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# Charity & Children

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

     @bchfamily

December 2024

Issue 10

Volume 137

## Best Christmas Ever!

**S**ix-year-old Liam never had a Christmas tree. When other children talked about their favorite Christmas traditions, Liam sat quietly. He lived with his grandfather and money was always tight. Trees and decorations were not a priority. His Christmas wishes were often wishes he kept to himself.

Liam's grandfather passed and two weeks before Christmas, he came to live at Broyhill Home. He walked to the tree first. His eyes widened as the lights twinkled. "It's beautiful," he whispered.

People give with no idea what their gift will accomplish in the heart of a child. A Christmas gift for a little boy who went to a more permanent placement the first week of December was just what Liam wished he would have under the tree Christmas morning—a Batman bicycle.

"This is my best Christmas ever!"



You can **SHARE HOPE THIS CHRISTMAS** by making purchases from our

## GIFT CATALOG INSERT



See inside to shop from 25+ gifts that will make a difference in the lives of Baptist Children's Homes' boys and girls, special needs adults, mothers and all those we serve. Use the included order form or scan the QR code to shop online.



# Volunteers and donors make Christmas memorable

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

**V**olunteering often looks like rolling up your sleeves and getting your hands dirty, but it can also include revved motors, shiny chrome, and fishing hooks. In the weeks leading up to Christmas, volunteers will share their passion to bless others in a myriad of ways.

The roar of the engines could be heard traveling the long, private road leading to River Hill Refuge (RHR). Members of Full Throttle Biker Church converged on the property that serves children in foster care as part of their Bug Splat Motorcycle Run to support the ministry of Baptist Children's Homes (BCH).

A fun twist to the ride was the "bug splat" competition where riders are given a target to place on their headlight. At the end of the ride, the rider with a bug splat closest to the target on the headlight wins. While at RHR, the children were able to see the motorcycles up close. Sitting on the bikes brought smiles and laughter to children, foster parents, staff, and riders alike. Motorcycle riders have a long history of serving and loving BCH's children.

This Christmas season, motorcycle riders from Temple Church participate in the 32nd Annual Toy Run for Kennedy Home the Saturday following Thanksgiving. Riders will roll on to campus in their favorite holiday gear with toys in tow. The children, families, and staff look forward to greeting the riders with welcome signs as they ride down Cedar Dell Lane. The afternoon will be filled



Volunteers share their passion to bless others in many ways. Above, Camden, son of the Biggerstaffs, who were the first foster family to serve at River Hill Refuge, has fun sitting on one of the motorcycles from the Bug Splat Motorcycle Run. Below, Hayley Davis of Parkview Baptist Church caught a 5.61 lb Red Drum in the Coastal Fishing Tournament.

with smiles and excitement while sitting on motorcycles, exchanging high fives, and eating hot dogs. The riders will conclude their afternoon with a silent auction. It is sure to be a time filled with grateful hearts,

not only for the toys that will be provided, but for the love that will be shown through the presence of the bikers.

Members of the Randolph County Concerned Bikers Association head to

Mills Home (MH) on Sunday, December 8 for their 38th Annual Toy Run. Hundreds of bikes

will surround Mills Home Baptist Church while MH children and families cheer and wave. It will be a day that will be remembered for years through the young eyes looking on and experiencing the love of so many who care enough to come and bring toys and donations.

Not only are motorcycle riders making an investment in the lives of children, so are a group of fishermen and women from Parkview Baptist Church in Morehead City who are hosting their third annual Kennedy Home Coastal Fishing Tournament. While casting lines and hooking fish, time spent on the water has become a way to invest in the life of a child with all of the proceeds being donated to BCH.

Christmas for children in care is bitter sweet. Because of many generous volunteers and donors, children will awake to presents

under the Christmas tree, but there will also be heartache and sadness while missing their families. Please don't underestimate the difference that your hour, your gift, or your word of encouragement makes in the life of a child. To "find

**"We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us...; if it is serving, then serve;...if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously..." (Romans 12:6-8).**

your spot" to serve, please visit [www.bchfamily.org/volunteer](http://www.bchfamily.org/volunteer) or contact me at [kbutts@bchfamily.org](mailto:kbutts@bchfamily.org). Regardless of if you are able to serve on a BCH campus, give a child's gift this Christmas, or make a donation, you are extending the hand of Christ to children and families who need to know the hope of the Baby in the manger.



**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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# Melber "humbled" to work alongside NC Baptists

By Blake Ragsdale, Vice President of Communications/C&C Managing Editor

The 2024 Annual Meeting of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina was not only an opportunity to share Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) highlights from the past year but to poise itself for the future by introducing incoming CEO David Melber.

Melber greeted NC Baptists during multiple events as well as at the BCH display booth and on the stage. During the morning session on Tuesday, November 5, he delivered a brief message after being introduced by David Powell, Chair of the BCH Transition and Search Committee and Pastor of Lovedale Baptist in Sylva.

"BCH is very close to the heart of this convention, and it is close to my heart as well," Powell shared during the introduction. "My father was raised at the Mills Home campus of BCH."

He thanked NC Baptists for their prayers as he invited David Melber to the podium.

"My wife Tera and I could not be more humble, more excited and more privileged to come join your churches as we are on a mission together to take the Gospel to the least of these, to the vulnerable, across this state and beyond," Melber said to NC Baptists. "You have been a faithful steward of this ministry. It is through your support, your sacrificial giving, your sacrificial serving that BCH exists."

Melber officially begins on January 1, 2025. Learn more at [bchfamily.org/ceo](http://bchfamily.org/ceo).



Reverend David Melber, the incoming Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for Baptist Children's Homes (BCH), brings greetings to NC Baptists during his introduction at the Annual Meeting of the Baptist State Convention in Greensboro on Tuesday, November 5, 2024. Melber expressed excitement for coming to North Carolina and his gratitude to NC Baptist churches for their faithful support of the BCH ministry. He concluded by saying, "I look forward to working alongside of you as we're on mission together." Melber begins at BCH on January 1, 2025.



Top left, Melber and BCH Transition and Search Committee chair David Powell visit messengers at the BCH display booth. Middle, Mills Home Church pastor Luis Quintanar discusses BCH foster care. Top right, Melber and wife Tera meet with messengers. Bottom left, NCBAM celebrates 15 years of ministry with messengers. Bottom right, CAS shares its adoption ministry.



# Journey to Bethlehem: A journey to hope and healing

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

**T**he *Journey to Bethlehem* is a story we have read and heard many times. It was a trip filled with struggles, disappointment, obstacles, loneliness, messiness, and fear! But the *Journey to Bethlehem* is ultimately a journey to hope, to healing, to joy, and to transformation.

His name was Joseph and her name was Mary. They were poor and cold. They were alone and unknown. The couple trudged through Bethlehem looking for a warm place to stay. Finding an inn, they knocked on the door and asked: “Sir, we are tired and alone, may we stay here tonight?”

