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October 2025

Issue 8

Volume 138

2025 ANNUAL OFFERING STORY

Alicia Hinton met Ian when the newborn was discharged from the hospital and placed into the family's care on Christmas Eve.



The Hinton family give God their "yes"

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Vice President of Communications

Chad and Alicia Hinton felt they had exhausted all excuses. While the rest of the congregation at Englewood Baptist Church in Rocky Mount were exiting the sanctuary, the couple stayed in their seats reflecting on the two-part question from the Sunday morning message: *What is your reason for not participating in fostering and adoption, and is your reason just an excuse?*

In January and February 2022, Englewood was in the midst of a biblically-based sermon series focusing on foster care and adoption. Two of the messages were shared by speak-

ers from Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) who discussed the EVERY CHILD foster care initiative. The initiative makes it possible for Christian husbands and wives to care for vulnerable NC children by becoming foster families through training provided by BCH.

With their hearts moved by the challenge from the pulpit, Chad and Alicia sought clarity from the Lord. They carefully examined the reasons in their hearts and minds that were keeping them from making the commitment to fostering.

"In looking at things and talking to God, everything was an excuse," Chad explains.

"So I said 'yes' and we said 'yes' together."

The Hinton's decision would change the direction of their already large family. The couple and their four biological children, ages four to 13, live in the small community of Tarboro, about a 20-minute drive from their church. Alicia, whose father lived at an orphanage from age three until he was 18, had grown up knowing about the hardships her dad navigated because he did not have the support of a family. For Alicia, giving God their "yes" was an answer to a longtime prayer.

(Continued on page 7)

Charlotte's faith and creativity inspire others to help

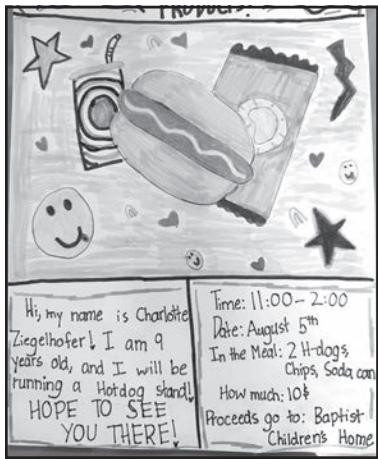
By **Kristyn Butts**, Director of Volunteer Engagement

In Matthew 18:1-4, scripture reads, “At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ And calling to Him a child, He put him in the midst of them and said, ‘Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.’”

Just as Jesus reminded His disciples long ago, adults today are still learning from the faith, humility, and service of children. At only nine years old, Charlotte Ziegelhofer is one such example. Her



Charlotte proudly stands ready to serve at her hotdog stand where she raised \$880 for BCH. Below left, she designed the flyer to advertise her hotdog stand. Below right, her first customer was her little brother, Eli, who used his own money to purchase a hotdog.



ence in the lives of boys and girls at Baptist Children’s Homes (BCH). Her inspiration came after visiting Mills Home and sharing a time of fellowship at one of the boys’ cottages. The experience left a deep impression on her. Combined with knowing family friends who adopted through BCH, Charlotte felt called to help.

Her idea came from the pages of a magazine—she had read about a girl who started a popsi-

bold faith, creative spirit, and heart for others remind us that greatness in God’s kingdom often begins with the faith and generosity of a child.

This past summer, Charlotte set out to make a differ-

cle stand to raise money for a cause. Charlotte thought, “Why not me?” With encouragement from her parents, she decided to start a hotdog stand. Her father, Joseph, offered his workplace, Horizon Forest Products, as the perfect location. Charlotte designed a flyer to invite employees and customers, and she got to work decorating the stand with her artistic flair.

When the big day arrived, it became a family affair. Charlotte’s Nana made homemade chili, a kind customer contributed slaw, and her younger brother Eli proudly bought the very first hotdog with his own money. Employees, customers, family, and friends all came together to support Charlotte’s mission. One generous customer even purchased twenty meals to treat his entire crew.

By the end of the day, Charlotte had raised an incredible \$880 for BCH—all through hotdogs,

hard work, and a heart full of love.

Her mother, Katie, reflected on the day with gratitude: “We are really proud of Charlotte. She has such a pure and kind heart, and she’s always looking for ways to love and help others. We always want to encourage generosity. It has been very humbling. We wanted to do this with her to help create confidence. We want her to always have the courage to act on her ideas.”

For Charlotte, the best part wasn’t just raising money—it was meeting people. She joyfully shared, “My favorite part was getting to meet all my customers, especially all the sweet ones.” Through the experience, she embraced lessons far bigger than the hotdog stand itself. “I learned to be a better person and how to interact with people,” she explained.

But perhaps her most important takeaway was simple and profound:



“People are really generous.”

In Charlotte’s story, we see a beautiful reflection of Matthew 18—the greatness of a humble, faith-filled child who points us all back to the heart of God. Her hotdog stand wasn’t just about food—it was about love, service, and showing others the joy of giving. And in that way, Charlotte reminds us that sometimes the greatest teachers in our lives are children.

To learn more about how you can find your spot to serve at Baptist Children’s Homes, contact me at kbutts@bchfamily.org.

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 10 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 three 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.

