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December 2021

Issue 12

Volume 134

Christmas is time to show children His love

By **Jim Edminson**, Editor

Randy's job was to welcome the girls at the door and then show them to the living room where tables with white linen table cloths were adorned with delicate tea cups and holiday finger foods. And then he was to be scarce. . . .

Christmas for most of the children living at Mills Home is a time when nightmares recur and sadness wrestles with the joyful lights of the season. Dr. Randy Stewart and wife Diane determined early after he was called to be pastor at Mills Home Baptist Church in 1992 to remind every child that they were loved, especially at Christmas.

The Christmas Tea for the teen girls was a time to escape into a more genteel setting. It was an escape from one's past. It was a time for the Stewarts to express deep love for each

girl, reminding them that despite life's circumstance, God loved them.

The girls chatted as they found their places at the tables. The hot tea was then served and delicious morsels were piled on each girl's plate. The tea's highlight was Diane's reading of "A Cup of Christmas Tea." The beautifully illustrated book tells of a young man's reluctant visit with his infirmed aunt, her determination to keep Christmas, and the transformative lesson he learned.

Diane was creating a memory, a memory each girl could place on her shelf of new, happy memories, memories that replaced the hurtful ones that often haunted them.

It is not uncommon during the holiday season for Randy to be asked to stay after a church service to talk with a child. Children

struggle and often their hearts are breaking. There is always a tissue box nearby.

Randy says, "I listen as anger and hurt finds its way into words of pain. Sometimes their anger is directed to God, and I assure them that God is big and can handle it."

Even after serving twenty-nine and a half years, Randy asserts that much of his job entails listening and being available to each boy and girl.

"I love them," Randy says. "At Christmas, it is even more important for all of us to show these children that we love them and that they are loved by God, the One who sent Jesus out of the abundance of His love, not just for the world, but for them personally. That is why Christmas is so important."

(Continued on page 8.)



Diane Stewart
1956-2021

"Cowboy Code" still good advice

By Michael C. Blackwell, President/CEO

Gene Autry was many things—singer, songwriter, actor, musician, and rodeo performer. He owned television station, several radio stations in Southern California, and a Major League Baseball team from 1961 to 1997.

But it was the “Singing Cowboy’s” image as a movie and television star that captured my attention growing up in Gastonia. He was the first recording artist to bring country music to the silver screen with his signature songs “Back in the Saddle again” and “At Mail Call Today.” Most everyone will remember his holiday recordings of “Frosty the Snowman,” “Here Comes Santa Claus,” and “Up on the House Top”. But the biggest hit was “Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer.”

One Christmas, my parents gave me a Gene Autry watch, my very first watch. He and his horse Champion were good guys

who fought those bad guys of the wild, wild west and always came out on top.

He was one of my heroes.

There’s also a Gene Autry “Cowboy Code,”

ten statements which are as good

today as when they first came out. Take a gander at these:

1. The cowboy must never hit a smaller man or take unfair advantage.

2. He must never go back on his word, or a trust confided in him.

3. He must always tell the truth.

4. He must be gentle with children, the elderly, and animals.

5. He must not advocate or possess racially or religiously intolerant ideas.

6. The cowboy must help people in distress.

7. He must be a good worker.

8. He must keep himself clean in thought, speech, action, and private habits.

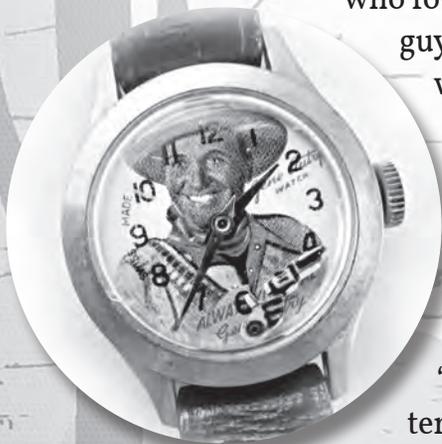
9. He must respect women, parents, and his nation’s laws.

10. The Cowboy is a patriot.

I’m thinking that you might have your own personal Code of Conduct. A code for the ages is found in Exodus 20 and that Code is called The Ten Commandments. Another great code is found in The Sermon on the Mount. What are the markers of your life—the points of light and truth by which you live? For most of us, Faith, Family, and Friends are the foundations on which we stand.

The Cowboy Code could also apply to Cowgirls as well. So, next time I look with nostalgia at my Gene Autry watch, I’ll remind myself of the Cowboy Code, especially Number 4—Be gentle with children, the elderly, and animals. And, I might add—be gentle with yourself.

So long for now, *Partner*, until next time, when, to quote a Gene Autry song, “I’m back in the saddle again, out where a friend is a friend.”



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RHR friends meet goal, last two homes named

By Blake Ragsdale, Managing Editor

The quiet ridge at River Hill Angus Farm overlooking the picturesque countryside will soon be bustling with the sounds of construction machinery. And in the near future, it will come alive with children's laughter.

The building of three new Family Foster Homes for children will soon commence now that North Carolina Baptists and faithful friends of Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina (BCH) have met the \$4.3 million fundraising goal for River Hill Refuge.

"It's to God's glory that we have been blessed with friends who are just as passionate as we are to see vulnerable children in our state have these compassionate homes," BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell shared.

Brothers Jay and Wes Westmoreland donated acreage from their family's River Hill Angus Farm in Shelby, the inspiration for the project's name. They also gave a lead gift to build the first home which will be named in honor of their late father, Dr. Ted G. Westmoreland.

The lead gift for the second home was made by Whittier residents Tom and Marcia Huskey in honor of Marcia's late sister Star. Marcia served as her sister's guardian as Star struggled with chronic mental illness. When she passed, the Huskeys were the recipients of her assets. After praying about it, the couple decided to give funds from the sale of property Star owned to build the second home at River Hill Refuge. The home will be named "Starlite House" in her memory.

