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October 2021

Issue 10

Volume 134

Samantha accepts Christ, realizes college dream

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Managing Editor

Samantha is beaming as she walks onto the stage. The bright blue and gold colors of her graduation robes are almost as vibrant as the eighteen year old's smile. Like the passing of a baton, Samantha's high school principal places the neatly rolled-up diploma into her outstretched hand.

Samantha soaks in every second of her graduation day; it is an accomplishment that was not always within her grasp.

Samantha has been in the custody of North Carolina's foster care system since she was five years old. She lived in multiple placements, some which were so difficult that it put her future success in doubt. Her hope grew dim until almost five years ago when she came to live at Odum Home, Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina's (BCH) cottage homes for vulnerable children located in the college town of Pembroke.

Once she began living with BCH's caring cottage parents and the other girls, Samantha's hope started becoming brighter.

"I saw Odum Home as a beautiful place," Samantha recalls. "When I came here, I felt at home. I felt like I was safe."

The night she arrived, her cottage parents had a bedroom ready and all the necessities awaiting her. Samantha quickly felt at ease.

"Sometimes children may come in with nothing, and we want to make sure they have what they need," explains Kathy Locklear, campus manager at Odum Home. "We want to always make sure they have something new and nice to sleep on so that they feel comfortable."

"My first night I talked to my (cottage) parent, and I told her everything I had been through," Samantha divulges. "She prayed



At one time, hope was dim for eighteen-year-old Samantha. Since coming to Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) Odum Home, her future has become bright. Samantha, above middle, and fellow Odum Home seniors Rachel, left, and Joann, right, snap high school graduation selfies. All three are now attending college.

with me, hugged me and told me everything was going to be okay."

Modeling the love of Christ is the anchor of BCH's mission of "sharing hope...changing lives." Cottage parents lead daily devotions, take the boys and girls to church and ensure they know that God loves them unconditionally.

Odum Home has strong relationships with a number of North Carolina Baptist Churches including two of the first churches Samantha attended with her cottage—Bear Swamp Baptist Church and Berea Baptist Church both located in Pembroke. It was in their services

she heard the gospel message.

"You know when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, your heart starts beating fast," Samantha shares. "So I came to the altar, sat on the bench and I said 'I need to be saved.' That's when I decided to start living for God."

"Samantha is one of those young ladies that church and Christ mean a lot to her, and she has accepted Christ in her life," says Locklear. "Christ being a part of the children's lives and helping to give them hope for the future is phenomenal for them."

In order to help Samantha and the four
(Continued on page 8.)

River Hill Refuge moves from dream to reality

By Michael C. Blackwell, President/CEO

It is a beautiful, hopeful day. We gather to make a new memory knowing this was the 20th anniversary of one of the worst days in the history of the United States—September 11, 2001. But on this Saturday, September 11, 2021, we stand in amazement of what God is doing at River Hill Refuge outside of Shelby, North Carolina.

I welcome old and new friends and supporters, faithful volunteers, and Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) staff members.

"A river is a body of water with unending possibilities," I say, "A river can be a source of recreation, fun, renewal. A river can be a place of glorious memory. For me, that memory was a visit to the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized. I put my feet in those waters—cool, clear, peaceful—splashed several handfuls on my face, and just let that "river of rivers" wash over me."

My eyes close, I begin to sing, and voices join in as our hearts lift upward to Heaven. "I've got peace like a river...I've got peace like a river...I've got peace like a river in my soul."

On this site, three new homes will be built for BCH's family foster care ministry. It is sacred, holy ground. It is a place of peace for children—no more hurricanes of abuse and tornadoes of neglect, just peace, peace, peace like a river.

"A hill is a place that signals hope and healing," I say as my voice rises, reverberating across a crowd of almost 300. "Mary went into the hill country to await word about the birth of the Messiah. Even that Hill far away where stood an Old Rugged Cross, even that Hill, the emblem of suffering and shame, became a Hill of Hope and Eternal Life as Christ died—on that hill—for our sins."

River Hill Refuge is a community set on a hill—ordained by God—to shed the light of hope and healing to the least of these, I tell you.

"God is our Refuge and Strength," I whisper. "And because of that, there will be no fear. We will have no fear."

This is a refuge for children."

Children have a special place in the heart of Jesus. You've seen the picture, haven't you, as He's surrounded by children. What does He say? "Let the children come to me, of such is the Kingdom of God." And what is He saying today? "Let the children of River Hill Refuge come to me."

Of such is the Kingdom of God.

I never speak more assuredly than when I speak about the welfare of children. I am never afraid to ask for volunteer help or a financial gift when the wellbeing of a child is at stake. God assures me and from Him confidence bubbles up.

"God will guide our path," I say. "God will give us strength for the journey. These three homes—set on a hill—will honor God, the One who makes all things possible. Listen to me. The Westmoreland Dream, the dream of brothers Wes and Jay Westmoreland to build these homes on their family's prized farmland, will be even more than they dared dream. God is in charge. God is the architect."

Look around you today. See what *is*, the lush green pastures and the glorious vistas reaching into the distance, but also see what *will be*."

I then surprise the audience when I wave, wishing five-year-old Jacob a happy birthday.

"Imagine with me six months from now or one year from now," I say. "See the children playing? Look, there's Jacob. He's adorable."

Everyone looks around to see him. I call out to Nora, Jacob's older sister.

"Hi, Nora." Nora is nine years old and she's *in charge*. "Seeing the children play makes River Hill Refuge real. It is no longer a dream. It is happening."

