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# Charity & Children

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



@bchfamily

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## Couple puts adoption process into the hands of God

By Jim Edminson, Editor

...God was preparing us for a little boy who had not even been born.

Photo: Darby Kennedy Photography

Waiting and adopting seem to go together. But Sara and Kyle Warren would prefer the old adage “things worth having are worth waiting for.” After marrying in 2010, the couple not only began a life together, they started on a nine-year journey that would lead to the adoption of their son Lukas.

“Pregnancy for us was elusive, despite our efforts,” says Sara. “It was difficult the day

we decided to stop trying.”

Kyle is accustomed to challenges. He was born with VATER Syndrome—several birth defects that occur in conjunction with one another. He has only one kidney, scoliosis, and malformation of his arms and hands. He has had 26 surgeries in his lifetime. Despite the heartache of learning that he and Sara could not conceive, the couple determined to not give up their dream of having a family.

“I never liked the word no and believed

there would be a way,” asserts Kyle. “From a young age, I have trusted God as I lived the life He gave me. I have believed when one door closes, another one opens.”

In 2016, the couple turned their minds and hearts to adoption and began a new path on their journey. Home studies, volumes of paper work, and creating a Family Profile Book were just the first steps to what would become a longer process than they imagined.

(Continued on page 8.)



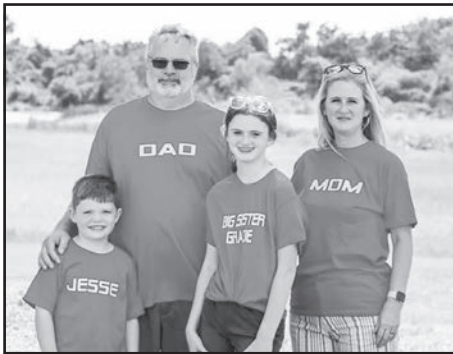
# God growing families through foster and adoption

The EVERY CHILD foster and adopt initiative (*every-child.org*), in partnership with NC Baptists, is specifically designed to assist children in foster care who cannot be reunited with biological families. Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) staff come alongside churches to train and license couples in their congregations to become foster families and foster-to-adopt families for these children.

BCH has trained and licensed 362 couples to date and served

736 children since beginning, and 54 children have joined families through adoptions and guardianships. With more than 10,000 boys and girls in the NC foster care system, it is vital to continue demonstrating God's love to those in need.

**Note:** In upcoming editions, the families pictured will share their inspirational foster care stories.



Uljuja Family



Caudle Family



Brown Family



Brummer Family



**Shaw Family:** Nathan and Kimberly Shaw have a strong heart for foster care and adoption. They have adopted internationally and became licensed foster parents in October 2020. They have fostered several children and most recently adopted two sisters: Amilli and CeCe, celebrating their adoption in May 2023.



Fruge Family



Light Family



Stanley Family



Stoker Family



**Bowden Family:** Brandy Bowden lives in Waynesville with her daughter Amyiah and became a foster parent in September of 2019. On May 15, 2023, after 1,184 days in foster care, Kiara officially became a Bowden.

**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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# Camper Killian learns life lessons by building tent

By **Jason Sullivan**, Assistant Director, Cameron Boys Camp & Education Director, Wilderness Camping

From their imaginations, the boys at Cameron Boys Camp put tent ideas on paper. They draw a front view, a side view, and a top view. For something like a cooking tent, the boys create a floor plan showing where the mud oven, tables, coolers for fresh food, and other items will be located. Several hands go into making adjustments—it is never one boy's creation. Killian is a new camper. He is not as confident. Even so, his opinions hold just as much weight as the most experienced guy. Once the group feels their design meets muster, drawings are handed over to supervision.

Supervisors make sure the design is safe and achievable and then return the plans with a stamp of approval. Each boy then draws the tent for himself. This gives clarity to the project, ownership, and the boys receive school credit. Killian is helped when needed—no camper is left to lag behind. With completed blueprints, campers calculate the pole lengths and quantities using all three views of the tent. With the list in hand, they march into the woods with axes and saws.

The boys don't use power tools. Everything is done by hand. It may take a little longer, but there is more pride when a little sweat equity is put into it. Pine trees are selected for girth and height. Killian learns to look up before he cuts, making sure the tree falls without being caught in a nearby tree. He is joined by another camper and the boys sit down near the trunk with a bow saw making sure

they cut as low to the ground as possible. Campers stand behind and push the tree, preventing the saw from pinching and guiding the tree



Above, Killian uses a hammer and chisel to notch poles for the new tent he and his fellow campers designed. Bottom left, all campers participate, using their imaginations and then drawing designs they use as blueprints for construction. Below, a successfully built tent keeps campers dry, building confidence and team spirit.

to fall in the desired direction.

Killian and the boys learn to be good stewards with what they cut. The thicker portion of the tree is cut into uprights (posts) while the thinner sections are used for rafters. Middle portions are used for side rails or ridgepoles. Any part not being used for the tent becomes firewood.

Once the tree is down and cut to the sizes, campers carry the poles to the campsite. Excellent teamwork and communication are required. When all the poles are at the campsite, the bark is stripped off with shingle removers. This keeps bugs out of the wood and makes it look nice.

Before the boys build the new tent, they dismantle the old tent from the rafters down to the uprights. All the wood will be repurposed as either firewood or trail logs—nothing goes to waste.

Most times, tents are built out of pine. Someone versed in construction may ask, "Why would you build them out of a soft wood? They'll rot quickly out in the elements." It seems counterintuitive, but that's exactly what is desired. Tents are not to last for decades. The hope is that a tent will last two or three years before needing to be taken down. This way new boys like Killian have

opportunities to contribute to their campsite. A boy is only here, on average, a year and a half. The more tents they build, the better their experience.

The build starts from the ground up, putting in uprights and then side rails for stability. Ridgepoles are added to hold the rafters. For this tent, the boys wanted a curved roof. Pines can be difficult to bend, so young sweet-gums are used.

The entire structure is done without nails. Campers notch the poles with hammers and chisels and fasten them together using dowel rods. Holes for the rods are drilled using old brace-and-bit drills. The boys lash the rafters to the ridgepoles with twine. A large vinyl tarp protects them from the weather and secured with additional twine.

It's an impressive feat—taking an image from one's imagination and turning it into reality. A new boy like Killian is amazed. He gains valuable construction skills. He learns how he is important to the group—the guys couldn't have carried the heaviest poles without him. The insight Killian provided during the dreaming process helped make the tent what it is now. He worked hard and reaps the reward by sleeping in something he made with his new friends and with his

own two hands.

At a traditional school, guys typically just strive for a passing grade. At camp, a tent that's done at seventy percent will leave people rained on or fall apart. Everyone at Camp strives for one-hundred percent. The experience of creating a tent is something the Killian will never forget.

**Editor's Note:** Jason has a new book titled "The Nine Hundred Acre Woods: Exploring the Sandhills of Cameron Boys Camp." To learn more, call 910-245-4034 or email [jsullivan@bchfamily.org](mailto:jsullivan@bchfamily.org).





# Help transform a child into a beautiful butterfly

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

**G**rab a cup of coffee or a glass of sweet tea with a piece of your favorite cake and visit with me for a few minutes. I welcome the privilege to come into your home each month and share how God is using your prayerful support to change the lives of those we have been called to care for each day. I love sharing with you the *metamorphosis* taking place in the lives of those we serve.

Now, imagine a beautiful butterfly visiting us in this moment.

Butterflies are absolutely beautiful, exquisite creatures and I could sit for hours by a butterfly bush watching them light ever so quietly on the flowers and leaves. I celebrate their beauty and their uniqueness—each one different, each one special. As I watch the butterflies, I am reminded that each one did not start out as this

beautiful creature. These beautiful butterflies were once caterpillars, which then changed into a pupa or a cocoon, and then into a butterfly. These beautiful creatures have gone through a complete *metamorphosis*.

