



This year marks BCH's 135 anniversary. (See page 2.)

1/20

Charity & Children

133/1

And now abides faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina

"Top 2019 stories to watch in 2020" (Page 6&7) Birth mom reunited with son 51 years later (Page 8)

Eighteen-year-old Teryn overcomes hardships

By Jim Edminson, Editor

The beautiful red bejeweled gown caught Teryn's eye. She reached for the hanger and taking it from the rack, she was smitten. But there were more dresses to see and to imagine wearing. The local store owner offered the Mills Home teen residents a free prom gown. As the girls shopped, Teryn kept looking back to the gown that had first captured her attention. It was dazzling.

"I was on the field that night as one of the finalists," Teryn remembers. "When the first runner up was announced and it wasn't me — I couldn't breathe. Then my name was called. I was chosen Homecoming Queen."

When Teryn entered foster care at age 13, becoming Homecoming Queen was far from anything she could have dreamt.

"I never knew my father," she says, "and my mother's life fell apart. This was not what I wanted. It just happened and I was scared, sad and mad — all wrapped up together."

Teen placements in foster care are not always a success. It can be difficult to find the right match for teen and foster family. After multiple placements, Teryn needed a new solution.

"I did well in school and some of the homes where I lived were good experiences," Teryn says, "but I kept being moved. I was 16 when I came to Mills Home."

Teryn recalls riding in the car to Thomasville. She was told that she was going to live in a group home. "All I could think about was 'what is happening to me'."

"I didn't talk to anyone," she says. "I remember everyone being great, but it didn't matter. It was very difficult. I couldn't help it, but I was afraid. I even slept with my room's lamp on at night."

Teryn's fears turned to acceptance.

"I got into a routine. It was summer and there were activities — fun things to do and I began to make friends." (Continued on page 3.)



PHOTO: Larry Mathis, Thomasville Times



The dream and legacy live on today

By Michael C. Blackwell, President/CEO

The morning of Wednesday, November 11, 1885 dawned in the little town of Ahoskie with apprehension and possibility. The winds blew strong, and people — those who ventured outside — walked hunchbacked from its invasion.

Just down the street from the Ahoskie Baptist Church lived Mary Presson and her nine-year-old daughter (and namesake) Mary Presson. They had been through tough times. But on this morning, things would dramatically change.

As the sun peeked through this northeastern North Carolina community, both Mary Pressons prepared for an unknown venture. Train tickets from Ahoskie to Thomasville were purchased for both Marys, as well as for Reverend John Mitchell, who had befriended them and knew of their plight.

Mitchell, who had previously served the downtown Baptist church in Asheville, enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere of Ahoskie. He was a close friend of John Mills, the stalwart, stubborn, big-hearted man whose dream was to begin an orphanage reflecting the Christian values he had learned while a student at Wake Forest College.

Mills teamed up with John Scarborough to find land appropriate for the dream that Mills said "... scratched at my skull until it bore a hole in it."

Working with Mitchell, they knew that Mary Presson would be the first child to be admitted and that her mother would subsequently become the first matron.

With fear and trepidation, the Pressons and Rev. Mitchell boarded the train in Ahoskie late that Wednesday morning. Little Mary clung to her mother, not fully understanding what was happening. Few words were spoken as the train wound its way down to Raleigh and to Greensboro and, finally, to Thomasville.

Rev. Mitchell was first off the train.

Warmly embracing his good friends John Mitchell and John Scarborough, he quickly introduced them to Mary Presson the mother and Mary Presson her frightened daughter.

Mills knew that this day would be a day of historic significance — November 11, 1885. He was a student of mathematics and history and he knew this was "a moment in time."

A little building — appropriately named after John Mitchell and still standing today — would be the place where Mary Presson (and soon, other little girls) would live. She would be comforted by the fact that her mother would always be close by.

John Haymes Mills was a brilliant visionary. He had owned the *Biblical Recorder* and within two years of his arrival in Thomasville, began *Charity & Children* (1887), which continues today.

Known simply as the Thomasville Orphanage, a few years after its beginning, it became affiliated with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. In 1956, the name was changed to The Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina.

Mary Presson grew up in Thomasville (Davidson County) and never left. She moved as a young adult to Lexington and was an active member of First Baptist Church.

Mary loved her mother and was deeply saddened when she died. Mother Mary is buried on the grounds of Mills Home in the "God's Acre" cemetery. Daughter Mary Presson Scarborough is buried beside her.

John Mills led the Orphanage for its first ten years. He is buried in the cemetery of Rich Fork Baptist Church in Thomasville.

Baptist Children's Homes was



John Haymes Mills



founded on faith. It has been built on love. Those words, "Founded on Faith . . . Built on Love" is our theme for 2020 and is the title of a new history book I will be writing this year.

God's Favor has been with us for 135 years. I am humbled and honored to have led this great ministry of Faith and Love for all but 98 years.

Winds will still blow strong, but we will rise.
We are strong. We are on sacred ground. We shall not be moved.
Hallelujah and amen!



Michael C. Blackwell leads the ministry with vigor and enthusiasm. He has served as president of Baptist Children's Homes since 1983 and marks his 37th anniversary in 2020.

