



Schedule your VBS speaker!

Share with your VBS boys and girls the BCH story and how God is honored when children help children in need. **Call 336-474-1209, today!**

Charity & Children

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



@bchfamily

May 2025

Issue 4

Volume 138



Fourteen-year-old Jazmine learns hands-on cooking skills from Chef Jonathan Seelig, founder of Kitchenology (see page 7). Jazmine's mom, Lisa, was part of BCH's family care program when Jazmine was younger and today she is a Greater Vision client .



GREATER VISION OUTREACH

Mom works hard for better future

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Fourteen-year-old Jazmine loves cooking with her mom. She helps her prepare dinners and feels very accomplished. When Greater Vision Outreach offered their clients the opportunity to attend cooking classes produced by partners Piedmont Fresh, Davidson County Local Food Network, and Kitchenology, Jazmine was all in.

She anticipated learning new cooking skills and there was the promise of new

recipes. Learning from a real chef would be exciting, she thought.

Jazmine's mom Lisa has been a Greater Vision client since 2018. Struggling to get on her feet financially and make ends meet, Lisa desired a life of self-sufficiency. She knew she needed help. The past seven years have been hard but Lisa has never given up.

Clients set goals, work with mentors, and learn to manage their money, saving as much as they can afford. Lisa has made

remarkable strides. Once afraid for her children, she has seen her three oldest grow into adults who bring her pride. One can see how her hard work has paid off by looking at her children.

"You can especially see how Lisa's choices have made a difference in Jazmine's life," Greater Vision Outreach Ministry Director Sara Becker says. "Her future could have been much different." (Continued on page 6)

Volunteers help camps during Friends of Children

By Kristyn Butts, BCH Director of Volunteer Engagement

After attending a Women’s Missionary Union leadership meeting where Tara Dew was the guest speaker, I was inspired to pick up her book, *Overflowing Joy*. In it, she writes, “Jesus wants us to have a joy so full that we cannot keep it to ourselves.” That line struck a chord deep in my heart. I couldn’t help but think of the phrase I often use to close my emails: Joyfully serving Him.

That phrase isn’t just a sign-off—it’s a reflection of how I feel every day. I’m filled with joy and deep gratitude for my salvation, for all the Lord has done in my life and the life of my family, and for the incredible privilege of serving in this ministry. This kind of joy isn’t meant to be hidden. Just like the truth of the Gospel, it’s meant to overflow and be shared freely with others.

My prayer is that out of this overflow, Christ would be magni-



Above, members of Memorial and Dunn’s Grove churches dig a drain line during Camp Duncan’s Friends of Children (FOC) event. Below left, the Hurley family volunteered at Cameron Boys Camp’s (CBC) FOC event and brought food and dry goods as part of the Food Roundup. Below right, CBC campers proudly share their campsite and tales of life at Camp with the FOC volunteers.

talents, or treasures, your investment makes a lasting difference. These gifts are vital as BCH continues its mission of sharing hope and changing lives through the love of Jesus. From young children to seasoned adults, volunteers of all ages were a tremendous blessing. Not only did they meet real needs, but they also got to witness the heart of this ministry up close.

Now, we’re excited to introduce a new opportunity to serve: BCH Prayer Partners. Starting this month, we’re inviting faithful prayer warriors to join us in lifting up this ministry. We believe in the power of prayer—and we know it changes things. As a Prayer Part-



talents, and love into serving the children, adults, and families in the care of Baptist Children’s Homes of North Carolina. They raked leaves, cleaned windows, chopped wood, washed clothes, and sorted food. But their impact went

far beyond tasks—lives were touched. Because they showed up, residents and clients knew they were seen, heard, and valued. They knew they mattered.

This spring, Friends of Children has been a beautiful example of how you continue to show up and serve. Many of you didn’t just Do Good – you also Brought Goods or contributed non-perishable items through Food Roundup or the Amazon wish list. Whether through your time,

ner, you’ll receive regular updates with specific

ways to intercede for our children, staff, and ongoing needs.

