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Charity & Children

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



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January/February 2026

Issue 1

Volume 139



41 babies were placed into loving, Christian homes through Christian Adoption Services in the last 13 months. Seven children were placed through international adoptions.

SANCTITY OF LIFE SUNDAY IS JANUARY 18

How do you protect your wealth and your legacy?

By **Jody Yopp**, Senior Director of Advancement and Planned Giving, 704-314-5291, jyopp@bchfamily.org

Planning for the future is one of the most meaningful gifts we can give to the people and causes we care about. For supporters of *Baptist Children's Homes (BCH)*, estate planning is not only a way to protect their own assets, it is an opportunity to leave a lasting legacy that changes the lives of children and families for generations.

A clear, well-crafted Will and properly designated beneficiary accounts ensure that your lifetime of hard work is protected, distributed efficiently, and directed according to your wishes and values. For donors who want to include BCH in their plans, doing so can be both simple and deeply impactful.

Why creating a Will protects your wealth and your family:

A Will is one of the most important financial documents you will ever create. Without one, state law—not your wishes—determines how your assets are distributed. This can lead to delays, additional expenses, unexpected outcomes, and potential conflict among loved ones.

A Properly Prepared Will...

...**protects your assets.** It ensures that what you have built is handled according to your plan, not left to state default rules.

...**provides clarity for family and friends.** Loved ones won't have to guess what you would have wanted or navigate unnecessary legal hurdles.

...**allows assets to be distributed more quickly and efficiently.** A valid Will can significantly simplify the probate process.

...**lets you support the people and organizations most important to you.** A Will is an opportunity to express your values and create a lasting legacy.

Because life changes, your Will should be updated when you experience a major milestone, including:

- ♦ Marriage or the death of a spouse
- ♦ Birth or adoption of a child or grandchild
- ♦ New financial responsibilities
- ♦ Graduations or major life achievements
- ♦ Retirement
- ♦ Significant changes in health or financial status



Jody Yopp

Keeping your Will current ensures your wishes are honored at every stage of life.

Designating assets outside your Will: Simple, Efficient, and Powerful

While a Will is essential, many assets can be passed directly to beneficiaries *without going through the probate process*. These include:

- ♦ Checking and savings accounts
- ♦ IRAs and retirement accounts (401(k), 403(b), etc.)
- ♦ Investment and stock market accounts
- ♦ Life insurance policies
- ♦ Annuities and certain financial instruments

Each of these accounts allows you to name a beneficiary directly. This is known as a **beneficiary designation**, and it overrides what is written in your Will. These designations can be completed through

your bank, employer, or financial institution—often in just minutes.

Why beneficiary designations are important:

♦ **They are simple to complete.** Most forms can be updated online with no legal assistance needed.

♦ **They avoid probate.** The asset transfers automatically and privately to the named beneficiary.

♦ **They ensure accuracy.** If your Will is outdated, a current beneficiary form will still hold legal authority.

♦ **They allow you to easily support charitable causes.** Even a small percentage designated to BCH can have a significant impact.

Many donors choose to leave a portion of these non-probate assets to Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina because it is one of the easiest and most tax-efficient ways to give.

Creating a legacy with Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina...

By including BCH in your Will or naming it as a beneficiary of an account or policy, you extend your commitment to helping vulnerable children, families

in crisis, adults with special needs, foster families, and aging adults who depend on these ministries.

Estate gifts to BCH:

♦ Provide long-term support for life-changing programs

♦ Help ensure the sustainability of services for future generations

♦ Allow donors to leave a meaningful legacy that reflects their values

A planned gift is the most significant charitable contribution one can make—because it is made at a time when one no longer needs the financial resources themselves.

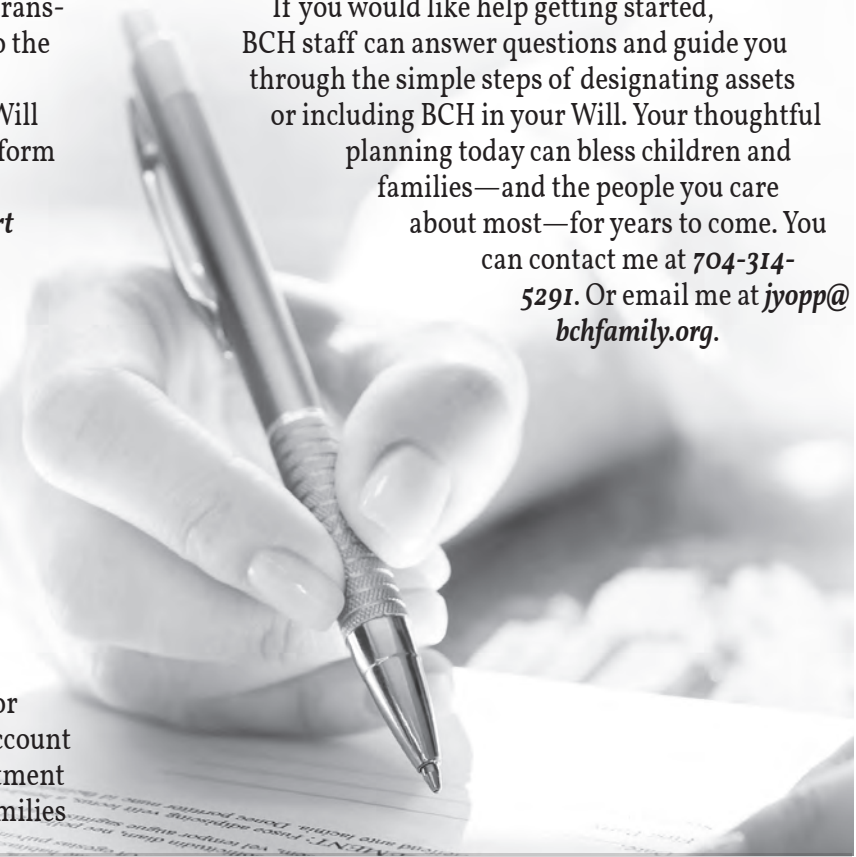
A thoughtful plan today brings peace tomorrow

Creating a Will and updating your beneficiary designations are not just about financial decision-making—they are acts of love. These actions remove uncertainty, protect assets, and bring peace of mind to those who will carry out your wishes.

