



First to tell the story! Join Dr. Blackwell and **C&C** editor Jim Edminson as they discuss the history of the 133-year-old publication. Visit www.bchblog.org/podcast.

Charity & Children

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

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Issue 7

Volume 133

A message for you from Dr. Michael C. Blackwell

*This place [this sacred, holy ground]
was founded on faith, built on love.*

The Thomasville Orphanage was born in a time of adversity. The Civil War had ended only 20 years earlier. It was 1885 and this Orphanage, this citadel of hope, greeted the first child on a blustery November afternoon.

In the intervening years, the Orphanage has weathered the winds of adversity and came out on the other side stronger, resilient, determined. We've been isolated before. The flu pandemic of 1918—isolation and death among children. The polio quarantine of the early 1950's—isolation and death among children.

Each time, the Orphanage did rise. Each time the Orphanage did survive. Each time the Orphanage did thrive.

The strength of the Orphanage came from God's guidance and the sacrifice of women and men who gave of themselves to the "least of these"—the most vulnerable.

Children grew up to be adults. They survived two world wars, The Great Depression, Vietnam, 9/11 and now Coronavirus.

This place—this sacred, holy ground—was founded on faith, built on love. It is what sustained us when we were The Orphanage—the Orphanage at Mills Home in Thomasville, the Orphanage at Kennedy Home in Kinston.

It's what sustains us now as the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, many ministries to the Glory of God, beating with one heart.

The dream of our founder, John Mills, lives on! The legacy of the first child in care, Mary Presson, lives on! Winds of adversity still blow strong, but we will not be defeated, and neither will you.

We are BCH strong. We will rise. We are on *Holy Ground*. Sacred space. We will not be moved. *Strong now, strong then, strong forever.*



"Founded on faith...built on love"
A special video presentation

You have read the words, now watch Dr. Blackwell's historic video. Hear the voice, see the images, be inspired. Go to www.bchnc.org/bch_strong or scan the QR code now!



Miss Sallie reaches through time

By Michael C. Blackwell, President/CEO

NOTE: In celebration of the ministry's 135th Anniversary, *My Thoughts*, on occasion, will be first person accounts by historic individuals who have helped make BCH what it is today. This month's column is by Sallie McCracken (aka Jennie Counts).

I sit in the rocking chair on the porch of my home and declare nature has never provided a more beautiful site. The grass is green, the sky is brilliant blue, and the trees' shade offers the most pleasant comfort. God surely is present here at Mills Home.

Reflecting on my life since arriving at The Orphanage in 1896, I recall many things. The Women's Building is my home and has been for more than 70 years—it is as comfortable to me as my shawl or my cane. My eyesight isn't as good as it once was, nor my legs strong, but my love for children and this place never dims.

I met Reverend J.B. Boone while I was a student at Judson College where he served as president. After teaching school for a while and doing some work as a secretary, Rev. Boone invited me to come to work for him at The Orphanage. I came to serve as his assistant, write letters, and keep records.

You can imagine my surprise and panic arriving that first day and being escorting to Durham Cottage to take charge of 32 ram-bunctious boys—all under the age of 12.

I protested vehemently, but finally consented to do my best. Having younger siblings prepared me to a small extent, although some days no amount of preparation mattered.

I remember looking at the faces of the boys, seeing their bottled-up energy, and feeling

my knees go weak. I almost ran. But I soon realized, these boys were as uncertain as me.

I thought, "Was God calling me to this very place because the boys needed me—and I needed them?" The scripture from the Book of Esther came to my mind: "But who knows but that you have come to a royal position for such a time as this?"

My love for the Lord has always sustained me even as I pondered the uncertainty about my future. I knew He would lead me. What I didn't know, upon reflection, was that my place of service here was to span more than 70 years, and I am still counting.

I later took charge of the Mother's Cottage and the Watson Building, taught Sunday school, and served as secretary to superintendents Boone, Kesler, Greer, Wall, and Reed. Not only did I have to train new boys upon their arrival, but I had to break in a new general manager every few years.

Today at my advanced age, I still work as a research secretary. My main duty is to follow my former charges to see how they've fared. It has opened my eyes seeing the lifelong effect on these precious lives.

We are all children at heart, and we need a dose of love. It was, and is, my job to show these children that God loves them, and I do too. I always give a Bible to each child who enters our care.



Sallie McCracken

It is also my task to instill values in the children that will serve them throughout life—Christian values of discipline, honesty, orderliness, and thoughtfulness. I encourage children to have a good attitude regardless of circumstances. A positive attitude often means success instead of failure.

One of my greatest rewards is to reconnect with "my children." Some have become teachers, ministers, printers, doctors, business owners, factory workers, and farmers. They are my heroes. They have risen above unfortunate circumstances. They have survived and are good citizens. They are loving and loyal to each other and to all of us here.

Well, it is almost dark; the air is chilly so I'd best go inside. As I take one last look at the campus, I am reminded once again that "surely the presence of the Lord is in this place."

— Sallie McCracken

Miss Sallie McCracken died in 1969 at 99 and is buried in God's Acre at Mills Home in Thomasville. I came to Mills Home a short five years later in 1974. Her rich legend and lore is still very much alive.

— Jennie Counts

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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Blackwell's videos stream words of encouragement

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Managing Editor

It begins with an idea—a spark of creativity nurtured through hours, sometimes days, of contemplation by Michael C. Blackwell, president/CEO of Baptist Children's Homes (BCH). The incubated idea results in a script, and ultimately a short video. Now a series of videos, *"A Good Word"* regularly shares Blackwell's uplifting messages through e-mail and social media.

For the man who still stands behind pulpits, being in front of a microphone and camera is a natural fit. "My time as a journalist, broadcaster and pastor prepared me not only for my position, but for producing *'A Good Word,'*" Blackwell explains.

Blackwell, who celebrates his 37th anniversary on July 1, often introduces himself as "Chief Encouragement Officer." It is not only a fun spin on his official title, but defines the purpose of the video series.