Have you been in Mary and Joseph’s place? Have you been on the outside looking in? Have you known the terrible sense of aloneness that comes when the door to hope is closing?

“That is not possible,” the innkeeper replied, closing the door. The world can be a cold and frightening place. The children we care for know this feeling all too well.

As a young girl, she was locked out of the house, left to stand outside in the snow—hungry and alone. She did not understand why her mother chose not to protect her as the boyfriend pushed her out the door. In that moment, she knew fear and the bitterness of rejection. She felt the finality of the door closing, leaving her alone and feeling no one cared.

It is the feeling you get when drugs become more important than you. It is the feeling you get when your mom has left and isn’t coming back. It is the feeling you have when you are living with your three boys in a car with very little—not knowing where the next meal will come from. It is the feeling of hopelessness.

My faith tells me when one door closes, Jesus opens another. One that is in His will and perfect for the moment. That is evident in the Christmas story written by God so many years ago. The door was closed to the inn but open to a stable. A stable

where a precious baby was born—a baby who would change the world and our lives for eternity.

She came to us frightened. Her mother and her mom’s boyfriend were charged with multiple counts of abuse and neglect. She and her siblings were placed at Baptist Children’s Homes. It was here, she continued her journey to hope and transformation. It has been hard but it has also been a journey with possibilities made possible by you. You helped introduce her to hope, to peace, to love, and to Jesus! She recently called to share she had been chosen as an outstanding nurse in the hospital where she works. You could hear the excitement in her voice as she shared how much she loves caring for others and sharing with them on their *Journey to Bethlehem*.

His mom had cancer. He went to live with his father and his stepmom—but his anger made it unbearable. When his mom died, he lashed out at everyone around him. He began showing signs of self-harm and his family was concerned for his safety and mental health. He was hurting. Doors were closing all around him. He felt there was no hope. The family sought help and a door opened. I listened a few weeks ago as this young man shared how his life had been transformed on his *Journey to Bethlehem*. He shared how the dedicated Christian men at Cameron Boys Camp had poured God’s word into him. He shared how difficult the journey was but that no one gave up on him. He shared how the chiefs prayed for him and walked with him. His *Journey to Bethlehem* eventually led to healing and to hope in Jesus Christ.

We have two precious three-year-old girls in our care on their *Journey to Bethlehem*. They are very different journeys. One has cancer and is going through

chemo. One struggles with night terrors. Our prayer is they will experience healing and rest. Will you join me in praying for them and their amazing cottage parents? Praying for more doors opened on the *Journey to Bethlehem*.

BCH opens the door to a hurting child or a desperate family and I hope and pray there will continue to be room for them in the arms of North Carolina Baptist. I pray that you have room in your heart for one more child and one more family as they *Journey to Bethlehem*.

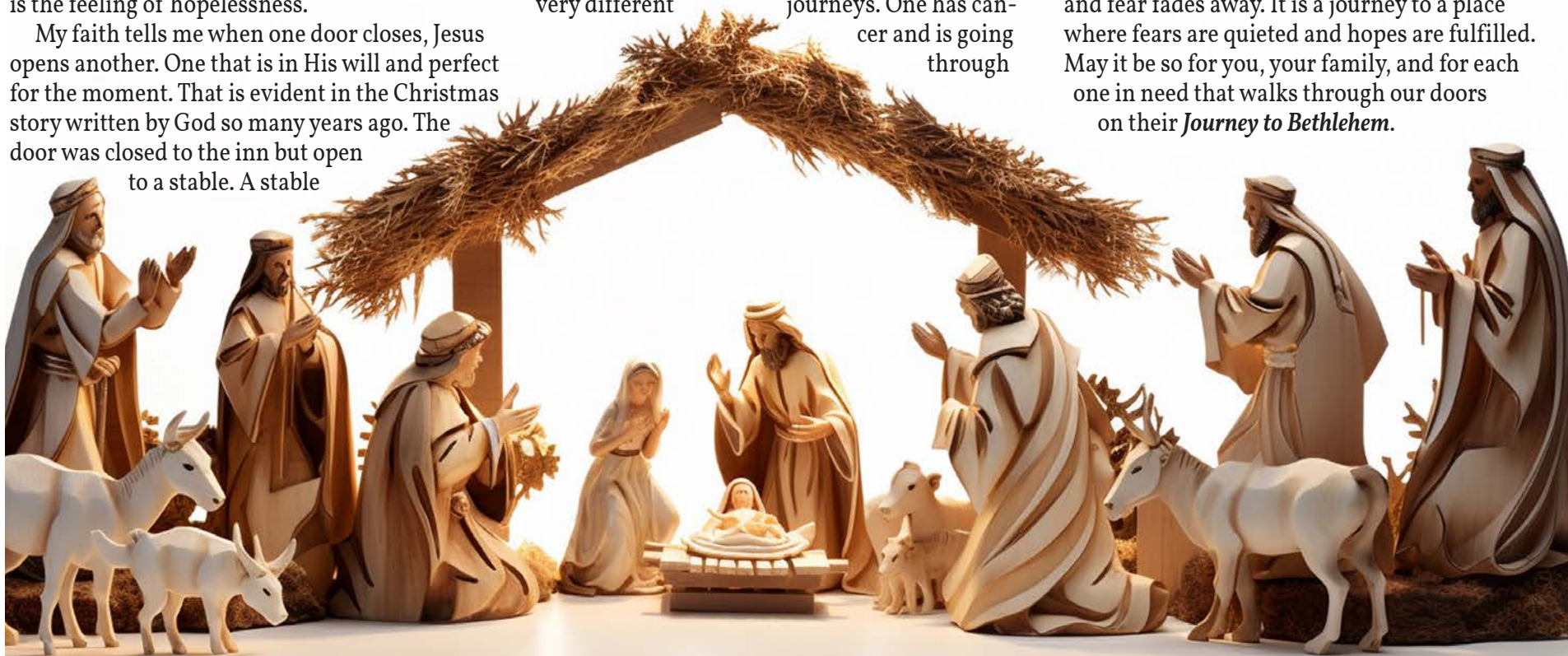
Through God’s help and your generosity, we were able to help these children on their journey, but it does not end there. Through your gifts to BCH, you helped 117,000 on their *Journey to Bethlehem* last year. You allowed them to see inside a stable. Because of you, they saw the baby that would bring light into their dark world.

“Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.” Mary and Joseph found rest and warmth in a stable. Everyday children and families on their *Journey to Bethlehem* find rest in a place called Baptist Children’s Homes.

Tomorrow, more will come and your gifts and prayers make it possible to journey with them to their Bethlehem—ultimately a journey to hope, a journey to healing, a journey to joy, a journey to transformation, a journey to Christmas!

**Thank you** for your love, prayers, and giving hearts! Thank you for sharing with our children and families during this season of hope, love, peace and joy—a season of God’s miracles.

