



## Podcast features Dr. Mark Smith

Listen as Dr. Blackwell discusses Smith's new role as BCH's foster and adoption liaison and the "Every Child" initiative. (See related article on page 8.)

# Charity & Children

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



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Alex, left, and Rob are residents at the Alverta Bolick Home in Asheville. The duo are also teammates on the Buncombe County Special Olympic soccer team. The team will compete this summer in the 2022 Special Olympics U. S. Games in Orlando, FL.



## Alex and Rob bound for U.S. Special Olympics

By Jim Edminson, Editor

**R**ob and Alex are best buds. They are residents at the Alverta Bolick Home in Asheville and teammates on the Buncombe County Special Olympic soccer team. This summer, the duo will compete in the 2022 Special Olympics U.S. Games in Orlando.

"You have to try out to be on the team," Rob asserts. "But if you try out and don't make the

team, you can still come and practice anyway."

"We warm up first thing at practice," Alex chimes in. "We do stretches and drills and then we scrimmage. I like when we scrimmage."

All five Bolick Home residents participate at county Special Olympic events throughout the year. Rob is a "Global Messenger." He has been trained in public speaking and serves as an ambassador for Special Olympics. Rob

recruits potential athletes, volunteers, and sponsors through public presentations.

Both men enjoy playing soccer. They know how to pass the ball, and each knows the position he plays and what is expected in the game.

Rob is proud of his defense: "I try to stay between the player with the ball and the goal."

"I'm the one who gets the ball and scores—sometimes," Alex smiles. (Continued on page 3.)



# Find value in life's small events and enjoy living

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

**S**ome people refuse to embrace the future, a sad, regrettable choice. I still remember reading about a woman who lived in destitute conditions, picking up clothes at the Salvation Army, begging door-to-door for food, and finally wasting away at a nursing home as a pitiful, emaciated shadow. But after her death, authorities discovered she had left behind more than a million dollars, including \$800,000 in cash and several hundred shares of valuable stock, stored in two safety deposit boxes.

Though a much smaller nest egg, another example of failing to live with an eye on the future comes from a bequest made to Baptist Children's Homes more nearly three decades ago. It involved the estate of John Duncan, a man who did not trust the government or banks. When he could not persuade his friend, Bob Lotz, to take \$8,000 of the cash he had accumulated, he declared he would bury the money and did not care if it was ever found.

When Duncan, who had never married, died, he left BCH all his possessions. Appointed the estate's executor, Lotz spent more than a year looking for the cash. True to his word, Duncan had squirreled away his cash. The only easy find was \$46.45 which Lotz located the day of his friend's death. From there, he started removing doors, window trim, and electrical wall outlet plates, and searching every nook imaginable. Three days later he found more than \$2,000 beneath a potato bin. Then he returned a few days a week for months, usually leaving empty-handed. Finally, frustrated that he had not located the main cache, Lotz prayed, "Look, God, you know I'm honest. I tried looking. I'm tired of looking for this money. I shouldn't have to go through all this. Please let me find it. You know I'll turn every cent

in; it's for a good cause."

On his next excursion into the woodshed, he noticed a plastic medicine tube against the foundation and a Wheaties box containing \$1,580. He returned to the pump house, studying the thick concrete walls and removing the roof, he found four plastic bags with a total of \$7,000. A couple of months later, he found eighteen \$100 bills in a peanut butter jar in a hog house. In the rafters above was a tobacco tin with seven more. Total cash discoveries came to just over \$13,000.

Although these are extreme examples, it is too easy to cluck, "What fools!" while overlooking the ways in which we cling to fear. Is choosing "stability" actually casting a vote for boredom? Or is "prudently" amassing ever-larger retirement accounts in reality dreading that some old-age disease will suck away our life savings? Is a refusal to share with those who are less fortunate a reflection that we do not think there will be any more to replace what we give away? Only you can answer these questions truthfully as you search your heart.

What these stories show is that some enjoy life. Others endure it. In which category do you fall? Truthfully, all of us are seeking direction. Most of us need help at one time or another during our lives. All of us have missed intersections and have taken wrong turns. Fortunately, we have not been left on our own to deal with life's unexpected wrinkles. We have two precious resources to help guide our steps.

The first is experience. We do not have to plow fresh ground constantly. We can stand on our predecessors'

shoulders. Each generation does not have to discover anew the law of gravity, invent the light bulb, or design engines from scratch. And, in a broader sense, the lessons of history are there to speak to us—if we will listen.

But experience is not enough. We also need expectation. Although we can recall the past, we must be able to anticipate the future. We spend numerous years getting educated in hopes of finding a good job. We follow a diet for weeks or months, keeping our eye on a trimmer figure. We spend hours at the keyboard, harvesting excellence at the piano. The effort is worth it because of expectation. Take that away and the present would lock us up in a blue funk.

Everyone needs to find something in life to look forward to, to anticipate. We make a mistake if we think it has to be a trip to the Bahamas or a vacation in Hawaii. It could be welcoming home a child from college or watching a grandchild march in the homecoming parade. We all need to learn to find value in anticipating small events and learn how to make them special. We all need to enjoy life.



**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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# Quiero ser como Lenuel y Sandy, y tú también.

**M**ichael C. Blackwell stood at the podium to introduce Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) Baptist Heritage Award recipients Lenuel and Sandy Chamberlain. The couple support and volunteer at the Good Shepherd Children's Home in Guatemala. Blackwell said they see the often abandoned, traumatized "little ones as children of the most high God." He said that the orphan children and staff members at the Guatemala home see "something special, something loving in these two adults, so much so that they say in their hearts, ***"Quiero ser como Lenuel y Sandy Chamberlain."***

The annual Baptist Heritage Awards program hosted by the North Carolina Baptist Foundation and the Baptist State Convention was held April 5 at the Grandover Resort in Greensboro. This year's awards were presented to an array of honorees recognized for their friendship and support for nine North Carolina Baptist organizations. The award is among the highest honors given to a North Carolina Baptist.

