



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 3, 2026

Kenny Williams Named Executive Director of Green River Area Development District

Owensboro, Ky. — The Green River Area Development District (GRADD) Board of Directors has selected **Kenny Williams** as the organization's **new Executive Director**, bringing more than three decades of executive leadership and community-focused service to the seven-county region.

"It is a true honor to assume the role of Executive Director of GRADD, following in the footsteps of remarkable leaders whose dedication and vision have shaped this magnificent organization of profound strength and service," says Williams. "I am truly inspired by what has been built and extraordinarily optimistic about what lies ahead. With deep respect for our past and enthusiasm for our future, I look forward to serving alongside an exceptional and talented team to further our impact, purpose, and support of the seven counties that are dedicated to changing lives for the better."

Williams was chosen following a comprehensive search process led by the GRADD Executive Director Search Committee. He succeeds **Joanna Shake**, who has served as Executive Director since 2020.

"He is from Owensboro and has been working in the social services field for many years," says Daviess County Judge Executive Charlie Castlen who was also on the search committee. "Before coming to GRADD, he oversaw a staff larger than the one he will oversee here and we believe he will be an excellent leader for this organization."

GRADD Board of Directors Chairman Hancock County Judge Executive Johnny "Chic" Roberts echoes Judge Castlen's comments on Williams' fit with GRADD.

"We are excited to welcome Kenny. His extensive knowledge of community-based services will be a valuable asset to GRADD and to the entire region," says Judge Roberts. "His career has centered on supporting, leading, and helping others, and we are confident that this dedication will continue in his work here at GRADD."

Williams brings more than 30 years of experience leading nonprofit and service-based organizations, with a strong background in strategic planning, developing leaders, uniting those dedicated to serving their communities, and partnership development.

Most recently, he served as Pediatric State Director for Sevita Health/The MENTOR Network, overseeing statewide operations in Kentucky and Alabama. In that role, he provided leadership and developed strategies for maximizing growth, implemented statewide strategic plans, managed strong relationships with partners and advocates across the state, and recruited as well as developed talent who became key members of the company's success.

"Kenny comes to GRADD with decades of experience as a leader and manager and his deep understanding of public service, regional collaboration and community-focused work will be a tremendous asset to our District," says outgoing GRADD Executive Director Joanna Shake. "I truly believe his leadership will help strengthen GRADD's impact across our region and position us well for continued growth and success in the years ahead."

Previously, Williams spent more than 26 years with Sunrise Children's Services, including serving as Vice President of Community Based Services. There, he provided executive leadership across a wide range of programs supporting children and families, oversaw statewide operations, managed multi-million-dollar grants, and worked closely with policymakers, boards, and community partners to expand services and improve outcomes.

Williams brings deep ties to the communities served by GRADD and a strong understanding of regional collaboration. His experience also includes teaching at the college level and serving in public service roles focused on strengthening families and community-based support systems.

"GRADD has been a part of my personal and professional world for over thirty-five years and it has shaped everything I have done," says Williams. "I am a better person because of the work of GRADD and to be given this immense opportunity both humbles me and inspires me to fulfill the vision and passion of our seven counties and the elected officials who so diligently serves our citizens."

As Executive Director, Williams' leadership will focus on advancing GRADD's mission of strengthening communities, supporting local governments, and improving quality of life across Daviess, Hancock, Henderson, McLean, Ohio, Union, and Webster counties.

Williams holds a Master of Education in Mental Health Counseling and a Master of Education in Marriage and Family Therapy from Western Kentucky University, as well as a Bachelor of Education from Kentucky Wesleyan College.

Williams' first day at GRADD was January 19th.

If you are interested in an **interview** with Kenny Williams, he will be available at the GRADD Office on **Wednesday, February 4 from 2 PM- 4 PM**.

For more information contact,
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The Green River Area Development District (GRADD) is a regional planning agency and council of governments serving the communities of Daviess, Hancock, Henderson, McLean, Ohio, Union, and Webster counties. GRADD offers assistance in the fields of aging, health, and social services; community and economic development; transportation planning; and workforce development. Our mission is to afford local governments and citizens a regional forum to identify issues and opportunities, and to provide leadership in planning and implementing programs to improve the quality of life in our district.

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