

\$300,000
MATCHING GIFT CHALLENGE

Double your gift. Give now!

Between October 1 and January 31, 2024,
gifts will be matched dollar for dollar

Charity & Children

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



@bchfamily

December 2023

Issue 12

Volume 136



Wishes

come true in the fullness of joy!

Christmas is the time to be reminded that joy and the Messiah's coming are synonymous. The world languished in darkness only to awaken to the song of the angels, "Glory to God in the highest!" We join them singing, "Joy to the world, the Lord has come." Our wishes come true in Him so our joy may be complete.

This Christmas, join in helping bring the joy of the Lord to those whose needs are great—who daily find refuge and healing at Baptist Children's Homes. Their wishes are fulfilled when you pray and give. These are challenging times and some may wish they could give but cannot this year. Please consider giving a little extra so needs will be met.

Merry Christmas!
Jim Edminson, Editor

Christmas hope burns bright in Guatemala

By **Arwen and Mike Elders**, BCH Associate Missionaries, Guatemala

Yulisa picks up the woodburner for the first time. She examines its fine metal point and glances at the temperature gauge. "How do you do it?" she asks curiously. That's Yulisa. A mixture of curiosity, artistic expression and the desire to try new things. Soon she is quietly

engrossed in wood burning the silhouette figures of the nativity scene.

Yulisa lives at our Good Shepherd Children's Home in Guatemala. In addition to her artistic interests, she also loves music and is a proficient piano player. Though often shy playing in front of large groups, Yulisa has dreams for a musical future.

"I want to write my own songs one day," she says. "I already have the musical scores, I just need to find the words."

(Continued on page 6)



NC Baptists show their support at Annual Meeting

Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) staff, caregivers, foster families, and those the ministry serves celebrated being on mission together with NC Baptists at the 2023 Annual Meeting of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSC) on November 5 -7. The three-day event began with the Pastors Conference, where BCH served as a sponsor, and ended with its 20-minute presentation on Tuesday evening.

The response was overwhelmingly positive as NC Baptists displayed their support for the ministry to children, adults, and families throughout the annual event.

"The love and affirmation was humbling," said Gayla Freeman, Chair of the BCH Board of Trustees. "From people taking the opportunity to spend time with our staff at the display booths to the phenomenal response we received from the audience during the presentation, we could not be more grateful to NC Baptists for continuing to stand alongside the ministry."

(See BSC Presentation on page 7)



The 2023 Annual Meeting of the Baptist State Convention of NC (BSC) took place on November 5-7 at the Koury Convention Center in Greensboro. Above, BCH's Lewis Smith greets Jim Kilby, pastor of Corinth Baptist Church in Vale, and his wife Wanda at the BCH display booth area. Left, Luis and Stephanie Quintanar are not only BCH employees but are the messengers from Mills Home Baptist Church at BCH's Thomaville campus. Luis is the church pastor. Bottom left, BCH's Sonia Livingston, Kourney Dye, and Becky Stegall stand ready at the Christian Adoption Services booth. Bottom center, Sam Allred, BCH's manager of Recruiting and Staff Development, discusses career opportunities at the main booth. Below, top right, NC Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) setting up their booth. Below, bottom right, BCH's Martha Surratt discusses the Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities Ministry for adults.



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—Established in 1887 as the official publication of Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, Inc., 204 Idol St., PO Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27361-0338. Jim Edminson, editor (wjedminson@bchfamily.org); Blake Ragsdale, managing editor (jbragsdale@bchfamily.org); Marcia Housand, account clerk. **Charity & Children** (ISSN 0009-1723-09 USPS 100-460) is published 11 times a year for friends and supporters by Triangle Web Printing, Durham, NC and mailed by Excalibur, Winston-Salem, NC. Circulation: 62,000 seven times a year, 30,000 four times a year. Periodicals postage paid at Thomasville, NC, and at additional mailing offices. For free subscription or to be removed from the mailing list or make address correction or change, use the above address and write to Attn: Circulation Manager, send an email to address@bchfamily.org or call at 336-474-1209. Subscribe online at bchfamily.org/charityandchildren. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to **Charity & Children**, PO Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27361-0338.

Ministry stands with family, helping along the way

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Rita and Samuel love their children, and they work hard. But as hard as they work, sometimes it is not enough. There are times when it takes a power of the will just to keep their heads up.

"Things happen," Rita says. "When you live pay check to pay check life can go bad quickly."

The couple are raising four children. Summer is 15, Kai is 14, Silas is 11, and Mathyus is nine years old. Rita and her family became regular clients of Greater Vision Outreach at Kennedy Home three years ago.

"We are so pleased that Rita and her family are a part of Greater Vision," Center Manager Jerry Snow says. "I've seen the children grow up in front of my eyes."



Snow

Greater Vision Outreach (GVO) helps meet the essential physical and spiritual needs of working families who are struggling financially. The goal is to help families achieve self-sufficiency. GVO provides direct service as well as referrals to other community resources. Established in 2018, the ministry's first center was built at Mills Home in Thomasville. Work began four years ago at Kennedy Home in Kinston. The new center, the former alumni building, was dedicated October 10, 2023.

"Life is just hard," Rita admits. "The last few months have really sucked. But I believe we'll come out on the other side."

