



## Remember your mom and dad

Make an honor or memorial gift before July 1 and yours and your parent's name(s) will appear in the August issue of C&C's special commemorative section. (See promo on page 8.)

# Charity & Children

*The historic publication of Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, first to tell the story for 135 years.*



@bchfamily

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## Mills Home helps prepare Thomas for bright future

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Life was tough before 18-year-old Thomas came to Mills Home in Thomasville five years ago. His parents were unemployed and struggling. There were times when there was no water nor electricity. The family was in a downward spiral and everyday life became riskier for him and his four siblings.

"My father's addictions were getting worse," Thomas recalls. "We didn't know what would happen day to day. It was hard getting money for rent and food. But, as hard as it was, I just thought this is what life is like."

The family was blended. Thomas has an older sister who now lives on her own, two siblings who live with an uncle and his family, and the youngest sibling was adopted.

"I never met my birth dad," he says. "My stepdad was my father. When things were good, he took care of us and provided all we needed."

Thomas' father was a drug addict and an alcoholic. He remembers his mother, Maggie, trying to help him, trying to get him to stop.

Thomas remembers her telling him, "You got to do this for us. You got to stop the drugs for the children."

But despite the chaos, Thomas says he was never afraid. "My dad cared about us."

Nevertheless, his father's addictions took their toll. The drugs damaged his heart, and while Thomas was living at Mills Home, his father died from heart failure. He was 48 years old.

"I was very sad when he passed," Thomas says. "There were hard times, but I had good memories."

The department of social services removed the children from the home and Thomas came into



Thomas was 13 years old when he came to Mills Home in Thomasville. Now five years later, he has graduated high school and is attending community college. Thomas is part of BCH's transitional living program that helps older residents prepare for a successful future.

Baptist Children's Homes' care. He was thirteen years old.

"I knew what was happening," he says. "Things had gotten really bad, but honestly, I never expected to leave. I was afraid when I first got here."

Thomas didn't say much for the first few months. He remembers he "rolled with it," but the change was drastic. In time, he began to open up.

"I realized there were a lot of good things about living here," he says. "There are caring people who

listen, and I can talk about anything. There was food on the table. We had clothes—clean clothes—and a good place to sleep."

Everyday life improved for the teenager. He successfully completed middle school, attended high school and began planning to go to college. Then word came that his mother was ill. Her condition worsened, and she passed away, right before Thomas graduated from high school in 2021. She was 50 years old. (Continued on page 3.)



# Live a legacy to be remembered

By Michael C. Blackwell, President/CEO (Chief Encouragement Officer)

As he neared the end of his life and career, John Claypool, one of the best preachers ever grown in the Baptist garden, said the day eventually comes to each of us when we realize we have more sunsets than sunrises in our future.

While that doesn't make any sense when you know each day has both a sunrise and sunset, the sentiment is true. You reach a point when you realize that you'd better wrap up your projects. The time for starting new things is growing short. The curtain is dropping on your play and you're not getting cast in a new production.

It's the time when thoughts of your mortality creep in and you consider what you're leaving behind. You wonder how you'll be remembered. You think about your legacy.

Every day giants pass from the earth. They leave this life—sometimes suddenly—and we analyze their impact on art, music, industry, education, sports, government, and service to humanity. Or they finish a career, slip a gold watch onto their wrist and then read with others the reviews about how they influenced the way we live our lives.

Consider volumes on Lincoln, Churchill, Kennedy, and every military and political world leader whose decisions changed the course of world events as if they were a large rock dropped suddenly in a local fishing pond. These definitive biographies are written after the subject's death—their legacy in the hands of others, to evaluate, interpret, and define.

You are thriving at the peak of your career and in family and

spiritual life, you've probably thought about your legacy for some years. If not, consider that building your legacy starts within the context of the life you're living right now.

Should you care about your legacy? Of course. First, understand that you will leave a legacy, whether or not you're conscious of establishing it. That is, unless you were born in isolation and raised by wild animals like Romulus and Remus of ancient Roman myth, or like Rudyard Kipling's Mowgli from *The Jungle Book*. On second thought, I guess they DID leave a legacy! So, there's no escaping it.

Secondly, you can, like many highly-accomplished men and women who have gone before you, live distinctly aware that you are growing a legacy—for good or ill, for a day or a century—and consciously live to leave the world a better place for your having been an occupant. ***Your life matters. Your life is a legacy. Live like it.***

Your legacy is the script you're writing on the pages of history; the difference you make that at some point in someone's life will prompt a memory of you. You want that memory to be positive.

How do you leave a positive legacy? Ask yourself, "What can I do to make life better for others?"

I try to be a realist. I've been a radio DJ, a newspaper journalist, a television anchor, a youth minister, and pastor of churches. I'm a father, husband, grandfather, friend. For others, I'm an author, speaker, neighbor, boss, and chief encouragement officer. So, what will be my legacy?

I think my legacy started to take shape in 1970 at Ridge Road Baptist Church in Raleigh where I was minister to youth and college students. I have a legacy there that is regularly renewed because I stay in touch with many of the "kids"—now senior adults—who were college students when I was their minister. One of them was an executive with CNN, and when his mother and father died within a few weeks of each other, I called him to express my love and concern and to share memories.

"You'll never know what that call meant," he told me. "When I was in your youth group, it was the first time in my life that I felt like 'somebody.' Your affirmation and belief in me will always be a part of my life."

My body of work has established me as a person of positive influence in others' lives. I say that in all humility because this really is the first time in my life that this only child, who was blessed with a resonant voice, a tender heart, and a strong mind, has realized that people look up to me just because of who I am. You'd think I would have more self-confidence than that, that I would have shouldered the public perception of "president" and expected people to respond to the position and to me as the one who holds it.

But, no. It took decades of hard work, a trail of successes, a consistent life, and faithful service to reach that point. And I'm only just realizing it.

