

Birth mom's new shoes feel  
"like walking on air!"

Read Yavonka's amazing story on page 7.

# Charity & Children

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



@bchfamily

May 2024

Issue 4

Volume 137



## Family realizes dreams through International Adoption

By Jim Edminson, Editor

The great excitement could only be measured by the great exhaustion Lisa and Nate felt upon arriving in Manila, nearly 9,000 miles from their home in Durham. The jet lag was real as they collapsed on the hotel bed. Eyes closed, their minds raced, caught up in the immensity of the moment. What they had waited for so long was now only hours away.

Out of the 25 million people in the city, there were only two that mattered to the anxious couple. The anticipation of growing their family by adding sister and brother Angel and Alex began months earlier when they appeared on a list of children in the Philippines hoping to be adopted.

Standing in the courtyard of the orphanage, Nate noticed a door open. The couple had visited with the children on video chats

over the past months—it was not like they would be total strangers. Lisa stepped forward as two caregivers walked into the sunlight with the children. The children's eyes raced back and forth until they saw their new parents and darted toward them—running. Lisa and Nate bent down simultaneously, just in time for Angel to bound into her mom's embrace and Alex to jump into his dad's arms. (Continued on page 8.)



# Military service members volunteer to help families

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

The month of April was spent celebrating the many wonderful volunteers who have found their “spot!” Regardless of their age, where they live, or what their interests, they discovered the place where they could serve and be involved with Baptist Children’s Homes (BCH) many ministries. It is because of the volunteers and church partnerships that BCH is able to continue the mission of sharing hope and changing lives in dozens of communities across North Carolina, in South Carolina, and in Guatemala. We are so grateful for each person, for each hour, and for each act of loving service completed.

Christian philosopher and evangelical church leader Francis Schaeffer wrote: “We must do the Lord’s work in the Lord’s way.” At BCH, we believe that “the Lord’s way” includes building existing and new relationships, serving those vulnerable and in need, and sharing the love of Jesus. Recently, I had an opportunity to meet with the military ministry partners at Camp Lejeune’s Protestant Chapel in Jacksonville. The meeting became the beginning of an exciting new relationship between BCH and the chaplains who serve members of the armed forces aboard Camp Lejeune, New River Air Station, Camp Johnson, and Camp Geiger. Through this partnership, service members now have the opportunity to assist at Kennedy Home in Kinston through Greater Vision Outreach. Greater Vision Outreach serves vulnerable working families by offering food and clothing distribution, health and education programs, and referral and preventive services for families in crisis.

Community service is highly encouraged by



On March 13, military chaplains, ministry leaders, and pastors learned about BCH volunteer opportunities at a Military Connections luncheon at Camp Lejeune’s Protestant Chapel in Jacksonville.



Kristyn Butts

our armed forces. Serving with BCH will give service members the opportunity to earn service hours while also significantly helping with sorting and stocking donations. While at Kennedy Home, the men and women will also see and hear about the love of Jesus through BCH’s work with children and families.

BCH already has a partnership with Fort Liberty and service members there volunteer with us at several of our locations in the east central part of the state. BCH looks forward to forming new partnerships with other military installations across the state. We are so grateful for the sacrificial and selfless service of our service members at home and abroad.

If you are interested in serving at Greater Vision, we also have a spot for you. Volunteers are needed regularly for sorting donations, washing/drying/stocking donated clothing and

linens, and organizing the marketplace.

Additional volunteers are needed to serve as client advocates. After completing an application, background checks, and training, client advocates are matched with clients in the self-sufficiency program. They meet monthly to support and encourage clients as they set “SMART” goals, implement strategies, and connect with resources. Relationships built on trust between the advocate and the clients lead to hope and lives changed.

Greater Vision is located in Kinston at Kennedy Home as well as in Thomasville at Mills Home. You can sign up to serve with Greater Vision at either location by going to [bchfamily.org/volunteer](http://bchfamily.org/volunteer).

Have you found your spot to serve with BCH yet? Check out the volunteer website [bchfamily.org/volunteer](http://bchfamily.org/volunteer) for exciting changes and a growing list of volunteer opportunities where you can find your spot to serve. As a volunteer, you have the opportunity to truly be the hands and feet of Jesus.

Visit [bchfamily.org/volunteer](http://bchfamily.org/volunteer) to learn more and/or submit a volunteer interest form. To ensure that you have an excellent volunteering experience and to protect the safety of our residents, always preregister for volunteer events. Check back often and be on the lookout for exciting updates that will include the option to create your own volunteer account and an interactive map with volunteer opportunities to help you find your spot.

Questions? Email me at [kbutts@bchfamily.org](mailto:kbutts@bchfamily.org).



**Mission:**  
sharing hope . . . changing lives

**Vision:**  
To provide the highest quality of Christian services to children, adults and families in a caring culture of measurable excellence

**Charity & Children**—Established in 1887 as the official publication of Baptist Children’s Homes of North Carolina, Inc., 204 Idol St., PO Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27361-0338. Jim Edminson, editor ([wjedminson@bchfamily.org](mailto:wjedminson@bchfamily.org)); Blake Ragsdale, managing editor ([jbragsdale@bchfamily.org](mailto:jbragsdale@bchfamily.org)); Marcia Housand, account clerk. **Charity & Children** (ISSN 0009-1723-09 USPS 100-460) is published 10 times a year for friends and supporters by Triangle Web Printing, Durham, NC and mailed by Excalibur, Winston-Salem, NC. Circulation: 62,000 seven times a year, 30,000 three times a year. Periodicals postage paid at Thomasville, NC, and at additional mailing offices. For free subscription or to be removed from the mailing list or make address correction or change, use the above address and write to Attn: Circulation Manager, send an email to [address@bchfamily.org](mailto:address@bchfamily.org) or call at 336-474-1209. Subscribe online at [bchfamily.org/charityandchildren](http://bchfamily.org/charityandchildren). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to **Charity & Children**, PO Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27361-0338.



# Fancy Finds grows—spurred by dedicated volunteers

By John Adamcik, MAM, SPHR, SHRM-SCP—BCH Director, Human Resources

It all starts with a piece of furniture or the perfect accent piece once owned by someone. And almost every piece has a story.

“What comes to Fancy Finds comes from people who want their legacy to be one of charity to others,” general manager Charlotte Edwards says. “Their treasures become the means to help children, aging adults, and families.”

Open to the public, Fancy Finds is located at Baptist Children’s Homes’ (BCH) historic Mills Home campus in Thomasville. What began as a fundraising effort now connects BCH with hundreds, growing into an ever-expanding retail store of salvaged and restored furniture, home goods, interior design resources, clothing, jewelry, and even enrichment opportunities for people of all ages.

Furniture—case goods in particular—come to Fancy Finds through donations. The furniture is often showing signs of daily use and in need of restoration and repurpose. Edwards and her team sand and paint the furniture and display it in the 2,500-square-foot store. Shoppers, many of whom become regulars, are quick to purchase these pieces for use in their homes.

“We find that furniture often comes to us from families who are experiencing life changes,” Edwards says. “Many are settling their parent’s estate or downsizing, recognizing that by bringing these pieces to us we are able to appreciate their gift and ensure the pieces are not thrown out but continue to be used—all while helping others.”