"The reason was to honor Star but also because at the end of the tunnel we hope every child sees the light for a good life," Marcia says.

The lead gift for the final home was made by



Marcia and Tom Huskey stand alongside BCH's Lewis Smith. The couple gave the lead gift to fund one of River Hill Refuge's three homes. The Starlite House is named in memory of Marcia's sister Star.



Baptist Children's Homes president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell is presented a check from Bob and Carolyn Tucker of Concord. Their gift to fund one of River Hill Refuge's three homes is made on behalf of their foundation "The Tucker Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength Foundation." With their help, and the contributions of North Carolina Baptists and other friends, River Hills Refuge's three homes are fully funded and the fundraising campaign complete.

"The Tucker Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength Foundation," a foundation established by longtime BCH friends and Shoe Show, Inc. founders Bob and Carolyn Tucker of Concord. They also funded BCH's The Bob & Carolyn Tucker Greater Vision Ministry.

"The Tucker Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength Foundation' is pleased to partner with the Westmoreland family and BCH to provide a Godly, loving and peaceful atmosphere for at-risk children," Carolyn said. "This gift acknowledges the success and faithfulness of those who labor to change the lives of children and point them to Jesus."

First Baptist Charlotte, one of BCH's

long-standing church partners and home church of Jay Westmoreland, went well



Robert Welch, Pastor at First Baptist Church in Charlotte, and Jay Westmoreland, member at First Baptist whose family donated the River Hill Refuge property and lead gift for one of the homes, share a moment on stage together during a service.

The sacrificial giving of church members exceeded the church's offering goal.

beyond their goal. Pastor Robert Welch and church leaders set a goal to raise \$150,000 towards River Hill Refuge, with part of the funds also going to the forthcoming Emmanuel Home for birth mothers.

"God has done an Ephesians 3:20 moment right before us and in a matter of only four weeks we have already received over \$220,000 in offerings!" Welch

said. "It's our prayer that River Hill Refuge and Emmanuel Home will shine hope, give help, provide a haven for healing, and allow room for the redeeming work of the Savior in the lives of children and birth moms. "

Spirit of Christmas is life-changing love of Christ

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

I love watching old Christmas movies. You know, the classics like “It’s a wonderful Life.” I can always count on it touching my heart and giving me an excuse for a good cry.

I love the scene when the community comes together to care for George Bailey. George had been a blessing to many. He had given up his personal dreams and aspirations to care for his family and community. When life circumstances became what George thought was unbearable he was ready to give up on his life. He thought he was alone in his difficult journey. He was wrong, so wrong.

In the movie his guardian angel Clarence shows him a very different story. The impact of George’s life is revealed as Clarence reveals what a different community Bedford Falls would have been without him. In the end George is surrounded by those whose lives he had enriched and they care for him as he cared for them so many years.

I always watch some version of “A Christmas Carol.” For some reason which I can’t explain, maybe it is just nostalgia, I prefer to watch the older version. Charles Dickens, in this wonderful classic, captures the spirit of the holiday season. The creative genius of Dickens shows us how life changing caring about others can be. In “A Christmas Carol” he depicts Tiny Tim, a small child full of courage and hope, but a child dependent on others for help. Dickens shows how the heart of Scrooge was transformed by the courage and love of a young boy. Dickens also demonstrates how Scrooge’s whole life was changed when he reached out to give of himself.

These classics depict lives that were changed, transformed. I love that word transformed, for we are transformed in and through the love of Christ. Not only were the lives of Tiny Tim and his family changed/transformed, so was Scrooge transformed/changed. He would never see life the same again. Not only were the lives of those touched by George Baily transformed/changed, he was transformed/changed and he too would never see life the same again. They were both blessed by being a blessing.

Thank you for being a blessing in the lives of those we serve. Thank you for being a faithful steward

of all that God has blessed you with. May you feel the joy, hope and peace depicted in these classics of being blessed by being a blessing.

Since Baptist Children’s Homes of North Carolina opened in 1885, many Tiny Tim’s (boys and girls), families, and people in need like those who lived in Bedford Falls have walked through our doors as the “least of these,” needing hope. Let’s look at some of the children of Christmas past.

We are reminded of Mary Presson from Hertford County in need of refuge, a home. John Mills met her with open arms. I can just imagine that day as he held her and let her know that she was not alone, that she was loved and that she was indeed a precious child of God.

As we continue our journey through times past, we see thousands of children who have found refuge at Baptist Children’s Homes (BCH). We remember children that were orphaned by war, sickness, poverty, and other circumstances that rendered families unable to care for them. We remember children like Agnes whose father died in the war. Her mother was sick. There was no one to care for her and her brothers and sisters. We remember Mamie who feared for her life. She was a precious child that had been a victim of physical and sexual abuse. She was only four years

of age when the abuse was reported.

We remember Jeffrey whose mother was dying with cancer and could not care for him. We remember Jennifer and Jacob

whose family was reunited. We remember Tina who at 15 discovered she was pregnant and the joy on her face as she learned how to be a good “mom” at Care House. Through BCH, each of these children and families experienced the promise of peace, hope, and love which the Christmas season so strongly reminds us.

As we continue to look back on our past like George Baily and the people of Bedford Falls, we are also reminded of tough economic times for BCH. They were not always sure they would be able to keep the doors open. Critical decisions had to be made. The needs of the children of North Carolina had to be met. Once again being blessed turned into blessing and blessing turned into being blessed.

Let’s take a look at Christmas present. Dr. Michael C. Blackwell, BCH president/CEO and the Board of Trustees continue to struggle with difficult decisions as they strive to care for the children. They have taken a courageous stand for children as they expand our ministry to include a strong continuum of care including foster care and adoption. They asked you to continue to join with us in our struggle to meet the needs of those in crisis today. And, you have answered with a resounding YES!