I imagine that whoever defines my legacy for the next generation will focus on my work as president of Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina since 1983. For sure, I will leave a legacy. I'm aware that I don't control the interpretation of that legacy. For certain, I want it to be positive.

***How about you? When all is said and done, how do you want to be remembered?***

## 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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# Virtual birthday party brings staff together



Mills Home children and staff members posted birthday greetings for Dr. Blackwell to see as he arrived on May 3. BCH residents and staff from all 30 statewide locations and Guatemala, sent greetings, participating in the "biggest," most "bodacious" virtual birthday party ever. Dr. Blackwell marks his 40th anniversary as BCH's leader in 2023.

**M**ichael C. Blackwell celebrated his 80th birthday on May 3 with a few of his closest friends—more than 350 Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) staff members and residents. The task was accomplished by throwing the biggest, most bodacious virtual birthday party ever. For nearly two hours, people from all of BCH's statewide locations joined a Google Meet to honor Blackwell. Individuals joined for a few minutes while larger groups participated taking up to twelve minutes for skits, videos, and musical renditions.

Blackwell was totally surprised: "I under-

stood there was going to be a small gathering, but I walked into the room and there was only a large TV screen on the wall and a comfortable chair for me—I had no idea. Hearing from so many from around the state and Guatemala took my breath. I was totally caught of guard, and it's hard to surprise someone who has been around for almost 40 years in this job."

There were times when Blackwell was visually moved as some participants teared up



when sharing their well-wishes.

"I was deeply touched," Blackwell said. "I feel so fortunate to serve with such genuine, wonderful people."

Blackwell also received a one-of-a-kind photo book as a gift. The book contained pictures of staff members and personal greetings to Blackwell.

"The book was a masterpiece and is now a personal treasure," he said. "The kindness shown to me on this special birthday will never be forgotten."

Big and bodacious was just the thing to mark "80 years great!"

## Thomas attends college to become a zookeeper

(Continued from page 1.)

**B**ut despite the loss of his mother, Thomas felt his life was on a better track. He began seeing life at Mills Home as his path to a bright future.

"I want my future to be something good," he says. "I have learned so many life skills here. I'm making the best life choices for me."

Thomas graduated Thomasville High School, decided to stay at Mills Home, and became part of BCH's transitional living program. The program is designed to help residents prepare for adult life. Thomas works at a Food Lion grocery store while attending

community college. He manages his income and has a savings account. He lives in a cottage with other residents in the program.

He says he never had a reason to leave. "I knew I wanted to go to college," he asserts, "and BCH was there to help me."

Thomas attends the community college and is working on an associate's degree. He is part of the school's Zoo and Aquarium Science Program.

"I want to be a zookeeper," he says smiling. "This program helps prepare you to care for zoo animals. It may sound funny, Dr. Doolittle or something, but I love animals. This is a dream of mine. And I have to admit, it would

be pretty cool to talk with the animals."

Thomas is light-hearted, but he also takes life seriously. He realizes life is always going to have challenges: "There are so many things that waste your time, that waste your life. You have to be careful and stay on the right track. Seeing how my dad made bad choices, I know I never want to live life like that."

Thomas professes Christ; he also confesses that it is more obvious some days than others.

"I trust God and believe He is working in my life," he says. "I believe God put me exactly where He wanted me. It's personal."

At Mills Home, Thomas is focused, working hard, and preparing to tackle life head on.



# To a child who has no hope, hope is everything

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

In North Carolina, more than 16,000 children need out-of-home care. One in five children face hunger on a regular basis. A child is abused or neglected every 24 minutes. One hundred and five children died from gunfire last year. The number of grandchildren being raised by grandparents is estimated at over 80,000 and 80% of those who come to Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) have no faith base.

These are not just numbers. They represent real children and real families who are dealing with real problems. At BCH, we are keenly aware of the plight in North Carolina. However, we also know a different story, one in which you help make happen every day. It is a story of healing. It is a story of **hope**.

What does **hope** mean for the children in our care?

## **These are their own words:**

**Hope** is... "feeling safe;" "having a friend;" "being cared for;" "being happy;" "family relationships getting better;" "learning to trust again;" "graduating from high school;" "having food for my brothers and sisters;" "Dad getting out of jail;" "being able to dream again;" "having no more placements and being adopted by foster parents;" "Mom being clean for five months;" "knowing God has me and I got God."

Returning home from a speaking engagement, my car was full of children, laughing, singing, and having lots of fun. In time, the car became quiet as several of children became tired and fell asleep. One of the younger boys had grabbed the front seat. While the others were sleeping, he became more talkative. He asked me to pray for the mother of a friend. He shared how she didn't have much and needed help. I said I would pray. He then asked me if I had parents. I shared with him that I had been blessed with wonderful parents.

"You sure are lucky," he said.

There was such pain in the child's eyes. He turned away from me as he wiped away tears. I wondered what had happened to have caused this extremely visible pain. As we continued our journey, I prayed God would use BCH to impact this child's journey. And He did.

When we are faithful and obedient to God, He takes our efforts and turns them into something amazing and wonderful—**hope!**

This story reminds me of this important message. A famous German artist named Herkomer was born in the Black Forest. The son of a simple woodchopper. Herkomer was a gifted artist and when his reputation grew, he moved to London and built a studio there. He sent word to his aged father to come and live with him.

The old man enjoyed creating things out of clay. He made beautiful bowls. The father and son worked side by side as artisans. The years passed and the old man's

abilities deteriorated. He began to feel his work was inferior.

Herkomer was sensitive to his father. When his father was asleep for the night Herkomer would go downstairs and take in his hand the pieces of clay that his father had left and gently correct the defects. When his father would come down in the morning he would hold up the pieces to the light, smile and say, "I can still do it."

That is what our Heavenly Father does with us. We try to do for him what we can. One of my favorite quotes is: "Kindness is Christianity with its working clothes on." We feed the hungry, visit the sick, teach Sunday School, go on mission trips, give to care for the need of others, and wipe away the tears of pain from a little boy's eyes.