The butterfly has experienced *transformation*. Through its stages of transformation it had to struggle just to survive. Maya Angelou said it this way, “We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.”

Our children come to us from very difficult situations. They have struggled so hard just to survive. Like the butterfly, they have found ways to build a cocoon around them, afraid to let anyone in for fear that the world around them will engulf them in the trauma that threatens to destroy them. Like the butterfly, they hide from the elements that will cause them harm. They are faced with the option of *flight or fight*. Faced with these two options, they create a shield of protection around them—their cocoon to shield them from the wounds and pain within their young lives.

When the children come into care, they hold onto their cocoons at first until they begin to shed some of their fear, their loneliness, their

pain, their distrust. As they experience unconditional love, they begin the shedding of their cocoon. As they are introduced to the transforming love of Jesus Christ, their cocoon falls away. *They become new creatures*. Like the butterfly, they become absolutely beautiful

exquisite creatures. Like the butterfly, each one is different and each one is special.

What if the caterpillar did not change, did not develop the cocoon, did not become a butterfly? What if it had been left as a caterpillar to dry up and die? What if our children were left to defend themselves? What if they were not provided the cocoon of Baptist Children's Homes to love and protect them and help them to transform into all God intended them to be? What if you and others like you had

not given over the years to make this ministry possible? *What if?*

I shudder to think about the “what ifs”—the children who would not have accepted Christ into their hearts and the children who would not have grown into successful adults making a difference in their families and their communities. There are many more children to come—babies to save—that will need the opportunity to develop into the beautiful children God intends—each one different and each one special.

Will you change their *what if no one cared* into *I am loved*? Will you pray about how God can use you to change their *what ifs*?

- Pray for four siblings that came into our care that lost both of their parents to a double overdose.

- Pray for a teenager in our teen-mom/baby cottage waiting for the

birth of her baby.

- Pray for one of our teenage girls dealing with the trauma of being neglected as a baby.

- Pray for our four-year-old boy in Guatemala who weighs less than 20 pounds. He has medical needs due to the trauma and malnutrition he experienced prior to coming into our care.

- Pray for 14-year-old Tirrell who experienced significant trauma and neglect—who will soon be adopted into his forever home.

- Pray for the two children who were abandoned by their family. They were left at a store and slept outside all night.

- Pray for the *metamorphosis/transformation* taking place in their lives and the beautiful butterflies they will become.

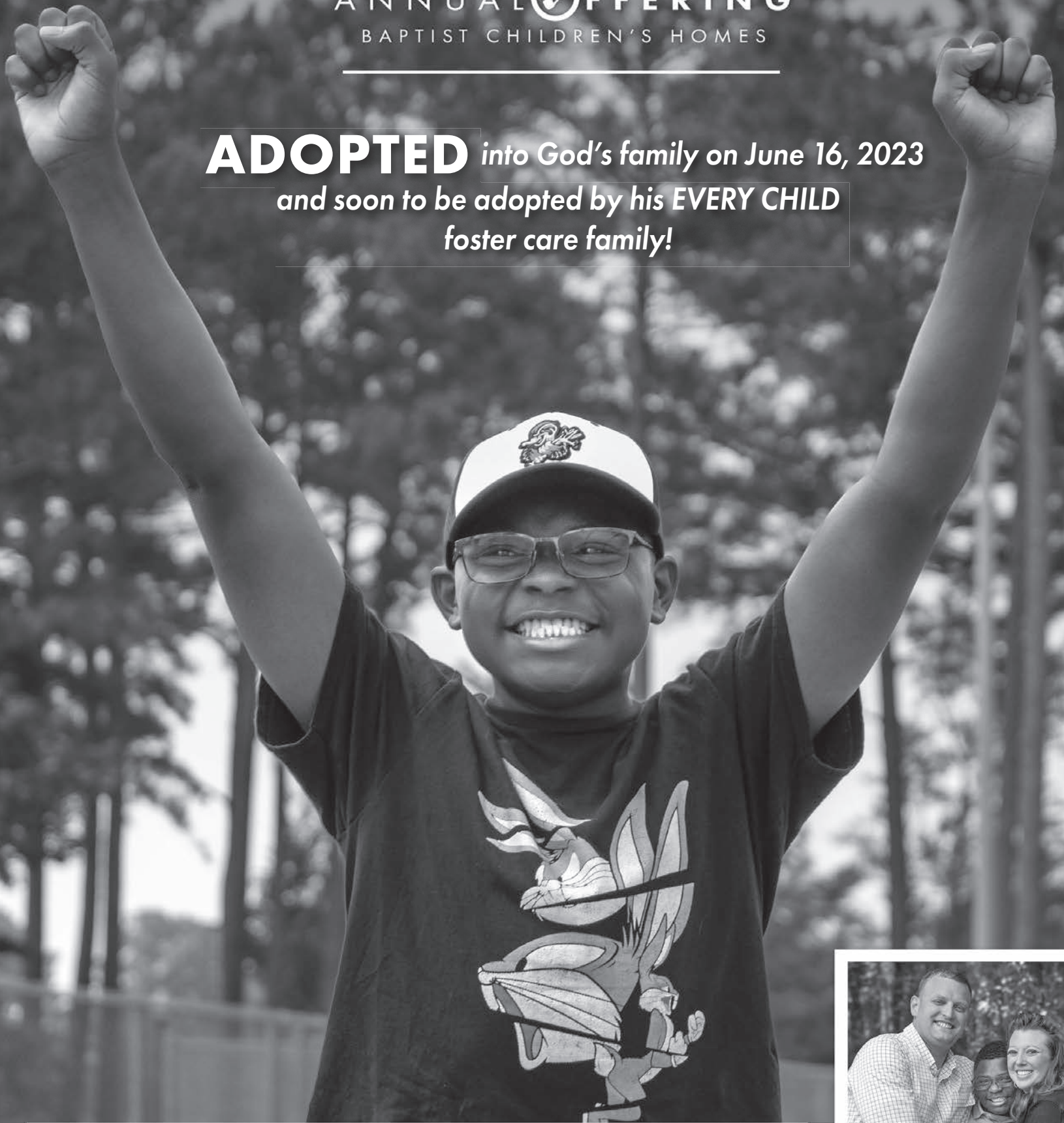
(See a complete prayer guide on page 7.)

For more information on how you can help transformation take place in the lives of *children who so desperately need you*, call me at 336-689-4442.





**ADOPTED** into God's family on June 16, 2023  
and soon to be adopted by his EVERY CHILD  
foster care family!



### TIRRELL'S LIFE WAS FOREVER CHANGED THROUGH YOUR OFFERING!

Everyday through the Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) ministry, Christian men and women, like John and Erin Stuebe, answer God's call to care for children like Tirrell. The couple, who became foster parents through the EVERY CHILD partnership between BCH and NC Baptists, welcomed the foster child into their home. The boy was severely malnourished, unschooled and kept alone and isolated in his childhood home. Your offering gift made it possible for Erin and John to be trained as BCH foster parents and give Tirrell the caring family he deserves. Through their discipling and church involvement, Tirrell accepted Christ. Tirrell is one example of the 167,619 lives impacted in 2022 because churches participated in the Annual Offering.

#### ORDER MATERIALS



From posters to bulletin inserts to envelopes, order resources for your church at [bchoffering.org/order](https://bchoffering.org/order)

#### INVITE A SPEAKER



Schedule a speaker to share the ministry with your church. Call 336.474.1218 or go to [bchoffering.org/speaker](https://bchoffering.org/speaker)



SHARING HOPE...CHANGING LIVES

**Baptist Children's Homes**  
of NORTH CAROLINA

**OFFERING GOAL \$1.5 MILLION**

Week of Prayer: November 5-12, 2023

Find videos and digital resources for your church to promote the Annual Offering:

**BCHOFFERING.ORG**



# God reveals His timing within the story behind the story

By Blake Ragsdale, Managing Editor

One of my favorite job responsibilities is sharing stories. I have the privilege of producing them for the printed page as well as videos for screens of all sizes. Remarkably, God can be found at the center of every story.