Blackwell added that the Chamberlains are



Sandy and Lenuel Chamberlain are BCH's 2022 Baptist Heritage Award recipients. Pictured left to right: Keith Henry, BCH COO; Sandy Chamberlain; Karen Slate, BCH Dev Dir; Lenuel Chamberlain, Brenda Gray, BCH EVP for Dev & Com, and BCH President/CEO Michael C. Blackwell.

known for their humility. "They don't need the spotlight. They don't seek the spotlight, to shine on their good deeds or 'good neighbor assistance.'" He said, "And if you got to know them, as I know them, as my staff knows them, you too would say with these orphan children, ***"Quiero ser como Lenuel y Sandy Chamberlain."***—***"I want to be like Lenuel and***

***Sandy Chamberlain."***

Lenuel serves on BCH's Board of Trustees and Sandy serves on Good Shepherd's Board of Directors. When Lenuel completed his first term as trustee, he spoke saying, "Being a Trustee of the Baptist Children's Homes changed my life."

Those powerful words illustrate the emotional commitment and heart-felt dedication the couple have for BCH's ministry. They seek no attention for what they do. They do things quietly, yet effectively. There was even a reluctance to be recognized for this year's award, such is their humility and desire to reflect all glory to God.

Lenuel and Sandy are known and well-respected throughout Yadkin County and are active North Carolina Baptists. As owners of the Lone

Hickory Arena, they host the local cowboy church as well as many other Christian events. The Chamberlains have invested themselves in making life better for babies, children, the frail elderly, and families in need of the grace and healing power of God. Humble servants, that's who they are and that's why they are BCH's 2022 Baptist Heritage Award recipients.

## Duo serve as great ambassadors for IDD ministry

By Jim Edminson, Editor

(Continued from page 1.)

**R**ob was the first resident to live at Alverta Bolick Home after it opened in 2006. He was featured in a ***Charity & Children*** August 2007 article when he was 36 years old.

Rob remembers it was hard to leave his childhood home in nearby Weaverville, but he visits with his mother often. He is light hearted, often joking around with the other residents. Now 52, Rob says he has always valued the friendships he has with the other men.

"I love living here. It is comfortable," he says. "My favorite people live here. Alex lives here. We hangout, play games, and have a good time together."

Rob is more somber as he reflects on his dad's passing in 2019. Alex quickly lifts his spirits saying, "Your dad was so funny and was a good guy." Rob smiles and agrees.

Alex came to Bolick Home in 2009 after his mom died from cancer. He was 18 years old. Today, the 30-year-old lets everyone know

that Rob is his best friend. "I like hanging out with Rob. He shares happiness with everyone."

Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina's (BCH) ministry for special needs adults is designed to serve men and women with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). BCH offers a safe living environment with a Christian atmosphere which includes opportunities for spiritual enrichment, preparation of nutritious meals, transportation, enhancement of daily independent living and social skills.

"We like going to church on Sunday, we just walk over," Alex says. "It's right there." He points to Calvary Baptist Church where the men attend Bible study and worship on Sundays. The adjacent church was where the home's benefactor Alverta Bolick attended.

"I think God is great," Rob says. "I look forward to the day when I go to heaven and meet Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John."

The men stay busy during the week attend-

ing classes at the community college and doing other off-site activities. But for now, Rob and Alex only have one thing on their minds, the Special Olympics U.S. Games.

"There is a private jet that will fly us to Florida," Alex boasts. "I really want to do my best. It would be great to win a gold medal and go to the Special Olympics World Games."

BCH's Asheville IDD administrator/QP is Stefanie Effler. "Rob and Alex are not only great representatives of Alverta Bolick Home and our statewide intellectual/development disabilities program, they are great ambassadors for Baptist Children's Homes."

Alverta Bolick Home is one of nine homes serving individuals with intellectual and development disabilities in six communities across North Carolina. The long-term care homes help meet the unique needs through gender-specific group homes. The goal is for residents to reach their highest level of independence. To find out more about the IDD program, visit [www.bchfamily.org/idd](http://www.bchfamily.org/idd).



# Difference makers equal blessed and changed lives

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

**M**ay is filled with significant support and celebrations. There will be birthdays, anniversaries, Mother's Day, graduations, and Memorial Day. Lots of opportunities for friends and family to gather, remember, and celebrate. On May 3rd, our BCH family will join hearts to celebrate Dr. Blackwell's 80th birthday. It is a life well lived and one we hope will be filled with many more years to come. Happy Birthday Dr. Blackwell!

May is one of my favorite months. Flowers are blooming and the landscape is flourishing all around us. Gardens have been planted and the reward is now visible as tiny sprouts make their way up through the ground. New beginnings are evident all around. May is a time for making memories and a time for remembering.

