

Charity & Children

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

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May 2023 Issue 5 Volume 136

Cutting-edge ministries heralded at national meeting

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

Southern Baptist communicators from across the country recently joined hands with Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) to create mission bags to share with foster children, independent college students, and senior adults served by BCH. The communication professionals took the event to heart—not only filling the bags but writing prayers and encouraging messages to tuck inside.

Mission Project Two-Fifteen was part of the 68th Annual Workshop of the Baptist Communications Association (BCA) held April 17-20 at the Ridgecrest Conference Center.

BCA Lifetime Member, Art Toalston, remarked, "Learning of North Carolina Baptists' compassion ministries in foster care, outreach to lone collegians, and so many ministries to seniors certainly has heightened my compassion in these areas. I needed that and am greatly appreciative." Toalston has served as editor of Baptist Press and as a writer for the International Mission Board.

"Mission Project Two

Fifteen," held April 19 at 2:15, provided an opportunity for attendees to learn about cutting-edge ministries BCH provides while completing hands-on mission projects. The session



Above, BCA member Pam Henderson from The Baptist Paper captures fellow members writing notes to some of North Carolina's frail aging as they fill 100 Red Bags with helpful and inspirational items. The bags will be delivered by NCBAM staff members and volunteers.

featured three BCH ministries: foster care and adoption services through EVERY CHILD, HOMEBASE outreach at Western Carolina University for college students who have aged out of foster or residential care, and NCBAM (NC Baptist Aging Ministry) which helps adults 65+ maintain their independence.

After learning of these outreaches, attendees created "Welcome Bags" for children entering BCH's foster care, "Care Kits" for students served through HOMEBASE, and "Red Bags"—a proven life-saving medication management

tool developed by NCBAM for older adults.

Attendees were most impressed with BCH's breadth of services and how the ministry that began as an orphanage in 1885 has constantly adapted to meet the needs of the marginalized, and now encompasses ministries for every stage of life—from first heartbeat to last. Dr. Michael Blackwell, who this year celebrates his 40th anniversary as BCH president/CEO, sent his personal invitation to BCA professionals to experience dynamic ministry in action.

(Continued on page 6)



Art Toalston

BCH stretches and changes to meet growing needs

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

Don't believe anyone who says there is not a place or need for children's homes in our country. While Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) is built on a solid foundation of success in helping hurting children, the landscape is constantly changing when caring for traumatized children and families.

Why do I bring this up? When a discussion of pros and cons comes up or is reported in the news, I want you to know who we are today and how we got to this place. BCH is keenly aware of the need for flexibility and innovation in being a provider of choice for those who are hurting, troubled, or broken. I want you to be assured that, as always, we are changing with the times and instituting dynamic programs that respond directly to the needs of 2023 and beyond.

Baptist Children's Homes is celebrating its 138th anniversary this year as well as marking my 40 years at the helm as president/CEO. You need to know, I'm not spending my time simply reinforcing past successes. Rather, I am directing a myriad of services that are the vanguard of care for children and families well into the future.

Here are some key points to remember:

- North Carolina Baptists have been at the forefront of progressive child care since the inception of Thomasville Baptist Orphanage (TBO) on November 11, 1885.
- BCH continues its time-honored tradition of improving lives and lifting hope with a keen eye on the future. In fact, much of our time is spent planning, praying, and watching, fostering well-crafted ideas to fruition.
- The Orphanage was founded by a small group of dedicated, passionate people who saw a dire need to care for orphaned children. Despite intense opposition, this hardy band of pioneers persevered until 9-year-old Mary Presson from Ahoskie stepped off a train in Thomasville to become the first child in care.
- BCH remains strong, providing grace and care to children and families in crisis.

Why do I want you to compare the TBO of yesteryear to the BCH of today? Because it's important to honor the rich tradition and strong success of those upon whose shoulders we now stand.

Equally, it's important to emphasize that BCH continues to seek out and meet the changing needs of children and families, while remaining resolute in its mission to achieve positive and measurable outcomes for all whom we serve. BCH models a constant readiness to step forward and meet identified needs even when others turn away.

We have responded to the emerging societal needs which precipitated the change from the self-contained Orphanage to the Christ-centered, family-focused array of services of today. When John Mills begged, urged, pleaded for Orphanage support in 1883-84, he saw the distress of widows and orphans who were left without husbands and fathers. He set out to relieve that distress. Today, BCH provides services to children and families from 32 North Carolina locations. While the methods and scope are different, the passion and commitment to the "Orphanage vision" are the same.

The TBO of 1885 was only for children. They were given food, clothes, and shelter, in a tightly-controlled environment, from which they rarely departed. The BCH of today works with children and families, special needs adults, our aging population, teen moms, and working poor families struggling to make ends meet and so many more. Consider the ways we have stretched and changed to offer a continuum of services:

- Traditional Residential/Congregate Care

- Emergency Care
- Christian Adoption Services
- Birth Mother After Care
- HOMEBASE outreach to college students
- Transitional Living
- Greater Vision Outreach helps the working poor
- Teen Mother-Baby Home & Parent Education
- Weekday Education Centers
- Therapeutic/Wilderness Camp for Boys and Girls
- Equine Therapy on a working ranch
- Care for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- Every Child Foster Care Initiative
- Family Foster Care Homes
- Care for Aging Adults 65+ through North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM)

As we honor our past while celebrating our present and planning for the future, we recognize and express gratitude to BCH's staff members who serve children and families daily, our friends who offer prayers and financial support, and the "great cloud of witnesses" who have gone before.

In return, it is my solemn promise that we will be faithful to the call of God upon this ministry and that we will honor Christ who loved children because "of such is the kingdom of God."



