since our founding just five years ago.

Through our partnership with the Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS), we provided in-home and community-based services tailored to each child and family’s unique needs. Our growing team of Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Orientation & Mobility Specialists, and Occupational and Developmental Therapists ensures that children receive the specialized support they need in those crucial first years. In addition, we trained service providers statewide through our annual VIISA certification program and celebrated four of our team members pursuing advanced degrees to deepen their expertise.

This year also brought special recognition: BEST was honored with the 2025 TN AER Commitment to Opportunity Award and recognized by Leadership Music in this 3rd year of its Giving Generously program —both, a testament to our dedication to creating pathways for children with vision loss to thrive.

Financially, we have strengthened our foundation for long-term sustainability, securing vital partnerships and grants that allow us to meet increasing demand while staying true to our family-centered approach. This year’s growth reflects not only the need for vision-specific early intervention in Tennessee, but also the trust you have placed in BEST to deliver it.

From our humble beginnings as the vision of two mothers to becoming a trusted statewide resource, our journey has always been fueled by the generosity of this community. You have given your time, talent, and resources to ensure that children with blindness or low vision have the tools, confidence, and joy to explore their world from the very start.

As we celebrate these successes, we simply say—thank you. Together, we are building a brighter future for Tennessee’s youngest learners with vision loss.

With gratitude,
Alison Clougherty

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison'.

Our Roots

Five Years of BEST

Fall 2020

Blind Early Services TN is officially formed as a 501(c)3!

Summer 2021

BEST awarded state contract to work as an Early Intervention Resource Agency, providing vision informed developmental therapy.

Spring 2022

BEST awarded state contract to provide specialty vision services by Teachers of the Visually Impaired & Orientation and Mobility Specialists.

Spring 2023

BEST begins to create our satellite team of vision informed early interventionists in Memphis (Shelby County, TN).

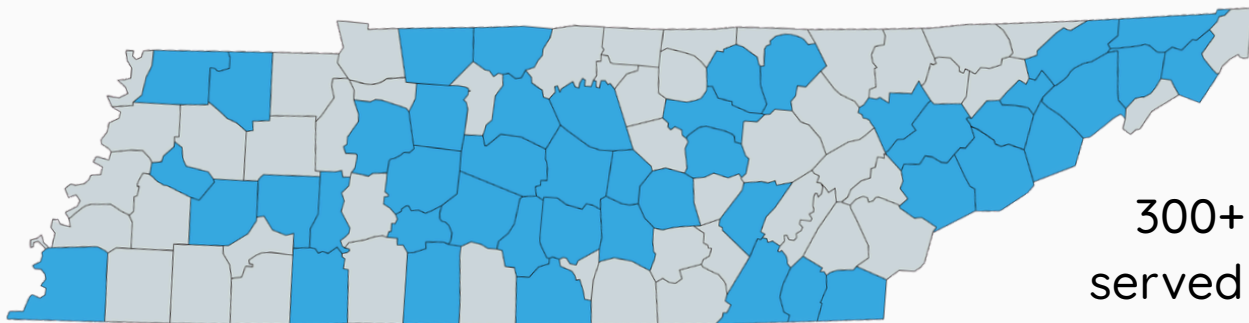
Summer 2024

The inaugural week-long Camp BEST takes place! BEST signs a five year lease on a brick-and-mortar home in Brentwood.

Today

Our Reach & Real Impact

Early Intervention by the Numbers



300+ families
served in over 50
TN counties!

Developmental Therapy

2,897

Sessions led by Early Interventionists



25% from last FY

Vision

2,245

Sessions led by Master's Level Certified
Teachers of the Visually Impaired and
Orientation & Mobility Specialists



230% from last FY

NEW- Occupational Therapy

272

Sessions led by Doctor of Occupational
Therapy

Our Reach & Real Impact

Faces & Voices of Early Intervention

My favorite thing about BEST is that I did not have to advocate for my child. **My concerns were validated and I was taken seriously.** Every individual from BEST I've had the privilege of speaking with has given me **undivided attention and advice.** We always look forward to our vision sessions.

Each child gets one on one **personalized care** and providers communicate that child's specific needs with the parents, teachers, etc. **We have felt so supported.**

You all are so **committed**, patient, understanding, very knowledgeable, **responsive** to questions, **compassionate**, equipping... **the list goes on!**

The **resources, knowledge, tools, and equipment** that BEST has provided for my daughter is incredible. My daughter has shown **huge improvements** with her vision and continues to improve.