With Jerry's help, Rita and Samuel actively set goals—both small and large. One big goal was to improve their employment opportunities. Rita went from working as a retail clerk to earning her Commercial Drivers License (CDL) from the community college. For the last two years, she has worked as a driver for a large waste management company, emptying business and industrial garbage containers. Samuel began working for the City of Kinston. The couple now budget their incomes and are able to put a small amount into a savings account.

"You don't work, you don't get paid," Rita says. "Bills keep coming whether you are working or not. It is important to have a plan."



Left to right, Summer, Silas, Rita, Jerry Snow, Kai, and Mathyus make Christmas decorations in the Greater Vision Outreach Center at Kennedy Home in Kinston. Below, Rita and Kai use markers to decorate wood Christmas tree ornaments they plan to place on the family's tree this year.

Financial security is a goal for every GVO client. Staff walk step by step with families, helping them experience success. It is important they know they are not alone. When a family sees it work, they invest themselves more toward reaching their goals.

"Rita and Samuel have been consistent the last year and a half, and they are seeing results," Jerry affirms, "despite the challenges they have faced in recent months."

Rita discovered a lump in her breast. She was diagnosed with cancer and had surgery October 13. She begins chemo therapy soon—another challenge to stare down. "I won't stop fighting. Being afraid doesn't fix it. I've learned to take

things as they come. I keep going for Samuel, the kids—for me. What else are you going to do?"

Rita's cancer, Samuel's recent rotator cuff surgery, and family bouts with strep and bronchitis began to cast shadows on their holidays. The family's successes seemed not enough to

prevent this Christmas from becoming a repeat of darker days from the past.

Rita knows the holidays can be tough. "You have to focus on paying bills and buying groceries. Buying presents and a tree doesn't make the list." This season, however, will be different.

Mt. Zion Wesleyan Church in Thomasville have a heart for children and families. They stepped forward this Christmas to provide the children of all 60 plus GVO clients, 17 years old and younger, Christmas gifts. These are people who give to make GVO families' lives better.

"A few weeks ago, we didn't know if we would be able to buy Christmas gifts," Rita admits. "But Jerry contacted us and gave me a wish list sheet for each child—asking sizes and what three needs and three wishes each one had. Apparently, he knows Santa Claus!"

Through the kindness of churches and individuals, GVO clients are receiving a hand up instead of a hand out. Faithful supporters have given since GVO's beginning, but needs remain high. Donations of clothes, furnishings, housewares, and food, as well as financial gifts, can be made by contacting GVO Manager Sara Becker at 866-904-0060.

Rita smiles with thanksgiving. "Samuel and I are actually getting excited about Christmas. We're going to be able to get a real tree after all."

I would never celebrate Christmas the same

By **Brenda B. Gray**, Exec. V.P., Dev. & Comm.

Remember with me...It's Christmas morning. I am sitting on the living room floor of an emergency care cottage. In front of me is the Christmas tree surrounded by children. It's loud and noisy as their excitement grows.

I am struggling, holding my tears back as I think about their lives and what brought them to this place. And then a precious little girl comes and sits in my lap and her two brothers protectively follow her and take their place—one on each side of her. I feel them snuggle close to me. The siblings were brought in by the police two nights before. I was told that they had been found living in an old chicken coup.

The three children quietly watched as the other children began opening gifts. At one point the little girl looked up, and said, "I want my Mommy." Her older brother reached over and cradled her tiny hand in his. When gifts were placed in front of them, they just stared.

The little girl whispered again, "I want my Mommy." It broke my heart that the one gift this child wanted most—I could not give to her.

"My Mommy's not coming to get me?" she asked. "My Mommy loves me," she says probing into my eyes. My heart broke because it was a statement and a question at the same time.

I rocked her back and forth as she cried.

The boys opened their gifts. There was a plane and a train. Their shouts of happiness joined in the squeals of the other children. The older brother helped his sister open her gifts. She did not make a sound. She did not smile until the last package was opened. Inside was a small Raggedy Anne doll. She wrapped her little arms around that doll and, for the first time, I saw her smile. As the day progressed, the smile grew and turned into giggles and laughter.

This changed me. I knew from that day forward I would look at Christmas differently—I would celebrate Christmas differently.

As I think back, I am so grateful God gave me the opportunity to hold and love this precious little girl and her two brothers. Many years have passed since that Christmas morning, but never does a Christmas morning pass that I do not think about those three little children. I always pray and ask God to bless them wherever they are today.

The gifts these children received that morning were given by the owner and employees of an area car dealership. They had decided to give gifts to our children rather than give gifts to each other. I do not know who purchased the

special
Raggedy
Anne doll,
but I do know
the light it
brought to the
eyes of this little girl.

All my Christmas' since have been filled with children in need. I watch as God uses the generosity of others to meet their needs. People like you share joy, peace, and hope with the children God places in our protective care. And I know that you are grateful that God has given you the opportunity to be there to share His love through your gifts and prayers.

I always smile when people say that they would not want my job. But I love what I do. People share their fears of asking someone for money. They often ask why does it look so easy for me. For me it is a calling, a calling to care for the least of these. If I were asking for myself, I could not do it. But I am asking for those who cannot ask for themselves.

I ask because Jesus said, "Whatsoever you have done to the least of these you have done it unto me."

I ask because I believe a baby was born in a manger, lived, and died to change my life—your life and all who believe.

I ask because I want everyone who walks through our doors to experience the promise of peace, hope, love, and healing—the miracle of Christmas.