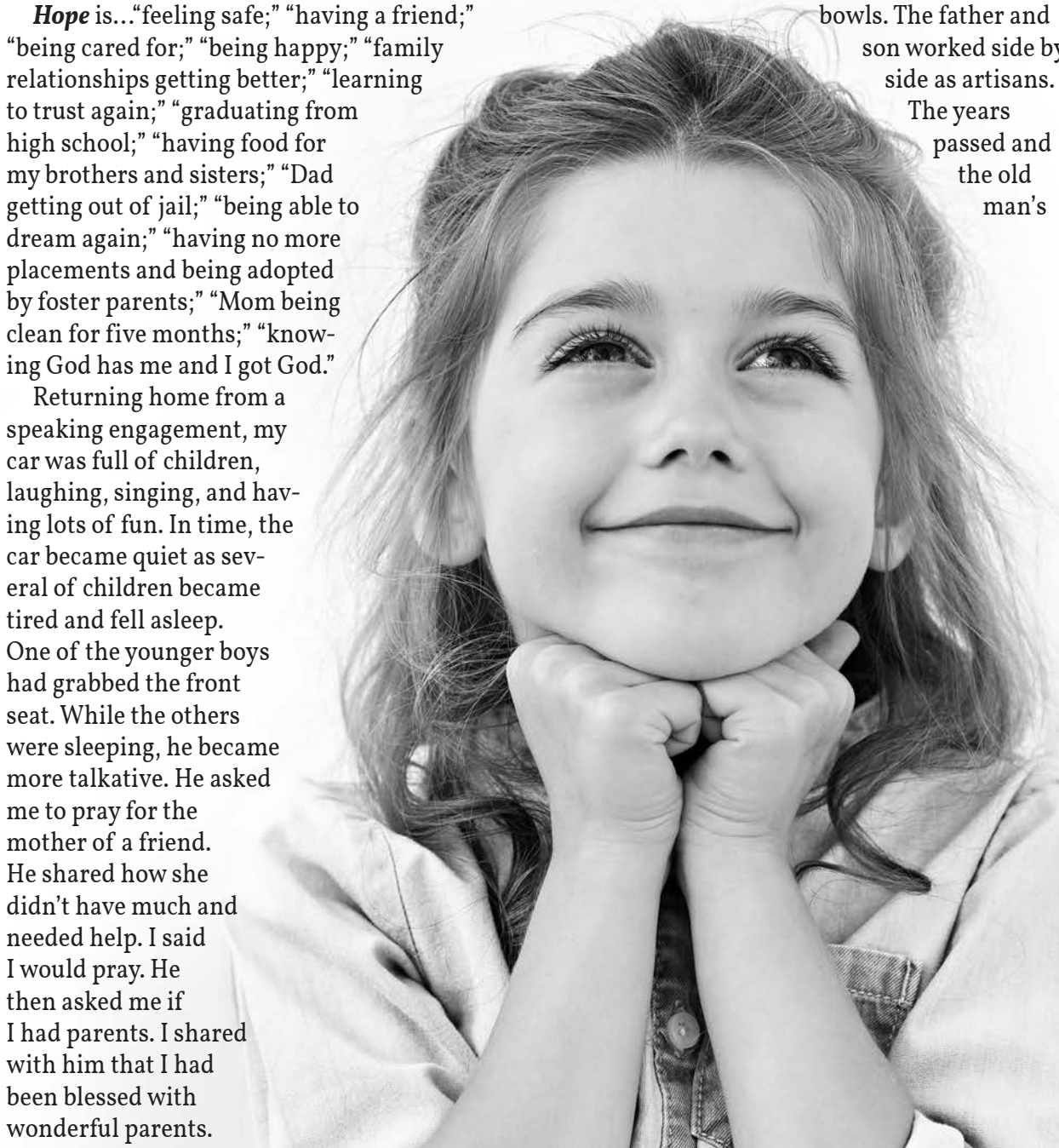
Like Martha in the New Testament, we are busy doing God's work. And Like Martha, we are frail and flawed. We make mistakes. Our life and work for the Lord is not as perfect as we would like for it to be. Like the old man in the story, we can become discouraged. The statistics showing the plight of children and families can seem overwhelming, making us question whether we can really make a difference. In that moment, I am reminded it is not about me. We are but the instrument. God places his hand on our efforts and shapes them and uses them in wondrous and marvelous ways, far greater than we could have ever imagined.

God has given us a job to do—care for the least of these. We must not be overwhelmed by statistics. These are not just numbers. Remember, they are real children and real families. Each of these numbers has a name. I hope you will see these numbers as: Janelle, Kevin, Ashley, Kourri, Amanda, Steven, Jackson, Erica, Kimmy, Brittany, Jason, Jacob, and the hundreds of others needing **hope**.

Let us be faithful and obedient to God and then watch with amazement as he takes our efforts, brings **hope**, and brings transformation before our very eyes.

"Now to him who can do immeasurably more (exceedingly, abundantly above all) than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us" (Eph 3:20).

Remember, it is in the summer months when our donations typically fall off dramatically and our budget needs increase. Thank you in advance for your continued gifts of **HOPE**.





# Your summer gift brings Smiles

***Stacey and Casey never use to smile. Their lives and hearts were haunted by dark memories.***

The sisters lived with their grandfather who told them they were “stupid” and “ugly” and that he “wished they were dead.” The younger sister, Casey, had been abused by a family member and molested by a “friend” of the family. One day, that same “friend” abducted Stacey but she fought her way free. It was this incident that brought the siblings into Baptist Children’s Homes’ (BCH) care just as Summer began.