There's a reason why this is true: *I am simply the one sharing the story, but it's God who is the author.*

For the 14 years I have served as Director of Communications for Baptist Children's Homes (21 total years with the ministry), I always tell others that my title is a more formal way of saying that I am a storyteller. More specifically, I share the real-life stories of how God is working in the lives of the children—and all those we serve—at Baptist Children's Homes (BCH).

There are also times when the behind the scenes planning and preparation for the story is almost as remarkable. In producing this year's BCH Annual Offering video, featuring a NC foster care child named Tirrell and his BCH foster parents John and Erin Stuebe, I found myself becoming less and less of that person with a formal job title and more of a witness to how God was orchestrating every aspect of the process.

Planning for the Annual Offering, which coincides with the Week of Prayer in November, begins early each year. Putting together a feature story that includes videos, articles and creating an assortment of print resources churches use to collect a BCH offering is a major undertaking. The project begins with identifying a story.

While there are many successes happening throughout BCH's many ministries, there are only a few that can be publicized. The majority of the children we serve come from situations where privacy is essential for their safety and well-being. Boys and girls we serve from the NC foster care system almost never appear in our print or digital platforms. It's why planning early is a must.

Normally by March, the story is chosen. The plan is underway. Except this year, *it wasn't.*



This year's Annual Offering video features NC foster child who grew up isolated inside his childhood home and was severely neglected. Today, he is thriving in the care of his Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) foster parents John and Erin Stuebe. The photos show the behind the scenes filming of Tirrell's story by Credence Pictures. Watch the video by scanning the code. Offering resources are at [bchfamily.org](http://bchfamily.org).



Weeks went by as several promising opportunities ended up not working out. When a door shuts, I trust God is the one who shut it. That is until the calendar was nearing May. My trust was quickly turning into stress. I began to question whether I was failing in the responsibilities that came along with my formal job title. However, the reminder came back to me: *I am simply the one sharing the story, but it's God who is the author.*

When God is writing a masterpiece, each element of the story being crafted falls into place in His perfect timing. For this year's Annual Offering story, that timing was the at the end of April. After working closely with BCH's Chris Allabaugh and Jessie Chilson, who first shared with me 13-year-old Tirrell's story, a video call with his foster family was scheduled.

On that call, Kourtney Dye, who works on the Communications Team, and I spoke with John and Erin Stuebe who had been Tirrell's family for a little more than a year. As they

described the passion God placed in their hearts for becoming foster parents through our EVERY CHILD initiative, BCH's foster and adopt partnership with NC Baptists, all questions regarding the wait for this year's story vanished.

Throughout the hour-plus conversation, we heard repeated instances of how God made his presence known throughout Tirrell's story—the story of a boy who lived isolated in his childhood home, was never allowed to go to school and fed only rice.

Today, Tirrell is growing and thriving with Erin and John who will soon adopt him. God is not only at the center of Tirrell's story, He is at the center of Tirrell's heart—the young teen accepted Christ as Savior on June 16. If the planning process for this year's Offering had gone according to my timetable, pages of Tirrell's story would have been incomplete; God was not done writing.

Fast forward to now. The video is done and completed on schedule—all in God the author's perfect timing. And as usual, I am thankful to be the one whose role is to simply share it.





# A month of prayer

We know prayer changes things, and Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) needs your prayers every day. By using this four-week prayer guide, your church, Sunday School class, small group or youth group can pray everyday for a different need. The guide gives you insight into the heartache and struggles of those we care for 24/7. Download the digital guide at [bchfamily.org/prayer](http://bchfamily.org/prayer)



**SUNDAY** Please be in prayer for the four siblings that just came into our cottage homes at our Broyhill Home in Clyde — they lost both parents to a double drug overdose. The children are ages four, six, eight and 10. We are thankful that our cottages are spacious enough to keep brothers and sisters together.

**MONDAY** Pray for one of the men living in our Winston-Salem home for intellectually/developmentally disabled adults who is in declining health. Pray for strength and encouragement. Pray also for his caregivers and the other men who live with him as they are all family to one another.

**TUESDAY** There is a tremendous need to hire cottage parents, caregivers and staff to care for our children and special needs adults — it is a mission field where laborers are few. Pray God calls the right people to apply and for strength for our current caregivers. Share the need — [bchcareers.org](http://bchcareers.org)

**WEDNESDAY** One of our EVERY CHILD foster families is fostering a child they may possibly be able to adopt. The foster mother and father are also expecting the birth of their biological child. Please be in prayer for this family for a healthy pregnancy and for the adoption to become a reality.

**THURSDAY** Pray for God to move in our statewide churches and couples in their congregations to be a part of the EVERY CHILD Foster & Adopt partnership with NC Baptists. There are more than 10,000 children in the NC foster care system who need Christ-centered homes — [every-child.org](http://every-child.org)

**FRIDAY** We celebrate Christina, Rachel and Joanne who lived in cottage care at our Odum Home in Pembroke. They are attending UNC Pembroke located across the street from Odum. Pray they have a successful college year and that they will continue to lean on their cottage parents and staff at Odum.

**SATURDAY** We praise God for the new family foster homes being opened — River Hill Refuge in Shelby and Turner Cottage in Hayesville. Pray for God to call the right couples to serve as foster parents at these homes. Pray for the children God has already prepared for us to serve at these special places.

**SUNDAY** Pray for these siblings — ages three, 14 and 16 — who found their grandmother deceased and called 911. Grandmother was their custodian and, as a result, they have come to live in our cottage homes. Pray for our cottage parents and staff as we minister to their hurts and care for them.

**MONDAY** Pray for the two-year-old girl living at Good Shepherd Ministries in Guatemala whose birth defect impacts the use of her hips and legs. She wears braces around the clock that immobilize her hips. Pray that she will be able to have corrective surgery and that she will be able to walk.

**TUESDAY** Pray that God continues to lead expectant mothers to our Christian Adoption Services where we have the opportunity to show them the beauty of choosing life for their unborn babies. Pray for Christian couples to turn to us so that we can give these infants the forever families they need.

**WEDNESDAY** Pray for the two children that were abandoned by their family. The siblings were left at the store and slept outside all night. They are now safe in our cottage homes but are dealing with unimaginable heartbreak. Pray for them as our cottage parents and staff minister to them.

**THURSDAY** Pray for the socially isolated and lonely aging adults who rely on the NC Baptist Aging Ministry Hope Line to have someone to speak with and pray for them — this is one of the few resources they have for regular connections. Pray that God gives Hope Line volunteers the right words for callers.

**FRIDAY** Pray for the two sisters living at Kennedy Home in Kinston who miss their family greatly. There have been many family visits promised, but they rarely make their scheduled visits. Through it all, the girls' resiliency is remarkable. Pray for them as our cottage parents encourage and care for them.

**SATURDAY** Pray for independent college students like Aubrey. The Western Carolina University college student had no family support and was running out of hope until she turned to HOMEBASE, our outreach for students in crisis. Pray for these students that we can help them succeed and graduate.

**SUNDAY** Pray for one of our girls living at Camp Duncan in Aberdeen — one of our two 24/7 year-round wilderness ministries. She is working through the trauma of being neglected as a baby. Pray that we can help her find the healing she needs as we point her towards God's unconditional love.