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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Monica Vaughan recieves Baptist Heritage Award

By Michael C. Blackwell, President/CEO and C&C Publisher

Monica Vaughan is an Ambassador of Hope! It was my pleasure to present this year's Baptist Heritage Award from the Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) to Monica on April 4 at the Koury Convention Center in Greensboro.

Monica, a life-long North Carolina Baptist, has a servant's heart, going back to her Greensboro childhood days at Rankin Baptist Church where she grew up and was baptized. She is a natural-born leader, filled with passion, vision, and a commitment to follow Jesus. She is an inspiration to those who know her, whether fellow church members at First Baptist, Greensboro, her volunteer and civic colleagues or just as a dependable Friend.

As BCH's Ambassador of Hope, Monica was—and continues to be—the spark plug for *Hope in Style*—an annual fundraiser for Mills Home in Thomasville. *Hope in Style* brings hundreds of people together every year to support, encourage, and bless children who need an infusion of faith and love.

Through her Vanguard Foundation, Monica also supports many worthy causes. But, children—children who sometimes live with a deficit of hope and love—have a special place in the sanctuary of her heart.

Monica is the mother of Stephanie and grandmother of Meredith.

The North Carolina Baptist Heritage Award recognizes individuals and couples who represent exemplary service and giving to organizations affiliated with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and is produced by the Convention and the North Carolina Baptist Foundation.



Dr. Michael C. Blackwell, BCH president/CEO, presented the Baptist Heritage Award from the Baptist Children's Homes to Monica Vaughan on April 4 at the Koury Convention Center in Greensboro.

Churches are answer in helping NC's aging adults

By Sandy Gregory, Senior Director, NCBAM

The needs of aging adults are varied and continue to change at a drastic pace. Twenty years ago, fraud wasn't a huge issue. Today, seniors are targeted by sophisticated Medicare and sweepstakes scams. Many fall prey due to lack of computer and technical skills.

In 2020, NCBAM (North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry) became keenly aware of this digital divide. Aging adults were told they were "first in line" for COVID vaccines. But North Carolina's "find your spot to take your shot" system required making appointments online. Changes in society have seen adult children move away from their aging parents and are unable to help.

I'm currently serving the senior adults at FBC Mooresville. In addition to a monthly "lunch 'n' learn", we are addressing physical needs by

creating transportation and care teams, making sure all aging adults have working smoke alarms, and providing fall-risk assessments.

I am seeing first-hand how the church is the answer to helping aging adults.

NCBAM has regional directors in every area and offers many resources to help your church meet the growing and changing needs of seniors. Contact us soon!

Camp BAM meal sponsors needed

This summer, NCBAM will host

its third Camp BAM! The intergenerational camp provides opportunities for volunteer campers to serve as the hands and feet of Jesus to help frail aging adults in Thomasville and surrounding areas. We rely on Camp sponsors to help us feed these hard-working, mission-minded volunteers. Campers reside at Mills Home in

Thomasville July 12-16. Austin Decker serves as camp director and is the north central regional director for NCBAM. Contact Austin at adecker@bchfamily.org if you can help.

One Hope volunteers reach lonely seniors

NCBAM has developed an outreach called One Hope to address the growing epidemic of social isolation and loneliness among aging adults. Melanie Beeson serves as the One Hope director. One Hope is a spiritual response to social isolation and loneliness. Its strategic plan includes:

- Raise awareness of social isolation and loneliness
- Streamline the call portal and volunteer reporting system
- Grow the volunteer base
- Implement volunteer appreciation plan
- Promote the One Hope outreach
- Enhance NCBAM's spiritual response

This outreach is dedicated to reaching isolated and lonely seniors in a state where 30% of adults 65+ live alone. "One hope" or "mia elpidi" is defined *one expectation, trust or confidence*. This outreach is vital in sharing the hope of Jesus with lonely seniors.

To learn more about how you or your church can take part, contact One Hope director Melanie Beeson at mbeeson@bchfamily.org.



Camp BAM 2022 was held at the NCBAM Care Village in Kinston. Care Village members, volunteers, and local churches provided a hot delicious meal every evening for the hungry mission-minded campers.

Encouragement— a life changing gift

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

When you are a part of changing the life of another, your life is changed.

An unusual football game took place between Grapevine Faith Academy (a Christian School) and the Gainesville State School (a maximum-security correction facility.)

Gainesville had 14 players and one coach. All of their games were played on the road. Their record was 0-8. Each of the 14 players had been convicted of crimes and most of their families have disowned them. Faith Academy, had a winning season, 7-2. They had 70 players, 11 coaches, supportive families, and lots of fans.

Gainesville players were familiar with words like loser and failure. They knew what it was like to play games with no encouragement from family or fans. This was not only true on the field, but throughout their lives.

As I heard this story, I remembered the coaches, cheerleaders, and fans in my life. I also thought of the coaches, cheerleaders, and fans in the lives of our children.

Chris Hogan, head coach at Faith Academy decided to make a difference. This game would not be about leading his team and community in winning a game. It would be about changing lives—the lives of the boys on the Gainesville team and the lives of his players and community.

Chris knew the Gainesville team would have no fans and no chance of winning. He decided to teach his team what is really important. He asked half of their cheerleaders and fans to cheer for the other team. He sent an email to their faithful supporters asking them to deliver a message to the Gainesville players: "You're just as valuable as any other person."

One player asked, "Coach, why are you asking us to do this?" Hogan responded, "Imagine you don't have a home, no one to love you, and no one pulling for you. Imagine everyone pretty much has given up on you. Now imagine what it would feel like and mean to you for hundreds of people to suddenly believe in you!"