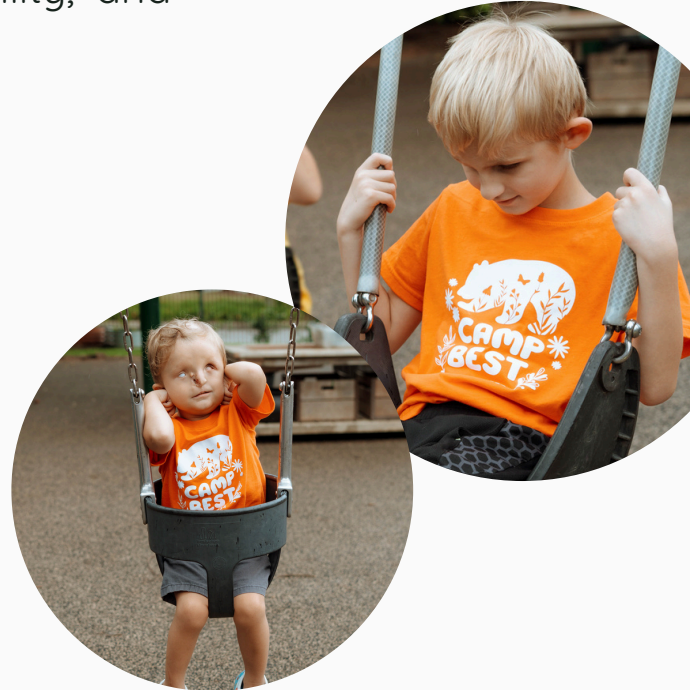
Our Reach & Real Impact

BEST Together: Inaugural Camp BEST

In July, BEST welcomed families to our very first summer camp, held at First Presbyterian Church in Nashville. Fifteen children participated in a week of joyful learning and exploration designed to nurture literacy, social skills, orientation and mobility, and sensory engagement.

The camp theme, inspired by the children's classic *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*, set the stage for a variety of creative activities. Children experienced storybox read-alouds, interactive sound effect storytime, sensory bins and texture mats, and even music therapy sessions led by visiting providers from Empower Music Therapy LLC.

Thanks to the generosity of the Foreseeable Future Foundation and the Preds Foundation, Camp BEST was offered at no cost to families, ensuring accessibility for all. This inaugural week brought families together in a supportive community, blending fun with meaningful developmental growth.



Our Reach & Real Impact

Financial Success That You Made Possible

Fueled by the Generosity of
our Partners...



Income Breakdown

Government Funding	\$836,883.45
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Non-Government Funding	\$35,967.54
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Contributions & Grants	\$222,920.74
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Special Events	\$87,705.49
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Misc. Income	\$1,080.17
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Total Income	\$1,184,557.39
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Expense Breakdown

Program Services	\$917,000.87
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Management & General	\$156,761.09
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Fundraising	\$60,477.83
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Total Expenses	\$1,134,239.79
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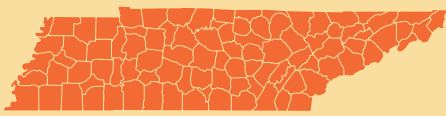
Net Profits	\$50,317.60
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A record breaking
\$85,000 raised at
BEST FEST 2024!

Our Road Ahead

Future Strategic Goals

Our fifth anniversary marks not an end, but a springboard into the future. Here's a glimpse of what we're most excited about in the years ahead.



**Expand Services
Across East TN with a
satellite hub in
Knoxville or
Chattanooga**



**Advance Statewide
Reporting on Pediatric
Vision Loss through
Babies Count**



**Elevate Caregiver
Voice with the Launch
of a Parent Advisory
Committee**



**Support Staff in
Advanced Vision
Training**



Our Road Ahead

the BEST Team

Across TN, from core teams to contract staff, we honor the heart of BEST.

Our Staff

Executive Director & Co-Founder

Alison Clougherty

Programs Director

LeeAnn McWhorter

Development Director

Denee Stewart Freeman

Early Interventionists of the Visually Impaired

Rachel Pace

Cat Saig

Alycia Snowden

Emily Melton

Developmental Therapists

Dana Foutch

Holly Hawkins

Khristian Ward

Deafblind Intervener

Carmen Litteken

Marketing & Media Associates

Adrienne Figuero

Sarah Immerfall

Orientation & Mobility Specialists

Genie Velaquez

Madison Smith

Lynn Austin

Teachers of the Visually Impaired

Patience Piesecki

Genie Velaquez

Gabrielle Gosnell

Cindy Adins

Misty Brown

Madeline Chastain

Amber Leffew

Jessica Mantz

Tina Schipp

Sloan Shaw

Mandy Yates

Jessica Styer

Militzia Woods

Virginia Burkhart

Lynn Austin

Sarah Gariety

Occupational Therapist

Gabbi Sledge

Our Board

President

Lyndsay Hayden

Treasurer

Henry Terrel

Directors

Ed Bratton

Melissa Matthews

Griffin Pinkow

Grant Reed

Wesley Williams

Vice President

Sandra Zaccari

Secretary

Lisa Solier

**With heartfelt gratitude to
Robin Sinatra & Stacy
Cornwall for five years of
vision and leadership that
shaped BEST's foundation.**