**MONDAY** Pray for God to bring us caregivers/counselors — known as chiefs — to serve at Camp Duncan for girls and Cameron Boys Camp. We need young men and women who love the outdoors and have a heart for the Lord and young people. Share the need by sending people to [campcareers.org](http://campcareers.org)

**TUESDAY** Pray for three-year-old Envy and the other special needs children we serve in our Weekday Education Inclusion Classes in Thomasville. These specially-structured classrooms provide learning and support for intellectually/developmentally disabled children and their families.

**WEDNESDAY** Pray for 14-year-old Tirrell, one of the children we care for through our EVERY CHILD partnership. He was isolated in his childhood home and neglected his entire life before coming to live with the Steubes, his BCH foster family. His story is the focus of our Annual Offering — [bchoffering.org](http://bchoffering.org)

**THURSDAY** Pray as we open our second Greater Vision Outreach Center at our Kennedy Home in Kinston. Like our center at Mills Home in Thomasville, it will aid community families by meeting their immediate needs while equipping them to be successful longterm. Pray for the families we will serve.

**FRIDAY** Pray for a girl living in the cottage at our Kennedy Home in Kinston. Despite a very hard and chaotic upbringing, this teenager is determined to be successful. Pray that she will be unwavering in her focus, and for her cottage parents and staff that are providing the love and support she needs.

**SATURDAY** We praise God for the 16 boys and girls who recently asked Jesus into their hearts and lives. Pray for their spiritual growth. Pray for the other children and everyone we are privileged to serve that they see the Gospel lived out through us daily and that they too will proclaim Christ as Savior.

**SUNDAY** Many boys and girls in care throughout our many ministries carry tremendous hurts. Pray for Tammy who just lost her father in a car accident. Pray for James who came to us because his parents are in jail on drug charges. Please lift up all our children as God knows the many needs.

**MONDAY** Pray for our first resident at our new birth mother home. Emmanuel Home is a place where women who have chosen adoption for their babies through our Christian Adoption Services can find support. Pray for this 24-year old as we help her find the stability and support she needs.

**TUESDAY** Pray for the family seeking help at Greater Vision Outreach due to a terminal illness. Pray for comfort, peace and strength as they face the difficult days ahead. Pray for our Greater Vision staff and volunteers as we assist them with many needs and show Christ's love to them.

**WEDNESDAY** Pray for a teen girl living at Kennedy Home. Like many of the children we minister to, they repeat the negative behaviors and patterns often modeled within their families. Prayer is needed to break these cycles. Please pray that she would be captivated by the love of Jesus.

**THURSDAY** Pray for our four-year-old boy in Guatemala who weighs less than 20 pounds. Although he receives nutritious meals now that he lives at Good Shepherd, he has special medical needs because of malnutrition. Please pray that the treatments we provide will help his body grow stronger.

**FRIDAY** Ministry, enrichment and respite are all taking place at our Oak Ranch in Central NC. Pray for this special place and the people who serve there. Pray for hope to take root in the hearts and lives of everyone who steps onto this property.

**SATURDAY** Pray that Christ is glorified throughout every aspect of ministry He has entrusted to us. For every child, special needs adult, single mother, expectant mother, aging adult — all who turn to Baptist Children's Homes — pray that the Lord will go before us and lives will be forever changed!



# Lukas has special parents to meet his special needs

By Jim Edminson, Editor  
(Continued from page 1.)

Now focused on adopting, the Warrens connected with an adoption agency. They soon learned that every adoption agency was not the same. After months of frustration, a friend told them about Christian Adoption Services (CAS). Sara and Kyle sent their home study to Sheryl Naylor, Executive Director of Domestic Adoptions for CAS. They were told that prospective adoptive families have to go through a process to become a waiting family with CAS, but their home study would be kept on file. The couple was excited—but again they waited. Months passed.

As the couple were learning, adoption can take time. “We knew it was about God’s timing,” says Kyle. “It was difficult then, but God was preparing us for a little boy who had not even been born. We realized that adoption is not like standing in front of a fast food menu board where you pick and choose. Adoption is putting things into the hands of God. Instead of us picking, God picked us for Lukas.”

The baby boy was born on December 13, 2018. He weighed three and a half pounds. There were mobility issues with both arms, he had scoliosis, and pulmonary issues impacted his breathing. Later, doctors determined he suffered from hearing loss. They speculated that he had been exposed to a virus while in the womb. The birth mother decided to make an adoption plan, but CAS did not immediately have a family for Lukas.

Naylor spent Christmas with her family, taking a few days away from the office. “I just could not stop thinking about this baby boy,” she recalls. “I cried out to God to show me a family.”

Naylor remembered the Warrens. She accessed



Kyle and Sara Warren adopted Lukas when he was only days old. Like Kyle, Lukas was born with special needs. The duo share a bond unique between father and son. Mother Sara, a special education teacher, provides loving support to both as the family looks forward to growing.

remembers Sara. “Sheryl told me about a baby who had special needs and needed special parents.”

The baby was in a Greenville hospital. The Warrens called family, canceled commitments, and packed what they hoped would be enough for the time they would be away. In a few days, they would meet their son.

“It was a whirlwind,” says Kyle. “We had waited

able to care for him.”

Kyle leaned on Sara as he ventured into fatherhood. “She encouraged me. If I had concerns, I shared my thoughts and feelings and together we found a way.”

When the new parents shopped for a crib, they bought a crib that Kyle could reach over the side to lift Lukas from the crib. It needed to work for Kyle as well as Lukas.

“I have always supported Kyle,” says Sara. “If he was able to try something, we tried it. We focused not on what can’t be done, but on what we could do. Kyle deserved to be as much a dad as any other dad.”

Lukas is now four years old. He wakes in the morning and has only one speed—go, go, go. By the end of a day, he and his parents are worn out. He attends daycare, and his special-education-teacher mom supplements what he is learning at home. He is on his way to being ready to begin school next year. The Warrens still navigate health issues that require doctor appointments with a variety of specialists, but he is doing well.

Lukas and his dad slip away for an occasional “Man Day.” They attend a college baseball game, go to the zoo, or stop by the library to peruse books. And every trip includes lunch complete with hot dogs and fries.

What’s next? Rumors are that a new home study has begun for an adopted sibling.



their home study and re-read every word. Kyle had similar disabilities as the baby. “I could not believe what I was reading.”

On December 28, nearly two years after contacting CAS, the call Sara and Kyle had waited for so long finally came.

“I listened and the tears began to flow,”

hold his son with shorter arms and hands with only four fingers? Spending the next three weeks with Lukas in the hospital, he realized his life with disabilities, facing the challenges he had faced, could be helpful to Lukas. “Lukas might face some of the same challenges I’ve faced. Living a life with disabilities made me uniquely



# Chief Paul believed in doing things well—all the way

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Chief Paul Daley was true to his calling to the end, ascending to Heaven on July 9. He would have marked his 50th year of being called “Chief” in October. It was a journey that began in his childhood home with parents, Lucy and Robert, who Paul remembers leading many to Christ. The impact they had on his life is measured today in the lives their son touched and who God used to lead others into a saving knowledge of Jesus.

“Paul witnessed to every child who came to Camp,” Lisa, his wife of 46 years, testifies. “His heart’s desire was for the boys and girls to know Jesus. He wasn’t ashamed of Christ and freely shared him wherever he went.”

Paul was born July 16, 1947 and grew up with his younger sister Peggy in a home that attended church every time the door was open. As a teen, he went against



what he knew was right, rebelling against his parents’ direction to make church and God his priority.

After completing high school, he joined the Air Force and was stationed in Austin, Texas. He admits he began getting into trouble.

“My dad knew I was far from the Lord,” Paul recounts in the video “Chief Paul’s Camp Journey” ([vimeo.com/755819462](https://vimeo.com/755819462)).