Our longing is satisfied when all things are made new

By David Melber, Chief Executive Officer

Who does not like new things? We all enjoy them, whether we admit it or not. I like a new appliance that has yet to be used, clean and crisp, without stains from cooking. Or a new car with that unique new car smell—honestly though I have never thought a new car smell is that great. We could go on about clothes, shoes, or toys, but you get the point. We long for things to be new.

The problem is that once we get something new, the newness immediately begins to fade. The shine wears off, and before long, it feels ordinary. Then the cycle starts again. A new version comes out, and we feel the pull toward the latest. As Christ followers, this longing for newness runs deeper. It's a God-given desire to see all things made right. The Bible declares that we are ministers of reconciliation, appointed to see relationships restored and people reconciled to God.

Yet the brokenness of sin touches this world, our own lives, and the lives of others.

You and I are on an eternal journey, but our time on this earth is short—

a vapor that soon vanishes. God sets eternity in our hearts, and by His grace, He uses the temporary to point us toward the future. Our longing for renewal is fully satisfied only in the promise that one day all things will be made new.



David Melber

In Revelation 21, John writes: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.'

And He who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' Also, He said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.'"

At Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, we see brokenness every day. We long to see situations restored, lives redeemed, and the lost found. Imagine the day

when God fulfills His promise—no more tears, no more pain, only joy in His presence!

That is why we center all we do on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We need laborers to join in this work. Some may begin by joining our prayer team by visiting bchfamily.org/prayer. Others may feel the Spirit stirring a deeper call: to foster, to adopt, to serve as cottage parents, or step more fully into one of our many ministries.

Following Jesus means we don't simply wait for the day when He makes all things new—we live now as agents of His renewal. Every time we extend forgiveness, offer hospitality, or meet the needs of the vulnerable, we reveal the Kingdom to come. The Gospel is not only about our eternal future but also about God's power to redeem the broken pieces of our present lives. Whether comforting a hurting child, walking with a family in crisis, or sharing Christ with the forgotten, we join His story of restoration. The newness we long for is not just ahead—it breaks into our world through Christ working in us today.

Yes, I want to see many join this mission, but even more, I long for each of us to take the next step of faith and pursue the Lord. God created us with eternity in our hearts. May He help us live in such a way that our actions declare we desire a better country—that is a heavenly one.

What is the LORD asking of you today?

Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

Someone is hurting, and you can make a difference

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

This will be my last column.
My husband and I embarked on this journey 50 years ago as houseparents and God has been opening doors for me to care for the least of these in many ways and in many places throughout these years. My journey brought me to Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) 26 years ago. It has been amazing, and THANK YOU for walking with me.

In one of my first columns, I shared this conversation between two friends:

Friend 1—"Sometimes I would like to ask God why He allows poverty, abuse, and injustice when He could do something about it."

Friends 2—"Well, why don't you ask Him?"

Friends 1—"Because I'm afraid God might ask me the same question."

Across North Carolina, children and families desperately need our help! Everyone needs a safe place where they can deal with the trauma that can engulf one's life. It is important that there is a place to experience the hope, grace and love of a Savior—a place where they can heal and grow to be all that God intends for them.

When the children and families come to BCH, they feel overwhelmed by the feelings of rejection, frustration, sadness, and fear. All, at one time or another, feel they have no hope. And because of this deep hurt, many bury their grief deep inside and are trapped in darkness. Sometimes they try to escape through alcohol and drugs. Sometimes the pain is so intense they become suicidal.

Each day, we are confronted with children and families whose problems are becoming more and more complex. Each day we face many new challenges and we are called on again and again to pick up the pieces of these precious broken lives.

Friends 2—"Well, why don't you ask Him?"

Friends 1—"Because I'm afraid God might ask me the same question."

God does ask us the question. There are several scriptures that have guided God's call on my heart to answer the question and care for the least of these.

In John 21:15-17, we encounter a conversation between Jesus and Peter: "He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."

Love me and take care of my sheep.

In Matthew 25:37-40, we read: "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and

clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

In James 1:27, Jesus commands us to care for the widows and the orphans. Throughout God's Word He tells us to care for each other and shares His heart to care for the children and all who are the "least of these."

Perhaps you have felt God calling you to minister to one of the "least of these"—to help pick up the broken pieces. Our children come hurting and in need of healing. They have gone through more pain than most people encounter in a lifetime and they have life experiences far beyond their years. Many of our children feel broken and they are desperate for a loving, healing touch.

In Japan, a potter will prize a cracked or broken pot beyond all others. They are known to fill the cracks with gold and put them in places of honor. It is their belief that the broken or cracked vessels went through more difficult times just to exist and are cherished.

Many of our children could identify with being broken or cracked. They are waiting for someone who will pick up the broken pieces of their lives. They are looking and hoping for someone like the potter to enter their lives and fill the hurt with love, patience, hope, encouragement,

guidance, and support—just like the potter uses gold to fill the cracks.

Will you hear God's question to you? Will you hear God's answer? I believe that **YOU** and I as the church are the answer.

How can you make a difference? Consider working where you can serve. Consider being a houseparent or a foster parent. Consider being a catalyst in your church to build a culture of orphan care. Consider being a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves. Let us come alongside your church to support you in caring for the least of these in your community.