Since it opened in 2016, Fancy Finds has steadily grown beyond retail sales and into the ministry for which it was designed, powered by a growing volunteer base.

“God changes lives through BCH,” Edwards says, referring to BCH’s mission statement. “Fancy Finds connects people to BCH’s ministries in a unique way. We frequently encounter folks who are visiting campus for the first time. Our staff talk with them about our furniture repurposing process, and as we learn their personal stories, they learn about our many ministries.”

Fancy Finds is a labor of love for Charlotte, her staff, and the volunteers who help demonstrate practical applications of God making things new or repurposed. As each piece passes through Fancy Finds, those who donate, those who renew the pieces, and those who buy the pieces connect in meaningful ways.



Charlotte Edwards



Volunteers, left to right, Kelly Allen, Ellen Cerce, and Judy Yarbrough, along with other members from Welcome Baptist Church, regularly help at Fancy Finds on the Mills Home campus in Thomasville. General Manager Charlotte Edwards credits Fancy Finds’ staff and volunteers for the ministry’s success.

The store is an ever-changing montage of goods for sale. Visitors often remark how great the space looks, even as the team of full and part-time staff and volunteers constantly rearrange and stage new items as other pieces sell. As the retail component became more established, Edwards and her team were able to expand the services to include pop-up vendor events on-site from spring to fall. Former BCH employee Linda Russo volunteers to help coordinate and market these events on social media. The events allow other makers to partner and showcase their creative wares, sharing a portion of sales with BCH.

Before joining Fancy Finds’ staff, Mary Alice Owens had been a vendor at one of the pop-ups. Owens, who serves as co-assistant manager with Kim LeSage, says, “Our staff have a shared goal, giving us all a sense of purpose and community.”

As throughout BCH, volunteers are a vital part of the Fancy Finds ministry. “They’re part of our BCH family,” said Edwards. “Some come every week while others once every couple of months.”

Volunteers from Welcome Baptist Church’s ladies group have made a lasting impact, returning regularly. Fancy Finds has become their meeting place and their mission ground.

Other volunteers do important work like picking up furniture and other items from donors’ homes. Items such as wheelchairs, canes, and lift chairs go to NCBAM, North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry, which serves frail and well-aging adults.

“When our staff and volunteers go to a home,” Edwards says, “they’re able to sort what we can use, what can go to NCBAM, and what we can share with Greater Vision Outreach ministry.”

Greater Vision is another growing BCH ministry that serves at-risk families through support with food, clothing, furniture, and guidance from trained client advocates that help families through a season of financial instability.

Craft workshops such as chalk painting have become another way Fancy Finds connects with and serves others. For a nominal fee, participants attend workshops where supplies, instructions, and guidance are given to repurpose items they take home with them.

Fancy Finds is open 10 am to 1 pm each Tuesday through Thursday. It is also open the first and third Friday and Saturday of each month from 10 am to 5 pm.

Creative, caring, and kind, Fancy Finds is a place full of people and stories—all with a purpose to repurpose, both furniture and lives.



# Love is a cure for skinned knees—and skinned spirits

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

The weather can be quite confusing these days. One day it is cold and two days later the temperature is in the 80s. One day the children on our campus are wearing coats and jackets and the next day they are begging their cottage parents to wear shorts and go barefooted. It's tempting to believe that summer is here, only to wake up the next morning to frost. I recently spoke at Community Center Baptist Church in Halifax. They were all talking about the possibility they had planted too soon and were having to cover their tomatoes and other plants with jars to protect them from frost. It had been a long time since I had heard people talk about covering their plants with jars. It reminded me of my childhood. The memory of the coolness of spring giving way to summer flooded my mind and took me back to those earlier days.

Summer was a time filled with lots of fun activities. Flying kites, fishing, swimming, playing in a strategically placed sprinkler, riding bicycles, playing baseball, eating homemade ice cream, attending family reunions and summer camp, taking trips to the beach and to the mountains, and, of course, enjoying Vacation Bible School (sometimes more than one VBS) were all among my favorite things. Do you remember these wonderful activities enjoyed as a child? To this day homemade ice cream remains at the top of my list!

There is another thing that goes along with these activities. You might not think of it at first, but when I remind you, you will have an immediate recollection—skinned knees and elbows.

During summers, I often visited my cousins who lived in Galatia near Seaboard. My Uncle Leroy was a farmer. There was always work to be done, lots of good food prepared by Aunt Eloise, and fun to be had.

One visit, my cousins decided to teach me how to ride a bicycle. I eagerly climbed on the bike. With one cousin on each side guiding me, we took off. After running with me a short distance, they let go. I quickly realized they forgot one important lesson—they did not teach me how to stop. But too late, I rode the bike into the farm truck resulting in a nasty cut on the chin which required a number of stitches. I still have

the scar to prove it.

I'm sure you have a similar story. If you were a young child, you ran to your mom or dad for a hug, a band-aid, and tender assurance. Then returning to whatever you were doing, you hardly gave it another thought. A mother's or father's hug and a band-aid works wonders.

The visible cuts and scrapes of childhood are easy to see and respond to with a little TLC. However, emotional "scrapes" are harder to see. While the summer may be the season of physical scrapes and bruises, emotional hurts occur year round—day and night. Emotional wounds are often unnoticed or even ignored. While physical wounds may come from riding bicycles or playing baseball, emotional wounds are inflicted by those often entrusted to provide loving care. One of the most common, most hurtful, and the easiest to prevent, are wounds caused by words. Mean words belittle, discount, and leave deep wounds that remain for years. When children are shamed, their spirits are wounded—although no one around may notice. Emotional wounds hurt, but the good news is that they can also heal.

Children are emotionally wounded and "skinned up" by events that they do not control or understand. It is not unusual for children to blame themselves for bad things that happen.

Children can be wounded by neglect. Parents who are depressed, addicted to destructive substances, or lost in selfish habits have little to give in the way of tenderness, reassurance, and support. Neglect wounds just as deeply as physical abuse. It creates feelings of worthlessness and helplessness that follows a child for years.

I wish healing could be instantaneous. I wish a band-aid could heal all wounds. However, like my chin after my run in with the farm truck, it can often take more than stitches and a few weeks to heal. The strong "love" stitches at Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) come in the form of wonderful cottage parents, foster parents, case managers, and many other Christian staff that are there each day when the unseen scrapes and bruises from the past become too much to bear.

It is amazing what this love can do. Never underestimate the power of love to heal emotional wounds. Maybe it is a mother's touch, a cottage parent's patience, a foster parent's kind words. It could be a neighbor, a Sunday School teacher, an aunt, or "you" who recognizes an emotional hurt and remember your own experience of being loved into wellness and healing.

Have a great summer and watch out for those opportunities to help out with "skinned knees" and "skinned spirits." Remember our children are counting on you to be there to pick them up when they fall down, both physically and spiritually. **Thank you for the difference you make!**

Summer can be a time when our donations go down and our expenses go up. Your help is critical at this time. With VBS just around the corner, it is a great time to teach your children the importance of helping other children. We would love to send a mission speaker to share our story with the children attending your VBS. Call now to schedule your BCH mission speaker and learn how the children in your church can be a part of changing the lives of other children whose lives have been so impacted by "skinned knees" and "skinned spirits."