"Every episode is meant to uplift and inspire the viewer—whether it is one of our staff members, supporters, many friends, or someone who is connecting with BCH for the first time," he says. "Today, encouragement is in short supply. Words of encouragement are something this ministry has plenty of to offer."

Most videos are no more than three minutes in length, quick but meaningful viewing. He draws inspiration from everything including scripture, songs, conversations with BCH staff members and children, and his childhood.

It's not uncommon for him to wake up from a sound sleep with an idea swirling in his head. Those thoughts are written on a notepad, dictated on his smartphone, or typed in an email that he sends to himself.

"I never know when inspiration will reveal itself," he says. "I just know I have to be open to it and prepared at all times."

Those thoughts become scripts which Blackwell rewrites multiple times until every word is exact. Then, the script is passed to Blake Ragsdale, BCH Director of Communications, who is the videographer and editor for the series.

"Dr. Blackwell's messages are always timely and deeply personal," Ragsdale says. "It's important to him that everyone who watches comes away with something meaningful."

The majority of the videos are filmed in Dr. Blackwell's office on the Mills Home campus in Thomasville. Ragsdale sets up lighting, video



BCH President/CEO Michael C. Blackwell and Blake Ragsdale, who serves as videographer and editor, record *"A Good Word"* episode. A former pastor and broadcaster, Blackwell calls on his vast experience to script each episode of the regularly-produced video series. The intent is to provide messages of encouragement to staff members and BCH's many friends and supporters. An archive of *"A Good Word"* videos can be found on BCH's YouTube channel at www.bchnc.org/goodword.

camera, and lavalier microphone to capture each message. Once filming is finished, he edits Dr. Blackwell's recording, chooses accompanying music, and adds any photos or video needed to complete the piece.

A recent video, that has garnered a great deal of attention, is the BCH mini documentary,

"Founded on faith...built on love" (see page 1). The idea was Dr. Blackwell's. The script was written by him and he provides the powerful voiceover. Ragsdale added historic Children's Homes photos and recent video footage to bring Blackwell's vision to life. The video harkens back to BCH's beginning in 1885 and, in only three

minutes, leads viewers through the ministry's 135-year history.

"This was a dream project," Ragsdale explains. "Dr. Blackwell has written something that is beyond a traditional documentary. It is an intentional reminder of God's provision and presence throughout BCH's existence. That needed message is particularly meaningful as we all navigate today's challenging climate."

Once Ragsdale completes a video, he works with Jacob Riggs, BCH Digital Marketing Spe-

cialist, to prepare the episode for BCH's social media pages as well as email blasts that deliver videos into inboxes.

People can watch *"A Good Word"* on BCH's YouTube and Facebook pages or receive the videos by signing up for BCH's e-newsletters at www.bchfamily.org.

"I am energized by the feedback I receive from people," Blackwell says. "If someone's spirit is lifted through a message or if it brings a smile to a person's face then the mission has been accomplished."



Dr. Blackwell recommends these two archived episodes:

"Holy Encouragement"
www.bchnc.org/agw620

Take a few moments to watch and listen to some much-needed words of "holy encouragement."



"Laughter Works Wonders"
www.bchnc.org/agw520

Watch this video message and see what Scripture has to say about laughter.



Children need nests safe from storms of pain

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

Abuse, drugs, violence, neglect, crisis and a lack of food have been the norm for so many of the children who come into Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) care.

Recently, I drove by Stokes Cottage and Hayes-Solomon Cottage at Mills Home. Both yards were filled with children playing. I stopped at the curb. The boys and girls ran up to my car, and all at once, they began telling me about the fun they were having. Every child deserves a safe place where someone they trust will care for them. It makes me happy to see them happy.

My friend Roy Howell made me a beautiful birdhouse for my yard. It is roomy and has a porch where the birds can rest. When it rains, there is more than a bird's share of worms. It is perfect! But to my surprise, no birds came. Roy also made a birdhouse for my mom, but hers is always full—I couldn't understand.

I recruited a wise bird watcher to help figure out the problem. He agreed that the birdhouse was exceptional, but there was one problem. He believes my birdhouse is too close to the ground—the birds do not feel safe. I had not given much thought to safety from a bird's vantage point. He told me that for birds to nest, the consideration is not how "nice" the birdhouse is, but "how safe."

Looking past my birdhouse, I see Ciara and Jackie coming home. They are both college students. Due to COVID-19, they are living back on campus and doing schoolwork online.

Earlier in their lives, both girls had lived in unsafe conditions. When they came to BCH, they found a home where they were safe, valued and loved. At Mills Home, they found hope and healing—they have blossomed into beautiful, Christian young women.

Three children, ages seven, six and five, came into BCH's care. They were safe in a cottage where they were loved and received care. After a short time, the children's mom began doing better and the department of social services (DSS) allowed the siblings to return home for a trial period.

A couple of months passed. One morning a local school teacher was driving to work and saw the three children walking alongside the road. The oldest, a boy, was carrying the children's belongings tied up in a sheet and tossed over his shoulder.

The teacher stopped, "Why are you out on the road by yourselves?"

"Momma is passed out on drugs and we haven't eaten." The boy pleaded for the teacher to take them back to *their* cottage.

She notified DSS immediately. A DSS case manager contacted BCH and their cottage parents immediately came. When the boy saw them, he ran into the cottage mom's arms, "I knew you would come get us!"

The children's tummies were filled, warm baths were provided and new clothes were given. No longer dirty and hungry, they rested in clean, warm beds. Safety, food, shelter, nurture, love, and trust are crucial. BCH gives children a safe "nest" where children can experience all these things.

When Tyler came to Cameron Boys Camp, he wouldn't talk. At home, he felt no one listened. He figured it would be the same at Camp. At first, he brought up little concerns, like a scratch on his knee or needing a pencil—just to see if anyone was listening. They were. He realized his chiefs cared. He felt safe enough to pull back the layers of unresolved hurt and ask for help.

His chiefs cried with him, prayed with him, and together, they came up with a plan to move Tyler toward healing. He has grown tremendously. He is becoming more confident because of the safety and security he has felt from day one.