It was clear to BCH cottage parents, Tim and Dawn, that the sisters had lived such a hard life that they had no idea how to play and be carefree. Within a few weeks, Tim and Dawn had taken the sisters and the other girls in the cottage to the mountains, for gem mining, to the amusement park, and to BCH’s beach cottage where they experienced their first trip to the ocean. ***The sisters’ stoic expressions turned into smiles as the memories made at BCH helped memories of the past begin to fade.***

***Stacey and Casey are examples of how your summer sponsorship is life changing! Make your gift today.***



## Use my summer gift to make memories!

☐ \$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 \_\_\_\_\_

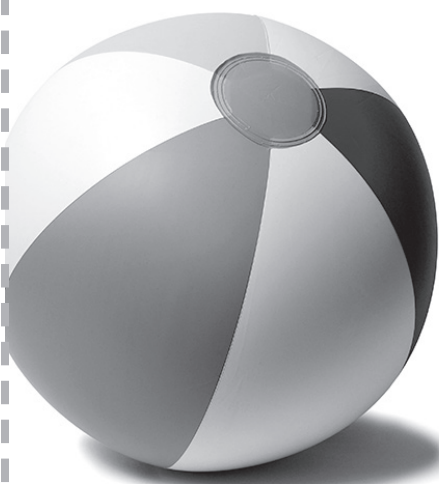
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You can make your gift by credit card at [www.bchfamily.org/summer](http://www.bchfamily.org/summer) or phone Faith Frazier at 336-474-1312.

☐ 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.





# Celebrating Achievements

**BCH RESIDENTS**

Evalayna Gentry, a resident at Mills Home in Thomasville, graduated from Thomasville High School on June 4. She will attend the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) this fall where she plans to major in psychology.



Gentry



Muse

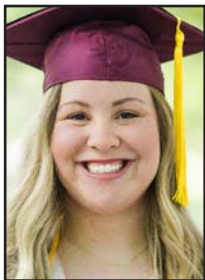
Shaeley Muse will graduate from the Get Real Program in Lexington this July. The resident at Mills Home in Thomasville plans to attend Western Carolina University (WCU) in Cullowhee this fall where she plans to major in nursing with a focus in phlebotomy.

**STAFF CHILDREN**

Catlin Adamcik graduated from UNCG in December 2021 receiving her Bachelor of Arts in Drama with a minor in radio. Catlin plans to pursue an acting career in film and television. She is the daughter of John Adamcik, BCH



Adamcik



Beeson

Director of Human Resources. Lauryn Beeson is the daughter of Melanie Beeson, Call Center Director for the North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry. She graduated on May 14 from Meredith College in Raleigh where she received her Bachelor of

Science in Business Administration and Hospitality Management with a minor in entrepreneurship. Lauryn has accepted a full-time position with Think-PLC as Executive Assistant to the President.

Rebekah Briles graduated from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte on December 18, 2021 with a Bachelor of Arts in Theater and a minor in dance. She currently works as a part-time administrative assistant at BCH's Christian Adoption Services (CAS) in Indian Trail. Rebekah is the daughter of Mike Briles, Assistant to the Senior Vice President of BCH.



Briles

Tyson Child graduated from Appalachian

State University in Boone on May 7. He is the son of Brooke Child, Director of Weekday Education in Thomasville. Tyson received a Bachelor of Science in Political Science with a Pre-Legal Studies Concentration and a minor in criminal justice. He will begin courses at Elon



Child

University School of Law in Elon beginning this August.

Hannah Collins graduated from Uwharrie Charter High School in Asheboro on May 27. She will attend Guilford Technical Community College where she will study pediatric nursing. Hannah is the daughter of Brandy



Collins

Collins, Intellectually/Developmentally Disabled Adults Ministry (I/DDM) Group Home Administrator for Asheboro Home in Asheboro.

Brice Dalke is the grandson of Bobby and Sonya Dalke, Senior Cottage Parents at Broyhill Home in Clyde. Brice graduated on May 7 from WCU with two degrees: a



Dalke

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies.

Michaela Effler graduated from Clyde A. Erwin High School in Asheville on January 30. She will attend Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College to study dental hygiene. Michaela is the daughter



Effler

of Stefanie Effler, I/DDM Alverta Bolick Home Administrator and Qualified Professional in Asheville.

Christian Gilmore graduated from Garner Magnet High School in Garner on June 11. She will attend Campbell University this fall. Lauren Gilmore, Domestic Adoption Coordinator for CAS, is Christian's mother.



Gilmore

Julianna Johnson is the daughter of Tim and Dawn Johnson, Child Care Workers at Broyhill Home in Clyde. She graduated from Gardner Webb University in Boiling Springs on May 7. Julianna received a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology. She has a full-time internship residency with Hope Community Church in Shelby.



Johnson

Hannah Naylor graduated on May 7 from Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. She received her Master's in Strategic Communication. She will serve as an adjunct professor at Liberty while studying for her doctorate. Hannah is the daughter of Sheryl Naylor, CAS Executive Director of Domestic Adoptions.



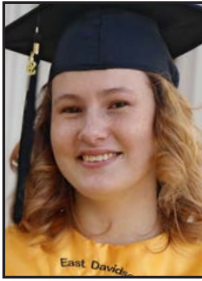
Naylor



Porter

pursue a cosmetology degree.

Madelyn Ragsdale graduated from East Davidson High School in Thomasville on May 27. She plans on attending UNCG to study for a Bachelor's of Social Work. Madelyn is the daughter of Blake Ragsdale, BCH Director of



Ragsdale

Communications and Managing Editor for **Charity & Children**.

Asher Truax graduated in June from Charlotte Christian School in Charlotte. He is the son of Cyndie Truax, BCH Director of Strategic Initiatives & Special Projects. This fall, Asher will attend



Truax

the University of North Carolina at Charlotte to major in business.

**STAFF MEMBERS**

Sonya Dalke, Senior Child Care Worker at Broyhill Home, graduated May 20 from Haywood Community College. She received an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education.



Dalke

Reagan Wallace graduated from Western Carolina University on May 7 with a Bachelor's of Social Work. She is the Foster Care Case Manager Intern at Moody Farmhouse in Franklin.



