

# Charity & Children

*The historic publication of Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina—first to tell the story since 1887.*

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## From singing karaoke in a bar to singing solos in church

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Scott Cummings usually sports a smile unless he is “pulling your leg” with eyebrows furrowed and a gruff nod. “I’m a cut-up,” he confesses with a chuckle.

Scott and Connie Cummings have been Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) cottage parents for 15 years, offering love and care to hundreds of teen boys.

“Every boy who steps through the front door of Drake Cottage is going to be asked three questions,” Scott says with a solemn voice. “The first is, ‘Ford or Chevy?’ The next is, ‘What is your favorite college basketball team?’ And the final is, ‘What NFL team do you pull for?’”

The University of Kentucky blue Ford with the San Francisco 49ers' bumper sticker sitting in the cottage driveway could offer clues, but the three questions are not meant to have a “right” answer. “Although it never hurts,” Scott says, elfishly admitting there may be an innocuous allusion about sleeping on the porch if an answer is too offensive.

“Scott’s questions are a tool he uses to engage the boys,” Connie says. “He never tires of finding ways of connecting with them.”

While Scott spends time with the teens in the yard, in the shop, or on camping trips, it is the kitchen where the boys meet with Connie. “Boys are always hungry. Many windows into hurts have been opened over fresh baked cookies. It’s a commitment to building relationships that makes the difference—relationships that last longer than the time a boy lives in Drake Cottage.”

Connie and Scott could never have imagined



Scott and Connie Cummings serve as cottage parents at Drake Cottage near Franklin. The native Kentuckians recently marked their 15th anniversary as BCH staff members.

they would be cottage parents the night they first met in the parking lot of a community grocery store. Their lives were going in different directions and neither had been saved. The couple blended their families and married.

“We were in a karaoke bar when a bunch of us were challenged to go to a nearby church,” Scott remembers. “They told us if 100 people showed up, the pastor would preach from the roof that next Sunday.”

Scott was amused. He and Connie went. “The Holy Spirit began to move and before we knew

it, we went down to get saved.”

Scott admits that God “had been tugging at my heart forever.” Connie likes to say that they went “from singing karaoke in a bar to singing solos in church.”

The couple never looked back. They became active in their church, grew in the Lord, and began to feel God calling them to work with youth—eventually calling them to BCH.

“We can testify that God works in mighty ways in the lives of those He calls,” Connie says.

*(Continued on page 3)*



# Invest yourself in a child's life

By **Michael C. Blackwell**, President/CEO  
(Chief Encouragement Officer)

Every child needs a charismatic adult in his life, someone from whom to gather strength. Whether this person is a parent, relative, teacher, or coach; whether a child has one or two or even more in his life—these are not important details. What matters is that at least one such person exists to give a child an edge.

Search your growing up memories. Who gave you the kind word or encouraging smile at a critical time? Can you recall an emotional ache, a silent scream for someone—anyone in authority—to notice you and give you approval? Your children and all other children know exactly how you felt then. Try to remember yourself.

Such personal involvement by a charismatic, encouraging adult even helps insulate children from drug use and other delinquency.

How can one person make such a difference?

By giving a child the emotional permission to believe in himself or herself. Of course, faking it won't make it. Telling Susie she is the best soccer player on her team when she is a liability whenever the ball gets near her, or Johnny that his piano playing is divine when it crinkles the wallpaper, can have two outcomes—neither of them good. Either the child realizes that you are being untruthful and begins to discount everything you say, or believes you and develops the mother of all persecution complexes since no one else recognizes his or her marvelous talent.

Instead, pay close enough attention so that you can see where actual progress has been made and praise the effort the child put into making the advance. This teaches that obstacles are real but many can be overcome with work and patience.

Providing a "yes-I-can" attitude for a child is a big deal. It's what leads to resiliency. Kids' abilities to rebound from setbacks is a key to success in an increasingly complex world. And while all children need resiliency, it is critical for those with low self-esteem, especially those who have learning or behavioral disabilities or whose home lives are unstable. What every child needs, and especially

these kids, is to look in your eyes and see home, not despair, encouragement rather than disappointment.

While a parent is the most obvious candidate to be the charismatic adult in a child's life, most of us can vouch that a teacher is often the adult who makes a difference. Teachers are perfectly positioned because they cannot only help a child believe in himself but can also provide situations where he can taste success.

Every child has something at which she can be successful. If her violin teacher despairs, how about art lessons? If team sports produce tears and bench time, explore individual athletic events. The successful teacher—and we all are teachers—matches ability with opportunity. A vast majority of those connections can and should happen at home. Celebrate reading a book, feeding the dog, washing the car, making cookies, committing random acts of kindness. Parents, teachers, neighbors, church school teachers, youth leaders, pastors, youth ministers, music ministers, uncles and aunts, bus stop buddies—the list of those who can be a significant, charismatic adult for a child in the corridor who seems all alone at church.

Call their names. That says you know them and to you, they are important. The solution for young people who can't seem to find direction in life is for someone like you to show them the way.

I had such a charismatic adult, my elementary and junior high school principal, Robert K. Hancock. He encouraged me to see beyond the cotton mills of Gastonia, NC. He said I could soar when



**PRESENTED GIFT**—Robert K. Hancock, principal of Flint-Groves School, is shown receiving a gift from Mickey Blackwell, representing the student body, in chapel exercises Monday morning. Mr. Hancock is retiring after 33 years as principal. He will be succeeded by John H. McClure who served this past year as assistant principal. Teachers of the school presented a gift earlier to Mr. Hancock. (Photo by Ennis Atkins Photography.)

others would walk. He said I could sing when others would only mutter. And then he made me believe him.

I was a second grader, lugging the lunch plates from our classroom back to the kitchen when he made the first lasting contribution to who I would become. As I descended a long staircase, I fell, scattering dishes in all directions. I jumped up—and saw Mr. Hancock standing beside me. He didn't say a word. He brushed me off, made sure I was not hurt, helped me gather up the plates and sent me on my way. No embarrassing questions—just compassion, understanding, and concern.

He would drop into classrooms to teach, and to this day I consciously pattern my

teaching style to his. He would call the entire student body together to listen to classical music. Classical music! In junior high school! Copies of great works of art decorated the entrance hall.

Mr. Hancock taught us that learning knows no boundaries and that most of our limitations are self-imposed. He pushed us to our intellectual limits and then gently took our hands and walked with us to the other side of our self-imposed boundaries. While others described the anchors that held me to earth, R.K. Hancock opened to me the wind and clouds that lifted me aloft.

Seek charismatic, energetic, encouraging teachers for your children; help your children's teachers be that way by encouraging them; and find a way to be that adult for your children, and someone else's.

Don't wait for a "big program" to fix the ills you see. Invest some of your life in another's. The big problem will begin to shrink—at the same time another life begins to loom large.

## Mission:

sharing hope . . . changing lives

## Vision:

To provide the highest quality of Christian services to children, adults and families in a caring culture of measurable excellence

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# Grants now available for seniors' safety projects

By **Carol Layton**, NCBAM Director of Communications and Administration

**V**olunteers from NC Baptist churches working through NC Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) will now have access to grant-funded smoke alarms and supplies for home safety projects for seniors.

On the heels of a \$40,000 FEMA Fire Prevention Safety Grant, NCBAM was recently awarded an additional \$78,000 for smoke alarms and other safety devices for seniors.