The Gainesville team emerged onto the field and the visitor's stands were full of cheering fans. The players heard fans and cheer-

leaders shouting their names. Isaiah, the quarterback said later, "I never in my life thought I would hear parents cheering for me to tackle their kid. These people are cheering for us. They even know our names."

Faith Academy won the game. After the game both teams gathered to pray. Isaiah asked to pray. "Lord, I don't know what just happened, so I don't know who to say 'thank you' to, but I never knew there were so many people in the world who cared about us." Each Gainesville player was given a burger, fries, a coke, a Bible, and an encouraging letter from the players from Faith Academy.

Do you remember the encouragers in your life—the coaches, the cheerleaders, and the fans? The ones that reminded you that you are valuable. I remember.

"Go! Go! Go Brenda! Shoot the ball, you can make it," my Dad shouted. I played on the Basketball team all four of my high school years.

What do I remember most about those years and the games? Encouragement!

From the time I was eight, the basketball goal in our back yard was very familiar territory. You would often find me shooting baskets even when it was almost too dark to see the basket. My Dad would play ball with my brother and me for hours—encouraging us. It was my freshmen year and it came time for tryouts for the team. I made the team. I was so excited!

What did I learn from my four years on the team? Play hard, give it my best, be encouraged, and encourage. Coach encouraged me to do my best on the basketball court and in algebra class. The people who encouraged me the most were my parents who almost never missed a game. I

can still hear my Dad encouraging me as I would take the ball down the court, passing it to my teammates to make the basket. No, I did not become the best player on the team; that was Janet. I became the encourager. Our senior year Janet and I were elected by our team to be co-captains.

I remembered Mom and Dad were always there, encouraging us whether it was a basketball game, a 4-H competition, school event, or a solo I performed at church. Their encouraging presence spoke volumes.

Many come into our care never having known what it feels like to be encouraged. At BCH, our staff are great coaches and cheerleaders. We have the most awesome fans—you, our supporters. You shout important messages to those we serve: "You are special." "Do your best." "You will always be a winner." And most importantly, "God has a purpose for your life." The Christian foundation and encouragement given to each child makes the difference. Thank you!

Give thanks for the encouragers in your life and as you give thanks consider giving a gift in honor of the coaches, cheerleaders, and fans who changed your life. Baptist Children's Homes has never needed your financial faithfulness and your encouragement more than today. Your gift matters, your gift encourages, your gift changes lives.

May is a month of celebration and remembering as we celebrate college graduations, Mother's Day, and Memorial Day. Consider giving a gift to honor those who were your encouragers. What better way to remember someone special than to honor them in a way that changes a child's life.

And remember, encourage and be encouraged!



A high school friend recently sent me a picture of our school's ladies basketball team. I played all four years and was honored to be named co-captain my senior year. That's me to the right of the coach, number 30. The photo makes me smile and brings back memories of the "encouragers" in my life.

Join us in giving thanks for moms and dads.

Using the coupon below, make a gift that offers hope to a needy child in honor or memory of your parent(s). In the August issue of **Charity & Children**, yours and your parent's name(s) will be published in a commemorative insert celebrating moms and dads.

Example of inside name listings:

MOTHER

In honor of Mrs. Edith G. Banks
Given by Joseph and Mary Banks
In memory of Jane W. Smith
Given by Her Children

FATHER

In memory of Edward R. Morrison
Given by Edith Morrison
In honor of William F. Hughes
Given by Jennifer Phillips

MOTHER & FATHER

In memory of Mr. & Mrs. R. Jones
Given by Daughters Beth and Sarah

**Hurry!
Deadline is
July 1.**

**Questions?
For more information,
call 336-474-1209.**

Remember Mom and Dad

"Honor your father and mother."

We are given the gift to recall the days of childhood, to relive the times when a loving parent's embrace sustained us as a young adult during times of heartache, to remember conversations with our mom or dad in the silence of sweet friendship as we have grown older, too. Keeping those we love in our thoughts and daily intentions strengthens families, teaching our children about the sacredness of life. The simple act of remembering Mom and Dad is glorifying to God.



Remember Mom and Dad! Make an honor or memorial gift.

Please check the appropriate box: ☐ Honor ☐ Memorial

In Honor or Memory of _____

Send Notice of Gift to _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

To give by check, please print your information below and mail this form with your check.

To: BCH, PO Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27361 Attn: Mothers/Fathers Day Gift. You can use the enclosed, postage-paid envelope.

Name _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Give by credit card online at www.bchfamily.org/momanddad or call Faith Frazier at 336-474-1312.

Group connects through "Mission Project Two Fifteen"

(Continued from page 1)

BCH is on what President/CEO Michael C. Blackwell calls and "upward spiral of growth."

"God has kept building, people have kept loving, and BCH has kept responding to help those in need," Blackwell says. "My years of leadership continue to be marked by change and managing the change for the betterment of those we serve."

Blackwell believes the ministries highlighted at this year's BCA annual meeting help illustrate "innovation during change."

The EVERY CHILD Initiative is a partnership between BCH and NC Baptist State Convention, providing vulnerable boys and girls Christ-centered homes.

EVERY CHILD helps North Carolina Baptist respond to the growing needs of children through adoption and fostering. BCH provides licensing and trauma-informed training for couples in churches who desire to foster or foster-to-adopt, avenues for families to adopt domestically or internationally, and instruction on how churches can support foster and adoptive parents and their children through their congregations.

For more information, contact Mark Smith at 828-450-9136.