Paul’s dad contacted Paul Hensley, an area director for The Navigators at the University of Texas, and asked him to go and witness to his son. The Navigators is a ministry that shares the gospel of Jesus and helps people grow in their relationship with Him. Hensley visited young Paul.

“Paul Hensley asked me if I died today would I go to heaven or hell?” Paul says. “I told him that I would probably go to hell.”

He told Hensley that he did not want to do



Chief Paul became the second director of Cameron Boys Camp in 1989, following his mentor Chief Mac. He realized a longtime dream by opening Camp Duncan for Girls in Aberdeen and becoming the first director on January 1, 2009—pictured with the first Chiefs.

anything about it and sent him away. Paul remembers his decision “weighed heavy on his heart.” He began to attend a local church and at the end of a Sunday service, convicted of his sin, he went forward and surrendered his life to God. It was 1968.

With an honorable discharge, he joined The Navigators in 1970 and began to take steps that would lead him into ministry with children.

In 1973, he was interviewed for a position by Buford McKenzie at E-How-Kee Boys Camp in Brooksville, Florida. He left unsure about joining the work, recalling how the mosquitoes “ate him



Paul becomes “Chief Paul” in 1973.

up.” He told Chief Mac he would pray about it. While serving as a counselor that summer at Eagle Lake Boys Camp in Colorado, he attended a worship service where the group was asked: “What is the hardest thing the Lord is asking you to do?” He challenged every-

one to not take the easy way. Paul thought about the message. He thought about Chief Mac and the mosquitoes. He decided to go, beginning

the next part of his journey. In October of that year, he became Chief Paul.

Chief Mac became a great friend and mentor. When Chief Paul followed Chief Mac as director of Cameron Boys Camp in 1989, he said, “I’ll always hear Chief Mac’s voice right behind me encouraging me and telling me the right way to do it.”

Doing things to the very best of his abilities was a personal mantra. Chief Paul believed in “doing things well—all the way.” He learned it from Chief Mac and it was what he taught the chiefs he mentored for more than three decades.

Illness beset Chief Paul over the last few years, but he remained interested

in the comings and goings of Cameron Boys Camp and Camp Duncan for Girls. Most recently, he took pen to paper, writing what he



Paul and Lisa Daley

entitled “Camp Isms and Schisms.” The 147-page book is filled with his stories and “camp principles” that make Christian residential wilderness programs work.

With the help of Lisa and his youngest daughter Bethany, Chief Paul worked every Wednesday afternoon

from January to June. He wrote the stories that amplified the points he was making. He was intent on getting it “just right.”

Paul held a proof of the book in his hands, editing and adding a few last things two weeks before he passed. The day after he died, the final printed books arrived.



“Paul loved Jesus,” Lisa says. “And he shared that love, whether it was in person or through the pages of his book. It was his life, and it was a life well lived.”

You can find his book on Amazon at [www.bit.ly/campismsandschisms](https://www.bit.ly/campismsandschisms).



# Summer events run the gamut for IDD residents

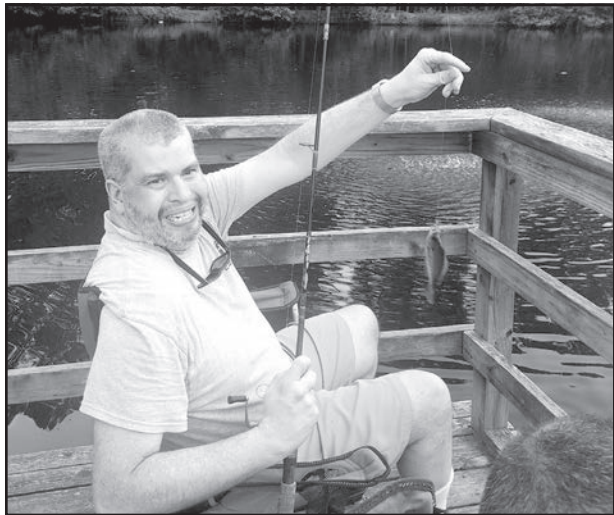
Since 2001, Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) has provided the compassionate care and support needed for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities to thrive! Thriving in the summer includes lots of fun activities.

BCH staff members not only offer daily care and support, but they are diligent in providing residents a wide variety of planned social and recreational activities. Staying on the move, while enjoying engaging summer activities, make days memorable.

A highlight each summer is attending Happiness Retreat. The two-night camp experience is for special needs individuals and their caregivers. Trained volunteer staff lead four sessions over seven days that feature fun classes, activities, recreation times, and a talent show. The camp is sponsored by the Baptist State Convention of NC in partnership with Caraway Conference Center in Asheboro.



Every year, Happiness Retreat is something all IDD residents anticipate. Above, Chris Kiser from Stegall Home in Marshville and Victoria Houle from Lindsay Home in Zionville attend this year's Happiness Retreat held at Caraway Conference Center in Asheboro. Below center, Stegall Home housemate Ronald Collette learns new crafts at Happiness Retreat. Below right, Asheboro Home's Sarah Rutledge loves time with visiting kittens.



Top, Margaret Dunbar and Virginia Weaver, residents of Lindsay Home in Zionville, visit with a moose at Marion Moose Lodge's "Special Day for Special People." Above right, the ladies of The Asheboro Home—Amanda Jones, Sarah Rutledge, Emily O'Rourke, Lindsey Jackson, and Ashley Ayers—celebrate August birthdays. Above, Ricky Armstrong and the men of Mercer Home spend an evening fishing at Jordan Dam RV Park.



Above, brothers Ben and R.L. Presnell join the other men and women of Joy Cove Ministries for a day on the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad out of Bryson City. The two men are great train enthusiasts. Left, Victoria Houle and William Smith join other IDD residents from around the state at this year's Happiness Retreat.



# Making morning coffee builds John's confidence

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Life lived at Mercer Home is meant to be lived to the fullest. Sometimes learning a new task makes for a celebration.

Mercer Home is one of nine homes providing services for intellectual and developmentally disabled adults in six communities across North Carolina. Like in the other homes, the residents living at Mercer Home in Sanford experience all the life around them, learning to do many things for themselves and grow as individuals.

"The men work toward what they are able to do, learning as much as each one can and at their own pace," says Brandy Collins, manager of Mercer and Lanier Homes in Sanford and the ladies' group home in Asheboro. "We help our residents discover how to be more independent, refining successes every day by reinforcing what is learned. It takes patience on both our parts, repetition, and care. It's what we do here every day—and I love it."

Learning becomes empowering. Staff members help residents discover ways to express themselves through acts of independence which leads to a greater confidence in themselves and their abilities.

John Willett has lived at Mercer Home since it opened in 2008. His late mother Jane Willett-Cromer was instrumental in bringing the homes to Sanford. Her now 56-year-old son is playful, willing to meet strangers, and is open to sharing his opinions—whether they were solicited or not. He is keenly aware of his "brothers" in the home. But mostly, he is inquisitive.

"I'm a coffee person," says Brandy. "I'm not proud to say it but it's best not to talk to me until I've had my coffee. The men know this. When I'm covering the cottage over night, I set the coffee maker before we all turn in for the night to begin brewing coffee at 5:30 a.m."

On a recent evening, John took an interest. He had seen others make coffee. The men drank morning coffee but suddenly he was interested in learning to make the coffee himself.

"First, he asked me how the coffeemaker



The residents of Mercer Home in Sanford consider themselves "brothers in Christ." Pictured left to right are Brian Perkins, Ricky Lawson, Bart House, John Willett, Ricky Armstrong, and Daren Lee.

worked—curious about every step," remembers Brandy. "Then, he asked me if I would show him how to make the coffee himself—something most of us take for granted. He watched closely as I went through every step."

John and Brandy began to do it together. It wasn't long before John did it on his own. The two celebrated and high-fived each other. "I did it," says John. "Look what I made. I did it."