Thanks to so many people who give their financial support, their time, talents, and most importantly, their prayers. Because of you, children and families of Christmas present will know the joy and warmth of this season today and throughout the year.

What will happen to the children and families of Christmas future? Many more Tiny Tims and families in crisis, like those living in Bedford Falls, will come to us in need of help. We know the needs will continue to grow and change. Approximately 16,000 children in North Carolina are removed from their homes each year in need of refuge—a home. Like the past and the present, as we move into the future, we are confident that the church will continue to be the answer. In the midst of a pandemic “on mission together,” we have not only survived, we have thrived. We “on mission together” touched 195,000 lives as we sought to bring hope, peace, and joy to the “least of these.”

Dickens reminds us that the spirit of Christmas is the life-changing love of Christ which we share each and every day. Thank you so much for your “make a difference” gifts of love in the past, in the present, and in the future.

May we each experience the joy of blessing others, and by blessing others, know we are even more blessed. From our “homes” to yours, Merry Christmas!



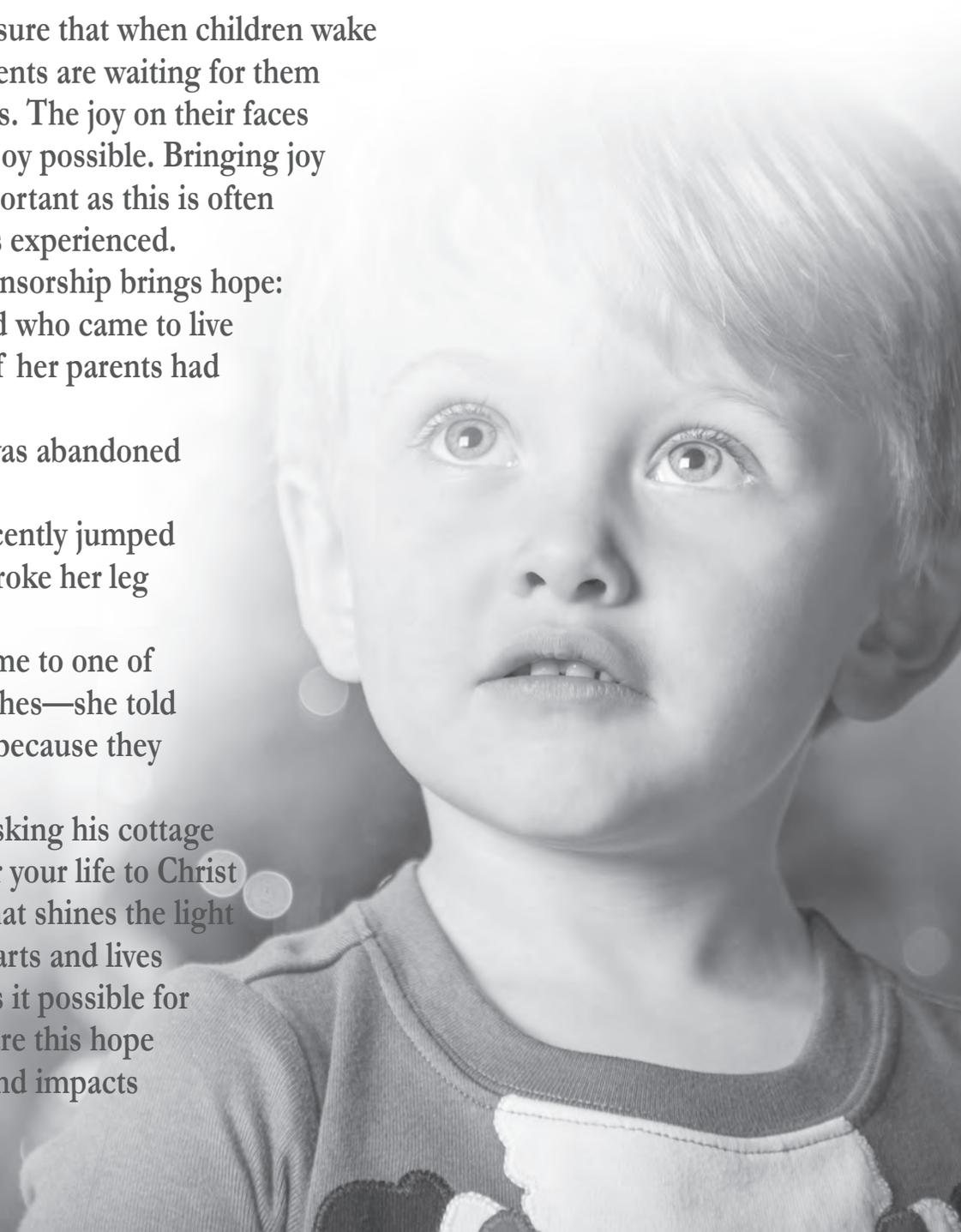
Shine the light of hope today.

Your sacrificial financial gifts ensure that when children wake up on Christmas morning presents are waiting for them underneath the brightly-lit trees. The joy on their faces as they unwrap each gift; you made that joy possible. Bringing joy to each boy and girl is tremendously important as this is often the first “merry” Christmas he or she has experienced.

Most importantly, your Christmas sponsorship brings hope:

- Hope for the heartbroken 16-year-old who came to live at BCH when she discovered that both of her parents had overdosed
- Hope for our six-year-old boy who was abandoned by his family at the shopping mall
- Hope for the 15-year-old girl who recently jumped from a car after being kidnapped—she broke her leg in the process
- Hope for the 12-year old-girl that came to one of our cottages holding a bag of broken dishes—she told her cottage parents that she keeps them because they are all she has left from home
- Hope for the child who has begun asking his cottage parents about what it means to surrender your life to Christ

It is the true meaning of Christmas that shines the light of hope—the light of Jesus—into the hearts and lives of BCH’s boys and girls. Your gift makes it possible for our cottage parents and caregivers to share this hope that brings healing to their brokenness and impacts their lives today and even eternally.