The gifts to our Food Roundup begin arriving on our campuses from wonderful partner churches and associations. As soon as the trucks begin to arrive, our children are filled with excitement as they run to see all the food in the trucks and to help unload. They are amazed by the amount. **We are blessed by so many difference makers!**

Hundreds of volunteers will arrive on our campuses for our one-day Friends of Children workdays. We are so touched by their commitment to come and work alongside us. To witness the before and after of their work on these days is awesome. Our cottages, our campuses shine. **We are blessed by difference makers!**

Funds have been raised and renovation is underway to create Emmanuel Home, a place of hope and healing for our birth mothers, post adoption. Volunteers have been renovating both inside and out to prepare for the next phase. We are so grateful for each volunteer that has helped and those that will follow. **We are blessed by difference makers!**

Mother's Day weekend motorcycle riders all across our state will gather to ride East to West and West to East for a purpose. Their purpose is to share the love of Jesus with our children. The ride is sponsored by the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. **We are blessed by difference makers!**

May is filled with many milestones and special moments to celebrate. College graduations will soon take place and our high school stu-

dents will not be far behind. Their education is so important. Thank you for making these opportunities available. **We are blessed by difference makers!**

**"I thank my God for every remembrance of you" (Phil 1:3).**

As I remember, I am reminded of the many prayers for our children and staff prayed by you, our difference makers! I am reminded of the hours volunteers spent helping with building projects, making quilts, providing birthday parties, creating Easter baskets, collecting towels and clothes, providing truckloads of food and so much more, **our difference makers!**

**"I thank my God for every remembrance of you" (Phil 1:3).**

For Emily, who was the first in her family to graduate from college. You made a difference! Sheryl, a teenage girl expecting a child in four weeks, cried as she opened gifts and celebrated the gift of this child with a baby shower. You made a difference! For Josh whose father and mother have died and who needed a home, you made a difference! For three precious children (siblings) who had never had a bed of their own, you made a difference! Tim bravely stood to speak at his high school graduation. He stood with confidence wearing a new suit purchased for him for this very special occasion. For Tim, you made a difference!

For Jeffrey who had never been on an Easter Egg hunt, you made a difference! For Jack who was ashamed to go to school because he had no clothes, you made a difference. For Susie, Annie, and Tommie who had never experienced a Christmas together, you made a difference! For Lisa dealing with the trauma of missing her Mom who was in prison, you made a difference! For Jacob who had never experienced a father, you made a difference! For Jackson who was given a second chance after making some bad choices, you made a difference! For the hundreds we care for each day, you do indeed make a difference! Eighty percent of those who come to us have not heard the message of God's love for them. For those who hear and experience transforming hope and healing through Jesus, we praise God for the difference!

It is such a blessing to remember and celebrate those "difference makers" in our lives who have encouraged us and influenced us in such positive and wonderful ways. Stop and take a moment to remember and cherish those memories. Throughout the month of May as you remember special friends, relatives (remember Mother's Day), those who have and those who are risking their lives for our freedom, people who have pointed us to God, people who have shown us grace and enriched our lives, consider making a gift to BCH in their honor or in their memory. What better way to remember someone than living out their example by being a difference maker in the life of a child for years to come. (See our opportunity in this issue to honor those special **difference makers!**)

For our prayer warriors, thank you! For those who have nurtured, mentored, and supported, thank you! For those who have loved, encouraged, and spiritually disciplined, thank you! As we remember those we serve and as we remember those who come along side us and enable us to serve, we give God praise and thanks for every remembrance!





# Join us in giving thanks for moms and dads.

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

## Example of inside name listings:

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**In honor** of Mrs. Edith G. Banks

Given by Joseph and Mary Banks

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**In honor** of William F. Hughes

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# Remember Mom and Dad

*"Honor your father and mother."*

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



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

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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



# BCH President Michael C. Blackwell reflects on service and leadership

By Eliza Harrell and Cynthia Truax, BCHU Cohort Participants

He's shaken hands with presidents, received counsel from Billy Graham, been an award-winning radio disc jockey, and covered JFK's funeral as a journalist, but Dr. Michael C. Blackwell's greatest accomplishment may always be the leadership, strength, and stability he has brought to Baptist Children's Homes of NC for almost forty years.

As a husband of 55 years to Kathy and a father to Julie and Michael and grandfather to Gabriella and Piper, one sees a steadfast commitment of a man who is proud of his family. An avid commu-



Blackwell

nicator, Blackwell is unwilling to settle for mediocrity and has created a culture of excellence which will far surpass his tenure. Recently, Baptist Children's Homes University cohort participants Eliza Harrell and Cynthia Truax interviewed 80-year-old Blackwell as he reveals the heart of a leader, talks about his

life, and shares thoughts as he reflects on decades of service and what the future holds.

## Q: Aside from Christ, who is the biggest influence on your life?

"My parents played a major role in who I am today as a person, but I guess I would specifically say my father, Clitus Blackwell. If you know me, you know my father. He had a voice which resounded and he worked hard. He led the choir at church and loved our family well. His only vice was that he loved to smoke and that eventually led to his death. However, even in that, he taught me many lessons. He was such a calm influence and I have cherished memories of him. He helped me practice my speaking when I was a DJ for the local radio station as a 14-year-old. He truly was one of the greatest men I've known."

## Q: As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

"I remember walking down the street in Gaffney, South Carolina when I was about four years old and a man from the local radio station was conducting interviews. He came up and asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, and without any hesitation, I blurted out that I wanted to be a preacher. I guess it was

ingrained in me from an early age, but then as a teenager, I became so involved in radio as one of the youngest disc jockeys in the country that I ignored that calling. I remember that as a teenager a pastor encouraged me to pursue a life in preaching. I respectfully said 'no thanks,' for my heart was set on other things. It wasn't until 1966, after I had been trained in journalism and communications, that I realized that God really did plan for me to be a minister and that I needed to answer that call."

## Q: Most people see you as a solid, concrete leader, but there have been moments when you didn't feel that way. Share about a time in your life when you felt overwhelmed?

"I've had many times in life when I've felt overwhelmed, but I have two which have always stood out to me. The first was about one week after I began as president of BCH. It was July of 1983 and I had been working through the day and night for days on end trying to get a handle on our budgets, our staff, and pinpointing areas of concern for the ministry. I had seen God move and knew that He had brought me to BCH but as I sat at that big wooden desk in my office, I suddenly had a sense of uncertainty. It was one o'clock in the morning and I was completely overwhelmed with the task before me. My predecessor had taken most of the files with him when he left and was unwilling to mentor me and as I sat in that quiet building, I wondered what I had gotten myself into?"



