



AUGUST 15, 2025

FROM THE DESK OF MR. KEVIN SANDLIN, MARE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MARE Focus

ENDORSEMENTS

American Fidelity
Assurance Co.

Claim Care, Inc.

Forrest T. Jones
& Co.

Hamlin Energy

IMS Technology

L.J. Hart &
Company

MASA MTS

MEUHP

Mike Keith
Insurance

MO. Consult. For
Ed.

MOCAAT

M.U.S.I.C.

SOCS

Veregy

MARE PARTNERSHIPS

- LEGAL
HOTLINE:
EDCOUNSEL,
GUIN
MUNDORF,
MICKES
O'TOOLE,
TUETH
KEENEY
- EDPLUS
- AMERICAN
LEGION BOYS
STATE
- GIRLS STATE

MISSOURI
ADMIN. JOB
POSTING

Superintendent Search Program – Over the past five years, MARE has facilitated more Superintendent Searches than any other organization in Missouri. We pride ourselves in offering a thorough, comprehensive and affordable Superintendent Search Program. We would be honored to work with your district should the need arise. If you have questions, please reach out to me at (6600 747-8050 or ksandlin@moare.com).

Several searches posting soon! Check out the MARE website at www.moare.com!

Foundation Formula Modernization Task Force – The School Modernization Task Force will be meeting on **Tuesday, September 9th at 3:00 p.m.** at the Special Olympics office at 305 Special Olympics Drive in Jefferson City. It is beyond important that school leaders, BOE members and community patrons continue to attend these meetings to hear the discussion and let the committee members know how important their recommendations to the Governor are for all schools, but especially rural schools. Please consider joining us at the next meeting! The meetings will be livestreamed. For more information on this work, please check out the website at this link: [Missouri School Funding Modernization Task Force](http://MissouriSchoolFundingModernizationTaskForce.com).

Open Enrollment Appeal – Open Enrollment was held at bay again this past session. We are thankful for all of those districts who have passed a BOE Resolution in opposition to Open Enrollment. The list has grown (attached) and now sits at 259 school districts opposed, impacting 454,600 student lives in Missouri. The list has been noticed by various legislators and it has had an impact! We are appealing to the other 257 or so public-school districts to take action and pass the attached resolution in opposition. Our hope is that if the number continues to grow, legislators will have to seriously consider the issue before casting a vote when the issue comes up again in the 2026 session. Thanks to Dr. Chris Gaines at EdPlus, Dr. Kenny Southwick with CSDGKC, and Dr. Pam Hedgpeth with GOCSD for their efforts in spreading the word. Thanks also to our many educational associations for their support in this endeavor and for sharing information with their respective memberships. If you have questions, please reach out to me at ksandlin@moare.com or (660) 747-8050!

[List of Districts Opposed to Open Enrollment](#)
[Open Enrollment Board Resolution](#)

Missouri School Directories – Core Data is the Key – The new 2025-2026 Missouri School Directories will be made available in October this year. The delivery date has been pushed back to allow and to encourage districts to double check all core data submissions this summer and to make needed updates, changes, and corrections. Be sure to include Assessed Valuations (most recent), and you most recent approved tax levy on the appropriate screens so that this information can be included in the new directory. We will be delivering these as we attend meetings in October and beyond. We will also have these available at the MARE/MO K-8 Conference on October 22nd - October 24th.

Welcome New District Members - MARE is pleased to welcome Moberly & Malta Bend R-V as district members! Welcome to the MARE family of 425 districts!

Welcome New Associate Members – MARE is excited to welcome the following New Associate Members – **balanceHQ, Hoener Architects, LLC, Inclusive Leadership Lab, Oasis Intergenerational Tutoring, Kummer Center for STEM, Sonus Benefits, Denovo Construction Solutions, Kids Read Now, Federal Education Consulting Group & Interpres Building Solutions** . Please watch for upcoming postings on the MARE website and in new MARE Focus articles. We greatly appreciate these businesses joining the MARE family!

Save the Date – The 2025 MARE/MO K-8 Conference will be held on October 22-24, 2025 at the Lodge of Four Seasons. Plans are underway to make this our biggest and best ever. Please block this on your calendar now and make plans to join us! I promise you will have a great time and learn a lot! More information will be posted on the website and appear in an upcoming MARE Focus. Our goal this year is 325 in attendance!

Here is the booking link for conference room reservations.