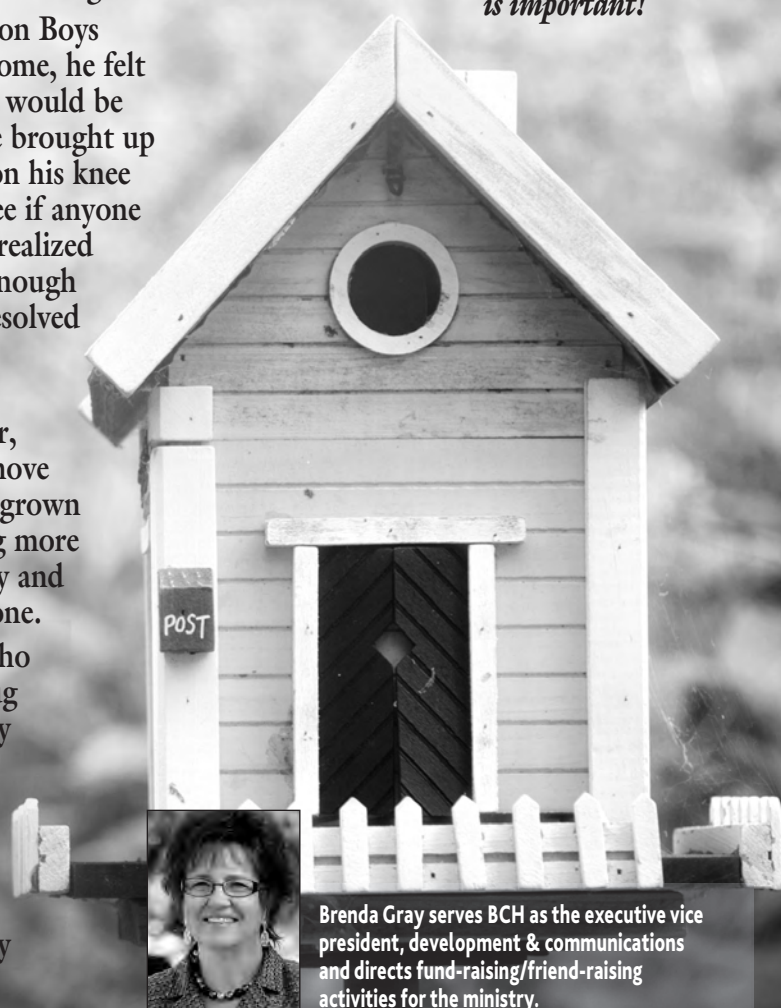
Ellissa lived with parents who were in and out of jail for drug trafficking. Dad was physically abusive. Stepmom made Ellissa steal food. When she ran away, DSS became involved. She was placed with a family member and who ended up being physically abused. DSS intervened and

brought her to Mills Home.

At first Ellissa was very quiet and did not want any help. But as time went on, she began to open up. Now after several months, this 11-year-old is happy. Her smile lights up a room. She trusts her cottage parents and knows her "nest" is safe. Today, she is experiencing God's love and healing.

It seems that whether you are a bird or a child—safety is important. Through your generosity and BCH's dedicated staff, there is a safe place that is *high enough off the ground* to be safe. Children form relationships and experience a healing, nurturing place. Together, we provide children a haven where they are protected from the storms and winds of pain. Together, we are providing a caring Christian environment where children experience God's message of hope and peace. *Thank you!*

By the way, I'm working on getting a taller pole for my birdhouse. *Being safe is important!*



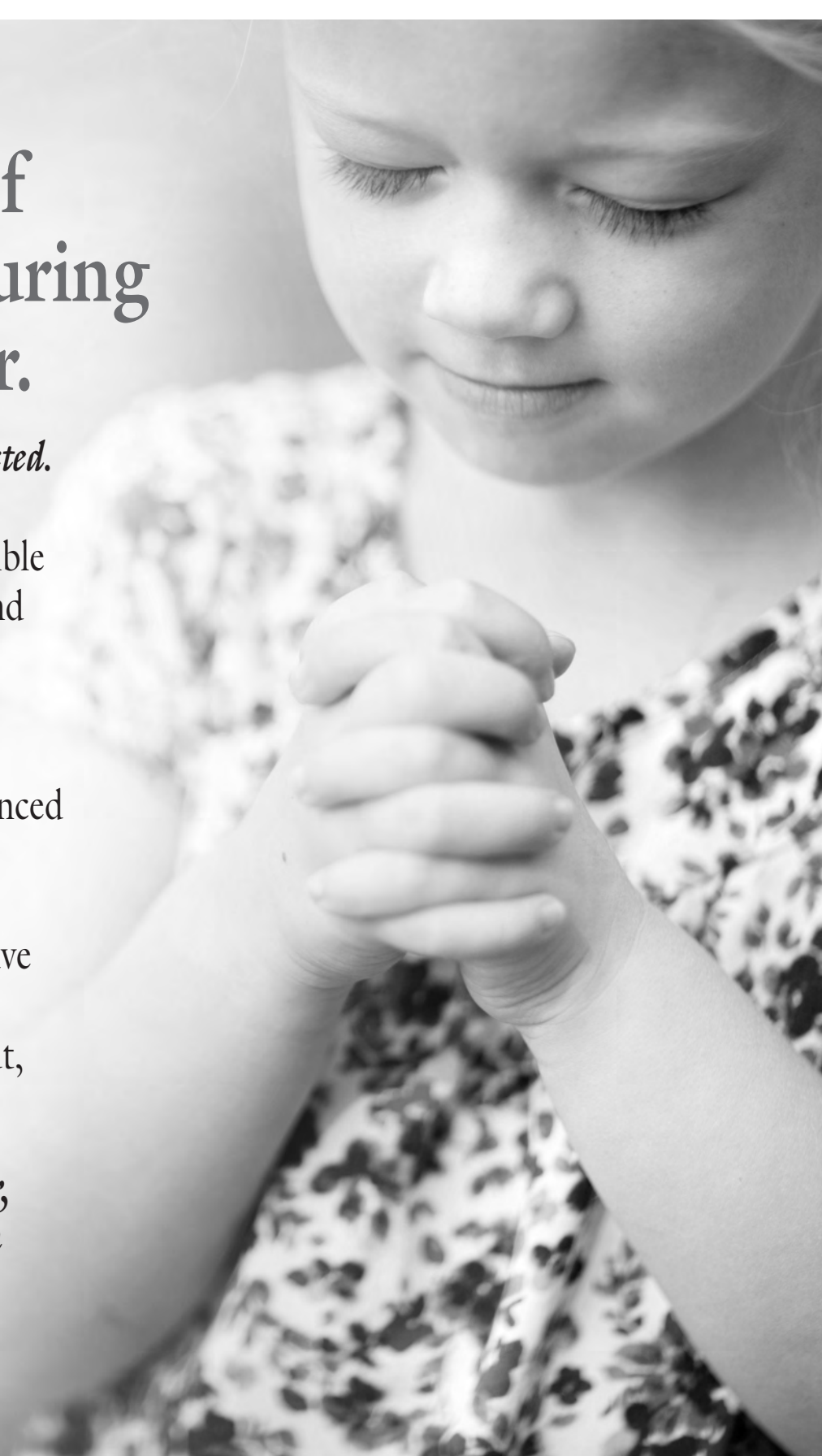
Brenda Gray serves BCH as the executive vice president, development & communications and directs fund-raising/friend-raising activities for the ministry.