NCBAM's senior ministry director, Dr. Sandy Gregory, says the safety grant speaks to the heart of NCBAM's work. "These grants will greatly enhance what we can do through our 'Priority #1: Prevention' outreach. Fall and fire prevention are integral to our mission of providing 'help for the journey' to older adults. Sadly, seniors are more than twice as likely to die in house fires. We've seen too many houses with no working alarms—some yellowed or even crumbling with age, or with batteries removed. We're thrilled to have access to these funds. We need teams of people who can partner with us to bless their communities."

Alarms will be available statewide to groups willing to be trained in installation. Groups can ensure all their senior church members have working alarms, or can canvass their communities as a missional outreach.

The grant-funded alarms are state-of-the-art and come with a 10-year sealed-in lithium battery, a loud 85-decibel alarm, and a "near-ex-



NC Baptist churches can help keep aging adults safe by installing smoke alarms in their homes. NCBAM has available grant-funded smoke alarms and other supplies for home safety projects. To learn more, interested churches can contact the NCBAM Call Center at 877-506-2226.

piration" chirp. NCBAM also has carbon-monoxide alarms for homes that burn fossil fuels as well as alarms for deaf/hard-of-hearing individuals.

Over the next two years, NCBAM will also receive \$275,000 from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). These funds may be used for home improvements or modifications that enhance the mobility and security of older adults. Projects will begin with home visits and may include grab bar installation, stairs/porch repair, door locks, wheelchair ramps, or other safety enhancements. Unlike the statewide FEMA grant, the ARPA grant can be used only

in Alamance, Davidson, Guilford, and Randolph counties.

ARPA grant funds will be distributed to NCBAM by the Piedmont Triad Regional Council Area Agency on Aging (PTRC AAA) which administers federal, state and local funding within the 12 counties they serve. "We're thankful for our great partners at the PTRC," said Gregory. "We've worked together many times, and they reached out to us about this grant opportunity—knowing that we rely on mission-minded volunteers who would stretch the funds and double the people served."

Dr. Michael C. Blackwell, president/CEO of Baptist Children's Homes, founded the Baptist Aging Ministry in 2009. "NC Baptist volunteers have always been willing to go the

extra mile to serve seniors in need. With their help, NCBAM served 4,801 clients in 2022. These grant funds will greatly expand what NCBAM and NC Baptists can accomplish in service to seniors."

If you or your church would like to partner with NCBAM in smoke alarm installations, home safety improvements, or in other ways, contact the NCBAM Call Center at 877-506-2226 or [ncbam@bchfamily.org](mailto:ncbam@bchfamily.org).

If you are 65+, live in North Carolina, and have a need that would help you to maintain your safety and independence, please contact the NCBAM Call Center at 877-506-2226.

## Couple marks 15 years serving as cottage parents

(Continued from page 1)

"Scott and Connie have a tremendous heart for children and their 15 years of service is an example of the dedication they have," says State-wide Director of Cottage Care Homes and Foster Care Linda Morgan. "Every child who comes into Scott and Connie's cottage feels love and they are always ready, with arms open wide, to receive the next boy."

Scott asserts that the boys come from difficult pasts. "It is hard for them to trust. But when they see how much we care and how we can be trusted, it changes them for the better."

The Cummings return to the importance of

relationships. "When a boy leaves, he may promise that he will never come back," Connie says. "Then we see him in Walmart and he comes up and hugs our necks."

People who work at BCH have similar testimonies to the Cummings. Their jobs are vocations.

**Do you or someone you know want to make a difference through their career?**

Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) is looking for servant-minded, passionate, hard-working people who are seeking a great mission career opportunity. Imagine a career where your kindness brings a smile to the face of a child who has

never known joy or imagine a career where your care of a special needs adult not only helps him or her but brings comfort to that person's aging parents. Maybe you could see yourself in a career where the outdoors becomes the place where you minister to a child who needs hope.

As a ministry, BCH is committed to providing only the highest quality of care through a highly committed and trained staff. Today could be the day you turn your calling onto a career. Check out the job postings and apply at [bchcareers.org](http://bchcareers.org). Or learn more by contacting Sam Allred at [sallred@bchfamily.org](mailto:sallred@bchfamily.org) or call 336-307-1181.

# How did you become involved? Share your story!

By **Brenda B. Gray**, Executive Vice President, Development & Communications

**A**s I visit with family and friends of Baptist Children's Homes (BCH), one of my first questions is, "How did you hear about our ministry?" I love hearing stories of how people have been touched by BCH. I am always inspired by their generosity and desire to give and be a part of the story today. I love hearing their "why."

The parent of a young girl called and shared that her daughter had heard about our ministry in Vacation Bible School. She was so moved by the stories of children whose mommies and daddies could not care for them that she asked her mom to help her do something to help the kids. On her birthday she asked her family and friends to help our children by giving to them instead of giving her presents. I love hearing stories of children helping children.

A number of you have shared with me how when you were a child your family would have a child from BCH come and stay with your family during holidays. The impact of the story shared with you by your parents instilled in you the commitment to care for the children coming into our care today.

"I have to give back. When I needed a home, BCH was there. They gave me unconditional love, something my family could not give me at the time. They gave me a home for eight years. They made it possible for me to go to college and gave me the emotional support to complete my LCSW license. Today I am giving back by helping other children as a clinical social worker. My husband proposed to me at the big tree behind Mrs. Gray's house. I have so many wonderful memories. My husband and I have chosen to give back by being a monthly giver to BCH. Others gave that I might have a family, I give so they (the children of today and tomorrow) can have a family."

"Our Association shared that you needed Easter baskets for the children. We were so excited to collect items and make special Easter baskets for the children. It was so much fun!"

A Sunday School teacher shares his love for BCH's boys and girls and one of his class members decides to leave a legacy gift that will impact the lives of hundreds of children.

So many lights in the darkness. So many voices raised on behalf of those we serve.

Three precious boys were living in a car, cold and hungry. When they walked through our doors, you were there. The peanut butter and jelly made its way to the table and a conversation of hope began. Their eyes became big and bright as they viewed their rooms. There was a bed with pillows and stuffed animals. There were action figures on the shelves. It looked

like a typical young boys' room. But their lives had been anything but typical. Two things that all of our children have in common is trauma and hunger.

April and May are two months we count on you to raise your voice for those who cannot speak for themselves. April is a time when churches all across North Carolina rally together to feed our children. Your association and your church recently received a letter with a needs list asking for help to feed those who walk through our doors. I want to ask you to do two things, 1) Make sure your church received the information 2) Be their voice. Encourage your Sunday school class, your mission friends, your entire church to help us feed the children. With the increase in food cost your help is critical!

May is Friends of Children month. It is a time when church groups all across our state converge on our campuses for one day mission trips. We need you! Please encourage your church to bring a group to one of our campuses.

June begins Vacation Bible School season. One of our strongest advocates heard about Baptist Children's Homes as a child at Vacation Bible School. "A speaker and some of the children came to our church." Invite a speaker from BCH to be one of your mission speakers during VBS. I am so inspired by the number of children helping our children through VBS.