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

FEATURING
Dr. Gary
Chapman



JANUARY 6

– Episode #1

JANUARY 20

– Episode #2

FEBRUARY 3

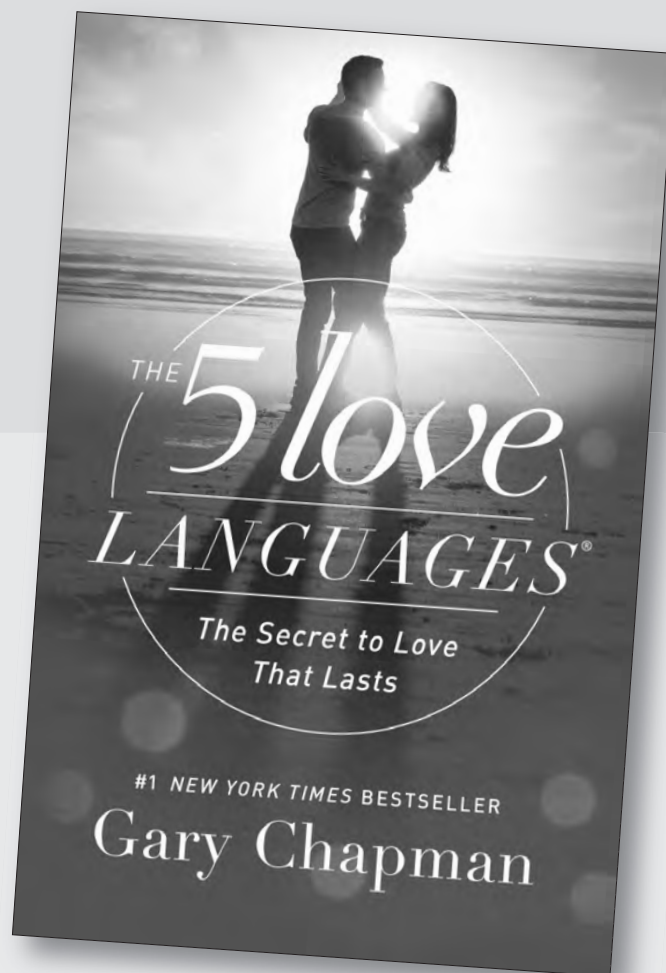
– Episode #3

FEBRUARY 17

– Episode #4

MARCH 2

– Episode #5



Listen to . . .

Dr. Michael C. Blackwell's five exclusive interviews with Dr. Gary Chapman.

Visit www.bchblog.org/podcast or visit a podcast provider and subscribe at no cost.



A personal word from Dr. Blackwell

With great sadness — but with a celebration of his life — I share with you the death of Jeff Orr, a resident of our Willett Ministries in Sanford. Jeff passed away on November 20. His funeral service was held November 26 at Snyder Memorial Baptist Church in Fayetteville.

Jeff Orr was a shining example of unconditional love. He would hug you, affirm you, bless you, and make you his “forever friend.”

You may remember Jeff being on stage with me at the 2018 Baptist State Convention in Greensboro. He prayed and then made us all laugh when he said, “When Dr. Blackwell asked me to speak, I didn’t know what the heck I was going to say.”

Pray for his family, friends and his fellow residents at Mercer and Lanier Homes during this time of loss. Pray for the staff members and residents of our other seven homes within this ministry to special adults.

Jeff’s parents express profound appreciation to BCH for the loving care provided for their son. God bless the memory of Jeff Orr, our dear brother in Christ.

Homecoming Queen gives God credit for incredible future

(Continued from page 1.)

Knowing she was not going to move again and feeling safe in her cottage, Teryn thrived. She connected with her cottage parents and the girls in her cottage. Now a senior, Teryn talks about her future and discusses college.

One day last fall, she came home from school with the idea of running for Homecoming Queen.

“For one of our girls to take on such a big challenge, everyone has to step up,” Mills Home director of family work Andrea Walker says.

Teryn put together a campaign and her cottage parents, case manager and other staff members pitched in and helped wherever they could. Cupcakes baked, posters made and “Vote for Teryn” stickers created made it official. Teryn was run-

ning for Thomasville High School Homecoming Queen.

“It made me feel really good when everyone came together to help me,” Teryn says. “To be where I am today — looking back from where I was only a few years ago — it is truly amazing.”

When Teryn made Homecoming Court, she was told that she could choose two people to escort her. She chose cottage mate and best friend Twinka first. Walker was deeply honored when Teryn asked her



Twinka, Teryn and Andrea Walker

to join them.

“You can’t help but be proud of Teryn,” Walker says. “Children who come to us have to overcome such hardship. There are days that I find myself speechless in the light of what God does in their lives.”

Teryn is hopeful. She is working hard.

“I never wanted to be in a group home, no one would,” Teryn says. “But

it has been good for me. God has given me an incredible future. There are days when I need to pinch myself to remind me it is all real.”

Children's lives are sacred, precious

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

Deneesha recently brought Jeremiah into our office for a visit. Deneesha is often referred to as the “director of first impressions.” Her beautiful smile and encouraging spirit make everyone who enters the Development and Communications office in Thomasville feel welcome and valued. Jeremiah is Deneesha’s precious baby boy born in August. He inherited his mother’s beautiful smile.

I could hardly wait to hold him, snuggle him, and kiss his sweet head. He is a wonderful gift God has given to her and her husband Frank.

This precious little boy was so wanted and he is so loved. I wish every child could feel this same love and experience family like Jeremiah.

But last year 16,796 children in North Carolina were removed from their families and placed in out-of-home care. Everyday children come to Baptist Children’s Homes (BCH) hungry, broken and wearing only the clothes on their backs. Sometimes the scars are so deep it takes years to heal.

Two precious babies came into care because of their parents’ addictions — which is a story that is repeated far too often.

Five siblings arrived with only the clothes on their backs. They were hungry and dirty. They had lived with a parent that was unstable — the story was heartbreaking.

Two weeks later the children were placed back in the home — which concerned us greatly. One week passed and the parent was arrested for cooking meth in the home.

The siblings returned to us where cottage parents received them with open arms, loving hugs and caring hearts. The children could not wait to return to their rooms. Clothing had to be purchased again, but God always provides.

Two children, ages four and six, were found living in a car at the junkyard. The father had been feeding them with food from the local dumpster. He had lost his job and home due to drug abuse. The children came to BCH frazzled, dirty and hungry.

