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Charity & Children

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



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October 2020

Issue 10

Volume 133



Family's Dream Comes True

By Blake Ragsdale, Managing Editor

Janina DeHart woke suddenly. The dream that pulled her from her night's sleep gripped her heart.

"I dreamed that we adopted two boys," Janina recalls. "The dream was our celebration party welcoming them to our family."

Janina and her husband, Mark, were unable to have children. They had discussed the idea of adoption before, but it never went further. The couple believed that Janina's dream wasn't simply coincidence—it was providence.

"I knew by putting our faith in God that He was going to open doors, and of course, He did," Mark divulges.

As "preachers' kids," Mark and Janina are familiar with Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) ministry

that provides compassionate, cottage homes for boys and girls. However, they did not realize BCH now offered Family Foster Care where couples can be trained and licensed to be foster families.

When Janina learned this information from a co-worker, they set up a meeting with BCH staff and began the process to fulfill their dream.

The DeHarts weren't the only ones with a dream. Brothers Nathen and Tylor, who were previously homeless and living in a tent with their mother, longed for a family. They had been removed from their mother's custody and came to live at Drake Cottage in Franklin. The siblings gained a family through their cottage parents, Scott and Connie Cummings and John and Glenda Mercer, as well as the other boys in the cottage. *(Continued on page 8.)*

[MY THOUGHTS]

Learn to listen and lift hearts in the process

By Michael C. Blackwell, President/CEO

Listen. Good listeners are in short supply. It takes time and requires patience. It also develops friendships and promotes healing.

Listeners don't have answers. Listeners aren't afraid of silence. They are comfortable with just being there. Good listeners are a gift from God.

The golden rule of listening is "listen unto others as you would have them listen unto you." We all have problems and need good listeners.

We can learn to listen. That's easier said than done, because we are so unaccustomed to listening. We talk and chatter. We are bombarded by gaudy messages and loud music. It's a high decibel world. A good listener is a rare commodity.

You can develop listening skills. All you have to do is "Be still, and know..." (Ps. 46:10).

1. Show interest: The first step in establishing a meaningful relationship is to show interest. What can you learn from this person? What can she learn from you? Listening and sharing are built on trust. You convey that you are a trustworthy person as you show interest. When a problem arises, a person will naturally turn to you if you have shown an interest in them.

That doesn't mean you are an automatic problem-solver. You don't have to say much at all. Just listen.

2. Stay calm: Don't let a highly charged problem get the best of you, causing your anxiety level to rise, thus making you feel like you've got to offer an instant solution. A simple "That sounds like a tough problem," may be all you need to say. Sometimes our friend's problems remind us of our own. Then we lapse into the "rattle syndrome" and talk about our problems.

3. Maintain contact: Friends are fickle—here today and gone tomorrow. A listener-friend is different. A good listener keeps in

touch and keeps on listening. Maintain contact.

4. Listen for feelings: Listening is perhaps life's hardest task. It takes concentration and determination. You must concentrate on what is being said and listen for the feelings behind the words.

There is no such thing as an instant answer. Offer options but beware of becoming an "answer-person." You could answer wrong.

5. Resist easy answers: Good listeners aren't answer-oriented. Even if they know the answer, one should avoid giving it. It's okay to suggest options—but only after listening carefully enough to understand the problem. Listeners are often pleasantly surprised at this comment: "You've helped me so much. I think I know now how to tackle my problem." What has the listener done to deserve this praise? Why, he listened, of course!

6. Empathize: Enter into the thoughts of the other person. Listen for feelings but also feel what your friend is feeling. You understand, rejoice, and weep because you have heard. Souls touch, and wounds are healed. There is a moment of closeness. Such moments are extremely rare, even among close friends. Most friendships cannot tolerate such intimate closeness. That doesn't mean it can't happen; it just means it doesn't happen often.

7. Offer encouragement:

Listening doesn't mean you sit still with your mouth taped shut. Good listeners must offer good responses. If a person trusts us, then the least we must do is offer a word of encouragement. Saying "I want to give to you a hand of support and encouragement" will do wonders to lift

the drooping head and spirit of a friend.

8. Gently confront: Sometimes our well-meaning friends bug the daylight out of us. We listen and listen and listen, but nothing does any good. We even offer unheeded advice. Finally, we feel the most loving thing we can do is tell our friend to look elsewhere for help. Or we lovingly tell him to eliminate the self-pity and to get on with life. Or we gently nudge him toward other possible solutions. We earn the right to confront because we have spent lots of time listening.

9. Follow-up: Skill nine is related to skill three (maintaining contact). Follow-up means you are willing to make yourself continuously available to your friend. "If you ever need someone to listen, just give me a call" is a friend's way of offering ongoing support.

10. Continue support: Listening is an art. It can be learned by observing those who do it well. A good listener can teach others by example to listen. Listening is contagious. Good listening means you never stop listening. You listen to the silences of your own heart; you listen to the joys and pains of those around you; and in it all you listen to the music of God which makes it all worthwhile.



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

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Trustees approve adding Christian Adoption Services

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Managing Editor and **Jim Edminson**, Editor

Trustees of Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) took historic action at their September 15 Board meeting adding a new, key component to BCH's comprehensive array of services. The 135-year-old non-profit is assuming ownership of Christian Adoption Services (CAS) giving BCH the ability to aid families with domestic and international adoptions. The CAS board unanimously approved the action less than 24 hours before the Board of Trustees meeting in Thomasville.

The September meeting was unusual due to the impact of COVID-19. Weeks before the meeting, Board members authorized their executive committee to meet in their absentia acting in full authority. The executive committee and key BCH staff members met using proper pandemic protocol using masks and social distancing.

Trustee chair Jerry Jordan spoke on behalf of all Trustee members: "Although not all Trustees are present in this room, we are all unified, without exception, in passing the motion to bring Christian Adoption Services into the BCH family. It is inspiring to see how God has brought this into being."