The *Journey to Bethlehem* is the same for all of us. It is a journey to a place where hope abounds and fear fades away. It is a journey to a place where fears are quieted and hopes are fulfilled. May it be so for you, your family, and for each one in need that walks through our doors on their *Journey to Bethlehem*.



# You are a part of every child's story when you prayerfully give!

## Children like...

Jessie who found comfort, safety and healing from the emotional and physical scars.

Two-year-old Emma who has a safe home while undergoing chemotherapy for brain cancer.

Matt who has found hope in a relationship with Jesus.

Maria, our oldest teen at Good Shepherd Ministries in Guatemala, who is thriving and plans to attend college.

Tyler and three-year-old brother Liam who have not only been adopted but Tyler has trusted in Christ.

Sophie who was always hungry but now she never worries about eating.

Paige who proclaimed her faith by being baptized.

## God uses your generosity to impact lives.

When you make your Christmas sponsorship gift, you become a part of new life-changing stories He is continuously writing. And because of you, we are able to share the most important story of all—the birth of Jesus, the Savior of the world.

Make your Christmas Sponsor Gift today by using the enclosed reply card and envelope or make a gift online at [bchfamily.org/givenow](http://bchfamily.org/givenow).

Your gift is automatically DOUBLED through our \$300,000 Matching Gift Challenge! It will not only help children today, but the ones who will need hope in the coming year. **Thank you!**



## I want to share the HOPE of Christmas

- \$50 Christmas for one child
- \$100 Christmas for two siblings
- \$300 A cottage holiday outing
- \$600 Christmas for a cottage
- \$1,000 A large gift for a cottage
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Any size gift

There are two ways you can make your gift:

- 1) By Check: Please use the enclosed envelope and mail this completed form with your check.
- 2) By Credit Card: Give online at [www.bchfamily.org/givenow](http://www.bchfamily.org/givenow) or call Faith Frazier at 336-474-1312.



Receive ministry updates and more. Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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

# Mykia replaces years of heartache with tears of joy

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Seven-month-old Sariah moves. She stretches, rolls over, and slips back into a deep sleep. Mykia wakes to tears rolling down her cheeks as sunlight creeps into the room announcing a new day. It is her birthday. Lying there, she relives her four years of being trapped in an abusive relationship. “He never celebrated me—never celebrated my birthday,” she thinks and quietly sobs.

A short time after Sariah was born, Mykia learned her partner was cheating on her again. A few months later, she learned she was pregnant. The abuse grew worse. On the floor, she tucked her legs to protect herself as he kicked her in anger. She always believed it would be better. She even hoped that after Sariah was born that he would change and they could be the family she always hoped they would be. She knew then it had to stop.

Mykia hid her phone beneath her shirt and asked if she could go to the bathroom. He nodded his approval. She had placed a bottle of water behind the commode. Closing the door, she slowly poured from the bottle—the sound was expected and helped hide her urgent call to her sister. “Come. It is dangerous. Save me.”

“I had to do something to protect Sariah and the baby,” Mykia says. “It was no longer about me and my fairytale dreams. I didn’t want this life for them. I didn’t want them to be hurt.”

With a restraining order issued and safely tucked away in a temporary emergency shelter for women and children escaping domestic violence, Mykia



Twenty-three-year-old Mykia has found hope again and is working to create a brighter future for her daughter Sariah and new baby due in December.

felt like she could breathe again. It wasn’t easy. She took care of Sariah but didn’t eat or care for herself as waves of anxiety and depression washed over her. It was like coming out of the haze of an addiction.

“I finally woke up one day and decided to fight for myself and for my children,” Mykia asserts.

She was referred to the Family Care program at Kennedy Home in Kinston. Family Care offers a supportive, safe home for hard-working, single mothers and their children. The nine-month program is goal-focused and helps mothers transition to successful, independent living.

“Mykia is a good mom,” Family Care Worker April Uzzell says. “Her main goal is to learn how

to parent well. She asks questions and wants to learn how to better care for Sariah and the new baby due in December.”

Less than a month after entering the program, Mykia has a job and saved to repair her car. She works at a local restaurant and loves it. She attends church regularly and is rebuilding relationships with her family.

“She is determined,” Uzzell says. “It is like she is making up for lost time. She is not letting her past slow her down.”

Mykia realizes she needed to let others help her. Through the Family Care program, she is connecting with resources and community services needed to bring stability to her life and empowering her to keep her family together in the future. She is opening up and trusting

people. Before she had lost hope—now hope has returned.

“I read again,” she says. “I sing again, write in my journal, and I’m living again. I am able to dream now—for me and for my children.”

A call from her mom helps to brighten this birthday morning. She needs to rise, take care of Sariah, and be ready for her work day.

Her manager greets her at the restaurant door and whisks her away to a shelf-stocking chore in the back. She emerges after the lunch rush to a strange silence. She is called to the kitchen, walks through the door, and is greeted by friends, cake and “Happy Birthday!” Tears return, but this time they are tears of joy.

## Help us finish strong: Urgent needs and God size goals

Give now through the end of January and your gift will be doubled. Your gift will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$300,000. Give a gift of \$50 to sponsor a child’s Christmas and it will be doubled to \$100—a cottage sponsor’s gift of \$600 becomes \$1,200. What better gift to give a friend or business associate than to honor them with a gift that blesses a child. BCH notifies honorees with a card and sends a gift acknowledgment receipt to you.

Check with your employer. Some corporations will match an employee’s charitable gift, so the potential is that a \$100 gift could be matched by their employer and then both could get matched by your donor, making a \$100 gift worth \$400!

Consider a gift of appreciated stock or other

property. When you give stock or property to BCH, we then sell it. By donating the stock or property directly to BCH, you eliminate the capital gains tax you would pay if you sell it. If you have held the stock for more than one year, your gift will be deductible at its full market value on the date it is received.

If you have a Donor Advised Fund, this would be a good time to double its impact.

**IRA Charitable Rollover Gifts are a great gift option. If you have an IRA and have not taken your required minimum distribution, an IRA Charitable Rollover gift is a great way for you to change the life of a child through the ministry of BCH and potentially lower your income and taxes this year.**

These are challenging times! Consider giving a little extra for those who wish they could give, but cannot this year. Thank you in advance for your investment in the life of a child. For details on any of these gift opportunities, please call Brenda Gray at 336-689-4442.

**NOTE:** This information is not intended as legal advice. Check with your accountant, tax advisor or attorney to determine the best strategy for your particular situation.

**IMPORTANT:** Call our office if you plan to make a stock gift. Brokers may not inform us of the donor who makes the gift. For questions about stock gifts or to expedite your stock gift, call Sam Barefoot at 336-474-1224.

BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOMES

[bchfamily.org/gift-catalog](http://bchfamily.org/gift-catalog)



# GIFT CATALOG

2024

**SHOP 25+  
GIFT IDEAS**

**WE HAVE PACKAGED  
OUR ITEMS TO  
ALLOW FOR EASIER  
HOLIDAY SHOPPING**

**WRAP A GIFT WITH  
ETERNAL IMPACT**

**SHINE JESUS'  
LIGHT WITH  
A GIFT THAT  
REALLY  
MATTERS**

**JESSIE'S STORY:  
READ ABOUT HER ON PAGE 2**

Shop our selection of gifts that impact the lives of children and families across NC, SC & internationally through our many ministries that share hope...change lives.



SHARING HOPE...CHANGING LIVES

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

# FOR JESSIE, IT WAS MORE THAN A SHIRT.

*Making Memories*

ITEM	PRICE	CODE
Birthday Sponsorship	\$50	GC001
Fun Care Package	\$50	GC002
Christmas Sponsorship	\$50	GC003
Christmas Meal	\$25	GC004
Fishing Pole	\$25	GC005
Sports Scholarship	\$100	GC006
Campership	\$250	GC007
<b>MAKING MEMORIES PACKAGE</b>	<b>\$550</b>	<b>GC008</b>

*Basic Needs*

ITEM	PRICE	CODE
Welcome Care Package	\$35	GC009
Winter Coat	\$50	GC010
Shoes	\$75	GC011
Clothing Wardrobe	\$400	GC012
Bedding Basics	\$100	GC013
School Supplies	\$50	GC014
Medical Needs	\$50	GC015
<b>BASIC NEEDS PACKAGE</b>	<b>\$760</b>	<b>GC016</b>

*Help a Mom in Need*

ITEM	PRICE	CODE
Family Start Up Package	\$300	GC017
Night of Safety	\$200	GC018
Car Seat / Booster Seat	\$150	GC019
Diapers & Wipes	\$100	GC020
Formula	\$200	GC021
<b>MOTHER'S PACKAGE</b>	<b>\$950</b>	<b>GC022</b>

Boys and the girls, like Jessie, who come into Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) care are often from traumatic circumstances. They arrive at our foster care homes and cottages located across NC bearing scars. Those scars can be emotional but sometimes they are physical as well. Jessie came into her BCH cottage with both.

Jessie's family was abusive and immersed in a lifestyle of drugs. The house they lived in more closely resembled a meth lab than a home. One day, the family's life literally went up in flames when the meth lab caught fire. The blaze not only burned the house to the ground, but it badly burned both of Jessie's arms leaving them scarred.

Jessie found comfort and safety with her BCH cottage parents and the other girls in the cottage where she now lived. As Christmas approached, she asked her cottage mother to put long-sleeve shirts on her wish list to cover up her scars. While healing from physical and emotional scars takes time, Jessie is learning day by day that there is now hope for her. ***Through her cottage parents, churches, and friends like you, she is being pointed to a Heavenly Father who loves her unconditionally. Jessie's healing has begun.***

***You share hope with a child, like Jessie, when you select a gift from this year's Christmas catalog.***



## BIBLES

You can help share God's Word with a child or individual who has never had his or her own Bible.

**\$10/CHILD or \$25/ADULT**

### NEW TO THIS YEAR: GIFT PACKAGES

*You can purchase individual items or, as seen to the left, purchase a package of items to bless those we serve in NC, SC and internationally.*



# MAKING MEMORIES

## **Birthday Sponsorship** \$50

Provide a gift & decorations for a child in care to celebrate them on their birthday.

## **Fishing Pole** \$25

Purchase a fishing pole for a child in care so they can experience the joy of learning a new skill and being in nature.

## **Christmas Sponsorship** \$50

Purchase a Christmas gift and help bring the joy of the season to a child in our care.

## **Campership** \$250

Give a child in care the opportunity to experience the joy of a week at summer camp.

## **Sports Scholarship** \$100

Provide the opportunity for a child to participate in youth community sports.

## **Fun Care Package** \$50

Send a care package to a child in care or to a student who has aged out of the foster system to help them feel loved.

## **Christmas Meal** \$25

Provide a special Christmas meal for a child in care.



**\$550**

Give a child the gift of sweet MEMORIES for an entire year - many boys and girls are overcoming years of difficult memories.

*This package includes all items on the top half of this page for one child.*

**MAKING MEMORIES PACKAGE**

## INTERNATIONAL NEEDS

### **Chicken & Feed** \$50

Purchase a chicken & feed for our Guatemala orphanage —provides a renewable food source for our children & caregivers.

### **Goat & Feed** \$100

Purchase a goat & feed to help with the ministry's spacious yard. Plus, boys & girls learn responsibility as they care for the animals' daily needs.

## BASIC NEEDS



### **Welcome Care Package** \$35

Provide necessities such as toiletries & towels for a child when they enter into care.

### **Winter Coat** \$50

Give the gift of warmth to a child in care or adult in our IDD ministry.

### **Shoes** \$75

Send a child to school with a new pair of sneakers showing them someone cares.

### **Clothing Wardrobe** \$400

Provide a child or adult in care with the opportunity to select new clothing when they arrive. (Many arrive with no belongings)

### **Bedding Basics** \$100

Provide new bedding for a child in our cottage homes or special needs adult.

### **Medical Needs** \$50

Help cover the cost of medical needs such as glasses, speech therapy, etc. for children and adults in our care.

### **School Supplies** \$50

Purchase school supplies & cover costs for fees & field trips for a child in care.

**\$760**

Provide for a child's BASIC NEEDS for an entire year - you show them the love of Christ by giving this special package.

*This package includes all the items on the bottom half of this page for one child.*

**BASIC NEEDS PACKAGE**

# HELP A MOM IN NEED

## Family Start Up Package

Provide a mom & her children with the necessary items to stock their kitchen/bath/bedroom (including pots & pans, utensils, towels, dishes, bedding, etc.).

\$300

## Night of Safety

Provide one night of safety (hotel & meal) for a single mom and her children or for an expectant mom in a crisis situation.

\$200

## Car Seat/Booster Seat

Provide a child (ages 0-5) a safe way to travel.

\$150

## Diapers & Wipes

Purchase diapers & wipes for one month for a single mom.

\$100

## Formula

Provide nourishment for a baby by purchasing formula for a month.

\$200



**\$500**

**BIRTH MOM RETREAT**  
Sponsor a birth mom to experience hope & healing at the annual birth mothers retreat.

**MOM IN NEED PACKAGE**

**MOST NEEDED**  
Not sure what to give? You can give an amount of your choosing to go towards where it is needed most.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**\$950**

Give a mom the gift of SAFETY & PEACE OF MIND -- show her God's love by providing for mom & child's basic needs.

*This package includes all the items on the top half of this page for one mom. (DOES NOT INCLUDE RETREAT)*

### HOW TO ORDER WITH A CHECK:

1) Find your item(s) on the form below. 2) Write the quantity in the space provided beside each item(s) you are choosing. 3) Total your purchases and make your check payable to "Baptist Children's Homes" for the total amount. 4) Detach the order form. Place the form and check in the enclosed pre-paid postage envelope. Please fill out the information on the envelope. If using your own envelope, mail to: BCH, P.O. Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27361.