Each time I ask, I am offering someone the same opportunity that God offered me when the little girl and her brothers made their way

into my heart.

Each time we give, we give of ourselves out of our relationship with God and in obedience. Not only is the life of a child changed, but our lives are changed. As a reminder, I was told by a donor that I am cheating them when I do not let them know of our needs and give them the opportunity to share what God has given. He reminded me that every time they give—they are blessed.

So, I am asking you to give for the children who cannot ask for themselves. I am asking you to give to provide formula for a malnourished baby, a home for a little boy and girl abandoned to spend the night in the cold, and loving cottage parents for three children who lost both of their parents from a drug overdose. I am asking you to give to provide a safe haven for a mom and her three children escaping a life on the street. I am asking you to give to celebrate the numbers of children who recently accepted Christ into their lives. I am asking you to give to hold high the light of Christ so that their darkness will be overcome. I ask you to give out of your relationship to Christmas.

I am asking you to give to celebrate the best gift ever, the true gift of Christmas—Jesus!

Thank you for being a part of our family. May your Christmas be filled with God's wonderful promise of peace, hope, and love. Please give, they are depending on you!





Kyle, younger brother Benjamin, and little sister Ivey arrived on Christmas Eve. Frightened and with no belongings, the siblings' new cottage parents, Bobby and Sonya, got them settled and fixed the hungry siblings something to eat. Afterwards, Sonya asked the three children, "What would you like for Christmas?" "Toys," Ivey said quietly, avoiding eye contact. "Toys and some candy," Benjamin replied. "Could my brother and sister have some new clothes for Christmas?" Kyle asked. "I don't need anything except some shoes that fit."

Sonya noticed Kyle's shoes. Old and worn, he had cut holes in the toes to give his growing feet room. Kyle had been the one taking care of his two siblings since his parents left them with relatives and never came back. Meeting his needs always came last. On Christmas morning, it was Kyle's turn to have others share with him the same love and care he showed his brother and sister. Along with the other children in the cottage, Kyle and his siblings unwrapped gifts. There were toys, candy, clothes, and shoes for all of them.



Your Christmas donation is a gift of hope to Kyle, Benjamin, Ivey, and all the boys and girls BCH serves through our cottages and family foster homes. Please give today. **Your gift will be matched dollar for dollar through our \$300,000 challenge gift—it's an opportunity to make twice the impact in children's lives!**

Giving right now is essential for helping boys and girls today as well as the ones who will turn to us in 2024. You can use the enclosed envelope, give online by going to at **bchfamily.org/givenow** or scan the QR code to the right.



Please note that the siblings' photo and names are changed for their privacy and safety.



I want to share the **HOPE** of Christmas

- ☐ \$50 Christmas for one child ☐ \$100 Christmas for two siblings ☐ \$300 A cottage holiday outing
☐ \$600 Christmas for a cottage ☐ \$1,000 A large gift for a cottage ☐ \$_____ Any size gift

There are two ways you can make your gift:

- 1) By Check: Please use the enclosed envelope and mail this completed form with your check.
2) By Credit Card: Give online at www.bchfamily.org/givenow or call Faith Frazier at 336-474-1312.

Receive ministry updates and more. Email: _____
☐ Contact me with information on how to prepare a Christian Will. ☐ I have included Baptist Children's Homes in my estate plans.

Yulisa hopes to become first child to attend college

By Arwen and Mike Elders, BCH Associate Missionaries, Guatemala

(Continued from page 1)

This Christmas, Yulisa looks to the future with great excitement. She is 17 and has one year left to finish high school. In Guatemala, high school students get to choose a career path to focus on during their junior and senior years. Yulisa is studying medicine and aspires to become a doctor one day.

"I would like to become a traumatologist," she explains, "because I really enjoy helping people." The Good Shepherd Children's Home is committed to providing the necessary scholarships for those residents who want to go to college and pursue a degree. Although still unsure which college she wants to attend, Yulisa knows she has the resources, support, and people in her life to make it happen. That confidence is a far cry from her situation when she came into care ten years ago.

Good Shepherd Children's Home in Quetzaltenango (Xela), Guatemala rescues orphaned children, helping them find hope in a place plagued by poverty, alcoholism, and chronic malnutrition. Yulisa was one of the very first children brought to Good Shepherd when it first opened in 2014. From a human perspective, it never should have happened, because at the time she was older than the 0-5 age requirement that the home had established. But God can use human errors to accomplish His purposes, and when seven-year-old Yulisa showed up at the door with nowhere else to go, Good Shepherd didn't turn her away.

Since then, she has grown not only physically and intellectually, but also spiritually. Yulisa remembers giving her life to the Lord at a local church the children attend. She credits church participation, the youth spiritual retreats hosted at the Home, and the positive influence of staff for her spiritual growth and maturity. In a sign of that maturity, the person she says has helped her the most along the way is Marco, the home's assistant director, who she says has always helped her in many ways, correcting her when she's gotten off track.

International friends have been part of Yuli-



Yulisa is learning to play "Silent Night" in time for Christmas. Robin Snyder of Sunrise Baptist Church in Chapel Hill teaches the 17-year-old piano every Tuesday via ZOOM. Yulisa and the other children at Good Shepherd Children's Home in Xela, Guatemala are given hope through the loving care and support of North Carolina Baptists. Below, Yulisa and BCH associate missionaries Mike and Arwen Elders celebrate the joy of Christmas.

sa's unique journey as well. Each year, the Good Shepherd hosts many week-long mission teams, through Baptists on Mission. Often these church groups come year after year and begin to form lasting bonds with the children in the home.