BCH and CAS were already working together through an official partnership that was established in July 2019. Taking action and adding CAS was a natural step forward.

"Now more than ever, boys and girls need to be cared for by dedicated families who can give them the love and protection they deserve," says BCH President/CEO Michael C. Blackwell. "Bringing in the proven expertise of Christian Adoption Services expands our ability to offer children hope. It is a distinctive highlight this year as we mark BCH's 135th anniversary."

CAS president Kevin Qualls amplifies Blackwell: "We have been able to help children in ways that would have been impossible without this partnership—so we are excited as we enter this bold, new chapter. Our goals, and the passion we share for serving children and families, align perfectly with one another."

Qualls served for 22 years in church ministry, in both North and South Carolina. He was the Next Generations pastor at First Baptist Church in Charlotte for four years before joining CAS in March 2016. Qualls will stay on in a major leadership position with BCH and continue to oversee the adoption services.

"The acquisition makes perfect sense," Qualls continues, "and the winners are the North Car-



Right, BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell and Christian Adoption Services (CAS) president Kevin Qualls are enthusiastic after BCH's Board of Trustees approved the acquisition of CAS at the September 15 meeting of the Board in Thomasville. CAS has provided expertise in national and international adoptions for 41 years.

olina and South Carolina children we will be able to serve by bringing our resources together."

BCH operates locations throughout North Carolina as well as two cottages for orphans in Guatemala with a third one under construction. Because of the acquisition, BCH now has a presence in South Carolina through the CAS office in Spartanburg.

"As we expand our presence, we strengthen the overall scope for BCH's mission of 'sharing hope... changing lives'," Blackwell emphasizes. "Bringing in the ability to handle adoptions adds an essential service to our continuum of care for children who need Christian families and stable homes."

In 2017, Blackwell and BCH Chief Operating Officer Keith Henry added Family Foster Care as a complement to its Cottage Care program. Currently, BCH has 85 family foster care homes throughout North Carolina.

"As the needs of children and families continued to evolve and increase, especially because of the opioid crisis in our state and nation, we recognized the importance of offering additional options of care—options to best respond to a child's specific needs," Henry explains. "Introducing Family Foster Care was one of those key resources. Adding Adoption Services is the other."

CAS is accredited by the Intercountry Adoption Accreditation and Approval and has placed more than 2,000 children in Christian homes in its 41 year history.

"We believe in offering nothing less than the highest quality of services," Henry says. "We are

taking that standard to an even greater level through this expansion of BCH's Family Foster Care/Adoption Services program. We are adding Christian Adoption Services' strong foundation of quality services to our own."

Together, BCH and CAS have almost 176 years of experience in providing compassionate services to bring help, hope, and healing to vulnerable children. "As we go through the acquisition's transitional process and begin to map out an exciting path forward, we do so in a spirit of confidence and expectation," says Blackwell. "The world around us is ever-changing and can be filled with uncertainty for the youngest and most vulnerable members of society. In the midst of it all, BCH remains a lighthouse—a beacon of hope—that now shines brighter than ever before because of this historic new endeavor."

The Board's executive committee addressed other Board business approving the 2020-2021 budget and hearing reports. Keith Henry introduced the motion for the acquisition of CAS and reported on programs.

Trustees viewed the Annual Offering video and heard from Brenda Gray, executive vice president, development and communications. Gray reported that donors and churches have been overwhelmingly faithful in their giving during the time of the pandemic despite the hardships they have incurred.

Nancy Hall of Apex Baptist was elected new Chair of the Board for 2021.

The next full Board meeting is slated for 10:00 a.m. on January 19 in Thomasville.

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Grateful beyond measure

By **Brenda B. Gray**

Executive Vice President, Dev. & Com.

I have an enormous praise to share. At the close of Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) 2020 fiscal year on September 30, we completed the year with a balanced budget. This is a HUGE God thing—and we offer a HUGE praise. Thanks to each of you that gave to keep this ministry operating throughout this unprecedented time of crisis. Thousands of lives have been impacted. **Thank you.**

When COVID-19 changed everything, we canceled events and speaking engagements. We canceled two \$100,000 events. We canceled our annual food drive which typically provides \$750,000 in food, gift cards, and cash for food. Immediately, we had a \$950,000 deficit. But no fear, God was working in your hearts—our dear, dear friends. **Our family.**

God used you to close the gap. We are grateful beyond measure for God's provision—for how God used you. Your calls, notes of encouragement, prayers, and gifts made the difference. Your impact translates into changed lives. **Thank you.**

A pregnant 14-year-old girl was frightened and alone as she prepared to bring her baby into this world. But, she did not remain frightened and alone. When she came into BCH, she gained a family. **That family includes you.**

A 12-year-old boy's Dad passed away. He is angry and grieving. He struggles to find the hope and courage he needs. But he is not alone. His BCH family walks this difficult journey with him—***you are a part of that family.***

A mom and her six children walked through our doors hopeless—broken by poverty and abuse. A safe place with plenty of food, words of encouragement, and a plan for a better tomorrow brought hope, help, and healing. This family is on the road to restoration and self-sufficiency. They are not walking alone. Their BCH family walks with them—***you are a part of that family.***

He never knew his mom. She was a drug addict and he was adopted at birth. He struggled as he became older unable to overcome feelings of abandonment. Then an amazing thing happened. Accompanied by his adoptive parents, he met his birth mother. They were able to talk. They hugged and he got answers to some of the tough questions he had carried all his life. It's been a difficult journey, but he did not walk alone. ***His BCH family, his adopted family, and you walked with him each step along the way.***

You have been overwhelmingly faithful in giving during the time of the pandemic. Our churches, despite the hardships they have incurred, have been unwavering in their love and support. Giving together, thousands of lives have been impacted.