- **Group Direct Booking Link- No login/Attendee Code needed:**
Booking Engine 4.0 URL: <https://reservations.trav-elclick.com/17336?groupID=4902386>

Conference Vendors Encouraged to Join Us – Associates and Vendors are encouraged to sign up to join us at our upcoming MARE/MO K-8 Conference, slated for October 22nd through October 24th at the Lodge of Four Seasons. Our conference continues to grow each year! We invite you to join us and get to know our rural leaders from all across our great state!

[Exhibitor/Sponsor Registration Page 1](#)
[Exhibitor/Sponsor Registration Page 2](#)

MOCAAT – What Can You Do for Me?

The MOCAAT® Advantage: Missouri's Trusted Financial Management Resource for School Districts.

Our experienced team, with broad expertise in Missouri school budgeting, finance, and investments, thoroughly manages nearly \$4 billion in assets for over 260 Missouri Participants, including school districts (as of March 31, 2025).

Since inception in 2020, MOCAAT has provided a new level of service and performance to Missouri communities.
Our philosophy – Partnership.

Maximize the potential of your reserve funds, tax revenues, state revenues, and bond proceeds with our professional guidance.

For financial support tailored to your district's unique needs, contact us:



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Vice-President
Investment Services

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jjungmann@pmanetwork.com



Jason Hoffman
Vice-President
Investment Services

(573) 212-6258
jhoffman@pmanetwork.com



Paul Ziegler
Coordinator, Sales &
Relationship Manager

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pziegler@pmanetwork.com

Missouri School Plant Managers Association — MSPMA is offering scholarships for district leaders to attend their Fall Conference on September 28-30, 2025 in Branson! For more information, visit the Missouri School Plant Managers Association website.

T Mobile's Friday Night 5G Lights

The 2025 application window is now open and runs through **September 12th**. I'd love your help again in getting the word out to Missouri schools. It would be incredible to see even more participation—and hopefully, another Missouri school in the spotlight this year. If you or anyone in your network needs more information or assistance with the application, please don't hesitate to have them reach out to me directly. I'm happy to help. Thanks again for your continued partnership and advocacy for our schools. Here's the link to apply: [5GFNL](#)

Kimberly Spence M.Ed.

Account Executive

K-12 Education

Mobile: 314-598-0323

Office: 314-332-1284

T-Mobile for Education



Quote of the Week

"You're off to great places, today is your day! Your mountain is waiting, so get on your way!" – Dr. Seuss

Moniteau Co. R-V (Latham) – On the Farm!



For many small, rural school districts maintaining enrollment is critical, the loss of even a few students can be the difference between consolidation and staying open. During the 24-25 school year, Latham Elementary, a K-8 district in Moniteau County picked up several new students: Petunia, Wilbur, Penelope, Flora, Harlee, Tate, Georgia and Joker. They were just not the kind of students that drive ADA. They were more of the 4-legged variety. With the completion of their on-site barn, their animal enrollment grew to eight. Two mini goats, 2 mini cows, 2 mini ponies and two teacup pigs. They have since added a bottle calf named June to the enrollment!

With the addition of the farm animals came many lessons, some intentional, and others equally valuable, but unintended. According to Latham Elementary Principal Tracey Bieri, the rationale behind starting a small farm on the elementary school grounds was to help students learn about problem solving, responsibility, respect, empathy and an appreciation for rural life. From an academic standpoint students covered standards found in the science and English Language Arts curriculum.

But as so often in life some of the most important lessons learned were ones that the district had not even considered when they dreamed up their school farm. The students in upper grades learned patience, tolerance and acceptance as they helped the younger students with the animals. The students all learned what it meant to be a part of a larger community and work together to achieve goals.

They learned when you are having a bad day there is nothing like a small pig eating out of your hand to help cheer you up. They learned the challenging and time-consuming lesson of what happens when you leave a gate open on the farm. They learned the valuable lesson

of always being aware of your surroundings, especially around animals and to look out for each other and to help keep each other safe.

Their school farm, much like many small, rural farms extended beyond animals, with a greenhouse and raised beds of vegetables. They learned about the economics of growing and selling hanging baskets. They learned the art of salesmanship when they sold out the greenhouse and made over \$1,400 in profit in less than an hour. Each class also grew vegetables to eat.

For many students it was their first taste of turnips or radishes or mustard greens. The plan as they move into the future with their garden is to raise enough vegetables so they can use some of the produce in their cafeteria. As a part of the agriculture curriculum there is also a focus on self-sufficiency, students learned how to make cheese and butter, although they confided the texture was “kinda gross.” Next year the school plans to use the vegetables from the garden to teach students how to can vegetables.