Whether you choose to support your family, your church, Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, or all three, the important thing is that **your intentions and legacy are protected and preserved.**

If you would like help getting started, BCH staff can answer questions and guide you through the simple steps of designating assets or including BCH in your Will. Your thoughtful planning today can bless children and families—and the people you care about most—for years to come. You

can contact me at **704-314-5291**. Or email me at **jyopp@bchfamily.org**.



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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In 2026, choose to give your life to something eternal

By David Melber, Chief Executive Officer

I have always been fascinated by people who willingly pursue and accomplish incredibly hard things—individuals who embrace difficulty rather than avoid it. As you read this, think back to the New Year's resolutions you may have made just weeks ago. Many of them probably felt urgent and life-shaping when you wrote them down. Yet today, several may no longer hold a place in your daily routine. Why is that? What separates noble intentions from intentions that truly reshape behavior?

Recently, I read *Into Thin Air*, the gripping account of the 1996 Mount Everest disaster. The book describes in vivid detail what it takes to climb the world's tallest peak—the physical punishment, the emotional strain, the mental battles, and the high cost of pushing beyond limits. But as I read it, I kept returning to a single question: *What compels someone to endure so much suffering simply to reach a summit?* For some, the answer may be spiritual—a longing for transcendence, purpose, or identity. For others, the motivation may have nothing to do with God at all. Yet in either case the pattern is the same, people give their whole selves to the pursuit of something they believe matters.

As I reflect on 2025, my first full year with Baptist Children's Homes, I have seen firsthand many people who have displayed remarkable resolve through pain, exhaustion, and difficulty. But unlike the climber driven by personal accomplishment, the men and women I've watched have been driven by something far greater: *the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ*.

Week after week, pastors across our state preach the Word with passion and conviction, longing to see people respond in faith—either by turning to Christ for salvation or by stepping into lives of mission. Believers become small-group leaders, volunteering sacrificially in their churches, and even leave behind long-standing careers to serve as missionaries around the world. And right here at BCH, I see countless volunteers, prayer partners, supporters, and fellow believers stepping into the complex work of serving vulnerable children and families. Their resolve is not rooted in personal glory but in a deep desire to see God redeem broken lives.

This work is messy. It demands stamina, emotional strength, patience, and deep reservoirs of grace. The stories are often heavy. The needs are overwhelming. The setbacks are real. But the

joy of watching God transform a life—of seeing Him work miracles in the hardest places—is beyond words.

Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 9:37–38 that “the laborers are few.” That truth remains unchanged. At BCH, we need men and women who will pursue Christ wholeheartedly and trust Him enough to step into ministry situations that are gut-wrenching, complicated, and emotionally taxing. We need laborers who are resolved not merely to attempt hard things, but to attempt *eternally significant* things.



David Melber

As we look ahead to 2026, our mandate is unmistakably clear. We exist to know Christ and to make Him known in every effort we undertake. That means caring for the vulnerable. It also means serving and equipping the church. It means to live on mission to understand trauma, to recognize the behaviors of those who carry deep wounds, and to build relationships that naturally lead to Gospel conversations. The work is spiritual, emotional, practical, and deeply relational all at once.

This is why we are so excited about launching the *Every Child/Every Church* initiative. “Every child” reflects our commitment to raising awareness about the thousands of children across our state who desperately need Jesus and desperately need safe, loving care. “Every church” reflects our conviction that every congregation in North Carolina can be on mission within its own community, stepping into the needs of vulnerable children and families. Brokenness is not out there somewhere—it is in every county, every town, every neighborhood.

As we seek to impact more than

ten thousand children in the foster care system, we are praying for God to raise up families willing to foster, churches ready to provide wrap-around support, and congregations prepared to send out couples as cottage parents and foster parents as missionaries. *Yes, missionaries.* We often reserve that word for those who travel overseas, but I believe with all my heart that a couple who fosters or those who step into a cottage with eight or so children who have come from traumatic, unstable, and often unchurched environments is entering a real mission field. They are living daily in the trenches of spiritual battle.