For the brothers that were homeless living in a tent, **Thank You.**

For the brother and sister who had

to survive on a single jar of peanut butter, **Thank You.**

For the special needs adult, who wakes up happy and brings smiles to everyone around him, **Thank You.**

For the aging adult who was isolated in his home with no wheelchair ramp, **Thank You.**

For the mother who had no home for her children after her husband was killed, **Thank You.**

For the hundreds, who have been able to let go of their painful past and ask Jesus into their hearts, **Thank You.**

A new budget year begins October 1. And like 2020, there are many unknowns—but there are several knowns.

First, God is faithful! Next, we know we can count on you to be as amazing as you have been all year long through prayers, giving, and your voice of encouragement.

Please help tell our story to as many of your friends and family as possible. Please encourage your family of faith, your church, to make a difference through their prayers and gifts through our Annual Offering.

Yes, shout loudly for those who cannot speak for themselves. Thousands will continue to come to us in need and we need your continuous help. ***Together, we will be here with open hearts and arms.***

Budgets represent big numbers, but more important they represent big needs, big opportunities, and the big love and transformational power of Jesus!

Remember, every gift given between now and January 31 will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$250,000—we are so grateful for this matching gift. It is a great opportunity to maximize your investment in the lives of those we serve—**Together!**



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

God is

Changing Lives

through your Annual Offering

God is writing incredible stories in the hearts and lives of the children and families served through the Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) ministry. They are stories of boys and girls in our communities -- our North Carolina mission field -- who have been hurt and neglected by the people in their lives they trusted to care for them. Through the **ANNUAL OFFERING**, God is writing amazing endings to children's stories -- look at the above image from this year's video to see a glimpse of lives being changed!

If you are a pastor, please make an extra effort to promote your offering online during this time of COVID-19. Spread the word in your in-person and online services. Any electronic platform you are using to communicate with your members (social media, website, e-mail, etc.), utilize BCH videos, graphics and social media resources at www.bchoffering.org. Equip members to give their offering online by adding "Baptist Children's Homes" as an option on your church's online giving platform or direct them to www.bchoffering.org/give. Thank you sharing God's love with hurting children!




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Baptist Children's Homes

ANNUAL OFFERING

Resources at www.bchoffering.org. Call 336.474.1209 to schedule a speaker.

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of the brothers, their new family and their river baptism! Download regular and short versions of their video for your church's in-person and online services. Videos and digital resources (slides, social media, leaders guide, etc.) are at www.bchoffering.org

Your offering

provided homes, hope and healing to

107,000

children, families, and adults in 2019.

703

salvations have been proclaimed in the last five years because you made it possible for the Gospel to be shared.

Model the kindness and forgiveness of Jesus

By **Keith Henry**, Chief Operating Officer

I absolutely love reading about the amazing adventures of King David in the Old Testament. He was a mighty warrior, a wise king, a man after God's heart—and a sinner. And like us all, he suffered the consequences—heart broken to see how his sin destroyed relationships and devastated the lives of those closest to him.

There was one relationship David had that always confounded me. I confess, when I read the story of Ahithophel—David's friend, counselor, and, ultimately, his traitor—I would just gloss over it. It never made sense. The verses gave no apparent reason for Ahithophel's change of heart against David. Then, I learned the intriguing secret behind his festering need to exact revenge.

You may remember, King David's son Absalom rebels and seeks to dethrone his father and become king. When David realizes what is happening, he is heartbroken and turns to the person he believes to be his most devout friend and advisor, Ahithophel. Shockingly, Ahithophel joins Absalom in his rebellion! David hears the news of the betrayal fleeing from Jerusalem and he is devastated.

Ahithophel's hidden rage against David bubbles up when he advises Absalom to publicly sleep with the King's concubines. It now escalated to the vengeful public shaming of David—there is no going back for the conspirators.

But the rebellion fails. Absalom is killed while hanging in a tree by his hair and Ahithophel commits suicide. But the question remains as to why Ahithophel suddenly decided to totally betray and humiliate his friend and king? Was Ahithophel seeking influence or power?

Ahithophel had absolutely no ambition for battle or civil war. His motive was fueled by a deep and personal animosity that had built

up over time. This level of poison in relationships almost always stems from painful family tragedies. This case was no different. You see, Ahithophel's son was one of David's great warriors—a star in many of David's great battles. But more than that, Ahithophel had a beautiful granddaughter by that son. Her name was Bathsheba—the very same Bathsheba that David took from her husband Uriah and, then after learning that Bathsheba was pregnant, had killed.

David had dishonored Ahithophel's family—shamed his granddaughter and murdered her husband. Behind the curtain of friendship and trust was a troubled man unable to forgive. This broken relationship was a consequence of David's sin. Ahithophel's revenge sadly turned into heartache and death.