I couldn't help myself as once again I break out in song: "Lord, listen to your people praying. Send us love...send us power...send us grace...send us grace...send us grace."

September 11 is an unforgettable date in American history. But on September 11, 2021, we added a new memory, one that has a positive and redemptive note, one that will come to our minds each year at this time.

"This is River Hill Refuge," I proclaim. "A River of Peace. A Hill of Hope. A Refuge of Healing. *To God alone be the Glory. AMEN.*

AMEN. And AMEN."



To commemorate the 20th anniversary of September 11, 2001, the Cleveland County Sheriff's Office Honor Guard led in a Presentation of Colors.

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

Charity & Children

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Emmanuel Home will help birth moms in healing

By **Cyndie Truax**, BCH Director of Marketing, Development & Special Initiatives

She said to me that everyone had told her to have an abortion—then her eyes veered away from the newborn baby in the crib beside her. I could feel the sting of her words as they rolled off her lips and the tears began to swell in her eyes.

I walked over to the hospital bed and gently put my hand on her arm as tears rolled down my cheeks.

“But you didn’t,” I said, my words trembling with every breath. “You didn’t because you’re brave and you love her. And you didn’t because you have given us one of the greatest gifts we will ever know.”

As an adoptive mother, I have the blessing of experiencing love that didn’t grow in my body, but rather was birthed through my heart. It is a love as deep and powerful as the love I imagine my Savior has for me. But as an adoptive mother, I have also experienced the profound and sometimes complicated love that exists with my daughter’s first mama. That love is unique and possibly unlike any I have known. It is deep gratitude, deep sorrow, and deep admiration all rolled into one.

In my role with Christian Adoption Services (CAS), a ministry of Baptist Children’s Homes (BCH), as well as in my personal journey, I have watched God work as He weaves together lives in the most remarkable ways. However, I have also seen a side of adoption that many don’t realize exists.

For 42 years, CAS has been ministering to expectant mothers and bringing families together. One of the greatest blessings of that work is being in relationship with birth mothers—both during their pregnancies and after.

An often unrealized facet to our ministry is



Left, Kevin Qualls of CAS and, right, BCH’s Keith Henry receive the lead gift from Chris and Darci Horne in the front of the pre-renovated The Emmanuel Home in Thomasville.

that when an expectant mother reaches out to make an adoption plan. Part of that plan is ensuring the mother is in a stable living situation. In some instances, steps are taken to provide that safe-home until she gives birth.

But, what happens after the baby is born and the mother has physically but not emotionally healed?

Sadly, many of those birth moms return to unstable living situation. For years, this fact has haunted CAS.

We have built a strong post-placement ministry for our birth moms and maintain a deep connection after their child is born. Each year, events are held where we minister to birth mothers and guide them through the grief process. In the past five years alone, we have seen multiple birth moms accept Christ through these events. However, we are the first to admit that a few events are not enough for some of these precious women. That is about to change.

Through a generous lead

gift from Chris and Darci Horne, given in memory of their dear friend Emmanuel, “The Emmanuel Home” will change the way we care for birth moms after they have placed their child into the arms of another family.

The Emmanuel Home will open in 2022

as a fully-staffed, care house where birth mothers can live post-placement while working through grief, learning coping mechanisms, exploring life skills, working a job, receiving counseling, and furthering their education—all in the context of a nurturing Christian environment. The home, located in Thomasville, will care for up to

five women and each woman will be in care for approximately ten months.

The goal is to provide these courageous women with a season of intentional growth as they walk through the emotional grief which comes with placing a child for adoption. CAS and BCH desire to stand in the gap for these ladies and be a daily reminder of their Savior who loves them more deeply than any person ever could.

To learn more about The Emmanuel Home and how you can be a partner, contact Cyndie Truax at ctrux@bchfamily.org or 518-424-1890.



Cyndie Truax

Join us to **RESTORE HOPE** for birth mothers!

Be a part of the effort to establish **Emmanuel Home**, a place to minister to birth mothers who choose adoption for their child.

Dedication Service

November 6, 2021 | 10:00 am
417 West Main Street
Thomasville, NC 27360



The walk culminates with a dedication service as hiker Win McCullough finishes his 600-mile trek at the site of the home.

The **RESTORE** Walk

Learn how you can help:

Visit bchfamily.org/restore-walk
Contact Cyndie Truax at 518-424-1890
or ctrux@bchfamily.org

The light of God's love shines through darkness

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

This is why I unashamedly ask you to give and help a child!

"Get out of here! Leave me alone! Go away! I want to die!" These are hard words for a young girl to hear her mother say. She leaves the room and calls for help.

"My mother left us when I was five, and I never saw her again." A five-year-old little boy's life is shattered as his mother leaves him and his one-year-old brother.

"I was so hungry. Some days we would eat, some days there would be no food. That's just the way it was."

"In my neighborhood a gunshot is more common than a doorbell ringing. I joined a gang to have a family."

"At 14 years old, I had a baby. I had no family, no place to go, no home for my baby."

So, tell me something, what do you do when life seems so very harsh, so dark? What do you do when you are five and your mom abandons you and your brother? What do you do when you are 14 and have a baby? What do you do when your mom's opioid addiction is more important than feeding you? Where do you run when mom's boyfriend is enraged because he's had too much to drink, again? What do you do?

These are only a few situations some children face day after day. Every year in North Carolina more than 16,000 boys and girls are removed from their families because of abuse and neglect and crisis.