**MAKE YOUR GIFT ONLINE:** Go to [bchfamily.org/gift-catalog](http://bchfamily.org/gift-catalog) or scan the QR code on the catalog cover to make your gift online.

## 2024 GIFT CATALOG ORDER FORM (Detach form below and mail with check using the enclosed envelope.)

Item	Qty	Amount	Gift Code
<b>MAKING MEMORIES</b>			
Birthday Sponsorship		\$50	GC001
Fun Care Package		\$50	GC002
Christmas Sponsorship		\$50	GC003
Christmas Meal		\$25	GC004
Fishing Pole		\$25	GC005
Sports Scholarship		\$100	GC006
Campership		\$250	GC007
<b>Making Memories Package</b>		<b>\$550</b>	<b>GC008</b>
<b>INTERNATIONAL</b>			
Chicken & Feed		\$50	GC024
Goat & Feed		\$100	GC025

Item	Qty	Amount	Gift Code
<b>BASIC NEEDS</b>			
Welcome Care Package		\$35	GC009
Winter Coat		\$50	GC010
Shoes		\$75	GC011
Clothing Wardrobe		\$400	GC012
Bedding Basics		\$100	GC013
School Supplies		\$50	GC014
Medical Needs		\$50	GC015
<b>Basic Needs Package</b>		<b>\$760</b>	<b>GC016</b>
<b>BIBLES</b>			
Bible for Child		\$10	GC026
Bible for Adult		\$25	GC027

Item	Qty	Amount	Gift Code
<b>HELP A MOM IN NEED</b>			
Family Start Up Package		\$300	GC017
Night of Safety		\$200	GC018
Car Seat / Booster Seat		\$150	GC019
Diapers & Wipes		\$100	GC020
Formula		\$200	GC021
<b>Mom in Need Package</b>		<b>\$950</b>	<b>GC022</b>
<b>Birth Mom Retreat</b>		<b>\$500</b>	<b>GC023</b>
<b>WHERE NEEDED MOST</b>		<b>\$</b>	<b>GC028</b>
<b>TOTAL DONATION AMOUNT</b>		<b>\$</b>	

# Bonhams hear call to become part of Leland's life

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Leland has learned it is best to be on the lake before the sun rises. He and his foster dad Robert ride in the truck cab illuminated only by the dash lights. The boat is hitched to the back as they travel down the highway.

“There is not another place I’d rather be this morning than with you out on the lake. I can’t help but have my ‘perma-grin’ on.” Leland looks perplexed, so Robert adds, “It’s that smile you have on your face when you’re doing something you love.”

The two have bonded fishing together—early mornings watching the sun rise and checking trotlines in the dark of night, Robert jumping in the water to retrieve a fishing pole being taken away by a big catfish Leland caught, speeding across the water with Leland’s hands on the wheel and a “perma-grin” on his face. Fishing has become some of their favorite times.

Leland spent 13 of his 16 years of life in foster care. As each year passed, his hopes of having a permanent family slipped farther and farther away. At age 15, he came into Baptist Children’s Homes’ (BCH) care. There, Laura and Robert Bonham met Leland on a mission trip to Broyhill Home in Clyde. They felt an immediate connection.

The couple’s church, Bethany Baptist Church in Wendell, started an outreach at Broyhill Home in 2006. Trips to provide vacation Bible schools for the children in care morphed into projects like building picnic tables, power washing buildings, and building new shelves in cottage food pantries. Getting to know the children at Broyhill Home was more than the couple expected.

Laura was amazed. “Seeing them thrive. Seeing them receive the good news of Jesus. Their lives are changed all because of loving care.”

When Robert learned that Leland was available to adopt, he called Laura and the two set plans in motion.

“The Bonhams heard God’s call to become a part of Leland’s life,” BCH’s Lead Foster Care Supervisor Jessie Chilson says. “It is a busy time in their life but they didn’t blink. They fell in love with Leland and stepped up in faith.”

The Bonhams have been married 26 years, have demanding jobs, and are launching three young adult sons—Zak, Evan, and Larry. Even



According to 16-year-old Leland, the best time to be out on the water is in the early morning. Above, Leland steers the boat to the perfect fishing spot as foster dad, Robert, captures the moment in a selfie photo. Robert Bonham and wife Laura are Leland's foster parents now and have plans to adopt him in early 2025. While the Bonhams met Leland only a short time ago, they cannot imagine life without Leland in the family.

with all that was going on in their lives, they were not daunted. They felt there was plenty they could offer Leland. After contacting BCH, they began the process to become licensed foster parents on July 31, 2023. It was the first step in their plans to adopt Leland.

“The boys were getting their lives going—high gear,” Robert remembers. “Laura and I were still in go mode and jumped in with Leland.”

In February 2024, Laura and Robert were officially licensed foster parents and began spending time with Leland. On May 31, he came to live with them.

“It is amazing to watch God work,” Chilson asserts. “Leland and the Bonhams were in God’s plans. He saw them and brought them together.”

Leland must live with the Bonham’s for six months before they can begin the adoption process. All the requirements and paperwork

are expected to be done by the end of the year. Laura and Robert hope the adoption will be finalized by the end of the first quarter of 2025.

“People do not line up to adopt older children,” Chilson says. “Older children and teens need homes, too. They need love and care. They are worth that.”

Zak, Evan, and Larry are role models for Leland as he plans for his future. The boys are becoming a family, sharing their interests in sports and music. Leland is doing well in school and plans to study computer science in college.

He hopes one day that he will have a family—giving his children a home like he has now. “But it is scary. I don’t ever want to be like my parents were to me.”

Leland never met his father and he is not close to his mother, talking to her occasionally on the phone. Living with a mom and dad is a new thing: “Being with the Bonhams has changed my life. To be adopted will mean there is a place for me, now and forever. When I need something, there is now someone who will be there for me. I’ll always have a home.”

This is God’s story, a match made in Heaven. Written in love and evident by Leland’s ever-present “perma-grin.”



# NCBAM's first 15 years: From strength to strength

By Carol Layton, NCBAM Director of Communications and Administration

What began in 2006 as a gleam in the eye of Milton Hollifield at the Baptist State Convention has grown into a unique, multifaceted, and award-winning ministry that has impacted the lives of more than 83,000 well- and frail-aging adults across North Carolina.

Soon after Hollifield's tenure began as executive director-treasurer of the Convention, he reached out to Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) for its help in developing a new ministry to serve older adults.

With no template to follow, BCH's Dr. Sandy C. Gregory was tapped to not only lead the new ministry but to determine exactly what its focus would be. He spent the next year researching and traveling "from Murphy to Manteo"—consulting with senior adult ministers, social service providers, and the foremost experts in the field—aging adults themselves.

Gregory remembers, "When I would ask older adults what they desired most as they age, their answers were invariably, 'independence,' 'to live in my own home,' and 'to have purpose.'" This insight led to NCBAM's mission – providing "help for the journey" to aging adults in ways that help them maintain their safety and independence in their own homes.