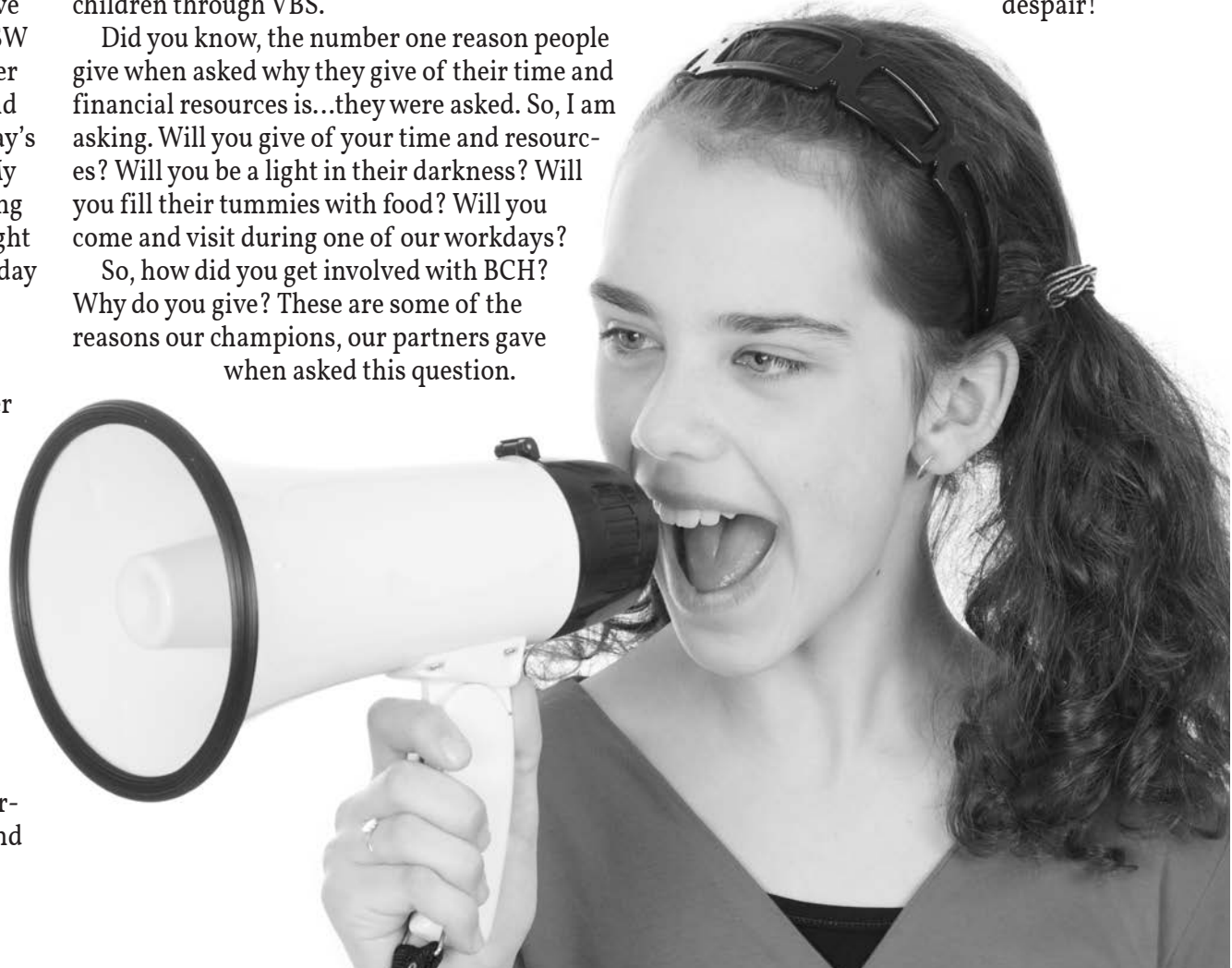
Did you know, the number one reason people give when asked why they give of their time and financial resources is...they were asked. So, I am asking. Will you give of your time and resources? Will you be a light in their darkness? Will you fill their tummies with food? Will you come and visit during one of our workdays?

So, how did you get involved with BCH? Why do you give? These are some of the reasons our champions, our partners gave when asked this question.

"They have rescued thousands of children over the past 138 years." "To whom much is given, much is required." "I give because they are good stewards. The ministry is cost effective with the majority of funds given going into direct service to those in need." "I love the children." "My wife and I are supporters of BCH for many reasons, but a particular reason is that we want to be encouragers and helpers of those that have been overlooked, abused or otherwise discarded in society. We realize that all people are created by God and are valued by Him. We therefore, want to assist them physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually." "God owns it all, but he chooses to place it in our pockets. We want to use it to build God's kingdom. It is His money—we are striving to be found faithful with it." "These are investments into God's kingdom that will bear eternal returns." These heartfelt reasons say it all. I am so thankful for each of our ministry partners, both young and old. You all inspire and encourage me!

If you do not tell them your BCH story, how will they hear? Please share! Please speak up for those that cannot speak for themselves. I will look forward to seeing trucks filled with food during the Food Roundup and buses filled with people at our Friends of Children workdays.

Thank you for being light in their darkness, food in their hungry bellies, and hope in their despair!





# 661 souls

**We celebrate 661 decisions for  
Christ made in the past five years!**

Through your Easter gift, you are a part of every life that is changed! Your generosity provides a safe home, daily provisions, and the loving care of cottage parents who show children Christ's unconditional love. Without your support, it is impossible to meet the needs of the thousands and thousands of lives Baptist Children's Homes is privileged to impact every year.

**Please make your life-changing  
Easter gift today. Thank you!**

## Use my Easter gift to bring children hope!

☐ \$50   ☐ \$100   ☐ \$250   ☐ \$500   ☐ \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Any size gift!

To make a gift by check: Print your information below and mail this form with your check.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Make your gift by credit card at [bchfamily.org/easter](http://bchfamily.org/easter) or scan the QR code. You can also call Faith Frazier at 336-474-1312.

☐ Yes, I would like to receive email updates.   ☐ Contact me with information on how to prepare a Christian Will.

I have included Baptist Children's Homes in my estate.





# Morgan gives God glory for 50 years of service

By **Linda Morgan**, Statewide Director, Cottage Care Homes/Foster Care

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This year marks the historic 50th anniversary of Linda Morgan's service to children and families. On March 22, staff members, family, and friends celebrated this momentous occasion at a luncheon gala held in her honor at Broyhill Home in Clyde. Below, Linda reflects on her tenure and how God took an "old blackberry patch" and created a "haven of hope."

**O**n March 19, 1973, at the age of 19, I became an employee of Baptist Children's Homes (BCH). Little did I know that in March of 2023, I would be celebrating my 50th anniversary in service to children and families. As I reflect on this accomplishment, the most important part of my experience is knowing God has directed my life. It is certainly His hand that has guided me throughout my career—and to Him be all the glory.

I arrived on campus driving my 1966 Chevy Malibu and never really planning to stay. My goal was to work hard while looking for another job in Haywood County. However, God had other plans. My first job was secretary of Broyhill Home. I quickly noticed what a difference the staff members were making in the lives of hurting children. It inspired me and I set my attention on making a difference, too.

As the years passed, I became a child care worker supervisor, resident director, and the director of campus life at Broyhill Home. And then I was humbled when I was tapped by BCH President/CEO Dr. Michael C. Blackwell to become the Western Area Director. Today, my title is Senior Statewide Director of Cottage Care/Foster Care. However, of all those titles, there is only one that I truly treasure—that is "Child of God." When I speak in churches and before groups, that is the title I use.



Morgan was honored with the unveiling of "Linda's Haven of Hope Garden" that will be constructed on the Broyhill campus.



Above, Broyhill Home staff members provide entertainment during the luncheon gala celebration held in honor of Linda Morgan's 50th anniversary. Below, BCH President/CEO Michael C. Blackwell with Morgan after presenting the "Linda Loves" program highlighting the impact of her service to children and families.

