



Sharing comfort and joy!

You can be a part of meeting the needs of vulnerable children while also sharing the hope and joy found through Christ's birth. *(Read more on page 5)*

Charity & Children

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



@bchfamily

December 2025

Issue 10

Volume 138

For unto us a child is born

• Little fingers curl around the sheep, scooting them closer to the manger where baby Jesus lays. The Nativity beneath the tree in Tabitha's cottage fascinates the five-year-old. Two to three times a day, she can be found rearranging the figurines: the baby, the mom and dad, a donkey and sheep, and the shepherds. She is in awe of the story.

Christmas is only days away. The cottage is abuzz. Her cottage father vacuums the living room carpet. Noticing something different about the nativity scene, he switches the vacuum off and kneels down to see an addition—a new figure. It was Tabitha's small Barbie Chelsea doll propped beside the donkey, standing with the others in the crèche.

He looks up to see Tabitha standing there. He smiles, raising an eyebrow. "It's me," she says matter-of-factly. "I wanted to be a part of the story."

This Christmas, children in cottages and foster homes will hear the story of Jesus—some for the very first time. Thank you for all you do to help change lives.



Small acts of kindness shaped the life of alumna

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

The memories came rushing back as Robin Bailey stepped onto the campus of Kennedy Home (KH) with her son Sammy. Decades had passed since she last walked those familiar paths—the very place she once called home.

Robin and Sammy were there to take part in the Friends of Children event, a one-day mission blitz where more than 200 volunteers gathered to serve across campus. Their assignment brought them to the girls' cottage where they met Susan Lee, the cottage mom. As Robin worked alongside her son, she couldn't help but think back to her own cottage days just down the road—and to the people whose small acts of kindness shaped her life forever.

"I only see it as a good thing—what an opportunity," Robin shared with a smile. "We had a swim team, summer Olympics, a basketball team, even a skating rink. We were very active. We had a dietician, Mrs. Bradshaw, who cooked our meals. It was incredible. I was with Rosa and Tom Nichols in Biggs Cottage. Mrs. Nichols decorated it beautifully. She wanted us to have something nice. I remember thinking we were pretty special to be in that cottage."

Robin came to Kennedy Home as a nine-year-old along with her two older sisters. For four years, the cottages, garden, and church pews became the backdrop of her childhood. Looking back, she realizes it was the little things—the quiet encouragements, the patient lessons, the faithful presence of caring adults—that left the biggest imprint on her heart.

There was Mr. Beacham, the athletic director, who saw her potential and took her to track meets. There was the dietician and Mrs. Nichols who taught her how to garden, can vegetables, and cook—skills she still uses today. Those lessons in the fields and kitchens of KH became the foundation for how she later poured love into her own family.

"When I became a mother, it was important to me to be very hands-on," Robin said. "I used what I learned here to make home-cooked meals and treats for my kids. Being able to show Sammy the garden during our visit meant so much. Cooking together has always been one of our favorite things."

More than the activities or lessons, it was the example of love that stayed with her. "Mr. and Mrs. Nichols modeled what a family could look like," Robin reflected. "Our cottage was a community—sixteen girls and our cottage parents. Every cottage was like that. We had our own neighborhood. We walked to church on Wednesdays and Sundays. We had a resident pastor and a choir director. It was the only time in my life, before I got married, that I had a community."

That sense of belonging inspired Robin to give back. Today, she serves as a substitute teacher and has volunteered at KH, hoping to offer others the same love she once received.

When asked what she would say to those who serve, give, and pray for Baptist Children's Homes, Robin didn't hesitate. "As someone who was a beneficiary, I know it sounds cliché, but you really do make a difference," she said earnestly. "Today's cottage parents are the Mrs. Nichols to me."

While visiting, Mrs. Susan, the cottage mom, said, "A young lady in care told me (after years of not finding a home and being in an institution), 'If I were a dog at an animal shelter, I would have been euthanized,' and it stuck with me and influenced our decision to serve older children and teens."

That statement made Robin think about how everyone wants to adopt the cute puppies, not the older dogs, and that helped her understand what that girl meant, how so many of the children,



Robin Bailey, former child in care at Kennedy Home, and her son Sammy served at Friends of Children. They are standing in front of the pecan tree that brought so much peace to Robin as a young girl at Kennedy Home.

including herself, felt forgotten once they weren't "the cute ones" anymore. Robin went on to say, "But Kennedy Home gave us a community, a family, a home. The people who have a heart for those kids—they're so important, because it's easy to forget the ones who aren't little and cute anymore. Mrs. Bradshaw, Mr. Beacham, and Mrs. Nichols—they let me shine in something I was good at. That made all the difference. It doesn't have to be a major act or gift—the little things can really make a difference."

As Robin and Sammy's visit came to an end, they stopped in

front of one of the large pecan trees that shade the lawn across from the administration building. Robin bent down and picked up a pecan still in its husk. Holding it in her hand, she smiled softly.

"I remember walking by that tree on the way to church each week," she said. "I used to go there by myself, pick up the pecans, and try to crack them open. The tree was so big and beautiful—it was my place. When I was under that pecan tree, I felt free and peaceful."

Robin's story is one of hope reclaimed and gratitude returned—a reminder of how God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things through simple acts of love.