HOMEBASE is a partnership between BCH and Western Carolina University, providing needed support to independent college students who have aged out of foster or residential care. They may also have parents but these parents cannot or will not care for their child's needs.

HOMEBASE is a safe place for students. The ministry provides free food, hygiene products, access to printers and a washer and dryer, social gatherings, and emergency housing.

To learn how you can help, contact Jim Dean at 828-508-0035.

NCBAM's Red Bag ministry was initially created to prevent accidental medicine



Baptist Communicators Association (BCA) members from around the United States gathered for their annual meeting held this year at Ridgecrest near Black Mountain, NC. Three of the many BCH cutting-edge ministries shared with the group during "Mission Project Two Fifteen." Above, members also filled 300 bags with items to be given to foster children, college students through HOMEBASE, and aging adults 65+. Below, BCH's presenters are, left to right, Angie Gregg, Jim Dean, and Mark Smith.

overdoses among aging adults. Medication mismanagement is a great risk to the health of individuals 65+—many who take two to seven medications daily. The red, insulated bag is a perfect place to keep medicines.

Having all medicines in one place makes it easy to take medicines to doctor appointments. Emergency response programs across North Carolina are trained

to look for Red Bags when assisting aging adults in crisis.

Providing Red Bags is a good way NC Baptists can help aging adults, especially to frail aging adult who find it hard to leave their homes. To learn more, contact Angie Gregg at 828-467-1371. To order Red Bags, visit

www.ncbam.org. Red Bags are ordered in minimum quantities of 50.

We are excited to share this unique ministry with Baptists from all across America who will learn about NCBAM and hopefully go back to their areas inspired about what BCH/NCBAM is doing.

BCA is a professional organization of communicators who serve in editorial, public relations, electronic media, photography, management, marketing and graphic design positions principally within Baptist agencies and institutions. The organization has more than 250 members across the United States and around the world.

BCH staff presenting at the mission project session included: Jim Edminson, assistant to the president and editor of BCH's publication *Charity & Children*; Jim Dean, HOMEBASE director; Mark Smith, EVERY CHILD church liaison; and Angie Gregg, west regional director for NCBAM. Additionally, BCA members Jim Edminson and Carol Layton (NCBAM director of communications) presented a session entitled "Ageism in America—and the Church."



Emmanuel Home offers next step for birth mothers

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Managing Editor

With the cutting of the ceremonial ribbon, the transformation of this historic, residential home, brought back to life after nearly being condemned, is complete. Much like the women this new ministry will serve, the house is prepared for a bright, new beginning as The Emmanuel Home.

Approximately 200 people attended the dedication ceremony on April 25 to celebrate the opening of the completely-restored home that is the next step in Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) commitment to providing compassionate support to birth mothers—women who have chosen adoption for their babies through BCH's Christian Adoption Services (CAS).

"This is a heartbeat ministry," BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell shared with those in attendance. "Emmanuel Home is giving courageous birth mothers a glorious opportunity to be partners with God in affirming life with all of us. We are in the business of sharing the hope of God in Jesus Christ and restoring lives of those who accept Him."

The new ministry came together through two lead gifts. The residential home was given to BCH in 2021 as an estate planning gift by Thomasville resident Charles Franklin Finch. Once it was determined that the home, which sits directly on the outskirts of BCH's Mills Home campus, was perfectly located for this new effort, CAS supporters Chris and Darci Horne of Charlotte made a lead financial gift. They donated funds from the sale of a piece of property that was willed to them by a friend from their church whose name was Emmanuel.

"I am humbled to be here to see Emmanuel—God with us—at work and that He will be the head of this house," said Quintell Hill, President of the Baptist State Convention of NC and Lead Pastor of Multiply Church in Monroe.

The Horne's lead gift, NC Baptist volunteer efforts, and donations from others made it possible to completely restore the 1914 homestead which had become uninhabitable. Rich Fork Baptist Church, which is located less than four



The dedication ceremony for Emmanuel Home, a new ministry for birth mothers who have chosen adoption for their babies, took place on April 25. Above, front row: Sam Barefoot, Keith Henry, Jim Goldston, Jean McVerry, Michael C. Blackwell, Chris Horne, Darci Horne, Kevin Qualls, Marley Finch Russell, Suzanne Finch, Anne Finch, Cyn-die Truax. Back row: Scott Vail, Phil Wagon, Quintell Hill, Michael Bowers, Regina Keener, Wendy Sellars. Below — The crowd gathers for the program after touring the completely-restored home where the ministry takes place.

miles away from Emmanuel Home, was one of the many churches that helped.

"Its purpose aligned itself with our mission to reach our community and to help shape the future of these women," says Rich Fork senior pastor Michael Bowers. "For our work volunteers, who value the sanctity of life, this is a means to also show value to these ladies and what they are walking through. It's a tangible way for us to say that life is important."

The restoration of the residential property mirrors the ministry that will take place inside. Emmanuel Home will serve as many as five birth mothers, supported by a live-in caregiver, providing them a safe place where they can find healing and support in the aftermath of placing their newborn with his or her adoptive family.

"Some of the women we come alongside find themselves without the support and resources they need to live a healthy life," says Regina Keener, Senior Director of Adoption and International Ministries. Keener oversees Christian

Adoption Services' efforts. "By connecting them to the resources they need and helping them establish a supportive community, we will be able to see these ladies transition into safe living situations and equip them for success."

CAS offers domestic and international adoption services in North and South Carolina. One of the key aspects of its adoption ministry is its outreach to birth mothers. CAS works with Christian couples who desire to adopt as well as the expectant mothers choosing life for their unborn child. CAS domestic adoption coordinators support the mothers helping them make the adoption plan that connects their babies with the adoptive parents.