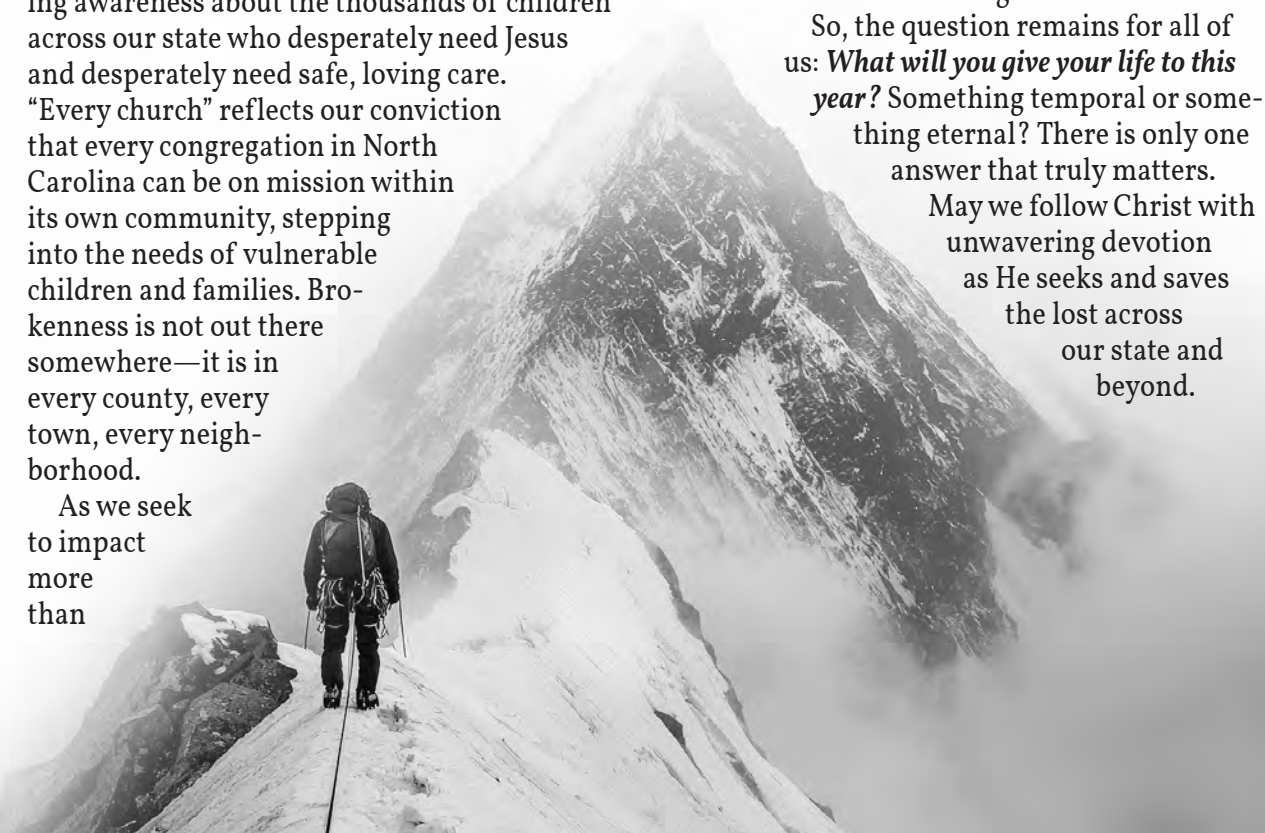
And as churches cultivate a culture of compassion for the vulnerable, we pray that many will continue opening their homes to adoption. Adoption is one of the most vivid pictures of the Gospel we have, and the church should be at the forefront of providing Christ-centered families for children who need permanent homes.

The opportunities to serve at BCH extend far beyond foster care alone. Needs among aging adults continue to grow. Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities require Christlike love, stability, and support. There is no shortage of ministry work to be done but the laborers remain few.

I deeply admire, and yes, even envy the resolve of those who climb Mount Everest. Their discipline is extraordinary, and their accomplishments are impressive. But as noteworthy as that summit may be, it is not of eternal consequence. My prayer is that each of us would seek God for a resolve far stronger than the resolve of the mountaineer—a resolve that compels us into spiritual battle for the sake of the broken, a resolve that leads us to pursue families in crisis, children longing to be loved, and communities aching for reconciliation.

So, the question remains for all of us: *What will you give your life to this year?* Something temporal or something eternal? There is only one answer that truly matters.

May we follow Christ with unwavering devotion as He seeks and saves the lost across our state and beyond.



Following call to advocate for vulnerable children

By **Jay Boyd**, Chief Advancement Officer

Bryan and I were riding in the back of my grandfather's pickup truck in late November. Thanksgiving on the Florida Panhandle had already been full—bonfires, s'mores, oysters on saltines, and outdoor adventures on the farm. We were somewhere between catfishing and dove hunting as the truck bumped across a cut peanut field, our legs dangling off the tailgate, shotguns across our laps.

Everything had been going great. Bryan had been laughing and soaking up every new experience. But as we crossed the field, I felt the mood shift. His shoulders trembled and I heard a quiet snuffle. He had pulled his hat low, trying to hide tears running down his cheeks. In the awkward way only a thirteen-year-old boy can manage, I whispered, "Hey man, are you okay?"

He hesitated, lifted his head, and said softly, "Jay... you have no idea how good you have it."

He was right.

Bryan lived at the Florida Baptist Children's Homes where my mom served as campus director and my dad was his youth minister. He had been around our family before, but this was his first time immersed in our extended family's holiday traditions. I didn't know the specifics of his past—my parents never shared details—but I didn't need them. That one sentence told me everything. He wasn't crying because anything

was wrong. He was crying because, for a moment, he glimpsed something he had never really known—stability, warmth, laughter, belonging.

Looking back, that moment became one of hundreds of experiences that quietly formed who I have become. I grew up in a loving family with parents who followed



Jay Boyd

Jesus and strove to live out the fruits of the spirit. I didn't yet understand what a gift that was. Bryan did.

In my final years of high school, I worked on campus with the maintenance director. I cut grass, changed light bulbs, and helped repair whatever needed fixing—but the best part was teaching younger kids how to do basic chores so

they could earn a little allowance. I didn't realize then that those simple interactions were planting the seeds of my calling.

Years later, after college, Lauren and I were newly married and living on stretched paychecks as I pursued a master's degree from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. One evening during dinner with my parents, I found myself asking again about the kids I'd grown up with at the children's home. After a long conversation about ministry and calling, my mom asked, "Jay, have you ever thought that maybe God wants to use your compassion and sense of justice for them?"

Something unlocked.

Not long after, I attended a national conference for Baptist childcare agencies. For the first time, I met people—besides my mother—who had built their lives around serving vulnerable children through fundraising, church engagement, and marketing for ministries like BCH. As I listened to their stories and watched their passion, everything in me settled. I left that conference with a clarity I hadn't felt before—the Lord was calling me to devote my life as an advocate for vulnerable children and struggling families.

As I begin my new role at Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, the weight and privilege of this calling feels even more significant. BCH is truly a pro-life ministry—caring for people from "the womb to the tomb." The organization's scope is extraordinary, and the scale



New Chief Advancement Officer Jay Boyd is pictured with wife Lauren, left, and mother Julie, center. His mother's career with Florida Baptist Children's Homes greatly inspired Jay's own journey, ultimately leading him to Baptist Children's Homes.

of opportunity to serve more children and families with the hope of the gospel is remarkable. Combine that with their 140 years of rich history, a compelling mission, and the fresh leadership vision under CEO David Melber, and it's impossible not to feel excitement about the future!