BCH sheds a light on the mission field in your community and throughout North Carolina. The mission field is all around us. The question remains, "Do you love me?" His direction is the same, tend My sheep and "whatever you did for the least of these—you did for Me."

For 140 years, BCH has been the arms of Jesus, reaching out to children and families and blessing them in His name. With your help, we will continue to be here to offer hope to these special boys and girls and their families. We will continue our mission to enable each child and family to find healing through Christ's love. **Thank You!**

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes one such child in My name welcome Me, and whoever welcomes Me welcomes not Me but the one who sent Me."

There are many ways you can help this ministry reach a hurting world. You could help with a work project by volunteering. Consider being a Christmas sponsor. Lead your church in collecting "a mile of pennies" or giving through this year's Annual Offering or making a special year-end gift in honor of someone special in your life. The most important

way to begin your support is through prayer. Become a prayer partner. For more information on how you can volunteer and be involved in this life transforming ministry, contact Kristyn Butts at 336-943-3862.



IAN WAS AMONG THE
10,000+ CHILDREN
IN N.C. FOSTER CARE

UNTIL YOUR OFFERING
CHANGED
HIS LIFE.

Alicia Hinton first held newborn Ian, a child in the NC foster care system, at the hospital on Christmas Eve. That night, he came into the Hinton family's home and their hearts.

Chad and Alicia Hinton, along with their four biological children, became an EVERY CHILD foster family through Baptist Children's Homes so that they could care for vulnerable NC children and show them the love of Christ. Not only have they fostered Ian since birth, they are now his forever family through adoption.

Your church's offering makes it possible to provide care for vulnerable children and to ensure that EVERY CHILD hears the hope of the gospel.

EVERY *Child*



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SHARING HOPE...CHANGING LIVES
Baptist Children's Homes
of NORTH CAROLINA

Brothers return home but now have a bigger family

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Sherry and Geramy Marks met in college. Sherry was studying to become a nurse. Geramy was working on his masters to become a physical therapist. Friendship and romance turned into a commitment of marriage and they were wed in 2008. The couple dreamed of having four children. Naomi was born, and despite a difficult pregnancy, the couple welcomed Maya two years later. Again Sherry had a difficult time and the dream of more children ended. Or so they first thought.

"Our two daughters were enough," Sherry asserts, "but as the girls grew older, we started talking about more children."

After considering adoption, the Marks turned their attention to fostering after a Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) representative presented the EVERY CHILD Foster and Adoption Ministry at their church—Temple Baptist Church in New Bern. Becoming a foster care family immediately struck a chord. Geramy and Sherry signed up for training classes and began the process to be licensed.

To become a foster family, a family agrees to offer their home and adult supervision to care for a foster care child(ren), providing daily 24-hour care. The licensing process typically takes between four to six weeks. A minimum of 30 hours of pre-service trainings come next. After the training, required licensing paperwork is completed and submitted.

BCH walks with EVERY CHILD foster care families through each step. Once the licensing and certification process is complete and a family is licensed to foster, a BCH case manager is assigned to them. The case manager walks alongside them becoming their advocate, helping them through any situation that arises along their foster care journey.

"We looked at our lives and realized we could help children," Geramy says. "Our home was a good, safe environment, we were financially stable, and we had the faith and love needed. Caring for foster children was our answer."

The couple's faith drove them forward and from the start they committed themselves to nurture and support the foster child's family as



Sixteen-year-old Naomi, Sherry, Geramy, and 14-year-old Maya opened their home in 2021 to care for foster children. The couple made it a priority from the beginning to nurture and support the foster child's parents as well. The first two children they fostered were reunited with their family after 19 months with the Marks. Below, Naomi and the two brothers settle in for a bedtime story.

well. They determined to show the love of Jesus through their actions—loving and caring for the entire family in their time of need.

"We all have a tendency to judge before we understand," Geramy says. "We committed ourselves early to reunification and helping families come back together. We set our hearts to do all we could, helping parents as they worked to reunify their family—encouraging and supporting them."

The Marks's family officially became a foster family in October 2021. The excitement was palpable. The wait for their first placement, for what they thought would be short, went from a few days or weeks to two months.

"We had calls and each time we said yes, but circumstances would change and the children were not placed with us," Sherry

remembers. "And then the call came for the boys and things moved quickly."

The two brothers were close in age. The youngest was born with cerebral palsy and could not walk unassisted. Cerebral palsy occurs most often before birth and symptoms can include irregular posture, exaggerated reflexes, and

unstable mobility.

Naomi and Maya loved the boys from the start. The oldest brother attached himself to Sherry and the youngest to Geramy.

"God gave me a very special opportunity," Geramy testifies. "I knew I could use my skills as a physical therapist to help this little boy."

He developed a plan. The two-year-old needed him and Geramy was determined not to let him down. "My thoughts became what can I do to help this little boy be the best he can be."

Sherry was quick to reach out to the brothers' parents. They were working hard on their reunification plan. She blended the two families when she could—birthday parties, the boys' haircuts, cookouts.

"Mistakes are made," Sherry says. "It was best for the boys to be removed. But when it is safe for the child, there needs to be a way back for the parents—a path to forgiveness. I would want the chance to be reunited. It is what Jesus would do."