Emmanuel Home adds another option in the efforts to provide ongoing support and resources to birth mothers post adoption.

"One of our greatest assets through the totality of BCH's many ministries is the ability to provide a complete continuum of care," explains Blackwell. "Through our adoption services, we offer the best possible support to our adoptive families. We ensure that these babies are provided with the caring homes they need. And we show the greatest measure of compassion that we possible can to these courageous mothers who have chosen life for their children."

See the photo gallery of the day at bchblog.org.



Noelle's journey leads to life for her unborn child

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Managing Editor, and **Kourtney Dye**, BCH Creative Specialist

Noelle had a secret; it was one she would be unable to keep long. The high school junior hid it from her parents, the teachers at the Christian school she attended, and others who knew her well. What Noelle kept locked away within herself was known by one classmate—the teen father of the child she carried.

“We kept it a secret until the night before my senior year,” Noelle remembers. “We cried. We did not know what to do.”

The high school couple knew the news of her pregnancy would be difficult for others to receive, particularly the faculty at their school. They were afraid of what the potential repercussions could be once her pregnancy was revealed. That fear led Noelle and her boyfriend to consider terminating the pregnancy.

“We’re two teenagers talking about abortion because we were scared. We were so afraid to tell anyone,” Noelle shares. “All you want is for your life to go back to the way it was the day before you found out you were pregnant.”

The teens waited until she was too far along for abortion to still be an option. And when the truth became impossible to keep hidden any longer, Noelle found herself expelled from school. She finally confided in her mother and father. Unsure what to do, Noelle’s mother made an appointment with a center that could provide them with options.

“They gave us a couple of brochures,” Noelle recalls. “One of them was for Christian Adoption Services (CAS).”

A ministry of Baptist Children’s Homes, (BCH) CAS was the answer Noelle’s family needed. The comfort and confidence they received during their initial meeting with CAS staff was immediate.

“From the get go, they were loving and caring and understanding. They knew that our world was falling apart,” Noelle says. “When faced with a very big decision, nothing felt better than knowing that God was going to be a part of that.”

Through the support and counseling of CAS staff, Noelle made an adoption plan for her unborn daughter.

CAS works directly with Christian couples



Above: Noelle, who made an adoption plan for her baby through Christian Adoption Services (CAS), sifts through the photographs from when she gave birth to her daughter. As an unplanned pregnancy with her high school boyfriend, CAS helped Noelle place her baby with one of their Christian families who desired to adopt. Below: Noelle smiles as she holds up the note written to her by Olivia, her biological daughter.

who desire to be adoptive parents. At the same time, they come alongside each birth mother, like Noelle, to help her identify one of the families for placement. The process allowed Noelle to help choose the parents for her child—a couple named Sam and Robin.

Noelle gave birth to a healthy baby girl who she named Olivia.

“You can’t even believe that you’re looking at your baby and the love you feel,” Noelle divulges. “It’s really the best thing in the world.”

A short time later, Sam and Robin arrived at the hospital to meet the baby who would become their daughter.

“I was trying to hold it together because you know that all these steps lead up to the finality of the decision you’ve made,” Noelle explains. “And it’s a good decision, but seeing Sam and

Robin at the hospital made it even more real.”

In the midst of the reality, Sam and Robin shared heartfelt words that were not only what a teenage Noelle needed in that moment, but were sentiments she carries within her heart today.

“They told me that they would teach Olivia to pray and that she would always pray for me,” Noelle shares. “They said she would know that she was loved and that this decision of adoption was always God’s plan. They’ve been wonderful throughout this whole journey.”

As Noelle reflects on that time in her life just four months before giving birth, she recalls the hopelessness she and her boyfriend felt. Her journey that culminated in choosing life for Olivia put everything in a new perspective.

“There is grief in abortion and there’s grief in adoption. In adoption, however, there is also hope because you get to see your child live the life that you envision for them,” Noelle confides.

Olivia is living that life and thriving. Last year was her senior year in high school—she was the same age as Noelle when her biological mother gave birth to her. As her graduating class’s salutatorian, Olivia gave a speech to her classmates.

“At the end of the speech, Olivia thanked her mother (Robin),” Noelle says tearfully. “She said how her mother was her biggest fan, how she was there for all her games, and how much she knew she loved her.”

“I always think, what is nine months of your life so that someone else can have an entire lifetime?”



Alum are encouraged to send condolences to families of MH brothers and sisters who passed

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

Please be sure this date is marked on your calendar: Homecoming, August. 4-6.

"She lived a life of love and accomplishment." These are words said by friends of alumna **L. Susan Spainhour**. Susan entered Mills home with her sister **Marcelline** in 1965 and she graduated in 1969. Both girls were always very polite and considerate young ladies. As an adult, Susan loved to travel and spend time with family, especially her grandkids. She was an honor graduate of University of South Florida and had an accomplished career at Anchor Glass Container Corporation. She loved spending time with family and friends as an active member at Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church, the Palma Ceia Golf and Country Club, and as a member of Junior League.

Besides her parents, Susan is predeceased by her children **Amy Preston Kemp** and **Andy Preston**. She is survived by her loving husband, **Don Preston**, and children **Jake Schoolfield** and **Jon Preston**, sister, **Marcelline Lockhart**, one nephew, and six grandchildren. A memorial service celebrating her life was held at Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church in Tampa, FL on January 7. She will be remembered for her life of love and service to others. Condolences may be sent to **Marcelline Spainhour Lockhart**, 604 Plantation Dr., Simpsonville, NC 29681.