Gregory connected with a strong partner to help him identify how this new ministry could best serve older adults. With feet planted both in Baptist life and government services, Bobby Boyd, the director of Catawba County's Department of Social Services provided input that would steer NCBAM toward the value of partnering not only across denominational lines, but with government agencies, civic groups, and the private sector. (Boyd still serves on NCBAM's Advisory Team—providing invaluable feedback and encouragement.)

While Baptist churches and their volunteers are the undisputed backbone of NCBAM, the



Dr. Sandy Gregory

## 2009-2024

**NCBAM has received 42 state and national awards for its leadership, programming, and publications. These include:**

- North Carolina Senatorial Statement
- Innovative Program award from the NC Association on Aging
- Outstanding Community Service Award from the Southeastern Association on Aging
- Book Award from the Baptist Communicators Association - *One Hope Devotional*
- Dr. Gregory - Leadership Excellence Award from the NC Coalition on Aging
- Dr. Gregory - Pioneer Award from the NC Coalition on Aging
- Dr. Gregory - Religion, Spirituality, and Aging Award from the American Society on Aging

Scan the QR code and view NCBAM's 15th anniversary video:



ministry has also developed strong partnerships with FEMA, the National Fire Protection Association, NC's Office of State Fire Marshal, Lowe's, Home Depot, the NC Department of Insurance's Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP), and Meals on Wheels of NC—just to name a few.

With a plan for the statewide ministry taking shape, the previous BCH "print shop" was outfitted for NCBAM offices and its Call Center. Gregory was joined by BCH's *Charity & Children's* editor, Jim Edminson, who became NCBAM's marketing director.

When a special phone number was acquired (877-50-NCBAM) for the NCBAM Call Center, the new ministry was up and running. To date, the Call Center has made 137,0000 connections and with the help of North Carolina Baptist volunteers, has met needs in all 100 counties.

While the Call Center was NCBAM's first outreach, it has been followed by 13 more. These 14 outreaches directly or indirectly serve to fulfill

the mission by addressing the key reasons older adults lose their independence. Outreaches include: Priority #1 Prevention, Wise Up Enrichment workshops, annual Aging Well Conferences, Caregiver Resources, Christ the Cornerstone Publications, Rampin' Up! campaigns, Durable Medical Equipment outreach, Fall Prevention, Intergenerational Camps, Aging Adults Innovating Ministry conferences, and Servant Care, a special outreach to retired Baptist ministers and their spouses.

NCBAM's two most recent outreaches could only have been attempted by an experienced ministry with a solid base of support. "One Hope" offers a spiritual response to the epidemic of social isolation and loneliness affecting older adults. In addition to education and resources, One Hope's "Hope Line" receives calls from senior adults seven days a week. Trained volunteers encourage callers with a friendly voice and compassionate ear.

The ministry's most ambitious outreach is its 14th. "Care Villages" are church or community-based services for older adults. Ironically, Care Villages were the first dream on Gregory's heart when he charted NCBAM—a vision he held as the

ministry grew. NCBAM operates two community-based villages and is planning a third.

However, with the participation of NC Baptist Churches, Church-based Care Villages hold the potential to make the biggest difference in the lives of North Carolina's growing aging population—which is projected to double over the next 20 years. Gregory envisions training and equipping Baptist churches to adopt the Care Village model to support not only their own members, but others in the community.

Since 2009, NCBAM has received 42 state and national awards for its leadership, programming, and publications. However, nothing the ministry has accomplished would be possible without the support of North Carolina Baptists. Their volunteers represent the vast majority of our partners who sacrificially serve vulnerable older adults every day by building wheelchair ramps, providing friendly visits and transportation assistance, and by reducing social isolation and loneliness one call at a time on the NCBAM Hope Line.

# Alumna remembers MH as a great place to grow up – “Uptown” boy named honorary “MHomey” by alumni

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

It is always good to have reminders, so please remember that **Flora Hicks Patton** is already collecting new addresses, changes, and corrections to old addresses for our Mills Home Alumni Address Directory. Please send any information to her without hesitation. The directory will go to the printer around June 15, 2025. If you let her know, Flora will also see that changes or additions to your address will be put into the hands of the **Charity & Children** staff. Contact information for Flora: [florapatton@ctc.net](mailto:florapatton@ctc.net); 704-791-7866; or 6428 Sisk Carter Rd. Rockwell, NC, 28138.

It appears that **Evelyn Kirby Burns** filled out the alumni update sheet as soon as it arrived at her home in early July. She was very enthusiastic about the recent trip she and her daughters had taken to Niagara Falls and New York City. It was a meaningful and wonderful trip to share. They thoroughly enjoyed experiencing the power and beauty of the Falls and the precise perfection of all parts of an exciting Broadway play—settings, costumes, and skilled acting. In visiting the 9/11 museum, they were brought to deep pondering, sad memories, and silent tears. Other parts of the trip included visiting “the Maid of the Mist,” (a boat ride at the base of the Niagara Falls) which she said was like being in a hurricane, and finally her first experience at ziplining. An awesome trip indeed! She was somewhat amused when the “young” ticket lady said to her, “You should have done this when you were young.” Obviously, that was a bit impossible.

Evelyn entered Mills Home (MH) in 1957 and graduated in 1967. She enjoyed life on campus with two great memories being the scripture memory work she did in training union and traveling with the tour choir. She especially loved

**Ms. Serena Walker**, great dietitian at the Biggs Cottage from whom she learned to love cooking. Evelyn has had a long married life with **Robert Gary Burns** and has three daughters, two grandchildren, and six great grandchildren. Just a few years ago, she served the alumni by working on the Alumni Council. She loves being at Homecoming with former classmates and other friends.

**Lester J. Smith** is not on the records of MH as a resident, but if you have come to Homecoming the last 15 or so years, you have probably run into him. You may be one of the recipients of his big bear hug. He is an “uptown” boy from the class of 1956 who was invited one year by **Steve Carver** (1956) to meet with the MH classmates for the Saturday dinner. He happily joined Steve and the other class members: **Steve Carver, Carolyn McC Carson, Leonard Kornegay, Grace Panther, Allen Carroll, and Betty Mull**. During the dinner, they asked him to be an Honorary 1956 “MHomey” person. He was happy to say yes to that. Three of those people are now deceased and the other three had to miss Homecoming this year. And they all were sorely missed like so many other alumni. But Lester was able to come and there he was, hugging right and left and making sure people met his lovely wife, **Sylvia**. Lester is in our address book and receives all Homecoming information and update sheet. He filled it out this year and closed with the note, “I’ve always thought of **Carolyn, Leonard, Grace, Allen and Betty** as brothers and sisters. I loved them dearly through the years and will continue to cherish them.”