**Thank you!** I look forward to hearing from you soon! You can email me at [bbgray@bchfamily.org](mailto:bbgray@bchfamily.org) or call me on my cell at 336-689-4442.





# God, thank you for chocolate cake.

Four-year-old Sophie took bite after delicious bite of the cake given to her by her cottage mom—something not possible earlier. Only days ago, Sophie’s bed was the back seat of a car. Her family was homeless because of her parents’ substance abuse. Any food to eat would have been welcome for Sophie’s growling stomach—***much less a slice of cake.***

***Because of summer sponsors like you,*** Sophie and other North Carolina children will have a safe home, experience fun-filled summer activities, and be able to depend on cottage and foster parents to show them the love they need—***sometimes love in the form of chocolate cake.***

***Please make your summer gift today.***

## Use my gift to bring a child hope!

\$100    \$250    \$500    \$1,000    \$2,500    \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Any size gift!

To make a gift by check: Print your information below and mail this form with your check.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

You can make your gift by credit card at [bchfamily.org/summer](http://bchfamily.org/summer) or scan the QR code. You can also phone **Faith Frazier at 336-474-1312.**

Yes, I would like to receive email updates.    Contact me with information on how to prepare a Christian Will.

I have included Baptist Children’s Homes in my estate.





# Numerous opportunities available to help frail aging

By **Brian Roberts**, NCBAM Call Center Director

**W**itnessing the day-to-day lives of older individuals being positively impacted by NCBAM (North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry) and the dedicated statewide church volunteers who work alongside on a regular basis has been truly inspiring. I have likened the NCBAM Call Center and Call Center Specialists to the beating heart of a living, breathing, life-changing ministry. And if the Call Center is the heartbeat, then volunteers are undoubtedly the lifeblood that sustains the ministry.

As the senior population in North Carolina continues to rise, volunteers play an even more vital role in helping NCBAM fulfill its mission. Volunteers are the reason why NCBAM is able to provide assistance with essential services such as home repairs, transportation, wheelchair ramps, smoke alarms, friendly

visits, and more, helping aging adults maintain their independence and quality of life. Volunteers offer hands-on assistance and companionship many frail aging desperately need.

When photographs of completed projects from our clients arrive, I experience the joy of seeing the

smiles on faces. It reminds me of the unseen heroes of the ministry—volunteers contributing through NCBAM's home accessibility efforts. Many seniors face challenges in maintaining their homes due to physical limitations, health issues, or financial constraints. Partner volunteers help in a variety of ways by offering their time and skills. Volunteers make it possible for seniors to live in safe and comfortable environments, enhancing their overall well-being.

In addition to home repairs, volunteers play a crucial role in providing transportation. Many elderly individuals are no longer able to drive or have limited access to public transportation, making it difficult for them to reach medical appointments, grocery stores, and other essential destinations. Volunteers offer rides to seniors, ensuring that they can access the



Volunteers from First Baptist Wilmington pass on knowledge to the next generation of ramp builders as they work together on a client's ramp in New Hanover County. Below, David Faircloth, second from left, and members of Mebane First Baptist Church's Handyman Ministry build a wheelchair ramp for an Alamance County client using funds from NCBAM's ARPA/PTRC Grant.

services and resources needed.

Another vital way in which volunteers support NCBAM is through our toll-free Hope Line (866-578-4673). Many seniors are at risk of social isolation and loneliness, especially if they live alone or have limited contact with family and friends. Trained volunteers answer the phone daily from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and provide companionship and conversation—a listening ear to the aging in need. These interactions brighten their days and help combat feelings of isolation, improving mental and emotional well-being.

The impact of volunteers cannot be overstated. Their dedication and compassion make a tangible difference in the lives of thousands across North Carolina. Without our volunteers' commitment, many of the programs and services offered by NCBAM would simply not be possible, leaving seniors without the help and resources needed to thrive.

One such volunteer who has made a sig-

nificant impact is David Faircloth, a retired insurance company owner and coordinator for Operation Inasmuch and the Handyman Ministry at First Baptist Mebane. David has dedicated more than six years as a church volunteer. His commitment to building ramps for NCBAM's clients has forged deep relationships, bringing the aging not only physical assistance but spiritual comfort through shared moments of prayer and the gifting of a new Bible at the completion of each project.

"Working with others associated with BAM has been a rewarding experience," David shares. "[This experience] is providing me with encouragement as I'm in my 70s and understand the challenges our seniors face."

The need for volunteers will only increase as the number of seniors increases. NCBAM is always looking for individuals willing to donate their time and skills to support the frail aging. Whether one has experience with home repairs, means to provide transportation, or simply enjoys spending time with older adults, there are numerous opportunities to get involved.

If you are interested in partnering with NCBAM, visit [ncbam.org](http://ncbam.org) or call 877-506-2226 for more information on how you can contribute to the mission of providing aging

adults "help for the journey." By volunteering, you can make a meaningful impact on the lives of seniors in North Carolina, ensuring they receive the care and support they need to live healthy, happy, and fulfilling lives. Your contribution, no matter how big or small, makes a difference!



Brian Roberts



# Yavonka tackles addiction, choosing life over death

By Jim Edminson, Editor

There are people living lives that are difficult to imagine. They are too tragic. How can one understand being discarded at the age of nine months? To have the people who are supposed to love and protect, only abuse? Instead of a future of hope and promise that every child deserves, a childhood head injury, abandonment, and sexual violence set Yavonka on a course of addiction. Hers is a story traversing darkness, best understood through the miraculous light of God's healing.

Forty-five-year-old Yavonka is sober. She started smoking marijuana at age 14, drinking alcohol at 17, and using hard drugs at age 26. Now an ardent AA participant, she marked on March 7 the milestone of sobriety for over a month. It was a goal she needed to reach—to be clean—before attending her first Birth Mother's Retreat set for the weekend of March 22 in Charlotte.

"I was so nervous meeting the other moms," Yavonka admits. "But I reminded myself— 'I'm friendly. I can do this'—I put on a big smile, and they took me in with open arms."

It was Christian Adoption Services' (CAS) 27th annual retreat. The event is an opportunity to celebrate the courageous moms who chose adoption and placed their child for adoption with CAS. This year, a record number of 42 birth moms gathered. Some like Yavonka were attending for the very first time, while others have attended the three-day event year after year.

"We design the retreat each year to be an exceptional experience for each participant," CAS Lead Director of Domestic Adoptions Sheryl Naylor says. "This is our opportunity to be a blessing to our birth mothers. It is a remarkable time of emotional and spiritual healing and encouragement—where the moms are loved and affirmed."

CAS walks along side and assists women during their pregnancies. The ministry also

offers post-placement care that includes counseling, virtual support groups, and the annual birth mother's retreat. CAS helps women process the grief that can be associated with adoption.

"It is a long-term commitment on our part," Naylor asserts. "What an honor it is to walk with our birth moms as we help them look toward



Yavonka has called Charlotte home since she was 14 years old. She was incarcerated the first time when she was 16. At age 26, she was using hard drugs and living a cycle of going in and out of drug and alcohol detox centers. Now committed to being sober and drug free, below, Yavonka attended her first Birth Mother's Retreat. She is living a life of sobriety for herself as well as for the two children she placed for adoption through CAS.

their futures with hope."