Dr. Michael Blackwell shared the sad news of the death of **Milton C. Bliss** on February 21. And he fondly recalls that Milton offered a great deal of support and assistance during his early years as CEO of BCH. Friends wishing to memorialize Milton by donation are asked to give to the Baptist Children's Homes, PO Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27361.

Milton was described by his son as a man of kindness and creativity with an abiding interest in his family and friends. Alumni will certainly

remember the kindness Milton showed to alumni and Mills Home (MH) as he returned yearly to direct the alumni choir for our homecoming worship service. The music was usually a piece Milton had composed or arranged. With the variety of activities in which he had access to at MH from 1937-1944, it is no wonder Milton developed the wide interests he had. He took advantage of the choral and band training from **Mr. W. B. Lord** in the Mills Home School and became a master musician. After graduating from Mills Home, Milton volunteered in the US Navy, serving in signals intelligence. Returning to North Carolina, he earned degrees from Mars Hill and NC State, serving the latter for 26 years and was named Professor Emeritus of music. At NC state he directed several choral programs inspiring hundreds of students. He was a member of the Mu Beta Psi national honorary music fraternity, music director for several theatre productions, composer of several dozen choral and orchestral works, and director of two church choirs outside his university tasks.

Physically active his entire life, Milton enjoyed tennis and became a well-known runner, participating in half-marathons and shorter races well into his seventies. In his final years, he retained his keen interest in good literature, sports, classical music, current events, history, and politics. His legacy of kindness and creativity will long be remembered by his family and friends. He is survived by two sons, **Lawrence** and **Bryan**, and his brother **Robert Bliss**.

Franklin L. Huggins Jr., who was called "**Daddy Frank**" by almost everyone, passed away on March 4. He entered MH in 1943 with siblings **Rachel**, **Dorothy**, and **Louise**. He graduated in 1955. He was quite a popular youngster in his years there. After graduation, he served in the United States Army from 1955 to 1957, serving in the 15th Anti-Aircraft Artillery AW Battalion in South

Korea. After being honorably discharged, Frank began his career with the North Carolina State Highway Patrol (NCSHP) as a tele-communicator. He served 39 faithful years in the NCSHP in this state from 1957 to 1996, rising to become Troop G Communications Supervisor where he oversaw communication operations for 18 counties in WNC. He was also a member of the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO). Frank was a member in the NC Chapter, serving a year's term as its president as well as serving as the group's national president from 1993 to 1994. In this role, Frank aided in numerous technological, legislative, and educational improvements in public safety communication operations. During this time, he further served the public as he traveled the US and world sharing a wealth of knowledge to other cities and countries.

One of Frank's core and most important values was service above self. Aside from his career and APCO, Frank continued to give back to his community through selfless service. He served as an elder and founding member of Swannanoa Valley Presbyterian Church for over 40 years; he drove countless buses all over the country for school trips, both for his grandson's school and the NC School for the Deaf; and he taught Law Enforcement Communications at AB Technical Community College in Asheville.

Frank was married to **Evelyn** for 62 years and is survived by his son **Franklin**, daughter **Meg**, two grandsons, five great grandchildren, and his sister **Louise McClure**. A celebration of life service was held March 11 at the Valley Hope Church in Swannanoa. Friends may send condolences to Louise McClure, 317 Woodlawn Ave., Burnsville, NC 28714.

We were deeply saddened to learn that **Juanita White (Cole) Messervey** passed away on March 6. Many of us had become well acquainted with her in the last 5 years as the

lovely lady who spent hours on Homecoming weekend keeping the auction displays neat and orderly, assisting prospective bidders, and executing any task needed for the auction's success. Others of us first got acquainted with her as we all took part in a "second" annual gathering held at the farm of **Bill Byerly** and his wife **Verna** some Octobers. Juanita was such an asset to any and all occasions and she will be sorely missed. She entered MH in 1959 with siblings **Lynn** and **Margaret Ann** and graduated in 1962. She spent most of her adult years in Asheboro where she reared her family.

Juanita was predeceased by her husband **Cliff Messervey** and her sister **Johnnie Nivens**. She is survived by her children: **Tony (Karen)**, **Cathy**, and **Billy (Jennifer)**; her siblings, **Ann Elbert** of Asheboro, **Faye Morrison** of Florida, and **Lynn White (Cindy)** of Asheboro; eight grandchildren and several great grandchildren. Her funeral service was held on March 9. Friends can send condolences to Lynn at 947 Ward Valley Dr., Asheboro, NC 27203 and to Margaret Ann at 1133 Camelot, Asheboro, NC 27203. We have no address for Faye.

Reminders: Please remember that **Sharon D. Stiles** is the person to talk with regarding ashes being placed in the columbarium. You can reach Sharon at 1588 Elkhart Circle, Gastonia, NC 28054, sharonstiles51@yahoo.com, or 704-685-2443. Donations toward upkeep of the Columbarium grounds are always welcome and should be sent to Treasurer **Flora Hicks Patton** at 6428 Sisk Carter RD., Rockwell, NC 28138. In addition, all alumni address changes for the 2023 address directory as well as changes for the **Charity & Children** mailing list should be sent to treasurer **Flora**

Hicks Patton at the same address.

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





High school Beta Club gives back

The Beta Club at East Davidson High School in Thomasville selected BCH as the recipient of its charitable donation. The high school sits a few miles away from Mills Home.



New South River prepares baskets

Churches in the New South River Baptist Association made it possible for BCH children to receive a beautiful basket in celebration of Easter. They prepared hundreds of baskets.



Lives changed at Birth Mothers Retreat

At Christian Adoption Services' annual retreat for moms who made adoption plans for their babies, several women rededicated their lives or made decisions to follow Christ.



