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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

March 2025

Issue 2

Volume 138

Around the table...

Preparing a meal and sitting around the table together are perfect ways to connect and build relationships. The kitchen is one of the biggest rooms in a cottage and is central to foster family living and to the Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities home. The cook tent is where all trails lead. The only place larger is the table where children and caring adults gather. The table is where community is woven into the lives of children who have suffered loss and pain. It is a place where chaos is turned into peace, where harmony, love, good-will, and reconciliation take root in hearts. At Baptist Children's Homes, God's love is declared and modeled sitting around the table.



Two opportunities and five reasons to *find your spot*

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

My husband and I have three children who are in their late teens. When they were younger, their favorite question was, “Why?” It could be a little frustrating after the 99th time, but we loved their inquisitiveness and their hunger to learn. At Baptist Children’s Homes (BCH), we want the children, adults, and families in care to ask “why” when volunteers show up at one of our three dozen locations to serve.

Why are these people here? Why are they working so hard and not getting paid? Why do they care about BCH? Why do they care about me? Why does Jesus love me?

Through the selfless acts of service and with each ‘why’, the love of Christ is revealed.

In 2025, we are excited to launch two volunteer initiatives as we seek to engage our communities, churches, and ministry friends to be the hands and feet of Jesus. Prayer is our lifeline to our Heavenly Father. We are instructed in Philippians 4:6 to “not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” We cannot do the ministry of sharing hope and changing lives without your prayers. The first initiative “Prayer Partners” is coming soon. This will be a more formal way you can commit to serving as an intentional prayer partner. Many of you pray for us now and your prayer support for the children, adults, and families served by BCH, as well as current and future BCH staff, is making a difference. Second, we are seeking Lead Volunteers to serve as an extension of staff during Friends of Children events this Spring and Fall. The “lead volunteers” will help ensure that the one-day mission blitz on each campus is run efficiently and effectively. If your church is interested in learning more about being lead volunteers, please reach out to me. We hope Friends of



Members of Shiloh Baptist Church, Monroe, helped to spread fresh pine straw at Stegall Home which serves men with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Broadway Baptist Church, left, and Connect Church, below, served at Oak Ranch cleaning and preparing a building to be used as a BCH Enrichment Center.

Children 2025 will be the best yet .

Volunteers are essential to our ministry. The work completed by volunteers does so much more than just save money and complete a task. Here are five reasons why you should go on mission with BCH this year:

1. Serving as a volunteer reflects Jesus who “did not come to be served, but to serve.” It is the unconditional love of God on display.
2. Whether painting, sorting donations, building ramps, cleaning windows, or hosting a cook-out, volunteering is what it looks like to “visit with orphans and widows in their distress.” It’s about doing life alongside those who have experienced



unimaginable hardships while sharing the love of Jesus.

3. With locations in more than three dozen communities in NC and SC and ministry partnerships in Guatemala, the Philippines, and South Africa, serving with BCH is one way you can be a “witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.”

4. There is joy in working together as the body of Christ to serve others. While you bless those in care, you will be blessed—“It is more blessed to give than receive.”

5. Your gifts and talents are needed. In 1 Peter 4:10, it reads, “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” God has uniquely equipped you. Ask the Lord how He’s calling you to be used by Him—maybe in one of our new volunteer initiatives.

Find your spot to serve with BCH and go on mission together sharing the hope of Jesus Christ.



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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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The Melbers connect with staff and ministry partners

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

Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) new CEO David Melber, with his wife, Tera, has spent his first weeks building relationships with the ministry's staff members, ministry partners, and supporters throughout North Carolina.

Melber, who joins BCH after serving with the Georgia Baptist Mission Board, feels that his most important priority, as he begins his tenure, is to invest in the relationships that have been vital to carrying out the ministry's mission.

"We want them to know that they are our most valuable resource," David says.

The Melbers have visited BCH's various locations meeting staff members at the specific areas where they serve. Visits along the way have also included leaders at the Baptist State Convention of NC (NC Baptists), pastors, donors and trustees. David's message to all has been one of expectation in what God is going to do in this new season at BCH.

"We want to continually seek to love the Lord more each day," David says. "We want to encourage this among staff and our ministry partners.

"We may be serving BCH as an organization, but most of all, we are all being conformed into the image of Christ. We want to walk alongside every BCH partner together throughout this journey with the Gospel clearly at the center."

Top, David Melber (center) visits with cottage parents and staff members at BCH's Broyhill Home in Clyde, NC. Middle left, Jordan Willard, Senior Pastor at First Baptist Church of Weddington, with David and Tera. Middle right, David speaks to staff at BCH's Christian Adoption Services in Indian Trail. Bottom left, Surrounded by NC Baptist leaders, WMU executive director/treasurer Amy Boone leads prayer for the Melbers at the NC Baptist Board Meeting at Caraway Conference Center. Bottom middle, the Melbers meet with ministry partners at the NC Baptist Board Meeting. Bottom right, Brenda Gray, the Melbers, and Pastor Mike Cummings and wife, Quae, gather at BCH's Odum Home in Pembroke.



Please help us fill their tummies and their hearts

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

You can see it in her eyes—a deep sense of hopelessness. She is hungry, alone, and frightened. The impact of neglect on her young life has created a darkness we would hope no child would ever experience. And yet, it does—sometimes as close as next door. Did you know that North Carolina ranks 10th in the nation in food insecurity? One out of every five children in North Carolina lives with food insecurity. They are hungry.

Baptist Children’s Homes is a place where tummies and hearts are fed every day. It is not unusual for children to hoard their food when they first come into care. No matter what time of day they arrive, they each have something in common. They have been through incredible trauma and they are hungry. Peanut butter sandwiches and milk are ready and waiting.

Factors such as the harsh realities of poverty, abuse, trafficking, drug addictions, and hunger all impact the child’s physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual growth.

A child who is ignored stops talking. A child robbed of emotions won’t hug or allow themselves to be hugged. A child who never plays with toys won’t learn as quickly. A child betrayed will find it difficult to trust.

All children deserve to be loved, to be held, to feel safe. They each deserve to become all God would intend. Often when I ask a child what they like most about BCH, they respond by saying: “I am safe.” “I like the food.” “I like my cottage parents, they really care about us.”

A lot of hope and healing takes place around our dining room table. When I see our cottage parents in the various cottages interact with the children in care, I see the children not only receiving nourishing meals, but meals shared with an extra helping of love, hope, and healing. You see when gathered around the table: *When a child speaks—we listen. When a child dreams, we believe with them. When a child hurts, we hold them close and pray for healing. When a child laughs, we laugh and smile with them celebrating their moment.*

Our cottage parents not only create food for the tummies but food for the heart. It may come in the form of soup, chicken casserole, or chocolate chip cookies—whatever it takes to let each child know they are loved, safe, and cared for each and every day.

Thank you for providing food for the hungry and for being a voice for the voiceless and hope for the hopeless. Thank you for embracing the opportunity to change lives today.

Today, you gave a child a warm breakfast.

Today, you gave a child warm water for

their shower.

Today, you helped a child learn to read.

Today, you wiped a child’s tears of hurt and loneliness.

Today, you listened to a child.

Today, you put a band aid on the knee of a child.

Today, you bought a child a pair of shoes.

Today, you helped a child believe in their dreams.

Today, you gave a child a warm bed where they could find rest and peace.

Today, you gave a child a cone of ice cream.

Today, you baked a cake for a child’s first birthday party.

Today, you fixed three meals for 10 hungry teenagers.

Today, you attended a child’s ball game (cheering for them loudly).

Today, you shared the love of Jesus with a child.

Today, God used your gifts of love to change lives.

I have often heard the saying, “You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.” I am grateful to our partners in ministry. You and all those who put their faith into action. Feeding the thousands of people who walk through our doors could be a daunting task.