Saturday's rain threatened plans for the birth mom's excursion to Carowinds. Yavonka welcomed the alternative of going to a nearby mall. She was hiding the fact that the shoes she wore hurt her feet and she dreaded walking all day at the theme park. Armed with a donated gift card each birth mom received, she made a beeline for a shoe store, found a comfortable pair of shoes that fit, and quickly discarded her worn pair in the nearest trash bin. This was a blessing she had not anticipated.

Yavonka is not a complainer, but blessings are not something she is accustomed to. Life as an addict is dangerous. She has overdosed six times; she flat-lined in 2020. But after each incident, she went back on the streets, wandering without purpose. She was homeless, doing whatever she needed to do to get the next fix. It was a life she now chooses to leave behind.

"Being sober is about life over death," Yavonka says. "I feel my life is finally stable. There are bad things in my neighborhood, but I want nothing to do with them. I'm learning to like how I feel

and discovering what I really want. Recovery looks good on me."

Yavonka has semi-open adoptions with her daughter and son, meaning CAS mediates updates and potential visits. The few days spent with the children after their births are etched in her mind. She recites the birth dates and her daughter's birth stats: "She weighed 8 pounds 2 ounces and was 20 inches long. You don't forget."

Yavonka is thankful for their adoptive families. She receives news and photos regularly and rests in the hope of their bright futures—futures she places in God's hands.

"God is now first in my life," she confesses. "Talking with Him is as important to me as breathing. He is essential to my recovery."

Before the retreat ends, the birth moms gather in a circle one last time. They have shared their stories, feeling a connection that comes from walking similar paths. Seventeen have made decisions to follow Jesus.

"I'm glad my daughter and son know who I am," Yavonka says. "I'm glad they will know me as someone who chose life for them and for me, a life free of drugs."

This is God's transformational power at work.

*(If you or someone you know is pregnant and considering adoption, call the CAS helpline at 1-800-453-1011 or text 704-619-3531 or email [pregnant@christianadopt.org](mailto:pregnant@christianadopt.org).)*





# God turns couple's hearts toward Philippine adoption

By Jim Edminson, Editor

(Continued from page 1.)

**L**isa and Nate Curtis met in college. They were both involved in *Young Life*. Nate rededicated his life to Christ and became a group leader. Lisa gravitated to the group's emphasis on building personal relationships with Jesus. Friends knew the duo would become "best friends."

They graduated college, married, and began promising careers. The couple put down roots in Atlanta, roots they did not plan to pull up anytime soon.

"God's plans are not always our plans," Nate chuckles. "I began working for a company in Chapel Hill, commuting back and forth from Atlanta. Then, Lisa called to tell me she had a great job offer—but she would need to move to North Carolina."

They pulled up roots. The dust seemed to settle from the bustling beginning of their life together. They bought a home near the baseball stadium with plenty of room to start a family. The couple wanted to make their dream of having children come true.

"It was heartbreaking at first when we did not become pregnant," Lisa remembers. "We were seriously considering fostering and explored respite care, but later realized God was preparing our hearts for adopting older children."

The couple planned for a domestic adoption. They found Christian Adoption Services (CAS) online and signed up for a virtual information meeting. They listened intently, Lisa taking



Above, Nate and Lisa Curtis traveled to Manila in the Philippines to unite with their adopted son and daughter, Alex and Angel, on March 25, 2022. The couple found the guidance and help they needed to navigate the adoption process through CAS's International Adoption program. Today, Angel, age 11, and Alex, age 12, are thriving in their new family.

well up in Lisa's eyes. She reached for the mouse and clicked the camera off. "I broke down. International adoption had not been on our radar at all, but I knew God was doing something."

Lisa and Nate were profoundly moved. They would adopt a child from the Philippines. When emails came listing children, the couple prayed over each one.

"A dear friend told us that as she prayed for our future child or children, the name Seraphina—angel—came to her. We started praying the same, praying that God would make it unmistakable to us who our 'Seraphina' was."

CAS is Hague accredited for intercountry adoptions and is approved with the Philippines for international adoptions. CAS has a rich history of working with the Central Authority, National Authority for Child Care (formerly ICAB) of the Philippines.

From the start, Lisa and Nate were open to adopting siblings. Philippine adoptions often come as sibling groups with older children, not infants. As they reviewed children's profiles and prayed, both agreed their hearts were set on nine-year-old Angel and older brother Alex.

Then COVID came and everything was more

difficult. Depending on God's provision became even more important. There were mishaps with documents, possible quarantines in the Philippines, and the uncertainties of COVID testing and returning to the U.S. But on March 25, 2022, Angel, Alex, Lisa, and Nate were united as a family.

"It is hard to describe what we felt as our children came running to us in that first meeting," Lisa says. "I remember thinking, this must be what heaven feels like."

It is often the waiting that takes its toll. Couples plan, dot all the i's and cross all the t's, they train and prepare to meet the challenges they will face as children and parents adjust to their new lives with each other.

"Waiting can be the most difficult part," Laura Nichols-Virgilio says. "I tell families to trust God. Trust in His timing and see how in all things 'God works for the good of those who love him.' His timing is always about what is best—for both children and families."

Growing a family through adoption can be scary, but CAS walks with couples through the process, tackling the downs and celebrating the victories together, creating a bond of trust and purpose.

"The Curtis family encourages me," Nichols-Virgilio says. "They are so gracious and stay in touch. Seeing how God has worked in their lives and then for them to share

their adoption story, reminds us all of God's love for children around the world. I love it."

Two years after becoming a family, routines shape the Curtis's day. There are Alex's soccer games on Saturday, and dance practice keeps Angel on her toes. They curl up together on the sofa for movie nights, and they read bible stories before bedtime. It is a family's dream come true—one only God could envision.



notes. When the presentation on domestic adoptions was over, CAS's Lead Director of International Adoptions Laura Nichols-Virgilio began her presentation. As Laura told the stories of the children and defined the needs, tears began to



# CAS staff member shares first open adoption story

By Jim Edminson, Editor



CAS Domestic Adoption Coordinator/Confidential Intermediary Lauren Gilmore with her family in 2021: left to right, daughter Christian, son Elijah, husband Jeff, Lauren, youngest son Xaviour, daughter Laelle, and son Gabriel Tvedt. Below, during their first visit in 2003, Lauren holds toddler Gabriel. Gabriel's adoptive mom Laura Tvedt, left, holds Lauren's four-week-old daughter Christian.

**N**ineteen-year-old Lauren sat alone in an airplane full of passengers. She listened as the jet engines roared and the plane raced down the runway. She felt the nose of the plane rise as it lifted off the tarmac. She was returning home.

The former high school homecoming queen felt trapped in the reoccurring thought, "How could I have let this happen?" She was pregnant.

Lauren knew before she left for Spain. She and her sister Raven were enrolled in a study abroad program and in the "spirit of continuing to make bad decisions," she did not tell her parents.



Now that they knew, they insisted she come back to North Carolina. Four hours into the flight, the pilot announced the plane was returning to Madrid. Her world turned upside

down. Terrorists had attacked the World Trade Center. It was September 11, 2001.

Lauren's mind raced. Terrorists. Pregnancy. Panicked parents. She went back to Sevilla not

knowing when she could return to the United States. She attended her classes and finished the semester.