It was a task that was just out of John's reach—something that was done by someone else, not him. With Brandy's help, John became a little more independent, a little more confident, and a little more proud of what he can accomplish.

Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) intellectual and developmental disabilities ministry is about the residents. Staff members focus on helping them to become everything God intends. It's

more than a job, it's a calling.

Brandy began her career with BCH six years ago as a qualified professional (QP), daily assisting the ladies at Asheboro Home. The single mom went from that position to also managing Mercer and Lanier Homes. Brandy has two school-aged children and depends on the love and support of her family, especially her mom and college-aged daughter.

"This is not an easy job," admits Brandy. "It is not for everyone. It has to come from the heart."

People who love this population love doing things with them and are willing to give of themselves. Servant-minded, passionate, hard-working people who are seeking a great mission career opportunity are invited to learn more at [bchcareers.org](http://bchcareers.org).



1



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4

John Willett was interested in making the morning coffee and BCH's Brandy Collins took the opportunity to teach him a new skill. **1.** First, John filled the coffee pot with water. **2.** Next, he placed the filter and carefully measured the coffee. **3.** Then, he poured the water into the coffee maker. **4.** Finally, John set the timer for 5:30 a.m.



# Fostering leads to blessings and unexpected challenges

By Ashlee Welch, Foster Sister

**INTRODUCTION:** This installment is the second of a three-part series telling the first-person account of 20-year-old foster sister Ashlee Welch. In this story, Ashlee recounts how her family becomes a fully-licensed Baptist Children's Homes' foster family, Israel becomes her adopted brother, and her parent's desire to foster more children.

Israel is now a part of our lives and so my parents decided to take the next step—we would become his foster care family. They began the training in preparation for receiving their foster care license and when that was complete Israel moved in with us full time. It was a little challenging at first as I imagine all foster placements are in the beginning. It took an adjustment period. Israel was not allowed to call or visit his mother at this point but had an array of court dates in which she was required to attend by phone. Israel was timid and unsure what the future held. For a while, we walked on eggshells around each other while still trying to create that place of family and comfort. Slowly, it began to happen.

After about three years of Israel being with us full time, we all sat down together and discussed legally adopting Israel into our family. He was in the 8th grade.

Tanner and I never went to the court dates. Usually, Mom and Dad, Israel, his mom, the case-workers, and judge were the only ones allowed in the courtroom. When we did go, it was the last court date, the day we fought for Israel to be permanently placed in our care and legally become our brother. His mother would never regain her parental rights and did not even bother to show up that day. This was hard on Israel. Eshawn, his older brother, had moved back in with his mother and quickly landed himself in jail. His mother had a part-time job at a hotel, but she quickly lost it due to her issues. When she didn't show up that day, the judge ruled in our favor. Our family was granted legal guardianship which means he was fully removed from the foster care system and

was legally my parents' child—my parents are his legal guardians and Israel became my brother. He would not age out of our home at 18. He would be a part of the family forever and have loving parents to help him figure out life's big



Israel, left, went from being fostered by the Welch family to being adopted into the family, becoming the brother to Tanner and Ashlee. After adopting Israel, Lisa and John Welch decided to continue as BCH foster parents. (Photo: Callie Lynch)

questions and provide guidance as he grew into adulthood.

After fully moving into our home, he and Tanner adjusted to high school and Israel thrived, making a ton of really good friends. Football became his life. Although he was the smallest lineman on the team, he could tackle and loved it.

When things settled back to something that looked like normal, my parents decided they would keep fostering when the opportunity came. One evening, we got a phone call right as Mom was pulling dinner off the stove. The call was from Israel's old case worker and she was frantic. She had just taken a call about two little girls, sisters ages three and four, who had been immediately placed into foster care. One of the sisters was in the emergency room and the other needed us as soon as possible.

Allison and Kimberly, the two little angels who were about to become the little sisters I had been praying for, came from a much different background than Israel. We left the house before we ate and met the caseworker at her office to pick up three-year-old Allison. We would pick up four-year-old Kimberly once she was released from the hospital. We took Allison back to the house and she was scared. She did not eat and would not sleep. When we bathed her, we were

asked to check for any further signs of abuse, and let me tell you, not a single eye in our house was dry that night. After her bath, we applied Band-Aids where they were needed and turned on the television with her by my side hoping she would feel comfortable enough to sleep.

Around midnight, Mom got another call from the case worker. We went to meet her and welcome Kimberly. She was feeling better after leaving the hospital and was a bundle of energy. She talked the whole way home, telling us all about her day. You could tell the girls were opposites as soon as we met the older sibling.

Mom and I were given a binder of the information gathered about the girls—their trauma and what we needed to do. Each girl had a backpack with some necessities. They had a few clothes and their stuffed animals. Kimberly ate all her food and all Allison's leftovers as well. We then followed the same steps we did with her sister.

Allison and Kimberly meshed with our family. Our home was soon filled with giggles. The girls were the biggest fans of VeggieTales, stories before bedtime, and building Legos. Allison loved the little kitten we had and carried her around like a rag doll ninety percent of the time. Kimberly loved playing with the dogs. She had these big blue glasses that she managed to lose everywhere we went—only to find them sitting in her car seat when we returned to the car. The sisters captured Dad's heart and they were the next missing piece to our family puzzle.

But there were challenges as well. They were harder to work with when it came to their time in the foster system. They had supervised visitation rights with their parents, and since they were so young, once they saw them they didn't want to leave them—which was understandable. They didn't really remember all the trauma their parents had put them through and when they saw them they didn't understand why they weren't going back home with them.

Then one day everything changed, Israel woke up in the middle of the night with a massive stomachache.

**NOTE:** Allison and Kimberly are not the girl's names. Their real names were not used to protect them. (Part three, the final installment, will appear in the October issue.)



Ashlee Welch



# Homecoming delivered wonderful time for all — Alumni Association conducts annual business

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

Each August, I enjoy writing about another successful Homecoming and I especially love it when people take the time to write about how much they enjoyed it. **Kaye Trantham Mills** wrote praising the Alumni Council for another well-planned and executed homecoming weekend. (She has helped with quite a few herself.) Several of the Alumni Council, plus friends and family, arrived on campus on Wednesday, August 2, to begin setting up for the weekend. As usual, they set up a lively, colorful scene which this year represented several eras of history. Fashions of the 50s and 60s were depicted in standing frames with head holes for taking personal photos. Special table clothes and floral arrangements rounded out the décor. Not only that, there were especially prepared notebooks showing scenes from campus life. Yes, the council really outdid themselves and everyone had a very good time.

Alumni Council, family members, and friends who helped with much of Homecoming preparation and work include these: **Rusty Bunker, Mike clay, Martha Berndt Fisher, Ruth Berndt Hodges, Bob and Lib Johnson, Joe Knight, Pete Knight, Ron and Lisa Carter Lancaster, Flora Hicks Patton, Jimmy and Linda Rochelle, John Shields, Randy Stewart, Sharon DeHart Stiles, Jackie Elliott Walker, Bobby Weber, Mark and Cecelia Townsend Wilkerson.**

It is very notable that some of these people came to Mills Home (MH) two weeks before Homecoming and spent hours cleaning God's Acre which was covered with storm debris. They were **Flora Patton, Martha Fisher, Cecelia Wilkerson, Ron and Lisa Lancaster, Jimmy and Linda Rochelle, Keith Campbell, Chuck Haigler and Calvin Talbert.**

We very much appreciate these MH and BCH workers who gave so generously of their time to make this Homecoming great: **Chris Allabaugh, Jada Cable, Patricia Carroll, Makayla Cobb, Dana Hartman, Bobbie Heilig,**

**Melinda Helsabeck, Regina Keener, Pastor Luis and Stephanie Quintanar, John Mullen, Julieta Santillan, Krystal Saunders, Hannah Smith, Andy Snovak, Linda Taylor, Andrea Walker, and several MH youngsters.**

Nearly 80 alumni arrived Friday evening, August 4, for the delicious "fix it yourself" sub-sandwich supper sponsored by **Charles and Clifton Lambreth**. Thus began another special MH Homecoming. Most of the time after the meal was spent in happy greetings and reminiscing. Saturday morning came with a new bunch of people arriving for a delicious breakfast sponsored also by **Charles and Clifton**. Many hung around after breakfast to browse over the Silent Auction items or play checkers, chess, bingo, and corn hole. Folks who did not wish to leave campus for lunch enjoyed sandwiches and other snacks at the concession stand. Shortly after lunch, alumni enjoyed the usual watermelon feast and the now popular cakewalk—all kinds of desserts were won. At 3:00 when the crowd assembled for the annual group photo, a dozen people were there to snap the photo.