When their biological families let them down, Baptist Children's Homes is there to offer them a safe home where compassionate cottage parents and foster parents provide for their needs and care for them with the unconditional love of Jesus Christ.

When these boys and girls came into care their lives had been devastated. They had no hope. When they entered our doors we embraced them with God's love. Thank you for making it possible for us to provide the love and care they so desperately needed.

In just a few short weeks, churches across North Carolina will be collecting their Annual Thanksgiving Offering. Our theme this year is "Light their Darkness." As you read Samantha's story in this issue of **Charity & Children**, you will celebrate her journey from abuse and chaos to accepting Christ as her Lord and Savior. You will celebrate her graduation from high school with honors, and you will join us in praying for her daily as she continues her journey as a freshman in college. There are so

many children like Samantha who need to know that "light" pierces the darkness.

I ask you to make an investment in the lives of children that will reap a return unlike any investment you have ever made. I ask you to advocate for children and families by encouraging your church to invest in the life of these precious boys and girls. We cannot provide this life transforming ministry without you!

Thank you so much for your prayerful support through our annual Thanksgiving Offering. Some of you have already started collecting your "mile of pennies." One church decided to go for a "mile of dollars." When we join together, we are able to do so much more.

In Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, we read: "Two are better than one, because they have good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up." In verse 12 scripture reads, "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Each child—each individual—that comes to us has several things in common. Each has experienced trauma. Each has felt alone. Every child knows what it is like to fall and have no one to pick them up. Each of them have been overpowered by the darkness and hopelessness in their lives. The "good news" is they have come to a place where hope is shared by the cupful each day. They have each come to a place where someone is there to pick them up when they fall. They have come to a place where darkness is overpowered by the light of God's love shining through you.

It takes the body of Christ—the church—

to join with us to form the strands of hope that will not be broken. It takes the body of Christ—the church—to be light, to light their way. We need you! The children need you!

So why do I unashamedly ask YOU to PLEASE GIVE? The best way for me to answer that question is by sharing a verse from the Book of Matthew: "Whatsoever you have done unto the least of these you have done unto me."

Last year, you and I as North Carolina Baptists—"On Mission Together"—touched the lives of more than 195,000 through BCH's ministry. Thank you for illuminating their path to hope and healing.

For many years the Annual Thanksgiving Offering has been referred to as the "umbilical cord" of our ministry, sustaining us yesterday, today, and, with your help, tomorrow.

Will you make the cord even stronger; the light even brighter? Remember, together we are stronger! Grateful to be "On Mission Together."





THANKS TO YOUR
OFFERING
SAMANTHA IS ONE OF THE

725

WHO MADE PROFESSIONS
OF FAITH IN THE
PAST FIVE YEARS

"The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not over come it." - John 1:5



**LIGHT
THEIR
DARKNESS**

Samantha is one of the approximately 16,000 children in the NC foster care system. Through your offering her future is bright! You gave Samantha a safe home at Baptist Children's Homes where she heard the Gospel and asked Jesus into her heart. Today, Samantha is a college student. You can light children's darkness by giving to the Offering.

Week of Prayer: November 14-21, 2021 | Offering Goal: \$1,500,000
Call 336.474.1209 to schedule a speaker | Resources at bchoffering.org



SHARING HOPE...CHANGING LIVES

Baptist Children's Homes
of NORTH CAROLINA



Community celebrates groundbreaking for new foster care homes

By Blake Ragsdale, Managing Editor

Almost 300 staff members and trustees of the Baptist Children's Homes (BCH), Cleveland County dignitaries, supporters, and friends came together on Saturday, September 11 for the groundbreaking of three new homes near Shelby, North Carolina. River Hill Refuge, as it will be known, will allow BCH to provide care to vulnerable children in Cleveland and surrounding counties who need a safe home.

In his remarks to guests at the River Hill Refuge groundbreaking, BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell fittingly referenced the hymn, "I've Got Peace like a River."

"This place—this sacred, holy ground—will be a place of peace for children who have felt hurricanes of abuse and tornadoes of neglect flood their lives," Blackwell proclaimed. "This place will offer them, as the old hymn states, peace like a river."

Realizing Blackwell's dream of establishing a BCH location in this area of the state began with Shelby natives Jay and Wes Westmoreland. The brothers donated acreage from their family's River Hill Angus Farm, the inspiration for the project's name, in honor of their late father, Dr. Ted G. Westmoreland.

During the program, Jay shared the dream for the family farmland where he and his brother spent many years raising award-winning cattle alongside their father.

"A few days after dad's funeral in 2017, I returned to walk the property," he remembered. "I called Wes and invited him to join me. I shared the growing vision that had been implanted in my heart, and Wes immediately embraced the concept. We developed ideas together, and we reached out to our friends at

Baptist Children's Homes to invite the organization to minister here in Cleveland County and surrounding areas."

"We see the needs of so many disadvantaged children—their current circumstances are grim as abuse and abandonment is far too common," says

announced another exciting incentive to help make River Hill Refuge a reality—a \$100,000 matching challenge issued by an anonymous donor.

"Let that sink in—this anonymous donor will give \$100,000 if you and I and others join hands and hearts and also give a hundred thousand dollars,"

Blackwell explained. "I know you will want to be part of this challenge."