And this calling to BCH doesn't rest on my shoulders alone.

Lauren and I recently celebrated seventeen years of marriage, and every season of ministry has been something we've stepped into together. In recent years, her ministry has been especially impactful. During our time at Connie Maxwell Children's Ministries in South Carolina, she served as the Fitness and Wellness Specialist, using her background as a personal

trainer and former Division I tennis player to build relationships and healthy rhythms for kids and staff. She helped establish a gym on campus—not just as a place to work out, but a relational tool where confidence grew and trust was built.

For some kids, that gym became a place of healing. For others, it prepared them for sports or gave them tangible goals to work toward—one even improved her run time enough to qualify for a military institute. Lauren has since spoken at national conferences about how fitness, health, and physical rhythms can lead to better outcomes for children who've experienced trauma. Her ministry has been personal, creative, and transformative.

As we prayed about this new opportunity with BCH, we sensed a shared peace that this is exactly where God was leading us. Our children—Brayden (14) and Isabella (11)—have grown up seeing ministry not as something their parents "do," but as something that shapes our family culture. Ministry can be messy and beautiful all at once, but when we talked with them about moving to North Carolina, they trusted that Mom and Dad were doing their best to follow God's calling for our lives—and theirs.

As we begin this new chapter, we do so with deep gratitude—for the past that formed us, the calling that guides us, and the Christ-centered mission ahead. We are honored and excited to join the BCH family.

Your gift brings HOPE into the New Year!

Because of you, children find a safe, compassionate place at Baptist Children's Homes *where hope is thriving!*

Across BCH's mission field in North Carolina, there are more than 10,000 boys and girls in the foster care system. Your generosity connects the children we serve with caring foster families and cottage parents who ensure their needs are met. When children see they have plenty to eat, clean, well-fitting clothes, and a safe place to sleep, it opens up conversations for the Gospel to be shared—***the opportunity to introduce children to hope in Jesus!***

Your gift today—***which is MATCHED dollar for dollar through the Matching Gift Challenge until January 31, 2026—***is also the opportunity to ensure that boys and girls who come to us in 2026 will be able to experience the same joy and hope as the children we serve right now. ***Please give.***

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



Match my gift to share HOPE with a child.

- ☐ \$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.



Couple chooses adoption to grow their family

By Jim Edminson

Noah was waiting on Ali and Will to arrive. Their nearly three-hour drive was taking forever. Only days old, Noah had spent the time acclimating to his new, big world—bright lights, unmuffled noises, and waking in the middle of the night for diaper changes. His arrival was incident-free. His birth mom had cared for him well. He was healthy and already loved. He sensed her bravery in making the difficult decision to place him for adoption. She hoped his new life would be filled with many wonderful moments and memories. Now, he was ready for the Johnsons to arrive and to feel their loving arms hold him, welcoming him into their lives. He was ready to go home.

Ali grew up seeing adoption work. She has family who were adopted and babysat for two children who were adopted. She admired the parents, witnessing families who had positive experiences. It impacted her thoughts about adoption. When she and Will knew their life together was leading to marriage, they talked about adoption. After marriage, it was the path they chose to grow their own family.

“It was never an alternative,” she recounts. “It was the way we would have children. We would grow our family exclusively through adoption.”

Will and Ali talked openly about their plans. Their decision was lovingly embraced by their parents and siblings. The couple believe education regarding adoption is key to understanding. This attitude has been the foundation for tremendous support from family, friends, and church community.

The ride to Noah’s new home was uneventful. It was dark and he slept most of the way. He was at rest. It felt as if it was meant to be. The next morning was exciting. Ali had called her parents to come for breakfast. It wasn’t unusual—they are a close-knit family. Will greeted them at the door. Ali stood around the corner with their newborn boy. With great fanfare, Noah was introduced to one set of his new doting grandparents. He had no idea how his extended family would grow. He also had no idea what great gifts he would receive from them over the next months. It was a monumental day.

The Johnsons began their adoption journey after learning about Christian Adoption Services (CAS) from a minister at their church. A friend’s recommendation sealed the deal. They went online and expressed interest in adopting



Ali and Will Johnson are happy they chose adoption to grow their family. The couple are ready ambassadors for Christian Adoption Services, birth families, and adoptive families, helping others understand more about adoption through education and sharing their personal testimony. Below, Prince and big brother Noah are all smiles.

through CAS and were invited to apply.

CAS places children in Christian homes where they are loved, cared for, protected, and honored for who they are and where they came from. For nearly 50 years, the goal has been to connect birth families with adoptive families and to find the right home for every child. CAS is licensed in North and South Carolina.



Comprehensive trainings and paperwork filled the months ahead for Ali and Will. They met other adoptive families and their confidence grew. The CAS staff and the experiences affirmed every step.

“It’s different than conceiving a child,” Will confides. “The only significant milestones you celebrate are the moving from one step in the process to the next. The anticipation is different. You’re waiting on that phone call.”

Time flew for Noah. He was now more than a year old. Unknown to him, his parents set their heart on adopting him a sibling. When the call came about Prince, the couple quickly understood things would be different. He had spent the first

45 days of his life in the hospital. A heart issue, a cardio procedure, and constant medical attention were needed before he would join his new family.

“We had confidence God would put the child He wanted in our home,” Ali says. “When we were told about Prince’s health concerns and the challenges he might face, we didn’t hesitate. There was no reservation.”

Noah noticed things were different when his baby brother arrived home. Mom and Dad were now being shared with Prince. There were doctor appointments and distractions, but there were also friends and family to help meet Noah’s needs.