We are so *PROUD* of our boys and girls during this unusual Summer.

This is not the Summer our children expected.

The season was supposed to be filled with extraordinary activities such as Vacation Bible Schools, camp experiences, water parks, and church friends coming to visit. It was supposed to be the kind of Summer many of the children have only dreamed about because of the traumatic lives they experienced before coming to Baptist Children's Homes. However, our children haven't complained. Having a place where they have a safe home, plenty to eat, clothes that fit, and most of all, lots of love, is enough. But, it takes you to make all of this possible.

Join us, during this unusual Summer, by praying and giving so our children will have the love and necessities they need.



I want to give children a summer filled with *Joy & Love!*

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☐ Contact me with information on how to prepare a Christian Will. ☐ I have included Baptist Children's Homes in my estate plans.

Spanning across the state, friend-raiser team brings message of encouragement during pandemic

By Jim Edminson, Editor

As soon as the coronavirus began impacting North Carolina in March, our development directors began making phone calls," Brenda Gray says. "It was important for us to be in touch with our donors and pastors to make sure they were okay. They are great friends and very much a part of the BCH family."

Gray, who serves as Executive Vice President, Development and Communications, suspended the daily, face-to-face visits the directors regularly make with donors, pastors and church leaders across the state.

"The concern was for those we visit as well as reducing exposure for our staff members," she asserts. "We pivoted quickly, and instead of the visits, we began calling,

emailing and sending cards and letters."

The response was great.

"Our amazing development directors approach this as ministry," Gray reminds. "There have been many times that a call one of them made came at just the right moment. Each one has been able to encourage and pray with donors or pastors."

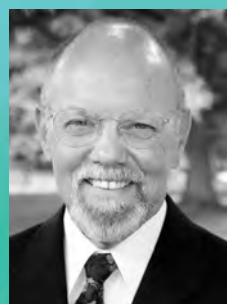
BCH's friends make a difference. As the development directors contacted people, the ones they called quickly shared their concern, wanting to know what impact COVID-19 was having on children, residents and staff.

"We have the best supporters," Gray says.

"At a time when we were showing concern for them, all they could do is ask how they could help us."

In spite of uncertain financial times, churches and donors have been faithful—with many giving sacrificially. The postponed Food Roundup has made it difficult for BCH, but gifts of grocery food cards and food items in the interim have helped.

"Words cannot express our gratitude," Gray says. "Even at times like this, our donors and churches are making a difference."



Lewis Smith

Carolyn Bailey suffered a stroke in the midst of the pandemic. After Carolyn's stroke, her husband Phil and I talked often by phone and prayed together. The couple are wonderful examples of people who stand with BCH in caring

for children. Phil Bailey is a special friend of mine and the director of missions for Polk Baptist Association. Polk Association is amazing. Over the years, the little association of only 24 churches has given BCH more than \$100,000. After the food drive was postponed due to the COVID-19, I called Phil to discuss our needs due to the cancelation. A few days later, he called to say that a number of churches decided to send money and food cards anyway. The pastors of the churches agreed that we might need extra help before the rescheduled food drive takes place. They made the needs of feeding the children a priority. By the way, Carolyn is improving, and the total gifts from Polk Association has topped \$8,000.



Karen Slate

It was a dreary, rainy day—the fourth straight in a row. I was calling donors to check to see how folks were coping during the COVID-19 crisis. One particular call was to a sweet friend who had lost both her husband and her daughter within the year. She said it had been a horrible day, a day of many tears and heartache. I listened as she shared such wonderful memories about her loved ones. It was humbling as I prayed with her, asking for His comfort and peace, and shared a scripture of hope (Romans 15:13).

At the end of our time, she thanked me for the call. She said it had been a God-send and asked if I would come visit when things were better. She invited me for coffee and a visit on her porch. I said I would.

What a privilege to love on our donors and dear friends. They matter to me and to this ministry—we are in it together. This is what Baptist Children's Homes is all about.



Micah Lee

Shortly after the announcement to suspend the 2020 Food Round Up, I received a phone call from a concerned donor. His question was simple: "What can I do to help feed the children?" I shared with him what we needed to purchase food and cleaning supplies in the months ahead. He then shared his concern and our need with his pastor, Darren Johnson of Hebron Baptist Church in Statesville. The church leadership unanimously voted to provide a gift of \$7,500. When I asked the pastor about this gift, he simply said: "To God Be the Glory!"