In combination with the many skills the students are learning by their active participation in the school farm, Latham has a strong STEM program. All the raised garden beds are marked by grade with acrylic signs the students designed and made on their glow forge machine. They recently acquired 3-D printers and each class learned to design and print products, everything from mini thermos cup keychains to wiggly toys; with the plan for next year to look for needs around the school and use the 3-D printers to create products to address those needs.

Latham students are also learning the skills of entrepreneurship. Students in grades five through eight created, marketed and sold a product, everything from meat seasonings to dehydrated fruits. The students shared what they learned, “When you make and sell products it is not all profit. You have to pay back for what you bought.” According to Rylee, they are also learning to speak to people about their product, understand the economics of pricing and how to manage costs.”

Bieri believes that the additional time and effort put in by her staff to incorporate the school farm is a benefit for her students. “Kids who may not be the top students in traditional academics have an opportunity to shine. This provides them an outlet where they can share their expertise. All of our students have talents, we must help them realize and celebrate them.”

The Latham School Farm has been a positive addition to the Latham School District and a point of pride for the community. The positive emotional benefit of having animals and plants to care for has benefited all the students and staff. As one student responded when asked about why other districts should consider adding a farm, “It makes the day more bearable.”

Plans are underway to make the 25-26 school year even more successful, and the excitement continues to grow with the students as they move from grade to grade and assume more responsibility and ownership in the success of the school farm. If you are interested in finding out more about starting a farm project in your district reach out to Tracey Bieri at Latham Elementary school at admin@lathambraves.com . In the words of one of her 8th grade students, “Just do it.”

Suicide Prevention & 988 Guide for Schools

We are pleased to share that the 2025 edition of the [Suicide Prevention & 988 Guide for Missouri Schools](#) is now complete and available for use. This resource is intended to support schools in their ongoing efforts to prevent youth suicide, respond effectively and navigate a suicide crisis, and understand how to engage with Missouri's behavioral health crisis services.

This updated edition includes:

- Strategies and resources available to help strengthen school or district-wide suicide prevention efforts and promote safe, supportive environments for students
- Information on how schools can utilize 988, mobile crisis response, and behavioral health crisis center services
- Updated, evidence-based suicide prevention programming
- New resources for parents and guardians explaining 988 and available supports
- Immediate steps schools can take in the aftermath of a suicide death

This guide complements the recently updated [DESE Model School Policy on Suicide Prevention](#) and is intended to be used alongside it to strengthen school preparedness and response efforts.

Thank you to everyone who shared feedback and contributed content to help strengthen this resource. Please take a moment to review the guide and feel free to share it widely with your networks.

- *The Suicide Prevention in Schools Committee, Missouri Suicide Prevention Network*

Missouri Suicide Prevention Network

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admin@mospn.org
www.mospn.org

**MISSOURI
SUICIDE
PREVENTION
NETWORK**



New Superintendent Boot Camps 2025

– The 2025 Superintendent Boot Camps will be held on Wednesday, September 3rd at the Mickes O'Toole Offices in St. Louis and on Friday, September 19th at Springfield Public Schools. Please go to their website at seminars@mickestoole.com to find more information and register.

MARE Board Training Calendar for 2025

MARE Board Training Dates – 2025

Lake Ozark, MO – The Lodge of the Four Seasons (Conference)