An abandoned eight-day-old baby arrived at the orphanage in Guatemala. A newborn, only a few days old, was found in a gutter along a public street, left to die of exposure.

Another baby arrived several months old

but weighing only as much as a newborn due to malnutrition.

At the Guatemala orphanage, a two-year-old, who had been beaten and placed in a garbage can to die, is loved and nurtured. Children are given hope. God’s love is being shown in so many ways through the missionaries, caring staff members and the hundreds of volunteers who give time, talent and financial resources.

God’s love and compassion in and through all of BCH’s ministry is a warm soothing balm that brings healing — covering a child’s pain and easing the cruelty he has endured. Thank you for partnering with us as we offer second chances a reality.

January is “Sanctity of Life” month. The phrase sanctity of life refers to the idea that human life is sacred, holy and precious. Every child that walks through our doors, whether a baby left in a gutter to die, a toddler discarded in a trash can, a teenager that is angry and hurting due to the loss of a parent to the horror of drug use, is loved and shown they matter. Children’s lives are sacred, holy and precious.

Thank you for joining us in this quest to honor God by following His mandate found in James 1:27: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this — to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

Another year draws to a close and a new year emerges filled with so many opportunities to change precious lives. But with each new opportunity comes challenges — challenges that will stretch us and force us to grow.

I pray we never allow ourselves to become complacent to the challenges and opportunities as we care for the “least of these.” This year, we face our most challenging year financially. We face this challenge with faith and with confidence that God will provide. Every gift you give offers life, new beginnings, second chances, hope, and love. Thank you for helping to meet critical, lifesaving, urgent needs — “with God all things are possible!”

For more information on how you can help give a child new life, call me at 336-689-4442. And remember, every gift you give between now and January 31, 2020 will be doubled through the \$250,000 gift challenge.



Brenda Gray serves BCH as the executive vice president, development & communications and directs all fund-raising/friend-raising activities for the ministry.

[MATCHING GIFT CHALLENGE]

SHE NEEDS YOU

She will come to us hungry.
She will come to us broken.
She will arrive with only the
clothes she is wearing.
She will feel unwanted.
She will feel unloved.

She needs help. She needs hope.
She needs Baptist Children's Homes.

She needs you.

In 2018, 16,796 children in NC were
removed from their families and
placed in the foster care system.
How many more children, like her,
will need us in 2020?

We need you. She needs you.
Please give.



Mail to:
BCH
P.O. Box 338
Thomasville, NC
27361

I want to help – please double my gift !

☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$ _____ Any size gift!

To make a gift by check: Print your information below and mail this form with your check. to: BCH, P.O. Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27361

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Make your gift by credit card: Give online at www.bchfamily.org/givenow Make your gift by phone: Call Faith Frazier at 336-474-1312.

- ☐ Yes, I would like to receive email updates from Baptist Children's Homes.
☐ Contact me with information on how to prepare a Christian Will. ☐ I have included Baptist Children's Homes in my estate plans.

1

2019 stories to impact future

By Blake Ragsdale, Managing Editor

There are five stories that began in 2019 that you will want to watch in this coming year. They are picking up speed and will grow in their impact on the lives of children and families in 2020.

1. FAMILY FOSTER CARE

Thanks to the dedicated support of North Carolina Baptists and other friends, Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) Family Foster Care ministry is on a fast track.

In addition to the cottage-style residential homes, BCH is recruiting Christian couples to become foster parents. BCH provides the training and support needed for these families to become licensed foster homes.

Several churches are partnering with BCH creating their own foster care ministries. The churches provide support and community to foster families in their congregations.



The Cooks first became foster parents to Makala (who they later adopted). The family continues to increase the number of children they foster in their home.

2

Family Foster Care is a natural addition to BCH's cottage residential program. Both ministries allow BCH to better meet the needs of the child in care.

In 2018 alone, 16,796 North Carolina boys and girls were removed from homes by North Carolina's departments of social services. Parents are being crippled by addictions that include the addictions to opioid. As a result, BCH's vision is to establish 100 foster homes, one in each of the state's 100 counties by the end of 2020.

2. NEW PODCAST

BCH's podcast "It's a family matter." with Dr. Michael C. Blackwell was launched in August, 2019 with the goal of producing eight episodes in the inaugural year. By the end of 2019, 22 episodes were recorded, 19 were produced, and 14 were made available through major podcast providers and at www.bchblog.org/podcast.

As host of the new podcast, Blackwell returned to his broadcasting roots. In his 36 years as BCH's leader, Blackwell has used his voice to speak up for the defenseless and for those often overlooked. In the new podcast, Blackwell interviews a wide variety of guests from former BCH residents to personalities such as Dr. Gary Chapman, author of



A former radio broadcaster, BCH President/CEO Dr. Michael C. Blackwell returned to his roots through the new podcast — "It's a family matter."

3

The Five Love Languages. The five Chapman episodes will air consecutively, one every two weeks beginning January 6. (See page 3.)

3. EXPANSION IMPACTS FUTURE

Opening new facilities expands ministry opportunities both in North Carolina and beyond.

The Bob and Carolyn Tucker Greater Vision Center was dedicated on January 15. The Center was built with a lead gift from the Tucker family — the founders of Shoe Show, Inc. The Harris family,

who own and operate Furniture-

land South in High Point, provided the furnishings for the Center as well as Stokes Cottage at Mills Home. The children's cottage was renovated thanks to a lead gift from Kenneth and Ruth Samuelson of Charlotte.

The ribbon-cutting for the Ammons Education Center



located at Cameron Boys Camp took place on May 7. The 10,000 square-foot center was made possible by a lead gift from Justus "Jud" Ammons and his late wife Jo Ellen Ammons of Raleigh.