"My faith was important to me," she says. "I had always done my best to put Christ at the center of my life. But when I went to college, I began doing things I knew I should not be doing. I began dating a guy—someone I should not have been with."

Abortion was never even considered. Lauren imagined she would parent her child. Then her mother brought up adoption. Lauren began considering the possibility as she thought about what would be best for her child. She did not trust the birth father. It would be a chaotic life.

"I returned home in December, six months pregnant," Lauren recalls. "I looked up Christian Adoption Services and called. Sheryl Naylor came and explained adoption and what it would look like. I felt no condemnation, only God's love." *(Continued on page 10.)*



# Open adoption brings families together for Gabriel

By Jim Edminson, Editor

(Continued from page 9.)

There are always questions when considering adoption. Lauren worried her baby might be adopted by someone who wouldn't love him. She wanted to know her child would be adopted by a family who kept his best interests at heart: "It was my biggest hesitation. 'Who was going to adopt my baby?'"

Lauren found out about something new. "Open adoption" had been legalized in North Carolina in 2001. It was 2002, only a few months before her baby's birth.

"An open adoption allows the birth mom to pick the family," Lauren says. "You get to meet the adoptive family and have a relationship with them in varying degrees. This was my answer. This would be Christian Adoption Services' (CAS) first open adoption."

Lauren felt peace. She was not placing her child and walking away. "People associate adoption with a child not being wanted. It was just the opposite. I made the decision to protect my baby from an uncertain, possibly harmful future. I chose an open adoption to be involved in his life—so he would know he was wanted and loved."

Finding a family that was willing to have an open adoption was not easy. It was new and families in the state were unsure. Lauren ended up choosing a couple from Minnesota. (Adoptive families now embrace open adoption as best practice and CAS no longer recruits or accepts adoptive families from outside the Carolinas.)

A week before Lauren was due, Laura and Joel Tvedt came and spent the entire week with her.

"Immediately, we fell in love with each other," Lauren recalls. "They were loving and sweet people. I felt God affirming our decisions every step of the way."

On March 28 at 10:32 p.m., on Joel's birthday, Gabriel was born.

Lauren was released from the hospital and Gabriel went with his family. The Tvedts stayed two more weeks, easing the separation for Lauren.

Laura began emailing immediately when they returned home. She and Lauren agreed to their first meeting after the adoption when Gabriel was 19 months old. The Tvedts had come back



Above, Lauren and Jeff, their four children and son Gabriel, Lauren's mom and dad Rick and Karen Rasette, and Lauren's sister Raven and her daughter Kinsley squeeze into Lauren's oldest daughter Christian's dorm room at Campbell University's freshman move-in day. Below, Gabriel, and left to right, Kinsley, Laelle, and Xaviour.



to North Carolina to adopt another child.

Lauren was building her life. Healing was taking place. She enrolled at NC State to become a social worker. She met, fell in love, and married Jeff Gilmore. They have four children and have been married for 21 years. After 16 years working for Child Protective Services, Lauren began serving at CAS three years ago.

Laura and Lauren kept up with each other's children, what their interests were, and how they were doing in school. The families vacationed together. Laura and Lauren were determined to be a part of each other's lives despite the distance between their homes.

"Here were two families who came together

for the purpose of one child, Gabriel," Lauren says. "We just became one big family."

The last time Lauren saw Laura, she and Gabriel came to celebrate Lauren's daughter Laelle's first birthday. Gabriel was 15. The siblings are both March babies, born 21 days apart.

"We had so much fun together," Lauren

remembers. "I had no idea how in just a few months it would all change when Gabriel called, devastated. Through tears, he told me Laura was in the hospital and wasn't expected to make it through the night. She was 42."

Gabriel had lost his mother. Laura had loved and nurtured him to be the young man he was becoming. Lauren had lost her close friend. The Gilmores were on the next plane.

"We spent time together—our families grieving," Lauren says. "Later, I would call Gabriel and text. We prayed together and I shared Bible verses. Laura and Joel had showed him Jesus, and now it was his faith that would pull him through."

After graduation, Gabriel came to North Carolina to attend college. He is 22 and has begun a career here. He returns to Minnesota to be with his family three or four times a year.

"Grief and loss coexist with hope, joy, and peace," Lauren asserts. "I made some bad decisions. I was completely broken and went through heartache, but I never regret placing Gabriel for adoption. God did this right."

Lauren now counsels pregnant women who are placing their babies for adoption. Having gone full circle, she understands. Adoption is a redemptive story, one where God restores and heals brokenness. There is no condemnation, only God's love.



# Remember Mom and Dad

*"Honor your father and mother."*

*We are given the gift to recall the days of childhood, to relive the times when a loving parent's embrace sustained us as a young adult during times of heartache, to remember conversations with our mom or dad in the silence of sweet friendship as we have grown older, too. Keeping those we love in our thoughts and daily intentions strengthens families, teaching our children about the sacredness of life. The simple act of remembering Mom and Dad is glorifying to God.*

## Join us in giving thanks for moms and dads.

Using the coupon below, make a gift that offers hope to a needy child in honor or memory of your parent(s). In the August issue of **Charity & Children**, yours and your parent's name(s) will be published in a commemorative insert celebrating moms and dads.



### Example of inside name listings:

#### MOTHER

**In honor** of Mrs. Edith G. Banks  
Given by Joseph and Mary Banks  
**In memory** of Jane W. Smith  
Given by Her Children

#### FATHER

**In memory** of Edward R. Morrison  
Given by Edith Morrison  
**In honor** of William F. Hughes  
Given by Jennifer Phillips

#### MOTHER & FATHER

**In memory** of Mr. & Mrs. R. Jones  
Given by Daughters Beth and Sarah

**Hurry!  
Deadline is  
July 1.**

**Questions?  
For more information,  
call 336-474-1209.**

### Remember Mom and Dad! Make an honor or memorial gift.

Please check the appropriate box:  Honor  Memorial

In Honor or Memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Send Notice of Gift to \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

To give by check, please print your information below and mail this form with your check.

To: BCH, PO Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27361 Attn: Mothers/Fathers Day Gift. You can use the enclosed, postage-paid envelope.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

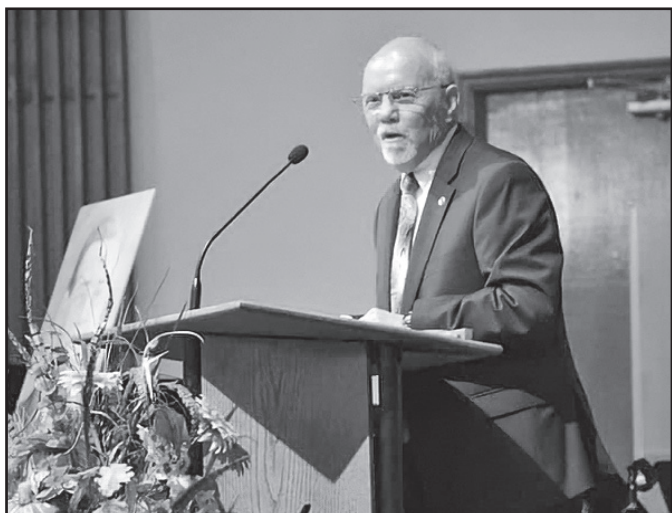
Give by credit card online at [www.bchfamily.org/momanddad](http://www.bchfamily.org/momanddad) or call Faith Frazier at 336-474-1312.