Thanks to **Lana Sue Hooks Elliott** for her update sheet. Sue entered MH from Landis, NC in 1955 with siblings **Mary Ann, Woodrow, Jimmy, and Steve**. Only Sue and Steve survive. They all left in

1959 and after awhile Sue moved in with her grandmother. Upon entering MH, Sue came to live at the Little Cottage where I was living as a 10th grader. In addition to swimming and playtime activities, Sue especially loved the church activities, namely training union and GAs. She also enjoyed taking piano lessons under the tutelage of **Ms. Willie Perkins Mizelle**. I was happy to become reacquainted with Sue again once **Sally Beck Ferguson** created a Mills Home Website for us. During the early years of the website, Sue married the wonderful **David Elliott** and we all got to know them both fairly well through their attendance at homecoming. We were all so sad when David passed away back in 2022. Sue is a devout Christian and devotes time to her church. One of her favorite pastimes is crocheting caps, gloves, scarves, dish cloths, and dish towels for gifts or for extra pocket money. In her adult life, she had her own house cleaning business and really enjoyed knowing the people that she cleaned for. She felt confident in her job because she had learned good cleaning techniques at MH. Though she was there only four years, she remembers it well as a great place to live. She now enjoys having her daughter **Lisa** living with her in China Grove, NC. In a last comment on her update sheet, she wrote that she loves meeting up with old friends at Homecoming and she remembers **Nurse Bettye Joyce Lee** with great fondness.

I called 1978 graduate **Clifton Lambreth** recently for some information on an alumnus from his era. After giving me the information, he shared other information about the various volunteer projects he is involved in, especially things concerned with music, Christian organizations, and university related things. One organization he has strong ties to is named “Lead Like Jesus,” a

title that is obviously a personal mandate for Clifton. A board he serves on as advisor is the hospitality board for the University of Tennessee at Knoxville which provides students with hospitable connections that facilitate university/college adjustment. As our chat continued, he became more animated and enthusiastic about his recent participation in producing the musical show, *Music for a Brighter Tomorrow*, that took place on November 9 at the J.E. Broyhill Civic Center in Lenoir, NC. He had a major role in the selection of the outstanding singers for the show and he was very excited to be able to enlist the “Shepherd’s Voice” as one of the five featured groups. We all know that trio to be the **Danny and Jane Helms Brown and daughter Sana**, our own favorite trio. Additionally, he is still immensely pleased that the proceeds from that fantastic project went to Samaritan’s Purse, the Billy Graham/Franklin Graham charity organization which services so many devastated communities.

I’m saddened to report the deaths of **Dusty Jenkins and Helen Helms Brown**. Reports will be in the next column.

The Alumni Association did a great thing when it added the Columbarium to God’s Acre. The ashes of several people have been placed there already and many other people have arranged for it to be their final resting place. You too can make such plans by contacting **Sharon DeHart Stiles** to get the information you need to do that. She can be reached at this email address, phone number, or home address: [sharondstiles51@yahoo.com](mailto:sharondstiles51@yahoo.com); 704-685-2443; or 1588 Elkhart Circle, Gastonia, NC, 28054.



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



**Family finalizes international adoption**  
The "W. Family" celebrated the adoption of their now teenage son through BCH's Christian Adoption Services.



**Church makes pillow cases for BCH**  
BCH's Jody Yopp received 70 handmade pillowcases from children and members at First Broad Baptist in Bostic.



**Volunteers make a difference at Odum**  
The Deep Impact team from Brookwood Baptist in Jacksonville tackled projects at Odum Home in Pembroke.



**Groups donate for hurricane relief**  
Groups have collected supplies for Western NC hurricane victims. Broyhill Home is serving as a distribution hub.



**Toddler's birthday honors children**  
Girls from Mills Home were treated with a visit to the Nido Quebein Children's Museum at High Point University.



**Piedmont Association unites for BCH**  
Piedmont Baptist Association churches collected gift bags, baskets, gas cards and more for all those BCH serves.



**Hinkle House adults attend fall festival**  
The special needs ladies from Winston-Salem enjoyed their evening at the recent fall festival hosted by Hillside Park Baptist.



**Volunteers help with downed tree**  
Volunteers from Hyde Park Baptist in Lumberton removed a tree downed by a storm at Odum Home in Pembroke.



**Trainings keep BCH staff prepared**  
Ongoing trainings, as shown with BCH's Western area staff, ensure team members are best-prepared to serve.

Your *Angel Fund* gift makes forever families possible and much more!

**YOUR IMPACT IN 2024:**

**42** children adopted domestically

**337+** expectant moms counseled

**17** birth moms made decisions for Christ

**6** children adopted internationally

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# Remember to send your favorite recipes – Christmas Party is set Dec. 7 at King's Restaurant

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

**T**he Kennedy Home alumni have decided to produce a cookbook of some of their special recipes. We are using this as a fund-raising project. All alumni are encouraged to send their favorite recipes—as many as you want—to **Debbie Daniels** at 936 Sunset Drive located in Havelock, NC 28532. If you would like, you may bring your recipes to the Alumni Christmas Party.

**Larry and Brenda Gilliam** have planned a wonderful Christmas Party luncheon at King's Restaurant in Kinston. It will be on December 7. The luncheon will be from noon until 3:00 p.m. This will be a buffet luncheon and the costs \$17.95 per person. Senior Adults will receive a 10% discount. Larry would like for you to let him know if you plan to attend.

It is exciting to report that 661 decisions for Christ have been made by those served through the many ministries of Baptist Children's Homes during the past five years. Join me as we take a moment to say "thank you" to all of the Baptist churches in North Carolina for supporting our homes and foster care.

**John Ogle** writes about having a "visiting home" while he was living at Kennedy Home (KH).

While living at KH, he went to visit folks who attended a church in Charlotte. He was provided clothing by a ladies' Sunday school class there. He remembers that he would visit about every six months or so and they would take him to Belk's and buy him very nice clothes. They would give him

some money to spend on other things he needed. When he was in the Boy Scouts, he used part of the money to buy an official Boy Scout hatchet to use on camping trips. He still has the hatchet to this day. **Franklin Bailey** engraved his name on it.

This could give Sunday School classes an idea of how to help KH children.

At the Alumni Beach Cottage Retreat this year, we had the following come together and had a great time: **Debbie Caulder (Bunker)**, **Gary Caulder (Biggs)**, **Hugh Kirkman (CCB)**, **Rusty Wortham (Beacham)** and **Rusty's wife, Patsy Lovejoy (Hensley)**, **Debbie Stallings (Maready Cottage and one other)**, **David Lassiter (Debbie's husband)**, **Alice Sisk Russum (Pollock)** and her husband, **John Russum**, **Walter Buddy Sisk (Williams)**, **DeAnn Pierce Parker (Biggs)**, **Mary Etheridge Feige Parker**, **Joyce Connie (Ferebee and Williams)**, **Debbie Daniels (Brokenhurst and Biggs)**, **Sherri Herring**, **John Thompson (home on campus)**, **Donna (Weeks) Duty (Brokenhurst, Pollock)** and **Dave Duty (Donna's husband)**. There may have been others who came but didn't sign our attendance sheet.