"One of my favorite visitors is Eddy," Yulisa

reminisces. "He comes every year dressed in a full Santa Claus suit, but it's never at Christmas time! He's full of jokes and lots of fun."

While Yulisa appreciates the mission teams, the people also appreciate her. "What a leader she is," a team member commented after spending a couple days filling in for

one of the Guatemalan child care workers. "She practically ran the house and helped us know what needed to be done to stay on schedule."

Yulisa says she hasn't sought out a leadership role in the Home, but being the oldest, the other children often look to her example. "It's

just something that happens," she mused while acknowledging that such a position comes with a responsibility to lead well.

If she does go to college next year, she will be leading in that area as the first resident to pursue a higher education.

In the meantime, Yulisa looks for ways to enjoy her time at the Home during the Christmas break. She loves to walk the property. There is much to explore: trees, flowers, gardens, chickens, goats, bees, and even a horse! In addition, Yulisa claims two pets as her own: a black dog named Sombra (Shadow) and a cat named Pantera (Panther) that she found and rescued as a kitten. The children and staff stay busy as they work together to care for the plants and animals on the property.

As Christmas approaches, they begin decorating the home and the property with lights, greenery, and homemade decorations like the one Yulisa is working on today. Carefully she lifts the woodburner and shows off a nicely shaded camel that is part of the nativity. "All done," she exclaims proudly—a new decoration to celebrate the Christmas season.

And there is much to celebrate. Yulisa is one of many children whose life has been forever changed and set on a new course. Her future burns bright with the hope of the One whose birth we celebrate this Christmas season.



Presentation places spotlight on God's goodness

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Managing Editor

Appause and shouts of praise echoed throughout the room as approximately 200 children, special needs adults, foster and adopt families, and staff from Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) took the stage at the Annual Meeting of the Baptist State Convention of NC on November 7.

The 20-minute presentation placed the spotlight on God's goodness across the BCH ministry and celebrated the more than 167,000 lives impacted last year through NC Baptists' support.

"I just wanted to say a huge thank you to everyone here and the others who have been involved with BCH," Ciara shared from the stage. Ciara, a college senior, and her sister were orphans when they first came into care 10 years ago.

"You all have been with me and my sister throughout our journey," she continued, "from when we first stepped into the cottage, when I accepted Christ on my 16th birthday, and when I was applying for colleges."

Near the end of the program, foster and adopt families who are a part of the EVERY CHILD partnership between BCH and NC Baptists rose from their seats in the audience to come on stage.

"We decided what better way to demonstrate the theme of 'on mission together' than to show you," BCH Chief Operating Officer Keith Henry said of the gathering families.

"Through their obedience to God, we have served (nearly) 800 children in their homes where they have experienced the gospel lived out," Henry shared.



Above, Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) led an extended presentation in front of an audience of NC Baptists from across the state during the final session of the 2023 Annual Meeting of the Baptist State Convention of NC. Pleasant Garden Baptist Church pastor Robert Hefner closed the presentation in prayer, thanking God for the partnership between BCH and NC Baptists and for His continued guidance and grace in the days ahead.



Above, BCH director of communications Blake Ragsdale and Ciara, who has been in BCH's care for 10 years, discuss her successes. Top middle, girls and their staff from Camp Duncan sing. Bottom middle, BCH cottage parent Adam Saunders leads the opening song. Top right, adults from BCH's Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities Ministry share their joy from the stage. Bottom right, the growing number of foster and adopt families are the results of the EVERY CHILD partnership.



Sandra Ammons uses life experiences to help teens

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Sandra is nervous. She remembers other Western Area Conferences, the ones where she was the one watching speakers come to the podium. Now 25 years later, she hears her name. She stands and walks to the microphone.

"Hello everyone, I'm Sandra Ammons now, but when I was a child in care, I was Sandra Christopher."

She begins by sharing about the children she helps. She tells how she turned the hardships in her life into a life spent encouraging students as a cafeteria manager at two Haywood County schools. "I meet kids who face a lot of life situations like the ones I experienced growing up."

She tells her story. Sandra's father was an alcohol and drug addict. Her mother came in and out of her life. Sandra spent more and more time living with her grandmother. Unsettled, her frustration turned to anger. At 15 years old and now living again with her mom, Sandra's anger turned into aggressive behavior.

"After one very bad fight, I punched a hole in the wall. My mom told me she was going to send me away. I was like, 'Okay.' And it happened. It was the worse day of my life."

She couldn't believe it. She was being taken away from everything she had known, sent to a place where she knew no one.

"I was brought here—to Broyhill and was introduced to my house parents, Sian and Adam Saunders, Linda Morgan, and the caring staff."

After 60 days, she returned home. It did



Sandra Ammons shared her story of healing to those attending the 2023 Western Area Conference at Broyhill Home in Clyde. Sandra's seven-year-old son Timber was with her at the event.

not take long to realize circumstances had not changed and she ended up back at Broyhill Home.

Sian and Adam welcomed Sandra back into their cottage. She worried as 60 days approached—would she be sent away to live with her mother? Instead, she was moved to another cottage. For the first time, she felt hopeful.