If you feel called to stand in the gap through prayer, we’d love for you to sign up for our Prayer Partner email list at www.bchfamily.org/prayer.

Let’s continue joyfully serving Him—overflowing with the kind

of joy that points others to the hope we have in Christ.



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.

Everyone can do something: The Body of Christ and foster care

By **David Melber**, Chief Executive Officer

If you've ever read 1 Corinthians 12:12–27, you know Paul paints a pretty clear picture: the Church is like a body—one body, many parts. Each part is important. Each part has a role. And none of them work in isolation. That's true for spiritual gifts, it's true for ministry, and it's especially true when it comes to caring for vulnerable children.



David Melber

The needs within foster care are big, but the Church is big. What if we really believed that every single person in the Body of Christ had a part to play in caring for kids who come from hard places? What if

we stopped thinking of foster care as something only certain "called" people do and instead saw it as a mission we all share? Each doing our part.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul reminds us that no part of the body can say to another, "I don't need you." The eye cannot avoid the hand. The head can't pretend that the feet aren't important. Why? Because they're all connected. Each one matters. That's the heart behind this passage, and it's also the heart of the foster care movement within the Church.

Foster care isn't just about foster parents. It's about wraparound support. It's about prayer, providing meals, offering childcare, donating supplies, mentoring teens, supporting biological families, encouraging caseworkers, and a dozen other things that help foster families stay afloat and the children feel safe.

One of the biggest misconceptions in the Church is that only adults—typically married—can engage in foster care. But that's simply not true. In the body of Christ, there is no "retirement" from being useful and no age requirement to start serving in some capacity.

Are you in school or college? You can collect supplies, babysit, or tutor foster children in care.

Are you a young adult figuring out your path? You can mentor a teen aging out of foster care. Are you a grandparent? You've got time, wisdom, and probably an amazing cookie recipe—share them with a foster family that needs encouragement.

Every season of life has something unique to offer. No role is too small. In fact, sometimes, the most unexpected acts of service make the biggest impact. Paul says that the parts of the body that seem weaker are actually indispensable. That means the contributions we might overlook—or disqualify ourselves from—could be the very ones God uses to bring healing to a child or hope to a weary parent.

When someone says, "I'm not called to foster," it can feel like an easy out. But let's look at this through Paul's metaphor. What if the eye said,



"I'm not called to be a hand, so I'll just sit this one out." That wouldn't make any sense. The eye is still needed. The hand can't do it all. And the body suffers when one part is disengaged.

Foster care is too heavy a burden for individuals to carry alone. But when the Church operates like a body—each part doing its job, each member showing up in their unique way—that's when things start to change. This doesn't mean everyone will open their home to foster. But it does mean everyone can open their heart to be involved somehow.



phone, but maybe you're the hands organizing donations. You may not be fostering a child, but maybe you're the ears that listen when a foster parent needs a friend. You may not be the feet going to court hearings, but maybe you're the heart that prays faithfully for reunification.

In foster care, consistency matters more than perfection. Kids who've experienced trauma don't need superheroes—they need safe, steady people. They need a body of believers who care enough to show up again and again in small, meaningful ways.

This is what foster care needs. It needs the whole Church—not just a few families, but a whole community—not just the "qualified," but every willing heart. Because together, we can be the body that offers healing to broken stories, hope to struggling families, and a home—even if temporary—to children who



need to know they matter and they are loved. So, wherever you are, whatever stage of life you're in, ask God this simple question: "What's my part?" Then trust that your piece of the puzzle—however big or small—can be exactly what someone else needs. At Baptist Children's Homes, we want to come alongside you and your church to help you find your spot!

Because in the body of Christ, everyone can do something.

It might be a prayer ministry. It might be offering practical help once a month. It might be speaking up about foster care needs to your church. It might be starting a support group or simply checking in on a foster family regularly.

Sometimes, we over complicate

what it means to "help." We think if we can't do everything, we shouldn't do anything. But that's just not how the body of Christ is designed to work. You may not be the mouthpiece at the micro-

March comes winds, April showers, May flowers

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

The children and families who turn to us for care can describe their lives in somewhat the same manner. Life has brought them turbulence. They have been tossed by crisis, neglect and abuse. They have been battered with hopelessness, fear, mistrust, hurtful words, and actions.