IDD resident Jeff Orr with Dr. Blackwell at the 2018 Baptist State Convention in Greensboro. The duo were close friends. Jeff passed away on November 20, 2019.



Dr. Blackwell celebrated his 35th anniversary as the ministry's leader on June 19, 2018. Residents and staff members fill Mills Home Baptist Church to overflowing during the "Family Gathering: Special Edition."

a dear man to my mind who I knew was praying for me and was a night owl, too. I called J. Dewey Hobbs, at the time pastor, FBC Marion, and we talked for more than two hours. As a fellow minister, he didn't know child-care any better than I did but he did know struggle and victory in battles. That night became a turning point for me which I

have remembered all these years later. I think that when people are feeling stress it is important that they get help and reach out to their circle of supporters. I have been blessed to have a wonderful group of peers who I meet with twice a year who hold me accountable and help share the load.

"Find your people and reach out to them. Be willing to have hard questions asked of you and be willing to reflect often on areas where you can improve. Pray often, exercise, and practice intentional breathing. Learn what refreshes your soul and go to those waters often. Life will never be without stress so learning to cope positively is necessary."

## Q: You mentioned two times. What was the other time?

"The other time was when I turned 60 years old. I never dreaded the thought of aging or struggled with any other birthdays, but for some reason, I sat down at my desk on the day of my 60th birthday and I immediately felt a darkness sweep over me. I felt, 'This is it. It's all over.' I remember sitting there and putting my head into my hands and wondering where to go from there. At that very

moment, I heard a knock at my office door and my friend and former employee C.F. McDowell was standing beside a vintage automobile. He whisked me away to the Broyhill Building where the staff had gathered to surprise me with a birthday party—complete with poodle skirts and black and white saddle oxfords. It was as if God said, 'You're far from over and don't forget the people who love you.' That moment will remain one of the most significant moments of my life."

## Q: What do you see as your purpose in life and how have you lived out that purpose?

"I believe our purpose in life evolves and changes a bit as we journey. There was a time when my purpose was to be out at churches every Sunday and raising funds and awareness for BCH. There was a time when I believe it truly was necessary to work 60+ hour weeks to help BCH fulfill its mission. However, at this stage of my career, I no longer need to be that person. I have an excellent executive team to help carry that load. Now my purpose is truly to inspire people to be their best self. I want to motivate and encourage them. I believe my purpose is to continue to create a culture of excellence by listening to others and encouraging them to grow in their giftedness and in the Lord."

## Q: Do you feel like you ever failed?

"We all have moments when we feel failure. The most important thing to remember is that just

because you've failed, it doesn't make you a failure. If you ever internalize failure, then you're done. You might as well hang it up, turn out the lights, and shut the door.

"You learn from your mistakes. There was only one perfect person, Jesus, so obviously we will never be perfect, but the key is how you act when faced with failure. You change course, you pivot. There have been things I did that worked out much better than I expected and things that have completely flopped. Be willing to recognize what is before you and adjust when needed—or you will flame out. Everyone gets butterflies at times in life. The key is to take those butterflies and make them fly in formation."



Dr. Blackwell leads by example. He boldly demonstrates enthusiasm for his faith, children and families, and staff members.



Dr. Blackwell often brings his childhood "Teddy" out to greet children who visit the President's Office on the Mills Home campus in Thomasville. Blackwell marks his 40 anniversary as BCH president on July 1, 2023.

## Q: What do you have for future leaders?

"I have always said that school is never out for the professional. I fully believe that. I must always be willing to learn and I encourage others to keep that perspective as well. You never quite arrive if you are going to be in a leadership position. There is always more to take in and grow from. I would also tell the next generation to take advantage of every single opportunity that you have. Look around you and find the people who are successful, the ones who intimidate you even, and then take advantage of opportunities to spend time gleaning from those people. Many years ago, I was working for a newspaper and I passed the owner many days on the stairs. I was so intimidated that I never once introduced myself. I've regretted it ever since. Don't be afraid to learn from those around you and when you get to the place where you yourself are the leader, be available to encourage others."

## Q: What regrets do you have and what is still left on your bucket list?

"Well, I've been blessed and I've done a lot in my life. My list is getting pretty short at this point.

As far as what I regret, it's probably that I never saw Elvis perform live. I had an opportunity once when he came to Fayetteville in 1976, but I thought I would catch him when he came back to Fayetteville on August 25, 1977. Sadly, he died on August 16, 1977. I guess the only thing that is really left on my bucket list is that I always wanted to ride in a hot air balloon. Kathy says that probably 'ain't' happening at this point so I may need to let that one slide. I've done so much that I wanted to do. I've seen places in the world where Jesus walked, I've attended leadership conferences that were dream experiences, and I've watched BCH flourish. God's been good to me."

## Q: What do you hope people will say about you in the years ahead?

"I hope that people will say that I left BCH stronger than it was when I got here. So much has changed since July 1, 1983 and I firmly believe that BCH is much stronger than it was when I arrived. I think the employees are a family and they feel happier and safer than they did back at that time. I think we've created a culture of compassion and excellence which will last far into the future. I don't live under any illusions that my name will be remembered forever, that's just the nature of the world. When I'm long-gone and buried in God's Acre (a burial site located at Mills Home in Thomasville), I know that eventually people will not recall my name, but I believe that they will know BCH because of the lives that it has touched and the hearts it has transformed. That's what matters."