We may not all be called to serve as cottage parents or foster families, but each of us can do something. A smile, a word of encouragement, a moment of care—all of it matters.

Because as Robin's life so beautifully reminds us, it's often the smallest gestures that make the biggest difference.

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

Charity & Children—Established in 1887 as the official publication of Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, Inc., 204 Idol St., PO Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27361-0338. Jim Edminson, editor (wjedminson@bchfamily.org); Blake Ragsdale, managing editor (jbragsdale@bchfamily.org); Marcia Housand, account clerk. **Charity & Children** (ISSN 0009-1723-09 USPS 100-460) is published 10 times a year for friends and supporters by Triangle Web Printing, Durham, NC and mailed by Excalibur, Winston-Salem, NC. Circulation: 62,000 seven times a year, 30,000 three times a year. Periodicals postage paid at Thomasville, NC, and at additional mailing offices. For free subscription or to be removed from the mailing list or make address correction or change, use the above address and write to Attn: Circulation Manager, send an email to address@bchfamily.org or call at 336-474-1209. Subscribe online at bchfamily.org/charityandchildren. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to **Charity & Children**, PO Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27361-0338.

A Season of Hope: Christ with Us

By David Melber, Chief Executive Officer

The Bible says in Ecclesiastes, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted.”

We are in a remarkable season in the life of Baptist Children’s Homes (BCH); a season filled with renewal, vision, and purpose. God is stirring hearts and bringing fresh excitement as we join with churches across this state to be on mission together. We are prayerfully assessing all that God has entrusted to us, so that every gift can be fully aligned with His call to impact lives for His glory.

As Solomon wrote, there is a time to plant and a time to harvest. Each season carries its own challenges and, yes, sometimes pain, but those seasons are necessary for growth and for the harvest God has promised.

And now, as we enter the Christmas season, we are reminded that God Himself is Lord of every season. From the very beginning of time, He has orchestrated each moment of history according to His perfect plan. Scripture tells us that “when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son.” The birth of Jesus was not random. It was the appointed time when Heaven broke into earth’s story, and hope came wrapped in swaddling clothes.

Just as Christ entered a humble stable, God still meets us in unexpected places, amid our chaos, our pain, and our longing. The soft glow of a manger, the quiet watch of shepherds under a starry sky, and the songs of angels proclaiming peace all remind us that no darkness is too deep for His light, and no heart is beyond His reach.

Seasons change, but the love of Christ remains constant. It’s not only organizations that walk through seasons; each of us does too. God uses these times to remind us that our lives on this earth are temporary, that even our bodies bear the marks of a fallen world. Yet

within this reality lies a blessing: our temporary nature draws our hearts toward what is eternal.

And that’s what Christmas is really about—the eternal breaking into the temporary. True peace and lasting joy are found not in our circumstances, but in the One who came to dwell among us. The angels declared it on that holy night: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.”

At BCH, we see these seasons play out every day in the children, families, and adults we serve. Some are walking through challenging seasons that feel endless, yet through Christ, we bring light that pierces the darkness, hope that warms the coldest nights, and reminders that no season lasts forever. Because of Jesus, every difficult chapter can become a story of redemption.

At Christmas, we remember that Jesus left Heaven and came to earth to walk alongside humanity—to walk in humanity. He took on flesh to experience and sympathize with us in every part of our brokenness. Jesus is our model. He entered the mess to redeem it, and He calls us to do the same: to walk in His way, to love deeply, and to reflect Him to a hurting world.

This calling is not always easy. Our human nature often craves comfort and simplicity, and the enemy is subtle in luring us toward ease, disguising self-protection as wisdom or safety. Yet God calls us to something far greater. We are not meant to live at a distance from the brokenness of the world, but to step courageously into it. You and I are called to embrace every season of life, to walk beside those who are hurting, and to bring the hope and healing of Christ into their pain, just as He first did that holy night in Bethlehem.

This is hard work, and I’ll be honest, there are days in the hard and difficult that I wish the ease of life were common rather than uncommon. Yet the truth remains: a life spent

chasing comfort is a life spent chasing the wind. True joy, purpose, and fulfillment are not found in the absence of struggle, but in faithful obedience, in saying yes to God even when the path is hard. It’s often in the most difficult seasons that we see His power most clearly and His grace most fully displayed.

I am deeply encouraged by the BCH staff who embrace challenges every day. Those who serve faithfully in every role. Some serve in support roles as rope holders* for our front-line missionaries who live with children and adults daily. They have stepped into service to Christ, choosing compassion over comfort and answering the call to love as Christ loves.

They are missionaries on the front lines, serving in mission fields where, for many, the name of Jesus is heard for the first time.

This Christmas, we celebrate that God is still Emmanuel—God with us. He has not left us alone in our work or our weariness. He walks beside us, strengthens us, and fills us with His peace, like a guiding star shining over a darkened stable.

In *Don’t Waste Your Life* by John Piper, the concluding words are these:

“Take your honored place, O Christ, as the all-satisfying Treasure of the world. With trembling hands before the throne of God, and utterly dependent on your grace, we lift our voice and make this solemn vow: As God lives, and is all I ever need, I will not waste my life . . . through Jesus Christ, Amen.”

So let us take up this charge: to live with courage, compassion, and conviction. To embrace this Christmas season as a gift. May we live every day with hearts on mission determined that in this season, and in every season to come, we will not waste our lives.