But it is not. Why?

Because of you, the Church.

We are on mission together.

Ways you can help with our food drive:

- Set aside one can of food

each week through the month of April and then bring it to your Association and put your cans of love with all the other cans of love.

- Share the need with your church, Sunday School class, your business and your family and friends.

- Identify food producers in your area and ask them to help. Example: pickles, sweet potatoes, spices, etc.

- Identify food distributors in your area and ask them to help.

- Identify meat producers in your area and ask them to help.

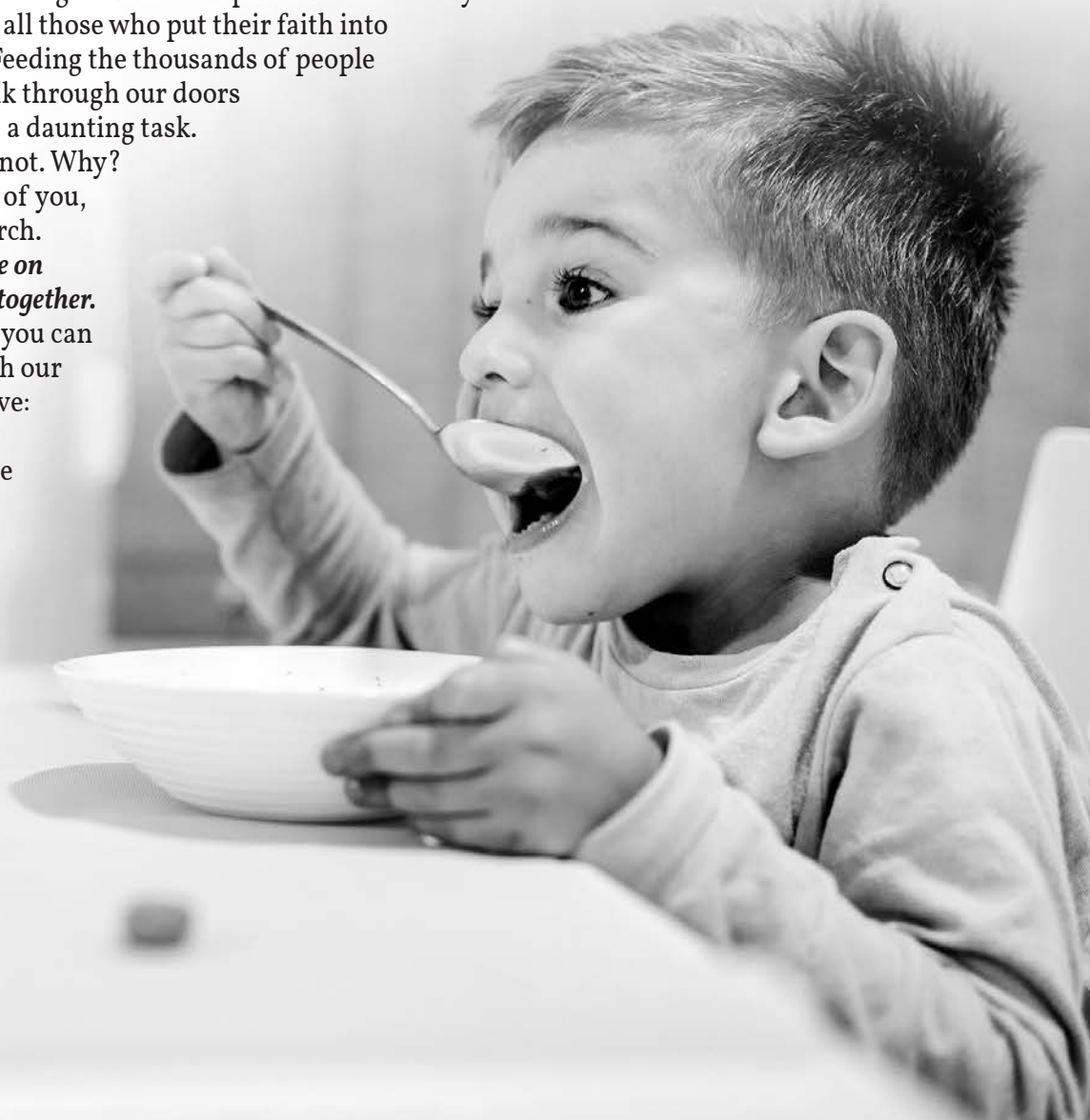
- Food Cards enable us to provide the perishables we need.

- Spread the word, share the opportunity to make a difference in the life of a child.

Help us fill their tummies and their hearts.

And remember, always be kinder than necessary for everyone is fighting some kind of battle. Galatians 6:9 reads: “Let us not grow weary in doing good.”

Thank you for walking this journey with us. You help to lighten the load as we journey, together!



We thank God for the 322 decisions made for Christ last year!

Making Jesus known was the most exciting opportunity drawing me to my new position as Chief Executive Officer. Your compassionate support ensures we are able to share the Good News. Because of you, Sophia* heard the gospel, witnessed it lived out before her, and accepted Jesus as her Savior!

Sophia came to us with little hope. Her father was not a part of her life and Sophia and her mother were severely mistreated by her mother's boyfriend. Her mother coped through heavy substance abuse, making the situation worse.

The day Sophia was baptized, she gave her testimony. It was inspiring and God honoring. She is a role model and is making a difference in the lives of the other children. When you give, you become a part of the beautiful story God is writing in their hearts and lives!

I am thankful for a Savior we can celebrate this Easter—a Savior who sacrificed Himself and conquered death so we may have new life in Him. It is because of Sophia and other children like her, I ask you to make an Easter gift so other boys and girls can discover the same hope she has found.

Blessings,
David Melber, CEO



**Sophia's name and photo have been changed for her privacy and safety.*

Use my gift to help children like Sophia!

\$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$ _____ 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 or call Faith Frazier at 336-474-1312.



I want to receive ministry updates and more. My email: _____

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



Helping young men conquer issues is 100% worth it

By **Jason Sullivan**, Assistant Director, Cameron Boys Camp; Education Director, BCH Wilderness Camp School

I have wanted to go into ministry for as long as I can remember. Aside from my dad, I had youth pastors and coaches who invested in me, and I always knew I wanted to give back. During college, I focused on a degree in theology with missions or youth ministry in mind as a career. I loved being outdoors and going on adventures. Mentoring youth was a passion.

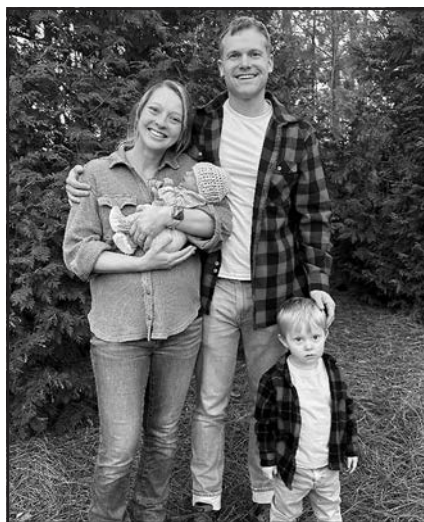
I graduated early and spent the spring term looking for work. I couldn't find anything for months. One day, I stumbled upon Cameron Boys Camp online and gave them a call. The idea of living outside and taking adventure trips matched my desires. A deeper, relational ministry also piqued my interest. This job wasn't your typical summer camp job but a year-round commitment and much more intense. After an initial phone interview, I set up a time to visit the camp.

I do not remember everything from my visit but I vividly recall staying with the youngest and oldest groups. It was not easy. The younger boys had a difficult time listening. Chaos was always a moment away but the counselors were able to capture the boys' attention. The boys had fun playing games. Their unfettered glee chasing each other while playing tag stands out as one of my early camp memories.