I want to shine the light of hope for every child!

- \$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 life-changing stories, 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.

On Mission Together

Partnership with BSCNC a highlight of Annual Meeting

By Blake Ragsdale, Managing Editor

Applause erupted from attendees at the evening session of the Annual Meeting of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSCNC) on Monday, November 8 when Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina (BCH) received \$300,000 in funding for the new EVERY CHILD Foster & Adoption Ministry. The surprise check presentation was a highlight for BCH as the EVERY CHILD partnership between BCH and BSCNC was highlighted as a part of the two-day gathering at the Koury Convention Center in Greensboro.

"Humbling is what immediately comes to my mind when I reflect on the magnitude of this gift from our passionate North Carolina Baptist friends," BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell said.

The presentation of an oversized check was made to Blackwell by recently-elected BSCNC executive director-treasurer Todd Unzicker during his inaugural address to messengers.

"The Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina is a vital ministry partner, and we are excited about the launch of the EVERY CHILD initiative," Unzicker said. "Scripture tells us that God is a father to the fatherless and calls us to care for the needs of orphans."



On November 8, Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSCNC) executive director-treasurer Todd Unzicker surprised messengers at the Annual Meeting with a \$300,000 presentation to Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina (BCH) president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell for the new EVERY CHILD Foster & Adoption Ministry. The new initiative is a partnership between BCH and BSCNC. Through EVERY CHILD, churches can be equipped to be involved in foster care and adoption to meet the needs of the 16,000 children in the North Carolina foster care system. For more information, visit every-child.org.

With approximately 16,000 children in the North Carolina foster care system, the goal of the EVERY CHILD partnership is to equip churches to be directly involved in foster care and adoption.

Unzicker said the contribution will "bring help and hope to precious souls" and make an eternal difference in children's lives.

"Because of North Carolina Baptists' faithfulness, there are children across the state who

will finally discover the safety and security of a loving home, and, God willing, they will find joy and hope in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," Unzicker said.

Church leaders and messengers spent considerable time at BCH's Annual Meeting display booth learning how to involve their churches with EVERY CHILD. BCH also held two breakout sessions. The first presented an overview of EVERY CHILD and gave attendees opportunity to ask specific questions. The second shared BCH's expertise serving children from a myriad of traumatic circumstances, and how churches can recognize and best respond to behaviors stemming from trauma in the children and youth they serve.

On Tuesday, November 9, Blackwell gave a short, impassioned report to messengers at the Annual Meeting's morning session. From abused and abandoned children to aging adults, Blackwell highlighted the variety of people BCH now serves through its, as he put it, "many ministries, to the glory of God, beating with one heart."

Overcome with emotion, Blackwell had to regain his composure as he referenced serving "unborn babies who deserve a

chance at life." As they had done so during Unzicker's check presentation, the audience burst into applause once again.

"This is BCH! We will not be discouraged. We will not be defeated," Blackwell exclaimed. "God is on the side of children. And, so is the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina."



Top photo, Dr. Blackwell shares his report with messengers on Tuesday, November 9, affirming the long-standing relationship with BSCNC. Top right photo, Charity Johnson, Southeastern Regional Director and Care Coordinator at North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) shares information with a messenger. Above photo, Bob McCleary, Director of Residential Services for Broyhill Home and Western Area Foster Care Supervisor, answers questions about career opportunities and discusses information about the EVERY CHILD Foster & Adoption Ministry. Right photo: Blackwell and Kevin Qualls, Senior Director of Adoptions for BCH's Christian Adoption Services, greet messengers.

Mills Home pastor leaves legacy of God's grace

By Jim Edminson, Editor

(Continued from page 1.)

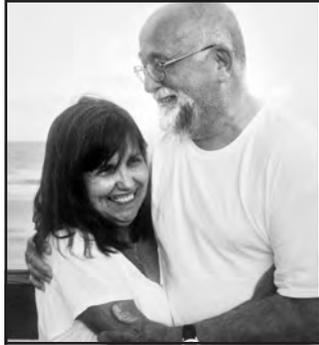
Life as pastor of Liberty Baptist Church in Thomasville was good. It was a journey for Randy Stewart to get to this place, one in which he felt God's calling along the way. It was a path that began on the family's farm with his widowed mom Geraldine and his three sisters.

"There were two things that were stressed in our home—school and church," he says. "I studied hard in school and grew up in Christ attending Oakboro First Baptist Church."

Randy's understanding of God began in the absence of his dad. He recalls uncles who "stepped in and loved" on him, took him to ball games, and encouraged him. But he remembers his heart opening to God as a boy, seeing Him as *his* Heavenly Father, full of love and grace.

Music played a big part in Randy's life. He loves music and can strike up almost any tune upon request. He met his wife of 44 years at a piano recital where the 12 year olds both performed. He recalls watching Diane on the stage of the auditorium playing and thinking, "She is the one for me." He says she was the best there and so cute.

The couple dated in high school and married on February 26, 1977. They were active in church and, at 25 years of age, Randy felt a calling to become a minister. In 1981, they moved to Wake Forest and he began Southeastern Seminary, graduating with



Diane and Randy Stewart

a divinity degree in 1984.

"We began our family. I worked and served in churches," Randy recalls. "I was involved in children and youth work, music, and church education. When I think of all that I did with children and families, I see how God was at work in my life."