Those in need who come to us are able to find refuge here. Here they find the wind fades, and mercy drops of encouragement, faith, hope and love fall along their path to hope and healing. They are showered with God's grace.

And as the Son is revealed to them, they blossom.

Easter Sunday morning, we gathered at Mills Home Baptist Church for Sunrise Service. It was a beautiful morning as the sunlight shined through the trees. Spring is all around us. Trees are budding and flowers are sprouting everywhere. The burst of color brings joy to my heart and a smile spreads across my face as I take in the beauty all around me. We sing with joy as we proclaim and celebrate Resurrection Day. The Gospel is proclaimed.

And as the Son is revealed to them, they blossom.

His family was in crisis. Communication in the family was abusive or non-existent. He began to stay in his room, his grades dropped, and depression set in. His anger was gripping him in a way that frightened him and his family. They knew they had to find help. Every member of the family was being affected by the dysfunction within the family. His family seemed to be disintegrating before his eyes. He felt responsible, lost and alone.

At the end of their rope, the family sought help and found it at Baptist Children's Homes. Here they were drenched with God's love through dedicated, Christian staff. They were given the structure and tools they needed to work on their problems. The staff used every opportunity to share their faith. He felt nurtured, encouraged and safe. He accepted Jesus as his personal Lord and Savior. The family has a new foundation to build on.

And as the Son is revealed to them, they blossom.

Her father had been in and out of jail most of her life. For years she moved from place to place with no where to call home. Her Mom was high on drugs most of the time and unable to hold a job. Her mom eventually abandoned she and her brother. The siblings stayed with relatives, but soon had nowhere to go.

At BCH they found home. Here, loving cottage parents nurtured them as you would a flower, feeding them with

truth, hope, grace and understanding. And when the wind of the past threatened to cause despair, and when they would wake in the night from nightmares, their cottage parents were there to reassure them they were safe. They no longer had to worry where they would lay their heads at night. Each afternoon there was always someone to meet them after they returned from school. There was a caring adult to hear about their day. There was someone to care about how they did on their test and who the new girlfriend or boyfriend was for the day. Here they found a home where they were able to thrive and blossom.

And as the Son is revealed to them, they blossom.

I am very grateful for what God has done and is doing in the lives of those we have been called to care for. Thank you for helping them through the windy, turbulent times of their lives. Thank you for showering them with God's love and grace enabling them to blossom as God intended.

This Sunday April 27, we will have the wonderful blessing of baptizing four on our Mills Home campus. Three weeks ago, we held our birth mom retreat where 15 made decisions for Christ. Hope and healing are taking place.

And as the Son is revealed to them, they blossom.

This weekend I am going to buy flowers and a few vegetable plants. It will be fun to dig in the dirt once again. I will provide the best environment for them with good soil, plenty of water (but not too much, I tend

to over water), and plant food. And I will I keep them safe from bugs and varmints. Then comes the joy of watching the plants grow and produce flowers and hopefully a few tomatoes.

It is such a joy to watch as those we serve are rooted and planted in God's Word. Celebrate with us as the Son is revealed. Beautiful flowers are blooming all around us!

NOTE: May brings lots of opportunities to celebrate memories and create new ones. On May 11, we honor and remember our mothers. Mid-May, we remember our college graduates. On the last Monday in May, we commemorate Memorial Day and remember those who have given their lives for our freedom. It is a blessing to remember the people in our lives who encouraged us and influenced us. People who have shown us grace and enriched our lives. People who have revealed the Son to us and in this truth, we have blossomed. Take time to remember these precious people. Call or send them a note.

Consider giving a financial gift in their honor or memory. There are so many ways you invest making Jesus known to those we serve. ***Thank you.***



Hearing the laughter of children digging up the perfect sea shell, listening to the sound of the waves lapping on the shore, and witnessing God’s creation up close—the sunset, the sea breeze, the birds overhead—are the kind of moments that become summer memories remembered for a lifetime.