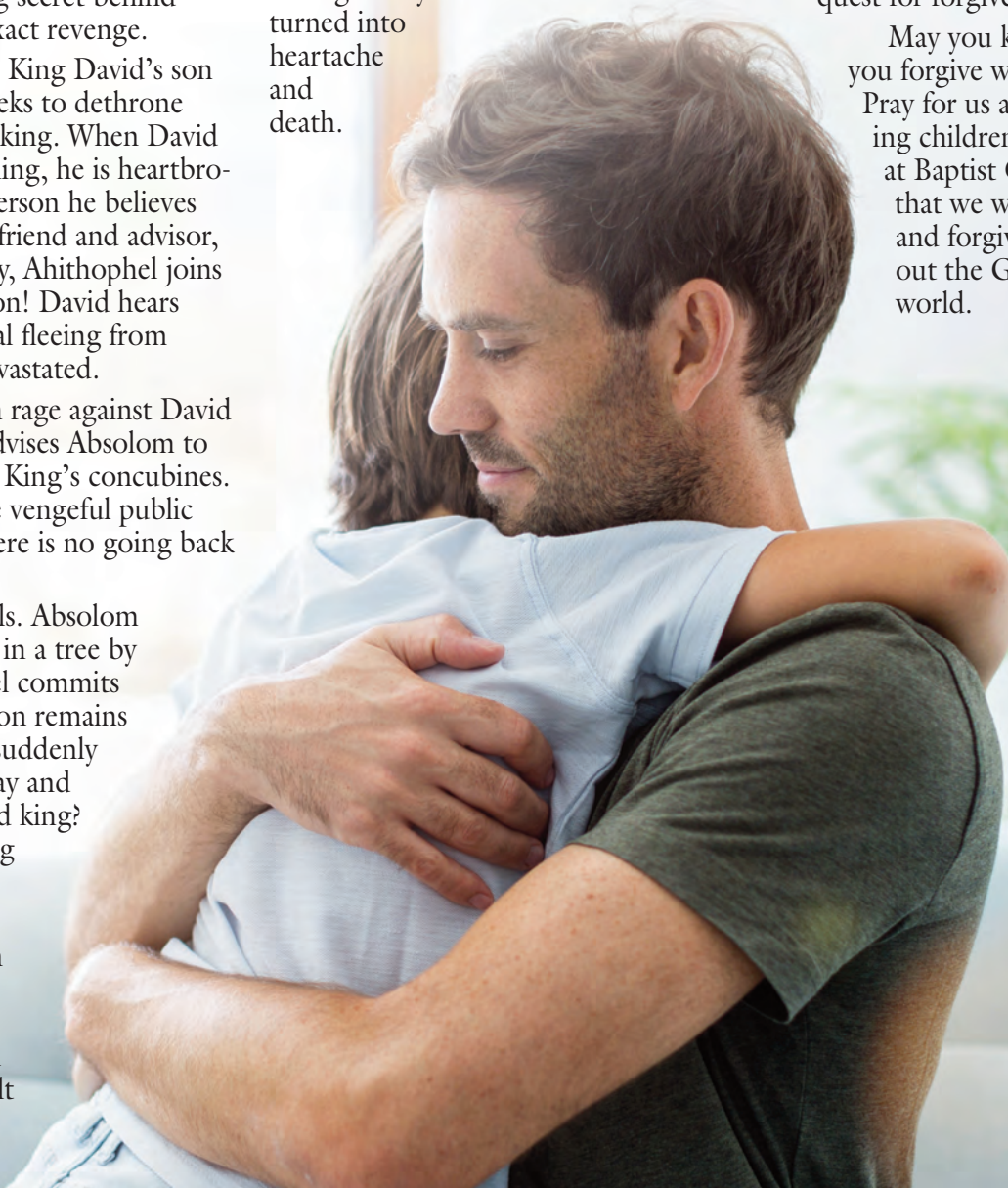
Keith Henry

There is no way to condone David's behavior—he was wrong. But the hurt and shame Ahithophel felt went unchecked and destroyed him. He could not forgive David.

Christ often spoke of the need for us to forgive. He understood the destructive power of an unforgiving heart and made a way for us as sinners to be reconciled with the Father by forgiving us. Ephesians 4:31-32 reads: "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

Forgiveness! There is no healing, there is no reconciliation, and there is no freedom without forgiveness. Individuals and families that are experiencing betrayal, hurt, and brokenness can only begin their journey to peace when they begin their quest for forgiveness.

May you know forgiveness and may you forgive when someone hurts you. Pray for us as we minister to the hurting children, families, and residents at Baptist Children's Homes. I pray that we will all model the kindness and forgiveness of Jesus and live out the Good News to a hurting world.



Mom and children safe in Family Care cottage

By **Pam Burgess**, Administrative Associate, Office of the President

When I started working for Dr. Blackwell at Baptist Children's Homes in March of 2019, I knew that my administrative job would be behind the scenes—a bit distant from direct childcare workers, but I had no idea of the impact that my job would have on my life and that of a young mother with six children.

On a cold winter's morning the Sunday before Christmas 2019, April* walked the mile to First Baptist Church in High Point from the Salvation Army Hope Family Shelter where she and her children were staying. She had fled her marriage leaving behind an abusive spouse to a women's shelter, and finally to

the Salvation Army shelter. But the solutions were just temporary. Each morning they would have to get up and be out on the streets for the day before they could return in the evening. No easy feat when you have six children ages two to ten.

When they arrived at church that Sunday, I was alerted that we had some visitors to my children's Sunday school class.

My class usually consisted of three or four children. This Sunday, it was more than doubled. Over the next

weeks, I was amazed at the children's knowledge of the Bible. I could tell April had instilled in them her love for the Lord.

I have taught this age group for 20 years and have never seen a group of children so enthused about the lessons—this wasn't the thrill and glitz that is Vacation Bible School—this was an ordinary Sunday.

I learned from the children that their father had moved back to Texas. He abandoned them and had stopped all support. They were in North Carolina alone.

When we think of homelessness in America, we don't often think of families with multiple children out there, and if there is a shelter, they are only designed for very short time stays—until the family can reconnect with relatives. I knew that BCH had

Family Care. So, I contacted Regional Director Regina

Keener at Mills Home in Thomasville to see if BCH could help. Regina and her staff moved this family to our campus just before COVID-19 struck—talk about God's hand and His timing!

BCH's Family Care program offers long term assistance for families like April's. The program offers a cottage home environment where moms and their children are not sleeping in dorms with strangers. Families have their own rooms and bathrooms. There is a kitchen where moms cook for their children rather than being fed. Each family has a case manager who helps the moms get back on their feet by assisting them in applying for jobs, providing counseling, and offering lessons in parenting and life skills. The families work to become self-sufficient—navigating their way to independence and success.

I feel so grateful that April has become a friend. We share texts and I visit the family when time allows.