Dr. Blackwell with Eliza Harrell, left, and Cynthia Truax

## Baptist Children's Homes University (BCHU) participants assigned project to write article on BCH president

Two new BCHU participants were welcomed in 2022. Eliza Harrell and Cynthia Truax were assigned in their first class the task of interviewing BCH President/CEO Michael C. Blackwell. The duo spent more than an hour and a half grilling BCH's leader for the article. BCHU is a leadership and talent management program that challenge participants to reach their "next best." Cohorts are made up of staff members who not only do their jobs, but look for ways to improve BCH's overall "culture of excellence" in their areas and departments. Blackwell marks 40 years at the helm in 2023.



# Mark Smith blazes new trails with "Every Child"

By Michael C. Blackwell, President/CEO (Host of "It's a Family Matter")

On April 18, I released an episode of "It's a Family Matter" that features Dr. Mark Smith. Smith is Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) new foster and adoption liaison. I'm so proud of the work he is doing as he blazes new trails, walks new paths, and climbs new mountains of ministry and opportunity. We spent time discussing his role and the explosive growth of the "Every Child: Foster and Adoption Ministry," BCH's partnership with the Baptist State Convention to offer every child the caring home that he or she deserves through the direct involvement of North Carolina Baptists. I've pulled and edited a few excerpts from our conversation for this story and I encourage you to listen to the podcast "Biblical Solutions for The Foster Care Crisis: A Discussion with Dr. Mark Smith" on your favorite podcast platform or visit [www.bchfamily.org/podcast](http://www.bchfamily.org/podcast).

## Q. What is your role as foster and adoption liaison?

**A.** My goal is to reach out to pastors and associational missionaries and help them understand what the "Every Child" initiative is all about. I share that at any given time there are as many as 16,000 North Carolina children in the state's foster care system. We can break those numbers down county by county and show what this great crisis is all about. Our partnership with North Carolina Baptists is about eradicating that number, placing children in Christian homes, and having North Carolina Baptist churches help make that happen.

## Q. How does this partnership work?

**A.** When North Carolina Baptists connect with BCH, we then recruit families from churches to participate as foster families, train them through a biblical lens, and license them to foster children. BCH provides case managers who support and encourage these foster families on a daily basis. They are there to minister to them as they walk their personal foster journey with these children that they bring into their home. There are more than 4,000 North Carolina Baptist churches—together we can do this.

## Q. What is the biblical role of the church?

**A.** The role of the church is found all throughout scripture. It's something that God is very passionate and compassionate about, and we see this in so many different passages and all the books of the Bible. We see it in different



Dr. Michael Blackwell, host of "It's a Family Matter," recently interviewed BCH's new foster and adoption liaison Dr. Mark Smith. The award-winning podcast features news and information concerning BCH and addresses issues relevant to today's families. Use the QR code and listen to Smith discuss BCH's new "Every Child" initiative.

layers and at different levels. A key verse, James chapter one verse 27, reads: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27). Leaders of churches can help congregations better understand what this verse is really all about. What religion does God our father accept? Is it to come, visit, go look after? No, it is to get into the lives of those who are vulnerable and who desperately need our help. And it says right there in the verse, those in distress. These 16,000 children are in distress. God is calling our churches to aid them, to come alongside them by partnering with BCH and the BSC of NC to help children in this great time of need.

## Q. I'm sure you never could have dreamed a year ago that you and I would be here discussing your role with "Every Child." What do you enjoy most about this new job?

**A.** This is brand new. I love creating new things. One of these things is getting to meet with pastors who have already been down this road of foster care and adoption. For example, there are two pastors in our state, Tony Morita and Andrew Hopper who know that foster

care and adoption are biblical. These men actually preached on these subjects and their sermons changed the DNA of their congregations. Both of them graciously filled up my email box with manuscripts of sermons. We put them online at [www.every-child.org](http://www.every-child.org) for all pastors. There are PowerPoint slides, materials that can be used in bulletins and on social media. A pastor can go to the website, click, and download all these resources to help their congregations become involved. It's great!

S@TURDAY

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Founders Day, Cameron Boys Camp | May 14

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Friends of Children Saturday Mission Day

Projects for ages. Register: [bchfamily.org/foc](http://bchfamily.org/foc)

- May 7 - Odum Home, Pembroke
- May 14 - Kennedy Home, Kinston
- May 21 - Camp Duncan, Aberdeen

More events at [bchfamily.org/events](http://bchfamily.org/events)



# Alumni saddened after the passing of alum – Alumna recuperating after car accident and illness

By **Lib Johnson** (336) 299-7412 libjohnson@triad.rr.com

It was sad to read a note on Facebook from **Nancy Baker Threadgill** that her husband **Billy Threadgill** passed away on March 1, 2022. Billy lived at Mills Home (MH) from 1964-1969. **Gene Monroe** who commented that he also was sad to hear of Billy's death, wrote: "I have great memories of the five years at the Watson and Culler Cottages with Billy. He was a great athlete at all sports. He had an amazing curve ball pitch that I wanted to be able to hit off. He tried so hard to teach me how to hit his curve ball, but no, I never was able to hit it. He will be missed by his MH family and wife and children." Bill and Nancy were married for 42 years and had three offspring. A service will be held for him at a later date.

We are saddened to report another alumna death from a few years back. **Vannie Downey Carter** died on Nov. 28, 2019 and was 89 at that time. She entered MH in 1939 and graduated in 1951. Her sister **Layla** and brother **Robert** also lived at MH and both preceded her in death. They were all outstanding youngsters in the vibrant life of MH. After leaving MH, Vannie settled in the Durham area, married her beloved sweetheart **Bill** and reared their son **Mitchell** and daughter **Marsha**. She had the joy of two grandchildren and two great grandchildren. The family suggests memorial donations be made to the Baptist Children's Homes of NC, Inc., PO Box 338, Thomasville, NC, 27360-0338.

Other sad news we received is that **Charles M. Deal** has passed away. He lived at MH from March, 1974 until October, 1974. I'm sorry I do not have more information on Charles.