These are the memories my wife Tera and I created for our six children when we escaped everyday life and retreated to experience the beauty of God’s creation. It was in these quieter times that we could listen to our children share their hearts while pouring God’s love into them unconditionally.

I am immensely thankful that we have the privilege to make it possible for the vulnerable boys, girls, and families BCH serves to experience these times—big summer memories that give way to quieter moments when cottage and foster parents and staff members can freely share the love of God.

I humbly ask you to join me and become a summer sponsor. It is through your financial support that we provide for the needs of the children entrusted to us while always pointing them to the love of Jesus.

Thank you for being a difference-maker through your gift. Please be in prayer that, throughout the summer, God will continue to open up the doors for discipleship and that children will see that they are His beautiful creation.

With gratitude,
David Melber
Baptist Children’s Homes CEO



Use my gift to create lasting memories!

☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$ _____ Any size gift!



There are two ways you can make your gift:

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

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

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



Lisa journeys with BCH, making remarkable strides

By Jim Edminson, Editor

(Continued from page 1)

The life Lisa lived was a good life she thought. She was married with children. She had given her heart to Jesus in 2008. It was all she had wanted. She and her husband had built this life. But the walls of glass that set her beautiful world apart were shattered when the unspeakable happened and her husband was sent to jail in 2012.

"It was like suddenly all the walls broke at once," she remembers. "It was over and there was no putting it back together."

Lisa was reeling in pain but she was determined. She worked three jobs and tried to keep her family together and a roof over their heads. As hard as she tried, there was never enough money and she felt her middle son and daughter slipping from her grasp. Both were skirting the law and her son was in a gang.

She learned about Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) Family Care program on the Mills Home campus in Thomasville. "I have a deep stubborn streak—prideful even, and I didn't want to ask for help. But it clicked with Family Care."

Family Care offers supportive cottage homes for single, working mothers and their children. The program is goal-focused, helping mothers transition to successful, independent living and connects mothers and families with the necessary resources and community services needed to bring stability and keep families together.

Sara Becker was a Family Care worker then. That is when she and Lisa met and became friends. "We have gone through so much together," Lisa says. "She is like a sister, a gift from God."

Lisa began by setting goals to improve her life. Family Care counselors and Sara offered encouragement. She was finding her footing once again—although far from the way it once was. Hope returned, but her biggest accomplishment during these two years was keeping her family together.

On her own again, Lisa had good days and bad ones. Some days were dark. To feel better, she would spend money. It was her coping mechanism—"retail therapy."



Lisa and her youngest daughter Jazmine attend cooking classes to learn how to cook fresh, healthier food. The classes were provided by Greater Vision Outreach Ministry in Thomasville in partnership with Piedmont Fresh, Davidson County Local Food Network, and Kitchenology (see page 7). Photo credits: Cary Kanoy

"I lived beyond my means," she confesses. "I spent too much and my credit score suffered. I was unable to save any money."

Working multiple jobs again, just trying to meet all of her responsibilities, the stress was unbearable. Lisa fell ill. She had a stroke and wrestled with diabetes and hypertension. She comforted herself, remembering how things had not always been this way. Then Sara came into her life again.

"We opened Greater Vision in 2018 and I reached out to Lisa," Sara says. "I knew she was struggling. She was one of the first five clients."

Greater Vision Outreach helps meet the essential physical and spiritual needs of working families who are struggling to financially stay afloat. By offering food and clothing supplements, health and education programs, and referral and preventive services, the ministry provides help to keep vulnerable families together.

"Lisa's goals were realistic," Sara says. "She wanted reliable transportation, to save and pay down her debt and improve her credit score, and grow spiritually and be involved in church again."

For the next few years, Lisa learned to handle trials better. She has improved her credit rating, is saving money, and is earning her GED. She has dreams of entering the associate nursing degree program at the community college.

Throughout Lisa's journey with BCH, she has made remarkable strides. There have been a few bumps in the road but she has never given up, working hard on improving her life and setting and reaching new goals.