Jerry Anderson of Woodlawn Baptist Church in Conover is a huge supporter of BCH. When the final decision was made to cancel this year's food collection, Jerry just couldn't let it go. He first planned an "Emergency Collection." Then the COVID-19 shutdown the churches making it unsafe to collect and deliver food to our campuses. Well, Jerry wasn't finished. After some prayer and thoughts, he elected to make a video and a webpage link to share churchwide. The video included a personal message from Dr. Blackwell on several ways to give and support BCH. The church has raised to date more than \$9,000. Other church members gave directly to BCH. Way to go, Woodlawn! Jerry never gave up trying to find a way for his church to help feed the children.



Patrick Fuller

I called a faithful donor and friend who loves Baptist Children's Homes. She was distraught over the devastation the virus had brought to her family, community and church. My heart broke as I listened. She felt alone.

Two weeks later, I called and she asked if I could come and have lunch on the patio—using social distancing measures. I agreed. During lunch, this sweet friend began to cry. But this time, her tears were tears of joy and gratitude. Her heart was lighter. She said that Dr. Blackwell had been in contact as well as other staff members. She thanked me for my calls and concern. She said that we were like her family. It was a powerful moment of genuine connection and fellowship. Although our visit was different because of the coronavirus pandemic, our time together was beautiful evidence of BCH's mission to share hope and change lives. The donor made the statement that they would commit to help us change lives with "every day that God gives her." She also affirmed her commitment of sharing hope during the pandemic. She said the crisis changed their life because of our commitment to our champions, those who support Baptist Children's Homes.



Danny Hawkins

It was shortly after the coronavirus outbreak that I called Robert and Rose Swain of Dublin County. Rose had sent a note to inform BCH that she and her husband named the ministry in their last will and testament, and I wanted to thank the couple personally.

I called their home and Rose answered. I introduced myself and shared the role I played in the ministry. Then, I stated my purpose for calling. I shared how BCH had received her note that afternoon and I was calling to let them know how much their decision meant to us and the many children and residents we serve. Rose was surprised, yet happy that she was receiving personal confirmation so soon. She said, "I just wanted someone to know that we care."

I assured Rose that their actions were evidence of their love and care for children and families. She explained that her husband Bob had been scheduled for heart surgery that week; however, because of the virus, his surgery was postponed. Bob's condition was critical and Rose was disappointed and concerned the surgery had been delayed. I shared my concern for both her and Bob. And then I asked if I could pray for them and ask God to protect Bob until his surgery could be rescheduled—sooner than later.

After my prayer, I asked if I could stay in contact with them and promised to continue to pray for Bob. Fortunately Bob's surgery took place a week later and it was successful. I was diligent to call them often to check on Bob. Rose has expressed, over and over, her appreciation for BCH's love and support. I told her it was a privilege and reminded her "that's what friends are for."

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Connecting with lonely seniors during the pandemic

By Carol Layton, Director of Communications and Administration - NCBAM

More than 40 volunteers, along with team members from North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM), are currently manning *Hope Line*—the friendly call service to lonely seniors, which now includes both inbound and outbound calls.

In March, when older adults were first encouraged to self-isolate to protect themselves from the coronavirus, the *Hope Line* experienced a 923% increase in calls from the previous month. To meet the increased demand, two lines and weekend service were added.

What follows are the testimonies of mission-minded *Hope Line* volunteers as they share what it's like to connect with older adults living in the throes of the pandemic.

Gereline commits four hours each week. "Answering *Hope Line* calls is a blessing. I'll soon be 78 years old, so I understand what some callers are going through. Children and grandchildren are busy with their own lives, and callers need to be able to pick up the phone and know they can talk to someone.

"I prayed for a long time, 'Lord, what can I do that will further your Kingdom?' Then, NCBAM showed up and here I am! I've lived for years without shedding a tear, but God has softened my heart to weep for the joy of serving on the *Hope Line*."

Al and Rose serve one afternoon each week. At one o'clock, the married couple grab their phones, make themselves comfortable in a room together, and wait for the calls to start. Their strategy grew out of the specialized training they received in "mindful awareness" and



Hope Line is available to callers daily, 9:00 am-9:00 pm at 866-578-4673.

"other-focused listening" which encourages minimizing their distractions.

Rose says her callers deal with a wide variety of situations. "Some have been recovering from surgery, some are widows, one had grown up as a foster child and has no family to talk to. Some looked forward to church because it was their only time out of the house. But they all have one thing in common: they just need someone to talk to."

Al says the *Hope Line* is something very positive in his life. "Rose and I like serving together. We are blessed with a great family and with each other, but I've talked with widows and widowers who don't have anyone. I've learned that sometimes, just having someone to talk to makes all the difference."

Cheryl and a friend walk together three times each week. "One day as we were walking, it oc-

curred to me that within a ten-mile radius of our church, there were probably many people dealing with the same issues I hear from *Hope Line* callers all across the state. It just breaks my heart. Some don't have anybody."

Cheryl is glad the *Hope Line* was started. "It's worth all the hard work NCBAM put into it, and I'm glad I volunteered. It blesses me to be the person someone can talk to. Some are struggling with issues of faith and ask deep questions about being a Christian. NCBAM supplies a resource list, Scripture verses to share, and I can offer callers the 'One Hope' devotional book. It touches my heart when they ask me to pray for them, and I often sense they feel better after."

Jackie sees the *Hope Line* as a much-needed service. "The pandemic has heightened loneliness. Many tell me their only outing was to church or the grocery store, and now they can't do that. But many callers have been living this way for years. My biggest dilemma is that some people just don't want to hang up. It feels like no matter how long we talk, it was never enough."

Kay says that answering calls is a ministry for her. "I have prayed with callers and they really appreciate it. Some of my calls have been lengthy but the one that broke my heart was a short one where a caller said, 'I just wanted to hear the sound of someone's voice' and then she hung up. I was glad I was there for what she needed in that particular moment."

To learn how your church can be involved or how you can become a volunteer, call 877-506-2226.

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Make your honor or memorial gift and yours and your parent's name(s) will be published in a commemorative section of the August **Charity & Children** that celebrates moms and dads. Use the coupon below or enclosed envelope:

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City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ Email _____

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Hurry! Deadline is July 10.