# Speakers welcome opportunities to share at churches

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Managing Editor

Telling the gospel story with churches as well as how the good news is being shared in the lives of the children and families is a passion for Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) team members. The opportunity to speak in worship services, Vacation Bible Schools, and other church events is a vital way to celebrate how God is working through the prayers and support of NC Baptists.



Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) Lewis Smith is one of many representatives that share the BCH ministry with churches throughout the year.

"Having a BCH representative come and speak at a church can be similar to a missionary being invited to give an update about the kingdom work he or she is experiencing," says Brenda Gray, Executive Vice President, Development and Communications. Gray is one of many representatives across BCH's ministry locations who shares in churches.

"When NC Baptists selflessly give of their resources, it is our opportunity to share the return on their investment," she continues. "In this case, that investment is in lives that are

being impacted today and for eternity."

Throughout BCH, and particularly with the Development & Communications Team that Gray oversees, several staff members served as pastors before joining the nonprofit ministry that now impacts lives from infants to the aging.

"It's amazing to see how God has grown BCH throughout the years and to share

that with others," says Lewis Smith who has served as BCH Director of Development, Western Area since 2004. He served as a pastor as well as in full-time children's ministry prior to BCH.

Smith not only enjoys sharing BCH's many different ministries with congregations but also with boys and girls at Vacation Bible Schools.

"When I speak with a VBS, I not only want to challenge children with the gospel but also challenge them to share it with their friends," Smith explains. "And when you see a VBS support BCH, there's just always something special about seeing children helping other children."

## Inviting a Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) speaker:

### What is the best fit for your church?

**The Entire Service(s):** A speaker will prepare a 20 to 25 minute message for your worship service to edify the congregation while providing a BCH mission update.

**A Mission Moment:** A speaker will spend approximately five minutes sharing a mission update and set up a small display table to greet people on the way in and out.

**Small Group/Sunday School Class:** A speaker will share a mission update with your group and ways to pray, volunteer and support the ministry as a class or congregation.

**Vacation Bible School:** A speaker will share an age-appropriate message about BCH and how your children can go on mission for BCH's boys and girls.

Scan the code to invite a speaker or call 336-474-1218.



**We have a spot for your church at our Friends of Children Saturdays!** These one-day mission opportunities invite your small group, youth group, Sunday School class -- any church group -- to help with projects for all ages at our statewide ministry locations. It's a perfect way to be the hands and feet of Jesus to those Baptist Children's Homes serves.

### Spring Opportunities:

- May 4: Camp Duncan, Aberdeen
- May 11: Kennedy Home, Kinston
- May 18: Odum Home, Pembroke

Register at [bchfamily.org/foc](http://bchfamily.org/foc) or the code. You can also call 336-474-1277.





# Update sheets provide information on alumni – Special memories remind alumni of great times

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

**A**n update sheet from Judy **Elaine Norwood Hicks** shows she entered Mills Home (MH) in 1965 as part of one of the largest families ever to enter. The other family members were **Janice, Larry, Linda, Harold, Doris, and Mike Norwood**. While at MH, Judy especially liked activities at church where she could put to good use her knowledge and skill as pianist, vocalist, and violinist. She adjusted well to cottage life and was very fond of the houseparents **Mr. and Mrs. Stevens**. She was also very fond of **Betty McCarty**, the dietitian who not only prepared great meals—she made wonderful brownies for the youngsters. Judy says she especially enjoyed her last Homecoming visit because she was able to reunite with friends **Charles and Clifton Lambreth, Jane Helms Brown** and others. After leaving MH, Judy married and reared two children. She now enjoys time spent with them and her one grandchild.

Judy remembers well how she was helped to overcome homesickness in her early days at the York Cottage. It was there that Jane Helms Brown took her “under her wing,” petted her, and sang to her to help her get over her discomfort. Jane would tell her “everything will be okay.” And it was. From Jane, she learned all the words to the song “Tommy & Laura” and later sang it to her own children. Just before school picture day, Jane, who called Judy “Lil Sis,” used her own curlers to curl Judy’s hair. When Judy reunited with Jane at Homecoming in 2014, she showed her the school picture made that day and they rejoiced at being together again. Widowed and disabled, Judy lives at 815 Snapdragon Rd., Sevierville, TN, 37876.

**Louise Huggins McClure** entered MH in 1943 and graduated in 1949 as a member of the first class to

graduate from Thomasville High School (THS). Her siblings who also lived at MH were **Franklin, Jr., Dorothy, and Rachel**. Louise was an active young lady who loved strutting as a majorette or flag carrier in the band and playing on the girls’ basketball team. After graduation, she met and married Doyce Gilyard McClure and made her home in Burnsville, NC. The couple reared two youngsters and now have three grandchildren and two great grandchildren. Now widowed, Louise is retired from serving as secretary for the Yancey County Schools. She is recovering well from hip surgery so friends can send get-well cards to her at P.O. Box 453, Burnsville, NC 28714. She is the only surviving member of the 1950’s MH Huggins family.

**Chuck Lee Hagler** entered MH in 1981 from Mint Hill, NC, with brothers **Calvin Talbert and James Thompson**. He left in 1985. One thing he learned at MH was to reach out to others and give help to others whenever possible. In the last few years, Chuck has been around at homecoming time and has helped where possible. He loves Homecoming and really enjoys being around old friends again. He still laughs at a homecoming memory of a student/alumni ballgame. He knocked a high ball toward two alumni who ran like crazy to catch it with their eyes focused upward—and all they managed to do was crash into each other.

We had a short paragraph on **Ray Fortenberry** three or four years ago so I was happy to find another update sheet from him which prompted a phone call. Ray entered MH from Cornellius, NC in 1961 and he graduated in 1969. Between those two dates, life at MH was full for him—sometimes fun and adventuresome and sometimes demanding. It was always more secure than what he had known

earlier when he called himself the “Pass Around Kid.” He had a lot to say about his older years at MH when he was able to play football and run track at THS. He also fondly recalled the great social life he enjoyed on campus attending activities at the church, gym and valley. He loved having so many special friends like **Jeanie Helms and Martha Culler**. He also had a lot to say about his work career which began as a student at MH working for **Stevenson’s Grocery**. He married and had two lovely daughters—**Stephanie and Chance**—who have given him three delightful grandchildren. He was proud to speak of his 44-year career in the oil business and was very grateful in speaking of his special friendship with his MH caseworker, **Susan Ray**. Susan was in touch with him the whole time he was in service out of his home country. He will be forever grateful to her. Susan died last December.

I had a delightful phone conversation with alumnus **Richard Rankin** whom we all called “**Dickie**.” He was known as a witty, fun loving member of the class of 1956. He and his brother **Charlie** came to MH from McAdenville, NC in 1945. When he graduated from THS and MH in 1956, that is where he chose to start his adult life. He has been married to **Judith** all these many years and they have two offspring and three grandchildren. He is enjoying retirement from UPS. When he entered MH, he thought he was at an elite college—so after high school, he saw no need to attend another college. He thoroughly enjoyed life on campus and felt it was very special. The last time he attended Homecoming, he rode with **Steve Carver** and thoroughly enjoyed the whole weekend experience. Dickie also spoke very highly of **Mrs. Thaggard**, the housemother who was at the Hutchinson Cottage during his years there. Many times

after a homecoming weekend, he and Steve would take time to visit her at a nursing home in Greensboro. Friends can contact Dickie at this address: 298 Mockingbird Ln. McAdenville, NC, 28101.