*The phrase “holding the rope” was first spoken by missionary William Carey. He said, “I will go down into the pit, if you will hold the rope.” May we each be faithful to the part of the rope God has placed in our hands—especially in this season when we celebrate the greatest Gift ever given.



David Melber

Jay Boyd named BCH Chief Advancement Officer

By BCH Communications Team

Jay Boyd has been named the new chief advancement officer following a national search that drew more than 200 candidates.

Boyd most recently served as senior vice president of strategy and engagement at Connie Maxwell Children's Ministries in Greenwood, South Carolina—one of the state's most recognized child and family service ministries. In that role, he led advancement, marketing, and engagement strategies. He previously held development roles with Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries and Baptist Children's Home & Family Services in Illinois.

"I could not be more excited to welcome Jay and his wife, Lauren," said David Melber, CEO of BCH. "His entire life and ministry align perfectly with our mission to share hope and change lives."

Boyd's commitment to child and family ministries is rooted in his personal story. As a child, he witnessed firsthand the impact of Florida Baptist Children's Homes (now One More Child), where his mother worked in development. Years later, while in seminary, a conversation with his parents and an experience at a Connections Conference hosted by the Association of Baptist Children's Home Professionals confirmed his calling to advocate for children and families.

"When I was a boy, I became aware of how unique it was to grow up in a loving home with parents devoted to Jesus, and how God calls us to extend that compassion and hope to others," Boyd said. "Being part of ministry that truly changes lives is an honor and a privilege."

"As we work to engage, equip and support churches to enter this mission field, we need a visionary leader who can build relation-



Jay Boyd and his family are officially joining the Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) family. Boyd has accepted the position of Chief Advancement Officer for BCH. He and his team will work closely with ministry partners including churches, community friends and others who have a passion to impact the mission to see vulnerable lives transformed. Boyd brings years of experience to BCH, but most importantly, he brings his love for the Lord.

ships and inspire generosity," said Melber. "His long-tenured experience in Baptist life and his passion to be a voice for those without a voice will help North Carolina Baptists in our calling to be 'On Mission Together.'"

As chief advancement officer, Boyd will lead a mission-driven team in implementing a comprehensive fundraising and communications strategy that strengthens BCH's mission and builds on its rich history of donor support.

"I want to build healthy bridges between

churches and the heart and mission of BCH," Boyd said. "When God places a calling in someone's heart to help children and families in need, we want to equip them to follow His leading."

Boyd holds a Bachelor of Arts in journalism and mass communication and a Master of Business Administration from Samford University, as well as a Master of Arts in leadership from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Lauren, have two children.

"God has truly blessed me with opportunities to serve in ministries where, through His providence as well as the dedicated efforts of Baptists and community partners, I have the privilege of seeing vulnerable lives changed forever. I cannot imagine a better place to continue this holy work than at the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina." — JAY BOYD



Children teach us about the heart of giving.

Brothers nine-year-old Josh and seven-year-old Joey were in our care. With Christmas approaching, the boys in their cottage were asked to write down a couple of items they hoped to receive under the tree. Josh made the list for himself and Joey. It simply read “blankets for our family back home.” *The boys could have asked for toys or treats, but their only thought was for their loved ones. That is what pure generosity looks like.*

In a world that shouts for more—more lights, more gifts, more everything—their quiet wish whispered a louder truth. *The greatest giving begins with seeing a need and deciding it matters more than our own wants.*

This is the love we celebrate at Christmas. Jesus saw our need, was humbly born, lived without sin, died for our sin, rose from the grave, and now intercedes for us. This is the meaning of Christmas and is the ultimate privilege we have to share with everyone we serve.

Your generous gift meets needs. Know that every dollar given becomes a blanket, a safe bed, a warm meal. *You help guarantee a listening heart and loving arms are always there—tangible proof to every child that they are not forgotten.*

Please make your gift today. Remember, through our matching challenge, your gift is doubled! Let Josh and Joey’s wish remind us all that the heart of Christmas beats strongest when it beats for someone else.

David Melber | CEO

Note: Josh and Joey’s names and photo are changed for their privacy.

Scan the QR code to make an immediate, online gift.



Double every dollar until January 31, 2026

- ☐ \$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 or call 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.

Rebecca believes good always outweighs the bad

By Jim Edminson, Editor

The morning sun cuts across the wood floor as three little girls appear. Rebecca sits on the small rug as the other two, each with a corner, pull her across the floor. Their giggles turn to full belly-roll laughter as each girl takes a turn. Before long, the floor is nicely buffed to the matron's satisfaction.

Eighty years ago, three-year-old Rebecca Coffey and her older sisters arrived at the Thomasville Orphanage. Her mother had died during the birth of her younger sister Penny, who died one year later. The sisters' lives were changed forever without their mother. The father was not there for them, putting his needs before theirs, and relatives had no place for them. They "were shifted here, there, and yonder." They needed a home.

"I was so little but I remember being hungry and sad," Rebecca says. "When we went to the orphanage, there was food and other little girls like me."

Mary, the oldest sister, lived at the orphanage only a short time. Reba lived in a cottage for older girls, but having her close helped Rebecca adjust to her new life.