Homecoming 2020 canceled due to COVID-19 — Alumni reminisce about favorite MH staff members

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

O Dear Alumni, on behalf of the Mills Home Alumni Council and Association, it is with sadness, but also with understanding, that I announce the cancellation of Homecoming 2020. Because of concerns regarding COVID-19 and health restrictions placed on "congregate care" groups by the State of North Carolina, it is not possible to have this year's event. We will miss seeing one another, but we look forward to the time when we all will be together again.

Sincerely yours,
Sharon DeHart Stiles
President

We can learn many things about alumni by reading their comments on Facebook. Almost everyone complains that they are eating too much during the quarantine time. But a number are using the time to complete home projects. **Lisa Carter Lancaster** and her husband **Ron** have spent a great deal of time perking up their backyard — the biggest task being the removal of all the cute metal cutouts from along their wooden fence, staining the fence, freshening the metal art work, and returning them back on the fence.

Sally Beck Ferguson occasionally pops up on Facebook with a humorous quip of some sort and treats us to frequent photos of the beautifully beaded jewelry she makes. She wrote recently: "I have made a few face masks and jewelry pouches, but my true love is beading. When boredom sets in, I always revert to beading jewelry. I really regret that all my scheduled crafts shows, fair and bazaars were cancelled because of COVID-19."

Cecelia Townsend Wilkerson took on a daunting task of pulling together a big team of volunteers to help a widowed neighbor with all kinds of chores so she would not be denied home insurance (success on that already). The crew assembled with Cecelia and her husband Mark on five Saturdays to mow, cut down trees, remove debris, and rebuild a porch. *Alumni Heros* assisting in the worthy endeavor are: **Ron Lancaster** (and his mighty chainsaw), **Tracy**

Morrow, Grady and Flora Hicks Patton, Martha Berndt Fischer, and of course, **Cecelia's grandchildren — Taylor and Cecelia Hollis**.

Larry Phillips wrote on Facebook: "Before COVID-19, we played trivia on Wednesdays at our local spot. So once everything closed, we got trivia questions out of a paper and played while we ate supper. Then my friend Gilbert's wife sent us a Southern Trivia game and we have played that also. It has been a lot of fun."

We were so sorry to learn that **Mari Dietz** lost her daughter **Maddie Rae** on May 21. Friends can send condolences to Mari at this address: 2006 Cheltenham Blvd, Greensboro, NC 27407 or to her "Mari Dietz" Facebook page.

Mari has two sons. She entered Mills Home in 1971 with siblings **Denise, Gary and Wesley**. She left in 1977. Mari lived in Craver Cottage her entire time at Mills Home (MH) with her "duty" often being house duty for that cottage. She recalls all the girls also had to go pick vegetables at the farm. To her it always seemed that her cottage mates were the last ones to go to the field and there were never enough vegetables left to get a bushel full. Her favorite campus activity was at the church working on GA activities. In the summers, she loved going swimming and to the valley in the evenings. She enjoyed vacation time at the McNeill Beach Cottage and visiting churches and spending weekends in homes of the members. As for workers on campus, Mari liked **Mrs. Pearson, Miss Byrd**, and especially the nurse, **Miss Miller** who was very kind to her. Mari looks forward to enjoying time with friends at future Homecomings.

Thanks to **John Terrell** for the recent update sheet. John came to Mills Home in 1953. His father, **Rev. Ike Terrell**, had accepted the call to be the pastor of our Mills Home Baptist Church. The family also included John's mother **Mildred**, sister **Rebekah**, and brother **Ike Jr.** They left MH for a call to Winston Salem in 1955 but returned in 1967 when Rev. Terrell became Director of Development for Baptist Children's

Homes — a job he held until 1985. From 1972 until 1977, John worked with the editors of *Charity & Children* as a photographer. He has remained close to the Mills Home family and is a regular attendee at Homecomings and miscellaneous picnics about the state. He surprised us all on February 16, 2019 when he tied the knot with **Ann Widdows**. They live at 509 Council Street, Thomasville, NC 27360.

Janice Lewis Doherty returned her update sheet. She writes that she entered MH from Waynesville in 1952 with siblings **Dale** and the late **Carolyn and Noel Dean**. Janice was active in sports at Thomasville High and served as lifeguard at the MH swimming pool under the direction of **Coach Darrel Corder**. Her favorite duty was working at the Woman's Building with **Mrs. Helen Pearson**. She was lucky to have so many campus workers to be very supportive of her: **Mr. and Mrs. Bowman, Mrs. Pearson and Dr. John Ball**, her social worker. Janice enjoys returning for Homecomings and she happily brings her husband **Ed** with her and loves the chatting and visiting with everyone. She is thankful to maintain good contact with her brothers and sisters. When not under quarantine, she enjoys going out for a meal with MH friends. Janice and Ed are both retired and living in High Point. Janice has two sons and seven grandchildren. You can connect her by emailing: janpened@hotmail.com.

Ron Wyatt's update sheet has him living at 242 Windy Hill Lane, Thomasville, NC 27360. He is married to **Amanda Arrants** and they have two grown children. Ron entered MH in 1978 with siblings **Michael and Linda**. Michael and Linda stayed only a short time, but Ron stayed until 1981. He loved participating in high school track and cross country and serving as a MH gym/recreation supervisor. He also handled van transportation to assist other residents in getting to appointments. As a business partner, he currently is serving as a manager of Sidekick Media Solutions, Inc. which offers printing, publishing and mar-

keting services. Ron's favorite houseparents were **Mary Lewis and Gary Bruin**. His favorite part of Homecoming is the camaraderie. Ron can be contacted by emailing: rw Wyatt@northstate.net.

Steve Hooks came to MH in 1952 from Landis with siblings **Mary Ann, Sue, Woodrow (Doc) and Jinny**. He graduated and left in 1959. We're pretty sure Steve enjoys Homecoming because he is always there and with his wife **Linda**. Linda works at a daycare and Steve is retired and sneaks in extra time with the couple's two children, seven grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren. When asked about a favorite MH worker, Steve quickly names **Bill Sisk**.