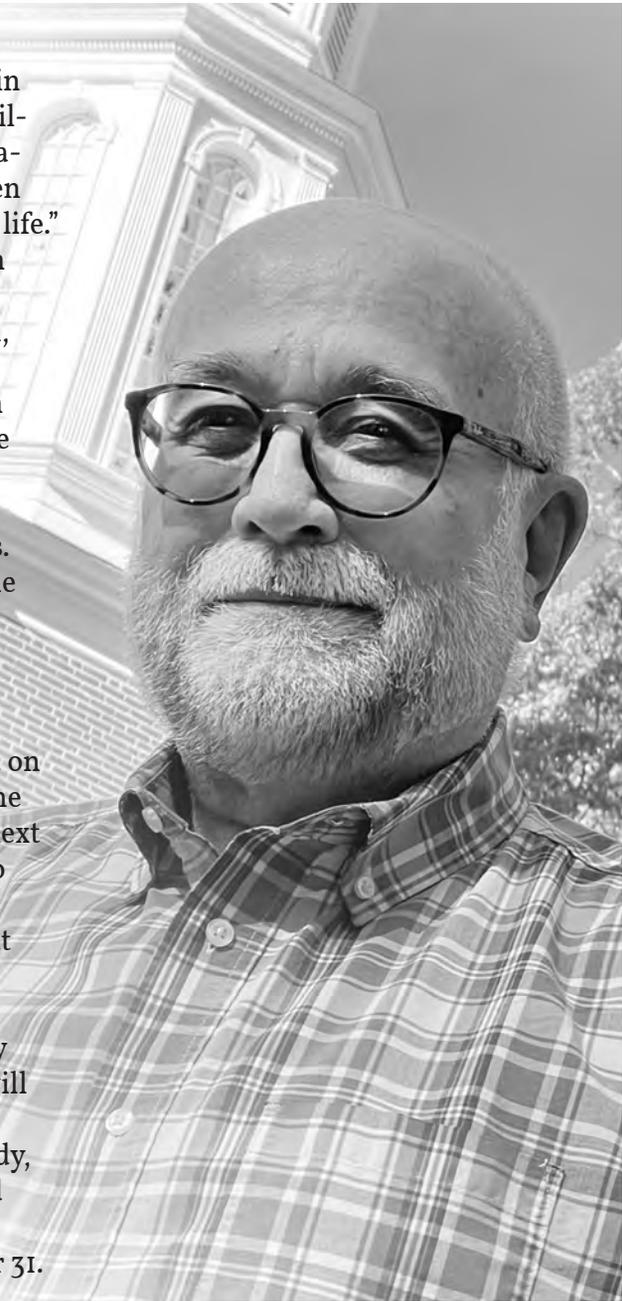
Diane and Randy served as North American Mission Board church planters in Georgia, and much of the work involved children. Then, Randy served at Cedar Hill Baptist Church in Chattanooga before beginning his ministry on August 1, 1987 at Liberty Baptist Church. While serving there, he earned a Doctor of Ministry degree in 1991.

"We loved serving at Liberty," Randy asserts. "Never in my wildest dreams did I ever imagine being approached about becoming the pastor of Mills Home Baptist Church."

Randy knew about Baptist Children's Homes and supported the ministry. He had preached one night of a revival held on the campus. On August 1, 1992, he became pastor of the 130-year-old church. The next day, a Sunday, he stepped to the pulpit to proclaim a message of grace.

"For me, the message to the children at Mills Home has always been simple," he says. "Every child needs to know that no matter what they have done or what may have happened them, God loves them—and will always love them. His grace is unconditional."

On September 7, Diane passed, leaving Randy, their three children—Meredith, Matthew, and Mark—and four grandchildren to cherish her memory. Randy retires as pastor on December 31.



Double gift now, Care Act incentives offer benefits

Giving at this time of year is crucial to our being here in the coming year. There are many ways to give and your gifts from now through the end of January will be doubled, every gift matched dollar for dollar up to \$250,000.

Ways to give: A gift of \$50 as a Christmas sponsor—a gift of \$600 sponsors a cottage. Give a friend or business associate a gift in their honor. BCH notifies honorees and sends a gift acknowledgement receipt to you.

Consider a gift of cash or a gift of appreciated stock or other property. Give stock or property to BCH and we 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 a year, your gift will be deductible at its full market value on the date it is received.

Call our office if you plan to make a stock gift. Often brokers do not inform us of the donor's gift. Questions about stock gifts or to expedite a stock

gift, call Sam Barefoot at 336-474-1224.

An IRA Charitable Rollover gift is a great way to help a child. Contact your advisor soon to make this happen before the end of the year.

The Cares Act created several incentives for individual giving in 2020, which carried over into 2021. These include:

- A new deduction for charitable donors who do not itemize when filing their tax returns. If you do not itemize, but make a gift to charity, you will be able to take a tax deduction, up to \$300 to reduce tax liability. If filing single, you can claim a \$300 deduction, married/jointly you can claim a \$600 deduction.

Example of this above the line deduction is a taxpayer who takes the standard deduction and makes a \$300 cash gift to a public charity (BCH) may claim the \$300 deduction in computing their AGI. The gift deduction is in addition to their standard deduction.

- The Cares Act lifted the cap on annual contri-

butions to public charities (BCH) for individuals who itemize. This provision provided an increase in the deduction limit up to 100% of a donor's AGI for cash gifts to qualified charities (BCH). Prior to the Cares Act the deduction was capped at 60%. Any excess contributions available can be carried over to the next five years. **Note:** For corporations, the new law raised the annual limit from 10% to 25% of taxable income.

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

Thank you in advance for your investment in the life of a child. There are those who wish they could give at this time, but can't. Will you pray about giving a little extra on their behalf. And remember, your gift will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$250,000 until January 31st 2020. For more information call me at 336-689-4442.