She remembers waking early and eating breakfast. She had her own bed and her place at the dining table. Her memories are filled with being a child—laughing and having fun. As she grew older she moved to another cottage, and her "duties" changed. The orphanage was a working farm, so added to making her bed and chores around the cottage, she remembers washing lots of dishes, helping can vegetables, and doing campus laundry while the boys helped out in the barn with the livestock and in the fields harvesting their bounty.

"I didn't worry about anything," she says. "There must have been times when I was sad or gotten in some kind of mischief but I can't remember anything."

The children went to the orphanage's school. They did their chores together and attended class together. And they played together: skipping and doing cartwheels, and there was the merry-go-round—laughing, running fast and then jumping on as it spun. "It was the saddest day of my life when I left six years later," she recalls. "If I could have only stayed with my friends and finished school. It was the only time as a child when I felt I had a real childhood."

The good news that Rebecca's father had married again and she and Reba would be welcomed into their home was short lived. What she



On November 11, 1945, Mills Home children and staff members came together in the church sanctuary to honor Mary Presson Yarbrow on the 60th anniversary of her arriving as the first child in care. Three-year-old Rebecca Coffey, the most recent child welcomed into care, presented Presson with a bouquet of flowers.

thought would be a reunion with family turned into servitude. She was forced to serve her new mother and her five older daughters. Each day became one challenge after another. When she was married at age 18, she began building a life and a home with her husband, eventually welcoming three children. "My life became something different, better, and I was happy again."

There is a song she sings to this day, learned while at the orphanage. "Now is the hour when we must say good-bye and soon we will be sailing across the seas. Please remember me until we meet again." The tune spans across the years, as thoughts of her early childhood return. Rebecca can still see faces and remember names of the children, matrons, and staff.

Life at the orphanage was centered around church. The pastor preached. The children sang. Everyone entered the church respectfully and listened intently. "It was a time of joy and inclusion," Rebecca remembers. "As an adult, I always looked for church homes that reminded me of that time—of being at peace and worshipful."

Rebecca found ways to help make other children's lives better, serving the little ones in her church and volunteering at the elementary school. The greater the need of the child, the more she poured herself into meeting that need.

Rebecca confesses life is not without an "occasional pity party," but she feels blessed. "In those early days, I know God was with me every step. He is in my heart and on my mind. I'm thankful. I have loving children, grandchildren, and great-grands and a great place to live where I look up at the sky and see the sun rise and at night the moon shine."

Through it all, Rebecca chooses to focus on the good, believing "good always outweighs the bad."



Rebecca Coffey Foust

New ministry connections formed at Annual Meeting

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Vice President of Communications

Messengers and ministry partners found Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) display booths set up at their familiar location for the 2025 Annual Meeting of the Baptist State Convention at the Koury Convention Center in Greensboro. When they arrived at the booths, however, they discovered something different — a revamped look with new messaging.

BCH unveiled a redesigned booth introducing its **Every Child | Every Church** initiative (see page 8 for more details). The Annual Meeting was the ideal place for team members to share about BCH's ministries to children and vulnerable individuals and families while introducing the new opportunity to serve churches with their own ministry efforts.

"BCH is committed to aligning every program with Kingdom purpose, and equipping every church to reach every child," said BCH CEO David Melber. "The response from the Annual Meeting was not only affirming, but humbling."

Through BCH breakout sessions as well as one-on-one time with NC Baptists at the booth, new ministry partnerships were formed while existing relationships were renewed during the two-day event.



The two-day Annual Meeting of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina was the perfect opportunity for Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) to affirm ministry partnerships with NC Baptists. Taking place November 10–11 at the Koury Convention Center in Greensboro, BCH introduced its new **Every Child | Every Church** initiative while building new relationships with churches that wish to partner with BCH to serve vulnerable lives in their own congregations and communities.



BCH launches bold new vision to expand ministry

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Vice President of Communications

At the Annual Meeting of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina on November 11, 2025, David Melber, CEO of Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina (BCH), delivered an inspiring entity report to messengers gathered at the Koury Convention Center. His message centered on gratitude for NC Baptist churches and a bold new vision to expand ministry impact through an initiative called *Every Child | Every Church*.

Melber, who will finish his first year as the 140-year-old organization's CEO on December 31, opened by expressing deep appreciation for the prayers and support of NC Baptists.

"Your prayers and support have been life-sustaining this year," he said, acknowledging the vital role churches play in BCH's mission. "You are not just partners—you are the hands and feet of Christ in this ministry."

To illustrate the life-changing impact of this partnership, Melber shared the story of two siblings, Jay and Kay (*their names have been changed for their privacy*), who entered BCH's care just over a year ago. At ages 11 and 13, they arrived frightened and uncertain and, as described by Melber, carrying burdens no child should bear.

"They came to us scared and unsure, with stories of loss that no child should ever have to live through," Melber said.

Through the compassionate care of their cottage parents and the family-style atmosphere at Mills Home—meals around the table, fun outings and memorable activities, nightly prayers, and church attendance—Jay and Kay began to experience what true belonging feels like.

"They began to see what love is," Melber explained. "They were taught the Word of God and discovered what it means to be known, valued, and cared for."