Judy and Walter Blanton were her new house parents. "I'm not a dressy-type person," she told the crowd. "I had never worn a dress—not to mention used makeup. Miss Judy helped me pick out my first dress and taught me about lipstick

and blush."

Sandra was the first in her family to graduate high school. She recalls studying for a spelling test and struggling with the word "prevail." "Mr. Adam asked me to use it in a sentence and I couldn't. He said, 'I will prevail!' I often laugh when times are hard and think, it's hard right now, but I will prevail!"

Sandra wasn't taught anything about God growing up. But living at Broyhill Home, Sandra learned love's power. She learned about God and discovered He had a plan for her life.

"People think life is like a straight path. It's not. There are oceans to sail across, rocks to climb, and mountains to scale."

Last year, Sandra was named food service "Employee of the Year" for all of Haywood County schools and a new job opportunity, a career change, came her way. She remembers being con-

gratulated. Friends encouraged her to take the new job. "Everybody is telling me such wonderful things. And I'm like, what is this? What am I doing?"

Some of the children she served sent notes. They told her that her positive attitude and her kindness meant something to them: "One read, 'Thank you for always taking time and listening to us.' And I'm like, 'You know what? I don't need to go anywhere. This is where I need to be.'"

Pausing, fighting back tears, Sandra ends her presentation: "God brought me here. It has changed my life. Loving someone unconditionally, makes all the difference. Thank you."

Double your end-of-year gift! Double your impact!

Give now through the end of January and your gift will be doubled. Your gift will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$300,000. Give a gift of \$50 to sponsor a child's Christmas and it will be doubled to \$100 – a cottage sponsor's gift of \$600 becomes \$1,200. What better gift to give a friend or business associate than to honor them with a gift that blesses a child. BCH notifies honorees with a card and sends a gift acknowledgment receipt to you.

Check with your employer. Some corporations will match an employee's charitable gift, so the potential is that a \$100 gift could be matched by their employer and then both could get matched by your donor, making a \$100 gift worth \$400!

Consider a gift of appreciated stock or other property. When you give stock or property to BCH, we then sell it. By donating the stock or property directly to BCH, you eliminate the capital gains tax you would pay if you sell it. If you have held the stock for more than one year, your gift will be deductible at its full market value on the date it is received.

If you have a Donor Advised Fund, this would be a good time to double its impact.

IRA Charitable Rollover Gifts are a great gift option. If you have an IRA and have not taken your required minimum distribution, an IRA Charitable Rollover gift is a great way for you to change the life of a child through the ministry of BCH and potentially lower

your income and taxes this year.

These are challenging times! Consider giving a little extra for those who wish they could give, but cannot this year. Thank you in advance for your investment in the life of a child. For details on any of these gift opportunities, please call Brenda Gray at 336-689-4442.

NOTE: This information is not intended as legal advice. Check with your accountant, tax advisor or attorney to determine the best strategy for your particular situation.

IMPORTANT: Call our office if you plan to make a stock gift. Brokers may not inform us of the donor who makes the gift. For questions about stock gifts or to expedite your stock gift, call Sam Barefoot at 336-474-1224.

Alumni saddened by deaths of dear friends — Memories of days gone by stir hearts

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

We were deeply saddened to learn that **Jimmy Rochelle** passed away on Oct. 19. We've been privileged to know and love Jim for many years as he served on the Alumni Council. With that relationship and details from Hutchinson housemate, **Harry Walls**, we can see that Jimmy's Mills Home (MH) life was full. He was lucky to have his sister **Linda Wimberley** and brother **Charles Reese** nearby in other cottages. Together they had entered MH in 1956 and Jimmy graduated in 1967. Jimmy thrived at MH with all the wholesome activities available. He was a member of the basketball team and a member of the MH high school band. He was grateful he had a "duty" of learning the printing trade which paved the way to a fruitful career. His ability to get along easily with others stood him in good stead as he served as a bus driver and had to manage his younger campus mates. After high school, Jimmy served his country as a member of the U.S. Army in Vietnam. When he returned home, it was by way of the state of Alabama where he met his wonderful wife **Velinda Kerr**. Together they reared two beautiful daughters, **Jamie and Sara**, and now have three adorable grandchildren. Jimmy was a member of the VFW Post 10346 and all American Honor Guard. He held a special place in his heart for Ford F100 trucks, including his cherished 1956 Ford panel truck "Big Bird," and he loved attending car shows. He also cherished beach trips with his family and MH friends and fishing trips to Alabama. He spent 18 years as an employee of GTE/Verizon and later worked with Metro Productions and PBM Graphics. Jimmy is survived by his wife, Velinda; two daughters, Jamie, Sara and their husbands; three grandchildren; and sister

Linda Wimberley who also lived at MH. Jim's brother is deceased. Jimmy's death leaves a big hole in the hearts of his family and friends. His funeral was held on October 24 at the Clements' Funeral Home in Durham and he was buried at Woodlawn Memorial Park in Durham. Friends wishing to make a memorial donation, please make it payable to the Mills Home Alumni Association and mail it to Flora Patton, 6428 Sisk Carter Rd., Rockwell, NC, 28138.