Please contact me at [Libsjohnson@triad.rr.com](mailto:Libsjohnson@triad.rr.com) or call at 336-299-7412 if you wish to add or correct an address for your **Charity & Children** subscription. Contact **Sharon DeHart Stiles** to discuss use of the God’s Acre Columbarium by calling 704-685-2443 or mail her at 1588 Elkhart Circle, Gastonia, NC, 28054.

After you read this column, why don’t you send me a list of your Mills Home special memories as **Lynn Carter Rountree** has done with these:

◀ “I remember picking veggies on the farm with Henry, a fine gentleman and even assisted in the birth of a calf to one of our moo moos on the farm.”

◀ “I remember being ‘brand new’ with three other girls at the Huffman Cottage and we got caught smoking up in the attic! Bad mistake! We had to paint the whole kitchen and eating area. I never smoked again in my life!”

◀ “I remember learning how to drive with **Mrs. Ruth Hutchins** in an old beat up truck, driving very slowly of course, and Mrs. Ruth just giggled at me.

◀ “I remember the many times when we skated in the gym having the time of our lives just being with each other and making memories.

◀ “I have nothing but fond memories of growing up at MH. We had many caring and nurturing houseparents. We met Jesus and were baptized and we bonded with many sisters and brothers. Great times!”



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





**Foster child baptized with bio father**  
A foster child in the care of Josh and Charity, an EVERY CHILD foster family, was baptized at the couple's church with his biological father. It is a beautiful picture of co-parenting.



**Twins celebrate Easter Sunday**  
R.L. and Ben, who live at Three Forks Home, part of BCH's Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities Ministry (IDDM) in Zionville, had wonderful Easter Sunday praising a risen savior at Brushy Fork Baptist Church. IDDM helps this special population reach their highest level of independence and offers them community involvement. **Find out more about IDDM and opportunities at [hereismyhome.org](http://hereismyhome.org).**



**Volunteers help at Camp missions day**  
Volunteers of all ages tackled a number of projects at Cameron Boys Camp for "Friends of Children" missions day. More opportunities are available at [bchfamily.org/foc](http://bchfamily.org/foc)



**Association donates Easter baskets**  
The children and special needs adults at BCH had an Easter surprise thanks to the Baptist churches in New South River Association. They donated 1,046 Easter baskets to the ministry.



**Chapman inspires at staff meeting**  
Dr. Gary Chapman shared "The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace" with BCH staff. The author and former pastor graciously communicated wisdom and encouragement.



**Fund established to celebrate Akin**  
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary established The Charlotte Akin Student Aid Fund in honor of the impact of Georgia Baptist Children's Home from Mrs. Akin living there.



**Students collect for missions emphasis**  
Students at Sheets Memorial Christian School collected items for the Food Roundup during their missions emphasis week. They delivered their collection to Mills Home in Thomasville.



**Broyhill Home boy makes big catch**  
While his face cannot be shown because of his privacy, just imagine a smile that is almost as big as the fish he caught from the pond at BCH's Broyhill Home where he lives.

**every CHILD**  
foster & adoption ministry

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

Get connected at [every-child.org](http://every-child.org)

**TURN YOUR CALLING INTO A CAREER**

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

**BCHCAREERS.ORG**

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

Contact Sam Barefoot at [svbarefoot@bchfamily.org](mailto:svbarefoot@bchfamily.org) or call him at 336-474-1224

**Set Your Reminder and Join Us for these Events & Mission Days**

<p><b>MAY</b> 4: NCBAM: Rampin' Up!</p> <p>8 - 11: Ride to Clyde motorcycle charity ride NC Baptist partnership <a href="http://ridetoclyde.com">ridetoclyde.com</a></p> <p>11: Broyhill Home BBQ Festival <a href="http://broyhillbbq.org">broyhillbbq.org</a></p> <p>11: Cameron Boys Camp: Founders Day</p>	<p>11: NCBAM: AAIM State Leadership Conference</p> <p><b>JUNE</b> 19-23: NCBAM: Camp BAM</p> <p><b>AUGUST</b> 24: Hope in Style children's fashion show and silent auction <a href="http://hopeinstyle.org">hopeinstyle.org</a></p>	<p><b>FRIENDS OF CHILDREN SATURDAY MISSIONS</b> Camp Duncan, Aberdeen – May 4 Kennedy Home, Kinston – May 11 Odum Home, Pembroke – May 18</p> <p>For a complete 2024 list of events, registration info and other details, visit <a href="http://bchfamily.com/events">bchfamily.com/events</a></p>
--	---	--

How can we help you? Contact 1.800.476.3669 or [bchfamily.org/referral](http://bchfamily.org/referral) >>>

For each person's specific need, Baptist Children's Homes offers a unique ministry that is prepared to help. Reach out today.

**SECC**  
State Employees Combined Campaign

**#3641**



# C&C editor to deliver Homecoming sermon — The founding of Kennedy Home remembered

By JOHN THOMPSON, 102 Maritime Court, Havelock, NC 28532 (252) 671-3515 jbthompson43@gmail.com

Come one, come all! Mark your calendars and make plans to attend this year's Kennedy Home Alumni Homecoming set for June 1 and 2! This is always a great time to visit with many of our friends from the past and celebrate all the things God has done. We have a special treat this year for Sunday morning's worship service. **Charity & Children Editor Jim Edminson** will deliver the Homecoming sermon. Mr. Edminson marked his 24th year in 2024. His anniversary is June 3 and he will begin his 25th year as editor. **John Haymes Mills** was the editor when the paper was first printed in July 1887. Jim is the second longest tenured editor only surpassed by **Archibald Johnson** who took the job in 1895 and was editor for the next 39 years. Jim always has an insightful and enjoyable column on the back page of **C&C** that many of us read every issue. It is very clear that he loves his family as well as he loves all the Children's Homes' work that goes on around our state. I know you will join me in welcoming him on June 2 and look forward to hearing his message.

Kennedy Home Alumni Homecoming is the first weekend of June. I know I say it every year, but let's try to have the largest crowd ever. You need to be making your motel reservations as soon as possible so you can be there on Saturday and Sunday. I will be leading the congregational singing in worship at the church on Sunday morning. There will be a choir practice between Sunday School and morning worship hour. **Donna Daniels Wade** will lead the choir this year. She was a very good piano student. She has made some special CDs and even has written a book entitled: **Wisteria Trees and Honeybees**. One of

the choir selections will be a song that Donna wrote about coming back to Kennedy Home at "homecoming."

Donna and her husband will also be leading the group fun time on Saturday night at the gym after the business meeting. Bring your favorite CD and sing it for everyone. **Alumni President Larry Gilliam** and the alumni board have planned a great weekend for all of us. Bring your whole family so we all can meet your children and grandchildren.