Nineteen months went by in a flash. The boys returned to live with their mom and dad—but now they have a bigger family. Sherry and Geramy worried about their girls. There were tears, but the couple had made the girls a part of what they were doing and they understood the goal. They were happy for the boys and witnessed how God worked to bring the brothers' family back together again.



Hintons give God their "yes" to being a foster family

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Vice President of Communications
(Continued from page 1)

Chad and Alicia began the EVERY CHILD training which is a 12-week course. The training and licensing process to officially become a foster family carried them deep into 2022. As December arrived and family Christmas planning was underway, Alicia felt a stirring within her that was signaling a very different plan. "God started really putting 'Christmas baby' on my heart," she explains. "And I couldn't shake it." In the days ahead, Chad and the children would come home from work and school to find Alicia "nesting"—she was doing extra cleaning and chores to prepare the family home in anticipation of a child being placed.

"I was sitting by the Christmas tree, and I received a phone call from an unknown number," she shares. "It was Baptist Children's Homes."

Alicia's heart raced as the BCH case manager told her about Ian, a newborn in the NICU at the hospital, who was in need of a foster care placement. She shared that the baby would likely be discharged into the Hintons' care either Christmas Eve or Christmas day.

"All the time Alicia was nesting, Ian was there at the hospital waiting to come home," Chad says. "Little did we know Ian would come into our lives on Christmas Eve of 2022."

Chad stayed home with the children that night while Alicia drove to the hospital. After putting on a pair of hospital scrubs, the new foster mom cradled Ian in her arms.

"My heart just melted, and I ugly cried," Alicia shares. "I tell myself, 'Okay, I'm going to take care of this baby. I'm going to love him like my own until the courts tell me not to.'"



The Annual Offering collected by NC Baptists have made it possible for the Hintons to become an EVERY CHILD foster family through Baptist Children's Home. Below left, Ian with his adoptive siblings, cousin, and his half sisters who have been adopted by their great aunt and uncle. Below right, Chad and Ian on the playground. Scan the QR code to watch the Hinton's video.



The main goal for a child in foster care, if at all possible, is reunification with his or her biological family. Chad and Alicia understood and accepted that if the court, in tandem with the N.C. Department of Social Services, agreed it was in Ian's best interest, he would one day return to his biological family.

"Ian has some wonderful family that love him," Alicia explains. "He's got cousins and two older biological sisters who have been adopted by their great aunt and uncle."

The Hintons connected with Ian's extended family to give him interaction with his half sisters. In the process, a deep bond formed.

"Ian was the bridge between two families," Alicia says "They are supportive of us and Ian. Together, we're a family."

After seven months, the Hintons received a call that Ian's official plan was changing from foster care to adoption. It was not the news Chad and Alicia were anticipating. The

family of six were faced with a big decision.

"We talked to our kids and asked, 'What do you think about adopting Ian?'" Alicia recalls. "They said, 'Yes.' They didn't even have to think about it."

With the enthusiastic agreement of the entire family, including his great aunt and uncle, Ian is now a permanent member of the Hinton family. Since then, Chad and Alicia decided to renew their foster care license so they can continue to care for vulnerable children. In order to do so, they have purchased a larger home that gives them an extra bedroom. They see their larger home as an extension of their commitment to minis-

tering as a EVERY CHILD foster family.

"I don't think I can put into words what fostering has done to my spiritual journey," Alicia says. "There's so many times in the story where it just felt impossible, but the impossible is nothing to God."

Ian is now two years old. The toddler is happy and thriving with his forever family.

"We understand that BCH can't do what they do without the support of NC Baptists throughout the state," Chad says. "We truly are making an impact one family at a time, one child at a time."

Looking back at that pivotal church service, the Hintons see a plan that was far greater than their own.

"If we hadn't said 'yes' at the time, we would've missed God's timing," Chad shares.

"BCH was there, and we just said 'yes' together," Alicia adds. "God just wants our 'yes.'"

Note: The BCH Week of Prayer is November 9-16, 2025. Offering resources are at bchoffering.org.



Aging ministry team rolls up sleeves to ServeNC

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

From his wheelchair, just inside the kitchen door, Bob Blake watched intently as the team from North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) went to work. Over two days, the deck he had painstakingly built 20 years ago—weekend by weekend—was dismantled and rebuilt anew. The sound of drills removing screws marked the “tearing down” season. Then came the “building up”—a new deck and a 53-foot wheelchair ramp that would restore Bob’s independence.

“How did it feel to watch your deck come down?” he was asked.

“Bittersweet,” Bob replied. “I wish I could help, but I’ve had so many strokes I’ve lost count. There are just so many things I can’t do anymore.”

The project was led by Robert Leonard, former NCBAM regional director, during ServeNC week (August 2–9). “Bob’s workmanship was incredible—so solid it took us twice as long to take apart as I expected,” Robert said. “We could have kept the deck if the kitchen door threshold hadn’t been one step down. But safety comes first.”

Following a series of strokes in 2024, Bob could no longer navigate the steps alone and Barbara reached out to NCBAM for help. Months passed without available funding or local volunteers—until ServeNC provided the opportunity for NCBAM staff to take matters into their own hands.