Girls reflect on Christ's sacrifice

The girls at Camp Duncan spent time on Good Friday reflecting on the significance of the day. They discussed how Jesus laid down His life for their sins and the sins of the all the world.



Brothers celebrate Easter Sunday

Siblings Ben and R.L., who live at Three Forks Home in Zionville, love attending church. Three Forks is one of nine homes for intellectually/developmentally disabled adults.



Fruitland hosts BCH team members

Recently, several BCH staff members were graciously hosted by Fruitland Bible College president David Horton and his team. The two organizations have a growing relationship.



Breeze Ministries supports BCH ride

Breeze Ministries, a Christian bikers group in Youngsville, organized a charity ride to support the upcoming Ride to Clyde. The group raised \$1,140 and had more than 50 bikers.



Church group organizes Easter party

The "Saved to Serve" class from Village Baptist in Fayetteville hosted Easter festivities at Odum Home in Pembroke. Class members form lasting bonds with the boys and girls.



Camp Duncan visits Vietnamese Church

Girls from Camp Duncan enjoyed helping lead worship during Sunday service at Vietnamese Baptist Church in Jamestown. The church presented BCH with a generous offering gift.



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at svbarefoot@bchfamily.org
or call him at 336-474-1224

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



DEDICATIONS

Turner Cottage
May 22 – Hayesville

Greater Vision East
July 18 – Kinston

River Hill Refuge, Shelby – TBD

CAMP FOUNDER'S DAY

Cameron Boy's Camp – May 20

WESTERN AREA CONFERENCE

Broyhill Home, Clyde – Sept. 7

FUNDRAISERS

Ride to Clyde: May 10 – 13
ridetoclyde.com

Broyhill Barbecue Festival
May 13 – Clyde
broyhillbbq.org

Hope in Style: August 26
Greensboro Country Club
hopeinstyle.org

NCBAM Field of Makers
Mills Home – Sept. 9

FRIENDS OF CHILDREN SATURDAY MISSIONS

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

How can we help you? Contact 1.800.476.3669 or 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.



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"Homecoming Day" to be preformed and Dr. Blackwell to preach during June 4 worship

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

Plan to attend Homecoming on June 3 and 4. We will be celebrating **Dr. Michael C. Blackwell's** 40 years as president/CEO of Baptist Children's Homes of NC.

Donna Daniels Wade has written a song for Homecoming. She and the alumni choir will be singing the song during the worship service on Sunday morning. Choir practice will be between Sunday school and the service. Let's fill up the choir loft.

I taught 62 piano students while serving at Kennedy Home (KH). Donna was one of my students. I taught three students every hour and they were required to practice at least 20 minutes a day—except Saturday and Sunday. Donna was exceptional and learned to play and to this day she plays and composes songs. She also has a beautiful voice. I am including the words for her song.

"HOMECOMING DAY"

"What a day it will be when our Savior's face we see, When we all go to our home up above. But 'til then let's begin by loving all our kin and the people who have shared with us their love.

"Mr. Thompson will sing, and we'll talk about the things good and bad, that happened long ago. Mr. Mack was the best, Mr. Russ and all the rest tried to teach us right; they loved us so.

CHORUS

"Come on home, welcome back, let us hug you and say 'how 'ya been.' We can share a laugh or two and who knows, before we're through We will be as close as we were way back then."

"We'll tell stories 'bout the hut, tho the skeeters made it tough, How about the great Olympics in July? Spitting watermelon seeds, running races, skinning knees, even earn a medal if you try.

"Although many years have passed, we still have lots of laughs Reminiscing sure is therapy to most.

But until we meet again, and go walking hand in hand, to those no longer with us, let us toast.

CHORUS

"Come on home, welcome back, Let us hug you and say 'how 'ya been.' We can share a laugh or two and who knows, before we're through We will be as close as we were way back then."

"Now before it's time to go, let us hug you and bid you adieu. You may travel on your way, but we'll meet another day. Until then may God's love shine on you! Until then may God's love shine on you!"

James Clayton Pate (1958-1972) has arranged for us to have another old car and old truck show. It will be in front of the gym. It was a big success last summer. If you want to show your car, give him a call and let him know. He will be glad to hear from you. Those who participate pay a registration fee. Last year the fees totaled \$120. Fifty dollars was also donated by Broken Spoke Bikers of Maysville and \$50 was donated by Christians Soldiers for hot dogs and picnic supplies that fed 25 KH children, cottage parents, and alumni at the car show.

Six Dirt Bike trophies were donated by **Darrell and Vicky Bell** of Bell's Corner in Pollocksville and \$80 was donated by the Pate family of Trenton for trophies.

Thirty dollars was donated by Calvary Memorial of Trenton. A \$200 profit was donated. This report was given to me by alumni vice president James Pate.

Canned vegetables are needed for KH. Back in the day, there was a 25-acre garden. **Henry Hamilton and Richard Poteat** saw that the campus had all the fresh vegetables that they could use. Some were canned and used throughout the year. Even when **Becky** and I moved to KH, **Rev. Roger Williams** told me we wouldn't have a huge salary but we could eat out of the garden—and believe me we did. The first thing we did was buy a freezer. I would go down and

pick and pick and pick and then go home and cook and cook and cook. It was great. I learned not to ask for anyone to bring vegetables to our home. I asked for a little corn one day and the next morning we had five bushels on the back steps. We had a time freezing all that.

Sunday school classes can buy any size of canned vegetables and take to KH for the houseparents to use. Some of the cottages have a garden in their yard now. But this would really help. Someone sent me this article to use. I know you will really like it.

How to plant your garden:

"First, you come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses.