Things settled in time. Prince now has a good prognosis. He loves his big brother and Noah is obsessed with him. He helps Mom monitor baby brother’s needs, alerts her when baby wakes from his nap, and speaks up when he thinks parental attention is required. Noah even has given his brother a special name, “Princy.”

“It is amazing how God brings the right children into the right homes,” Ali says. “When you accept the call to adopt, you realize you are not in control. You see His plans are perfect. Will and I are grateful to be witnesses to the miracles in Noah’s and Prince’s lives.”

Noah’s life has settled into the routine of a family of four. If anything changes, he is confident he is up to the task.

Completion...from the heart of a cottage parent

By Rachel Reed, Cottage Parent, Broyhill Home

Ding, dong. The cottage doorbell rings as eight children scurry around inside. “Mrs. Rachel, someone is at the door!”

Who could it be?
It’s you! Welcome to our cottage. As you enter, you may hear lots of little feet moving, you may smell cookies baking, or you may very likely hear me say, “Don’t forget to put that away when you’re done.” From this single instruction, you may sense my greatest desire as a cottage parent. It may be similar to a desire that any person, parent or not, feels. Perhaps it is the greatest desire in all of our hearts?

It can be summed up in one word — completion.
We may not consciously consider the idea of completion each day, but I assert it is what we long for. As a cottage parent, I long for the children in our care to complete a task all the way. I find myself daily passing out verbal reminders to close kitchen cabinets after grabbing a water cup, to turn bedroom lights off, and to put away toys when they are finished playing. My desire for an orderly cottage comes out so often that our cottage kids joke with each other: “I hope you remembered to push your chair up before Mrs. Rachel sees it.” The idea that a task is complete and things look tidy just brings me joy!

As I consider this, the hearts of the children in our care also long for completion. Maybe they are not as concerned with chairs being pushed up, clothes being in the hamper, and doors being closed. Their own longing for completion is far greater than mine. These children are longing for their parents to complete their plan so they can return home. They want the adoption they’ve heard talked about for so long to finally be complete—signed by a judge and a new life begun in a forever home. They want to know completely whether or not a family member will become an option for permanent placement rather than living the in-between, waiting. They want their pain gone, as we all do. *They want completion.*

This is where the greatest news we can offer ourselves and the children in our care enters. We have been given a hope and a promise of completion one day! It is good for our cottage kids to



Above, Rachel can often be found doing activities with the children in her cottage. Things are especially busy during the Christmas season. Below, Rachel and Alex Reed with their son Tripp.

know that despite the brokenness of the world we live in—the pain, the shattered pieces of life—we can grasp the hope of a perfect, complete life with Jesus! As cottage parents, my husband and I encourage the children we care for to turn to Jesus and receive the gift He’s given. His promises are true, and beyond what we can fathom while we are in this world. To have

something so profound to look forward to is the only way we are able to do this work and pour into our kids. *We remind them often that there will be no broken homes in Heaven, no waiting on parents to show up to a longed-for visit, and no lack of completion!*

One of my favorite songs and my recent anthem is “Homesick for Heaven” by Phil Wickham. When pondering finally being there and reaching that completion, the song’s words encourage me: “I’ll run as fast as I can into Your arms ‘cause I was created to be where You are.

There’s an ache in my heart, I’m homesick for Heaven.”

I love this picture so much. We are finally where we were created to be—with Jesus.

We cannot forget the truth that we can live in that completion even now. Although our circumstances consistently bring us pain, the salvation we have in believing in Christ’s completion on the cross allows us to live in that completion today—even here in this broken place. This gives us, as cottage parents, such an opportunity to display God’s grace for the children we care for.

As for me, the hope I’ve found in Christ and the completion I will receive one day encourages me to pour grace into our kids through every unfinished task, every chair left unpushed, every light left on, and yes, even every toilet left unflushed. Do I do this perfectly? During these few minutes visiting our cottage tells you there are moments I have clay feet. However, I trust God to sanctify my heart and I pray this is evident to our children. I long for the children placed in our cottage to trust Jesus for this completion and to know they are living the entirety of their lives with the promise of being with the One who created them. *Imagine the satisfaction our hearts will feel when there is no more pursuing completion!*



Take the opportunity to model respectful language

By **Carol Layton**, Director of Communications, NCBAM

Nothing good ever came from a tsunami. So why is it acceptable to refer to 73 million baby boomers as a “silver tsunami”—as if they are a looming catastrophe? This phrase is just one example of how language about aging subtly influences one’s perception of older adults.

With the mission of providing “help for the journey” to individuals 65+, North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) is deeply aware of the cultural messages surrounding aging—and how these messages can minimize or distort the worth of older people. While most of us would never intentionally speak disrespectfully to someone based on age, we live in a culture where such language is normalized.

NCBAM seeks to present a biblical view of aging in which elders are honored, valued, and seen as capable contributors to God’s ongoing work. Throughout Scripture—through examples like Moses, Joshua, Daniel, and Anna—we see older adults presented as faithful servants empowered well into their advanced years. American culture, however, often pulls in the opposite direction, celebrating youth while minimizing the gifts of age. The Church has a powerful opportunity to model something different.

Sometimes, even when trying to be kind, people use language that unintentionally diminishes. A restaurant host, seeing my friend and me (both in our 60s), greeted us with, “Right this way, young ladies.” When he walked away, we looked at each other and sighed. He meant well, of course. But why not simply, “Right this way, ladies”?

Curious what others thought, I polled a few friends. Their responses ranged from “infuriating” to “respectful” to “a Southern thing.” Regardless of intent, the phrase carried an underlying message for me—being older is something less desirable.

My sensitivity to these issues began long before I turned 50. Because my grandmother was 40 when my mother was born—and my mother was 36 when I arrived—my relatives tended to be older than those of my peers. I remember, painfully, two moments that



North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) provides “help for the journey” for individuals 65+. The ministry seeks to present a biblical view of aging in which elders are honored, valued, and seen as capable contributors to God’s ongoing work. Speaking respectfully with Christlike care to older adults proclaims that every season of life is sacred.

shaped my understanding.

