



13725 Starr Commonwealth Road Albion, Michigan 49224 PH: 517.629.5591 [www.starr.org](http://www.starr.org)

# *History*

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## OF STARR COMMONWEALTH

*It's been almost a century since a young man named Floyd Starr purchased a ramshackle barn and forty scrub-covered acres in Albion, Michigan and began what would eventually become one of the nation's most respected child and family charities. Floyd Starr founded Starr Commonwealth as a refuge for "homeless, dependent, neglected and delinquent boys." Starr strives to change personal outcomes, one individual at a time.*

*Founded in 1913*

*The staff at Starr Commonwealth believes in the power of relationships to make positive changes in children's lives. Nationally recognized for outstanding results, Starr Commonwealth offers a full spectrum of community-based early intervention and prevention services along with specialized residential alternatives. Through the Starr Institute for Training, parents, clinicians, educators and childcare professionals now have access to Starr's highly successful and innovative techniques aimed at bringing out the best in every child. The organization has extended its reach through regional facilities in Albion, Battle Creek, and Detroit, Michigan; and Van Wert and Columbus, Ohio.*

*Today, Starr Commonwealth operates dozens of programs for troubled youth and their families in Michigan and Ohio. "Uncle Floyd," as he was affectionately known, would probably be amazed at just how far his original vision has come, but he certainly wouldn't be surprised at the reasons why. Starr still believes, as did its founder; that when you treat a child with dignity and respect, it changes a child's heart. And that, in the end, is what changes a child's life. ~*

**VISION:**  
BE A NATIONAL  
LEADER IN  
STRENGTH-BASED  
PRACTICES FOR  
CHILDREN  
AND YOUTH.

**MISSION:**  
CREATE POSITIVE  
ENVIRONMENTS  
WHERE CHILDREN  
FLOURISH.



### *Hannab Neil 1794-1868*



*Hannab Schwing was born June 5, 1794 in Franklin, Virginia. She married William Neil, also a native Virginian, in 1816 in Louisville, Kentucky, where she had moved with her parents at age 6. In 1818, they moved to Urbana and then Columbus, Ohio. William Neil was a bank cashier and stagecoach company owner. Wealthy members of the Columbus society, Hannab organized women's clubs and circles to help with the growing indigent and needy population. ~*

#### **Hannab Neil Center, Columbus, Ohio**

*After a cholera outbreak in 1851 that left many children orphans and homeless, Hannab Neil and Mrs. William Blackstone Hubbard founded a day school in 1855. Based on this initial success, the Industrial Mission Association was founded on April 27, 1858. The Industrial Mission School Association renamed itself the Hannab Neil Mission and Home for the Friendless on April 7, 1868, just after the death of their most tireless worker, Hannab Neil. ~*

### *Floyd Starr 1883-1980*



*Floyd Starr was born to Marshall and Mary Starr in Decatur, Michigan on May 1, 1885. After surviving the rigors of country school, Floyd attended Marshall High School and went on to study at Albion College where he met Harriet Armstrong. After graduating in 1910, he took a job at the Bernarr McFadden's Healthatorium in Chicago and married Harriet on Christmas Eve that very same year. ~*

#### **Floyd Starr's Passing**

*Starr Commonwealth has always been blessed with outstanding leadership. Founder Floyd Starr was President of the organization for 54 years, from 1913 until 1967. After retiring at age 84, he traveled and remained an advisor to campus. He continued to live in Candler Hall until his death at age 97. He is buried at the top of the cross on the hill behind the Chapel-in-the-Woods on the Albion campus. ~*

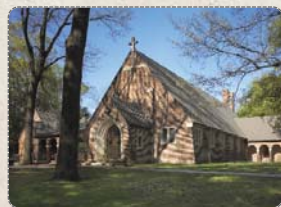
1913



**Gladsome Cottage & Old Barn**

Perhaps the most historically significant building, Gladsome was the first cottage to be built on Starr's Albion campus. During the first few years, Floyd Starr, his wife Harriet and daughter Margaret shared their home with as many as 22 boys. The Old Barn was standing on the original tract of farm land Floyd Starr purchased in 1915 and served as a temporary home for Floyd and the first boys while Gladsome Cottage was being built.