Williams

*"We are proud of all of these who have worked so hard to achieve their academic success," BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell said. "We look forward to bright futures for each one."*



# Ministry celebrates with record 12 WCU graduates

By **Jim Dean**, Director of HOMEbase

**F**ive years ago, two independent students stood with me in front of the former Baptist Student Union building at Western Carolina University (WCU) in Cullowhee. I remember asking the students, “What do you want this building to look like?” Immediately, they replied, “Home!” With that proclamation, HOMEbase became a safe and welcoming place. It also became one of the many innovative ministries of Baptist Children’s Homes (BCH) serving hundreds of WCU students who had no parent or family support and needed a place to rest and be encouraged.

The first task in 2017 was to update the 50-year-old building. With the help of the Interior Design Department at WCU, HOMEbase morphed from a dated, industrial-like building into a warm and welcoming place. A living room was fitted with new carpet, furniture, and a gas fireplace. Photos taken from around campus were hung along with curtains for the windows. Bedrooms to house students in transition were added. The kitchen was updated with new appliances and cooking utensils. A greeting area in the lobby was created. All that was left was to add the students.

“HOMEbase was always going to be about the students,” BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell said. “Jim and our team decided to let the unmet needs of the students dictate the direction of HOMEbase’s services.”

There were several immediate needs. A food pantry was established that included the usual items. Over time, food for students with various dietary needs like gluten, vegan, and vegetarian were added. With a grant from the Western Carolina Community Foundation, a computer lab and WiFi was added to help students do homework, print papers, and do remote job interviews. During the pandemic, students came to HOMEbase to attend online classes. A clothes closet was started. One student came who needed a new winter coat because the one she was wearing was too small. It was the one she had worn since she was 12 years old.

Housing is a big need for independent stu-



HOMEbase marked its fifth anniversary by celebrating the graduation of 12 seniors. Pictured above are: Devon Grizzle, Sarella Jackson, Associate Director of MAPS-Mentoring and Persistence to Success at WCU Anita Puerto, Tutu Strickland, DeeDe Buchanan, and Donovan Barnes. Below, students Kayla McBride and Ben Thackston are pictured with HOMEbase Director Jim Dean.

dents. These students have often grown up without stable living situations. It makes them resourceful and it also makes them grateful. HOMEbase has set up five rooms to house students who are caught in the housing gaps of a school schedule. Some students have encountered a violent living

situation and need to get out and into a safe location. Other students do not have a place to go when school is not in session. HOMEbase is equipped to help these students get adequate housing

and then helps them transition to a permanent location. This summer, eighteen students will be at HOMEbase for varying amounts of time. Each student has access to showers, kitchen, food from the food pantry, a game room, computer lab and our living areas.

Life skills classes are a vital part of HOMEbase. Our students did not grow up learning basic skills. HOMEbase has offered basic car repair classes, financial aid workshops and learn-to-cook classes.

HOMEbase offers a variety of Bible study and worship experiences throughout the week. We host the Baptist Student Fellowship on Thursdays for a meal and worship service. Bible studies for men and women are also available weekly. We have seen several of our students give their life to Jesus Christ because of their time here and their witness of the good God is doing in their lives.

A very important goal of our presence at WCU is to see students stay in college and graduate. The first couple of years, one or two students graduated each semester. Then we saw six graduate, then eight, and then nine. Last December, there were 11. And in May, we celebrated 12 students graduating and going on to bigger and better opportunities.

God is doing great things at HOMEbase. This has not been done in a vacuum. HOMEbase has been helped by the generous donations and support of BCH, the faculty and staff of WCU, and many churches and individuals who have responded to the needs. It has been a great beginning. I cannot imagine where the next five years will take us.





# "When kickstands go up, great things kick in"

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Managing Editor

From their starting point at Caswell Conference Center at the east coast to the finish line at Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) Broyhill Home campus in the Western North Carolina community of Clyde, bikers participating in "Ride to Clyde" shared the Gospel throughout their 450-mile route. In the process, they raised a record \$160,000 for BCH's ministries to children, families and special needs adults.

"When kickstands go up, great things kick in," says BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell.

"The moment these dedicated riders raise up their motorcycles' kickstands and begin this annual journey, God is there and goes before them. Once again, we have witnessed the great things He is able to do through these motorcyclists' selfless efforts."

The seventh annual "Ride to Clyde," the motorcycle ride produced in partnership between NC Baptists and BCH, was held May 4-7. Riders raise funds and share the love of Jesus with children at multiple BCH locations along the route. "I met three girls who have addicted moms,"



Top, ladies from Lindsay Home in Zionville greet bikers on the new west-to-east route. Middle, this preschooler can't stop smiling as he blows the horn. Bottom, Robbie Harvey from Brookstone Church in Weaverville shares a moment with Iyana at Camp Duncan.



Keith Feather from South Elm Street Baptist in Greensboro uses his puppet and ability to speak like Donald Duck to bring laughter to children at Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) Weekday Education preschoolers in Thomasville. Feather was among the dozens of motorcyclists who participated in the seventh annual "Ride to Clyde," a motorcycle ride produced in partnership between BCH and NC Baptists. The riders raised a record \$160,000 for BCH.

Andrea Gore from Wrightsboro Baptist in Wilmington says tearfully. "I had a mother who was a substance abuser. I was able to share with them how Jesus broke that cycle."

For the first time, a new west-to-east route was established where a group of riders traveled from Truett Conference Center in Hayesville and visited different BCH locations in Western NC including homes for intellectual-

ly/developmentally challenged adults.

"N.C. Baptists are thankful for our longtime partnership with the BCH, and Ride to Clyde is just one example of how we are on mission together," says Baptist State Convention of NC executive director-treasurer Todd Unzicker. "We praise God that these funds will make an eternal difference in the lives of vulnerable children all across our state."