**Judy E. Norwood Hicks** entered MH in 1967 and left in 1970. Siblings with her at MH were **Janice**,

**Linda, Doris, Larry, Harold, and Michael**. Judy and her husband **Doyle Allen Hicks Jr.** had two offspring. Now disabled and widowed, Judy enjoys time spent with her one grandchild. Friends can reconnect with Judy by writing her at this address: 815 Snapdragon Rd., Sevierville, TN, 37876.

I'm sure many folks will remember **Don Watson** who was a case-worker at MH. He and his wife **Maggie** came from Salisbury to MH in 1964 and left in 1969. They have two offspring and one grandchild. Don passed in December 2020. Friends can reach Maggie at 200 Trade St., Apt B201, Tarboro, NC, 27886.

**Wallace Maultsby**, class of 1944, was happy when **Sharon DeHart Stiles** was able to give him the phone number for **Max Rollins**, a student at Thomasville High School who was friends with many MH students. He is also the son of two alumni, **Florence Breedlove Rollins** and her husband, the late **Eugene Rollins**, Wallace's classmates. Wallace enjoyed finding out from Max that Florence is still living but is now making her home in Denton, NC where she will be closer to Max.

**Darrel and Sandra Corder** were so faithful and caring for **Burl Moss** in the last years of his life. When told that Burl was somewhere in South Carolina, Darrel and Sandra found the nursing home caring for Burl and made regular visits to see him. They also frequently took gifts they felt would be useful for Burl. After Burl's death, the Corders kept his ashes in protective custody until a suitable resting place was found. The resting place will be the new columbarium now erected at God's Acre at MH. Alumni will be notified when the inurnment is to take place.

An update sheet for **Oren Maness** shows him to be retired from the city of Gastonia, NC where he has long resided. Oren and **Louise**

entered MH in 1952 from Carthage, NC and Oren graduated in 1963. Oren recalls making a visit to the home of **Jimmy and Sandra Peeler Norman** many years ago around home-coming time. Besides the Normans' three children, other children were in the relaxed setting with them. In the course of the conversation, Sandra told the youngsters that Oren used to be a teacher. The immediate question which arose was, "Why did you quit teaching?" They seemed amazed that he would give up such a job, but Oren simply did not answer. Even though his teacher training really qualified him for a higher level job, he was more interested in working with the water purification system of Gastonia. He gave quite a few dedicated years to that job and is now enjoying retirement. But when he sought work in the city of Gastonia and was required to give his qualifications, he realized it would be a good idea not to mention his college achievement for fear of being considered overqualified for the city job.

**Jim "Doc" Norman** entered MH from High Point in 1952 with sisters **Faye and Dot**. He left campus before his senior year began but he remained connected to his campus sweetheart, **Sandra Peeler**, married her and reared three children. They made their home in Gastonia. A widower several years now, Jim still resides in Gastonia where he is self-employed. For several years, Jim and Sandra served the Alumni Association in a big way in handling live auctions for us at Homecoming. The auction not only brought in money for the association, it was a great deal of entertainment that allowed alumni to browse over all the donated items and then take part in a live auction trying to outbid their old childhood friends. Jim was a popular bus driver for the MH youngsters in

his high school years. He enjoyed playing on the church softball team, trying out for football, socializing in the valley, and being a "Daniel Boone" exploring the woods on the MH property. He enjoyed the camaraderie among the campus kids and liked all the workers. Friends can reconnect with Jim at this address or on Facebook: brosales@netscape.com.

I had a recent phone conversation with **Louise Maness Pierce**. After injuries from a car accident and intervening illnesses which necessitated hospitalization in Winston Salem, Louise is still staying with a friend in Winston and continuing with her recuperation. She is feeling better from some recent trips to the hospital. She sends a thank you for cards sent by loyal friends, so please keep sending cards to Louise at 316 Ridgeway Lane, Lexington, NC, 27295. She can also be reached at 336-997-2028.

**Joyce Ann Cartrette Hill** entered MH in 1966 with siblings **Carter, Tommy, Mickey, and Ricky**. Joyce appreciated Mills Home Church because it trained her so well in her Christian development. She loved being in the regular and tour choirs. She also loved the active MH life and joined in fun social activities such as gym play, swimming, and valley socializing. She enjoyed going to Thomasville High School, especially being in the National Honor Society. After graduation in 1972, Joyce began a 45-year-career with Thomasville Furniture. She and her husband **Jim** are now retired and enjoy time with seven grandchildren. Friends can contact Joyce at this address: 209 Oakdale Rd., Jamestown, NC, 27282. (Joyce317hill@gmail.com.)



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



Odum Home in Pembroke

### BCH senior receives scholarship

Jocelyn, a high school senior who has lived at Odum Home for more than two years, was awarded \$1,500 from the Gilbert Scholarship. She is attending UNC Pembroke this fall.



EVERY CHILD Foster & Adoption Ministry

### Multiple families participate in training at Peninsula Baptist Church

Peninsula Baptist Church in Mooresville hosted a foster care training class for 15 new families. Church pastor Daniel Dye and wife Kimberly were also in the class to become licensed foster parents. Training is made possible through the EVERY CHILD partnership between BCH and the Baptist State Convention of NC. **Learn more at [every-child.org](http://every-child.org)**



Three Forks and Lindsay Home in Zionville

### Residents treated to gem mining

Adult residents were hosted by Doc's Rocks Gem Mine in Blowing Rock for a fun and educational outing. The homes are for intellectually/developmentally disabled adults.



Teen Mother/Baby Home in Thomasville

### Cottage supports teen mother

Cottage Care staff members gathered for a baby shower. They came together to support and celebrate the upcoming birth of a baby at the teen mother/baby home at Mills Home.