Alumni Council Spotlight shines on **Martha Berndt Fisher**! Martha came to MH in 1973 with siblings **Ruth, Mark, Andy, and Susan** (the last two are recently deceased). Her favorite cottage was Stokes because it was a family cottage. She also lived at the Aydlette and Huffman. Two of her campus duties were cleaning the church and maintaining the campus grounds — but she most enjoyed gym duty which included being a lifeguard. She has wonderful memories of snowy days when all the kids gathered on the hill behind the gym or library to sled, warming up by the fire barrel, and drinking hot chocolate. She loved all the church activities: GA's, Acteens, Children's Choir, Adult Choir, Tour Choir, and Handbells. She was a well-rounded athlete lettering in basketball, softball, and volleyball which earned her a full scholarship to Pfeiffer College. After college, she married **Kerry Fisher** and had four daughters. Now widowed, Martha has two grandsons and one on the way. She owns her own business and has taken on hemp farming. You can expect to see Martha working away at future Homecomings, but she will also do her share of reminiscing with old friends while making new ones.



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



Making News Every Day Around the State



Broyhill Home in Clyde Cruz receives band award

Broyhill Home's Cruz received the "Senior of the Year" award for high school band. Cruz has been accepted to the School of Music at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee.



Kennedy Home in Kinston Dusk brings fireflies out

One of the children's favorite activities on Kennedy Home's sprawling grounds is to chase fireflies. This one young boy walks slowly to sneak up on the flashing insects in order to make a catch.



Camp Duncan in Aberdeen Girls rebuild campsite tent

Every so often, campers tear down an older campsite tent and start a new. The Pathfinders are sawing and preparing the logs for rebuilding what is known as the "Chuck Tent."



Lindsay Home in Zionville Rebecca feeds fellow residents

During their stay-at-home time, the ladies have helped around the kitchen more than usual. Rebecca prepared spaghetti, garlic bread and salad for a recent meal.



Odum Home in Pembroke Girls enjoy Hawaiian cookout

Even when you have to stay at home, you can always use your imagination. This is exactly what the cottage parents and girls at Elmore Cottage did by dressing up for their Hawaiian lū'au.



Mills Home in Thomasville Girls honor their case manager

Residents and staff honored BCH's Rae Francis who completed her masters degree. The girls, who Rae serves as case manager, led a ceremony by reading scripture, poems and sharing personal sentiments.



Care House in Lenoir Young mothers receive supplies

Members of Dallas Baptist Church made a front-porch visit to Care House, BCH's home for teen mothers and their babies. They donated food, paper products, socks, and gift cards.

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Linda Morgan, Lead Dir., 828-627-9254
2. Central Area Family Services
Regina Keener, Dir., 336-474-1200
3. Eastern Area Family Services
Christopher Allabaugh, Dir., 252-522-0811
www.kennedyhome.org
4. Odum Home
Kathy Locklear, Res. Mgr., 910-521-3433
www.odumhome.org
5. Oak Ranch/Family Care
6. Cameron Boys Camp
Drew Scott, Dir., 910-245-4034
www.cameronboyscamp.org
7. Camp Duncan for Girls
Brad Gearhart, Dir., 910-944-3077
www.campduncanNC.org
8. Weekday Education
Brooke Child, Dir., 336-474-1201
9. Tucker Greater Vision Ministry
Sara Becker, Mgr., 336-687.6384
10. Family Foster Care
Bob McCleary, 828-627-9254
www.bchfostercare.org
11. HOMEBASE at W. Carolina University
Jim Dean, Dir., 828-293-4660
12. Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities
Tara Sessoms, Dir., 336-474-1259
www.hereismyhome.org
13. NC Baptist Aging Ministry
Sandy Gregory, Dir., 336-474-1221
www.ncbam.org
14. Good Shepherd Children's Home in Guatemala Keith Henry, COO,
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Annual Beach Retreat is slated for October 2-5

Alum tells tale of scary night at Skeeter Hut

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

Beach Cottage here we come! We are all looking forward to having our “Annual Beach Retreat” especially since we didn’t have Homecoming — it was so sad not seeing all our friends.

Please note that the Beach Retreat begins Friday afternoon, October 2, and continues until Monday after lunch. I’ll let you know about the cost and what to bring soon. If you have a craft you want to share, bring it along. We will have a great time of fellowship, walking on the beach, eating, eating, and eating! You can email me to let me know if you are coming.

In the first of May, we learned that **Becky** had been exposed to COVID-19. She was quarantined for the next 28 days but never came down with the virus. The past months have been hard. But things are getting back to normal for us. I hope all of you are making it through this time in good health.

Back in 1972 when the Lord called Becky and me to serve at Kennedy Home (KH), we lived in an apartment in the middle of the campus. The first KH youngin we met was **Stanley Matthews**. His campus job was painting and he made our apartment look brand new. We will always remember him for welcoming us and helping us feel like KH was home.

The next youngin we met was **Georgia Roach**. We had two sons with us and one was still wearing diapers. Becky was secretary to Reverend Roger Williams, the director of KH, along with doing secretarial work for seven others in the office. Georgia’s campus job was to baby sit for us as well as be the church organist. She really helped us in a time of need. I remember that she liked everything about the job except changing diapers.

Georgia told us about keeping her eye on some cinnamon buns in the pantry in her cottage. When she got up the courage, and was desperate enough, she went down and took several after everyone had

gone to bed. She didn’t get caught, but the guilt of it was more than she could bear. She swore that she would never take anything else that didn’t belong to her. Georgia goes on to tell that when she was at North Lenoir High School, she took driver’s education. She was terrified of driving a car and said her feet shook so much she could hardly keep them on the gas pedal. Georgia kept telling herself that she had to learn to drive if she was going to make it in this big world.