The older boys were fun too. They could accomplish more than the younger boys, but their problems were more difficult too. They had plenty of practice concealing their issues, and it was a counselor's watchful eye, discernment, and boldness that had to expose problems in the group because these guys wouldn't come out and tell you what was bothering them.

The boys in both groups just needed an adult in their lives whom they could trust, talk with, and model appropriate behavior. This behavior I am referring to is not merely table etiquette, being quiet when someone else is talking, or learning how to pass an exam in school. It could be

just having good-hearted, healthy fun—a necessity that was void in some of the boys' lives. It is owning up to mistakes and making it right. It is exposing emotion that's been bottled up for years. It is being patient with others when you're at your complete wits' end. It is not having all the answers no matter how hard you try. It is



Jason Sullivan began as a Chief (Counselor) at Cameron Boys Camp in 2009 and now serves as the assistant director and the Wilderness Camp School education director. Above, Chief Jason and the Rangers Group prepare to embark on a two-hundred mile canoe trip along the Kentucky Green River in 2011. Below, Jason and his wife Claire are pictured with their young son Caleb and newest arrival Eliza.

realizing that it's not all your fault. It is being selfless, having integrity, and asking for help. It is the pragmatic, everyday living out of your faith the way Jesus did.

I was intimidated by the structure and discipline I saw during my visit. As a counselor in the woods, I'd be providing twenty-four-hour care for up to ten boys, five days a week. I couldn't have my cell phone with me so I couldn't check the news or message my family and friends. At camp, problems are faced head-on and I, as the counselor, would have to address those problems, hold a line, and ensure they were solved well. Choosing to come was a decision of the self-sacrifice of my wants and comfort. My whole purpose was to help the boys accomplish their goals so they could return to their families and be successful. I had to do that relationally, because that's the only thing that works.

I spent the eighteen-hour drive home to Kansas City praying and seeking counsel from family and friends. Everything pointed toward me going. Despite my hesitations, I knew Cameron Boys Camp was where I was supposed to be. So two weeks later, I packed up everything I owned

in my navy 1998 Honda Accord and made the journey again.

That was nearly sixteen years ago.

I would have never guessed I would be here this long. My original commitment was two years but I felt God call me here and I've never felt called away. I have learned an incredible amount through the devastating lows, the pinnacle peaks, and the much more frequent everyday moments where my character was revealed. Being a counselor in the woods has helped me be a better husband and dad. It's taught me to be intentional with relationships and not only own up to problems but put in the effort to make positive change. It's allowed me to touch the lives of countless boys and their families through the love of Jesus while growing closer to Him too.

I consider myself a domestic missionary, doing Kingdom work. We need men who are able to dedicate two years of their lives to helping young men conquer issues that have held them up. It is a difficult commitment but it is one-hundred percent worth it. There is a girls camp too that needs Godly women as much as we need men. I am sure the faithful service of God's children will not be forgotten by Him.

If you want to know more about becoming a camp counselor, or know someone who might be interested, visit www.campcareers.org.

There is always room around the Grimes' table

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Lamar Grimes was nine years old when he and his younger sister and two brothers went to live at a Christian children's home in Orlando, Florida. His mother was an orange picker and worked in the packing plant. The family lived in a trailer park with other people who depended on the orange harvest to make their living. Her pay check went far too often to buy alcohol and drugs. Lamar says he became a "dumpster diver" to find food for his siblings. He learned when the stores would throw away the dated food and bruised produce. "I made sure to be one of the first ones there."

There were times he would sneak in neighbors' trailers for food. One day, there was a note waiting for him. The neighbor wrote that there was no need to break in, he was welcome to take whatever he needed. Caring for his siblings, making sure they attended school and had food, took much of the young boy's attention.

The children's home was the ministry of a Baptist church. He and his sister and brothers attended the church's school. The house parents modeled Christ and he came to know Jesus. The experience shaped Lamar's life.

Nancy and Lamar have been married 34 years. They met in church, fell in love, and married. The couple have three children, two daughters and a son. He was a career AC repair technician and Nancy worked in the financial industry. Lamar had also served as a bi-vocational youth pastor many times. There have always been children in their lives.

"I can't remember a time when kids were not in our home," Nancy says. "We have a heart for children."

When the Grimes felt God stirring in their hearts to become cottage parents, Lamar knew it was a way to give back what was given to him. In 2016, they left their careers to serve in full time ministry. Their children affirmed the decision: "It's what you already do. Go for it."

"We both had great careers," Lamar recalls. "It wasn't easy. I remember talking with my boss



Above, Lamar and Nancy Grimes have cared for girls in residential care since 2016, the girls of Johnson Cottage at Mills Home in Thomasville since 2024. The Grimes find the kitchen and the dining table the perfect places to connect and build relationships. Below, Lamar and his three siblings grew up at a children's home in Florida. He is the child highlighted in the photo.

about it and he asked me, 'Did the Lord say go? If so, go.' We knew the Lord was leading."

Six weeks later, the couple became cottage parents at Seamark Ranch in Green Cove Springs, Florida, caring for as many as ten girls. The Grimes overheard one say, "They're not going to last long."

"The first two months were hard," Nancy remembers. "It was all up hill. There had been three sets of parents before us, but we were not leaving."

The next seven and a half years were spent caring for girls. Training and depending on God to equip them brought success. They learned the importance of building relationships.

"The girls wanted to be heard like any child," Lamar says. "One girl said later, 'You told us you loved us, and we felt you loved us.' They became like our daughters."

Nancy and Lamar left in December 2023, trusting the Lord again to lead the way. An online search drew their attention to Mills Home in Thomasville and the way became clear. They

were offered positions, and in early July 2024 they came to serve in Johnson Cottage.

"We felt like we were not skipping a beat," Lamar says. "It is a girls' cottage and we had the experience. We were ready to dive in."

The Grimes know meal preparation and sitting around the table with the girls grow relationships. The time invested brings big rewards.

There is never silence—at mealtime or in the kitchen. The girls talk about their days, and it is best to never be surprised by the breadth of conversation.

Lamar and Nancy are responsive to the girls'

needs. Around the table, the girls are free to ask questions—to talk about what is on their minds. They hear things at school and are looking for answers. The Grimes have learned that discussing real life creates opportunities to discuss biblical truths.

"We don't force our way in," Lamar says. "Kids put up wall—boundaries. I understand because I was that child in a home. I responded to honesty. Kids know if you're fake. Building trust. Doing what you say and following through is the only way to break through the hurt and see the walls fall away."

Some girls come into care and do not know how to pray. They have never been part of a devotion. Some want nothing to do with God. The Grimes meet the girls where they are.

"We work to build trust," Nancy says. "Lamar and I love them. We line everything up to the Bible and plant seeds. We present Jesus to them and trust the Lord to bring change into their lives."

In Johnson Cottage, the girls are fed physically and spiritually—their stomachs filled and their hearts nurtured. Lamar knew his houseparents loved him and his siblings. They cared. He knew they were there for them. He and Nancy model the same for the girls in their cottage, asserting, "This is their home. There is always a place for them around the table."



For CJ and Timothy, it stops at the Edwards' home

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Tara and Rob Edwards have welcomed nineteen foster children into their home. Tara, a public school teacher, admits she is drawn to hurting children, seeing the good in every one, looking past the often “prickly” outside.

“Tara loves kids in such an amazing way,” Rob says. “It’s a God thing. She has an ease about her that draws every child to her. She loves them in the Lord.”

Rob’s son Matthew was two when his first marriage ended in divorce and three when Rob and Tara married in 2013. His daughter Macie was three years older. Tara became a first-time parent of two children she loved, but the couple wanted to grow their family. It was devastating when they learned there would be no more children.

“I struggled to understand,” Tara confesses. “Why would God give me such a passion for children and I couldn’t have children of my own?”