Over these past 50 years, God has allowed me to testify of His greatness as He turned an old blackberry patch into a haven of hope for children. I was there to see Broyhill Home being built and the old saying "build it and they will come" certainly rings true. I witnessed God-called staff come to fill the roles of loving cottage parents, case managers, office professionals, and maintenance workers. They all came because God directed them to come. The staff members at BCH are the essence of: "Here I am Lord.... Send Me."

Throughout all these years, I have witnessed God's hand on a group of Christians who answered the call to serve. We are all here to care for God's children.

I have treasured memories of my 50 years. They involve the children and helping them to make memories they can take with them as they leave. Many times, children come back to visit and they always share the memories they captured while living at Baptist Children's Homes.

The other day, I was driving down the road and I saw a sign that said "Disaster Recovery Center", and it hit me that at Baptist Children's



Homes we have been in the disaster recovery business for the past 138 years—going about God's business of sharing His promise to broken hearts, the abused and neglect-

ed, those who fall into the wrong crowds, those from broken families.

We are going about God's business of sharing His promise, "As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee: I will never fail thee nor forsake thee." Children need to hear that promise when they are traumatized and their lives are in turmoil.

Fifty years, and it seems like yesterday I began employment. Why? It seems like yesterday because it is a joy to work with children and staff knowing that God is with us and that He will never leave us nor forsake us as we allow Him to be our guide in caring for children. It is a high and holy moment when you work each day providing God's presence in the life of a child.



# Church welcomes first new pastor in three decades

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Managing Editor

For the first time in three decades, there is a new pastor at Mills Home Baptist Church preaching and ministering to the boys and girls at Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) flagship campus in Thomasville.

Luis Quintanar became the pastor at Mills Home Baptist Church during two special installation services in February. The first part took place during the church's Sunday morning worship service on February 19. The second half was during the mid-week service on Wednesday, February 22 so that all Thomasville area staff members could attend and meet Pastor Luis and his wife Stephanie.

"This is a historic moment for the spiritual center of Mills Home," says BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell who presided at the service. "The last time a new pastor came to this congregation was more than 31 years ago when we welcomed Randy Stewart."

Randy Stewart pastored from 1991 until retiring in 2020. His wife Diane, who served in the church alongside Randy, passed away earlier that same year.

"I appreciate those who have presided here and delivered messages of hope, salvation and forgiveness during this period of interim work," Blackwell shares.

Luis was one of several BCH staff members that filled the pulpit. He and Stephanie began as cottage parents at Mills Home in January 2022.

They provided care while modeling the unconditional love of Jesus to the vulnerable boys and girls living at Stokes Cottage.

When Luis filled in at the church services, others in attendance saw something special.

"When we started looking for a pastor, we put in a lot of thought and prayer, but it needed to be God's timing," says Regina Keener, Director at Mills Home. "Luis filled in one Sunday and a



Former cottage parents Luis and Stephanie Quintanar sing "Nothing But the Blood" during the special "Service of Installation" on Wednesday, February 22 at Mills Home Baptist Church. Luis became the new pastor at the church located on BCH original campus in Thomasville. Mills Home Baptist Church was established in 1891, six years after Mills Home, then known as the Thomasville Orphanage, accepted its first child in care.

staff member told me he should be our pastor. Then he filled in on a Wednesday and I heard the same thing from another staff member. It all flowed from there."

The next step began with a knock at the Quintanar's door.

"I opened the door and it was Regina asking if I wanted to be the pastor," recalls Luis. "At first, to be completely honest, I didn't."

Luis and Stephanie loved serving in their cottage, building relationships with the children and caring for their daily needs. It made the idea of doing anything different, even becoming the church's pastor, challenging to consider.

After much prayer and conversation with Stephanie, God changed Luis' mind.

"I said, 'I want to make Your will my will, Lord, so that I can follow it with everything that I've got,'" Luis shared with the congregation at the Wednesday installation service. "I am committed to BCH. I'm committed to the kids here because I love every single one of you so much. I would do anything for you."

In addition to his pastorate

responsibilities, Luis and Stephanie are also serving with BCH's foster care ministry helping to train other couples to be foster parents through the EVERY CHILD initiative.

"The thing you notice when you step onto the Mills Home grounds are Oak trees. Pastor Luis, I want you to stand tall and to be a mighty oak," Blackwell proclaimed at the service. "I want our children here to realize that God loves you and that Jesus is the way to salvation."



BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell greets Luis and Stephanie Quintanar. He presided over the installation service.



BCH staff members and children welcomed the Quintanars after the installation service on Wednesday, February 22. Prior to his installation as pastor, the couple served as Mills Home cottage parents.



# Help feed the boys and girls

When churches and friends unite for the Food Roundup, hundreds and hundreds of boys and girls living at Baptist Children’s Homes are fed. You are not only caring for their physical needs but children see the love of Christ through your efforts.

- MOST NEEDED (in bold):**
- Household cleaning products (i.e. bleach, Comet, Lysol spray and wipes, Clorox spray, Windex, Pinesol, Pledge, Tilex, etc.)
  - Canned Fruits
  - Fruit Juice (Apple, Orange, Grape, Cranberry)
  - Laundry Detergent
  - Paper Products (paper towels, toilet paper, napkins, Kleenex)
  - Bottled Water
  - Dry Cereal
  - Spaghetti Sauce
  - Pasta (Spaghetti, Lasagna,
  - Macaroni)
  - Canned Tomatoes (diced, sauce, paste)
  - Pancake Mix and Syrup
  - Soups (All types & condensed)
  - Sugar (Granulated & Brown)
  - Flour
  - Splenda
  - Popcorn, Kettle Corn
  - Apple Sauce
  - Fruit Pie Filling (Cherry and Peach)
  - Beverage Mixes (Tea, Tang, Kool-Aid, Lemonade, Cider Mix - All Sugar Free)
  - Vegetable Oil, Shortening, Olive Oil, Pam Cooking

- Spray, Bakers Choice
- Canned Sweet Potatoes,
- Canned Yams
- Canned Meats (pink salmon, tuna, roast beef, chicken - packed in water)
- Stuffing Mix
- Gravy Mixes
- Hamburger, Chicken, and Tuna Helper (all types)
- Pickles (Sweet & Dill)
- Refried Beans
- Hot Chocolate Mix
- Snack Foods with & without sugar (Fruit Rollups, Fruit Cups, Beef Jerky, Slim Jims, Pepperoni Sticks, Cheese Nips, Pretzels, etc.)
- Healthy Snacks (Dried Fruit, Nuts, Raisins, Cranraisins, Trail Mix)
- Individual Cookie Packs
- Jello
- PopTarts
- Rice
- Instant Potatoes (scallop, au gratin, mashed, julienne)
- Muffin Mixes
- Bisquick Mix
- Kidney Beans
- Pickle Relish
- Cranberry Sauce
- Mac & Cheese
- Corn Meal
- Jiffy Mixes, Corn Muffin Mix, Hush Puppy Mix
- Peanut Butter
- Jelly, Jams, Preserves (Strawberry is the favorite)
- Pizza & Pizza Dough Mix
- Saltine Crackers, Ritz Crackers, Graham Crackers
- Sauces (A-1, Steak, BBQ, Texas Pete, Cheese, Worcestershire, Soy, Teriyaki, Sweet & Sour)
- Spices and Seasonings (including Salt & Pepper)
- Dishwashing detergents
- Laundry pre-treating products (i.e. Shout, Spray and Wash)
- Brooms, Mops, Scrub Brushes, Dust Pans
- Foil and Plastic Wrap
- SOS Pads
- Fabric Softener
- Dryer Sheets
- Sanitary Pads & Tampons
- Hand Lotion
- Shampoo
- Body Wash
- Soap