4

Longtime BCH supporter and trustee Jay Westmoreland along with his family provided the lead gift for the Westmoreland Family Children's Home in Guatemala. The home is named for Westmoreland's father — Dr. Ted G. Westmoreland. It's home to seven orphans and is a complement to BCH's affiliate — The Good Shepherd Children's Home.

4. ADOPTION PARTNERSHIP

BCH and Christian Adoption Services (CAS) have partnered to offer ongoing comprehensive foster care and adoption services to families throughout the state. BCH provides foster care expertise while CAS facilitates the adoption process.

The collaboration between the two nonprofits goes beyond supporting North Carolina children and families. Their efforts are also about providing quality placement options as the state's child welfare system removes children from families at an alarming rate. In North Carolina, there are now 3,000 more children in foster care than there were in 2011.

5. GREATER VISION EXPANDS

The Bob and Carolyn Tucker Greater Vision Outreach Ministry continues to grow in its efforts to provide a pathway of help, hope and healing for the economically depressed, the spiritually discouraged, and



BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell, staff members and board members from BCH and Christian Adoption Services formalize the partnership.

5



Greater Vision Outreach Center promotes education, good hygiene and healthy eating. Clients receive food and supplies including paper and cleaning products.

the emotionally distressed. Through partnerships with other nonprofits and volunteers, families receive education and resources needed to achieve self-sufficiency. In 2018, Greater Vision impacted 71,946 lives in the following ways:

- 70,616 meals served
- 1,103 individuals received food, clothing, household items, and furniture
- 53 families (196 household members) were served by Greater Vision's self-sufficiency program
- 31 individuals participated in a variety of training classes

In 2020, Greater Vision Ministry, based at Mills Home in Thomasville, is developing a new center at Kennedy Home in Kinston.

Mark Your CALENDAR! 2020 EVENTS

Food Roundup | April (entire month)

Rally your church to collect non-perishable food and supplies. Needs list and information are at www.bchfoodroundup.org.

Friends of Children Spring days | Saturdays

A one day, all ages missions outreach for your group to help at a BCH statewide location.

Register at www.bchfamily.org/foc.

– April 25 | Oak Ranch in Broadway

– May 2 | Camp Duncan in Aberdeen, Kennedy Home in Kinston, Odum Home in Pembroke

– May 16 | Cameron Boys Camp in Cameron

Ride to Clyde Charity Ride | May 6-9

Statewide motorcycle ride organized by the Baptist State Convention. Information and registration at www.ridetoclyde.com.

Broyhill Home BBQ Festival | May 9

BBQ, a bow shoot, car show, and lots of vendors make this benefit for Broyhill Home's boys and girls a community favorite.

Cameron Boys Camp's Founders Day | May 16

Camp is celebrating its 40th anniversary during this year's event that includes testimonies, tours, songs, and a free meal.

Western Area Conference | Sept. 10

Visit Broyhill Home in Clyde and tour cottages, hear gospel music, and see a program filled with testimonies and a message from Dr. Blackwell.

Friends of Children Fall days | Saturdays

Register at www.bchfamily.org/foc.

– Sept. 12 | Cameron Boys Camp in Cameron

– Sept. 19 | Camp Duncan in Aberdeen, Kennedy Home in Kinston, Odum Home in Pembroke

– Sept. 26 | Mills Home in Thomasville, Oak Ranch in Broadway

Week of Prayer | November 15 - 22

Pray and prepare for the Annual Offering. Information and resources at www.bchoffering.org.

Birth mother gives baby boy what she never knew

By **Lewis Smith**, BCH Director of Development Western Area and **Jim Edminson**, Editor

Many years ago in the mountains of western North Carolina, a young couple fell in love. As folks would say, "This young boy fancied this young girl and had it in his mind to court her and marry her." And that's exactly what he did. It wasn't too long until that little family grew to three — the couple welcomed a beautiful baby girl. The young parents were thrilled and life was filled with excitement and hope.

It wasn't long, however, until the young mother fell ill. She would have a few good days and then a few bad days. The sick days increased as time passed. The doctors shared the sad news of cancer and gave her only a short time to live. When her baby girl was only 18 months old, the mother passed away.

The sad reality of his wife's passing left the young husband and father devastated. He decided to leave his little girl with relatives. She remembers being put on a train at the age of five, all alone with a string and a note around her neck that stated her name and destination. Over the next years, she was moved from place to place.

As a 15-year-old teenage girl living in Dillon, South Carolina, she met a boy. Both were lonely and insecure. But she thought she had finally found love. Now expecting a baby, without the hope of a husband and no family sympathy or support, she was alone and broken.

God intervened in her heart and mind giving her the strength to deliver the baby. She felt that adoption would give her baby something that she never experienced — a momma and a daddy.

The girl gave birth on Saturday, August 19, 1950. I was that boy! My birth mother didn't just give life to me, she stayed with me at the maternity home to nurture and care for me for more than a month. She then made her way to the Children's Home Society (CHS) in Greensboro. She wrote a prayer down and laid the paper over my heart, and left. Her prayer asked three things of God. First, that I would know that she loved me. Second, that God would grant me loving parents, and finally, that God would bless me. She walked away and didn't look back.

God looked down and saw Kenneth and Gracie Smith without a baby. CHS called my dad at his office and said, "Mr. Smith, we have a baby here and he might be the one that you and Gracie are supposed to have — can you come to Greensboro?"

Kenneth and Gracie Smith filled out the adoption papers and paid \$28.50 for me and then



Lewis Smith with his birth-mom Vivian Selene Daniels Arrington at South Macon Baptist Church in Franklin. The picture was snapped in 2001 shortly after the two first met. Arrington placed her baby up for adoption to give him what she never knew — a mom and a dad.

loaded the car and returned home with their son.