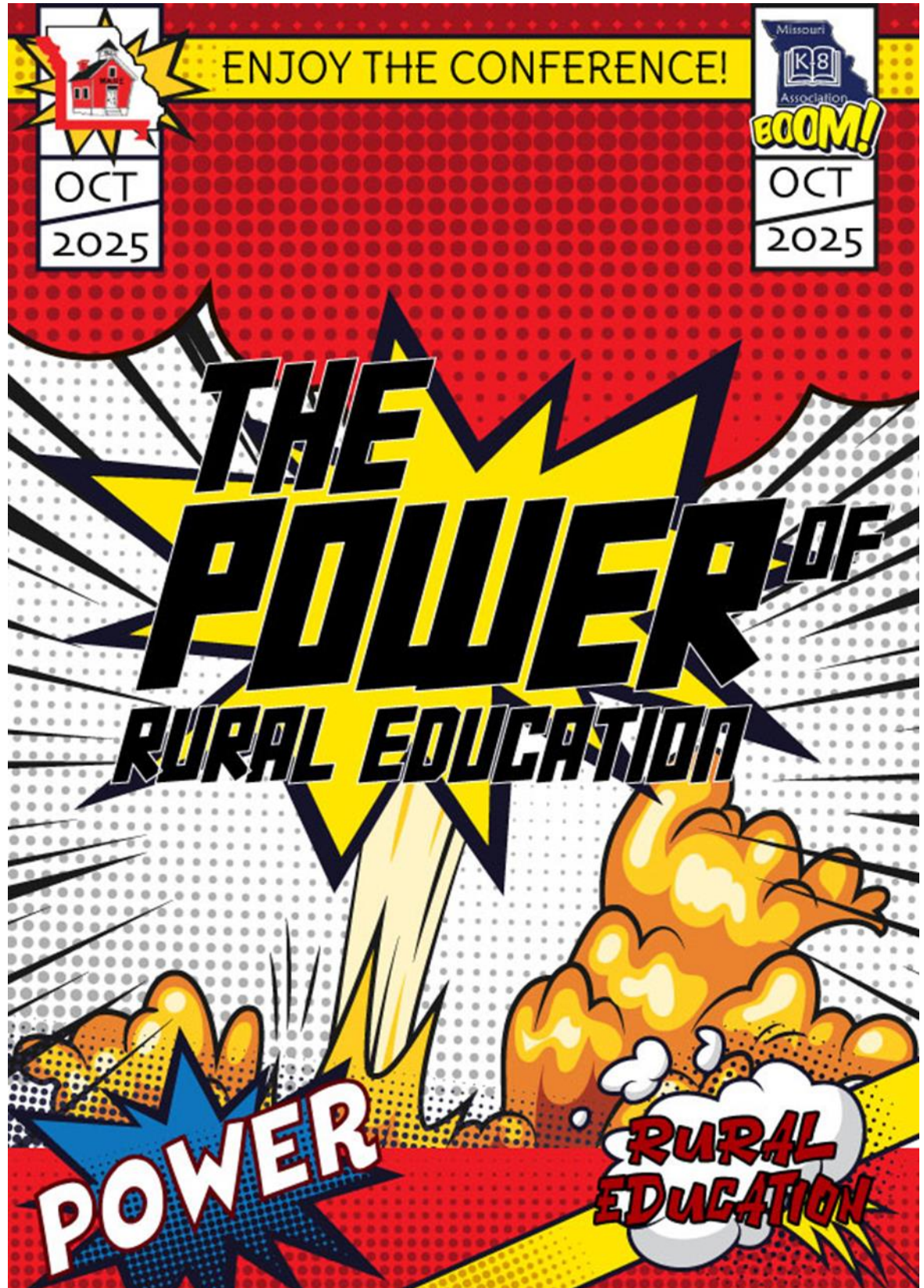
- **Wednesday, October 22, 2025 (11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.)**
- **Thursday, October 23, 2025 (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)**

Lake Ozark, MO - The Lodge of the Four Seasons

- **Friday, December 5, 2025 (12:00 noon - 6:00 p.m.)**
- **Saturday, December 6, 2025 (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)**

***** Please share this information with any new Board member who has not completed the 18.5 hours of required training! MARE is an approved Board Training provider!**

MARE/MO K-8 Conference – October 22nd through October 24th!



Please join us at the Lodge of Four Seasons!

Note from Claim Care

Important Update for Missouri School Districts: Declining MO HealthNet Eligibility Rates Could Impact Services and Reimbursement

As Missouri School Districts begin the 2025-2026 school year, many are experiencing a significant decline in student eligibility for MO HealthNet. Claim Care has observed this ongoing trend across the majority of our districts, with the most substantial drop occurring during the spring and summer of 2025.

Why This Matters for Your District

Reduced MO HealthNet eligibility rates can directly reduce reimbursement through several state programs including Direct IEP Therapy, Cost-Based Settlement, and SDAC. More critically, it can jeopardize access to essential medical services for students who rely on them.

What's Causing the Drop in Eligibility?

The Missouri Family Support Division (FSD) has resumed its annual review process for all MO HealthNet participants. As a result, more than 1.5 million Missourians are undergoing eligibility redetermination—many of whom may lose coverage simply due to outdated contact information or missed renewal notices.

What Can Districts Do?

District staff play a vital role in helping families maintain coverage. Please encourage parents and guardians to:

- Watch for a yellow MO HealthNet annual renewal form in the mail.
- Update their contact information and report any changes by one of the following:
 - Visiting mydss.mo.gov and selecting “Report a Change”
 - Calling (855) 373-4636
 - Visiting their local Family Support Division Resource Center

For Claim Care Clients

If you notice students missing from your MO HealthNet eligibility roster who you believe should still have coverage, please contact Claim Care staff at 660-327-5308 or claim@claimcareonline.com.