With the groundbreaking taking place on the date of September 11th, the program began with a time of remembrance. The Cleveland County Sheriff's Office Honor Guard led in a Presentation of Colors ceremony followed by the singing of the National Anthem by BCH Trustee and former Miss North Carolina Dana Dixon. Nancy Hall, Chair of the BCH Board of Trustees, led in a moment of silence in remembrance of those who lost their lives and were impacted by the events of 9/11. She also offered a prayer in memory of BCH staff member Micah Lee who died recently. Lee served as BCH Director of De-

velopment, Metrolina/West Central Area and was deeply committed to raising the necessary funding and awareness to see River Hill Refuge realized.

Doug Bridges, Chair of the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners, brought greetings on behalf of the county. John Butler, Executive Leader, Business Services of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSCNC), brought greetings from BSCNC executive director/treasurer Todd Unzicker and his staff.

"This is a very special day in a lot of ways. Obvi-

Wes Westmoreland. "Our efforts come from a desire to see this change."

In addition to the gift of property, the brothers made a lead financial donation to build the first home in memory of their father, a long-time veterinarian in Shelby and BCH supporter, who passed along his love for BCH and heart for philanthropy to his sons. Their efforts provided the momentum needed to begin raising the \$4.3 million that is required to build the homes.

During the groundbreaking ceremony, Blackwell



Left to right: to Doug Bridges, Chair of Cleveland County Board of Commissioners; Dana Dixon, BCH Trustee and former Miss North Carolina; Nancy Hall, Chair of the BCH's Board of Trustees; Wes Westmoreland, property donor; Michael C. Blackwell, BCH President/CEO; Jay and Scarlett Westmoreland, property donors; Rit Varriale, Pastor of Elizabeth Baptist Church in Shelby; John Butler, Executive Leader, Business Services of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.



Jay and Wes Westmoreland stand with a portrait of their late father Dr. Ted G. Westmoreland and renderings of the three homes to be built for River Hill Refuge.

ously, 20 years ago our country went through a time where people wondered, 'is there hope anymore?'" Butler said in his remarks. "But I'm reminded that God said three things remain: faith, hope and love. Hope remains, and we have the opportunity to invest, by faith, in the hope that so many children need to experience."

River Hill Refuge's three homes are a part of BCH's growing Foster Care program. Each home will have a set of BCH-recruited and licensed foster parents who care for as many as six children at one time. The foster parents will care for the children the same way as other foster parents, except live in these homes which are owned by BCH. The foster parents will also have the ongoing support from BCH's Foster Care staff.

The establishment of River Hill Refuge, and an

additional Foster Care office in Shelby, gives BCH a presence in 32 communities throughout North Carolina, South Carolina, and Guatemala. The non-profit serves boys and girls who come from traumatic circumstances where oftentimes North Carolina Departments of Social Services have taken custody of the children for their well-being.

"It has been a long-held dream to establish a loca-

tion in this area of the state for children," Blackwell said "With the gracious support of the Westmoreland family and our many donors and friends, this dream is coming to fruition, and children's lives will be forever changed because of it."

Anyone interested in helping with River Hill Refuge, may contact Brenda Gray, BCH Executive Vice President of Development and Communications, at 336-689-4442 or bgray@bchfamily.org.



NC Baptist relationships vital to teen's success

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Managing Editor

(Continued from page 1.)

other Odum Home seniors be ready for the future, Odum Home case manager Heavenly Silva held transitional living sessions teaching them life skills needed to be successful, independent adults. In the past year, much of their time has focused on the process of pursuing higher education goals as well as exploring financial aid options.

"The children already had the dream of going to college, but what we don't want is for them to get trapped by debt," Silva explains. "It's about helping them make informed choices and understand that their time at college is an investment."

With Silva's help and the encouragement of each other, the five seniors were accepted to the University of North Carolina at Pembroke (UNCP). Samantha, who was involved in ROTC all four years of high school, received a \$10,000 ROTC scholarship. Not only did she feel that UNCP gave her the best opportunity to succeed, the university is only a block away from Odum Home.

"It fit our budget and it was right here in front of Odum Home," Samantha explains. "If we need help, we can go across the street."

"Our commitment is to be there for them no matter what they need," Locklear assures.

No matter their ages or circumstances, the support of North Carolina Baptists is integral to BCH's ability to serve boys and girls at Odum Home as well as BCH's cottage homes that stretch from the east coast to the mountains of western North Carolina. Members of Clement Missionary Baptist Church in Autryville and Village Baptist Church in Fayetteville formed lasting, personal relationships with Samantha and Odum Home's seniors that have grown stronger throughout the months and years.

"It's so exciting! We've watched them grow. We've watched them mature. We are so proud of them," says Vicki Burge from Village Baptist's "Saved to Serve" class.

Members of Village Baptist's "Saved to Serve" class not only celebrate the children's birthdays, organize activities, and drop off items they need, but members encourage the teens through phone calls and include them in their virtual Sunday School classes.

"Ms. Vicki has really impacted my life," Samantha says. "She has been there whenever I needed her."

Leading up to graduation, Burge and her fellow class members worked carefully to keep a tremendous secret from the seniors—they

were organizing a surprise graduation party. The group worked with Locklear to ensure it was a special day for all the Odum Home children but prepared several plans just for the seniors. One of those special treats included cooking each senior's favorite meal which ranged from steak to seafood.

The day of the party, Samantha and the seniors entered the Odum Home gym which was adorned in ribbons, balloons, and a back wall filled with gifts. Samantha covered her mouth in shock as the sound of cheers filled the building.

"We wanted to bless them with those things college freshmen need and also perhaps some things they might want," Burge explains. "It was

overwhelming to see them so excited, pleased and proud of themselves. I think they truly felt special and that was really our goal."