Gracie looked at Kenneth and said, "This has to be the prettiest child I've ever laid eyes on."

I had a great childhood. My parents told me about Jesus. They taught me the Bible. I wasn't always the best son, but God answered my birth-mother's prayer and gave me the best parents.

When I was in the third grade, we moved from Belmont to Franklin, North Carolina.

I continued my growing-up years in the mountains. In 1970, I married Sherry Cabe, my high school sweetheart. In 1972, I was called into the Gospel ministry and followed God's leading through the years. I pastored churches in South Carolina and in Franklin, Waynesville and Cashiers, North Carolina. Eventually, I had the opportunity to move back to Franklin and live next door to Mom and Dad in their later years. They were there for me in the beginning and I wanted to be there for them now that they were aged. Mom passed away in 1998 and Dad only eight months later.

While taking care of my parents' estate, I found and read my adoption papers for the first time. Mom and Dad had shared everything that they knew, but I wanted to know more. I didn't need anything and I didn't have a hole or void in my life. I was thinking that my birth mother might have a need and perhaps I could lead her to the Lord Jesus if she wasn't a believer.

In August 2000, I wrote a letter to the

Children's Home Society and requested any information they might be able to send me. In return, I received non-identifying information and a reminder that my records were sealed by law. The information didn't bring any answers to the increasing number of questions that flooded my mind. But I saw this as an adventure with God. We hired a lawyer to petition the court in Guilford County to release the records. The court at first said I couldn't know about my birth and beginning. But I shared my heart with the judge and he issued a court order instructing CHS to contact my birth mother seeking permission to release my records. Four days later, I received word that they could not locate her. They recommended that I hire a private investigator.

On October 5, 2001, I was traveling to Hendersonville to conduct a wedding. As I drove through Balsam Gap, just above Waynesville, I received a call. It was from CHS. My birth mother was located.

After corresponding with her a couple of times through CHS, I decided to write and tell her who I was. She shared who she was and we knew we had to meet. I was to meet Vivian Selene Daniels Arrington of Balsam.

I called her. When she answered, I said, "Mrs. Arrington, they tell me I'm your son." We arranged a meeting for the following Sunday afternoon.

I had lived only a mile from her and her family for seven years while I pastored Ratcliffe Cove Baptist Church in Waynesville.

Our oldest son Grady and my birth mother's youngest daughter Marty attended fourth grade

together at Lake Junaluska Elementary School — never knowing they were family. I had preached in all of my brothers' and sisters' churches.

Knowing my birth mother, her family and the story of my beginning is a rich blessing. It is truly amazing to see just how God did all this. I have such a peace in my heart knowing that God loves us and had brought us together. He intervened in our lives to do the very best for us.

I thought my family was somewhere far, far away. But I learned I was always close in my birth mom's heart and they were nearby all the time.



Lewis Smith

Update sheets provide great news and information — Alumni are encouraged to send condolences

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

Sometime in the last couple of years, I wrote a fairly long paragraph about **Frank Huggins** who entered Mills Home (MH) in 1943 with siblings **Louise, Dorothy, and Rachel** and graduated in 1954. (Louise is still living in Burnsville, NC.) A detail left out is that during Frank's work with the Highway Patrol, he was awarded the Order of the Long Leaf Pine by Governor Bob Scott. This is quite an honor because it is awarded to individuals with a proven record of extraordinary service to North Carolina.

Dave Stepp, who lives about as far as one can go and still be in the United States, has honored us with another update sheet. It shows he is still in the state of Washington. Dave entered MH in 1955 with siblings **Eugene and Jim**. He left in 1968 having taken advantage of so many opportunities to learn various tasks and hone many skills. He also found time to be a bit mischievous. As a child, he especially enjoyed Little League Football under **Coach Corder** and Boy Scouts under **Scout Master C. Franklin Bailey**. The cottage he seemed to love the most was Hutchinson where **Estelle Crouch** offered love, care and a constant friendly attitude — as well as delicious food like German chocolate cake. Since he lives so far away, it is hard for him to get back for Homecoming but he did return a few years ago and enjoyed spending time at the church and sharing old stories with old friends. Now a single man, he has two offspring, two grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Dave says that one of his funniest happenings was at Watson Cottage when the **Abernathys** were house parents: "**Bill Sisk**, who ran the farm, showed up one morning around two and said the cows had gotten out and were roaming through a nearby community. So **John Wayne Horne** and I set out searching.

"We found a cow behind a house and John Wayne went to the back of the house to urge the cow toward the front where I was waiting to guide it back to the farm. John chased it around to the front and

I spooked it and it jumped up on the edge of the porch, knocking down a support post. All the noise and excitement woke the resident who came to the door — but not alone. He had a gun pointed directly at me and said 'who's out there?' I quickly explained we were from the orphanage trying to round up the run-away cows and that Mr. Sisk would see that his porch got paid for. So he was ok with that and allowed us to guide the cow back to the farm. On the way back to the Watson, John and I had a lot of laughs discussing the events of the night. He and I are still very good friends today and I enjoy calling him as often as possible."

It was wonderful getting an update sheet from **Brenda Gantt Kerr** because it has been such a short time that we were praying fervently for her to get well. She and her husband **Richard** still live at John's Island in SC. Their combined family includes her three children and Richard's two children that she calls her own. They have seven grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Brenda entered MH from Charlotte in 1962 with siblings **Lynn and Sherl**. She left in 1966. A big memory from her adult life rearing kids is all the time she spent helping with Girl Scouts as leader, neighborhood chairman and cookie chairman for seven or eight troops. Fond MH memories for Brenda include "running to the gym snack bar, serving as lifeguard at the pool, being in the tour choir and GAs at church, and working in the print shop. Memories of **Mom and Pop Steele** are special because of their love and discipline. When we were able to bring the family dog on campus, Pop Steele built a house for it. We laughed because the dog slept in the building more than in the dog house."