In 2016, Tara and Rob turned their hearts toward fostering to adopt. They remember talking about it one day, and the next Sunday Chris Allabaugh, Associate Vice President, Child and Family Services for Baptist Children’s Homes (BCH), spoke in their church about becoming a BCH foster family. After attending a question and answer session following that morning’s presentation, they were the only couple who returned the following week with paperwork completed, ready to start training.

“We were building the foster care program in the east from the ground up,” Allabaugh says. “Rob and Tara were the perfect couple to be our first foster family. They didn’t come at it half-hearted. They were in from the beginning.”

After training, their license was written, submitted, and approved. The Edwards were ready for the call that their first foster child was on the way. What they believed would be days, maybe a few weeks, turned into months and the months began to add up.

“We were asked if we wanted to continue,” Tara says. “I remember being discouraged, but Rob and I never gave up. We resolved to wait on God. He would bring the children.”

A week later, 12 months after being licensed, two sisters walked through the front door of their home. The couple relied on their training and the ready support available from BCH staff members. They quickly learned every day would be different and to roll with what happens. Tara recalls: “There were awesome days and other days you think, ‘What in the world are we doing?’”

The Edwards learned that with every child, their family had to become the family the child



Tara and Rob Edwards have fostered 19 children since becoming licensed BCH foster parents in 2017. Married 11 years, the couple adopted the last two foster children, brothers CJ and Timothy. Above left to right, Rob, Timothy, Tara, Macie, CJ, and Matthew capture a selfie after learning the boys’ adoption was finalized.

needs. Each child is different and the couple had to work through every challenge, choosing to love each child unconditionally.

“When we were being trained by Chris,” Rob says, “I remember him telling us that on average a foster child has seven placements. Seven! What an impact that must have on a child! Tara and I determined then that if a child came into our home, it stopped here for that child.”

The couple committed to work with the foster child’s family, too. They are non-threatening, befriending and encouraging to them.

“We never try to replace parents,” Rob says. “We encourage, helping anyway we can as they work to be reunited with their child.”

Seeing healing and watching a child return to their family is rewarding but saying goodbye can be painful. It is hard to let go.

“God helps us through it,” Rob asserts. “We know it’s not about us. We do what we know to do, turn to Jesus, and lay down our hurt. We let go and trust.”

After every child leaves, the Edwards go for ice cream. It’s good balm as they remember the good things, celebrating the child who shared their lives.

Tara and Rob’s goal from the beginning was adoption, but it was just a goal, not the goal.

The number of children added up, quicker than the couple ever planned. Their main goal was to always love the child.

In summer 2023, a call came about two brothers, nine-month-old CJ and four-year-old Timothy. They had been in foster care and parental rights were about to be surrendered. The boys needed a family—an adoptive family.

The boys visited on Labor Day. CJ wore a cranial helmet and needed Tara’s attention. Timothy was high energy, excited and happy. Tara, Rob, Matthew, and Macie fell in love with the boys.

It stops at the Edwards’ home. The boys would go nowhere else. A short time later, the boys moved in. The adoption process began, but took longer than anticipated. CJ did not have a birth certificate. He was not born in a hospital and his birth was never recorded.

“It is God’s providence,” Rob says. “We married and were a family of four. We couldn’t have children and ended up fostering. When the time was right, we were what God needed us to be so that when these boys needed us, we were there.”

When word came that the adoption was final on January 8, 2025, Timothy smiled. He was now an Edwards. It was the last stop for the brothers, a permanent, stable home. He and CJ now have the family they needed.

Christian and Will become the family each needed

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Will Paul fidgets in his seat. His church, Calvary Baptist in Roxboro, is an ardent supporter of Baptist Children's Homes (BCH). He sits, listening to a BCH representative share about the ministry as he has many times, but this time Will felt, "God was all in my head." This was the first time he heard Christian's story.

Christian was born in the Philippines. He was abandoned on the streets when he was nine years old. Living in desperation, his days were about survival—avoiding the violence of street gangs and scavenging enough food to live each day. Then one day, Christian developed a cough. It was not uncommon among the street children.

There were days when the fever and chills kept him from going out to find food. He became weak. When it was discovered he had tuberculosis and was treated, his body was drug resistant. Healing came slowly and as a result he suffered hearing loss. Christian was now deaf.

Christian was placed in an orphanage. It was a time of healing—physically and spiritually. With the ferocity he lived by on the streets, he tackled his deafness, learning sign language and how to read lips. He learned the stories of the Bible. He gave his heart to Jesus and was baptized. Like other children at the orphanage, he began to pray for his heart's desire—a family.

Will knew he had to find out more. After the service, he approached BCH's representative and began to share his story—a story of a servant-hearted man who never thought he would become someone's father.

He was raised with his brother in a believer's home. He attended church where he decided to follow Jesus. In college, a friend was deaf and taught an informal sign language class. Fascinated with what he learned, he decided to take a few college courses.

He was an education major and believed the classes would be helpful. It was the first time he was introduced to the deaf community.

The skill became more than an interest after learning about fostering children who were deaf. He volunteered at first with the licensing agency and then worked part time, helping to place deaf children with families.

"God had a plan," Will asserts today.



Christian was adopted by Will Paul in October 2024. The 18-year-old is a student at the North Carolina School of the Deaf in Morganton where he excels in academics and sports. He became deaf after contracting tuberculosis as a nine year old living on the streets in the Philippines. It was his heart's desire to be adopted and have a family.

In 2022, through Christian Adoption Services, the boy's prayers were being answered. Fifteen-year-old Christian immigrated to the United States with a plan of adoption. Unfortunately, that plan was unsuccessful, and he came to live at Mills Home in Thomasville. The search for another adoptive family began. It is difficult to place a child with special needs—especially an older child. There are hundreds of children on waiting lists.

Christian never lost faith despite the challenges. After

all, he had prayed, believing God would send him a family. It is his deep love for the Lord that assured him. It is his greatest strength.

Will remembers from the expression on her face, BCH's representative was surprised about both his interest and his experience. He asked if there was a way he could help Christian? Volunteer? Mentor? She promised she would be back in touch.

"I didn't know how I felt," Will recalls. "I knew God was leading and I felt I had to do something."

Will became a BCH volunteer after completing the application and being vetted. Will and Christian's first visit "felt right." Despite his age, the teen still wanted a family and Will knew he wanted Christian in his life. As the duo became better acquainted, Will asked, "How would you like me to be your family?"

Christian and Will spent more and more time together, talking more and more about adoption. Will remembers Christian asking if Will adopted him, would he have to change his last name. "I told him it was up to him. Whether or not he changed his name would not change the fact that I wanted to be his dad."

Christian was attending the North Carolina School for the Deaf in Morganton. He was succeeding in academics and as an athlete and set his focus on college. Time was passing and it was decided to pursue a domestic adult adoption—the quickest way for the two to become a family. On September 15, Christian turned 18. The adoption was approved by the Philippine government and was finalized October 28.

Christian Paul finally has the family he always wanted. As for Will, he is the dad he never knew he wanted to be and the dad who God always desired for him to become.



Boys find true picture of gospel in church home

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Sunday mornings at Frizzell-Higdon Cottage are busy. Will and Betty Porter wrangle eight boys—dressing for church, eating breakfast, and loading into the van for a short drive from Broyhill Home in Clyde to picturesque Dellwood Baptist Church nestled along Hall Drive in Waynesville. Will parks with the arriving cars, some with other children holding Bibles in hands, ready for Sunday school and worship. After Betty’s final inspection, she sends the boys off with the other children.

Later, the boys enter the sanctuary and are welcomed with hugs. Members pause to greet them, asking about their week. They are indistinguishable from the other children. It is exactly what Lead Pastor Bobby Rogers wants: “They are just part of the Dellwood children.”

Betty rounds up her brood and they sit on two pews midway back from the pulpit and communion table. She directs the youngest to sit by her and the others take their places on the pew in front. Will, a deacon of the church, joins them before the service begins.