"Then plant three rows of peas: peace of mind, peace of heart, and peace of soul.

"Next plant four rows of squash: squash gossip, squash indifference, squash grumbling, and squash selfishness.

"You will want to plant four rows of lettuce: lettuce be faithful, lettuce be kind, lettuce be patient, and lettuce really love one another.

"And remember, no garden is without turnips: turnip for meetings, turnip for service, and turnip to help one another.

"Finally include thyme: thyme for God, thyme for each other, thyme for family, and thyme for friends.

"Be sure to include all these in your garden and you will discover the secret to true happiness."

Joyce Surbaugh will still accept a phone call from you if you haven't given her your address. She is trying to make a new directory. So many people have moved and not let us know. Her phone number is 252-571-7796. Please call her now if you did not receive your registration information for Homecoming. She will still try to get you put on the list. Give her a call.

Robert Bickle wishes to thank all the folks who sent him get well cards

since they have discovered a blood clot in his right lung. He wrote: "I want to reach out to everyone and let all of you know how grateful I am for all the prayers and support. Thanks to **Brother John Thompson and Mrs. Joyce Surbaugh.**" He states that he is still a little weak but keeping spirits up high as I was told he had a close call. He continues: "I had very bad pain for at least two or more days. **Mr. Thompson** came to my home and took me to the hospital for treatment. He stayed by my side for the two days and I will always remember his kindness as well."

Folks, if you hear of one of our alumni being very sick, let me know and I'll try to get the word out. It means a whole lot to get a card or a phone call.

Hugh Lane Kirkman writes: "Kennedy Home life really helped prepare me for my job. When I was in **Mr. Cribb's** cottage, we went out and beat the mats every day before school. I learned to make my bed, clean bathrooms, kitchens, living rooms, and our bedrooms, I was nine years old. I learned a lot. I believe children should learn how to tend to the house so as adults they know how to care for themselves and a family. **Mrs. Batts and Mrs. Howard** taught me how to keep a clean house. Now, I clean the Senior Adult building every day in Craven County. I get to meet so many nice people. Brother John says this old building used to be the recreation center and a place to give concerts. I love my work there. Thanks to all the folks who taught me to have a clean house."

Always remember you are welcome to stop by my home in Havelock. I love company. I hope it will be clean when you get there. Love you very much. jt



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

Remembering God's wonderful works brings great joy

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Taking photos is a tradition that predates my own family—captured moments in time from childhood and from times before I was even born are family heirlooms. When a birthday or holiday appears on the horizon, it is not uncommon for the photo albums and memory boxes to come out from the cupboards and closets to relive times past. Nowadays, I scroll through my phone's photos for more recent snapshots.

This Easter, I look back again at images of newborn Jenny Inez smiles, burrito-blanketed in pink and blue in the hospital bassinet, and am amazed how my capacity for love increased in that very moment. Her preschool self swings high in one of our past backyards, the wideness of her smile stretching her little face exhibiting the epitome of happiness. She stands with a smaller smile but eyes lit in her white robe moments before following her Lord in baptism. She strikes a pose in color-guard-style, chin up, flag up, practiced smile frozen in time as the Carolina band's song crescendos then fades. In front of her loaded car, she smiles with high hopes as she embarks on her journey as a social worker into parts unknown (in that photo, the stuffed animal I gifted her on day one, Buffy Bear, peaks from beneath the lid of her last box, centered in her back window—all recalled as I look at that photo). In front of our home, she smiles straight into the eyes of her beloved newlywed Donald, their hands clasped, bubbles freeze-framed in the photo, iridescent witnesses of her newest beginning... I look up from the albums and focus on the framed photo of Jenny and me swirling and, of course, smiling on her wedding day.

Every now and then, holiday seasons



are supersized. The significance of faith celebrations coincide with family milestones, and both take on special meaning. This past Easter, as the family gathered for the high holy day of celebration, we also brought gifts and sang "Happy Birthday" to daughter Jenny.

We put on our Easter finery, sang our hymns of earth-shattering joy, wove our garden flowers onto the resurrection cross, and listened to the fantastic story of a risen Savior conquering death on that early morning long ago that changed creation's outcome for all who believe. We came home joyful and victorious to put finishing touches on the Sabbath feast we would share with loved ones. My attention fell on the lemon poppy-seed pound cake—Jenny's favorite. The pink ceramic cake stand decorated with hearts held the treasured birthday cake, and I placed the candles she would blow out that afternoon.

My mind sifted snapshots of time, of Easters past, of birthdays past. Forty-one years ago, on the day after Easter Sunday, my firstborn burst onto the scene, linking the joys of spring's best holiday with the added joy of becoming a father. Just a few years later, a similar spring day just after Easter saw Jenny's entrance into this dad's heart. Just when I thought life could not be any better, she came into our family of five then and proved that the human heart really can expand in incredible ways.

On this Easter Sunday, my spirit sang with the psalmist: "I will praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well" (Psalm 139:14). How else to explain the increase in mind and heart to hold these memories? All this joy?

On Easter Sunday, we listened to the proclamation of our triumphant Lord Jesus bursting from the awfulness of death on a cross into the early morning newness of a conquered tomb and everlasting life. We heard how God's plan for the salvation of His creation provides promise and assurance to all who believe. We lit those candles and sang and the birthday girl blew them all out, making her wishes. We joined with our own silent wishes for her new year. I experienced all of this in real time with a heart overflowing with joyful gratitude and humble thanksgiving to my Lord and Savior. I will relive these moments as I look back at photographs of my family and read again the images recorded in scripture of my Jesus. Join me in discovering joy by remembering God's wonderful works.



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