- OTHER NEEDED ITEMS:**
- Brownie & Cookie Mix
  - Canned Vegetables
  - Individual Chef Boyardee cups

- Clif brand nutrition bars
- Hot Dog Chili
- Coffee (Regular & Decaf)
- Coffee Creamer
- Sweetened Condensed Milk
- Evaporated Milk
- Powdered Milk
- Flavorings (Vanilla, etc.)
- French Fried Onions
- Honey
- Ketchup
- Mustard
- Oatmeal
- Parmesan Cheese
- Puddings, Pudding Cups
- Salsa
- Vinegar
- Paper Products (Cups, Plates, Bowls, Plastic Ware, Dixie Cups)
- Trash Bags (large & small)
- Zip-Loc bags (Sandwich, Snack, Quart & Gallon Sizes)
- Band Aids
- Rubbing Alcohol/Peroxide
- Anti-bacterial ointment
- Razors
- Shaving Cream/Shaving Gel
- Dental Floss
- Hair brushes
- Deodorant
- Conditioner
- Tooth Paste
- Tooth Brushes
- Diapers (all sizes)
- Baby Wipes
- Bug Repellent
- Wasp/Hornet Spray
- Sunblock 30+
- Batteries (AA , AAA and D)
- Disposable Gloves (Latex & Non-Latex)

Gift Cards are appreciated for buying perishables and items not received. (i.e. Wal-Mart, Sams Clubs, Food Lion, Lowes, Ingles, Piggly Wiggly).

We can use all size cans. Some locations prefer #10 cans (family size).

**IMPORTANT:** Please check for expired dates on food -- we cannot accept expired items.

Please help our volunteer truck drivers by packing your church’s donations in small, sturdy boxes.

Pack like items together. Please do not pack chemicals with food.

# Statewide pick-up points ready for collections

**Please Call First.** Delivery hours vary at each collection location. Call in advance to schedule your delivery please. Thank you!

<b>Alexander Association</b> Becky Parker 828-632-6546 <b>Anson Association</b> Kim Glenn 704-694-2790 <b>Ashe Association</b> Debbie Miller 336-846-5631 <b>Atlantic Association</b> Rachel Dupree 252-447-4593 <b>Avery Association</b> Bob Gorbett 828-733-6674 <b>Beulah Association</b> Wendy Oliver 336-599-6117 <b>Bladen Association</b> Kelly Self 910-862-3496 <b>Blue Ridge Association</b> Sharon Blanton 828-559-0224 <b>Brier Creek Association</b> Karen Slate 336-307-9464 <b>Brunswick Association</b> Elyse Brown 910-754-7979 <b>Brushy Mountain Assoc.</b> Gloria Kilby 336-838-4407	<b>Buncombe Association</b> Della Brindley 828-252-1864 <b>Burnt Swamp Assoc.</b> Odum Home - Kathy Locklear 910-521-3433 ext. 6005 <b>Cabarrus Association</b> Marvin Tyson 704-786-9171 <b>Caldwell Association</b> Darlene Townsend 828-758-4081 <b>Cape Fear Network of Baptist Churches</b> 910-799-1160 Pine Valley Baptist Church 910-791-1949 <b>Carolina Association</b> Paula James 828-693-4274 <b>Catawba River Assoc.</b> Veronica Klapp 828-437-0137 <b>Catawba Valley Assoc.</b> Woodlawn Baptist Church Charity Travis 828-464-6921 <b>Cheoah Association</b> New Hope Baptist Church, Robbinsville Gerald & Nellie Phillips 828-479-8279	<b>Chowan Association</b> Annie Weir 252-426-9621 <b>Columbus Association</b> Teresa Powell 910-642-2155 <b>Dan Valley Association</b> Karen Slate 336-307-9464 <b>Dock Association</b> Participating churches mail gift cards to BCH <b>Eastern Association</b> Charity Baptist Men on Missions, Rose Hill Sandra Winstead 910-289-2019 <b>Elkin Association</b> Karen Slate 336-307-9464 <b>Flat River Association</b> Myra Klein 919-693-5215 <b>French Broad Association</b> Robin Jackson 828-689-2845 <b>Graham Association</b> New Hope Baptist Church, Robbinsville Gerald & Nellie Phillips 828-479-8279	<b>Greater Cleveland Assoc.</b> Katie Harris 704-482-3472 <b>Greater Gaston Assoc.</b> Karen Weaver 704-867-7257 <b>Green River Association</b> Teresa Sams 828-286-9278 <b>Haywood Association</b> Broyhill Home - Linda Morgan 828-627-9254 <b>Liberty Association</b> Mills Home 336-474-1200 <b>Little River Association</b> Cameron Boys Camp Sandy Snyder 910-245-5001 <b>Macon Association</b> Gary Holland 828-524-3215 <b>Metrolina Association</b> Angie Wolff 704-375-1197 ext. 101 <b>Mitchell Association</b> Jennifer Beck 828-765-9412 <b>Mount Zion Association</b> 336-226-0249	<b>Neuse Association</b> Kennedy Home 252-522-0811 <b>New River Association</b> Jeanette Palmero 910-347-3146 <b>New South River Assoc.</b> Robert Ivey/Regina Hammonds 910-485-8791 <b>North Roanoke Assoc.</b> Regina Balasoto 252-443-3883 <b>Pee Dee Association</b> Janie Frye 910-895-5282 <b>Piedmont Association</b> Rebecca Newlin 336-275-7651 <b>Polk Association</b> Inez Jackson 828-894-3787 <b>Raleigh Association</b> Iris Woodard 919-231-3995 <b>Randolph Association</b> Erica Smith 336-625-4175 <b>Robeson Association</b> Odum Home - Kathy Locklear 910-521-3433 910-318-3981	<b>Rocky Face Association</b> <i>Only Collecting Gift Cards</i> Rev. Brian Eades 828-612-2684 <b>Rowan Association</b> Darcell Mangan 704-637-3407 <b>Sandhills Association</b> Cameron Boys Camp Sandy Snyder 910-245-5001 <b>Sandy Creek Association</b> 1. Hickory Mountain BC 919-742-3928 2. East Sanford Baptist Ch. 919-776-3241 3. Moons Chapel BC 919-742-4569 4. Cool Springs BC 919-776-4633 <b>Sandy Run Association</b> Evelyn Lane 828-245-2613	<b>South Yadkin Association</b> 704-873-4372 <b>Stanly-Montgomery Assoc.</b> Albermale Assoc. Office Jennifer Snellings/Judy Hartsell - 704-982-1033 <b>Stone Mountain Assoc.</b> Sherry Hicks 336-696-4210 <b>Stony Fork Association</b> Roy Gryder 828-295-3410 <b>Surry Association</b> Susan White 336-789-5701 <b>Tar River Association</b> Louisburg Baptist Church 919-496-4195 <b>Tennessee River Assoc.</b> FBC, Bryson City Judy Hensley 828-488-2679 <b>Three Forks Association</b> Jennifer Waldorf 828-264-4482 <b>Transylvania Association</b> Nancy Kirkpatrick 828-877-3203 <b>Triad Church Network</b> Maria Wise 336-830-8189	<b>Triangle East Association</b> Johnston Comm. College Carolyn Tharrington 919-934-3749 <b>Truett Association</b> Duronda Hood 828-837-5401 <b>Tuckaseegee Association</b> Gracella Morris 828-586-6011 <b>Union Association</b> Bessie Benson 704-283-8383 <b>United Association</b> (Drop at Metrolina Assoc.) Angie Wolff 704-375-1197 Ext. 101 <b>West Chowan Assoc.</b> Rebeccah Adams 252-332-3235 <b>Yadkin Association</b> Brenda Garner/Dennis Shaw 336-679-8731 <b>Yancey Association</b> Joe Miller 828-682-2388 <b>Yates Association</b> Teresa Dotson/Marty Childers 919-489-3396
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# News of alumni who have passed stir hearts— Alumna credits Mrs. Griffin for making life better