REMEMBER

Mom and Dad

To use bank card, call Faith Frazier at 336-474-1312. To give online, go to [www.bchfamily.org/momanddad](http://www.bchfamily.org/momanddad).

Make an honor or memorial gift and yours and your parent's name(s) will appear in the August **Charity & Children's** "Remember Mom and Dad" special commemorative section.

Check the appropriate box: ☐ Honor ☐ Memorial

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

By check, mail to: Baptist Children's Homes, Attn: Mothers/Fathers Day, P.O. Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27361 or use the enclosed postage-paid envelope

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Deadline is July 1.



# Homecoming slated for August 5, 6, and 7 — Phil Christman continues to create masterpieces

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

**H**omecoming 2022 will be August 5, 6, and 7 at Mills Home (MH) in Thomasville. As always, we ask that you place those dates on your calendar and make plans to join us that weekend. The Alumni Council under the leadership of **Jane Helms Brown** has done much planning as usual, and they will be sending you the Homecoming letter in June. As usual, it will contain greetings from Jane, a schedule of the weekend's activities, a pre-registration form, and the update sheet used to aid in the writing of the alumni column. Please take care of the letter until you are able to complete the registration and get through the homecoming process with all the information that you need.

Chatter has begun on the MH Facebook pages showing great anticipation for 2022 Homecoming. **Pat Baucam** says he has already bought his airline ticket and is looking forward to seeing everyone. Take the lead from Pat and begin your plans to attend now.

Friends were very happy when **Marie Rayona Damphouse Gipson** recently posted on the MH Orphanage Memories FB page. In reply to some questions, Rayona said that she was at Mills Home for three years and that she loved living there and never wanted to leave. She has one grown son, and like most mothers, she still insists he is "her baby." She also enjoys owning a shelter cat that is quite a handful. As an adult out in the work world, she worked mainly as a caregiver for the most critical elderly. Rayona has now moved back to Thomasville and is particularly happy to be back in touch with her special friend of old, **Harry Walls**. They have promised they will happily attend Homecoming 2022 together.

Mother's Day was also a topic on

that same Facebook page, one comment being from **Renita Mooney Bryant**: "I am thankful for all the Mother figures that helped to rear the children of MH, both past and present! And I am thankful for Mills Home Baptist Church for filling the spiritual needs for the children because I married one of the very best ones, **Danny Bryant**!"

Going along with that comment is a sentence from **Virginia Williams Neely**. "Mr. and Mrs. Tom Marlowe were my favorite workers because they always felt like real parents to me!" There will be an update on Virginia in the column.

Good news for you "Mills Home history buffs!" **Tough Mercy, Ted Chandler's** book about life in the 30s and 40s at Mills Home is being offered by Baptist Children's Homes' president/CEO **Dr. Michael Blackwell** at this time. To receive a free copy, write to Dr. Blackwell at P.O. Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27361. I reread parts of that book a short time ago and meant to mention it to the Facebook group as a great source for stories about life at Mills Home. I did not do that because I did not dream there were any copies available. Be sure to get your copy from Dr. Blackwell.

More good news is that bright and early on May 3, I checked into the podcast that is put out twice a month by **Dr. Blackwell** and his staff. Well, I was pleasantly surprised to see he was interviewing **Dr. Ted Chandler**, MH grad of 1945. It was a very interesting and touching interview which gave Ted great opportunity to tell the world a bit of his history. At the same time, it showed how the orphanage life he was privileged to was so transformative in helping him reach his childhood dream of becoming a medical doctor. I was inspired by how well the podcast was produced and touched by things Ted had to say. Dr. Blackwell has a strong

command of the "orphanage history," and he used it to good advantage commenting throughout the interview. Dr. Blackwell's podcasts are produced twice monthly. Following is the link to locate the podcasts: [www.bchfamily.org/podcast](http://www.bchfamily.org/podcast).

We were so sad to hear from **Roseanne Spickler Lankford** that her brother **Gene Spickler** died on May 4. Many alumni expressed sincere condolences to Roseanne and the family reminding Roseanne that they remember Gene as such a pleasant person. Roseanne recalled that when she entered MH, she was very scared as **Mrs. Hoyle** was showing her around the cottage. Mrs. Hoyle took her to the bedroom and showed her the bed she would sleep in and then said "This is where your brother Gene slept." That made Roseanne begin to feel at home. Roseanne concluded her post adding "Last evening he left his hospital bed in my living room and went home to stay! You see he had suffered with cancer for the past year! He stayed with me as I tried to make it easier for him. He went from a prideful man to an humble man, praising God for each new day! So today, I praise God for taking him home to stay! I thought some of his old friends might want to know." Friends can send condolences to Roseanne Lankford at her Facebook page.

We were also saddened to learn that **Charles Ricky White** passed away in April. Many loving and prayerful condolences were posted to the family on Facebook. **Candy Volz**, a relative of Ricky's, expressed her appreciation for the many expressions of sympathy. Charles Ricky entered MH in 1969 and he graduated in 1976. His two sisters, **Teresa and Sandra**, also lived with him at Bright Brown Cottage when **Mrs. and Mrs. Frisbee** were cottage parents.

This comes from a **Charity &**

**Children**, June 1992, Cleve Wilkie column: "**Bennie Christman Phillips** brought me up to date on her brother **Phil**. Seems Phil is going around and painting up the whole country with his deft stroke, for he is a real 'Artiste Deluxe!' He demonstrated an artistic flair early in life at MH, and someone recognizing his latent talent arranged for him to have expert private lessons. He has clearly gone on to great achievements. He has paintings, murals, and fantastic art work throughout the country and even in Holland. Port Orchard, Oregon commissioned him to paint 14 murals in their fine city, and as a result, Port Orchard is now considered an outstanding tourist attraction. He has been most active in Hollywood, having done art work for various movie sets and he even painted Pee Wee Herman's famous playhouse. He provided the artistry of the backdrop for the famous beach scene Coca-Cola commercial with Art Carney and his grandson. Phil also became an expert at tapping on drums and is depicted playing the drums in a scene celebrating Tom Selleck's 40th birthday."