"Lisa's success creates a ripple effect," Sara says. "It has produced stability for her entire family. Her adult children have stable lives and Jazmine is involved in sports and does well in academics."

Lisa was one of the first again, when she and Jazmine attended Greater Vision's inaugural cooking classes. Sara had dreamed of offering clients this education experience. The two learned how to cook fresh, healthier food, impacting their family's well-being and building new impressive skills. They are proud of their joint accomplishment that adds to living their best life ever.



Families benefit from learning to cook healthy food

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Greater Vision Outreach Ministry addresses food insecurities and eating healthier in a variety of ways. Client Lisa and her daughter Jazmine (see page 6) are not alone in their struggle to eat healthy. More people experience financial hardships now than a decade ago, and the effects of lower wages and longer hours place a burden on being healthy. Food education and learning cooking skills can help.

Experts point out that people at the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum face challenges with eating well. A Tufts University study found that lower income families have poor diets



compared to people with higher income levels. That stands to reason. To obtain groceries, transportation must be available, stores with fresh produce and good prices must be available, and the

know-how to prepare healthy and filling meals must be available.

“It began with an idea,” Greater Vision Outreach Director Sara Becker says. “I wanted to offer cooking classes to our clients. I knew it would take more than what we could do. We needed partners. It was amazing to see what God did next.”

Grace and Cary Kanoy learned about Greater Vision and were impressed with how the ministry serves their clients. A partnership developed.

“It is our passion to connect people to healthy food,” Cary says. “Our online farmers market Piedmont Fresh brings produce, meats, and artisan foods directly to consumers.”

Greater Vision provided space to help Piedmont Fresh, becoming a weekly food distribution hub. The online farmers market is a food system that supports local farmers and food artisans. The husband and wife are also committed to the Davidson County Local Food Network that works “towards



Above, week-one students began by learning how to cut vegetables and how to use a knife correctly and safely. Left, healthy meals using fresh ingredients and flavor-enhancing techniques were prepared during classes. Below, class participants were able to taste their dishes and celebrate their accomplishments. Below right, a Spanish speaking family were all hands on deck in preparing their dish. Photo credits: Cary Kanoy

building an equitable and resilient food system for the health and economic welfare of our community.”

Teaching people to eat better and placing value on eating better was just what Sara envisioned. The Kanoys’ expertise was needed for her idea to grow. Grace applied for and received a grant to fund two once-a-week for four weeks cooking classes for Greater Vision clients. The idea now had roots and was growing quickly. The couple had been hoping to offer cooking classes and now they had a pilot opportunity.

With the addition of Chef Jonathon Seelig of Kitch-enology as the class instructor, a curriculum was developed and the two classes were scheduled. Each cohort could include interested clients

and family members. The second cohort would be presented in Spanish with translators.

The classes introduced food handling and safety, knife essentials, cooking techniques like



sautéing and blanching, and how to store and serve leftovers. Clients and their family members prepared a dish each class and were given a box of ingredients used in that week’s class to prepare the meal again at home the next day.

“Improving lifestyles,” Sara asserts, “is adding quality to living. The skills learned are skills they can teach their children and make a difference in the health of future generations.”

Sadly, eating unhealthy is generational. Doing “easy” or what’s most convenient is understandable when one works hard and tries to make ends meet. That is why learning to prepare healthy food is essential. Simple ingredients. Cooking from scratch. It is liberating when someone experiences healthy eating.

“We were seen and felt affirmed in our calling.” — Jessica Branch

Branch family encouraged meeting like-minded families

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Getting on the road at the Branch home is much like that of any young family who is going on a trip. It’s a tag team approach featuring mom and dad, Jessica and Justin. Check-in for the Foster Care Retreat is at 4:00 and it is a three-hour trip. The four children are excited and have asked dozens of questions. Suitcases are packed, tum-mies are filled, and all are dressed. There is of course a lost shoe, and fostering a little girl about the same age as their youngest—both toddlers—keeps one or both parents rounding up the little ones with the efficiency of an Australian shepherd. All the while, the adults are readying themselves to head out the door to buckle the children in the car and leave to arrive on time.