Not long after, both children made the most important decision of their lives: they placed their faith in Christ. Jay, now a beacon of hope in a challenging school environment, is known for sharing his faith with classmates who call him "Preacher." Kay's transformation was equally profound, and together, the siblings shared their newfound faith with their older sister—who prayed to receive Christ as well.

"A cottage family said 'yes' to a calling. BCH staff said 'yes' to a calling. And because of their own 'yes,' two children said yes to Jesus—and then led their sister to do the same," Melber said. "That's what saying 'yes' looks like."

Melber then unveiled BCH's new initiative, *Every Child | Every Church* which strives to see churches engaged, equipped, and supported so they can give their own "yes" in ways



During his Baptist Children's Homes report at the Annual Meeting of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, November 11, CEO David Melber outlined a new aspect of ministry named Every Child | Every Church. The initiative will see BCH partner with churches to help equip them for serving vulnerable lives in their communities.

God is leading them. Melber described it as a Gospel-centered, trauma-informed training initiative designed to help churches serve the vulnerable lives -- including children, individuals with special needs, and senior adults -- they encounter in their own congregations and communities.

"Every church longs to be a place of hope," he explained. "But in a culture filled with anxiety, depression, loneliness, and broken families, many believers simply don't know what to do."

The idea is for BCH team members to come alongside congregations with specific trainings and resources in order to build a foundation of safety and connection between church members and those they are serving. Melber shared that the goal is for discipleship and Gospel conversations to take root.

"Our mission has not changed," Melber emphasized. "The Gospel will be the center of everything we do. *Every Child | Every Church* simply expands that same mission—helping your church feel equipped to join us in the messy work of ministry."

Melber challenged messengers to see the need as urgent and the opportunity for churches to be

a part of the solution for addressing brokenness throughout the state.

"There are thousands of hurting children, adults, and seniors in communities across our state—and over 10,000 children in the foster care system right now," he said. "The mission field is right next door. When your church says 'yes,' you bring light into dark places."

He urged churches to consider practical steps such as fostering, adopting, supporting foster families, mentoring single mothers, and caring for seniors.

"Together—as NC Baptists—we are On Mission Together: sharing hope, changing lives, and saying yes to what breaks the heart of God," Melber concluded. "Because when the Church says yes, darkness trembles, redemption begins, and the light of the Gospel shines brightly!"

EVERY Child | EVERY Church

Connect with us to learn more!

Text the word "children" to 72572
or scan the QR code.



Information sheets help tell stories of alumni — Roommate recounts daily life at Mills Home

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

Thank you to all the alumni who fill out and returned the information sheets we send out in June. **James (Jim) Jolly** was one of the first ones to do that this year. Like so many do, Jim expressed appreciation for his Mills Home (MH) siblings, fine workers who were great role models, and the wonderful advantages he had growing up on campus. He entered MH from Hiddenite, NC with siblings **Clyde, Polly, W.I., and Dianne** in 1953. He graduated in 1963. He did not say much about his life at MH except taking part in the Home's great Boy Scout Troop 160. He also mentioned that he had held **Bill and Louise Sisk** up as important role models in his life as well as the older MH youngsters he could imitate and admire. And a final person he remembers fondly is **Ms McKenzie**. Jim also mentioned that a large part of his adult life was spent in Maryland where he was a manager for a branch of the Verizon Company. His wife **Tish** was a federal employee in Washington, DC. They reared two children and now enjoy spending time with them and one grandchild. **Jim and Tish** have been retired for some time now, and they make their home at 4216 Cravens Point Rd., 28409-3285, in Wilmington, NC. Jim says he opens to the alumni page of **Charity & Children** and reads it completely and then tackles the other informative articles written by **Editor Jim Edminson** and other C&C staff. Several times in the last few years, Jim has called me just for the purpose of saying how much he appreciates the Alumni Column in C&C.

I recently enjoyed a phone conversation with **Sandra Stalling Lentz**, (class of 1958). Her life at MH began in 1950 and we became roommates in 1956. In our phone chats, we almost always discuss the fun and crazy events from

our life at MH, especially summer things—how we had to rush from the pool to get our hair dry and decent looking so we could rush to the valley to see all the cute guys. **Sandra** always had more than her share. Sometimes we took time to skate or play a little tennis. We often talk about **Coach Charlie Kearns** and basketball—the fun times and the hard times when we had to guard a 6'2" girl from Barium Springs Children's Home, and those scrappy tough girls from Methodist Home in Winston Salem. We also chat about the fun trips to and from ballgames. (MH had its own basketball teams even though we went to school "uptown.") Then of course, we have to discuss our wonderful preacher, our Christian faith, and that amazing **Lucille Reed**—the church pianist and choir director. And we can't forget the trips we made with the sextet or trio to churches about the state, or the talent show at Thomasville High School (THS). Then there was kitchen duty at the Little Cottage where we learned a lot about cooking and cleaning which was often interrupted by some "bopping" right there in the kitchen. We thought we had that shag going pretty well and **Lucy Pritchard** never caught us shirking our cooking duties. But alas, those great times ended when Sandra's mother remarried and took her, **Marilyn, and Jimmy** to a new home in the frozen North (Ohio).