“Dellwood Baptist Church is our home church,” Betty says. “The boys consider it their church.”

A little more than a decade ago, the church agreed to host the cottage, welcoming the boys and the cottage parents to worship with them. Pastor Rogers and church members have seen it as an opportunity to nurture the boys and help them grow in their love for the Lord.

“Broyhill Home is special to us,” Pastor Rogers says. “We are honored to invest our hearts into these boys’ lives.”

Pastor Rogers feels the boys need normal. The teens attend youth Bible study on Wednesday nights, attend events like Winterfest, go on



Dellwood Baptist Church Lead Pastor Bobby Rogers fields questions from the boys of Broyhill Home’s Frizzell-Higdon Cottage after morning worship. The Waynesville church has hosted the cottage for more than ten years and takes their role serious, loving and caring for the boys and cottage parents.

trips, have summer camp experiences, and do missions. Dellwood’s young adult group, led by Associate Pastor Shawn Porter (Will and Betty’s son), throws parties and cookouts for the cot-

tage. Every year, the group provides a Christmas party with gifts from each boy’s wish list.

“We believe they deserve our best effort,” Pastor Rogers says. “We see our job is to love them and give them our all.”

Rogers and church members assert it is easy to love the boys. It is hard to see them leave, feeling a part of their hearts go with each one.

“While they are at Broyhill Home, you think about them, pray for them, and become attached,” Pastor Rogers says. “When they leave, your work isn’t over—you pray even harder. You pray for the life before them, believing God will continue to care for them.”

Some of the boys have never been in church. They have questions. Things go slowly. They attend with the group and watch. It is never forced. Church members are respectful and loving. As their trust grows, the walls come down. “God has His way,” Betty says.

The service nears the end. The preaching is over. Everyone stands as music plays. Pastor Bobby invites anyone who is feeling God leading to step forward. Betty notices one of her boys is noticeably moved. She and Will have sensed God working in his life. Tears are running down his cheeks. He looks at Betty and she slowly nods. He steps forward, takes the pastor’s hand, and gives his heart to the Lord.

“I’m thankful anytime one of the boys is saved,” Pastor Rogers says. “When they trust enough to step forward—to make that move takes courage. They are laying down a lot of baggage.”

The boys are part of Dellwood Baptist Church and loved by its members. The church calls them their own, declares God’s love and is a true picture of the gospel. The church grounds them in a community of believers, affirming the boys. They know that when a boy gives his heart to Jesus, it can never be taken away. A boy takes Jesus with them no matter where he goes. It changes his life for eternity. It is God’s way.

More! We want to share more with you!

You can stay in touch by receiving emails with updates, events, ways to be involved—and most of all—life-changing BCH stories!

Fill out the coupon and mail using the enclosed postage-paid envelope. Or scan the QR code and in minutes you will be set to receive **more** information about *sharing hope...changing lives!*



Name: _____

Yes, send my emails to: _____

Yes, text me at: (____) _____

Four new trustees added to this year's board

The beginning of the New Year has not only been the start of a new season at Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) with the arrival of CEO David Melber, but it has also welcomed four NC Baptist friends as first-time members of the Board of Trustees.

In cooperation with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, potential BCH trustees are identified and elected to a four-year term. The group of four individuals, who are all members of NC Baptist churches, began their service in January and will complete their terms at the end of 2028.

The new members comprise a board of 26 individuals including chairperson Justin Lee who has been

an integral part of BCH's trustees.

"We are thankful for Steve, Quintell, Luis and Linda bringing their expertise and, most of all, their love for the Lord to our Board of Trustees," David Melber shared. "The dedication of our trustees, especially as we pray for what God has in store for BCH, is essential to lives being forever changed."

New Trustees:

Steve Calhoun lives in Tarboro. He is married



Justin Lee
Trustee Board Chair



Steve Calhoun



Quintell Hill



Luis Tejera



Linda Wendelken

to Beth and they are members of Englewood Baptist Church in Rocky Mount.

Quintell Hill is the pastor of Multiply Community Church in Monroe and is also the African-American Church Mobilization Strategist at the IMB. He is married to Christie.

Luis Tejera serves as the pastor of the Latin American Campus at Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte. He lives in Midland with his wife Myrta.

Linda Wendelken lives in Summerfield with her husband Don. They attend Lawndale Baptist Church in Greensboro.

Board of Trustees:

- Ray Brickhouse (27) - Fletcher
- Vickie Burge (26) - Fayetteville
- Steve Calhoun (28) - Tarboro
- Denise Critcher (26) - Deep Gap
- Dana Dixon (26) - Garner
- Ken Haigler (25) - Wilmington

- Quintell Hill (28) - Monroe
- Matt Hollifield (26) - Davidson
- Milton Hollifield, Jr. (25) - Asheville
- Roy Howell (26) - Apex
- Denise Hunter (27) - Roseboro
- Marty Johnston (27) - Bolivia
- Justin Lee (25) - Clinton
- Mike Leslie (25) - Waynesville
- Joann Lutz (25) - Boiling Springs
- Richard Matthews (27) - Nashville
- David Powell (25) - Sylva
- Sandy Saunders (26) - Fayetteville
- Eric Segars (27) - Hayesville
- Matt Sigmon (27) - Youngsville
- Kyler Smith (27) - Charlotte
- Nick Smith (27) - Waynesville
- Luis Tejera (28) - Midland
- Ryan Thomsen (25) - Raleigh
- Rit Varriale (26) - Shelby
- Linda Wendelken (28) - Summerfield

Sweet Dreams...your gift brings restful nights!



Becoming a "Sweet Dreams Bed Sponsor" is one of the most direct ways you can help change a life that has been bruised by hurt and neglect. Sponsors' names appear on plaques that hang in each cottage—reminding children they have "angel friends" who watch over them. **Use my gift to help a child!**

- ___ \$25.00/month for one child or a \$300 one-time gift
 - ___ \$50.00/month for two children or a \$600 one-time gift
 - ___ \$250.00/month for a cottage (10 children) or a \$3,000 one-time gift
- Use my bed sponsorship gift of \$_____ to help a child.

Return this completed form with your check. Or use your credit card by visiting bchfamily.org/bedsponsor. Call 336.474.1277 to setup a monthly sponsor gift.

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____ Email _____

Check here to receive inspirational stories, event info, and ways to be involved.

Plaque Text: If you would like a name and message to appear on a plaque in the cottage, print your information as you would like it to appear. (Limit to 23 characters per line. See character spaces below.)

Line 1 _____
 Line 2 _____
 Line 3 _____

Scan the QR code with your smartphone for more information.



Churches can fill hearts as well as the shelves

One of the most vital ways NC Baptists connect meeting a physical need with a spiritual one is through Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) annual Food Roundup. This is because many of the NC foster care boys and girls served by BCH have gone without -- *without food, without love, without hope.*

"It is unfortunately all too common that our cottage parents and foster parents receive children whose basic needs have not been met," explains Brenda Gray, BCH Executive Vice President of the Development/Communica-



tions Team. "When they have not been regularly fed, it leads to distrust of the adults in their lives. The Food Roundup becomes not only the opportunity to provide meals to children, but a way to build trust."

Churches and associations are asked to collect non-perishable food, supplies and gift cards from the needed items list BCH provides. From there, churches can ask people in the pews to collect in a way that works best for their congregation.

"Our NC Baptist churches create an incredible avenue for the Gospel to be shared," Brenda says. "When children learn that churches are collecting tons and tons of food so they don't have to worry about being hungry, our cottage parents and foster parents are able to share that they are



FOOD ROUNDUP

BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOMES

doing this to share the love of Christ."

The goal is to collect \$750,000 worth of items, enough to feed everyone the entire year.