Addie Timmerson Norvell gave me a call about a week ago and I thoroughly enjoyed talking to her. She told me lots of things about KH. She is planning to write a “big” article for me. She called to ask about **Mr. Johnny Justice, Jr.** who I wrote about the past two months. He was at KH the same time she was. I gave her his telephone number because she wanted to get in touch with him. I believe Miss Addie is now in her late eighties or early nineties. Maybe she will tell me when she writes me. One thing she told me was that the children were given \$2.00 a month to have as their allowance. They were taught to put one penny in the offering every Sunday morning at worship. One time she felt real bad because she had spent her money on cookies and drinks and didn’t have one penny for church. She sat way down the pew away from her house-mother who was looking her way. Miss Addie clicked her finger on the offering plate and it sounded like she had dropped money in—no one ever knew.

She had a campus job of cleaning the church. She made \$1.00. They had to clean all the classrooms and the whole church every week. She had to pass a “white glove” test when she had finished. She also told me that they never had food out of a can. Everything they cooked was fresh or had been canned by the cook or housemother.

It was also very, very cold in her upstairs bedroom and very hot in the summer with no air condition. Miss Addie gives the workers of KH

the credit for teaching and training her to live in this world.

Doris H. Powers is a KH youngin whom many of us will never forget. I remember so well her dressing up and playing the part of Mrs. Kennedy at Homecoming events. She was a great tour guide of the Cedar Dell Mansion.

She has gone on to be with the Lord but her husband continues to come to our Christmas parties and other events. We really enjoy seeing and being with him. Doris wrote me a long time ago and told me about her “dream.” Her letter reads: “One of the most important changes I’ve ever experienced has been the coming to terms with my past. I am who I am because of what I was back then.”

“The Dream”

by Doris Powers

Last night, I wandered down the hall in a strange and wondrous dream. When there before me in my house was a door I’d never seen. With trembling hand, I opened it and beheld beyond my ken, a room so filled with lovely things I scarce could take it in. With a child’s delight, I entered to roam its length and breadth, pausing here, now rushing there, to take in all its wealth. Still again, the dream would come unbidden in the night, pulling me onward down the hall, now upwards to new heights. I’d climb the stairs and at opened door behold a room complete, fully furnished, the closet filled, and all my needs replete. “What are You trying to teach me, Lord? Perhaps to open mine eyes?” “There are many ‘rooms’ within this ‘house,’” my precious Lord replied, “filled with treasures, untapped, unmined, if only you’d step inside.” Again to me my Lord did say, “O little one, can’t you see? When you trust me enough to follow in faith, there’s always more I have for thee.”

Doris wrote this after learning the meaning of her dream. I know she is having a grand time in heaven with her Lord.

Michael Grimsley sent a great story. He writes: “**Grayson Gentry** and I decided we would spend the night down at the old Skeeter Hut. This was back in the 70s. Well, we got permission to do so and took off walking. When we got there, we realized we forgot the key. So we climbed in the window. It was in the fall and got a might cold so we built a small fire in the fireplace. We were already kind of spooked because before it got dark we checked out the beds and found snake skins under the mattresses. We decided to sleep on a big table in the center room. We turned in, the fire had burnt out, and it was dark. All of the sudden, we were awakened to banging on the outside tin walls. We jumped up scared to death and hightailed it back to our cottage. Later, we found out **Vance Russ** got some guys together to scare us. That was it for me camping any more at the Hut.”

Mary Beth Thomas (1972-1977) tells us every day on Facebook to smile and have a good day. Mary Beth was at KH the same years that Becky and I were there. She has three children of her own and two step children—but she always says she has five. She also has fifteen grandchildren and some great-grandchildren. While at KH she says she was taught how to love folks and she says, “Believe me there is a lot of love! My family is so important to me. We always tell each other that we love each other when we talk on the phone. You should respect others and help when you can and never think you are better than anyone.”

Mary Beth was a KH youngin I could count on—just like you.

Always remember, Becky and I love you and if you ever just want to talk, pick up the phone and give me a call or send me an e-mail. And you

are always welcome to visit us in Havelock. Love ya!—jt

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



Summer is a time to take a break and be refreshed

By Jim Edminson, Editor

There is nothing better than an ice cold watermelon on a hot summer day to refresh the body and soul.

My great-grandparents' home still exists. Nestled under the loblolly pines in central Louisiana, the "old Terrell homeplace" sits along the banks of Spring Creek which meanders through the woods in Rapides Parish and connects properties neighbors once farmed.

The house is tired now and has not been lived in for years. But standing by the front porch, you can still hear the bustle and clamor caused by my grandmother and her eight siblings coming and going. Together they farmed crops, fed pigs and cows, and when they finished chores, the brothers engaged in horseplay and the sisters

played endless games of hide-and-seek.

Great-grandmother Minnie began cooking breakfast before the sun rose above the treetops. Aromas of bacon cured in the smokehouse drifted up the hill to the barn where Uncle Grant milked the family's dairy cow.

Behind the house where the yard dropped off to the bank of the creek, perishable food like milk stayed cold in the spring-fed waters. An oblong wooden box with no top or bottom and drilled holes along the sides allowed the water to run through.

When summer days heated up and the humidity bore down on the family, the children raised heartfelt pleas to escape to the swimming hole downstream from the house. A slight nod by great-grandfather William set them off downhill to the oasis. Uncle Pete grabbed a couple ripened watermelons off the vine and plunged them into the creek box before running down the dirt rode to catch

up with the brood who plowed ahead, halfway there.

While the family swam and sunbathed, the ice cold waters nearly froze those melons. Back home, the girls laid out newspapers on the porch and the boys cut the melons into half-round pieces. Everyone gobbled up the sweet treat, flinching from the cold on their teeth.

Later, reclining along the width of the porch, the children rested while a sparing wind rustled the leaves. Minnie and William slowly rocked as their eyelids grew heavy. Refreshed—at rest, if only for a short time.

Jesus rested. He stepped away from the commonplace, in the presence of Abba, Father, to find refreshment. He returned, renewed.

This year's summer vacation may more likely be a "staycation." But even with the restrictions, take a break, be still and catch your breath. Plans do not have to be fussy. They only need to include a couple of things. First, involve the family. Take a walk with your

sweetie, play with your children or grands. Do a fun thing for you. Then, spend time with your Lord. . . and be refreshed.



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



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