Brenda said she enjoyed visiting with alumni at Homecoming and introducing Richard to her friends.

Another update sheet came from our most recent past president **Bob Mayton**. Bob came to MH in 1962 with siblings **Buddy, Joe and Louvina Ellen**. He was well known about campus and Thomasville High School (THS) as a dedicated football

player and track participant — and good citizen. He graduated from THS in 1970 and then attended Appalachian State University where he earned a teaching degree. He spent many years teaching and in administration. He and his wife **Barbara** reared two offspring and now enjoy three wonderful grandchildren. His favorite activities at MH were RAs and dairy duty. At THS, he loved football and track. The MH worker he remembers with fondness is **Thelma Robertson**. Every year, he returns to Homecoming ready to help in some way and reunite with old friends. Bob has spent 35 years in the National Guard or reserves. He served two tours in Vietnam and one in Afghanistan being called up at the age of 58. Last Homecoming, as outgoing president, he enjoyed handing the reins of the alumni association over to **Sharon DeHart Stiles**.

Our hearts go out to **Brenda Gray** who lost her husband **John** on October 10. John and Brenda were married for 46 years having begun their training for Christian ministry and their lives together at Gardner-Webb University. Adding to his advanced training at Gardner-Webb, John obtained two masters' degrees and a doctorate from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. "John loved God and was passionate about people. He and Brenda have lived their lives in service to God by caring for others. John cared deeply for his communities at both Brunswick Community College and Holden Beach Chapel. He made life-long connections with those he taught and worked alongside. He counted them as friends and family."

The family suggests memorial donations in John's name be made to Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) at P.O. Box 338, Thomasville, NC, 27360. Friends may send condolences to Brenda at 400 Biggs Ave., Thomasville, NC 27360.

We were sorry to hear that **Robert "Bob" Yarborough** ('39-'45) died on November 7 at the Kate B. Reynolds Hospice Home in Winston-Salem. Bob was a Korean War Veteran and a graduate of Guilford College where he had such fond memories of the

years he played football. After graduation, he was football coach and teacher at Elkin High School. He later had a varied career in journalism including national sports writer for the *Durham Herald* and sports writer and managing editor for the *Elkin Tribune*. He also started his own newspaper, *The Yadkin Enterprise*, which is still in print today. He later retired from a long career with Prudential Insurance Company. Bob is predeceased by his sister **Pat Rhodes**. He is survived by his loving wife of 50 years, **Judith**; son **Steven**; daughters, **Angel, Paige, and Susan**; six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. For friends wishing to make a memorial donation, the family suggests BCH at P.O. Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27361.

We are also sorry for the loss of **Kenny Amberson** ('51-'63) who died on November 14. He was living in Hudson, FL at his death. Kenny came to MH with siblings **Barbara, David and Virgil** in 1951. He was very active and popular at MH and at THS. He lived most of his adult life in Concord and Charlotte while working for UPS for 35 years. He is survived by his loving and devoted wife of 21 years, **Betty**; son **Timothy Mark**; daughters **Cynthia and Tonya**; numerous grandchildren, great grandchildren, step-children, and his brother **Virgil**. He was preceded in death by his son **Kenneth**, his brother **David**, and sister **Barbara**. Family says they will remember Kenny as a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, uncle, and brother. They said his sense of humor and twinkle in his eyes will be missed dearly. He loved horse racing, fishing and playing cards. He was a kind and caring person who always had a story to make people laugh.

I just received news of the death of **Joe Harmon Byrd** November 20. I will write more in my next column. Condolences may be sent to **Daniel Blake Byrd** at 4212 Birdella Dr., Williamsburg, VA 23188. — Lib



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



Mills Home in Thomasville Bikers kick-off Christmas

Motorcyclists began the Christmas season by traveling to Mills Home with a tractor trailer truck full of gifts in tow. The bikers gather in the gym to see the children joyously unwrap their presents.



Odum Home in Pembroke WoodmenLife brings gifts

Members of WoodmenLife hosted their annual Christmas party for the children at Odum Home. The 18 different chapters that participate were honored with plaques by Odum Home staff.



Community support Cashion Rods holds fundraiser

Cashion Fishing Rods in Sanford held a community fundraising luncheon for Camp Duncan and Cameron Boys Camp. The children and their staff members attended the event.



Kennedy Home in Kinston Bikers and church deliver joy

Bikers brought gifts and Temple Church in New Bern matched the funds raised through the Toy Run. Pastor Jim Pennington, right, presented Kennedy Home director Chris Alabaugh with a \$24,282 check.



Cameron Boys Camp in Cameron Boys get ready for Homecoming

For Thanksgiving, the Boys Camp hosted their first Homecoming inviting former campers and staff. They incorporated their annual "Turkey in the Hole" Thanksgiving meal into the day's activities.



Broyhill Home in Clyde Cape Carteret travels west

Members of Cape Carteret Baptist traveled from the east coast to the mountains to host their Christmas party at Broyhill. All western residents, including the adults from Alverta-Bolick in Asheville, attended.



HOMEbase in Cullowhee College trustee breakfast hosted

HOMEbase hosted the trustee breakfast for Western Carolina University. Left to right: BCH Chief Operating Officer Keith Henry, WCU Chancellor Kelli R. Brown, HOMEbase's director Jim Dean.



Community support Friends give hand-made afghans

Friendly Avenue Baptist members Judy and Al Johnson, along with their service dog Benny, made 84 afghans for Mills Home children. Church members and community friends donate the yarn.



Camp Duncan in Aberdeen Girls prep Thanksgiving turkeys

Girls living at the wilderness camp cooked turkeys camp style. "Turkey in the Hole" is a tradition where a bonfire heats the pit to cooking temperature and turkeys, wrapped in tinfoil, are placed in the hole.