More Information and Resources



Resources for the Food Roundup -- including needs list, step-by-step collection guide, slides, social media posts, video and more—are available at bchfoodroundup.org. For support, contact BCH's Alan Williams at 336-474-1277 or awilliams@bchfamily.org

Updated list focuses on the greatest needs

MOST NEEDED (in bold):

- Canned Fruits
- Fruit Juice (Apple, Orange, Grape, Cranberry)
- Laundry Detergent
- Paper Products (paper towels, toilet paper, napkins, Kleenex)
- Bottled Water
- Canned Vegetables (green beans, corn, etc.)
- Dry Cereal
- Bake Beans
- Spaghetti Sauce
- Pasta (Spaghetti, Lasagna, Macaroni)
- Canned Tomatoes (diced, sauce, paste)
- Pancake Mix and Syrup
- Soups (All types & condensed)
- Sugar (Granulated & Brown)
- Flour
- Splenda
- Popcorn, Kettle Corn
- Apple Sauce
- Fruit Pie Filling (Cherry and Peach)

- Beverage Mixes (Tea, Tang, Kool-Aid, Lemonade, Cider Mix - All Sugar Free)
- Vegetable Oil, Shortening, Olive Oil, Pam Cooking Spray, Bakers Choice
- Canned Sweet Potatoes, Canned Yams
- Canned Meats (pink salmon, tuna, roast beef, chicken - packed in water)
- Stuffing Mix
- Gravy Mixes
- Hamburger, Chicken, and Tuna Helper (all types)
- Pickles (Sweet & Dill)
- Refried Beans
- Hot Chocolate Mix
- Snack Foods with & without sugar (Fruit Rollups, Fruit Cups, Beef Jerky, Slim Jims, Pepperoni Sticks, Cheese Nips, Pretzels, etc.)
- Healthy Snacks (Dried Fruit, Nuts, Raisins, Cranraisins, Trail Mix)
- Individual Cookie Packs
- Jello

- PopTarts
- Rice
- Instant Potatoes (scalloped, au gratin, mashed, julienne)
- Muffin Mixes
- Bisquick Mix
- Kidney Beans
- Pickle Relish
- Cranberry Sauce
- Mac & Cheese
- Corn Meal
- Jiffy Mixes, Corn Muffin Mix, Hush Puppy Mix
- Peanut Butter
- Jelly, Jams, Preserves (Strawberry is the favorite)
- Pizza & Pizza Dough Mix
- Saltine Crackers, Ritz Crackers, Graham Crackers
- Sauces (A-1, Steak, BBQ, Texas Pete, Cheese, Worcestershire, Soy, Teriyaki, Sweet & Sour)
- Spices and Seasonings (including Salt & Pepper)
- Dishwashing detergents
- Laundry pre-treating products (i.e. Shout, Spray and Wash)

- Brooms, Mops, Scrub Brushes, Dust Pans
- Foil and Plastic Wrap
- SOS Pads
- Fabric Softener
- Dryer Sheets
- Sanitary Pads & Tampons
- Hand Lotion
- Shampoo
- Body Wash
- Soap
- Household cleaning products (i.e. bleach, Comet, Lysol spray and wipes, Clorox spray, Windex, Pinesol, Pledge, Tilex, etc.)

OTHER NEEDED ITEMS:

- Brownie & Cookie Mix
- Individual Chef Boyardee cups
- Clif brand nutrition bars
- Hot Dog Chili
- Coffee (Regular & Decaf)
- Coffee Creamer
- Sweetened Condensed Milk
- Evaporated Milk
- Powdered Milk

- Flavorings (Vanilla, etc.)
- French Fried Onions
- Honey
- Ketchup
- Mustard
- Oatmeal
- Parmesan Cheese
- Puddings, Pudding Cups
- Salsa
- Vinegar
- Paper Products (Cups, Plates, Bowls, Plastic Ware, Dixie Cups)
- Trash Bags (large & small)
- Zip-Loc bags (Sandwich, Snack, Quart & Gallon Sizes)
- Band Aids
- Rubbing Alcohol/Peroxide
- Anti-bacterial ointment
- Razors
- Shaving Cream/Shaving Gel
- Dental Floss
- Hair brushes
- Deodorant
- Conditioner
- Tooth Paste
- Tooth Brushes
- Diapers (all sizes)
- Baby Wipes

- Bug Repellent
- Wasp/Hornet Spray
- Sunblock 30+
- Batteries (AA, AAA and D)
- Disposable Gloves (Latex & Non-Latex)

IMPORTANT NOTES:

Gift Cards are appreciated for buying perishables and items not received. (i.e. Wal-Mart, Sams Clubs, Food Lion, Lowes, Ingles, Piggly Wiggly).

We can use all size cans. Some locations prefer #10 cans (family size).

IMPORTANT: Please check for expired dates on food --we cannot accept expired items.

Please help our volunteer truck drivers by packing your church's donations in small, sturdy boxes.

Pack like items together. Please do not pack chemicals with food.

Plans set for Homecoming 2025 – August 1, 2, and 3

MH athletes to be inducted into Hall of Fame

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

The Mills Home Alumni Council of the MH Alumni Association held its second meeting since last homecoming at the Mills Home Baptist Church fellowship hall, formerly the Junior Sunday School and Training Union Department. It was wonderful that **David Melber**, the new CEO of the Baptist Children's Homes, and his wife **Tera** met with us. We came to understand quite clearly that David, supported fully by Tera, is very dedicated to his new leadership role. We hope that you noticed the full page introductory article about David and his family that appeared on page 3 of the Jan.-Feb. issue of *Charity & Children* (C&C).

In this second meeting since last homecoming, the Alumni Council continued plans for Homecoming 2025 by inviting David to deliver the homecoming message. With his gracious "yes" reply, the council continued discussion of the Sunday part of homecoming: selection of hymns, ushers, choir director, and consideration of a piano player. With much already determined, Homecoming 2025 purports to be another great homecoming. We hope folks will start planning early to return this year to be with your friends of old. **Sally Beck Ferguson**, now of Ormond Beach, FL, has already written that she and old friend **Janice Green** will be coming to be with friends and former classmates from around 1968.

Most of the homecoming details in the preceding paragraphs are certain, but if changes occur between now and Homecoming Weekend, August 1, 2, and 3, we will pass them on to you through C&C and, of course, our yearly Homecoming letter that comes out near the end of June and has the details of the events of the weekend.

We hereby remind you that the exciting Thomasville Athletic Hall of Fame will have its third induction of outstanding athletes, coaches,

and others such as ardent supporters of athletics, and scorekeepers at 4:00 PM on March 22 at the Thomasville Auditorium (beside of the high school at 406 Unity Street). Our own **Clifton Lambreth**, who has received high accolades from the attendees of the first two inductions, will again serve as the master of ceremony. Several MH athletes will be inducted in this ceremony: **William (Bill) Sisk**, 1944 MH senior; **Vaughan Dagenhart**, 1964 THS senior; and **Coach Charlie Kearns**, MH general coach of the 1930s and MH girls' basketball coach, 1950s.

Work continues on the preparation of the memorabilia of the Mitchell Museum for its transportation to its new home in the old Dr. Elizabeth Wagoner Kindergarten portion of the church. **Marilyn Moore**, a BCH employee, is the current curator of the museum responsible for the preparation. Up to this point, the task has mainly been digitally cataloging the items and packing them for transportation to the aforementioned building, which I am calling the new Mitchell Museum. We can only imagine that this is a laborious process requiring the skill and patience of an expert. Patience especially is needed since the "New Mitchell Museum" is still under renovation with emphasis on plumbing, restructuring rooms, and painting.