Dr. Sandy Gregory, NCBAM’s Senior Director, explained: “Every day, we invite Baptists and



After a day and a half of deconstructing and rebuilding, the NCBAM team poses with Bob and Barbara (highlighted above) on their new ramp. Failing health prevented Bob from doing needed repairs. Below right, Barbara shows a photo of Bob constructing the original deck more than 20 years ago.

community groups to meet the needs of seniors across our state. One of the greatest needs we hear is for ramps—simple structures that mean freedom, dignity, and safety. ServeNC gave us the chance to model what we ask of others: rolling up our sleeves and meeting needs firsthand.”

The team didn’t stop with Bob. In Greensboro, the NCBAM team built a ramp for 98-year-old Mary Bradley, making it easier for her daughter to get her to appointments and enjoy fresh air outside. Across town, they repaired a deck and steps for Daisy Ogun and installed grab bars for Porchia Nunally.

For NCBAM director Dr. Sandy Gregory, the day shone a spotlight on the importance of unity and teamwork.

“ServeNC was great for our team,” Gregory said. “I witnessed firsthand their dedication and deep commitment to serve every day. Together, we experienced the joy and gratitude of being a blessing to others.”

For South Central Regional Director Ashley

Marcolovio, the work was as spiritually uplifting as it was physically demanding. “I was speaking at a church the night before,” she recalled, “and their sign read, ‘As we await the return of Jesus, let’s do what waiters do: SERVE.’ I was blessed to put those words into action with my team.” For the NCBAM team, the work was as spiritually uplifting as it was physically demanding. “I was speaking at a church the night before,” recalled South Central Regional Director Ashley Marcolovio, “and their sign read, ‘As we await the return of Jesus, let’s do what waiters do: SERVE.’ I was blessed to put those words into action with my team.”

West Regional Director Jimmy Lancaster agreed: “I’m so grateful to be part of a team that literally rolls up its sleeves to be the hands and feet of Jesus. We went to bless others, but in the process, we were the ones blessed—knowing God used us to make a tangible difference for precious aging adults, all for His glory.”

NCBAM’s mission is to provide “help for the journey” for adults 65+, helping them maintain safety, dignity, and independence in their own homes. The Call Center is open Monday–Friday, 9:00 am–5:00 pm, connecting needs with willing hands.

Right now, seniors in every county of North Carolina are waiting for someone to show up and help. You can be that someone. If you can build, paint, pray, or

simply show kindness, your time will transform lives.

Call NCBAM at 877-506-2226 to volunteer or to request help in your community.



New Alumni Council officers take their places — Alumni who have passed are fondly remembered

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

We are thankful for the folks who agree to serve on the Mills Home Alumni Council because it is not easy to persuade people to serve. For the year beginning after August 3, **Jackie Elliott Walker** will serve in her second year as president of our Association. Her contact information is jhoneybear108@gmail.com or 919-606-6027. Other council officers will be as follows: 1st Vice-President/President-Elect, **Cecelia Townsend Wilkerson**; 2nd Vice-President, **Sherrie Townsend Alexander**; Secretary, **Lisa Carter Lancaster**; and Treasurer, **Flora Hicks Patton**. Other members will be listed next issue.

In case the name **Martha B. Foster** is new to you, that is because **Martha Berndt Fisher** married a new partner on early Saturday, Homecoming weekend. In a fun-filled wedding ceremony at God's Acre, she and **Kent Foster** exchanged Holy Vows and later enjoyed a delightful reception in the gym provided by her Mills Home (MH) friends.

As alumni serve on the Alumni Council, I like to introduce them to you through this column. Our newest member is **Sherrie Townsend Alexander**, sister of **Cecelia Townsend Wilkerson**. During the 2024 Homecoming weekend, Sherrie worked very hard. Her work was noticed by many and someone was quick to get her to agree to fill a position on the Council for the next two years. We saw her in action again at this year and we know we are lucky to have such a hard worker. She says, "I look forward to future work with the Council and I hope to connect with others from Mills Home. I especially thank Flora for making me feel welcome during the 2024 Homecoming."

In telling us about herself, Sherrie recalled that her life before her coming to Mills Home had been somewhat irregular in that she lived with her grandparents and then a preacher before returning to her

newly married mother, a situation which was not very nurturing. According to the alumni directory, Sherrie lived at Mills Home from 1974 to 1976, but she doesn't recall much about that life.

During her early years, Sherrie, husband Kerry, and family moved to Portland Oregon, which she felt was too big, so they relocated to Washington where they bought land and lived happily. While there she worked six months in pediatrics and 19 and a half years in hospice before retiring to start a non-profit focused on feeding families for over 13 years. They reared five amazing children: two daughters and three stepsons plus some foster children. She cherishes memories of all of them.

Though she never expected to return to NC, her family did return in 2024. She is very happy to be back near her sister Cecelia who has been her "rock and her world" throughout her life. She especially loves Cecelia's wonderful, successful family.

As a member of the Alumni Council, Sherrie says, "I envision helping to organize events that foster connections and create a sense of belonging. Together we can continue to create a community of understanding and support."