In first grade, my 42-year-old mother came to pick me up early. As she greeted the teacher, a classmate blurted, “Who is that old woman?” I felt shock, embarrassment, and anger on my mother’s behalf.

Sixteen years later, I visited my 97-year-old grandmother in the hospital. A well-meaning aide, speaking in singsong “elderspeak” called her “punkin.” Again I felt embarrassed and angry—this time for a woman who had memorized Scripture and classical poetry throughout her life. I wish I had said, “Her name is not Punkin. Her name is Nora.”

We now know that “elderspeak” toward older adults—especially those in skilled nursing facilities—can lead to depression and resistance to care. Even trained staff sometimes slip into it out of habit, which is why many facilities regularly retrain caregivers on respectful communication.

But the issue isn’t just how other people speak, older adults diminish ourselves with comments meant as compliments: “Wow! You don’t look 70!”—as if looking one’s age is a failure. Or we soften reality with euphemisms like “older and wiser” or “young at heart,” when we could simply say someone is thoughtful,

energetic, optimistic, or experienced—attributes not tied to any particular age.

I recently heard of a group of older adults at church who didn’t want to join the “senior” ministry, so they formed the “junior seniors.” It’s a humorous example of how deeply our culture resists acknowledging age—sometimes even among those who have earned every year with grace.

Yet Scripture offers a radically different view. Consider:

- Abraham, called by God at age 75.

- Anna, the prophetess, who was advanced in years when she proclaimed Jesus in the temple.

- Isaiah 46:4: “Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he... I will sustain you.”

- Psalm 92:14: “They will still bear fruit in old age.”

These reminders reveal the dignity, purpose, and spiritual vitality that belong to every older adult—because God Himself honors them.

This is where North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry finds its calling. Day after day, we work to affirm the God-given worth of aging adults through practical support, safety initiatives, spiritual encouragement, and compassionate companionship. We strive to help older adults maintain independence and meaning, not because culture demands it, but because Scripture commands us to honor them.

In a world that often overlooks or misunderstands those with gray hair and long experience, the Church—and ministries like NCBAM—can shine a brighter, more respectful path. When we listen deeply, serve humbly, and speak with dignity, we demonstrate the heart of Christ.

NC Baptist Aging Ministry exists because no one should walk the challenges or joys of aging alone. By standing beside older adults, speaking respectfully with Christlike care, we proclaim that every season of life is sacred, every person is valued, and God’s purposes endure—no matter one’s age.

Remembering those who have passed – Alumni use update sheets to share life after MH

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

We are saddened again to report the deaths of several beloved alumni. **Teresa Sue Penley Henson** of Morganton passed away on August 28 after a courageous battle with cancer. She entered Mills Home (MH) in 1964, and in 1971 she graduated from Thomasville High School having been very active in sports. She went on to higher education and built a 30-year medical career as a phlebotomist at Broughton Hospital and Grace Hospital. As serious as she was in medicine, she managed to find time to serve as a referee for Burke County Recreation Sports for 25 years. She was a member of Missionary Ridge Baptist Church and had a deep love for the children's ministry there.

Surviving is her son **Clay Henson (Jessica)**; three grandchildren; brothers, **Roy Penley, Lewis, Richard, and Jay Suttles**; sisters, **Joy, Sandy, Lou Ann, and Janet**. Also surviving from the Suttle family are these: **Albert, Pam, Kim, Tira, and Teresa's former husband, Wendal Henson, Sr.** After receiving friends August 31 at Missionary Ridge Baptist Church, the family held her funeral service and burial in the church cemetery.

I was sorry to receive sad news from **John Shields** that **Virgil L. Amberson** has passed away. Johnny had visited with Virgil in Princeton, NC shortly before his death and he was pleased when Virgil seemed to have a sudden improvement. Sadly, it was short lived and Virgil passed away on November 7. He was predeceased by his wife **Caridad B. Amberson**; his son **Jerome Amberson**; and his siblings who were at MH with him: **David, Kenny, and Barbara A. Kirkpatrick**. He is survived by his son **Glenn Amberson**, his daughters-in-law, **Pannee Amberson and Karen Amberson**; five grandchildren, **Jeremy, Ashley Seas, Kelly, Glenn, and AJ**; and his sisters, **Linda A,**

Walker, Kathy Amberson, and Debbie A. Brown. Following Visitation on November 14 at the Mt. Nelson Baptist Church in Eureka, Virgil was honored with a Military Honors service at the Eureka Cemetery.

We recently learned that MH **Coach Darrell Corder** passed away peacefully on November 14. Darrell was from Kernersville and graduated from Kernersville High School in 1950. He spent 1951-1957 playing minor league baseball in four different states. He married the love of his life, **Sandra Sue Elliott**, in 1954; served his country in the United States Army from 1953-1955; and earned his Bachelor of Science degree from High Point University in 1957. Then he began his work as coach at MH. He and Sandra were such wonderful assets to the childcare program there and were dearly beloved. Though they were never houseparents, the youngsters knew they were ever much loved by Sandra and Coach Corder. All 335 kids were devastated when their daughter **Stephany** died in an accident. They were at MH from 1957 through 1963.

In the early 1960s, Darrell began a 30-plus-year career with the YMCA, with leadership roles in Thomasville and two other cities in North Carolina and South Carolina where he retired in 1993. When Darrell and Sandra learned that **Burl Moss** was in a hospital not so far from their home, they visited with him and made sure he had plenty of love and attention the rest of his life.

Upon Burl's death, Darrell worked with **Jay Wood** to make sure Burl's ashes were placed at God's Acre.