Pat Heath Beck has asked the important question of what will be done with the honorary bricks in the path at the Mitchell Cottage/House. The answer that was posted back to her is that placement of those bricks will be at the site of the New Mitchell Museum once the workmen are able to start working on the landscaping and path placement, hopefully in the not so distant future. The new plan for displaying the memorabilia is based on the museum that has been established at Oxford Orphanage in Oxford, NC, the other orphanage established by **John Haymes Mills**.

Many alumni are excited about the prospect of having a MH website. As we were informed at homecoming last August, our then president **Ruth Berndt Hodges** and a professional website builder were collaborating on the final development. Despite the still incomplete stage, it is possible for people to use this link (millshomealum.com) to access the site for a brief examination. There is presently an updated list of the Alumni Council and some photographs. Many more photographs will be added along the way, as will reports from the council, progress on the museum, advertisements for Homecoming 2025, and later reviews of Homecoming. You will be notified when the site is running full force and you can participate as one does on Facebook.

If you would like to serve on the Alumni Council and help out at Homecoming, please contact **President Jackie Walker** at this address: 1044 Jackies Lane, Garner, NC, 27529 or 919-606-5027.

Leona Grindstaff, who lost both parents at a young age, entered MH in 1926 with her sister **Lillian**. Leona has often said that MH really saved their lives and they had adjusted easily to it and most happily thrived there with more than 500 youngsters. After graduating from Mills Home High School, she attended Jones Business College in High Point. In 1941, she married her MH sweetheart, **Warren Price**. Soon thereafter, he joined the US Air Force and Leona worked as a civil servant for the Air Force. They were stationed in Herington, KS until after the war. They relocated to Newport News so Warren could attend the apprentice school at NASA and Leona continued her work with the Air Force. Leona retired from Langley in 1980, and she lost her husband Warren in 1988.

Leona was a faithful member of Parkview Baptist Church in Newport News for almost seventy-five years, serving her church in many

different roles. Her favorite role was being part of the kitchen team that prepared church-wide suppers. She is remembered for her love and kindness to all God's creatures and many young people who were no kin to her. She is survived by two daughters, **Susan and Judy**, grandson **Alex**, and granddaughter **Lauren**.

The family honored Leona's life with a graveside service on October 22, 2024. Friends wishing to make memorial donations are asked to give to Mills Home, Box 336, Thomasville, NC, 27360.

In the December issue of C&C, I wrote about **Lester Jordan Smith**, a man from Thomasville who a few years ago was invited by members of the graduating class of 1956 to attend our homecoming. During that weekend, those alumni invited him to be an "honorary orphan" and so he filled out a form and entered himself into our alumni directory. From that time on, he was a regular "Homecomer" each August, fulfilling that role admirably with warm hugs. Today, I sadly report to you that he passed away on Dec. 26, 2024. We will miss his warm hugs and humorous contributions to our August gatherings. Friends can send condolences to his wife **Silvia** and daughter **Deborah** at this address: 78 Richfork Ave., Thomasville, 27360. The family asks that anyone wishing to make a memorial donation, please send it to Mills Home, Box 338, Thomasville, NC, 27360.

My husband **Bob Johnson**, who has been such a great support for anything I do, especially MH concerns wants to send a HELLO to all! **So, Hello to everyone from Bob!**

He is nearly blind with macular degeneration. Send him a card if you have time to 5612 Bledsoe Dr., Greensboro, NC, 27410.



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



First River Hill Refuge child baptized
Camden proclaimed Christ as Savior and was baptized. The former foster child is adopted by his foster family in Shelby.



International adoption celebrated
The "W" family celebrates the adoption of "D," their Filipino daughter. "D" loves to read her Bible and sing worship songs.



First 2025 snowfall creates memories
The first snowfall of 2025 allowed children at Mills Home, and BCH's state-wide locations, to make fun memories.



Western NC talent show stars shine
Every child and special needs adult was at the talent show at Broyhill Home. It's an evening to celebrate their gifts.



Sunday School class shows their love
Saved to Serve Sunday School class at Village Baptist in Fayetteville brought Valentine's gifts to Odum Home.



Navy program volunteers at BCH
A team of 12 volunteers from NTAG Carolina, Division 1 tackled projects at Kennedy Home in Kinston.



BCH attends seminary's chapel service
BCH staff members gather with Southeastern Seminary's Danny Akin after the seminary's Sanctity of Life Chapel Service.



Stegall men treated to bowling night
Our special needs men at Stegall Home enjoyed an evening of bowling with the Vine Class from Hopewell Baptist.



Truett Home children build snowman
Children at our Truett Home in the mountains of Hayesville built their first snowman of the year.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Check out our Events Calendar for opportunities to serve and registration information. Visit bchfamily.org/events



MARCH

13: Charlotte Benefit Banquet for Christian Adoption Services (CAS)
- First Baptist Church, Indian Trail

25: Triad Benefit Banquet for Christian Adoption Services
- Mercy Hill Church, Greensboro

27: NCBAM Aging Well Conference
- River of Life Baptist, Sunset Beach

APRIL

4: Camp Duncan Open House
- Aberdeen, NC

24: CAS Upstate Golf Tournament
- Travelers Rest, SC

FRIENDS OF CHILDREN

Spring Saturday one-day missions for all ages--more info and registration at bchfamily.org/foc



- March 9: Oak Ranch in Broadway
- April 5: Cameron Boys Camp, Cameron
- April 12: Camp Duncan, Aberdeen
- May 10: Kennedy Home, Kinston
- May 17: Odum Home, Pembroke

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foster & adoption ministry

We equip your church to be a part of foster care & adoption so that every child receives the caring home he or she deserves.

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Giving your vehicle puts the ministry in

Motion!

Your donated vehicle helps with school, church activities, student drivers, doctor visits, family care mothers and more.

Call Sam Barefoot at 336.474.1224

SECC
State Employees Combined Campaign

#3641

How can we help you? Contact 1.800.476.3669 or bchfamily.org/referral >>>

For each person's specific need, Baptist Children's Homes offers a unique ministry that is prepared to help. Reach out today.



Send your recipes for the new KH Cookbook – Focusing on the positive helps no matter your age

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

Come one! Come all! Let's have the largest crowd we have ever had at Kennedy Home Homecoming this year on June 7 and 8! After much searching and prayers, Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) now has a "new" chief executive officer. His name is **David Melber**. He will be the main speaker at the Sunday morning worship service at Homecoming. He and his lovely wife **Tera** will be coming on Saturday to meet with the alumni. We are looking forward to this. Following the morning worship service, we will all go to the gym to have lunch with our special guests. If you are a former alumni youngin or staff member, come and join with us.

Alumni **Debbie Daniels** is putting together a Kennedy Home (KH) cookbook. She needs many more recipes. She would like to have a lot more recipes for fresh vegetables to add to the book. You need to send your recipes right away to Debbie Daniels at 936 Sunset Drive, Havelock, N. C. 28532. Let's help Debbie make this a great success.

Have you put the Fall Beach Retreat on your calendar? It will be October 3, 4, and 5 at the McNeil Beach cottage. This is the cottage that you went to every summer when you were living a KH.

Let **Debbie and Gary Caulder** or me know if you plan to attend. Your cost will be \$30 a person. Where else can you go to the beach, have a bed to sleep in, Friday night supper, Saturday night supper, Saturday breakfast, Saturday lunch leftovers, Sunday morning breakfast and leftovers for Sunday lunch while you are cleaning up the cottage? This is the deal of a lifetime. We always have a great time on this special retreat. Remember, no pets allowed in the cottage. Again we want to thank the folks who provided this beautiful location for the Children's Homes to enjoy.

Do you know what you have in

your life? I was reading an article some time back and I want to share it with you. It gives us a lot to think about. We all need to focus on the positive in our lives—no matter our age. Our BCH houseparents help the "youngins" focus on a positive future. Let me share these with you and try to be positive each day by remembering all you have.