We were saddened to learn early this year of the death of **Wayne Luther Young**. He passed away on February 15 following a period of declining health. He entered MH in 1949 where he was able to be with his siblings **Glen and Bonnie**. Wayne adapted well to MH life and graduated in 1960. He returned to his former home town of Hildebran, married, and reared an outstanding family. He was co-owner and operator of Custom Plumbing for many years. He was also involved in Gideon's International Hickory Camp and served as president for several years. He was a vital force in his community, working with the East Burt Booster Club coaching

Little League in Hildebran. He was a long time member of Mountain View Baptist Church and he loved to have pool parties for his teens and his church groups. Everyone was always welcome at Wayne's house. He was preceded in death by two sons, **Charles Wright and Jerry Young**. Surviving is his beloved wife **Beverly Jean Abernathy Young**, one daughter, one son, three grandchildren, and his siblings Glen and Bonnie. His funeral was held February 18 in the Chapel of Heritage Funeral Service, Valdese. Friends may send condolences to Glen at 3115 Lail St., Hildebran, NC 28636 and to Bonnie at 3179 Lail St., Hildebran, NC 28636.

Estie Culler wrote on Facebook about **Gene Staton**: "I am so thankful I had the privilege of knowing this strong, sincere, quiet, loving and kind hearted man." She spoke of Gene Staton whose time at MH overlapped hers. Gene passed away peacefully at his home on April 26. We learned he had entered MH from Union County in 1955 and left in 1964. After serving in the US Army in Germany and Vietnam, he married **Patricia Rorie**. They reared their two children in Monroe where he worked for many years as an electrician. A man of faith, he was a dedicated member of Bright Spot Baptist Church. Gene was an avid NASCAR fan, with **Rusty Wallace** being his favorite driver. He had a deep love for animals, especially his beloved dog **Daisy**. In his youth, he enjoyed pitching horseshoes and spending time outdoors. He is survived by his devoted wife **Patricia Rorie Staton**, a daughter, a son, a brother, and two grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his son **Michael Gene**; his brothers, **Theron, Bob, and Joe Staton**; and his sisters, **Bronnie Wright and Barbara Scism**.

In addition to the appreciative comments made in the last column, **President Jackie Walker** wishes to say a special THANK YOU to each member of the Alumni Council

for their long hours of hard work during the Homecoming weekend and all the other alumni and friends who helped make the event memorable. We are fortunate to have so many "brothers and sisters" to assist with making great memories. She also says thank you to **Jane and Danny Brown** for preparing our Friday and Saturday night meals, to those who attended the Sunday morning worship service, and to Baptist Children's Homes' CEO **David Melber** who delivered a wonderful message.

Jackie says, "Homecoming weekend ended on August 3 for all of us except **Flora Patton and Lib Johnson**. Flora spends an entire week totaling our expenditures for balancing our budget. Lib spends days writing information for the *Charity & Children* column to give a summary of a wonderful weekend for those who were unable to attend. Special thanks and appreciation to Flora and Lib for all their 'behind the scenes' work!"

And finally, Jackie reported a message from **David** and his wife **Tera Melber**: "Please convey our gratitude to all the alumni. We thoroughly enjoyed the time and getting to know everyone. All have been so kind to us and so welcoming! We surely appreciate your work!"

I sorrowfully report these deaths that have occurred since Homecoming: **Herman Canady, Betty Gurley Stubbins, Teresa Henson Penley, and Vickie Whitaker McMannus**.

Please send any corrections or additions of addresses for C&C to **Flora Hicks Patton** at florapatton06@gmail.com or 704-788-1396. To discuss use of the Columbarium, contact **Sharon DeHart Stiles** at 704-685-2443 or sharondstiles51@yahoo.com.



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

Making News Every Day Around the State



Waiting family adopts their daughter

Recently, a waiting couple adopted a newborn daughter, Elliana Joy, through BCH's Christian Adoption Services.



Young volunteer is recognized

Charlotte (right) is given a thank you gift from BCH's Kristyn Butts for raising support from her hot dog stand. (See pg. 2)



Rich Fork serves at Foster Care Retreat

Volunteers from Rich Fork Baptist served at the Foster Care Retreat supporting EVERY CHILD foster families.



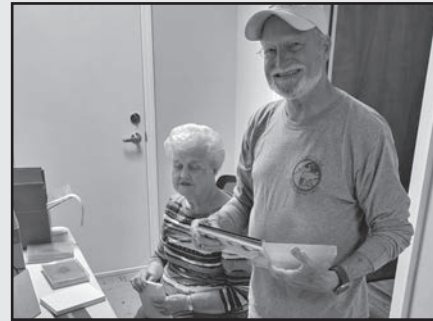
Church celebrates milestone for BCH

Pine Grove Baptist was recognized for reaching \$200,000 in lifetime giving to BCH. The church is a longtime supporter.



IDD's Victoria loves where she works

Victoria, one of our special adults residents, poses with Seth, a part-owner of Cardinal Restaurant where she works.



Friends of Children impact Mills Home

Both indoors as well as outdoors, church volunteers spent a Saturday assisting with projects at Mills Home.



IDD residents travel to the aquarium

Men from the Intellectual/Developmental Adults (IDD) cottages in Asheville and Marshville visited the NC Aquarium.



CAS participates in Care Net Conference

Christian Adoption Services (CAS) was a part of Care Net Conference in Charlotte to create new connections.