We give thanks as we remember KH workers: **Mrs. Flonnie Parker**, **Sarah and Howard Troyer** (he was a barber) and their three sons—**Larry, Jerry, Stan**. Jerry has gone to be with the Lord. **Frank and Julia Dupree** and their wonderful son, **Phillip**. Mr. Dupree was in charge of campus beautification. The workers there shared their love and concern for all of us.

Gary Caulder recalls that KH was like a "resort." The children

could eat toast after school, swim in a large pool, play basketball at the gym...and on and on.

**Rusty Wortham** (KH's "officer and a gentleman", '72-'75) writes, "I met **Maureen** at the Mt. Laguna Air Force outside of San Diego. It was my first duty station after enlisting in the Air Force from Kinston. Maureen, a native New Yorker, was commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant and assigned to the small radar site in the Laguna mountains. We met on a volley ball court during a squadron intramural game where I 'graciously' allowed her to substitute in the game before him. We spent the next few months playing team sports together where I 'allowed' her to show off her skills. We began the individual sport of dating after Thanksgiving and have been thankful ever since. We were married in September of 78. I left the Air Force in June 1979 and followed her through her career in Space Systems until her retirement. I got a degree and along the way found my second love, the "gentleman's sport" of golf and became a professional in the PGA. We have a son and daughter and were content with our "foursome."

"We live in Altus, Oklahoma where I retired in 2017 from civilian government service after running the golf course at the Altos Air Force Base. Maureen and I just celebrated our 46th wedding anniversary."

**Mary Etherridge Feige Parker** kept us all busy with crafts on the beach retreat this year. She taught us how to make earrings. I made a pair of turtle earrings for my daughter-in-law. She

taught several people how to paint beautiful pictures and taught the women how to make a necklace. She also "cut hair" for some of us. Thanks so much for doing this with us.

Parkview Baptist Church in Morehead City loves to collect food and money for KH. This is the third year of hosting the "Kennedy Home for Children Coastal Fishing Tournament" from August 23, 2024 through January 25, 2025. For more information, write the Parkview Baptist Church in Morehead City. The categories are "Redfish," "Speckled Trout," "Sheepshead," "Pompano," "Spanish Mackerel," "King Mackerel," and "Bluefish." To speak to someone, call **Sean Bowen** at 252-269-8783 or **Albert McElmon** at 252-241-9359. The cost is \$40 a person. This is something that any of our Baptist churches can do in the mountain lakes, rivers, etc. Contact these two men today.

In my next column, I plan to list a lot of stories about KH youngins telling what they got for Christmas time. **Ed Pait** has already asked you to list them on the KH alumni Facebook pages. You can write to my e-mail and tell me some of your Christmas experiences at visiting homes, in your cottages, and fun holiday parties.

Remember, I live with my son and his wife now in Havelock. They are taking very good care of me. You will find my telephone and address at the beginning of this column.

Love you all! — jt



John Thompson served at Kennedy Home from 1972-1977. At age 81, he continues to serve the Lord.

# During these days, we need a little Christmas now

By Jim Edminson, Editor

**M**ary texted brother Kyle: “Hey! Have you put up the tree yet?” Kyle lives in the Dallas metroplex and, by long-standing tradition, does nothing Christmas-y until the Thanksgiving holiday is past. Little sister knows this—she just wants him to ask back, because of course her tree is up and decorated. Her whole house is decorated!

Adult Mary adopted the mantra of living life to the fullest and not waiting, placing whatever brings joy at the top of her life list. Husband Alan embraces the philosophy, and each year our family waits in anticipation for the first photo of the Newcomb family Christmas tree.

This year’s tree is beautiful (I have received the official photo!), and since Zebedee has a new brother pup, Franklin, there are some adaptations to this year’s decorating for the holiday. Everything is extra-festive as usual but with an addition of a baby gate surrounding the tree. Kathy and I are planning a trip to catch Mary’s display of seasonal joy soon because—we tell each other often these days, *we need a little Christmas now.*

The Advent season, the grand lead-up to the miraculous birth, is filled with anticipation. That word’s association is wide-eyed wonder and joy of goodness to come. The word also tells of a deep longing for fulfillment of promise and for the end of intense trials and tribulations. Years before Jesus’s birth at Bethlehem, God’s people walked in darkness, assured of a coming Light even while not seeing how or when newness would come. The waiting is the hardest part of every promise coming true.

Way back in childhood, I recall watching the 1974 Rankin-Bass holiday movie “Twas the Night Before Christmas.” The little mouse in the tale inadvertently delays Christmas because of his curiosity and meddling with the official beginning of the day at midnight. He realizes that he must correct events so that the day can

come and bring the fulfillment of expectations to the town. The song featured in the movie plays on repeat in my mind at moments when I need a reminder of the great gift the Father bestowed when He sent His son into this world.

*“For we need a little Christmas, right this very minute—Candles in the window, carols at the spinet...”*

These days, I spend hours interviewing and writing the stories of redemption and returned hope in the lives of children and families impacted by the ministries of Baptist Children’s Homes and the women and men who are the hands and feet of our Lord and Savior. The difficult circumstances that people proclaim in their pasts are hard to hear. Sometimes, I bow my head in sorrow at humans’ inhumanity to our fellows.

*“For I’ve grown a little leaner, grown a little colder, grown a little sadder, grown a little older— And I need a little angel sitting on my shoulder, need a little Christmas now...”*

But juxtaposed with the good news of their present lives, at the intersection of Christ’s wonderful love, my heart resounds “Hallelujah!” to the One who takes us where we are and trans-

form us to the vision He intends. The end of my stories proclaim that lives are restored and hope is reclaimed, over and over again.

In our walks with the loving Almighty, He reveals His plan. We are called to be instruments where He places us. We are called to be faithful to His setting us apart for His glory. We are called to bear witness to His wondrous deeds among us until He comes in exaltation and we are united with Him for eternity. Think with me of the faithful men and women in scripture who walked in faith through trying times, believing the prayer that never fails: “Thy will be done.” Life is difficult, and that is an understatement. But God is faithful. Jesus believers, one and all, have read the end of the story, and we know God is victorious.

So here we are, anticipating the wondrous love of the Father who sent His Son into the human world to draw us back to Him. While we wait to see God’s revelation, we have the Christmas season to anticipate. We rejoice in peace and love. We feel joy. We celebrate, through our devotion and in community.

*“For we need a little music, need a little laughter, need a little singing ringing through the rafter— And we need a little snappy, happy ever after, we need a little Christmas now!”*

My daughter is right, you know. When we know what brings joy, there is no reason to wait to celebrate. We can claim all the goodness of God’s grace, right now. *I wish you every blessing of the season, my friends.*



Mary and Alan’s 2024 Christmas Tree

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