April inspires me as I witness her strength and perseverance—mothering six children isn't for the faint of heart. The family is involved in trauma counseling, the children are in school and daycare, April is searching for a job, and she is looking forward to getting her GED soon. But most of all, she loves cooking for them in her cottage kitchen and sitting on the porch watching them ride bikes. She is thankful they are all safe.

BCH's "a hand-up model" offers families who are going through a tough time dignity and respect. This mother's life unraveled in the course of just a few months by circumstances beyond her control. Baptist Children's Homes was in the right place, at the right time, to help. I feel fortunate to get to work in a place where this story, although personal to me, is just one of many that can be told each year at BCH.



Pam Burgess

*The mom's name has been changed to protect the family.

National award recognizes excellence in workplace

When human resources director John Adamcik was asked to describe Baptist Children Homes of North Carolina's (BCH) safety program, he said, "Compassionate, collaborative care is the driving force behind our success."

Adamcik participated in an online panel discussion honoring winners of National Underwriters Property & Casualty 360 Magazine's 2020 "Excellence In Workers' Compensation Risk Management Award."

BCH was recognized along with fellow national winners JetBlue and DaVita for outstanding results in providing a safe and productive work environment. Past winners have include Starbucks, DHL Express, Butterball LLC, and Aramark.



John Adamcik

"It is amazing how God uses something like safety to share the BCH story," said Adamcik. "Risk is certainly a reality in our ministries, but we have great staff members who strive to faithfully balance physical realities with the dynamics of living life as God intends."

The magazine article highlighted BCH's faith-based approach to serving others. Whether sharing moments preparing meals in the kitchen, making memories at the beach, or playing ball outside a cottage, sharing God's love and building relationships means BCH



Baptist Children's Homes received the national "Excellence In Workers' Compensation Risk Management Award" with fellow national winners JetBlue and DaVita. The award recognizes BCH's excellence in providing a safe and productive work environment.

is an active organization.

The award recognized staff members' efforts from across the state, and the guidance of the BCH risk performance team, formed in 2017 by Sam Barefoot, senior vice president of properties and insurance. Barefoot, along with insurance advisor Jim Simpson, Jr., of Professional Services

Group, LLP, and Steve Heston and Jacob Dahlin of broker agency Scott Insurance, brought together Adamcik, colleagues Ruby Pennington and Joni Brooks, and senior BCH leaders Linda Morgan, statewide director, child/residential services, Martha Surrat, director of special ministries, and Regina Keener, Thomasville area director.



Sam Barefoot

For the past three years the team has worked to identify and address main areas of risk potential within BCH. With support and insight from United Heartland, BCH's workers compensation carrier, the team has been able to provide useful data, training, and on-location support for our ministries in areas such as fleet safety, medication administration, and preventing slips, trips, and falls. The efforts have paid off in fewer and less serious workplace accidents, bringing our annual insurance metric down by 28% from last year, and in line with the baseline for organizations of our type.

"We have an outstanding, smart working team," said Barefoot. He points out that by recognizing the importance of managing around the clock, every day, the result is a "more fun, safer haven to effectively minister to BCH's children and families. Being the best stewards of our resources means more families are being served."

Nathen and Tylor find loving family and new life in Jesus

(Continued from page 1.) "Our cottage parents were able to provide for us, and we didn't have to worry about not being able to eat and not being able to do things," Nathen explains.

"We had a shower instead of having to bathe in a creek," Tylor recalls.

Even though they were receiving the care they needed, the boys still dreamed of living in a permanent home with a mother and a father.

"We never really had a dad because our dads left our mom," Tylor says. The brothers had the same mother but two different fathers.

After living at BCH for almost a year, the dreams of the DeHarts and the boys began to come together. The staff arranged for Nathen and Tylor to go on a weekend visit with the DeHarts as the couple's foster care licensing was being completed.

"Here's these two beautiful kids standing there, both grinning from ear to ear," Mark remembers.

"It's like I had just become a dad right then."

The bond between the boys and the couple grew stronger as they spent more time together. It wasn't long before the DeHarts officially became foster parents to Nathen and Tylor.

"I didn't know I had that much love in me for somebody that I've never known, but I love these boys like they're my own kids," Mark adds, his eyes glistening with tears. "I'd do anything for them. I love them to death."

On October 24, 2019, the two dreams became one as Mark and Janina officially adopted Nathen and Tylor. They celebrated with family, friends, and BCH staff members during an adoption party like the one from Janina's dream. But this would not be the last celebration to take place during the family's first year together.

On June 13, 2020, a small group gathered at a picnic shelter by the Tuckasegee River. It was not

only Nathen's 16th birthday, but it was the day the two brothers would be baptized.

"They became Christians after they moved into the Children's Homes," Janina shares. "They had experiences that first year they were living at the cottage. Each at different times, the boys made decisions."

With friends and loved ones watching, Nathen and Tylor were immersed in the river's flowing waters by a pastor from the family's church and their adoptive father. Mark embraced his sons as each one emerged from the river. With tears streaming down his face, Mark raised his hand skyward and praised God.

"I'm just glad that God is using me and Janina to help these young boys," Mark declares. "I want them to grow up in a Godly home to be able to be a witness for Christ. I know they're going to be; they already are."

Alumni Association president addresses membership – COVID-19 impacts alumni, friends, and family

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

Our new Mills Home Alumni Association president, **Jane Helms Brown**, has set the tone for the Alumni Council and has set the date for its first meeting. We are all familiar with the many talents Jane has and the dedicated way she has worked for our association over the years. Consequently, we know we can look forward to her adding to the legacy of our past Councils. A note from Jane reads: "My first big concern is that alumni know we appreciate their membership in our association. And we know that keeping a good membership number might be a very difficult thing this year because of the horrific loss of income some people are experiencing. If you are suffering a tough financial situation and feel you simply cannot pay your dues this year, the council has a solution for you. Please contact me (Jane) at one of these addresses or phone number: 720 Curry Rd, High Point, NC 27265, or 919-451-2912 or ddb-jhb86@gmail.com. Your call will be completely confidential."