Pastor Stewart wished well as he enters retirement — Favorite childhood memories shared by alumni

By Lib Johnson

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libsjohnson@triad.rr.com

The feelings are certainly “mixed” in regard to the retiring of **Dr. Randy Stewart**. How we will miss him, his talents, and his fantastic helpfulness with the execution of Homecoming. We so appreciate what we have seen of his loving administration of his church duties and his obvious love for Mills Home, its children, staff, and the alumni. We’re so thankful for all he and Diane did for us. They will both be sorely missed, but we will rejoice in the spirit the two always demonstrated and be happy that he can enjoy the retirement he richly deserves.

On October 17, we learned from Harry’s Mills Home Orphanage Memories Facebook page that **Jane Helms Brown** and her husband **Danny** had contracted COVID-19. They have both been released from the hospital with necessary meds and oxygen. Please keep them both in your prayers. Most people know Jane as our alumni president and the two of them as the marvelous cooks for our Homecoming meals. Friends can send get well cards to them at this address: 720 Curry Rd., High Point, NC 27265 or contact them on Facebook through the name Jane Brown.

Freddie Lomax and brothers **Charles and Ray** entered Mills Home in 1949 after their mother died. They returned home to Greensboro in 1953 when their father remarried, but Freddie well remembers life at Mills Home! One reason for that is he sometimes traveled with **Marse Grant** to speak at various churches in the state. His task was to tell about life at Mills Home. He recalls being

uncomfortable when members of the churches would come by to shake his hand and they would leave change in his hands. He felt more comfortable when churches just started taking up a “love offering” for him. Duties Freddie recalls having at Mills Home were being **Miss Sallie’s** “boy Friday,” delivering papers, and working on the farm. He has been married to **Rosalyn** for almost 53 years and they have three offspring, six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. He is retired from three jobs, one being vice-president of Bank of America. When in Thomasville, he enjoys touring the campus and fellowshiping with friends.

Elizabeth Cooley Bramlet sends another thank you for prayers from friends. She is not totally well but she is thankful to be able to walk now and do more things for herself. She said that her prayer is “that God will use my healing for His glory and that others will be drawn closer to Him. I am so thankful God blessed me with a wonderful husband and family.”

Elaine Weimer Chrissikos entered Mills Home from Fayetteville in 1963 with siblings **Jerry, Lee, Raymond**, and the late **Nancy and Cathy Weimer**. She left in 1966. Her favorite workers on campus were **Mr. and Mrs. Steele**, house parents, and the ever-famous **Swannie McHargue**, the dietitian. In the work world, Elaine has had a challenging career as a teacher of kindergarten – grade 3. Now a widow, she is retired from teaching. She stays active in her church and makes consistent efforts to remain healthy. When she returns for Home-

coming, she enjoys going through the photo albums at the Mitchell Museum with old friends.

Ruth Berndt Hodges was voted in as a new member of the Mills Home Alumni Council during Homecoming 2021. While Ruth has not previously served on the council, she has been a member of the Homecoming committee since 2012, when she first suggested that Homecoming weekend should have a theme to help increase participation, as well as add to the enjoyment of all who come.

Ruth is the middle of five children who came to live at Mills Home in March of 1973. The family members, **Susie, Mark, Ruth, Andy, and Martha**, were ages 12, 11, 10, 9, and 7, respectively when they arrived. They have four older siblings who never lived at Mills Home. While living at Mills Home, Ruth enjoyed spending time with her friends. Her favorite activities were skating in the gym, swimming and diving during the summer, and riding the ponies. She also loved singing and was happy to be a part of the Tour Choir. Ruth was involved in several activities at school, but mostly she enjoyed her time as a cheerleader for the Thomasville Senior High School Bulldogs!

Having lived at Mills Home from 1973 until she graduated from high school in 1980, Ruth attended Campbell University where she received a BA degree in psychology. Many years later, she resumed her education at Wingate University where she earned a master’s degree in elementary education. She currently

resides in Charlotte and works in the Facilities Department at Bojangles corporate office.

Sharon DeHart Stiles, chairperson of the Columbarium Committee, is very happy to report that alumni have responded beautifully to the opportunity to contribute to the funding of a columbarium to be erected at God’s Acre. We are grateful to all the contributors who provided the necessary funds for that. The first step of the installation has been taken: the concrete foundation has been poured. We will soon know when they will be able to install the columbarium itself. Once the columbarium is completed, Mills Home alumni and their spouses and Mills Home workers and their spouses are entitled to be placed there at no cost. The families of the alumni and workers to be placed in the columbarium will have the responsibility of having the body cremated and for the engraving of the deceased person’s name and birth and death dates on the front door of each niche. Questions regarding the columbarium may be directed to Sharon at this address: 1588 Elkhart Circle, Gastonia, NC 28054 or 336-685-2443

I am very grateful for the many expressions of sympathy for the loss of my sisters **Essie Smathers Nichols** on August 12 and **Eulah Smathers Scott** on October 19. Essie lived at Mills Home from 1946-1952.



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



Weekday Education in Thomasville
Children enjoy the fall weather
 The boys and girls attending BCH's Weekday Education center play outside as much as the weather will allow. The mild autumn temperatures have made outdoor time ideal.



Christian Adoption Services
Aunt adopts Philippine nephews
 Congratulations to Marilee for finalizing the adoption of her nephews, Barry and Givv from the Philippines. BCH's Christian Adoption Services assists with international adoption.



Camp Duncan in Aberdeen
Girls canoe Lake Catherine
 Camp Duncan is anchored by the beautiful Lake Catherine, named for BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell's wife. It is the perfect place for them to practice canoeing.



Hickory Grove Baptist in Charlotte
Volunteers cut back trees
 LIVESENT Ministries, an outreach of Hickory Grove Baptist, trimmed and took down at-risk trees at Mills home. They have served multiple times at the campus.