But the sad part of her life had just started. **Sandra and Marilyn** did not like the new husband, so they left their mother and returned to Thomasville where Sandra struggled to provide food and a home for the two of them. That kind of responsibility prevented her from pursuing her dream of college but she made great strides anyway. She and Marilyn married close to the same time and started raising **Debra,**

Tonja, and Jeffrey. Soon thereafter, she moved to Charlotte where she built a post construction cleaning business. Consequently, she was able to take good care of her family and rebuild her family support group.

Sandra recently had an automobile accident which required a lot of medical tests. She was deeply disturbed when one of those tests revealed that she had lung cancer, but that fear quickly abated when the doctors testing her were very quick to get her to doctors who administered the care she needed. Sandra is very happy that she now has no signs of the cancer and she is certain she has been under the care of the Great Physician. She feels lucky about that and is doing well.

We were so sorry to hear that **Herman Canady** died shortly after Homecoming. We heard from his niece **Paula Phillips** that the **Canaday** family is honoring **Herman's** wishes that there would be no obituary posted or a funeral service. Paula's mother, **Jerrie Canady Stewart**, shortly after informed us that he would be laid to rest at the Mills Home Columbarium on October 22—his day of birth.

Thanks to **Barbara Bustle Canipe** for the sad news of the death of **Gerald Lee Hawkins** of Hickory, NC. Gerald died on May 13, 2025. **Barbara** has pleasant and positive memories of **Gerald** from the time he served MH youngsters in the 1970s. He is survived by his wife **Delores Moretz Hawkins**; two sons, **Tracy and Jonathan Hawkins**; two siblings, six grandsons, and three great grandchildren.

We were deeply sorry to hear that **Becky Harris Davis**, MH class of 1964, passed away Monday, Sept. 14, 2025 at her home. A Celebration of Life was held on Friday, Sept. 19, 2025 at 2:00 pm at Grace Episcopal Church.

Becky entered MH from Cleveland County, NC in 1946. Being

only three years old, she was placed in the Miles Durham Nursery to start a life at which she thrived. She entered into activities with great interest and energy and easily did well in school, sports, especially basketball, and the choir. She excelled at the piano. Through all the opportunities afforded her, she developed into a poised and lovely young lady. After graduating from THS, she completed formal schooling at Gardner Webb College and Cabarrus School of Nursing.

"**Becky** lived a life devoted to service, compassion, and faith. She poured her heart into her career as a nurse, caring for patients with dedication while also giving the same love and care to her family as a wife, mother, and grandmother. Her faith was a guiding light, and she joyfully served her church through her work on the Vestry and the choir. A gifted musician, she found joy in playing the piano her mother-in-law gave her. Becky was a visionary in her field, founding the psychiatric ward at Thomasville Hospital and extending her healing touch in both Thomasville and Rowan hospitals. Her life was one of strength, grace, and a legacy of care that will not be forgotten."

She is survived by her husband of 53 years, **John Davis**; son, **Jason Davis**; sister, **Pat Lopp**; and three grandchildren.

Please send any corrections or additions of addresses for C&C to **Flora Hicks Patton** at flora-patton06@gmail.com or 704-795-0017. To discuss use of the Columbarium, contact **Sharon DeHart Stiles** at 704-685-2443



or sharondstiles@yahoo.com.

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

Making News Every Day Around the State



Cottage children help decorate

Boys at Frizell-Higdon Cottage at Broyhill Home decorated the tree with their cottage parents Betty and Will Porter.



Stegall men bring home a gold medal

The men living at Stegall Home won a gold medal in bocce ball as a part of the Special Olympics fall tournament.



Alumna blesses Kennedy Home

Carolyn Tharrington, with White Swann BBQ, provided lunch for staff and those in care at Kennedy Home in Kinston.



NCBAM shares in association meetings

NCBAM staff, including Matt Martin, have shared in associations the many ways to help churches serve seniors.



Greater Vision honors first responders

Volunteers, community friends, and the NCBAM team, joined Greater Vision Outreach in both Kinston, top, and Thomasville, above, to provide meals to first responders. Thank you to Kings Restaurant, Texas Roadhouse, BBQ Joes, Food Lion and Shuler Meats for contributing.



Homebase collects coats for students

Recently, BCH's college outreach at Western Carolina University held a coat drive to help students be ready for winter.



Smith Leonard volunteers at Mills Home

Volunteers from Smith Leonard PLLC painted and cleaned at one of the children's cottages at Mills Home.



Hispanic WMU serve Kennedy Home

The Hispanic chapter of WMU have been serving at BCH locations across the state including volunteering at Kennedy Home.



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

Get connected at every-child.org



TURN YOUR CALLING INTO A CAREER



Statewide positions for serving children, families and special needs adults

BCHCAREERS.ORG

Giving your vehicle puts the ministry in



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

Contact Mike Briles at
336.474.1260 | mbriles@bchfamily.org

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

YOUR IMPACT IN 2025:

- 41** children adopted domestically
- 325+** expectant moms counseled
- 17** birth moms made professions of faith or rededicated their lives
- 7** children adopted internationally

Making your Angel Fund gift can help Christian Adoption Services EXCEED 2025's impact!

Your gift will help us connect boys and girls with the Christian homes they need as well as equipping us to show expectant mothers the beauty of choosing life for their babies.



Give at christianadopt.org/angel-fund or scan the QR code. Thank you!



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.