New South River Association in Fayetteville

### Churches supply Easter baskets

Churches from the New South River Association provided 1,023 Easter baskets for children throughout BCH's statewide locations. The association has done this for several years.



Emmanuel Home in Thomasville

### Church helps with renovation

Volunteers from Providence BC in Harrisburg help at Emmanuel Home. The home will serve birth mothers who have chosen adoption for their babies. Please pray for these moms.



Camp Duncan in Aberdeen

### Church drops off essentials

Girls at Camp Duncan had fun creating unique Easter crafts with friends from Christ Community Church. The church is a regular supporter and encourager of the young ladies.



North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM)

### Workshop helps with arthritis

The Higher Heights group at Jonesboro Heights Baptist participated in an arthritis foundation exercise program during NCBAM's recent "Shake, Rattle, and Roll" workshop.

## Can we help? Many ministries beating with one heart.

- Western Area Family Services**  
Linda Morgan, Lead Dir., 828-627-9254
- Central Area Family Services**  
Regina Keener, Dir., 336-474-1200
- Eastern Area Family Services**  
Christopher Allabaugh, Dir., 252-522-0811  
[www.kennedyhome.org](http://www.kennedyhome.org)
- Odum Home**  
Kathy Locklear, Res. Mgr., 910-521-3433  
[www.odumhome.org](http://www.odumhome.org)
- Cameron Boys Camp**  
Drew Scott, Dir., 910-245-4034  
[www.cameronboyscamp.org](http://www.cameronboyscamp.org)
- Camp Duncan for Girls**  
Brad Gearhart, Dir., 910-944-3077  
[www.campduncanNC.org](http://www.campduncanNC.org)
- EVERY CHILD Foster & Adopt Ministry**  
Bob McCleary, 828-627-9254  
[www.every-child.org](http://www.every-child.org)
- Christian Adoption Services**  
Kevin Qualls, Dir., 704-847-0038  
[www.christianadopt.org](http://www.christianadopt.org)
- Weekday Education**  
Brooke Child, Dir., 336-474-1201
- Tucker Greater Vision Ministry**  
Sara Becker, Mgr., 336-687-6384
- HOMEbase** at W. Carolina University  
Jim Dean, Dir., 828-293-4660
- Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities**  
Tara Sessoms, Dir., 336-474-1259  
[www.hereismyhome.org](http://www.hereismyhome.org)
- NC Baptist Aging Ministry**  
Sandy Gregory, Dir., 336-474-1221  
[www.ncbam.org](http://www.ncbam.org)
- Good Shepherd Children's Home** in Guatemala  
Keith Henry, COO, 336-474-1215

one ❤️



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





# Homecoming is set for weekend of June 4 & 5 – Wilderness camping program has roots at KH

By **JOHN THOMPSON**, 104 Village Court, Havelock, NC 28532

(252) 671-3515

jthompson117@ec.rr.com

**T**he dates for Homecoming are June 4 and 5. Alumni President **Katie Parker** is inviting all alumni to make plans to attend this weekend of great food, fun, and fellowship. She also needs everyone who lived at Kennedy Home (KH) 50 years ago to call her at 252-560-9929. She is planning to have a commemorative certificate for each person at Homecoming. Katie mentioned that her son had been in the hospital but was now home and doing much better. Remember him as you pray.

Bring your children and grandchildren to show them where you lived at one time. Remember, let's fill the choir loft on Sunday morning. There will be a special practice at 10:35. **Doris Russ** will be on the keyboard and **Penny Maready** will play the piano. Penny was one of my best piano students. I am so thankful that she is filling the place left by my **Becky** who played at many Homecomings. **Rev. Horace Hawes** will preach during the service. Mr. Hawes and his wife **Mary** were married on the steps of Cedar Dell.

**Clayton Pate** ('72), will be hosting the Car Show on Saturday, June 4, near the gym from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. It will feature a Show Class and Road Class for cars and a truck and motorcycle category. It is open to the public and will benefit Kennedy Home.

**Debbie and Gary Caulder** shared that **Gerald and Sylvia Hinnant** from Pine Level Baptist Church came by their home to visit. The Caulders took them to the Sandpiper Restaurant in LaGrange for dinner. When Gary was living at KH in the late 60s and early 70s, the young adult Sunday school class from Pine Level Baptist Church was his visiting home where he visited one weekend a month. The class was awesome to Gary. The church really involved Gary throughout his life and has

been a true blessing.

I want to encourage other KH youngins to write and tell me about their "visiting home" experiences. When Becky and I left Kennedy Home to serve at Tabernacle Baptist Church in New Bern, we became a visiting home for several children.

**Donna Daniels Duty** was walking down memory lane and found some pictures of her KH sisters and brothers and shared them on the KH Facebook page. One picture included **Georgia Green, Debra Beamon, Becky Rochelle, Debbie McCormick, Debbie Stallings, and Terri Woodard**. They were all at Debbie McCormick's home for lunch.

I encourage you to become members of this special Facebook page. Try to show a lot of your old pictures and tell us about your houseparents.

There have been pictures of **Mrs. Lou Pearl Simmons** and some of her girls from Pollock Cottage that Donna shared. The girls tell us of how they loved Mrs. Simmons. She was stern with the girls, but at the same time, she showed love for each girl. The girls learned how to make the beds, clean the kitchen, cook, wash clothes, develop a "study pattern," learn the importance of attending Sunday school and worship services, sing in the choir, play special music on the piano, read scripture, learn to tithe, and in their senior year work off campus. **Mrs. Lucy O'Hara** was the Pollock dietitian in the 70s and taught the girls cooking and housekeeping skills.