Sandra Stallings Lentz, class of 1958, called with the sad news of the death of **Elnora Johnson Dietz**. Elnora and her younger brother **Ronnie** entered Mills Home in the early fifties and she graduated in 1959. Unfortunately, her brother died after being hit by a train several blocks from the girls' arch. Everyone on campus was deeply saddened for many months and the children were so touching in how they tried to help Elnora accept such a terrible loss. Elnora was a very pretty and likable young lady, very popular on campus and at the high school. For quite a few years, she returned for happy homecomings with her friends. She will be sorely missed. Sandra is trying to locate more information regarding Elnora.

It is always interesting to receive letters or calls from children of MH alumni. One such person was **Karen Williams** who sent an email several months ago. I was happy to say I had talked with her mother by phone and knew of her father (**Geneva Frye and Bob Williams** graduates of late 40s.) Karen said that she never visited MH with her parents but did have the opportunity to visit the campus recently. She enjoyed seeing where her parents had grown up and experienced a few bittersweet moments thinking how nice it would have been to have had her parents with her that day to learn about their

Mills Home experiences.

We were happy to hear from **Chris Pappas** who brought us up to date with his life. He and his sisters **Rebecca and Cynthia** entered life in the cottages when their mother **Faye** came to MH to serve as the dietitian at the Simmons Cottage in 1950. She later served as the housemother at the Miles Durham Nursery for the pre-school children. After several years when their mother took another job, Chris and the girls moved away with her. After he finished high school and received the necessary training, he began a career with the NC Department of Revenue and remained until he retired. He and his wife **Cheryl** now live at 3426 Mill Pond Rd., Charlotte, NC, 28226. Cheryl is retired from the Mecklenburg School System. In recalling memories of life at MH, Chris fondly remembered **Ms. Estelle Crouch** at the Hutchinson Cottage as a very caring house mother.

It was great to hear again from **Evelyn "Lorene" Kirby**, class of 1967. A resident from 1957-1967, Evelyn had a fruitful life at MH. She loved the church life and enthusiastically entered the Junior Memory Work (Scripture) Tournament three years in a row. She also delighted in learning to cook, especially under the watchful eyes of **Mrs. Walker**, dietitian at the Biggs, and **Swanee McHargue**, dietitian at the WC. After graduating from high school, Evelyn returned to the Hickory area, met and married **Robert "Gary" Burns**, and reared three youngsters. They have provided her and Gary with six healthy great grandsons, the last two being twins.

Evelyn was a great member of the Alumni Council around 2016. She never seems to miss a Homecoming and was especially thrilled to see a good number of her class of 1967 returning in

2022. She closed her comments saying, "I have been blessed to be in good health. I like to travel and I delighted in traveling to Greece with our oldest daughter in September of 2019. I was amazed at how beautiful it is. With great pleasure, I continue enjoying our great grandsons but I still cannot tell the twins apart."

We were happy to receive an update from **Joel S. Morris**, son of purchasing agent **Clyde Morris** and his wife **Gin**. They came to work at MH from Lincolnton in 1953 and were still there in 1971 when Joel graduated from Thomasville High School. This whole family, including Joel's two lovely sisters, **Judith and Sandra**, were very visible in all aspects of campus life and very well liked. Joel especially liked being in the tour choir and joining residents in social gatherings about campus. A campus worker who served Joel as a great motivator was **Bill Sisk**. Joel is still active in the "work force" of Sherrill's Ford, where he is employed as a truck driver for Polytec Inc. His wife Kathleen works for Green Spring's Transportation and is also a school bus driver. He has three children and three grandchildren. Joel loves seeing old friends at Homecoming and he especially enjoyed the good food and the interesting Silent Auction the last time that he came.

Please contact me at libsjohnson@triad.rr.com or call 336-299-7412 if you wish to add or correct an address for your **Charity & Children** subscription. Contact **Sharon DeHart Stiles** to discuss use of the God's Acre Columbarium by calling 704-685-2443 or send a note to 1588 Elkhart Circle, Gastonia, NC, 28054.



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



As most of you are aware, the Board of Trustees is leading the effort to identify the next President/CEO of the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina (BCH). Through God's providence, we have weathered a tremendously difficult season and are entering the new one in front of us with a hope and expectation that is just as tremendous.

This is the first of several updates that will be shared with you in the weeks and months ahead so that you are informed of the plans being put into place and are kept updated regarding the search process.

In October, the Board of Trustees confirmed the selection of the Transition and Search Committee that is tasked with overseeing the search process for BCH's next executive leader.

The members of the Transition and Search Committee

are as follows:

- David Powell, Sylva (Chair)
- Matt Glover, Seaboard (Vice-Chair)
- Justin Lee, Clinton (Secretary)
- Vickie Burge, Fayetteville
- Ken Haigler, Wilmington
- Chris Watkins, Durham
- Seth Brown (State Convention designee)

The committee is currently in the process of assessing the leadership needs of the organization. Once this time of assessment is completed, the search for a new president will begin. There will be additional information in the days ahead.

As the committee undertakes this important responsibility, we do so in humility seeking the leader that God has prepared for this new season. Friends, this is a process that must be saturated in prayer, and there are no better

prayer warriors than you—the ones who are passionate about the Baptist Children's Homes ministry and everyone who is served through it.

Please pray. Pray for the members of our Transition and Search Committee. Pray for God to grant us His discernment and wisdom. Pray for God to prepare the heart of the person who He has already chosen to be the next leader. Most of all, throughout every step of the process, pray for God to be glorified and His will to be accomplished. And pray for the leaders, staff, cottage parents, foster parents, and caregivers as they continue to meet the daily needs of all those who turn to us seeking help and hope.