1. You have a *roof* over your head.
2. You *ate* today.
3. You have a *good* heart for others.
4. You wish *good* for others.
5. You have *clean* water to drink.
6. Someone *cares* for you.
7. You know how to *forgive* others.
8. You have *clothes* on your back.
9. You *love* to smile.
10. You are *breathing* today.

I think all these thoughts will help us to be thankful for the "little things."

Kim Maynor Allison (70s) shared this with me one time a long time ago. Kim had many KH friends. She was always involved in the whole program we had to offer. I met her when I was living and serving at KH. She told me about a life motto she has. It goes like this:

"No matter what happens in life, be good to people. Being good to people is a wonderful legacy to leave behind."

She and her brothers were well loved by many youngins. Thanks Kim for sharing.

I want to hear from you about who your "favorite" houseparents were. Many of the houseparents who served when I was there (72-77) are now living in heaven. I think there are only two housemothers who are still living that I worked with. A lady that I remember and loved dearly was **Lou Pearl Simmons** who lived in the Pollock Cottage and is now living with the Lord.

Donna Weeks Duty shared this with me. Donna begins: **Mrs. Lou Pearl Simmons** was my housemother when I lived in the Pollock Cottage from approximately 1971-1974. I have to say that out of all the

houseparents I had, she made the most lasting impact on my life. First of all, she was a Godly Christian woman with a sweet, gentle spirit. There were times of course when she would get upset and frustrated with us girls when we wouldn't listen, but I hardly remember many times when I saw her angry or heard her raise her voice. She was small and petite in stature, but she would "fly" up those steps in the cottage when the girls needed her. One of the most precious memories I have of her is seeing her sitting in her chair in the downstairs hallway. She sat most of the times with her "bible" in her lap and she could keep an "eye" on us girls from there. What a wonderful way for me to remember her. What a great example for myself and the other girls living in the cottage. I also remember times when I would go to her to talk out a personal problem I was having and to ask her advice. She would always very lovingly advise me to do what I thought God would want me to do, and then she would pray with me. After I graduated from high school and left KH, especially the first few months after leaving, I would to come to Kinston for orthodontist appointments. **Mrs. Lou Pearl** always let me stay in Pollock Cottage overnight on those visits. I loved it and felt right at home! I continued to keep in touch for many years after I left. We would write letters to each other and always visit at Homecoming. I also visited her when she retired and moved to her hometown of Clinton. I also visited her in a nursing home in Newport. Her mind was always sharp—right up to the end of her life. She would always remember me when I visited. I thank God for placing her in my life. She definitely helped me to become the woman I am today. Thanks Donna.

Now, I want to ask you to sit down and take a few minutes to write about your favorite house-

parent(s) at KH so I can share in my column over the next few months. Email it to me or mail to John Thompson at 102 Maritime Court, Havelock, N. C. 28532

Do you know what? Former staff workers can send an article about their favorite boss or co-worker. I will start it out:

Rev. Roger Williams was the head of KH when **Becky** and I served there from 1972-1977. I knew he would be a great boss when I first came over to the campus to meet him and have an interview. His wife sang in the Kinston Community Chorus that I directed for the college and the campus adult choir. A KH staff member was not supposed to have another job but I remember him saying that it would be great for me to direct the Community College Choir. Every time I did a concert, I would have on the program that I worked at Kennedy Home (good advertisement). Becky served as his secretary as well for many others in the office building. She also played the organ at church. Mr. Williams was a wonderful Christian leader. He would always try his best to help all of us do a better job. I knew the Lord had him at the right place at the right time. He is probably preaching in heaven now. **Rev. Rodney Beals** was the pastor of the Kennedy Home Baptist Church when I was there. I loved him from the very first day. You could tell that he had the "love of children" in his heart. His wife was the librarian at the gym. We had a very large library at that time.

Now, how about you? What would you like to share? Sit down and write an article for me to include right now!

I love all my youngins. Plan to visit, write, or call me anytime.

I will always hold you dear in my heart. — jt



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

It should not be hard to understand the love of God

By **Jim Edminson**, Editor

Her name means pure love. She is the fifth in the maternal line with the heritage name of Kathryn, translating “pure” in the Greek language. Kathy and I determined to pair the name with the Latin word for “love.” Let me say, the child is well-named.

She came in the early days of November, in the early hours of the morning, on her exact due date. The trip to the hospital was cold and clear, and the stars lit the heavens. Even my frantic mode of make-it-to-the-hospital could not overshadow God’s glory on that fourth day of the harvest month. My brain registered the extraordinary weather because it seemed to me the stuff of miracles. A day, I knew, would change my life forever, and everything around me affirmed it.

Louisiana in November can feel like May or September, sometimes like July. Weather is warm or hot, and the seasons are dry or wet. Even though Louisiana, in many ways, holds the best heart-memories for me, generally the weather is not among them. But this day stands out as close to perfect. I felt blessed in the way I’ve only felt four times in my life—being a father was always my heart’s desire. I thanked God as I drove through the pre-dawn landscape.

I am recording this memory on Valentine’s Day in my sixth decade. You will know, dear readers, that some days are not to be forgotten, and time does not dull their recollection. On the birth day of my first daughter, I was reminded of the Father’s love for me in the most powerful of ways.

It should not be hard to understand the love of God. The number of the “very hairs” of my ever-thinning head of hair are known by Him. He is my salvation—gentle and trustworthy, working to transform me into His image. How glorious. How loving.

My daughter has fair hair and blue eyes, and she favors neither Kathy nor me and yet both of us. She is petite, artistic, musical. She is fearless

to try new pursuits, and she is quick to share kindness to all.

In some ways, she takes after each of us; in most ways, she is truly one of a kind. My Amie’s best description is also the meaning of her name—that February word.

The word that is defined over and over in scripture as it applies to the very character of God.

God’s love is patient and kind. He does not envy, does not boast, and is not proud. God’s love does not dishonor others. He is not self-seeking or easily angered. He keeps no record of wrongs. God does not delight in evil. He rejoices with the truth. He always protects, always believes, always hopes, always perseveres. God is love—He never fails.

My child exhibits the pure love spoken of in the Bible when Jesus tells His disciples to become as little children. Memories of her growing years retell joy in the everyday, a fascination with nature, the desire to please, her penchant to explore, her need to emulate the best in others. Her exuberance found in raising her arms, hands upward, and spinning like a ballerina. Her smile delights now as then. Even in pain, she smiles trustingly; she knows her Savior personally.

At her re-birth day, I had a front row seat and watched her pastor ease her into the baptismal waters and back up again as a new creation. She

came up smiling, seeking my face. How blessed to be a father and witness such a momentous wonder. Even now, I rejoice that she joins her Lord on any path He takes her. How blessed I am to understand the Father’s love because He gave me the task of being a father. What a responsibility to practice love in action.

God’s love never wanes. He promises to be with me wherever I go, giving me rest and strength of heart. He gives me everything I need and meets my needs “according to the riches of His glory.”

Of course, I know my love springs from the love bubbling up from God’s love. And yet loving the ones He gives me provides practice every day to delve deeper into the mystery of pure love, to draw closer, to lean into the Spirit as I’m transformed into the image of Jesus.

In her third decade, my daughter continues to surprise me with her capacity for love. Out of the blue, she texts me words of encouragement from her reading of God’s word. At our lunch dates, she shares how her Savior is at work in her life. She includes me in her adult life, she nurtures our relationship, she values the person I am. She still calls me “Daddy.”

I claim the truth of John’s assertion that “we love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). I humbly add that experiencing my daughter’s love inspires me to love more fully those around me—helping me better understand God’s love.

And so dear friends, I greet you with love. The love that comes from the One God who is love.



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Imagine a career where your kindness brings a smile to the face of a child who has never known joy. Or where your care of a special needs adult not only helps him or her but brings comfort to that person’s aging parents. Or where the outdoors becomes the place where you minister to a child who needs hope.