BCH shares at joint meeting

BCH's Jody Yopp and Lewis Smith shared the ministry during the joint meeting with Sandy Run and Green River Associations.



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eere

UPCOMING EVENTS



Check out our Events Calendar for opportunities to serve and registration information. Visit bchfamily.org/events



OCTOBER

16: Christian Adoption Services (CAS) Benefit Banquet - Raleigh Area Faith Baptist, Youngsville

NOVEMBER

6: CAS Banquet - Rocky Mount Area. Englewood Baptist, Rocky Mount
22: Thanksgiving Turkey in the Hole. Cameron Boys Camp, Cameron

ANNUAL OFFERING WEEK OF PRAYER NOV. 9-16

Resources to help your church collect its best offering are at bchoffering.org

Find your Spot.

Opportunities for you and your church to volunteer are available throughout the year at Baptist Children's Homes locations across the state!

Let us help you find your spot! Visit bchfamily.org/volunteer or scan the QR code.



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.



Still time to reserve a spot at Alumni Beach Retreat — Brenda Gray commended for her years of service

By **John Thompson**, 102 Maritime Court, Havelock, NC 28532 (252) 671-3515 jbtompson43@gmail.com

We are planning to have fun at the beach. I hope you are planning to be there. The Alumni Beach Retreat is set for the first weekend of October. Your cost is \$30 per person. This covers the cost of a place to sleep, all your meals, and lot's of good Christian fellowship. This is important—we need to know right away if you plan to attend. Call **Debbie Caulder** or me right away. Remember, no pets are allowed. You are asked to make and bring some of your “delicious” homemade sweet stuff and desserts. Debbie is in charge of the cooking. She is great at planning and organizing this part of the retreat. Your meals go from Friday night supper to Sunday morning breakfast.

I'm sure you have heard by now that Brenda Gray, BCH's Executive Vice President of Development and Communications, is retiring. Go back and read her article in the August issue of *Charity & Children (C&C)* if you missed it. She and I have been friends for a very long time. Her 26-year-long ministry has been a blessing to so many. She has really served our Lord and the ministry in a great way.

I know no one would have wanted to step into her shoes. She has really shared her life, giving countless hours and giving the best of her ability for a long time. I'll never forget her coming to visit **Becky** and me one day and encouraging us. Drop her a line and tell her how much you appreciate her dedication to the Lord and service to children. Send your card or letter to: Brenda Gray, Baptist Children's Homes, P. O. Box 338, Thomasville, North Carolina, 27361.

Judy Poteat, former Kennedy Home (KH) office worker, wrote a note telling of how Brenda is such a great worker and friend. Judy says that Brenda has always wanted the best for Baptist Children's Homes. Judy also stated that Brenda worked

long hours and gave much of her life to helping North Carolina's children receive the best care.

Donna Duty Weeks sent a note about visiting **Ann Wilkerson**. I remember working with Ann while at Kennedy Home. She had a true love and devotion for all the children who were in her care. Donna asked that we keep Ann in our prayers because she has some health problems.

I remember also **Rev. Horace Hawes** who was the Director of Social Service while I worked at KH. The children really loved him. Mr. Hawes got married on the steps of Cedar Dell with one of my teen choirs singing for the wedding. We had a big choir and there was a huge attendance in front of Cedar Dell. Horace had found his wife **Mary** working at the Department of Social Services in New Bern (my home town.) Mr. Hawes has gone to live with the Lord now.

This next part is very hard for me to write. This will be the last time I write a column for the *C&C*. It's funny, I don't even know how many years I have written the column. But I want to give a great big thanks to all the alumni and staff who have sent me news and information to use. I could not have done it without your help. I hope you were never upset with me for begging and begging for your help. I also want to thank **Jim Edminson**, edi-

tor of *C&C*, for encouraging me to be a part of his team in producing this historic publication.

On September 17, I turned the ripe old age of 82. My health is not in the best shape. I take plenty of pills every day. I'm not allowed to drive anymore and it is very difficult to not be as active as I wished

I could be. Please keep writing me or calling me on the phone. You know I love you all so very much. Becky and I, along with our two sons **Johnny and Scott**, accepted the call to serve at KH in 1972 and stayed until 1977. I had a great time teaching 66 piano students. I would let them play the offertory in worship once in a while. I'm sure many of you remember **Bill Beacham**. He was in charge of the gym and sport's activities on the campus. He took piano lessons and even played in the recitals—just like the youngins. He had very long legs and had a time playing the pedal under the piano. I had a special choir of teens who would go out in the community and sing. **Mrs. Brock and Mrs. Hamilton** made them special fancy dresses to wear.

School and High School choirs on singing tours. We would get on the bus and travel a long ways and spend the weekends singing in churches. Becky and I also filled in at cottages if needed. I would run the gym or pool to help **Mr. Beacham** if he couldn't be there. I was in charge of campus tours, too. I loved this part a lot—you know how much I love to talk. I would take tour groups down to see the pigs, the lots where the cows were. I enjoyed taking the groups through Cedar Dell and telling them all the stories. We would go to the cemetery and show them the angel enclosed in the glass that would cry if you ran around it a certain number of times.