I thank you for your invaluable prayer, volunteerism and financial support. The Baptist Children's Homes ministry would not be possible without you.



Making News Every Day Around the State



Cook family adopt fourth child

Roger and Shanell Cook, BCH foster parents, welcomed Benson to their family. He joins his three adopted sisters and biological brother.



Church group makes pillow cases

Ladies from First Broad Baptist in Golden Valley presented BCH's Jody Yopp with made 58 custom cotton pillowcases for BCH's children.



Surry County group helps Greater Vision

Spokes of Hope, who help communities out of Surry County, donated household items for our Greater Vision Outreach in Thomasville.



Kenners lead church's giving efforts

Pine Grove Baptist pastor Greg Rogers and church members Debbie and Ervin Keener presented BCH's Lewis Smith with \$11,000.



Canipe family provide Christmas joy

Jeremy and Robin Canipe, longtime BCH friends, brought early Christmas gifts and lunch for the special adults at Joy Cove in Zionville.



Weekday Education enjoys festive fun

Weekday Education children in Thomasville dressed up for a "Fall Festival" day as staff members gave out candy to boys and girls.

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.




every CHILD
foster & adoption ministry

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

Get connected at every-child.org




TURN YOUR CALLING INTO A CAREER

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

BCHCAREERS.ORG

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



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

SECC
State Employees
Combined Campaign

#3641

Wish lists, fruit and candy, opening presents — Gratitude wrapped around memories of Christmas

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

Christmas is right around the corner! With all the parties, celebrations, gifts, and Christmas cantatas, please don't forget to "Keep Christ In Christmas!"

Christmas is also a time to remember. These are some precious memories shared:

Phillip Depree (73-78) is the son of **Mr. and Mrs. Frank Dupree** who served when Becky and I were living at KH. **Julia, Frank, and my Becky** are looking down at us from Heaven. They all three loved the Lord so much. Phillip writes: "Christmas has always been my favorite time of the year and it was always a special time at KH. Some of the things I remember about Christmas there were the decorations and Christmas trees in all of the cottages and houses on campus. The Christmas music from the different groups walking around campus caroling was wonderful. The big party held in the gym when all the children received presents was a highlight. I also remember how quiet it got on campus after most of the children left to go spend Christmas with their families and foster families. I was always eager for them to return and find out what they got for Christmas! I treasure those memories."

Phillip's mother was the campus nurse and Frank was in charge of campus beautification. They were loved by all.

Dan Medlin (43-54) writes: "Christmas has always been a special time for me. In my pre-teen years at KH it was a time to be out of school and I have memories of receiving a pair of gloves or even a bag of fruit. But as we grew we realized this special time was a memorial to our LORD and Savior and most important our CREATOR. I can proudly say that I see this in most of the brothers and sisters that I had the pleasure to live with and with whom I love dearly."

Edward G. Pait (60-69) shares:

"Reflecting back some 60 years, I arrived at Bunker Cottage in November. After being initiated several times for being the 'new kid in town,' I was asked to list three presents I thought I might want for Christmas. With the hopes of getting one of the three, **Kenneth Wilkerson, Buddy, (Walter) Sisk, and Jimmy Moore** gave me some ideas as to choose from. I chose a baseball glove, a Zebco 202 rod and reel, and roller skates. With eager anticipation that I might receive one of these, I along with 15 other kids got set for the arrival of Santa in December. I was informed that Santa might come early as we would be visiting our families during the school break. Before you knew it, time passed by and we were told the Woodmen of the World were stopping by to visit with us one evening. Along with them came the Cantata performance and lots of presents which brought smiles of joy. We sat around the Christmas tree opening presents and listening to happy voices as we got presents we had requested.

"I fished the canal the following summer with the rod and reel I received that first Christmas. I have fished that same spot many times, always remembering the first time.

"After living at KH some time, **Pastor David Leary** and his wife asked several of the youth to participate in church programs at Christmas. I was in many of these programs and it was where we learned the true meaning of Christmas."

Joyce Surbaugh wrote to say she will always remember getting a little transistor radio one year for Christmas.

Mary Lee Etheridge Feign writes: "Mr. John, one of the most memorable Christmases was when a church came and sponsored our cottage. That year we all got Coca-Cola shirts. All of us were matching! It was so cool! When

we would go to places and outings, we all wore our shirts with stone washed blue jeans. We looked like a tight-knit group. Today, I love Coca-Cola and collect Coca-Cola memorabilia. It takes me back to one of my fondest memories of Christmas. I will never forget.

"It really is meaningful to the children to have a Christmas—even though they may not have family. It really means a lot when different churches and groups sponsor children or sponsor a cottage. It is very meaningful and I would like to personally 'thank' anyone and everyone who has done this over the years. Thank you for blessing all the children by making Christmas so special."

Donald Wetherington writes: "I came to KH in 1958 as a six-year old little boy. I have fond memories of Christmas times. Writing a list of what I wanted for Christmas and hoping that some loving person would get me that present created great anticipation. We were able to offer three choices and I always got one of the three—that was so exciting. One of my fondest memories was when the Woodman of the World would come and someone dressed up like Santa Claus. They always gave each child a gift along with some fruit and candy. When we were little, we sure did love Santa Claus. I remember we would tug on him, telling him what we wanted.