In 1992, Phil painted the beautiful picture of Mills Home Baptist Church for our live auction. Most alumni are aware that Phil is still an active artist. He now produces his masterpieces at the beach, and he treats alumni to photos of them on Facebook. You can contact Phil through his website, [philchristman.com](http://philchristman.com), and through Marketplace on Facebook: "Island Art and More by Phil Christman." He still has copies of his painting of the church and God's Acre with special rates for MH people.



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



## Banquet Raises \$80K for Adoption

The Apex Banquet raised \$80,000 for Christian Adoption Services (CAS). The banquet, which invites friends to hear firsthand how their support makes a difference, took place on April 28 at Apex Baptist Church. As a part of Baptist Children's Homes' many ministries, CAS connects vulnerable children to Christian families through domestic and international adoption. They also offer compassionate care to expectant mothers who choose adoption for their babies. Learn more at [christianadopt.org](http://christianadopt.org).

## NC Baptists Rally for Food Roundup

The Food Roundup has experienced tremendous success through the leadership and participation of associations and churches throughout the state. NC Baptists have collected food, supplies and gift cards by the ton for the children and families in BCH's care. Check out a glimpse of everyone's efforts below:



The Children's Discipleship Ministry (CDM) of Oak Valley Church in Wilmington helped with food and supplies collected by church members. For their recent missions night, the boys and girls organized and packed the donated items. The children have also taken part in the church's Summer Missions Venture program helping with projects at Kennedy Home.



Larry Rudder from Piedmont Baptist Association delivered its collection to Mills Home.



Members of Greater Cleveland County Assoc. in Shelby collected an entire room full of items.



Volunteers from Alexander Baptist Association in Taylorsville load up their collection.



Suggs Grove Missionary Baptist in Fayetteville delivers food and funds to Odum Home.



Churches from Polk Association in Columbus collected a record \$13,552 in cash and gift cards.



BCH's Rusty Bunker has to move Catawba River Association's huge delivery by the palette.



Every year, Campers On Mission sort and shelve collections at Mills Home's food locker.



Campers on Mission sort food delivered to Broyhill Home by Transylvania Association.



BCH's Danny Hawkins receives gift cards from Tammy Weeks with Eastern Assoc. in Rose Hill.



Berea Baptist Church in Pembroke dropped off their food collection to Odum Home.

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# Memories of picking and shelling butter beans — Plans are being made for annual beach retreat

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

I love **Kim Allison's** wonderful motto: "No matter what happens in life, be good to people. Being good to people is a wonderful legacy to leave behind."

**Mary Beth Thomas** writes on Facebook every day. She always starts by saying: "Remember to smile and have a kind word!"

Recently, I heard from some of our Kennedy Home (KH) youngins who are so troubled. I get letters that I can't share because they are between their heart and mine. Pray that I will have kind words and helpful guidance. Let's all strive to leave "wonderful legacy" of kindness. Remember that I love you all very much. I am so thankful the Lord sent me and my family to KH from 1972-1977. Keep your emails, phone calls, and letters coming and let's keep in touch.

**David Bradley** writes: "I have some great news! I married **Donna Lanier** from Surf City on March 5 and we are looking forward to KH Homecoming. She has been very interested in the stories I have shared. One in particular is when in Hardee Cottage(1966) I was roommates with **Leon and Phillip Morgan**. We got up on a school day at 5:30 a.m. and I smelled chocolate. We couldn't wait to get downstairs. They told me we were having chocolate toast at the table—and you better get what you can, because when it's gone it's gone. Eighteen boys going after chocolate on toast and I was the youngest in the cottage. But it worked out great because I was the dishwasher, so I had the advantage of getting the all the leftovers."

**Penny Maready Batten** (daughter of **Louise and Earl Maready**) will be playing the piano for us at Homecoming. I asked her to write something for me and this is what she wrote: "My KH days were long ago! But one of the times I remember so

vividly was when we went to pick butter beans down at the garden. We all came back and got setup in the dens to shell the butter beans. The staff were in our den shelling just like the kids were in their den—Mom and Dad treated us the same as the children in care were treated. We did chores and when there were other things to do, we had to do them as well.—It wasn't but about an hour and someone came in and said they were done. Well, Mom certainly didn't believe that because there were several bushels. When she went to check the basket with the hulls she found a lot, probably more than half in the bucket, were not even shelled. Well, we all know what happened after that. She was so mad and made them go through the bucket and pull out all the butter beans that had not been shelled and shell them. Gardening was one of the best memories I had and I love tending my garden today. Thanks so much for asking me to play and much love and blessings to you and your family."

Penny was one of my best piano students. She always worked so hard to get everything learned. Now, she plays for her church. See how you can share what you know with others for the work of the Lord. When I taught, I had 62 piano students every week. I talked to a lot of churches and they provided a piano for every cottage at that time for the children and adults, like **Bill Beacham**, to practice on.

**Tammy Wiggins** shares: "My name is Tammy Wiggins, Tammy Taylor at the time I lived at KH. My time there was a brief time. I lived in Lenoir and Biggs Cottages. Lenoir Cottage was a boys and girls cottage at the time and Biggs Cottage was an all girl cottage. I have to say that the time I was there, all I wanted was to go home to be with

my mother. Looking back, it was a very nice place to be. We were able to go to the gym in the afternoon with our own age groups. And the swimming pool was great! There were a lot of activities for us all and we even had a sewing room where we could pick out clothes. I remember getting a white dress for church and I thought I was beautiful! I was 10 years old. The cottage parents were always nice and seemed to have time for you if you needed them. I had the **Thompsons** in Lenoir and the **Nickels** in Biggs Cottage. The children all had chores daily. We made up our beds when getting up and did dishes after meals, sweep, mopped floors, etc. We got an allowance that we would spend at the gym buying soda and what have you. We really had more there than many other children. If you think about it, we were privileged! We had it all except we didn't appreciate it at the time because we were heart broken from being away from our parents."