By **Lib Johnson** (336) 299-7412 [libsjohnson@triad.rr.com](mailto:libsjohnson@triad.rr.com)

**W**e hope you are looking forward to Homecoming 2023 on August 4, 5, & 6! The Mills Home Alumni Council is already immersed in preparations. One big thing in the works is updating and printing the new address book. So please send any corrections, additions, or new addresses you might have to **Flora Hicks Patton**, 6428 Sisk Carter Rd., Rockwell, NC 28138. The deadline is June 10 with the book going to the printer June 15.

As mentioned in the last column, another sad loss for alumni is **Ruby Lee Laws** of Lexington, North Carolina. She passed away on January 10, 2023. **Ruby, Eddie and Margaret** entered Mills Home (MH) in 1951 and she graduated in 1960. I was a few years older than Ruby but I remember that she was a cute, petite girl whom everyone seemed to love. She was predeceased by her husband **Grayson Laws Sr.**, her son **Eddie Barrier**, and her brother-in-law **Leonard Martinez**. She is survived by her sons, **Tino and Grayson**, and her siblings, **Eddie and Margaret**. (Robert E. Lee and Margaret Ann Martinez of Asheboro.) She is also survived by 11 grandchildren and many great-grandchildren and great-great grandchildren. Ruby's funeral service was held on January 13th at the Davidson Funeral Home Chapel in Lexington. The family's wish is that any memorials be made to Mills Home, 515 Blackwell Blvd., Thomasville, NC 27360.

And we grieve our loss of **H. Louise Maness Pierce**, who passed away Sunday, January 22. **Louise and Oren** entered MH in 1952 and she graduated in 1964. She married **David Whitener Sr.** and had one son. Widowed at age 20, Louise went on to earn an AA degree from Davidson County Community College and a BA from UNC-Greensboro. For most of her adult years she worked in the library at David-

son County Community College. She attended Park Place Baptist Church and later Welcome First Baptist Church. She loved reading books and traveling to such places as Hawaii and Arizona. She especially loved attending the Gaston County Library's annual April book sale. She is preceded in death by her husband, **Paul David Whitener, Sr.** and her only son, **Paul David Whitener, Jr.** Surviving is a brother, **Oren Maness (Tetyana)**, a granddaughter, three great-grandchildren, and a daughter-in-law. A funeral service was held January 27 at the J.C. Green and Sons Funeral Home Chapel in Thomasville. Burial followed at Holly Hill Memorial Park Cemetery. The family requested that memorial donations be made to the Baptist Children's Homes of NC, PO Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27361. Friends may send condolences to Oren Maness and family at 902 S. Chestnut St., Gastonia, NC 28054.

We were very saddened by the news of the death of **George Fore** on January 30. He entered MH from Hendersonville in 1948 with siblings **William, Lee, and Mae**. His sister **Frances** entered MH later. Very well liked, George was always active in sports and played basketball for MH. After he graduated from Thomasville High School, he married **Diane Hughes** and made his home in Thomasville. He held a job for 32 years at Duke Power and retired in the position of supervisor. He was very active with the Davidson High School Booster Club and assisted greatly in the revitalization of the athletic facilities in the 1980s. He took great pleasure in hunting, fishing, wood working and a life time commitment to the Baptist Faith. He is preceded in death by Mae, William and two other sisters. He is survived by Diane, his wife of 55 years, daughter **Cindy**, son **Tony**, brother **Lee**, sister **Frances**, and three grandchildren.

A memorial service was held for George on February 4 at his favorite time of the day, 10:30 AM, at the J.C. Green & Sons Chapel in Thomasville. Condolences may be sent to George's wife Diane and family at 1118 Hillcrest Ave. Thomasville, NC 27360.

Sadly, we recently learned of the deaths of **Susan Spainhour Preston ('69)**, **Milton Bliss ('45)**, **Juanita White Messervey ('62)** and **Frank Huggins ('54)**. We will have more about them in upcoming issues.

Friends may wish to send condolences to alumni who have suffered losses. (Addresses included.) **Evelyn McDonald Leigh lost her husband Jerry on May 26, 2022 (PO Box 34, McAdenville, NC 2810).** **Ruth Ann Highfill Reavis lost her son Conrad in March (209 Marie Dr., King, NC 27021).** **And Shirley Highfill Frye lost her husband of 49 years last January (2417 Cedar Valley Dr., Conover, NC 28613.)** Please keep these families in your prayers.

I was delighted to get acquainted with **Delania Ellington LeFever** by phone recently. In closing our chat, I asked her to send me a memory of something that inspired her while living at MH. She wrote: "I will always remember how living at Mills Home made me feel like a rich kid in a lot of ways. My family was so poor that I had never had the opportunity to go to special things like the circus or to the beach. And because my family was so poor, I had always felt like 'good families' didn't want their girls hanging around with me. Consequently, I always had few friends and somewhat of an inferiority complex. I was amazed one time right after I entered MH that another girl said to me, 'Do you think you are too good to go to the gym with us?' I replied, 'I would never have thought that you wanted me to go with you.'"

"Because I never felt 'good enough' or that people would like me, I was always willing to do any-

thing to gain acceptance. I did not want to have any conflict or have someone be upset with me. Once the girls in the cottage realized that, it was easy for certain ones to manipulate me into doing their 'duties' (chores they were supposed to do). After a time, **Mrs. Judy Griffin** called me into her room and said, 'I see these girls getting you to do their chores, and you never tell them no. Here you are, this big strapping farm girl letting everyone push you around. If you don't start standing up for yourself, people will do that all your life. If you are okay with that then fine, but if not, you had better learn to say no.'

"I did eventually learn to say no and other ways to not be manipulated, and I felt more accepted. I'm so thankful that Mrs. Griffin could analyze my situation and help me learn to fight against being taken advantage of. She helped me change my life for the better. Consequently, I learned how to pick true friends, truly one of life's treasures."

**Reminders:** Please remember that (until further notice) you can contact **Lib Johnson** at [libsjohnson@triad.rr.com](mailto:libsjohnson@triad.rr.com) or 336-299-7412 with **Charity & Children** address changes, additions, or deletions. Remember that **Sharon D. Stiles** is the person to talk with regarding ashes being placed in the columbarium. (Sharon: 1588 Elkhart Circle, Gastonia, NC 28054, ([sharondstiles51@yahoo.com](mailto:sharondstiles51@yahoo.com) or 704-685-2443.) Remember also that contributions toward the upkeep of the Columbarium at God's Acre are always welcome and should be sent to Alumni Treasurer **Flora Hicks Patton** at 6428 Sisk Carter Rd., Rockwell, NC 28138.