With Jesus, "you can conquer anything" — Beach retreat was time of food, fellowship, and fun

By **James Clayton Pate**, (910) 358-0992, 3894 Hwy 41 West, Trenton NC 28585

I was watching the news recently and saw that three high school football players were killed in a bad car wreck. It was sad and I could not help but think of the accident **Walter "Buddy" Sisk, Wayne McDowell**, and me had in the Kennedy Home (KH) '63 Ford station wagon. It was used to taxi kids from football practice, to and from work, and many other places. I was the licensed driver—it was one of my responsibilities. Well, Wayne landed in the ditch with the car and the exhaust pipe burning him. I was slung down the road, landing on my feet and breaking my leg, foot, and destroying my knee—the doctor told me I would never run again.

I didn't have a load of kids that day. I had left the junior varsity boys because they were not ready to go—I was going to teach them a lesson. I am so thankful I did. The seat where they would have been riding was in the road. I remember Buddy running up and down the road hollering my name. He found me sitting beside the road. I asked him what happened. He said that we had a wreck. I asked where was **Wayne**. Buddy thought he was dead. I rubbed my face and when I looked at my hand there was blood and gravel mixed with dirt.

I was looking back at the car up the road and some men came riding up on horses. They stayed with us to help and kept us calm until the ambulance arrived. **Wayne** (who had not died but was knocked out) and I were taken to the hospital.

Forty years later, I stopped at a house on that road where the man who had stayed and helped us still lived. I thanked him and told him what I had done with my life. How I asked Jesus into my heart and I had joined the army and made 35 parachute jumps. I told him how I climbed mountains and repelled in Georgia and Italy—not bad for someone who would never run again.

I was in traction for 10 weeks and had a body cast for six months. I was unable to play high school football again. I was power halfback. But I was healed enough to play football in the Army for one season. It was great! My position was middle line backer instead of power halfback. I loved defense because it gave me a chance to let off steam—I needed that then. I believe that if you have Jesus in your life and serve him everyday you can conquer anything.

Debbie Connie Daniels reported that the beach trip was wonderful. Those who attended were: **Gary and Debbie Caulder, Scott & Donna Daniels Wade, Dave and Debbie Stallings Lassiter, John Thompson, Hugh Kirkman, Rusty and Maureen Wortham, Patsy Hensley Lovejoy and her cousin Amy Stout, and Joyce Connie Surbaugh**. "Joyce Surbaugh and I were planning to leave early but work slowed them down. They had planned to meet in Havelock. Joyce called to say that she had to go on ahead of me. She had lost her car keys again. I realized this time it was serious and I couldn't leave her. We found a locksmith to come Saturday and we were ready to head to the beach. We arrived at 8:40 p.m. **Debbie Caulder** had saved us some dinner. Thankfully, we made it in time for the second half of karaoke with **Donna and Scott**. Some attending are not the best singers but all made a joyful noise, laughed, and had wonderful fellowship. Saturday all got up early for a beach walk to take photos of the sunrise. **Dave and Donna Weeks Duty and Mike and Rebekah Grimsley** came for the day. Some played games, some enjoyed reminiscing and catching up, and some fished while others went to area thrift stores. **Mary Feige Parker** called **Debbie Caulder** to let the group know how much she missed being with us. **Dicky Mayor** called as well. All sang an early Happy Birthday to Donna. She turned 70 on October 17. I brought rocks to paint. Most of them were given to **John**

Thompson. There was another night of karaoke, singing such songs as "Monster Mash" and "Start me up". I tried to teach the group the electric slide. The evening ended with the group singing sweet gospel songs. Sunday morning after breakfast, **John** lead devotion. He sang his favorite "Psalm 100." **Donna** sang one of her own songs. Beautiful! It was a blessing to spend time with the KH family. A special thank you to all the cooks and bakers that made the meals possible! Thank you **Patsy Hensley Lovejoy** for the cute little pumpkins! Next year, come and join in and make wonderful memories."

Walter Sisk (Buddy) shared this: "The message of John 4:16 is that God is love and that those who live in him, and he lives in them. The verse emphasizes that Christians have come to know and believe the love God has for them through faith and personal experience. This intimate, abiding relationship is built on the foundation of God's nature as love and the believer's continued love for God and others."

Mary Feige Parker writes: "I thought since it was football season and the Super Bowl will be coming up in 2026, I would share about this special time. I originally lived in Pollock Cottage and then Biggs Cottage. It was so memorable to me because our houseparent was **Mr. Godwin** at the time. We would have a Super-bowl party and we were asked to pick our team. The Redskins were always my team since I was 12. They were famous for playing the Dallas Cowboys. I remember it well because us girls were constantly yelling, making lots of noise and eating snacks. There were different sisters there: **Lynetta Washington, Teresa, Wanda McKinney, Juanita, Gwen, and DeAnn**. I don't know if all these girls know how much they meant to me. They all have a special place in my heart. Some have gone to Heaven and others are with to this day. I was there in the 80s and left in

89 when I was getting ready to turn 16. I think back and wonder how it would have been if I had stayed longer. I am thankful for all the friends I made. I'm truly thankful for every houseparent that helped guide me. I choose to go to KH when given the opportunity instead of more foster homes. I learned to think of others not just myself. I learned many things that have helped me survive in this world—from working in the office, cutting grass and lawn care, cooking, cleaning, and maintenance. It was a true blessing for me. I encourage alumni to come to Homecoming, beach retreats, and the annual Christmas party. I have met older brothers and sisters, done crafts with them, laughed with them, and listened to their stories. I promise you'll have a good time. We others to help carry the torch. Let me hear from you by mail at 521 Fayetteville Street, Newton Grove NC 28366 or by phone at 910-751-3402."