The Alumni Association had its regular business meeting at 5:00. After the approval of the minutes and the financial report, we honored our recently deceased alumni with a reading of the names and a moment of silent prayer. **Lib Johnson** presented the Oscar Award to **Mark Wilkerson** for many years of service to the Alumni Association. She also read a letter of appreciation to/for **Regina Keener** who for many years has been so kind and helpful to our association in its efforts to do things for the youngsters at MH and for the MH alumni. We learned that Regina is leaving the position of Director for the West Central Area of the Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) to become BCH's Senior Director for Adoptions and International Services. **President Ruth Hodges** then presented Regina with a "love token" of our appreciation and good wishes in her new

job. In her report on the Columbarium, **Sharon DeHart Stiles** reported that 15 people have already made arrangements to be inurned in one of the 48 Columbarium niches. She reported also that we will wait until the first unit is three quarters full before we purchase the second unit. In her report on the Mitchell Museum, **Jackie Elliott** reported that **Bob Pearl**, whom we have been consulting for several years regarding Mitchell repairs, is now more available. The committee agreed with his advice to have the work done in stages. **Flora Hicks Patton** made the motion that we not add any more money to the Mitchell Endowment until we have been able to complete repairs on the Mitchell building. The motion was seconded and passed.

With **Martha Berndt Fisher** being nominated as 2nd Vice-President, the other officers for 2024 remain as follows: **Ruth Berndt Hodges, President; Jackie Elliott Walker, 1st Vice-President, President Elect; Lisa Carter Lancaster, Secretary; Flora Hicks Patton, Treasurer.**

In Memoriam: **Milton Bliss, 1937-'44; Ricky Dale Cartrette, 1966-'71; Jesse Coe, 1948-'49; Louise Faw Lineberry, 1946-'55; George Fore, 1948-'60; Tony Greene, 1976-'82; Ted Griffin, 60s -70s, staff; Judy Hargus Reed, 1960-'68; Nell Hoyle Donadio, 1955-'61; scrub; Frank Huggins, 1943-'55; Raymond Hughes, 1941-'54; Margie Knight Roberson, 1960-'64; Evelyn Kornegay Dawson, 1941-'53; Cyndi Lash Banner, 1969-'73; Ruby Lee Laws, 1951-'58; Louise Maness Pierce, 1952-'64; Wallace Maulsby, 1933-'44; Earl Mills, 1952-'59; Harrison Powell, 1942-'48; Gail Rice Rayburn, 1959-'67; Waldron Richardson, 1945-'63, scrub; Page Sawyer, 1973-'82, staff; Woody Shields, 1952-'59; Susan Spainhour Preston, 1965-'69; Ronnie Lee Trantham, 1957-'65; Richard David Tritt, 1970-'71; Dennis Webster, 1958-'65; Fred Talmadge West, 1934-'41; Juanita White Messervey, 1959-'62; Linda Wood Patterson, 1949-'55; Thomas Whitt, 1955-'59; Jennie Counts, many**

years, staff.

Immediately following the business meeting, we moved from the Teen Room to partake of another delicious dinner prepared by **Danny and Jane Helms Brown** with much work contributed also by **Jimmy and Linda Rochelle**. As always, it was an amazingly delicious meal. Alumni council members and others helped serve the meal. Some of the "night owls" ended the evening around a "fake" bon fire telling very "tall" tales.

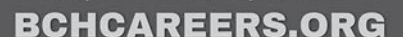
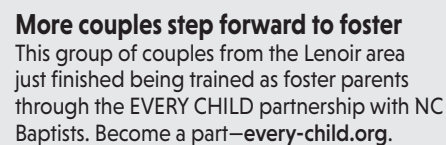
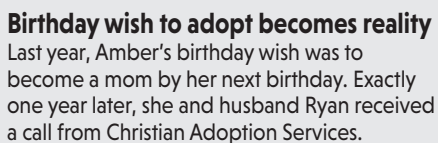
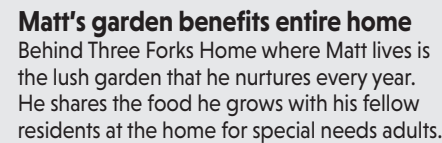
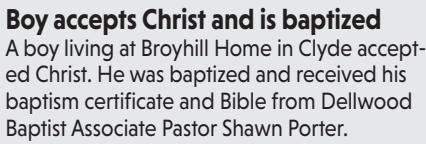
Sunday morning brought in a number of people to sign in at the gym and hang around to talk old times, but others went straight to the church to practice special music with our former MH pastor, **Randy Stewart**, accompanying magnificently on the organ. **Joe Knight** led the choir. Alumni passed the offering plates. Then we heard alumnus **Danny Bryant** deliver a heartfelt message on the salvation we are all offered through Jesus Christ. We joyfully sang many verses of songs we learned at MH, a chief one being "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing." **Jackie Elliott** had selected that hymn because it was the special song sung at the service held to establish the Baptist Orphanage back in 1885. **Chris Allabaugh**, BCH's director of the East and West Central areas, made us feel very much at home with his welcoming words which brought to mind the welcome so often expressed by **Dr. Blackwell**: "We'll leave the light on for you." A beautiful benediction was sung by the award-winning vocal family of **Danny and Jane Brown and Sana**.

At noon, homecomers met at the gym for a delicious meal of barbecue, chicken or hot dogs and a lot more visitation. The Silent Auction closed down around 1:30 with an over \$300 gain over 2022. People shortly thereafter began saying their goodbyes for



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





# #3641



# Alumni Beach Retreat slated for October 27-29 — Alumni agree to have campus archway refurbished

By **JOHN THOMPSON**, 104 Village Court, Havelock, NC 28532 (252) 671-3515 jthompson117@ec.rr.com

**T**his year's Fall Alumni Beach Retreat is slated for October 27, 28, and 29. Come one, come all down to the Baptist Children's Home (BCH) beach cottage at Atlantic Beach for a wonderful time. Even if it rains, we always have a great time of Christian fellowship. The Alumni Beach Retreat will always be remembered as a "trip down memory lane." Try to be at the cottage in time to have a good supper. We serve at 7:00 p.m. and spend time remembering things of years past. Plan on spending two nights at the beach. We have to clean up the cottage on Sunday following lunch and then we depart for our homes until next year. Please bring some of your most favorite homemade cakes and pies to share. It will help a lot if everyone brings a 2-liter drink to share. You are invited to bring games and things we can do together like painting rocks. Remember, no pets are allowed in the cottage. We will be scrambling for bunk beds, single beds, and double beds. You might even decide you want to sleep on the couch.

The cost this year will be \$30 for each person—this is the deal of the year. Where else can you go, sleep two nights at the beach, eat delicious food, and have a lot of good old Christian fellowship with a bunch of Kennedy Home (KH) Alumni for this price?

See you in October at the beach!