Equipped with the necessities and support she needs, Samantha moved into the dorm at



Campus Manager Kathy Locklear has seen Samantha blossom since the teen first arrived at Odum Home in Pembroke almost five years ago. Samantha was inducted into the National Honor Society and received a \$10,000 ROTC college scholarship.

UNCP and is now several weeks into her first year of classes. She is quick to credit Odum Home and North Carolina Baptists for helping her realize what, at one time, would have been an unreachable goal.

"My dream at UNCP wouldn't have been possible because I didn't have the financial support," she says. "And actually, with me being abused, I would've been traumatized where I couldn't even think to go to college"

For her graduation day, Samantha could only invite a small number of people to watch her dream of walking across the stage come true. They included her mother and grandmother, with whom she stays in touch, Odum Home's Kathy Locklear and Pamela Hailey, and Village Baptists' Nancy Paul and Vicki Burge.

"There are people that aren't blood that have been there for me and shared God's Word with me," Samantha says. "I don't feel like I would've gotten saved if not for Odum."

Burge sees North Carolina Baptists' involvement with Baptist Children's Homes as an opportunity to "make an eternal difference."

"I'm just so thankful for Kathy and her staff," Burge shares. "I'm thankful that God provides the opportunity through the Baptist State Convention for our young people to have a place that's safe, that provides what they need, and shares the Word of God."

For resources and videos, including "Samantha's Story," to help your church collect an Annual Offering for Baptist Children's Homes, visit bchoffering.org.



Samantha opens gifts at the surprise graduation party organized by Village Baptist's "Saved to Serve" class.

Alumni celebrate Coach Corder's 89th birthday

Columbarium planned for God's Acre

By Lib Johnson

(336) 299-7412

libsjohnson@triad.rr.com

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Bill and Verna Byerly regret that they need to cancel their annual covered-dish luncheon scheduled for October 2 because of a COVID-19 Delta variant health issue.

Since my chat with **Louise Maness Pierce** shortly before Homecoming, she has been in the hospital again and is now recuperating at a friend's home. She developed complications after taking a calcium building shot. It had a bad effect because of her stage 4 kidney disease which resulted from the removal of her pancreas. Although she is still weak, Louise is confident that her doctor is competently handling several issues for her. Please pray Louise will improve. You can send get-well cards to her at this address: 2235 Sunderland Rd., 96 C, Winston-Salem, NC, 27103.

We were saddened to hear of the July 3 death of **Ruby Hauser Wooten**, the last of the five Hauser children who entered Mills Home (MH) in 1942. After her 1950 graduation, she and her husband **James Wilburn Wooten** reared an outstanding family. Ruby was known to be a fantastic cook and seamstress. She was also known as an outstanding teacher in the nursery and children's church of the Winston Salem Friends' Meeting. Later she was a founding member of the Forsyth Friends' Meeting, whose building she helped build.

It is very interesting that Ruby was frequently on the awards podium with her husband from the 1960's through the late 1990's as they won trophies in all levels of archery competitions. She was the U.S. Women's Clout (Archery) Champion five times. She was so good that she was invited to compete in the 1988 Olympic Trials in Colorado Springs.

Thank you to **Tom Rus** for

reporting the July 3rd death of his mother **Viola Batts Rus** ('33-'47). She was the last of the four Batts youngsters who lived at MH. The widow of **Vladimir Rus**, Viola leaves behind two daughters, a son, and five grandchildren. After graduating from MH, Viola earned a BS degree in English from Women's College (UNC-G) and taught for a while. In 1952, she married Vladimir and moved to Levittown, NY where she was a long-time secretary of the Levittown Property Owners' Association. In 1988, she was a founding member of the Levittown Historical Society. In 2005, she received the "Make a Difference" award from the Town of Hempstead. She was a devoted mom and grandmother, avid reader, animal lover, and an ardent New York Yankee fan because of the success of star pitcher and MH graduate **Johnny Allen**. One of her earliest memories was that when Johnny was a major league player, he would send a truckload of oranges to MH at Christmastime. Viola will be missed by all who knew her.

We deeply regret reporting that **Jimmy Churchill** died on August 11 after a brief illness. Jimmy deeply loved MH and his special MH family. A faithful member of Catawba Valley Baptist Church for many years, he enjoyed discussing the Bible and especially sharing the love of Jesus. He lived out his faith through his generous heart to those in need and his tireless devotion to his family.

Jimmy enjoyed a career in the furniture industry as a color stylist for Reliance Akzo Nobel, but he consulted and designed for other companies such as Century Furniture, Drexel Heritage, and Henredon. He was widely known for his artistic abilities.

The greatest loss for Jimmy was losing his grandson **Christian James Churchill**, but he deeply

cherished the family members who survive him: a son, two daughters, their spouses, and five grandchildren. Jimmy's memorial service was held on August 17 and he was interred at Burke Memorial Park in Morganton. Memorial donations may be made to the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, PO Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27360. Condolences may be sent to the family at this address: www.heritagefuneralservice.com.

We were saddened also to learn that **William H. (Billy) Covington** died August 17. He and his sister **Ann** came to MH in 1948 and were fortunate to be reunited with their mother in 1954. He had a loving family that included his wife **Cherry**, a daughter and son, their spouses, four grandchildren and six great grandchildren. Friends can send condolences to his sister **Ann Turbeville** at this address: 340 Poplar Crossing Dr., NW, Apt. 302, Concord, NC 28027.