Lib Johnson was a resident of Mills Home from 1946 to 1957. Johnson began writing the Mills Home alumni column in 1992.



## Making News Every Day Around the State



### Alverta Bolick Home dress their best

The men from BCH's home for Intellectually and Developmentally Disabled Adults in Asheville dressed in their best attire as they attended the "A Night to Shine" event in February.



### Staff grandson befriends BCH child

The grandson of cottage parents Richard and Diane Schwall made a new friend with one of the children in care at the couple's cottage. The Schwalls serve at Broyhill Home in Clyde.



### Two Cities Church is for EVERY CHILD

Couples from the Winston-Salem church are undergoing training with BCH staff to become foster care homes as a part of the EVERY CHILD initiative. Info at every-child.org.



### Banquet spotlights adoption stories

The Charlotte Banquet for Christian Adoption Services featured testimonies from families witnessing God work through their adoption journeys. More info: christianadopt.org



### Cottage parent and daughter shine

Cottage parent Rachel and daughter Kenna participate in the Broyhill Home Talent Show. When a couple becomes cottage parents, their own children are part of the journey.



### Women's ministry collects supplies

Members from Pleasant Garden Baptist delivered valentine cards and treats for boys and girls living at Mills Home. They also collected baby items for the teen mother/baby home.



### Banner Bears gives to foster children

Ladies from Banner Bears, a small nonprofit providing stuffed bears and gift bags for foster children and others in their community, delivered items for Kennedy Home in Kinston.



### Preschoolers enjoy Pajama Day

Students at BCH's Weekday Education center in Thomasville celebrated the end of their Dr. Seuss week by having Pajama Day. The children all wore their brightly-colored PJ's.



### Church sponsors basketball outing

Friends from Living Hope at Ballantyne made it possible for children and their caregivers at Mills Home to make new memories by attending a Charlotte Hornets basketball game.

## Set Your Reminder and Join Us for these Events & Mission Days



### FOOD ROUNDUP: April 2023

#### DEDICATIONS

Emmanuel Home  
April 25 – Thomasville

Turner Cottage  
May 22 – Hayesville

River Hill Refuge  
To Be Determined – Shelby

#### CAMP FOUNDER'S DAY

Cameron Boy's Camp – May 20

### FUNDRAISERS

CAS Rocky Mount Golf  
Tournament: April 21

CAS Apex Banquet: April 27

Ride to Clyde: May 10 – 13

Broyhill Barbecue Festival  
May 13 – Clyde

Hope in Style: August 26  
High Point Country Club

### FRIENDS OF CHILDREN SATURDAY MISSIONS

Cameron Boys Camp, Cameron –  
April 15

Camp Duncan, Aberdeen – May 6

Kennedy Home, Kinston – May 13

Odum Home, Pembroke – May 20



For a complete 2023 list of events as well as registration and other details, visit [bchfamily.com/events](http://bchfamily.com/events)



We equip your church to be a part of foster care & adoption so that every child receives the caring home he or she deserves.

Get connected at [every-child.org](http://every-child.org)



Statewide positions to serve children, families and/or adults are available for you or someone you know.

**BCHCAREERS.ORG**

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and it becomes a part of the ministry. Doctor visits, rides to school, church activities — your vehicle helps!



Contact Sam Barefoot  
at [svbarefoot@bchfamily.org](mailto:svbarefoot@bchfamily.org)  
or call him at 336-474-1224



# #3641

How can we help you? Contact 1.800.476.3669 or [bchfamily.org/referral](http://bchfamily.org/referral) >>>

For each person's specific need, Baptist Children's Homes offers a unique ministry that is prepared to help. Reach out today.





# Visiting homes and sponsors proved invaluable—Homecoming to feature Dr. Michael C. Blackwell

By **JOHN THOMPSON**, 104 Village Court, Havelock, NC 28532 (252) 671-3515 jthompson117@ec.rr.com

**T**his year's Kennedy Home (KH) Homecoming will have come and gone before you know it. So plan now to attend. We want to have a huge crowd. Bring your families and show them where you lived at one time. **Mrs. Doris Russ** will be playing the keyboard with one of my former piano students, **Penney Maready**. Doris is in her 90s and still plays for her church in Kinston. **Dr. Michael C. Blackwell**, Baptist Children's Homes' president and "chief encouragement officer" will be our guest pastor for the weekend. Our alumni president, **Katie Parker**, along with some of us alumni, have planned a great weekend of activities. Come on folks, let's fill the streets of the campus.

Thanks to all who wrote to me about visiting homes and foster homes for me to share in my column.

**Mary Beth Thomas** wrote: "I lived with the Harrisons and, even after I left in 1977, we still remain as family. In fact, I was known as the daughter without papers. They were my 'parents.' They were the best for me to have. We have been in a relationship which has lasted 46 years if not longer. My children call them **Grandma and Grandpa Harrison**. I was the lucky one to be able to say KH was my home. The Harrison family welcomed me and my family and I am proof that family doesn't mean blood related in every case."

**Debbie Caulder** shared that Mr. Harrison was the principal at school.

**Sandra Sawyer** shared that **Jimmy and Doris Powers** were her visiting home: "They were our visiting home parents for three or four years and we stayed close well past the time we left KH. The Powers were wonderful. They were a great loving family. Their son, **Jamie**, and I were real close during

those years. I'm glad to have been cared for by this family."

**Susie Hughes** added that **Lisa Perkerson** had the Powers family as her visiting parents, too. It was great to be provided visiting homes for the children who couldn't go home on fourth weekends when the rest left the campus.

**Paul Stone** wrote: "I had what was called a 'clothing sponsor.' They were a Sunday School class from Raleigh. The family I stayed with was a very fine family named **Steele**. He was a captain on the Raleigh police force. They had five children and me as well. Sadly over the years, I have lost contact and never realized it. I am so thankful for what they did for me."

**Barbara Smith** added: "As far as a visiting family, I remember we would ride the bus from Kinston to Wilmington on the fourth weekends of the month. Some times **Paul and Wayne McDowell** would ride the bus with us to Wilmington, too."

**Edward Gaston Pait** ('60-'70) shared: "We went to visit family members at Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and a week or so during the summer. I, along with my siblings, would go to Wilmington to stay with a family. **Michael Butler** would go home with me occasionally."

Foster Homes are excellent places to place children who need a different kind of care. One particular one stands out—the home of **Rev. and Mrs. Roy Huthmacher**.

**Roy Huthmacher** has now gone to be with Lord. But "**Ma**" **Huthmacher** will turn 110 on her next birthday. It didn't seem that the Huthmachers could have children so they looked around for a way to help other children by allowing them to become a part of their family. They always stated how much they loved children. After they found out they could be fos-

ter parents, the Lord gave them a wonderful daughter of their own. But they were still interested in helping other children in need. All this time, he was a pastor in churches.

One day, they came to KH to visit with **Mrs. Janie Malpuss** who served as a social case worker at that time. My **Becky** and I loved Janie. She became one of our closest friends. She was working with **Rev. Horace Hawes** who recently went to be with the Lord. Mr. Hawes was in charge of all the social work at that time. Everyone really loved Mr. Hawes and his wife **Mary**. Mrs. Janie told the Huthmachers about three boys who were living at KH, but it was felt they needed to be in a foster home. The boys were 9, 12, and 13. The **Bickle boys—Johnny, Ricky, and Bobby**—captured their hearts. The Huthmachers agreed to work with "ready grown" children.