"Thank God for Woodman of the World. I had the opportunity to go with a chapter from Jacksonville once they found out I was KH alumni. They invited me and I was able to go and share my testimony with the children and give words of encouragement.

"I'm 71 years old and I hold tight to my precious memories of Kennedy Home. Thank God for the loving people that contributed to my well-being. God bless everyone and I wish you a very Merry Christmas and prosperous New Year."

My sons **Johnny and Scott** will always remember the year when baseball great **Catfish Hunter** came and helped Santa give all the presents to the children. He also shared his testimony. It was a day to remember!

Wayne Jackson (69-76) was one of my piano students who excelled and directed the congregational singing for me from time to time. Wayne writes: "My favorite Christmas memories was always center around the arrival of the Woodmen of the World. I remember staring out the frosty front window of Lenoir Cottage and seeing their cars stop at each building—first at CCB, then Bunker, Spillman, Hard-ee, Ferebee, and Canady. There were times I thought they would never make it to us! I always felt sorry for the girls in Pollock. They had to wait the longest as the Christmas joy slowly crept down the campus thoroughfare!

"Before they could get halfway up the sidewalk, we slung open the door paying no mind to the freezing cold. We all had baths and were prepared for company—faces scrubbed and teeth brushed—waiting for one of the most important nights of the year. It seemed that each person was always genuinely happy to meet us. Their kindness was truly as Christlike as anything I have ever seen. I will be forever grateful to those who gave me such a wonderful memory."

I suppose many of you know that I now live with my youngest son **Scott** and his wife. They are truly a blessing to me. My son **Johnny** and his sons come over to play games and visit. I am thankful to have such a loving family. Please continue to write interesting articles. Send them to jthompson117@ec.rr.com. Love you all!—jt



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

God never fails—hope in the unseen and rejoice

By Jim Edminson, Editor

When Kathy was pregnant with our first child, I was attentive. I remember fielding hundreds of possible names, rubbing tired feet and tender back, and during this time I discovered the love language of washing dishes. But my role did not encompass a new life growing within me. I did not feel the physical changes that occurred daily in Kathy's life. I did not sacrifice favorite foods to fight back the siege of nausea and heartburn. Much about being pregnant seems reserved for the expectant mom. But for this one thing: both mom and dad wait the same nine months. Kathy and I shared in the expectation equally, waiting together.

More and more of my name suggestions appeared on the "possibles" list. I attended each doctor's appointment and listened to the baby's heartbeat; our hands clasped, staring into each other's eyes as the pregnancy became more real. There were days when we pondered how our life would be forever changed. There were days when we wondered if Baby would ever arrive.

Kathy assured me we had two more weeks. "Go," she insisted. Relenting, I leaned forward, kissed her forehead, and left for work at a local retail store. The first day of the week was always busy. So busy that I swept away thoughts of my impending fatherhood.

The shop's phone rang and I was surprised to hear Kathy's voice. A quick

word to the owner and I sped away, back to our small apartment on campus. I do not remember much until I screeched to a stop, jumped out of the car, and burst into the apartment. There she was—brushing her hair with calm, long strokes while my anxiety meter was spinning out of control. "How far apart are the contractions?" I asked, focused on the second hand of my watch.

Kathy's sense of expectancy had shifted to a determined certainty and a keen awareness of the new life coming. She was having a baby. My feelings on the other hand exploded. I had heard of couples not making it to the hospital and dads delivering babies in the back seats of family cars. We needed to go—the sooner, the better. The waiting was over.

Deep in the past, written in Holy scripture, the message of a coming Messiah emerges. There are those who look up to the heavens as expectations capture imaginations. Enthusiasm rises only to fall as years pass and there is no Deliverer. Some wane, but there are those who hope, expecting the Savior's impending arrival.

One might think the life 84-year-old Anna lived would have stripped all hope from her. Widowed as a young woman and denied the family she may have longed for, she turned her life's energy to serving in the Temple, fasting and praying—alone and lost in her daily

rituals. But in her heart there was an expectation.

Anna was there as Mary and Joseph entered the Temple.

She watched as Simeon took the baby Jesus into his arms. She listened as he professed that salvation had come. Jesus was the One. Her heart fluttered as she walked toward Him, giving thanks for beholding the Messiah. Her salvation was here. She never stopped expecting, knowing the day would come—and it did. Anna "spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem" (Mark 2:22-39).

God's promises are fulfilled. Their reality is inevitable. He never fails. What remains are only the expectations and the waiting for His fullness of time.

When we drove up to the hospital, my anxiety disappeared, possible calamities diverted, replaced now with a hope meter spinning out of control. What Kathy and I had been waiting for was here. Kyle was born and we were now parents for the rest of our lives.

What are you expecting? Waiting can take its toll, but expectations are rewarded. Take courage. Believe. Hope in the unseen and rejoice.



\$300,000
MATCHING GIFT CHALLENGE

YOUR GIFT IS DOUBLED!

When you give between now and Jan. 31, 2024, your gift will be **MATCHED** dollar for dollar up to the newly-increased **\$300,000** challenge goal! You can change a child's life by scanning the code or giving at bchfamily.org/givenow



Baptist Children's
Homes is
accredited by
the Council on
Accreditation and
is recognized as
a certified CARE
agency.