Jessica and Justin have been married for nearly 15 years and have three biological children: Bennett (10), Evie (5), and Ellis (18 mos). Justin is the worship pastor at Rich Fork Baptist Church in Thomasville. Jessica is a stay-at-home mom and home schools.

When Jessica taught in schools, the students who came from troubled homes, needing and wanting

love, weighed heavy on her heart.

It was around that time when the couple felt the Lord stirring in their hearts about becoming foster parents.

“Becoming a parent made me more aware,” Justin recounts. “I experienced the beauty of loving a child, unconditionally, and realized every child deserves that kind of love—to know they are created with a purpose and are valued.”

After moving back to North Carolina from Texas in 2022, the couple learned about Baptist Children’s Homes’ (BCH) foster care program,

applied, and began training. They were licensed in March 2023 and received their first placement in June that year, which lasted four months. Their second placement came in April 2024—a little girl. She was 13 months old.

“You cannot find the layers of care BCH provides anywhere else,” Jessica says. “They are supportive and help you to be successful. They stand with you. You know they are in your corner, praying with us and for us.”

Navigating fostering has daily challenges. Caring for the child takes a commitment, but fostering is not just about the foster child, it is about the child’s family as well.

The Foster Care Retreat was held March 28-30 at Lake Junaluska Conference & Retreat Center near Waynesville. The event began Friday at 5:00 p.m. and lasted until lunch on Sunday. It was the first of two slated for 2025. Fifteen couples attended with 42 biological and foster children. The retreat is for foster families who have been recruited, trained, and licensed as EVERY CHILD Foster Care Families and designed to be a time of encouragement, worship, learning, and refreshment. The Fall Retreat is set for September 19-21

To see the brokenness can hurt. Foster care is beautiful and hopeful but there is tragedy. The hope is reunification while focusing on what is best for the child.

“We are the ones witnessing and celebrating her first words, her first steps,” Justin says. “We feel for the mom and dad. We are not trying to take their daughter. We are loving her and caring for her until things hopefully get better, trusting in God’s plan for her.”

When the Branch family were invited to the inaugural Foster Care Retreat, they were all in.

“They had us at there would be a date night for parents,” Justin chuckles. “It can be almost impossible to get away together as a couple.”



Above, Jessica and Justin Branch have three biological children and are fostering a two and a half-year-old little girl (not pictured). The couple are a trained and licensed EVERY CHILD Foster Care Family—licensed in March 2023. Their family was part of the Inaugural Foster Family Care Retreat held March 28-30. Below, daughter Evie attended VBS-like sessions during the retreat conducted by volunteers from two area churches.



Above, fifteen couples, including BCH CEO David Melber and his wife Tera and BCH EVERY CHILD liaison Rick Norman and his wife Melissa, attended the Spring Retreat. Below, volunteers and staff directed activities for the 42 children. For information about the Fall Retreat at Caraway Conference Center, visit www.bchfamily.org/foster-care-retreats.

at Caraway Conference Center near Asheboro. The retreats are funded through a two-year grant from The Duke Endowment.

Justin says. “They are families like us going through things like us. We felt not alone.”

Foster care families can feel isolated, caring for their bio children and fostering a child(ren). The retreat is an opportunity for BCH staff and volunteers to shower them with love and support. Orchard Church in Waynesville and Ridgeway Baptist Church in Candler provided volunteers.

“There was no doubt in my mind that God wanted this retreat,” BCH’s Foster Care Retreat and Outreach Coordinator Kristin Allmon says. “We were able to show the families that they matter

The weekend is for both parents and children to spend time together in a supportive setting, surrounded by other families who share a similar foster care journey. The retreat is provided at no cost.

“It was incredible to be with other couples committed to fostering,”

in God’s eyes and they matter to us and what we do in ministry to vulnerable children and families.”

BCH CEO David Melber and his wife Tera are the keynote presenters for both retreats. The couple welcomes times to share their story of adoption and their family.