I am also asking that all alumni keep Jane's contact information handy so that you can communicate with her when you wish. The Council and I are open to new ideas, especially with Homecoming next August.

We want folks to know that dear **Casey Medlin**, a great encourager of youngsters and athletes, has a new mailing address: 712 Guilford Rd., Jamestown, NC 27282. We hope folks will take time to send cards to Casey. Not only do older folks have to be wary of serious diseases like COVID-19, they have to be protected from loneliness. So we're all happy that Casey is now with family.

The Mills Home (MH) alumni know where to go when prayers are needed. **Flora Hicks Patton** wrote: "Please pray for my family. **Louise Combs**, an older sister of mine and **Colleen's**, died recently. Pray for her sons **Tracy and Monty**. My sister **Brenda** is at Cone Hospital with COVID-19; and **Grady's** brother, **Hugh Lee**, is at home with the same disease."

A late note from **Jim Hamby** asks for prayers for **Earl Laws** and his sister **Pearlie Mae**. Earl has been in a coma suffering from Covid-19 and its related pneumonia. His sister **Pearlie Mae** is hospitalized because of a heart attack.

Nancy Martinez requested prayers for her sister **Terri** who was hospitalized recently. Their sister **Geneva** came to Greensboro to be with the whole family and to visit **Terri**. Though frail and bedridden, **Terri** is now back home recuperating. Friends can send cards to her at 1721 Bald Hill Loop, Madison, NC 27025. We also have a request for prayers for **Mark Berndt** who is suffering from cancer of the throat. Friends can send cards to him at 1078 Cleavemark Dr., Clarkston, GA, 30021. **Linda Tucker Jambora** mentioned to friends on Facebook that her brother **Ted** died of dementia in 2019. Friends can send condolences to Linda at 624 Lafayette Park Dr., Little River, SC, 29566.

More sad news came from **Elaine Weimer Chrissikos**: "Hi Lib, I just wanted to let alumni know that **Nancy Weimer Kindrick** passed away Aug. 7 from diabetic complications in Amarillo, Texas. She leaves behind her husband **Joe** and 9-year-old daughter **Samantha**. Her brother, **Lee Weimer**, and her husband were with her when she passed. I was not able to go because of COVID-19 quarantine travel restrictions. It has been hard this year losing my husband **Jim** in February and **Nancy** six months later. The house is so lonely and COVID-19 has made getting away from it all harder." Friends can send condolences to Elaine at 2693 Jude's Ferry Rd., Powhatan, VA 23139.

We thank **Harry Walls** for notifying us of the sad news of the death of **Sandra Corder**. Sandra was the wife of **Darrell** who was a coach at Mills Home from 1957-1963. The MH youngsters loved them dearly and were very crushed when their little daughter **Stephanie** died in a terrible accident. They lost their son **Corey** in 2003. Throughout her life, Sandra served many organizations. She was

on the Board of Directors of the *Baptist Courier* in South Carolina for eight years, including terms as the vice-president and president. She taught Sunday school, was a participant in many civic and charitable events, several garden clubs, and was a deacon at First Baptist Church of Greenville. She was an avid reader and loved to read to her grandchildren. Sandra's biggest accomplishment was being a loving wife, mother, grandmother, and loyal friend to all. For 65 years, Sandra traveled alongside her husband as he served the YMCA in several cities. **Darrell**, sons **Chris and Cameron**, and four grandchildren survive Sandra. Condolences may be sent to **Darrell** at the Corder home: 103 Lancelot court., Simpsonville, SC, 29681, 864 724-1004, darcord@charter.net.

I wrote an open letter to MH alumni on Facebook asking them to share notes about how they are spending their "lockdown time." **Jimmy Rochelle** wrote: "We have been trying to stay safe and playing by the COVID-19 rules. When we get a chance to see our family, we do take advantage of that. At home, we have too much TV and internet time. I got a request from our daughter **Sara** to build a desk for her son **Carter**. I was happy to get a project other than the usual home stuff. I just did a basic desk and they liked it so much I decided to build one for our granddaughter **Paisley** and I am in the middle of that one. I have a feeling that will not be the last one. **Linda** is busy planning a vacation for the family. She is the best."

In looking for other responses to my request, I ran across a note from **Linda King Goodyear**. She was admitted to the Thomasville Medical Center for a while but because of their limited ability in COVID-19 care, they sent her to Forsyth. Her husband **Spanky** has now contracted the disease and was also sent to Forsyth. She urges all folks to take all the precautions advised by the medical experts. Send cards to Linda, now at home, at 405 Sullivan Rd., Thomasville, NC 27360.

Dusty Jenkins has spent some

of his recent time contributing to the MH Memories Facebook page. Often, he posts pictures of old MH campus buildings, **Aydlett and Chowan** being the last ones he posted. Of course, he identifies them with dates of when they were built and when they were demolished. Other times he just shares an abundance of information about the way things were at MH. His last really long pill was about the killing of hogs out behind the old laundry building. Many times he posts photos with names of places he has traveled and accompanying information. One day, he showed pictures of the Rio Grande River and the Sandia Mtns. taken from the Bridge of Los Lunos, NM. On another day, it was a copy of a 14 year-old girl's love letter he found in a book found at an antique store. While we were marveling over her beautiful love expressions to a lucky young man, we learned minutes later that she ended up marrying another man. Dusty has continued to post beautiful, high quality nature photos that demonstrate talent in photography and such great knowledge that fellow alumni strongly suggest that he publish some books.

Other people are passing the COVID-19 lockdown in interesting ways. **Sally Beck Ferguson** and her husband **William** spent a month in Creston, NC, in a peaceful mountain cabin. She also posted photos of fantastic scenes. Lastly, **Shirley Topping Maxwell** recently posted on Facebook the opening paragraphs of her book: *Missing Pieces*. It is about her life at MH. The introduction tugs at the heart strings and certainly makes us all look forward to its availability. Look for notice of its arrival soon on FB and this column.