I am sad to report that **Reverend Jim Camp** died on July 29. Rev. Camp and his wife **Joyce** began a life of service when they served as houseparents at Thornwell Children's Home in South Carolina. A few years later, they both earned theological degrees, and Jim began pastoring churches, serving several in his career. He also served as director of camps and YMCAs, was president of civic clubs, led in mission camping, and served as Director of Missions in the Eastern Baptist Association, Warsaw. From 1968 to 1979, Jim served in several capacities at MH. Condolences to the family may be sent to Jim's wife Joyce at this address: Joyce Camp, 2600 Croasdaille Farm Parkway, Apt. A-344, Durham, NC 27705.

The Mills Home Alumni Associational meeting in the Teen Room held on July 31 during

Homecoming weekend was smooth with all reports given being positive and well done. A big piece of news brought forward that evening was that the Alumni Council has investigated having a columbarium erected at God's Acre (a columbarium is a structure with niches or compartments to hold ashes of the deceased). **Dr. Blackwell** is amenable to the plan, so the motion was made at the meeting that the God's Acre Committee continue investigating details necessary. God's Acre Project Chairman **Jimmy Rochelle** says the project will be financed totally by donations. Several people have already made promises of donations. All donations should be sent to treasurer **Flora Hicks Patton** at this address: 6428 Sisk Carter Rd., Rockwell, NC 28138. Please make the check payable to the Mills Home Alumni Association with a notation stating the gift is for the columbarium. You will be informed of more details regarding this project.

Several alumni and a few dear classmates met with former **Coach Darrell Corder** on September 5 in the Teen Room at Mills Home. With great camaraderie, we celebrated Coach Corder's 89th birthday with a delicious meal, shared humorous memories, and were blessed with comments from Coach Corder. We are grateful to **Cameron Corder** for bringing his dad and to **Jay Wood** for sponsoring this event. It was a truly special and wonderful reunion.

We sorrowfully report that **Diane Stewart**, wife of Mills Home **Pastor Randy Stewart**, passed away on September 7. Please remember the Stewart family in your prayers.



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



Camp Duncan in Aberdeen

Girls prepare flowers for event

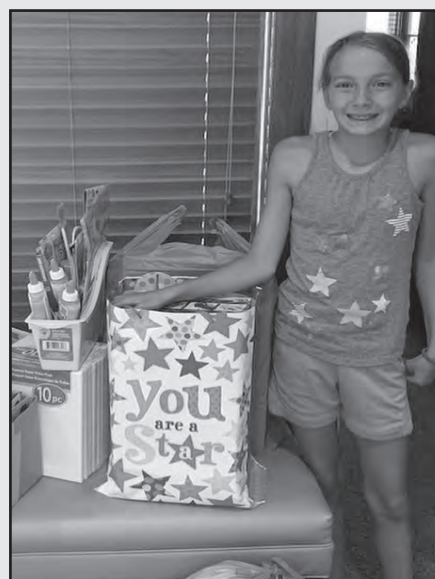
Camp Duncan girls ensured flower arrangements for the River Hill Refuge event in Shelby looked their best. They and boys from Cameron Boys Camp were vital to the day's success.



Baptist Children's Homes president/CEO

Michael C. Blackwell encourages staff

Recently, Dr. Blackwell made several visits to meetings with staff members to provide inspiration and encouragement. This particular meeting centered on ongoing staff training.



Broyhill Home in Clyde

Child uses birthday to help BCH

Canton resident Aspen Long, age 11, asked her friends to bring arts and craft gifts to her birthday party to benefit the boys and girls living at Broyhill Home.



Lindsay Home in Zionville

Ladies enjoy Friday night lights

Lindsay Home ladies cheered on the home team to victory as they attended the Watauga High School junior varsity football game. They posed with the cheerleaders afterwards.



Campers on Mission

Group renovates apartments

Members of Campers on Mission have tackled numerous projects at BCH this season including renovating two apartments that will help staff members new to the BCH ministry.



Odum Home in Pembroke

Church group makes "deep impact"

Children and adults from Deep Impact missions group at Marble Springs Baptist Church recently went on mission at Odum Home where they helped with several projects.



Hillcrest Baptist Church in Raleigh

Ladies deliver handmade blankets

The Slip Stitch Sisterhood from Hillcrest Baptist Church traveled to Mills Home in Thomasville to deliver handmade blankets for the boys and girls.



Vehicle Donation

Martin gives car to BCH

Lynell A. Martin donated her vehicle to BCH! She is a member of Clement Baptist in Autryville -- the church is a great friend of the boys and girls at Odum Home in Pembroke

Correction:

In the August issue of **C&C**, the names of siblings Michael McKinney, Martina Waller, and Linda Neal did not appear with sister Jeanette Malloy when recognizing the children's gift in memory of parents Garland "Mac" McKinney and Irmgard "Bobbie" McKinney. The recognition was part of a special section that honored and memorialized "Moms and Dads."

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Christopher Allabaugh, Dir., 252-522-0811
www.kennedyhome.org
- Odum Home**
Kathy Locklear, Res. Mgr., 910-521-3433
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www.cameronboyscamp.org
- Camp Duncan for Girls**
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Remembrances of Becky touches hearts Alum shares fond memories of Kennedy Home

By **JOHN THOMPSON**, 110 Lee K. Allen, Havelock, NC 28532 (282) 671-3515

jthompson117@ec.rr.com

I miss my Becky everyday. I can hardly stand it. But my sorrow is lessened by the love and support you all have showed.