All of this was back in the 70s. I left KH in 1977 to serve at Tabernacle Baptist Church in New Bern. I learned that **Bobby** was living in Bridgeton. His Aunt Virginia lived in Bridgeton also and she attended church at Tabernacle. He lived about a block away from her. I have been trying to keep in touch with Bobby for a long time now. During the real bad hurricanes his house was destroyed. Samaritan's Purse stepped in along with the Billy Graham Association and built him a home way up in the sky so that future storms would go under his home. He became very active at the Temple Baptist in New Bern, accepted Christ as his Lord, and was baptized. **Johnny** now lives in South Carolina and **Ricky** died not long ago and is buried just a few rows over from my Becky in the Green Leaf Cemetery.

I have taken Bobby out there to see his brother's grave. I have told you all this to show you how a child in care at KH became a foster

child, became a born again Christian, and is still around for me to help him when I can and just simply be his friend.

Have you ever wondered how you can help at Kennedy Home? There are actually many ways to become a part of the Baptist Children's Homes ministry throughout North Carolina. Your children, youth, and adults can volunteer for Friends of Children days and take care of the lawn, cutting shrubs, and lend a hand with other chores. Cottages always need help with perishable groceries. Think about bringing grocery gift cards or participate in the yearly Food Roundup. It's always appreciated when Sunday school classes or individuals send gift certificates to restaurants like Chick-fil-A. There is always a need for certain canned goods and paper products such as toilet paper, paper towels, and napkins—all the things you use in your home. It is important to keep it in stock. Also, a church can adopt a cottage to provide a Christmas party, Summer cook-out, or celebrate birthdays. I know of one Sunday school class that was provided with a list of all the children's birthdays and the children received a card and a gift on his or her birthday. That is something that really makes a difference. But I think the most important thing you can do is pray. Pray for Dr. Blackwell, the other leaders, those who provide direct care, and most importantly, those who receive loving care every day in the name of Jesus.

If you are ever in Havelock, feel free to stop by 104 Village Court to see me. It gets mighty lonely without my Becky after being married to her for 56 years. Love ya—jt



John Thompson served at Kennedy Home from 1972-1977. Today, he enjoys an active retirement.



# Living a new normal after visiting the Holy Land

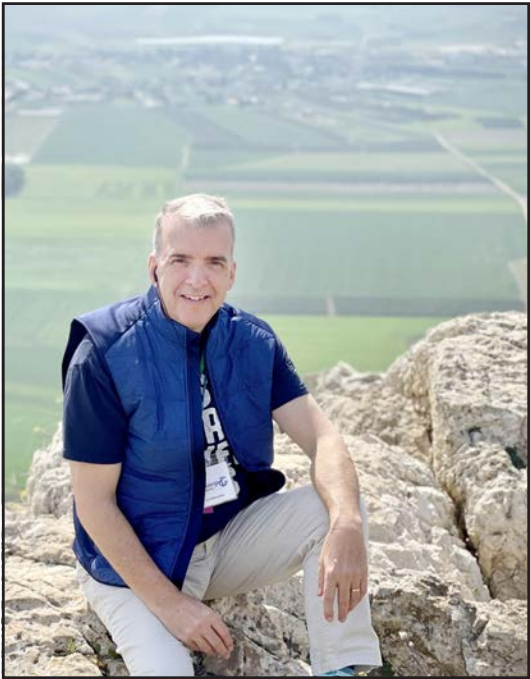
By Jim Edminson, Editor

I didn't think it would be so difficult returning to normal. The dining table, only recently packing central for my long-awaited trip to Israel, is now the receptacle of mementos, photo books, and collected bits and pieces from my journey. The physical unpacking took mere minutes, but the mental, emotional, and spiritual unpacking continue weeks after coming back. Some of the collected memorabilia are in small piles awaiting distribution to family—needlepoint bookmarks from Bethlehem, stuffed toy mascots from National Park visits, dreidels, postcards, recipes and spice blends. There are piles of museum and historic site books, my reading for the months ahead as I relive where I went, what I experienced. I brought back a piece of olive wood sculpture capturing an image of Jesus as Shepherd that I do not think I will grow weary walking by, touching, remembering.

But most of what I returned with is not so easy to sort through; there are no physical touchstones to point out and examine. Some of the memories are deeply tucked inside, and at odd moments, they surface in images and yearnings of the heart, and I travel back in my mind and walk again those ancient paths.

The Jezreel Valley quite took my breath away: its flowers and wild grass and panoramas. In the valley, farmlands boast fields of wheat, melons, chickpeas, cotton, sunflowers, and corn. There are orchards of citrus and succulent pears. Archaeological digs bordering the

valley showcase the past and visitors can walk where Gideon tread, where Jesus preached, where Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal, and according to Revelation, where the final battle, Armageddon, will occur.



Jezreel Valley from Mount Precipice

Working in tandem with Pastor Ray, Israeli guide Yair filled in background information that melded the Holy Land's past with its present. He used the digs to give evidence of the history we all know from our Bible. He pointed to ongoing conflicts today, but he also told of harmony among the many people who call this land home.

Pastor Ray read from his Bible at each step of the pilgrimage, weaving the words of scripture into all I saw before me, undergirding understanding and layering new sights and sounds with what I have read and studied from childhood.

Yair explained the Sabbath, *Shabbat*, as our group saw the foods, celebrations, and witnessed the music and dancing as Jewish families marked their day of rest. He instructed us in the significance of "Shabbat Shalom," the response of "Aleichem Shalom," and the importance of the good wishes for peace in our days. In his casual ways of teaching our group, he emphasized all that the Jews hold sacred—their worship of the One God, the sanctity of family and children, the importance of reading from the holy scrolls, and the celebration of God-given life and Sabbath observances.

I traveled by boat on the Sea of Galilee our first Sunday, and even now, my words are insufficient to share that journey. As I felt the breeze above and the waters beneath me, my mind recalled the Gospel accounts of Jesus's trips with his apostles. He boated and walked here! Overcome, I bowed my head and spoke the names of my family, praying for them. It was all I could do in the moment, in the fullness of my heart. This was my Lord's Day, and I worshiped deeply.

Everywhere I looked, walked, felt, I realized the past, present, and future: conversion of Cornelius and standing where Paul stood in Ceasarea; I touched the Mediterranean, boated the Sea of Galilee, sang at the Jordan River, floated in the Dead Sea, tasted the mustard seeds and Peter's fish, felt the juice of fresh squeezed olives, caught the fragrance of almond trees, and savored the fruit of the date palms. There was a sensory overload.

Even now, looking back over my words to you, I perceive gaps in my tales, the left-out parts of the story. And that is exactly how my conversations have been upon coming back. I start and stop and jump around in the narrative and say lots of "Oh, and I forgot to tell you..." because of the grandness of the pilgrimage. I have a photo essay on my Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/jim.edminson](http://www.facebook.com/jim.edminson)) and I'm working on a new photo gallery, "Faces of Israel," on my website, [jimedminson.com](http://jimedminson.com), to share more of my journey, just in case pictures really are worth thousands of words.

On that crowded dining table, among all the evidence of my journey, there is a certificate presented to me by the state of Israel, deeming me a Holy Land pilgrim, complete with dates and signatures. I'm living a new normal as I ponder and pray I may return one day. I hope you can go one day. May the opportunity come for us both, and when it does, may we go in peace. *Shalom*.



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