Please share a short note with me about ways you are spending your "lockdown time." Write or call Lib: libsjohnson@triad.rr.com, 5612 Bledsoe Dr., Greensboro, NC, 27410, or 336-299-7412.



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



Cameron Boys Camp in Cameron Cooking is a part of camp life

Campers in the Rangers group prepared this delicious dish at their campsite. Planning and preparing meals is a part of the skills the boys learn. Their cast iron skillet is perfect for cooking.



Camp Duncan in Aberdeen Girls catch Eastern Glass Lizard

The girls at Camp Duncan had an exciting catch when they discovered an Eastern Glass Lizard. The legless creature is often mistaken for a snake. Studying nature is a part of the education program.



Kellum Baptist Church in Jacksonville Church collects for children

Members of the church collected and delivered items for the Food Roundup. The church rallied around Pastor Jody Yopp who participates in BCH's "Ride to Clyde" motorcycle charity ride.



Mills Home in Thomasville Thrivent delivers supplies

Friends from Thrivent Financial donated \$2,000 worth of non-perishable items. Volunteers delivered the supplies for boys and girls at Mills Home. Thrivent has a long history of helping BCH.



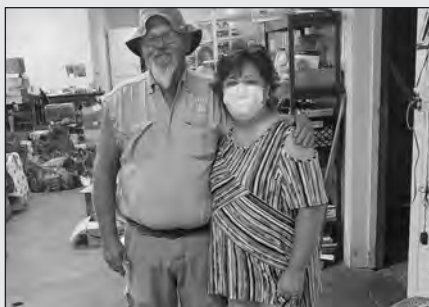
Pine Grove Baptist Church in Franklin Volunteers lead annual efforts

Longtime church members Debbie and Ervin Keener once again led weekly "Mile of Pennies" collection efforts for BCH. The church raised \$11,000 this year exceeding \$139,000 to date.



Lindsay Home in Zionville Children play for Lindsay adults

Child musicians The Freed Family recently played for the ladies living at Lindsay Home in Zionville. The Lindsay residents were overjoyed with lyla, Ezra, and Asa Freed sharing their talents.



Hopewell Baptist Church in Monroe Riders deliver supplies

"Ride to Clyde" participants Coot and Wanda Yow delivered food and supplies to Mills Home that were collected by their church. Riders were challenged to help with BCH's annual "Food Roundup."



Pleasant Garden Baptist Church Church provides cards and snacks

Marty Tobin, Pleasant Garden's Executive Pastor/Adult Ministries, delivered snacks, coloring books, and encouraging greeting cards to the boys and girls at BCH.



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Alum recounts river and “black water” fishing – Alumna remembers failed runaway with thanksgiving

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

I apologize for an error I made last month. Inadvertently, I stated that **Tom Koblinsky** had passed. He has not. I regret any hurt I caused his family.

Tom and Sally were two of my favorite friends at Kennedy Home (KH) while **Becky** and I served there. Becky, sons **Johnny and Scott**, and I were always welcome in their cottage.

I always remember Tom fondly.

As you know I love music—all kinds. And it has been a big part of my life. In Psalm 95:2, it reads: “Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and extol Him with music and song.” In Ephesians 5:19, it reads: “Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.” I have tried my best to encourage folks to sing from their heart. You have to mean the words or you might as well stay quiet. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord—you noticed it didn’t say it had to be perfect.

Alice Sisk Russum and her husband have rented a beach condo and are inviting alumni friends to visit them on Saturday, Oct. 3 for lunch. Alice sent me a note to share. She says we will be cooking hot dogs, hamburgers and brats. If you would like to go, call Alice so she can get a head count to assure plenty of food. Call her by Sept. 30 to confirm at 417-569-6112. Her brother **Buddy Sisk** and his wife **Dana** will be attending. The address is: 2111 West Fort Macon Road, Atlantic Beach. It is Dunes Villas condo number is 206. Also, Alice will let folks know what to bring to help out—like chips, buns and drinks.

Dan Medlin shared news of the death of one of his best friends, **Grover Boykin**. Dan writes: “We went to KH the same time and graduated the same year. Grover was 85 when he passed in Colorado. He had great admiration

for his upbringing and care at KH. We both attended LaGrange High School. He was a talented football player and co-captain in 1952. From 1956-1961, he served in the U. S. Army, receiving the Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Ribbon, and the Good Conduct Medal. He worked at Dupont for almost 31 years. He was laid to rest in Grifton, NC. Please remember his family in your prayers.”

Larry Gilliam (1957-1971) is one of our well-known KH youngins. He recently sent me a note. It reads: “There was one time when a couple of us went down to the river to fish. The only problem was every one thought the other person had dug the worms. Someone came up with the idea to swim in the river and get some mussels to fish with. It became so much fun finding the mussels on the river bottom that we forgot about fishing. **Old Odell**, who use to work on the farm, had a wooden fishing boat chained up to a tree in the river. We filled his boat up with so many mussels that it sunk! He knew some of us did it, but he couldn’t prove it. There were times when we would go fishing in the flooded areas off the river. We didn’t have a boat, so we would get in the water which was about two feet deep and the mud which was over a foot deep and fish. If a snake came by, we would hit it with our pole and scare it away. At the Falling Creek bridge, we would jump in the black water barefoot and go down the creek fishing. Back during that time we weren’t afraid much at all. It’s a wonder we are still alive.

“Back during the mid 60s, we would get a group of boys together and play tackle football in the Lenoir front yard. We didn’t hold back trying to tackle each other either. We got bruised up pretty bad, but it didn’t slow us down. Playing basketball in the old gym was something we all enjoyed. There was no air condition in the summer and no heat in the winter. Most of

the windows were broken out. It got so cold in the winter that the basketballs wouldn’t bounce. That didn’t stop us. We just play around with the ball until it warmed up. Those were the good days.