Can we help? Many ministries beating with one heart.

1. Western Area Family Services
Linda Morgan, Lead Dir., 828-627-9254
2. Central Area Family Services
Regina Keener, Dir., 336-474-1200
3. Eastern Area Family Services
Christopher Allabaugh, Dir., 252-522-0811
www.kennedyhome.org
4. Odum Home
Kathy Locklear, Res. Mgr., 910-521-3433
www.odumhome.org
5. Oak Ranch/Family Care
Lynn Garner, Dir., 336-474-1240

6. Cameron Boys Camp
Drew Scott, Dir., 910-245-4034
www.cameronboyscamp.org
7. Camp Duncan for Girls
Brad Gearhart, Dir., 910-944-3077
www.campduncanNC.org
8. Weekday Education
Brooke Child, Dir., 336-474-1201
9. Tucker Greater Vision Ministry
Sara Becker, Mgr., 336-687.6384
10. Family Foster Care
Bob McCleary, 828-627-9254
www.bchfostercare.org

11. HOMEbase at W. Carolina University
Jim Dean, Dir., 828-293-4660
12. Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities
Tara Sessoms, Dir., 336-474-1259
www.hereismyhome.org
13. NC Baptist Aging Ministry
Sandy Gregory, Dir., 336-474-1221
www.ncbam.org
14. Good Shepherd Children's Home in Guatemala
Keith Henry, 336-474-1215

one



Do you feel called to a CAREER IN MISSIONS?

We have immediate opportunities:

- Cottage Parents
- Teachers/Chiefs for Wilderness Camps
- Caregivers for Special Needs Adults
- Weekday Education Preschool Teachers

Call 828.230.7133
or visit www.bchcareers.org

Giving your vehicle puts the ministry in



Your donated vehicle helps with school, church activities, student drivers, doctor visits, family care mothers and more.

Call Sam Barefoot at
336.474.1224



Be a kid's hero.
Change a child's life
every month!

For as little as \$15 per month, you can change the life of a boy or girl!— sign up at
www.hopechampions.org

"Let me take care of it."

Director Renee Gregory relieves the burden from your family by taking care of your loved one's estate sale with compassion.
FREE CONSULT



FANCYFINDS
ESTATE SALE SERVICE
336.474.1331 | www.fancyfinds.org

Memories of picking vegetables abound — Sledding using an old truck hood was winter fun!

By **John Thompson**, 110 Lee K. Allen Drive, Havelock, NC 28532 (252)671-3515 jthompson117@ec.rr.com

Serving at Kennedy Home (KH) must be a calling from the Lord — just as I am called to be a church minister. The KH men and women work hard and share their life with so many boys and girls who need a helping hand and a caring heart. Did you ever think about the children of the houseparents or the other staff members' children who share their parents — often times seeing other children turn to their mother or daddy needing love and care? I imagine it's very hard to share your parents. I imagine it can be challenging for the parents, too.

I received a note from **Laura and Betsy Beals** — children of **Mr. and Mrs. Rodney Beals**. Rodney was the pastor at KH church and Martha created the wonderful library upstairs in the gym. Laura and Betsy recently spent the weekend with each other and came up with some memories for me to share with you.

They started by writing that they did not feel deprived: "As preacher's kids, we always shared our parents with congregations. So, it was something in which we were familiar. At KH, we gained lots of playmates with whom we could visit freely. We gained so many places to play — such as the swimming pool, the gym with the pool table, trampoline and basketball court, and, of course, skating and riding our bikes on campus.

"The church service was targeted to children and was wonderful. John, your choirs were great experiences. We loved living on a farm and seeing the livestock, watching milking, playing with baby pigs, and being a part of growing things in the garden.

"KH took us in and blessed us in many ways. We are grateful to have been a part."

At Williams Cottage where **Louise and Earl Maready** and their children, **Penny, Nannette, Robert, and Thomas** served and lived was always bustling with activity. Penny shared some thoughts: "Being a houseparent didn't make someone

rich, but there were some great benefits such as a great place to live, no light bill, no water bill, free food, and great Christian fellowship."

The Maready family were wonderful and I consider them good friends. Earl always kept my old car running. Penny went on to say: "I didn't mind the chores and the time spent doing gardening work. I think I really enjoyed that the most. I remember my piano lessons and I'm so glad I learned to play. I enjoy the comfort it brings me when I'm playing at church.

"What I remember about Christmas was the time at the gym with the Woodmen making sure that all of us got gifts. I remember our names being called and Santa would give us all a gift — even though our parents bought gifts for us, too. It was great to be included. I'm so grateful they saw the need to make sure we were treated as the other children."

And now a word from **Nancy**, daughter of **Reverend Roger and Mary Williams**. Roger became superintendent after serving at Mills Home in Thomasville where he was pastor for nine years and director of development for two years.

She writes: "I was just preparing to start my senior year at the high school in Thomasville when the call came to move to KH. We took up residence in the previously empty house near the entrance to campus. While it was empty of people, a few mice had managed to lay claim. **Rev. David and Bonita Leary** and **Stanley and Emma** lived in homes beside us. Interestingly, David and Bonita are currently members with me and my husband **Steve** at First Baptist Church in Morganton.

"Moving East was a new experience for our family. Gone were the rolling hills of the Piedmont. They were replaced by flat vistas of tobacco and corn with marvelous sunsets. While some things were definitely different, many were the same. I found a welcome place at the gym and the wonderful pool. I made new friends prior to the start of that school year. I remember

them well: **Penny Branch, Gary Caulder, Rosa Watson, Edward Pait, and Julius McNeill**. Many more friendships were added as the year unfolded.