Some times, I would have to take someone to get their driver's license. Our first home was in the old clinic. I was the only man in the building. I taught piano lessons in that building until we moved to a beautiful brick house facing the highway. We would put up tents behind the house and have campouts with a bunch of my KH youngins. From time to time, the youngins would come up to my house to let me know that they were running

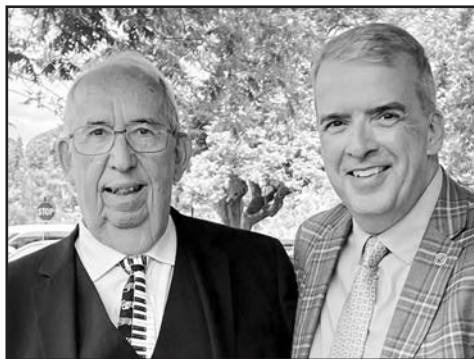
away. I reasoned this is because they wanted me to talk them out of it. I would talk to them an hour or two and then they would go back home to their cottage.

Kennedy Home left a life-long impression on Becky and me. I am grateful for my years of service.

Stay in touch! Love ya! — jt

John Thompson ends service as columnist

There are few people who have more enthusiasm than John Thompson. I believe it is because he truly is “a person possessed by God.” He serves with passion and a deep devotion, not only for the Lord but for his fellow image bearers. As a former Kennedy Home staff member (1972-1977), he has never refrained from caring for his “youngins.” Since writing his first column in June 2013, John has always met his deadlines while faithfully keeping alumni informed and “loved on.” On behalf of Baptist Children's Homes and *Charity & Children* readers, it is with great admiration that I extend a heartfelt thank you. — Editor, Jim Edminson



I had an adult choir, too. We met every Wednesday morning. I had a Senior High choir and a Middle School choir. I had a choir for children in grades one to three and one for grades four to six. All these choirs took turns providing the special music for Sunday morning worship. I would take the Middle

In one voice: Thank you, God, for all the good stuff!

By Jim Edminson, Editor

By the time Sissy, Eddie, Kelly, and I hit our adult years and our family grew in numbers, my mom served meals family style—heaps of vegetables, salads, meats, potatoes, and rolls in colorful bowls she and Dad collected in their travels lined the long table. Mom placed her china and silver in the formal arrangements, and although the napkins were paper, it still heralded my favorite holiday with orange and gold colors and seasonal illustrations—and the whole atmosphere exuded a sense of plenty. She called to us to wash and gather around. First we prayed, and then we served, Dad first and then all of us moved the bowls and platters clockwise until all of us had filled our plates.

At these occasions, my mother would “return thanks” for all we were about to receive. Men and boys removed caps, all heads bowed, and Mom voiced our prayer with a reverent tone and language all had become accustomed and expected. And then at the end all of us joined in a quiet and thankful “amen.”

One Thanksgiving day, Dad called us together—some from outside and others from the living room. Mom reminded to “wash up” and then we joined hands around the table and awaited her prayer of grateful praise. One of my small nephews, with round eyes on the feast before us, spoke up. “Grandme, can I ‘turn thanks this time?’” While we were surprised at the breaking of tradition, my mom nodded and we all bowed.

A loud and exuberant voice blurted, “Thank you, God, for all the good stuff! A-men!”

My siblings and I awaited the response to the very informal prayer. Here is my memory: Everyone at once looked at my mom, wondering how she would react. With her head still bowed and eyes turned to her precocious grandson, she let out a loud “A-men” and we all chimed in “A-men.”

This story of Robbie’s prayer passed into legend to be repeated over and again through the

years. His joyful voice cut to the essentials of his thanksgiving and reminded us how a little child can show the way to simple rejoicing.

Just like you, our family voices many different kinds of prayers suited to specific occasions. My brother and sisters and I learned to pray by listening to our parents and grandparents. In Sunday School, we learned prayers from the book of Psalms: “Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all His benefits” (Psalm 103:1-2, NIV). During worship, we learned the Lord’s Prayer: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matthew 6:5-15, NIV). As we grew in relationship with the Savior, we prayed in a personal manner, conversing with the Father we knew through Jesus our Lord in

more intimate ways. My mother’s model always emphasized a reverent attitude of prayer, and our experiences in church reinforced her teaching—we should always remember before whom we stand.

Long ago, God’s people observed the daily discipline, the conscious decision, to bring God into all of life. As they went from sunrise to sunset, they brought God into the everyday. He is never over there, somewhere. Rather, He is present in the very moment, part of the right now, and ever worthy to be praised.

And yet, there is a place for the spontaneous and impromptu jubilant exclamations from a full heart. My nephew echoed the prophet Isaiah: “Sing praises to the Lord...Shout, sing for joy...” (12:5-6). Let’s not forget that Paul exhorts believers in his first letter to the Thessalonians: “Rejoice always, pray continually...” (5:16). It’s that attitude of prayer once more, the understanding that we need to be in constant communication with our Father through Jesus. That’s exactly what prayer is, of course.

Praying invites God the Father into our everyday lives. Prayer reminds us to welcome the Lord God into our present moments. Constant communication with the One God acknowledges the dependence we have on Him.

During worship, we sing the Doxology: “Praise God, from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him, ye creatures here



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