“Some of the guys I hung out with were: **Ed Pait, Buddy Sisk, Paul Stone, Charles Butler, Danny Tharrington, Jerry Jackson, Clayton Pate**—just to name a few. Like a lot of others, I look at Kennedy Home as my “home.” I lived there for fourteen years and have some good memories that no one can ever take from me.”

Joyce Connie Surbaugh shares KH pictures on Facebook for us to enjoy. Recently, she wrote: “I was wondering what happened to **Ricky Murray** after I posted a picture of **Ricky, Penny Branch, and Debbie Stalling Lassiter**. Sadly, I learned he died Jan. 17. I was so glad to see that he was a husband, father, grandfather, and a Navy veteran. At KH he was fun, full of jokes, and just a good guy.

“When **Jerry, Buck, Debbie**, and I came to live at KH in 1968, we had to live in separate cottages. My little brothers were young and homesick. They left after 11 months to go back to our mom and stepdad. Since then, Buck told me in hindsight, he wished he had stayed.

“The first six months at Kennedy Home were sad and confusing—I was mad at my mom. Thankfully, we had counselors who we could talk to and they helped work out our feelings. I was never lonely at Ferebee Cottage. From the start the girls—**Barbara and Penny Branch, Mary Mullis, Wanda Sue Jones, Patsy Potter, Brenda Clark, Patricia Jones, Debbie Fink and Donna Broxton**—were friendly and helped me. My sister Deb was next door in the Brokenhurst. We had chores, school, and plenty of fun. In the summer, there was the pool. I learned the first time to not go up on the high board. I was told if I went up, I had to jump off. It took some time to get the nerve

to because all I could do was dog paddle. We had swing sets, the gym and the canteen. I never got the hang of skating. Even though I was short, I was good at basketball. We went to church off and on when we lived at home, so I didn’t mind KH church. You just got into a routine. Sunday school and church in the morning and services Sunday night and Wednesday night.

“One Sunday, **Miss Andy**, our houseparent at Ferebee, caught **Mary Mullis** and me talking and chewing gun during services. We had to sit with her for a month. I guess we didn’t appreciate it at the time, so we talked about running away to California. In the summer, we were allowed to sleep at the side door on the floor. We decided to sleep there and wait until everyone was asleep and slip out. We walked up to the store on the main road and waited for a bus. After about 30 minutes, we got scared and walked back to Ferebee. We didn’t get caught and didn’t think about it again. Maybe, we smartened up and realized we had a home.

“I’m sure I made the right decision to stay. There were advantages I wouldn’t have had at home. Going through high school without changing school numerous times. Going on trips to New York, Georgia, Boone, and the trips to the beach house. But most important were the friends that felt like family. Fifty-two years later, I still have those feelings of love, security, and family! Thank you to all the wonderful staff, pastors, and kids I knew!”

Always remember that **Becky** and I love you very much. Thank you for all the telephone calls, gifts, and cards you sent in celebration of our 55th wedding anniversary. Call us if you need us. Don’t forget, write



me some articles to use another time. Love ya!—jt

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

What about the rainy days?

By Jim Edminson, Editor

On rainy days, a Raisin Bran box becomes a city skyscraper and Quaker Oats container a covered bridge. Narrow strips of construction paper, crayon marks down the middle, provide roadways Hot Wheels travel between city and country. Scissors, glue, and all kinds of recycled scraps fuel my imagination as the family room turns into super highways that take me anywhere I can imagine in uptown style.

The porch of my childhood home, with the stormy backdrop on the other side of the screen, transforms into Robinhood's forest. Paper towel tubes are tree trunks and pieces of green construction paper stuck in the top of tubes become a dense canopy under which the band of plastic two-inch Merry Men battle—where good always wins and time moves at a fast pace.

Lincoln Log buildings and Tinker Toy wagons in the outlying towns come alive to one side of the play area. Mom's leftover yarn provides vines for the good guys to swoop down on the bad as the clouds gather and the wind blows rain through the porch's screen. I feel one with the heroes in Sherwood battling the elements as well as the sheriff's goons.

Thunder and lightning-filled afternoons find me on the top bunk with piles of picture books as I look out the window to see the pretend world of Miss Lollipop's Lion or Lyle the Crocodile. Mom seemed to forecast stay-inside days with total accuracy, and we visited the library a couple days before the clouds gathered. Books capture my mind's eye, and the blurry window streaming with rain droplets transports me like a Walt Disney camera capturing the fanciful from one world into another. I look at the pictures on the page, then out through the window I see lions and crocodiles move past me wearing raincoats and carrying umbrellas,

splashing in the puddles, obviously having the time of their lives in the wild world of my Laredo, Texas neighborhood.

On one tempest-tossed evening, my military Dad came home with a huge cardboard box. He took out his pocket knife and scored the cardboard where I directed. Later, with scissors in hand, I built a Jeep like the ones on the air base where Dad served. Mom supervised magic marker sessions that turned the box into my super-charged, Jimmy-sized ride to speed away. My Frisbee made an ideal steering wheel and a long Lego lever was perfect to shift into high gear, my body twisting as I took the curves along the road beyond the cutout windshield. I parked my Jeep in front of the television like I was at a drive-in movie to watch the evening programs on CBS—traveling to the city with Oliver from Green Acres or following railroad tracks with Uncle Joe at Petticoat Junction.

When the sun returned, I was ready to explore outside. More adventures could begin under blue skies, too.

It is the same now. My heart is gladdened by the sun because of a preceding storm. I give thanks for the rain that floods the earth for a time so that life can spring forth. I remind myself that everything has its season, and our God does not change. As the clouds gather in our human days, let us be diligent about our tasks that we may join the cloud of witnesses who have gone before, declaring "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior" (Habakkuk 3:18 NIV).



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

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