Mills Home in Thomasville
McVerry meets BCH leaders
 Jean McVerry, a vital supporter of BCH's Christian Adoption Services, recently visited with BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell and COO Keith Henry.



Greater Vision Outreach Ministry
GV encourage first responders
 Staff and volunteers from Greater Vision in Thomasville recently visited with first responders in the Davidson County are to show appreciation for their service.



The Restore Walk for Emmanuel Home
Hiker visits CAS Rocky Mount office
 During his statewide walk for the forthcoming Emmanuel Home for birth mothers, Win McCullough (second from right) visited Christian Adoption Service's Rocky Mount office.



Fancy Finds in Thomasville
Paint class encourages creativity
 In addition to its resale store that benefits BCH's ministries, Fancy Finds offers paint workshops. This recent class helped attendees create this beautiful holiday craft.



Three Forks Home in Zionville
Men meet Ninja the therapy dog
 The men living at Three Forks Home for intellectually/developmentally disabled adults were treated to a visit by Ninja the therapy dog and owner Lindsay Barnes.

Can we help? Many ministries beating with one heart.

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Linda Morgan, Lead Dir., 828-627-9254
- Central Area Family Services**
Regina Keener, Dir., 336-474-1200
- Eastern Area Family Services**
Christopher Allabaugh, Dir., 252-522-0811
www.kennedyhome.org
- Odum Home**
Kathy Locklear, Res. Mgr., 910-521-3433
www.odumhome.org
- Cameron Boys Camp**
Drew Scott, Dir., 910-245-4034
www.cameronboyscamp.org
- Camp Duncan for Girls**
Brad Gearhart, Dir., 910-944-3077
www.campduncanNC.org
- Family Foster Care**
Bob McCleary, 828-627-9254
www.bchfostercare.org
- Christian Adoption Services**
Kevin Qualls, Dir., 704-847-0038
www.christianadopt.org
- Weekday Education**
Brooke Child, Dir., 336-474-1201
- Tucker Greater Vision Ministry**
Sara Becker, Mgr., 336-687.6384
- HOMEBASE** at W. Carolina University
Jim Dean, Dir., 828-293-4660
- Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities**
Tara Sessoms, Dir., 336-474-1259
www.hereismyhome.org
- NC Baptist Aging Ministry**
Sandy Gregory, Dir., 336-474-1221
www.ncbam.org
- Good Shepherd Children's Home**
in Guatemala Keith Henry, COO,
336-474-1215



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 at svbarefoot@bchfamily.org
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Many thanks for kindness since Becky's passings — Christmas party set for December 4 at King's

By JOHN THOMPSON, 104 Village Court, Havelock, NC 28532

(282) 671-3515

jthompson117@ec.rr.com

The hymn "Showers of Blessings" is one of my favorites. Look at some of the words for a moment. It begins with: "There shall be showers of blessing, This is the promise of love, There shall be seasons refreshing, Sent from the Savior above," And then the CHORUS reads "Showers of blessing, Showers of blessing we need, Mercy drops 'round us are falling, But for the showers we plead." Then we find these words: "There shall be showers of blessing, Send them upon us, O Lord. Grant to us now a refreshing; Come and now honor Thy Word."

I believe the Lord is telling us to just "keep on hanging in there" and share all the "love" we have with others. That's what it is all about! Since my wife **Becky** went on to heaven on August 21, I have received 168 cards in the mail, about 275 e-mails, and sent me \$3,000. Plus, I received another \$3,000 from several others to help with funeral expenses. These are showers of blessing! I also asked memoriams be sent to Baptist Children's Homes of NC (BCH) and I received 21 notices that 21 gifts were sent. I know that many of you have been praying for me and my family. Let me say a great big "THANK YOU" to all of you who have been so kind. You are all "my youngins" and I love you with all my heart.

Our Kennedy Home (KH) alumni president, **Katie**, called me to say we are going to have our Christmas party at King's Restaurant in Kinston on Saturday, December 4, from noon until 3:00. Please bring a \$10 gift to share in a few games. Let's try to have a huge crowd. It has been so long since we had a gathering of any kind because of COVID. I know that several of you have lost family and friends because of COVID. You can wear your mask to be safe and I sure hope all have

had your shots by now. Come on and let's experience "Showers of Blessings" by being with our Kennedy Home brothers and sisters,

Now is the time to support BCH's annual offering, Christmas sponsorships, and end-of-the-year giving. I want to share with you these verses from Matthew. "Then the little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, But the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

There are many ways you can help BCH. Your Sunday school class, your WMU group, or your Baptist Men's Group can give. Grocery store and Walmart cards can be given. The cards are used by cottage houseparents to shop at the grocery stores for meats, fresh vegetables, milk, etc. Talk to the organizations in your church about helping from time to time.

Mazie Waters and her husband were houseparents in Bryant Cottage when Becky and I served at KH. You could really tell that they loved serving the Lord. Mazie wrote a beautiful poem and sent it to me at Christmas time one year. Let me share it with you.

"With a whisper and a clap, Night scatters the stars, Angels, unexpected, In outrageous white glowing gowns, Their wings in slow motion, Bring good news. "BE NOT AFRAID.. A CHILD IS BORN" A child is born who follows a star That dances within his heart—Calling us—All of us on a journey to follow our star To wade into the mystery To awaken the holy, To dive into the river of restless joy, To kneel with laughing gypsy kings who dared to follow their star. To dance with shepherds in the wonder, And magic of a birth we still embrace. BE NOT AFRAID. Remember the stable where a carnival of smells and

sounds filled the air, Where Mary and Joseph cradled their child... CRADLED THE CHRIST-MAS BABE AND INVITED US TO STEP INTO THE STORY.. INTO THE LIGHT..INTO THE CHRISTMAS."