1950



**Chapel-in-the-Woods**

Constructed in 1950 using gifts from hundreds of large and small donors, Chapel-in-the-Woods has always been the spiritual center of Starr Commonwealth. Inspired by Floyd Starr's ancestral church in Kent County, England, the chapel has always provided a non-denominational place of worship for the boys, many of whom have returned to be married and also have their children baptized.

1951



**Van Wert, Ohio**

When Floyd Starr wanted to expand the mission of Starr Commonwealth in 1951, he found a special place just outside of Van Wert, Ohio. The property, known as the Auglaise Gardens, was purchased from Harry Beckmann, the Midwest's "Peony King." Mr. Beckmann's former home on the grounds now serves as a chapel, called Beckmann Hall.

1956



**Brueckner Museum**

Dedicated in 1956 on the Albion campus, Brueckner Museum was made possible by an initial gift from Mrs. Emilie Brueckner in the name of her son, a promising artist until his untimely death at the age of 16. Mrs. Brueckner wanted to help other children develop their own interest by introducing them to fine art.

1978



**Columbus, Ohio**

In 1978 the Hannab Neil Center became part of Starr Commonwealth and the two organizations combined to bring their services to more children and families. Today, Starr Columbus carries on Hannab Neil's mission on its 55-acre campus.

1987



**Detroit, Michigan**

In February of 1987, Starr Commonwealth purchased the American Concrete Institute building on 7 Mile Road in Detroit where they moved all operations and began offering services. The building was designed and built in 1958 by award-winning architect Minoru Yamasaki, who later designed the World Trade Center.

1990



**Towsley Center for Recreation**

The Towsley Center, which was completed in 1990, is an addition to the Knights Templar Gymnasium on the Albion campus. A swimming pool, weight room, classroom, office and handball/racquetball courts were added around the existing structure, as well as the recent completion of a state-of-the-art track and field outside. Residential students of Starr Commonwealth use the facility every school day.

1997



**Battle Creek, Michigan**

Over a decade ago, there were many families and children in Calhoun County using Starr Commonwealth's home-based services. In 1997, Starr Commonwealth acquired the locally well-known Battle Creek Child Guidance Center, which had an outstanding reputation of providing children's services for nearly half a century.

2000



**Montcalm School for Boys**

Montcalm School for Boys, in Albion, Michigan, is a private-referral school and residential treatment center for 12-18-year-old boys. Outside In, a specialized social skills program within Montcalm Schools, began in 2007 in response to increased referrals of students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. Crossroads, a structured transitional living program, also is offered for older youth, ages 17-21. The school, named for the lake on the Albion campus, was founded in 2000.

2004



**Montcalm School for Girls**

Founded in 2004, Montcalm School for Girls is a therapeutic residential treatment facility for young women ages 12-18. A second cottage was opened in July 2005, and a third cottage was added in the fall of 2007. Montcalm School for Girls is situated on a beautiful wooded site on our Van Wert, Ohio campus.

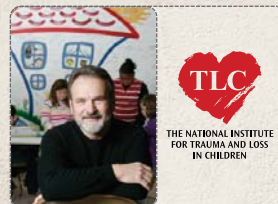
2009



**Children's Home of Detroit**

Founded in 1856 as an orphanage, the Children's Home of Detroit had a profound impact on the lives of children for 172 years. In November of 2008, the Children's Home of Detroit closed its residential program and due to the excellent reputation and nearly 100-year history of service to children and families, the organization's assets were transferred to Starr Commonwealth in early 2009. The Children's Home of Detroit's legacy now continues through Starr Commonwealth.

2009



**The National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children (TLC)**

Founded in 1990 by William Steele, PsyD, MSW, TLC provides the opportunity to become certified in its evidence-based interventions for traumatized children, adolescents and parents. TLC School Specialists and Clinical Specialists provide interventions to children, adolescents, families, schools and communities following the country's most traumatic events. TLC is a program of the Starr Institute for Training.

# Presidents



Floyd Starr  
1915-1967  
Founder and President



Dr. Larry K. Brendtro  
1967-1981  
President



Dr. Arlin E. Ness  
1981-2004  
President



Dr. Martin L. Mitchell  
2004-Present  
President