Darrell lost his son **Carey** and wife **Sandra** in 2021. He leaves behind two sons, **Christopher Elliott Corder and Cameron Ross Corder**, and four grandchildren. A private family service and interment will be held at a later date in the columbarium of First Baptist

Church in Greenville, South Carolina. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to the **Stephanie and Carey Corder Fund** at the Tom A. Finch YMCA, 1010 Mendenhall Street, Thomasville, NC 27360.

A most interesting update sheet came in to us in 2024 from **Teresa Marsha Rayburn**. She was a resident of Thomasville before she entered MH in 1968 and she lived happily on campus until she graduated from high school in 1978. With so many opportunities, it seems she stayed quite busy. As all residents did, she filled many hours with church activities such as Sunday School, worship services, Girls in Action, Tour Choir, and Sanctuary Choir. Then at some time she added piano lessons to her schedule. With all that, she blended in well with all aspects of campus day to day living. She was impressed with training she received from houseparent **Mrs. Mae Arnder** and campus workers **Bill Sisk and Mrs. Long**. She explained that **Mrs. Arnder** "taught us how to be proper ladies. **Mr. Sisk** instilled confidence with his friendliness and encouraging remarks. He would say 'Girl, you walk like you're worth a million bucks.' And **Mrs. Long** (dietitian) made me feel special and loved on and off campus. Often times when she made the delicious brownies she was known for, she would sneak me a couple since I was so skinny and small. We became and remained great friends. I would often visit her at her home there in Thomasville."

Teresa and her husband, **Anthony R. Rayburn**, live at 516 Old Emblem Rd., Thomasville, 27360. They are proud parents of two. Though Anthony is now retired, Teresa is still employed as a W&I Analyst at Old Dominion Freight Line. In speaking of Homecoming, she says she enjoys the worship service, socializing at the gym, and participating in the Silent Auction.

Another update sheet was from **Dan (Danny) Lambeth** who lived at MH for just one year, 1967. His earliest life had been spent in Charlotte and Archdale before his mom died. Dan was much impressed with the life he had as a nine year old at the Hutchinson Cottage with **Estelle Crouch**, the housemother, and **Lugenia Pinnix**, the dietitian. He feels that the little task of using a broom to clear the walkway started his development of a good work ethic. He also feels that learning how to keep his private possessions such as toys and clothes in the proper place assigned to him made him more responsible. Though he was at Hutchinson only a year, Dan developed a great appreciation for MH and Ms Crouch and showed it when he set up a scholarship fund at MH named for her. He also showed his appreciation for learning the importance of education from his time on campus. After high school, he earned an AA degree in business from Charlotte's Central Piedmont Community College. Over the years, he has collected a vast number of books on the history of education. He has also given talks and displays about education at various high schools and libraries. Dan has great memories of fun times learning to swim, having watermelon feasts, eating meals by Lugenia, attending MH church and visiting other churches on weekend visits the Hutchinson boys had the privilege of making.

Please send corrections or additions of addresses for C&C to **Flora Hicks Patton** at florapatton06@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.



Motorcyclists deliver Christmas joy
 For years, motorcyclists have organized Christmastime rides at both Mills Home in Thomasville and Kennedy Home in Kinston. Former Harley-Davidson owners and Faith Riders from Temple Church in New Bern organized the Kennedy Home ride, where gifts as well as \$38,000 in donations were delivered. The Randolph County Concerned Bikers Association hosted the annual ride for Mills Home, bringing joy to the children and foster families who benefited.



Family celebrates their adoption
 This family welcomed their third child through BCH's Christian Adoption Services. They have two girls and a son.



Hinkle ladies attend the Nutcracker
 The women who live at Hinkle Home in Winston enjoyed the Nutcracker due to a donation from the Wimberley Family.



Picking out their cottage's tree
 Boys and girls at Broyhill Home's Carolina Cottage received a gift certificate to pick out a Christmas tree at a local farm.



Eastern church blesses BCH in the west
 In memory of church member and volunteer Chuck Sutton, members of Cape Carteret Baptist Church organized the annual Christmas party in Sutton's honor. Several years ago, the Eastern NC church crossed paths with children living at BCH's Western NC locations when the boys and girls were visiting the beach with their cottage parents. That encounter led to an ongoing relationship with church volunteers tackling projects at Broyhill Home and hosting the party each year.



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New grandmother recounts joys of caring for Milo — Kennedy Home Annual Toy Run another success

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

The Kennedy Home Annual Toy Run was founded by **Jim Allen** of New Bern Harley Davidson and the Harley Owners Group Chapter Five. This small group of Harleys riders put all the toys they could carry on their bikes and headed to Kennedy Home in Kinston. Over the years, the Toy Run grew into a huge event for other riders with a passion to help the children here at Kennedy Home (KH). The event is now in its thirty-third year.

Joyce and I wanted to join in the event this year on November 11, but were unable to ride our bikes so we traveled by car. We took the opportunity to stop on the Hwy 41 overpass to watch the bikes ride by traveling to Kinston. A highway patrolman came and made us move. We ended up traveling over to the Kinston Taco Bell to watch the bikers pass and videoed the ride. There were a hundred and sixty bikes along with seven corvettes and others who joined up at KH. It was an eye-watering event.

When we had all arrived, the kids and houseparents with big smiles of joy were lined up cheering for us and holding welcome signs as we entered the gates. In most toy run events, you carry the toys to a location and drop them off. You never get to see the smiles of the children as they watch those toys coming in. The KH children greeted us and talked with us.

I was able to speak to some of the riders to find out how many years they have participated, where they were from, and if they knew Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Some of the ones I was able to speak with had participated for 16 years, some 20 years, and others 30 years. Some were from Victory Baptist Church, some from Temple Baptist Church, and some from Christian Motorcycle Association (three chapters). Some were Combat Vets and some were Nam Vets. Others were from the Goldsboro Hog Chapter and

the Greenville Hog Chapter—Nam Knights. Some of these guys had road names which included **Fires-tick, Tom-Tom, BoBo, and Big Nick**. I ran into a few friends such as Jesse and Victor who own and run Aztec in Kinston. If I left anyone out, please forgive me. Our Lord knows you were there and will bless you for helping these children.