And so I begin by offering my humble thanks to the many of you for praying for my **Becky** as she struggled. Your kindness heaped on me during this time of her going to be with the Lord has made the difference. I feel like she must be making sweet music up there in heaven.

Thanks to many of you for coming to her very special service at the Cherry Point Baptist Church of Havelock on August 28. I saw and *loved on* a lot of you—my Kennedy Home (KH) youngins—that day. Many of you have come by the house and have even taken me out to eat—what a blessing.

As you know, Becky and I served the Lord at KH from 1972-1977. I was minister of music and a lot of *other* things. Becky was secretary for several people in the main office. **Rev. Roger Williams** was her direct boss. She loved working for him as well as all the others. She was also my organist at the Kennedy Home Baptist Church. She loved to make “beautiful music.” I think one of the best times at KH was when my family lived right in the middle of the campus in the old clinic building. It was supposed to be torn down, but they had **Stanley Matthews** come in there and make our apartment look beautiful, painting all the walls, windows, and doors. He was my first KH *youngin*.

Becky and I loved the 62 piano students coming into our apartment to take piano lessons. The youngins seemed to like all the fish tanks I had. Many would stop by our house to just say hello or visit a minute on the way to the gym—we called them covert meetings because they were supposed to go straight to the gym!

The sanctuary was packed

for Becky’s funeral—with an overflow in the fellowship hall. I wanted the service to be “uplifting” and it really was. My son **Johnny** led lots of congregational singing and sang “The Holy City” and “The Lord’s Prayer.” Becky and I have played organ/piano duets for many weddings and funerals over the years, beginning in high school. We took piano lessons from the same teacher in the fourth grade. So, I just had to play the organ in tribute for about thirty minutes of the prelude with **Mrs. Lynn Bullock**, a wonderful pianist for the church. My son **Scott** gave a testimony of things he remembered about his mom. I really loved it. I had three preachers speak at the service. They were Cherry Point Pastor **Rev. Steve Epperson**, Becky’s nephew **Rev. Mike Scott**, and **Dr. Michael Schwalm** who was our pastor at Centerview Baptist in Jacksonville for the past six years.

After high school, Becky went to work for the register of deeds in Craven County where she served for about 30 years. The present register of deeds, the **Honorable Sherri Richards**, spoke and shared a lot about Becky—she followed Becky in that office. Becky upheld the integrity of her position when she served and took great care to faithfully carry out the laws and regulations in service to the citizens of the county. She won every election in which she ran—three times.

Becky made beautiful music and did many things in her service to the Lord at National Ave. Baptist Church, Washington First Baptist, Mt. Zion Baptist of Hudson, Kennedy Home Baptist, Tabernacle Baptist of New Bern, First Baptist of Beaufort, and Centerview Baptist of Jacksonville. When able, she played several times at Cherry Point Baptist.

I have received more than 100 cards so far and more than 600

comments on Facebook. The love you have shown through the love offering has touched me deeply—tears flood my eyes as I write.

It’s all I can do to write about how much my KH youngins have done. The financial “love” gifts to me makes me want to cry every time I think about it. I left KH way back in 1977 and all of you continue to show such love and care. And to be honest, I really need that love now. Becky and I were the only staff who ever attended alumni meetings. Thank you for keeping me involved.

Becky told me before her passing that our “whole” family had a great time sharing our lives with all the Kennedy Home youngins and staff from 1972-1977. She and I never forgot the friendships we made back then and they still carry over to now.

And now I’m thrilled to share an alumni update. **Charles (Guy) Langston** of Princeton, North Carolina wrote a letter for me to use and you can tell that it comes straight from his heart. He writes: “Good morning, all. My brother Ronnie, sister Becky, and I were at KH from 1955-1958. Our mother passed away October 16, 1964 with kidney problems. We were able to go to KH through our church’s help—Princeton Baptist. We were at Brokenhurst Cottage with two wonderful people for our houseparents. They were **Mr. and Mrs. V.T. Moore** and their daughter, **Linda**. They were on vacation when we arrived so **Miss Bullock** was in charge. She was a fine person, too. We went to school in LaGrange. **Mrs. Bryant and Mrs. Bell** were great teachers. Being at KH really changed my life for the better. While there, I was baptized at

the church. **Rev. R. F. Smith** was the pastor. I learned to swim in that great big pool on campus. We also picked strawberries in the afternoon after school from down on the farm. I picked a lot, but ate a lot in the field, too. That night for supper, we had strawberries and I really got sick. I never wanted to see a strawberry again. It was only about five years ago that I started eating them again and I love them a lot.

“I remember some boys names. They were **R.B. and Willard Tant** and **Larry Byrd**. I have been back to the KH campus and driven through several times. All the old buildings have been replaced with new ones now.

“After leaving KH, I worked at DuPont in Kinston on shift work for 12 years. Five other men and I drove from Princeton to Kinston all that time. I was drafted into the Army for three years. I went to Germany after basic training for 18 months. I called my wife and she came and lived downtown Ansback, Germany. We really loved Germany and the beautiful castles we visited there.

“I would love to hear from some of the KH children who were there when I was. My cell number is 919-922-5281 and my home number is 919-936-2211. KH meant so much to all of us. I have a home in Princeton at 1354 Old Cornwall’s Road. Drop by to see me some time.”

Please write me again, Guy. And all are invited to send their updates. Remember, I love you. — jt



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

You have a story to tell, so make it a good one

By Jim Edminson, Editor

At her birthday celebration last week, granddaughter Emmalie told the seven-year-old version of her beginning—how her mom and dad knew one night that their baby girl was on her way, and how they traveled to the hospital and texted family the good news, and how she came in the wee hours so that, today, she could wake up being her new age and not have to “wait to turn seven.”