**Edward Gaston Pait** shared this on Facebook a while back and I think it applies to us all. "While on this ride called 'life,' you have to take the good with the bad, smile when you are sad, love what you've got, and remember what you had. Always forgive, but never forget. Learn from your mistakes, but never regret. Remember, people change and things go wrong. But the ride goes on."

**Walter Sisk** added: "That's the truth, life will go on. Will you go with Jesus in your life or not?"

**Donna Wade Daniels** recently wrote me. She was one of my piano students and now she writes music, records cds, writes books, is a loving wife, and I want to thank her for sharing her music at Homecoming this year. She writes: "Music has always been an important part of my life. Even

before going to KH, my sisters and I would sit on the hill in front of our house and sing. At KH, I not only enjoyed being in the choir, but I had the best piano teacher ever! **Mr. Thompson** taught a never-ending group of kids piano lessons at his apartment. One year, during a time when Cedar Dell was strictly 'off limits,' Mr. Thompson sweet-talked someone and got permission to hold our piano recital there. That was really awesome! Trips the choir made all over the state were equally as exciting, that is after the rehearsals held at the beach cottage! Mr. Thompson not only allowed, he encouraged us to not just sing in the choir, but to also sing solos and play the piano during church services. Some of my favorite memories are the singing duets with **Mary Thompson** playing duets with Mr. Thompson or accompanying **Mr. Beacham** as he sang "He Touched Me."

Since leaving KH, I have been involved in music in different ways. During my teenage years, I played piano and helped with the children's choir for church. Later, after learning a bit more, I played for the Gourmet Diner Club at the country club in Sanford where I worked, sang in the church choir, and was backup pianist at church. After 9/11/2001, I wrote my first song when my son joined the Army and deployed overseas."

Please note, we are planning the annual beach retreat to take place sometime in September or October if possible.

And remember, you are always welcome to drop by my home in Havelock at 104 Village Court.

Write me at [jthompson117@ec.rr.com](mailto:jthompson117@ec.rr.com). I love you and let's keep in touch!



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



# Anywhere, everywhere, I will follow on

By **Jim Edminson**, Editor

I was eleven years old when my pastor, Al Gaspard, used this illustration preaching about God as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end (Rev 22:13). He declared that God knows everything. He is the God from which all history springs and the One who knows all things to come.

To illustrate his point, Pastor Al told a story of a little boy who loved the circus. When walking to the corner grocery with his mom, he saw a poster pasted to a pole outside the front door of the store advertising the circus coming to town. In those days, the circus traveled from town to town by train, and the train depot was not far from the boy's home.

The circus train arrived Saturday morning, unloaded, and all the animals, clowns, and acrobats began marching down the street. They stepped to the beat of the big bass drum while the trombones and trumpets heralded their arrival. Hearing the commotion, the little boy sprang from the back porch and bounded into the backyard. He ran to the six-foot high wooden fence that wrapped around the yard and peered through a knothole. The hole was big enough to see what was directly in front. But as much as the little boy tried, he could not see down the street to either his left or his right.

Meanwhile, his father was on the roof of the family home making a few repairs and could see everything. He observed the circus coming down the street. The circus passed and the father watched as the group reached the field

at the far end of town and began setting up the big circus tents. Despite not seeing as much as his father, the son was not disappointed (Deut 29:29). His dad promised they would go that evening and see the circus together.

In a Sunday morning worship service when I was 16 years old, I sat in the pew praying while Pastor Al preached the sermon. I was struggling, doubting, not knowing God was calling me. With my eyes closed, I saw Jesus before me and beside Him were antique brass scales. I felt Jesus beckoning me to follow Him (Matt 4:19), to give myself to Him. "But I can't, Jesus," I spoke in defiance. "I have my dreams and they do not include you." Again, He bid me to follow.

I stood my ground, and then He asked me to put all my dreams on one side of the scale. I did. I stacked them high, weighing the pan down. In a blink of my eyes, Jesus stood on the other side, and the pan crashed down. My rebellious heart gave way and I yielded everything to Him. It was the best decision I ever made. I would follow Jesus! But to where, I did not know.

I was called to be the student minister of First Baptist Tioga at age 25. Then, God opened the door for me to serve Louisiana Baptists on staff of the group's newsjournal, and five years later I became the communications director at the Louisiana Baptist Children's Home in Monroe.

In 2000, God led me to North Carolina where I have served at Baptist Children's

Homes for 23 years. But despite my service, I never attended seminary. I'm not complaining; I was following and God never led in that direction, until recently. Twenty eight months ago, Jesus ushered me into Moody Theological Seminary. It was a path I never had imagined, one that He alone could see.

On Saturday, May 14, I knelt on the stage of Torrey-Gray Auditorium in Chicago while being hooded, my masters degree in biblical studies being conferred.

Hymn writer William Cushing joyfully proclaims: "Follow! Follow! I will follow Jesus! Anywhere, everywhere, I will follow on!" You and I follow the all-knowing God, and His vantage point spans the whole of space and time. From the



Dr. Ryan Cook, Moody Theological Seminary program head for Biblical Studies, invests my Master's degree hood during graduation in Torrey-Gray Auditorium in Chicago.

"roof top," God sees the entirety and calls, "Follow me!"

But the choice is always ours. We can choose to view life from the knothole, making our plans based only on what we see. Or we can embark on a life lived by faith.

Just like the boy in Pastor Al's illustration, just like the teen and the brass scales, and just like the young man answering ministry's varied calling, I find myself back at the knothole straining to see the future, seeking to see beyond my ability. Thankfully, there are the words of the prophet to assure: "For I know the plans I have for you..." (Jer 29:11).

I choose faith in the omniscient God, and in the words of Cushing, once again affirm, "Everywhere He leads me I will follow on!"

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