People came from far and near. If any of you KH alumni have never been to the Toy Run, you should try to make it at least one time. It is a very heartwarming event.

Temple Baptist Church of New Bern have been hosting the run for many years and doing a great job. Thank you Temple Baptist Church for stepping up. May the Lord richly bless you.

I just pray that I might be able to ride next year. I am 74. My knee and back would not let me ride this year. I am going to try and buddy up with my cousin Ronald Pate. He has a slingshot. We rode in the Jones County Toy Run together in 2023.

I received a note from Barbara Branch Smith (Class, 1972).

"When I was asked by **Clayton Pate**, our Kennedy Home C&C columnist, to write a story on recently becoming a first-time grandmother, I was a little unsure—since I've only been a grandmother for six glorious months. I decided to broaden the topic to 'First-Time Grandmother at age 70+!' (I can already hear my dear KH long-time grandparents and great-grandparents laughing.)

"Yes at 71 and 75, my husband, **Mickey** and I were blessed with our first grandchild, Milo. I won't get into the birth stats of how much he weighed and how long he was but I will just say his father proudly will tell you he was in the 98th percentile of babies in weight and length". He is a proud dad!

"I believe being a Grandma (my chosen royal title) at any age just changes everything in you and about your life going forward.

When you are given that time to watch your own first born carry their first born, it brings a new tenderness to that relationship. When I first held **Milo** in the hospital, I looked down at his little chubby, wrinkled, red face and everything else around him just faded to a white, an iridescent background. (I am telling you, that happened).

"So, what have I learned in my 6 months and counting? Caring for an infant hasn't changed much: 'The Three Big Ones – Feed them, Diaper them and Let them Sleep, and of course, Make sure they feel safe and loved.' Knowledge is key and there is so much more research and information on an infant's development. I jumped in and discovered a whole new way to spend time playing (Tummy Time) while helping the grandchild develop his body movements and strengths. Although getting back up off the floor is a little tricky for me now! I have learned to trust that our ways worked back then and their ways work now just as well, maybe better. And, finally, how important it is to just step back and take in the love and care your adult children shower on your grandchild. The reward is to share with them the absolute heart-bursting times you can see in his eyes when he knows he is loved and safe.

"I have so many friends (KH sisters and brothers included) that have been grandparents for a long while, some even great grandparents now. I have always enjoyed the pictures and the stories, especially as they grew and how they were involved through the years. At my age, I will not dwell on the years to come and the milestones we may miss in his future. For now, I welcome every opportunity to run over to **Milo's** house (yes, it is his house now!) or have him dropped off. We have survived one solo sleep-over and hope for many more.

"And what may come tomorrow? Well, first it's off to meet Santa

tomorrow. His First Christmas. Another picture, another memory."

We are saddened to report **Frances Clark Heath**, 71, of Snow Hill passed away on Monday, November 10 at ECU Health Medical Center. She was a loving mother, homemaker, and wife. Frances worked for Walmart of Kinston for many years and worked with Caswell Center for several years. She enjoyed shopping and spending time with her grandchildren. Frances was a huge fan of country music and a bigger fan of **Loretta Lynn**. She enjoyed time spent dancing with her sisters. Frances was a member of the VFW of Snow Hill where she and her late husband, **Richard**, like to spend time.

She is preceded in death by her husband **Richard Heath**; grandson **Hunter Bennett**; sister **Jean Price (Milton)**; niece **Kimberly Bryant**; and mother **Mattie Clark Aswell ("Papa John")**.

Left to cherish her memory is her daughters, **Jennifer Brown and Kim Heath**; sons, **Chad Bennett, Christopher Bennett and Richard Heath, Jr.**; grandchildren, **Madison, Alyssa, Nicholas, Lou, Sara, Elizabeth, Brandley**; sisters, **Janet Clark Williams (John), Kelly Clark McLawhorn, Brenda Clark Harris**; brother, **Bobby Clark Bryant (Susan)**; numerous nieces, nephews, great nieces, and great nephews.

Graveside services were held Monday, November 17 at Pinelawn Memorial Park.

Please remember these folks. The Lord knows their needs. Prayer List: **Ken, Chrystal, David, Pam, Janet, Kenny, Edie, Don, Brenda P., Clifton, TJ, Brenda M., Donna Rose, Thomas, Sue, Tina, Chris, Jenny, James, Dana, Karen, Doug, Raymond, Joyce, and me.**



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

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Edminson ends tenure as editor, leaving BCH after 25 years

Charity & Children Editor Jim Edminson concluded his Baptist Children's Homes career December 31. In June 2000, he and his family moved to the Tar Heel State from Louisiana where he served as communications director at the Louisiana Baptist Children's Home in Monroe.

BCH founder John Haynes Mills was the first editor, launching the publication July 7, 1887. The longest-tenured editor, Archibald Johnson, followed Mills serving as editor for 40 years from 1895 until 1935. Edminson, the 14th editor, is the second longest tenured editor in the publication's history marking 25 years on June 3, 2025.

Edminson's time as editor revealed his great, heartfelt passion for children and families. This passion has been evident to C&C's readers in every issue through his feature articles and "Homeword" column—a passion that has fueled his desire to serve hurting families in need of God's grace for more than 30 years.

In addition to being an accomplished raconteur and polished "wordsmith," Edminson is an award-winning photographer and graphic designer. He is a frequent speaker and preacher in Baptist churches across the state.

During his BCH career, Edminson served as the Institutional Director of Communications, as a founding team member of North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM)—serving from 2009-2014, as the director of BCH's year-long 125th anniversary celebration in 2012, and as assistant to the president from 2015-2023.

Readers can send notes of well wishes to him at P.O. Box 436, Lexington, NC 27293 or email him at jedminson@gmail.com.



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