"Memories from venturing on the farm include seeing piglets being born in the pig parlor, observing the giant bull from the Holstein herd in his corral, witnessing the new mechanized milking machines, and seeing the Neuse River and Skeeter Hut up close. I seem to recall picking a few vegetables, also.

"John, you and Becky did a wonderful job playing the organ and piano for our wedding at the KH Church. Many fond memories remain of my brief year at KH."

The vegetable garden was set on 25 acres and planted seasonally with the best vegetables. They were mighty delicious. I will never forget what Rev. Williams told me in my job interview. He said, "We can't pay you what First Baptist of Washington payed, but we have a huge garden and the best livestock and you will always eat well.

So, Becky and I bought a freezer.

Now a word from **Debbie Caulder**. She writes: "I enjoyed my time at KH, but I was older and attending Lenoir Community College. As a staff child in Bunker Cottage, I thought living with so many children — eight boys and four girls — was like winning the lottery! There was always someone to talk to, to play games with, or just hang out and do nothing with.

"I'm not sure if my experience would have been the same if I was younger. Within a family with two or three children, one might hear "she is the oldest and gets everything," or "he is the baby and he always gets anything he wants." But can you imagine having an additional 12 children?

"My hat is off to all staff children that lived at KH. You are special kids for sharing your parents. My parents, **Pat and Mack McCormick**, were called of God to go and be houseparents in 1972. A few years prior, my mother Pat was diagnosed

with cervix cancer and the prognosis was not very bright. Her weight was 95 pounds and she was dying a slow death. My father prayed continuously for a miracle and promised God that he would do anything for Him if He would keep his wife alive.

"Well guess what? God heard his prayer and put into motion the plan He had for my parents to become houseparents at KH.

"They loved being houseparents!

"My mother was sad to learn that many of the children did not have photos of themselves growing up. So, she would take pictures and put them in an album for her new family to enjoy. When mom died, I took all those photo albums to KH during Homecoming to share with those who grew up with them.

"Mom also loved to cook and I believe most of the kids enjoyed spending time with her in the kitchen when it was their chore duty for the month. She loved to make those no-bake chocolate oatmeal cookies as well as cakes, pies, cookies, and, don't forget, doughnuts made from can biscuits and sprinkled with powdered sugar — and her delicious chocolate toast.

"We had nightly devotions that always ranked high on my list of favorite memories. My dad loved to play baseball and shoot hoops with the children. When it snowed, he would use a truck or car hood and pull it behind his truck like a sleigh for all the children. We had a lot of fun sledding and then we always made snow cream!"

Always remember that Becky and I love all of you. Thank you for reading this column. Please send any news or information to my email. Give me a call if we can ever help you — we will talk. If you would like to come and see us at our new home in Havelock, we welcome you. Several of you have already been for a visit and we loved it. — jt



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

Lily brings good change

By Jim Edminson, Editor

A boy and his dog is as American as apple pie. The image of a rambunctious puppy and a little guy makes us “ooh” and “aah.” Last fall, I was given a two-month-old puppy by a dear couple — it took 58 years for this boy to capture his dream.

Lily is a beautiful pup —

an Australian Shepherd. The four-month-old now follows me in the yard where we rough and tumble, and she has already learned to leap into my arms. She is a handful — in more ways than one.

When a new puppy arrives, life changes. A few nights of interrupted sleep and stepping into too many puddles, I begin asking myself what had I been thinking? I love the idea of a boy and his dog, but the reality is taxing.

Lily is smart. With a tilt of her head or a quick movement right to left with her eyes, I can see the gears moving; but with this pup, I’m just not sure if they are moving in the direction I am hoping!

Like rearing children, I deduce, caring for a puppy should be assigned to the times in our lives when we are younger — more spry and in possession of heaps of patience.

But despite the challenges, I look forward to coming home and being greeted by her excitement and licks of adoration. She insists I run with her in the yard — back and forth and repeat — again and again. Only today, I was told by a friend that the most important thing to remember as I age is to move. “Do not become sedentary,” she warned. No worries; Lily keeps me moving.

Change comes. There are times when we look with anticipation, arms open wide. There are other times when our bodies tense, fists clinch, and we brace ourselves with fear and trembling. But it comes. How

we deal with the change is everything.

The Hebrew people enslaved in Egypt prayed for freedom. They deeply desired change. And God heard them.

“Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them.”

Through some of the most dramatic events — invoking physical anguish and vile pestilence, and then dramatically parting the Red Sea to crash it upon the Egyptian army drowning them all — God brings change. He rescues the Israelites. They are free, but with each step in their exodus, they become bitter, caught up in their moanings of discontent. They soon reason, “It’s better to be a slave in Egypt than a corpse in the wilderness!” God’s people, faced with life-altering change, did not bear it well.

So, what is the “change” life has handed you in these days? Is it a Lily change, manageable and doable with some adjustments to your status quo? Or is this change as threatening as flood waters or desert trekking? When it is the latter, we focus on God’s faithfulness. We remember that He delivers. He has in the past. He will again. For now, we hold to the fact that He is true. There is hope — in the immediate future and in the distant days ahead. His promises are forever.

Lily stands at the back door, looking over at me. I have been sitting for a while now, and she beckons me for another romp. This boy and his dog venture forward. This change, my Lily change, is very good.



Edminson encourages others through the Good News of Jesus. Invite him to preach or speak at your church. Email him at wjedminson@bchfamily.org.

URGENT: IN 2018, 16,796 CHILDREN IN NC HAD TO BE REMOVED FROM THEIR FAMILIES

How many more boys and girls will need us next year? We **MUST** be ready to give them the love and care they desperately need.

HURRY! You have until January 31 to give to the **Matching Gift Challenge**

Give now and your donation is **MATCHED** dollar for dollar up to the \$250,000 goal! Use the enclosed envelope or go to bchfamily.org/givenow



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