Billy Smithwick has moved and is doing fine. He asked about his KH friends and family. He enjoys receiving cards and saves them. His new address is 103 Mitchell St Lewiston Woodsville NC 27849.

This month's prayer list: **Chris Conway** had a seizure, passed out, and struck his head. He is in a coma and in critical condition. My cousin **Clifton Taylor** is in the Kinston Hospital with sepsis. My neighbor **Brenda Miller** is in the hospital. **Tammy's** son **Shane** died at only 51 years old **Alice** is recovering from surgery to remove her kidney after being diagnosed with cancer—they believe they got it all. And **Doug** has afib but his heart has improved, functioning at fifty percent.

Please send me stories for the column. Until next time, signing out—
Clayton



James Clayton Pate was a child in care at Kennedy Home from 1958 to 1972. He and his wife Joyce live in Comfort, NC.

When walking with Jesus, an end is just a new beginning

By Jim Edminson, Editor

The day I decided to follow Jesus is a day I will never forget. Some look for that one thing, a purpose, a direction, all their lives and never discover it, elusive like an early morning mist. But for me it took only a moment: I would follow Him. I knew when I was 16 years old that I would become a nomad and go wherever He led. It could be described as a journey, but I prefer to describe my path as many journeys, each ending becoming a new beginning.

Kathy and I walked the Camino Portuguese this year from mid to the end of September. The journey would take us one hundred and eighty miles in twelve days, plus two days of rest. We planned the trip months ago—each daily stage with a starting point and an ending destination. After long days, accommodations awaited these two pilgrims who soon realized the meaning of the Camino saying: “If something is not hurting, you’re not doing the Camino right.”

Our pilgrimage along the Camino, we hoped, would become a reset for us. We were facing the end of journeys we had begun decades earlier. Change and transition became our focus. We set our hearts to use this time, walking as thousands of pilgrims have since the 10th century, seeking the Lord, declaring our needs before Him. We would seek answers to the questions we faced from the only One we trusted to answer them. And we were not disappointed.

From each “I do” in front of family and friends in the sanctuary of Sacred Heart Church in Pineville, Louisiana to every time we clasped hands and leaped in faith as the Lord directed us to begin something new, Kathy and I have followed Him. It is what you do when you walk with Jesus.

There were days on the Camino when



Standing together, Kathy and I celebrate the end of our Camino.

we wondered if we could make it to our destination—the Santiago de Compostela Cathedral. Don’t misunderstand me, the experience was incredible. We walked four days along the Atlantic coast, took our first rest day behind the walls of Fortaleza de Valença, strolled through eucalyptus forests along the Variante Espiritual, took our second rest day at a 12th century monastery before traveling by boat along the Río Ulla.

In time, our walking reality took its toll on our bodies. We put our heads on pillows at night not knowing how our feet could possibly carry us any further, and time and again, morning brought miraculous ability to keep putting one foot in front of the other. We truly leaned on the “everlasting arms” every day.

Metaphor? Analogy? Every prayer and every revelation on the Camino taught life lessons, and many of these were repeats of what Jesus had shown me from my earliest days following Him. Sometimes in life I have

felt like a wanderer, moving from end to end; looking back shows me those ends were in fact beginnings. Which way to go at the crossroad? Jesus is already in our future, and we must follow at each signpost. His direction is true. He is faithful to provide when I am faithful to ask and then listen.

Kathy and I completed our Camino on the last day of September. We stood together in the Plaza, the cathedral our backdrop and rejoiced with the hundreds of other pilgrims, celebrating the end of an incredible journey.

Now, dear readers, I arrive at another crossroad—an ending but also a new beginning. I am composing my last Homeward.

I will cease to be editor of *Charity & Children* with this issue. After twenty-five years, my ministry at Baptist Children’s Homes of North Carolina comes to the end. I have loved every opportunity these years have provided. My heartfelt gratitude goes out to you all. I have met many of you, but there are many of you I have never met. I would love to hear from you all—I can think of no better way to end. Please send me a note to P.O. Box 436, Lexington, NC 27293 or email me at jedminson@gmail.com.

I begin the new year and the new path forward with the words of Jude’s doxology in my heart: “To Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen” (24-25).

And amen—to God be all glory!



Your MATCHING GIFT: Vital today and for 2026.

WHY YOUR GIFT IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL:

Your generosity makes a difference in the lives of the boys and girls in our care today while also laying the foundation for the ones who will turn to us for help and hope in the coming year.

WHY THE MATCHING GIFT SO IMPORTANT:

Any gift you make is **DOUBLE** the impact in children’s lives—all gifts are matched dollar for dollar up to the \$325,000 challenge total. Your matching gift multiplies the impact in vulnerable lives.



Change a child’s life today! Scan the QR or go to bchfamily.org/givenow. You can mail a check to BCH / PO Box 338 / Thomasville, NC 27361 or use the enclosed envelope.