Way back in 1895, Mr. Mills, founder and first general manager of the orphanage, recommended that the Baptists in North Carolina should have a home for children in the eastern part of the state to serve the children in that area. **Mr. and Mrs. William Lafayette Kennedy** and his wife lived at Cedar Dell mansion, just outside of Kinston. They had a huge farm consisting of 1,200 acres. In 1912, the Kennedys decided to give their farm to use for a children's home. They would remain living in the beautiful mansion on the property. It is told that Mr. Kennedy would sit on the front porch of Cedar Dell and watch the children play. He and his wife were never blessed with their own children but gave everything they had to care for hurting children.

After receiving the property, the orphanage Board got busy and constructed the Biggs and Lenoir Cottages. Biggs Cottage was also used as the dining hall. Lenoir had one room that was used for the campus school. It is told that Mrs. Kennedy saw the need for one of these buildings and gave some of her diamonds to build Lenoir. She later became very ill and the builders rushed up with completing the building. On May 10, 1918, the builders told Mrs. Kennedy that the building

was finished. That very night, she went to be with the Lord. The Kennedys have a family graveyard near the mansion. When you are visiting the campus, be sure to go and see it. In 1917, the Board of Trustees raised money to build a chapel on the property. It was finished in 1919. It had three classrooms along with the sanctuary.

Did you know that it is three miles from the front gate to the back of the Kennedy Home property at the Neuse River? I walked it many times with **Rev. Roger Williams**, director of Kennedy Home when my family was there. Rev. Williams wanted **Anne Wilkerson**, a social worker on the campus and me, to go to Baldhead Mountain to represent Kennedy Home during a training week to show how a child faces a whole different life living on a campus and in a home full of children. That was some experience to remember. We didn't sleep in a building the whole week. We slept in tents and learned to come off the side of a mountain holding a rope. I will never forget that experience. I lost 17 pounds that week.

Look what I found! I was reading over a **Charity & Children** from way back in May of 1980 and saw the name of **Nanette Maready**. She was the daughter of **Louise and Earl Maready** who were at Kennedy Home when I served. Nanette was a very active girl in all the activities of the campus—I always thought it would be mighty hard to live in a cottage and share your parents with 12 or so children. The article stated the following: "Nanette Maready, who will be graduating from North Lenoir High School in Kinston, has been included in the listing, **Who's Who Among American High School Students**. She was a member of the National Honor Society in both junior and

senior high school and received an award for Academic Excellence in English on the Gifted and Talented level. In the fall, she will attend Wayne Community College."

Nanette, I am so proud of you. Not only did you grow up in a cottage with your parents as houseparents, but you excelled in your academics.

**Calling all ministers who served in the Kennedy Home Baptist Church!** Please take the time to write an article for me to use in my column about your "calling" and "service" to work at Kennedy Home. If you are reading this article and your father was pastor and has now moved on to heaven, please write an article in their stead for me to use. I think this should make for excellent reading.

**How can you help a cottage where wonderful children live?** Food is always needed. There is no longer a dairy or meat store on campus. It would be a great big help if your Sunday School class would send some gift cards for the houseparents to use at the grocery store in town and to buy meats and other perishables. If your class wants to give canned goods, buy the gallon size. This would be enough for one meal. Cottages are always in need of things like napkins, paper towels, toilet paper, etc. Talk to your Sunday School class about taking this idea on for a project from time to time. They also need items like notebook paper, pencils, and pens.

**REMEMBER:** We are looking for a huge crowd at Homecoming. I hope to see you there. — jt



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



# Heralding a heritage—being a blessing from the Lord

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Catfish Town was our destination of choice as a young family of three. Located in downtown Baton Rouge, the huge venue felt like a carnival—like a European open-air market. On weekends, the place bustled with energy and excitement, and with just a few dollars, we could have a terrific adventure. We walked the levee along the Mississippi River toward the throbbing heartbeat of the city, experiencing the loud colors and vibrant music long before we arrived at our port of call. We were never alone; people in pairs and clusters ranged along the 13-mile long levee path in the direction of Catfish Town, passing LSU where we lived in married housing, and occasionally we met people going away from the revelry, heading to their cars after filling up on the festivities.

Most often, toddler Kyle strode between his parents, swinging linked hands, pulling and hurrying us forward. Sometimes, we went too slowly for his liking, and he stepped out ahead. One memorable weekend (that remains in our family's most-shared-stories category to this day!), our son, who never met a stranger, sauntered up to a couple coming our way. He extended his hand as he reached them and said, "Hi! My name's Kyle!" Looking back at us, he continued, nodding his head left then right, "This one's Jim and this one's Kathy!" The people smiled big smiles, shook his hand, and gave their names back to him. He acknowledged them and kept on going. The man told me through his smile, "That's a fine young man you have there. Do you think he'll go into politics or sales?" The woman added, "He will be a huge success, wherever life takes him!"

I am writing this column on Kyle's birthday. My son burst into my life in the spring, on the day after Easter, at the time just between afternoon and evening. Life-changing does not begin to

explain how the moment became momentous.

Even now, it is difficult to imagine a more perfect first child. I did all the first-time parent things, like counting fingers and toes, feeling the incredibly soft baby cheeks, the downy drift of black hair. I remember my thankful heart growing exponentially every time I went by his little crib, pausing often, my hand touching his heart and feeling his warm breath as he exhaled (just to make sure).

He is precious to me. I am grateful that I have a son. That son. Kyle.

My dad was a first child. But he and his mother were abandoned by his biological father. There were days when little to no food was on the table and he began picking cotton when he was 12 years old to help pay bills and buy groceries. It was a life that promised little to no heritage to herald.

His mom eventually remarried. Dad's stepfather taught him to spell his last name E-d-m-i-n-s-o-n, although that was not the correct spelling. Purposeful or not, the outcome was that upon signing with the military, Dad's way of spelling his name became his legal name. When the family learned of the error, it didn't matter anymore; too many legal documents, military service, marriage license, birth certificates verified that our family name is Edminson. Heritage mattered to my parents, and they counted that heritage by our name, starting with the two of them.

The psalmist declares, "Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are

children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them" (127:3-5). There were times in his life that Dad felt alone, one man against the world. When he and Mom established their home together, all of that changed.

I have one brother, and he

has five sons. My nephew Trey has a son and two adopted sons who bear the family name. When Kyle was born, I realized how very important it was to me to have that lineage passing down in my family, too. Now Kyle has sons, and the name E-d-m-i-n-s-o-n is passed along. I am glad of that gift—a heritage my father gave me. Lord willing, I will know the blessing of seeing the next generation of those who bear our name.

Catfish Town is but a memory now, and I and my son live in different states with no levees, no Mighty Mississippi flowing through our towns. But Kyle continues to stride through life, confident and strong, meeting all with a firm handshake and characteristic smile. As I watch, he is there, just ahead of me, making a difference in the lives of his own family, heralding the name Edminson, being that heritage, that blessing from the Lord.




Kyle with sons Stuart and Roger

**2024 VBS Missions**

**VBS can help change children's lives!**

Plan to connect children during your *Vacation Bible School's* mission offering by collecting *Miles of Pennies* or *Quarts of Quarters*. Share with your VBS boys and girls how prayers and support changes children's lives.

Whatever the theme, make BCH the mission. Download resources at [bchkids.org](http://bchkids.org).



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