From the time before we are born, we have a story. It is unique and personal to us. Emmalie’s story is not my story, but I can recount my birth story and you can remember yours. We all have life stories.

At a Fort Caswell conference, I reconnected with a friend and fellow Louisianian. Ragan Courtney wrote, with Buryl Red, “Celebrate Life,” the famed Christian musical and anthem performed by youth choirs everywhere in the 1960s and 70s.

Ragan was traveling with his famous wife ministering through music. One of my favorite songs that she sings is “Tell Me the Story of Jesus,” It is one of Cynthia Clawson’s standards, and to my ear, her version is the best. In the lyrics, the whole of Jesus’s life comes to light for all of us—birth, ministry, death, life everlasting, Christ, Savior, God Almighty. Glorious!

Something transformative happens as I hear and experience her music. The songwriter’s words unite with the musician’s artistry to produce an awareness of my Creator. And the outcome? Praise!

I recently read a news article that reported that of the five senses, the most effective at locating time and place is the sense of smell. I sat back in my chair and pondered,

recalling associations between smell and space, and yes, it seems so. The scent of pine takes me to my childhood growing up near Kisatchee National Forest and my carefree summer explorations and adventures in the Youth Conservation Corps as a teen. The distinct fragrance of Old Spice, wherever I inhale it, elicits pictures of my grandfather Wilmer Lee. Catching the faint odor of linseed oil sends me to LSU and Dr. Cavanaugh’s art studio in the 1980s.

However, I would make the case for instant transport to specific settings through the sense of hearing, and even more specifically to music. I marvel at the ability of songs in my car’s very modern sound system to move me backwards to points along my personal timeline. The Imperials? Church Training, Sunday nights at New Hope Baptist Church. “Our God is an Awesome God”—daughter Amie in church choir, Tioga First Baptist Church. Any Huey Lewis tune? The amphitheater concert venue outside Raleigh and a sweet 25th wedding anniversary celebration.

The connections between the news article and my own riffs on the subject agree: it is our memories that elicit stories. I tell stories to cultivate common ground. We all have shared experiences that are different in the details but same in the bedrock. Telling stories builds

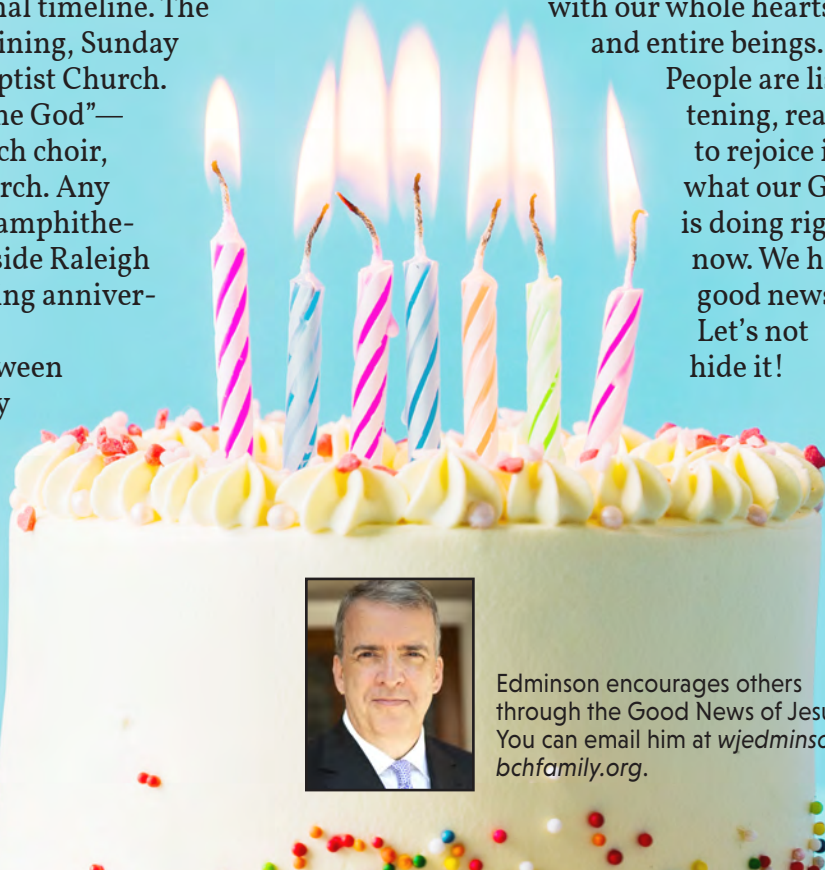
understanding. It grows community. It is why I write “Homeword.”

Storytellers begin with the end in mind, the outcome they hope to bring about in the hearers’ ears. The story is not the same, yet the experience is universal. When I hear “Tell me a story,” I immediately think of Jesus, the Author and Finisher of my faith, and then I point that way, to end at the beginning, which is exactly the same: God!

You, my friend, have a story to tell. It is your version of the universal one, but its importance is of great value. What will you tell? In these days, our personal stories matter, and our choice of which to tell can matter even more. Let us choose to tell the story of Jesus, in our words, in our actions,

with our whole hearts
and entire beings.

People are listening, ready to rejoice in what our God is doing right now. We have good news. Let’s not hide it!



Edminson encourages others through the Good News of Jesus. You can email him at wjedminson@bchfamily.org.

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