**Mrs. Lanie Cribb** was housemother at the CCB cottage. Mrs. Cribb taught the boys a lot about housekeeping, too. She showed her love by taking them on trips to her hometown of Wilmington. Her son **Theron** lived in the cottage with the other boys. **Mrs. Hardison** was the dietitian for CCB. Everyone loved her dearly.

My boys called her "Miss Heart Attack." When Becky and I moved on campus, we lived right in the middle of the campus where the old clinic was located. It was developed into apartments. We shared the building with **Mrs. O'Hara, Mrs. Hardison, Mrs. Brock, and Mrs. Garner**. I encourage alumni to write me about some of these very special ladies. Becky and I met our very first KH youngin when we moved in. His name was **Stanley Matthews**. His campus job was to paint our whole apartment. I will never forget him. He made my whole family feel so welcome. **Mrs. Rae Brock** and **Mrs. Mary Hamilton** served in the sewing room and made long formal dresses for the girls who belonged to the Madrigal Singers. When **Mrs. Garber** retired, she asked me to make a list of some of the things I needed to carry on my work. She then bought everything on the list. It was one of the sweetest things I have ever have happen to me in my ministry.

I have a special request. When you send in your Homecoming registration papers or when you come to Homecoming, please bring one to two pages with information about yourself, life at KH and your life story after leaving. It will help me as I write my column each month. The Mills Home alumni do this every year and **Mrs. Lib Johnson** uses the information to write the Mills Home alumni news for **Charity & Children**. Let's give it a try.

Alumni will convene their annual business meeting in the gym following the Homecoming Saturday night supper. Donna and husband invite everyone for a time of karaoke in the gym after the meeting.

Here is a little more information about **Mr. Vance Russ**. His wife **Doris** recalls the early years of their marriage when Vance began weekly trips to Fruitland Bible College in Hendersonville. Doris remained in Raleigh working and

caring for the family. He would bring home truckloads of apples to sell and worked on weekends as a meat cutter. They moved to Goldsboro where Vance became the superintendent for the Odd Fellow's Home for Children. While there, Vance attended a training session about helping children by "camping out." **Rev. Roger Williams** heard about this, visited Vance, and invited him to Kennedy Home to begin the Frontiersman Camping Program. The program served two groups of ten and specialized in group living. They lived in a cottage on campus four days a week. The other three days were spent back in the woods near the Neuse River.

The groups traveled to Washington, D. C. to study history up close, took canoe trips along the Neuse River to study nature, and built campsites that included sleeping quarters, a cook tent, and even latrines. **Becky, Johnny, Scott, and I** would go back there when they weren't at the campsites to spend time together. What a time that was, we loved it. I remember hearing all kinds of sounds coming out of the woods in the middle of the night.

I'm inviting alumni to come over to the duplex on campus to visit me during the Homecoming weekend. I would love to just sit on the porch and talk about old times with you. You are always welcome to come visit me in my personal duplex at 104 Village Court in Havelock any time you want, too. I even have an extra bedroom. You are welcome to stay if you want to spend the night. I make a great breakfast! Write me at my e-mail address (jthompson117@ec.rr.com) or call me to let me know how you

are doing from time to time. Love ya! jt

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





# After all, the greatest of these truly is love

By Jim Edminson, Editor

**R**emember chalk talks? They were the latest thing in my teen years, and I loved to use them to teach Bible truths. Storytelling and art, fast-paced and engaging, a quick connection between me and audience. During Vacation Bible School, I happily volunteered to bring Bible heroes to life, telling the story, chalking the characters, flipping the page, and beginning again. In my early advertising career days, I kept at it, moving from chalk to marker while keeping those big flipchart pages turning.

Maybe it's because of my memories, and maybe it's because it's just plain fun, but there is always a supply of chalk at my house. These days, I lean toward the big sticks that are multicolor pastels and come in a big tub. Bold, for bold messages.

When they were small, my children explored their artistic abilities using the colored sticks. As they grew, they drew four-corner courts and hopscotch blocks on the sidewalks and driveways. During *Poetry Month*, Kathy's students wrote poems along the walkways at school using the chalk, together with sketches of butterflies and dragonflies and caterpillars. That refillable tub of

chalk really came in handy. Still does, as a matter of fact.

On my phone there are snapshots of happy grands chalking on our driveway and sidewalks. Sometimes I wish I had a big umbrella to shield the masterpieces from rain, willing them to stay a bit longer to bring smiles to my face. On Roger's birthday one year, he and I chaked images of him, life-size and zany, capturing his exuberant personality.

Most recently, my North Carolina family gathered for daughter Jenny's birthday. We planned for an outdoor celebration complete with lawn games and activities. Emmalie brought supplies of her own suitable for the outside play. But although the calendar said spring, the breeze and chill was more like late February. The party took place inside.

Toward the end of festivities, my granddaughter slipped out of the family room, motioning her mom to come. She reappeared later, calling Papa and Pearl to come quick. Kathy donned a coat and following her outside. The aunts and uncles trickled out, too, with the pups. For whatever reason, I was delayed. When I rounded the corner, the crowd shielded my view until I was almost upon it: a great big chalk drawing created

by Emmalie. Hearts, stars, and 125-point, extra large hand-lettered words declaring her love for her grandparents.

Can I just say there is nothing more wonderful than to come upon a message boldly declaring a love unmerited and overflowing with sincerity and simplicity, straight to the heart and instantly awesome?

Our Heavenly Father writes His message of love as clearly, with bold brilliance, for you and me to see, to read, to hold in our hearts. He declares in Jeremiah, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." But there are countless more declarations throughout His word. It is humbling to know, after all, that we are only able to love because of Him, as John reminds us in his first epistle.

Whatever medium you choose, make sure you are sharing love with those you encounter. After all, the greatest of these truly is love. Grace be with you, friends.

*And love.*



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