Our hats go off to **Yvonne Jackson Nelson**. She and her daughter and grandson have shopped and brought bingo gifts to Homecoming for many years. I received a note from her. Please read it and then give her a call. **Avon**, as we all call her, was at KH from 1968 until 1971.

She writes: "I always wanted the alumni to feel welcomed back each year. I felt that providing a cool place to have fun and good prizes while they visited with each other would accomplish that. Hey! Who doesn't like to play bingo? I always enjoyed shopping for just the right prizes. I felt like alumni would appreciate someone wanting to make Homecoming a little more special. I also want to thank others who helped to make bingo a success over the past eight years, especially my daughter **Amanda** and her son **Spencer**. Without their help, bingo wouldn't have been successful. Also, **Joyce Surbaugh** has been there to help the last few years. I also want to thank **Patsy Potter Joyner**, her sister **Lucille Hooker**, and **Trica Jones Clark** for running bingo this past year. Thank you ladies for stepping in to take over. It's with great regret that I have to turn the reins over to others, but my poor health, and that of my husband's, will no longer allow me the privilege to serve our wonderful alumni family. I wish you all the best and please continue to come back to Homecoming each year."—Yvonne Jackson Nelson (1968-1971)

Thank you Avon for all you have done for the alumni. We really appreciate your efforts to make all of us very happy every Homecoming. We still hope to see you every year. You and your husband take care, stay healthy, and get well. We really need to see you. Thanks again for all you have done.

The Alumni Association decided at Homecoming to pay to have the entrance archway to the KH campus sandblasted and painted. What a beautiful welcome that will be for all who enter the campus and will be great to see next year when we

all return for Homecoming 2024.

The alumni vice president, **Clayton Pate**, has folks to come and bring their old car, trucks, motorcycles, etc. to our Homecoming. He gives all the money to KH from those who are in the show and just want to help. Registration is \$20 for those bringing a vehicle. There were several donations this past year. Fifty dollars was given by Broken Spoke Biker Church, \$50 was donated by Christian Soldiers, \$50 came from Calvary Baptist Church, \$60 was given by Enddie, and \$60 was donated by Lowland Church of Christ. After the cost of trophies, hot dogs, and hamburgers, \$260 was raised for the Kennedy Home Alumni Project. Clayton decided the food would be free this year. Thanks, Clayton. Everyone loves hot dogs.

Did you know that Kennedy Home is listed on the National Register of Historic Places? Here are a few interesting facts. The first permanent orphanage in North Carolina was the Oxford Masonic Orphanage in Oxford. Built in 1873. The first Baptist orphanage in the state was established in 1885 near Thomasville and later named Mills Home. North Carolina orphanages shared the same approach. The staff was led by a superintendent, many times a minister. Most of the staff lived on location. The houseparents in the cottages with their children and a home for the superintendent. There were some central dining rooms. In the beginning, a child had to be a full orphan. Now, most of the children are from broken homes. By 1950, Mills Home in Thomasville and Kennedy Home in Kinston cared for 522 children. Only 84 were orphans. At first the cottages would house 24 students

and then in the mid-1900s the cottages housed 10-12 children. Some went to school on campus and now most of the children attended the regular public schools. Kennedy Home represents the family cottage living era of orphanage philosophy. The well-preserved Kennedy Memorial Home has local significance under social history for its service to children from 1914 to now. Kennedy Home is located on 1,240 acres. It borders on the Neuse River. It is three miles from the entrance back to the river. The Kennedy Home campus has the most land of any similar facilities located in North Carolina.

Mark you calendars! KH Alumni Annual Christmas Party will be December 2 from noon until 3:00 at King's Restaurant in Kinson.

On September 17, if I'm still living, I'll be 80 years old. How about that? My health is pretty good. I'm not allowed to drive any more because I like to fall to sleep while driving. I am organist and assistant choir director at the Cherry Point Baptist Church of Havelock. I started leading the choir at National Avenue Baptist Church in New Bern when I was in the 11th Grade. My wife **Becky** was always my organist or pianist in the churches I have served. Becky went to live in Heaven two years ago—it just doesn't seem that long ago. I'm looking forward to cooking and helping at the KH beach retreat in October. Let's have a record attendance. Remember, if you are in Havelock, drop by to see me at 104 Village Court. Please



keep in touch. Love ya very much! - jt

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



# Choose empowering words

By **Jim Edminson**, Editor

**M**usic of all time periods has great value to those living in their day. Tucked in my mom's vinyl collection are the hits of the 50s, back when lyrics spoke volumes and narratives told stories and crooners connected with the experiences of contemporary culture. My friends wax poetic about the music of the 70s, back when bands used real instruments and harmony depended on the skill of the singers. There are songs on retro channels and throwback days from that decade that I recognize—some trigger nostalgia for certain times and places.

But my music in those high school years came from Christian artists of the time, those emerging from the Jesus Movement, creating cutting-edge mixes with powerful words of faith that made every song a worship experience. Second to none: The Imperials.

The quartet's inspiring messages were touchstones to the faith I walked, desiring to fill every space of my mind with words that uplifted and challenged and soothed and empowered. My friends had their own favorites, and all of us chose the right tapes for the right occasions as we traveled together. When I drove, the Imperials sang.

The 8-track player sat just beneath the radio in my 1971 Plymouth Scamp. My dad helped install the custom sound system my sophomore year of high school, and I relished the freedom of listening to any music I wanted as I rolled to school, to basketball practice, to church. The box of tapes clattered beside me, and if I tired of one tape, I popped it out and inserted another by touch, never moving my eyes from the road.

Music is a good gift from above, and of course scripture bears that out. I take Paul's words to heart as he commands: "Sing and

make music from your heart to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19). Somehow, my brain remembers words set to music, so when I'm in need of comfort or wisdom, strength or assurance, I find myself singing songs of the spirit that recount the grace and mercy of my God.

On recent summer mornings, I wake to the Imperials streaming through Kathy's computer. We were high school sweethearts and the Imperials serenaded our dating life, and those songs have special connections to both of us. In her quiet moments, she listens to the touchstones that uplift her spirit—so many lyrics are lifted from the Word of the Lord. The combination of vibrant music and powerful words sets a good tone for the beginning of her days, and especially in trying times, her choices of specific Imperials songs are telling.

Often, quotes from these songs find their way into the notes she tucks into my lunch bag. She starts the notes with excerpts from scripture, and sometimes she inserts snippets of poetry. She loves words, and I know as I read her notes that they have been carefully wrought, even if they are on scraps of paper she recycles from her teaching world. She begins most days reading and writing, and it is a treat to share her thoughts and musings, always underpinned with encouragement and love, during my lunch break, far from her and yet so close in spirit.

This morning, Kathy shared Colossians 3:16: "Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one

another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts." She also referenced the Imperials' "Whenever I Speak His Name." The last verse reads, "Whom shall I fear with God on my side? You see, Jesus and me, we are a majority. And no matter how big the mountain, it'll have to leave."

There are treasures untold in scripture—beautiful gleanings from God's word that gifted artists make into songs. All can provide touchstones during the day to remind us who we are and whose we are. I believe words have power, and you and I can choose the words we listen to just as we can choose the words we voice.

*To God be all glory.*



## It was the last time the two brothers ever saw their mother



"I'll be back in a little bit," Will and Gage's mom said to her two young sons as she left their home.

A single parent, she often left her six-year-old and eight-year-old sons home alone, but always returned sooner or later. Will and Gage could not have known that this was the last time they would ever see their mother. Thankfully, the authorities learned of their abandonment and brought them to Baptist Children's Homes (BCH). At their new home, the BCH cottage parents welcomed them and provided them with the warm bed and hot food they needed. And to prepare them for the school year, they bought the brothers new clothes and shoes so they wouldn't have to wear the same worn-out clothing -- it was the first time they ever had what they needed for class.

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