Tracy Pearson sent a note to share about the blessings of living at KH: "My name is **Tracy Pearson** and I was blessed by God who allowed me the honor of living at Kennedy Home in the Adlett Davis Cottage with **Mr. and Mrs. Bill Beacham**. I was in care from 1978-1981. This is the first time I have written to give you something for your column. First, let me say 'thank you' for everything you and your predecessors have done over the many years as you all have given to serve through **Charity & Children**. I have been an avid follower and fan of this paper. The people responsible for the publication of this wonderful paper are truly God sent.

"Anyway, what I need your help with is that I would very much like to reconnect with anyone that I was in care with while I was at KH. Due to some medical issues, my mind isn't like it once was so my memory is not as good as it use to be. Here are some of the names I remember from when I lived there. **Daryl Mervin, Norman and Tom Mitchell, Buddy, Teresa, and Miss Brown, Stephanie Hemby**. If you could put my request in the **C&C** I sure would be happy. Please let everyone know that I'm interested in reconnecting with anyone that was in care during those years. My time at KH was truly the best time of my life. I lived in AD Cottage with 11 others that I grew to love and think of as my second family. My life prior to KH was a mess and I was truly on the road to ruin. If it had not been for a very special Probation Officer **Mr. Steve Penney**, I would have gone to a reform school. Mr. Kenny put my case before KH to see if they would accept me. "THEY DID!"

"Since that day, I have (through God) become a positive, productive part of society. Although the road has not always been sunshine and candy, and there had been many times that my walk with God had strayed off His path, He always came and found me just like the wonderful shepherd He is and brought me back "to the fold." For that, I am eternally grateful. I want to say that I am very happy and I can honestly say that if it was not for God, my life would be very different from what is today. So, if you would be so kind, I would love to hear from anyone from 1978-1981 who remembers me. I also want to say *thank you to God* for Mr. Steve Penny, KH staff, Mr. and Mrs. Beacham, and all my brothers and sisters from AD cottage, all the kids in care while I was at KH, and to all North Carolina Baptists. Thank you all for playing such a huge part in my development and salvation. In closing, I challenge all past residents to remember their time there and as alumni, it is our duty to keep the godly place going strong. For a long time, I had forgotten, I will NEVER let that happen again."

Folks you can write Tracy at 4605 Battery Range, N. Charleston, SC 29470 or email him at tracypearson96@yahoo.com.

May you all have a great and joyous Christmas season. Are singing in a church choir for special Christmas programs. Write and tell me about it or share what you are doing to count your blessings! Always remember, I love you very much. Drop by to see me in my very new home at 104 Village Court in Havelock. You are always welcome. Email me at jthompson117@ec.rr.com —jt



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

God fits the pieces together for His glory

By Jim Edminson, Editor

It is the middle of November and it's time for Mary's annual report about Christmas gifts purchased.

She texts: "Alan and I have started shopping, and yours is the first gift we bought! How's your shopping going?"

I chuckle. Her tone of satisfaction is apparent, but I'm ready: "Shopping? Check! Mary's gift? Done!" I grin and send the message.

Looking over at the dining table, our staging area for gifts awaiting their holiday packaging, I smile; the large box with the bright photo of exotic colorful succulent plants will be a good surprise for my puzzle-happy daughter. No doubt, the 1000-piece jigsaw will be completed before New Year's Day. She is a whiz at putting together puzzles, the more challenging, the better. I wonder if I've told her that she comes from a long line of jigsaw experts?

My pawpaw had a portable card table that appeared from time to time beside his chair in the living room. The chair is where he sat weeknights to watch the CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite and on Sunday afternoon to cheer on Archie Manning as he quarterbacked the then-dismal New Orleans Saints. He used the table to piece together the most complex jigsaw puzzles. He pulled the table close to his chair, studied the picture of the puzzle on the box, and then he laboriously turned every piece right-side up on the table, pushing the pieces to one side. His glasses pulled down

the bridge of his nose, he studied every piece and aligned them, interlocking the shapes together to form the border first. The venture sometimes took weeks, but he was relentless until the final piece was placed into the puzzle. Pawpaw's commitment to the task was admirable.

Sitting with Pawpaw during his leisure puzzle hours, he talked to me with his eyes traveled over the pieces, searching for the right ones. I wonder if he sorted by shape or color? I never asked, but now it occurs to me that I look first at shape while Mary looks first for color.

My grandfather's legacy goes far beyond his jigsaw puzzle acumen, but the story adds to my recollections of his impact on my life. His dedication and commitment to every task to which he set his hands are cornerstones of my learning to be faithful in the small ways that fit together to form a good life.

The great themes of the Bible are about God; after all, it is His story. The historical books profile His commitment, faithfulness, mercy, and love. Although the book's stories center around many subthemes like conquest, deliverance, judgment, unification, and preservation, His intention to redeem His creation never falters; He is long-suffering and kind. In the book of Ruth, God's provision to redeem Naomi and Ruth foreshadows His plan to redeem both Jew and Gentile—illuminating the path to eternal life through Jesus.

The books of the Old Testament amplify this intention. The stories reveal God's desire for close relationship with His creation: the Garden, the Ark of the Covenant and the Tabernacle, the Temple—all pointing to the Messiah of the New Testament who came to us as a baby born in Bethlehem. He is relentless in the pursuit.

Paul captures, in his letter to the Philippians, God's dedication to His task. Paul writes, "There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears" (Phil 1:6). God intended to accomplish His work in those of the church at Philippi, and He intends to do so for those of us today and for all who will come. He is committed to fitting all the pieces together—to accomplish His redemptive will, for His glory.

I hope one of those packages with my name under the tree is a great big puzzle. I feel the need to pull over a card table next to my own chair, spread out the multitude of jigsaw shapes, and watch the picture come together.

Maybe Mary will have some time and we can work on it together. Pawpaw would be pleased.



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



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