What is MO HealthNet?

MO HealthNet is Missouri's Medicaid program, providing health insurance coverage for eligible children, families, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. The program supports school-based services such as therapy, nursing, and transportation when included in a student's IEP.

Learning Blade Back to School

Welcome Back to School with Learning Blade!

Explore **FREE STEM, Computer Science, and CTE Resources** for Grades 5–9.

Start the year with Learning Blade, an interactive career awareness platform aligned to national academic standards and career clusters. With 500+ online student lessons and comprehensive teacher lesson plans, Learning Blade makes it easy to engage students in STEM, CS, and CTE while reinforcing core academic skills.

Want to maximize impact?

Schedule your [Back to School Demo](#) to learn how to effectively integrate Learning Blade in your classroom or district.

Sign up for your FREE account:

www.LearningBlade.com/States

Social:

Welcome Back to School with Learning Blade!

Kick off the year with **FREE STEM, Computer Science, and CTE resources** for grades 5–9.

With over 500 interactive student lessons and ready-to-use teacher plans, Learning Blade makes it easy to spark career exploration and reinforce academic skills—all aligned to national standards and career clusters.

Want to maximize impact?

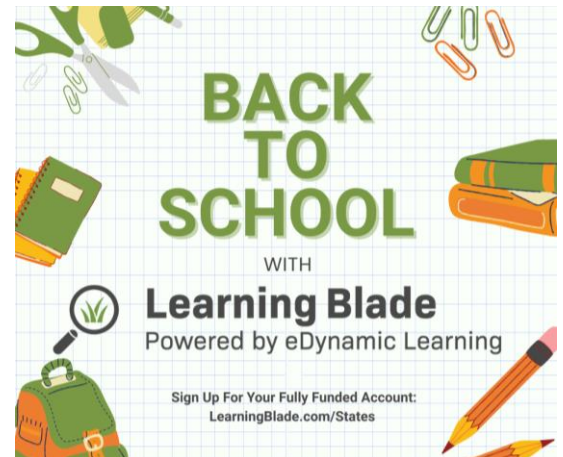
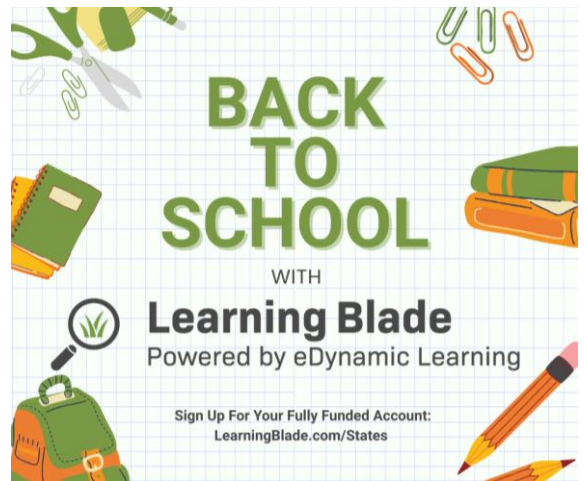
Schedule a Back to School Demo to bring Learning Blade to life in your classroom or district.

Schedule here:

<https://calendly.com/d/3xc-4s3-99n>

Get started for free:

www.LearningBlade.com/States



KIDS Read Now Information

Missouri's new House Bill 2 allocates funding for qualified at-home reading programs. The Kids Read Now program fully qualifies by mailing self-selected books directly to student homes.

Choice matters. Independent research shows our program results in 2-3 months of reading gains.

Why schools choose Kids Read Now:

- Students are twice as likely to read books they choose
- Books are mailed home
- Every book includes Discovery Sheet questions to guide family engagement. Want to see how it works?

We've all heard about the ongoing reading crisis, but without proper funding, solutions have been hard to implement.

Thanks to Missouri's recently passed House Bill 2 (HB2), your school now has access to funding for qualifying at-home reading programs.

Kids Read Now has supported over 468,000 students with 3 million+ books mailed home since 2010. With a 94% educator approval rating, our program stands out by letting students choose eight books, which are mailed home one at a time. Each book includes family engagement tools and discovery questions. As the program runs, each student's reading progress is reported back to you.

Independent studies show our program helps students gain 2–3 months of reading ability over the summer. Literacy improvements are critical to sustaining school-year reading gains.

Schedule a Call

Funds will soon become available through DESE. I'd be happy to send more details on the HB2 requirements and how we meet them.

Looking forward to connecting,

Glen Miller

Outreach Director, Missouri

Kids Read Now

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