A weekend of rest, connection, and hope

By David Melber, Chief Executive Officer

Nestled in the peaceful beauty of Lake Junaluska, the inaugural Baptist Children’s Homes (BCH) Foster Care Retreat was a weekend to remember. This special gathering was created to provide rest, foster bonding, and create lasting memories for fostering families, bringing together couples and their children who are faithfully answering God’s call to care for children in foster care.

Throughout the retreat, families enjoyed time to slow down and connect—with one another and other like-minded believers walking a similar path. It was heartwarming to see parents meet and form friendships with others who share the same joys and challenges of foster care. These moments of encouragement and shared experience were a reminder that no one walks this journey alone.

Kristin Allmon brought that vision to life through her incredible organization and creativity, and our dedicated directors and case managers poured themselves into every detail to ensure each family and child felt seen, valued, and refreshed.

Tera and I were honored to lead workshops on marriage and the importance of beginning with biblical self-reflection—recognizing that parenting begins with the posture of our own hearts. During this time of learning, parents were invited to examine their own responses, grow in grace, and let God’s truth shape how they care for children from hard places.

While parents attended these workshops, their children were lovingly cared for by volunteers, including BCH board member Mike Leslie and a generous team from his church, Ridgeway Baptist Church in Candler. Their servant hearts created a fun and nurturing environment where kids could laugh, play, and build new friendships.

This retreat was more than just a weekend getaway—it was a picture of the Body of Christ (see page 3) coming together to uplift and support those who have answered the Lord’s call to foster. We are so grateful for everyone who made this possible, and we look forward to what God will continue to do through this growing community of faithful families.

Our next retreat is in September and will be held at Camp Caraway. How can you and your church be involved? Not everyone is called to foster, but everyone can do something. Your support matters. Join us as we walk alongside those making an eternal impact—one child, one family, one faithful step at a time.



Tera and David Melber

Giving smiles away and picking apples lift hearts

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Hurricanes can be devastating. People living in coastal regions have seen winds destroy homes and flood surges keep them from returning to their homes for days and even weeks. When Hurricane Helene made landfall in the Big Bend region of Florida on September 26, 2024, it was at peak intensity. It quickly began tracking northerly. Helene's winds and rain reached North Carolina on the 27th and stalled, pouring copious amounts of water across the western part of the state. Two days of rainfall in the Asheville area reached a record-breaking 9.87 inches. Flooding and mudslides caused massive road closures and destroyed electrical and water systems.

"You train and put plans in place for emergencies," Alverta Bolick Home Administrator Stefanie Effler says, "but the widespread damage could never have been foreseen. Our caregivers took immediate action and began planning the evacuation of our residents."

Alverta Bolick Home in Asheville is one of nine Intellectual Developmental Disabilities (IDD) homes operated by Baptist Children's Homes (BCH). As the storm subsided, a safe route to leave Asheville was mapped out and the residents and care givers traveled to BCH's Broyhill Home in Clyde to shelter.

"It was pretty bad, real windy," IDD resident Rob says. "It was scary. I had never seen anything like it before."

In western North Carolina, buildings were washed away. Roads were gone. There was no water or electricity in most areas and, after the storm abated, there was no idea when power and water would be restored.

"We were impacted by the storm as so many others were," Stefanie recalls, "but our home was still standing. We were safe at Broyhill. Like others in the area, we decided to do what we could, volunteering and helping those



After Hurrican Helene, Reverend Keith Clark was thankful for volunteers who helped harvest apples from his orchard. Below left and pictured left to right are Robert Walker (resident), Henry Intemann (DSP), Rob Powell (resident), Andrew Hensley (resident), Jonathan Woods (community volunteer), Susan Davis (daughter of Rev. Keith Clark), Brian Woods (community volunteer).Below right, Alverta Bolick resident Rob Powell.

hurting and suffering."

The men began helping to distribute supplies, volunteering at Dellwood Baptist Church and Woodland Baptist Church in Waynesville and at Stefanie's home church, Canton First Baptist. The churches had become hubs, distributing essentials to many who had lost so much during the hurricane.

The men were great ambassadors, smiling and encouraging everyone. They took care

bags with food and supplies to the vehicles lined up at the churches and loved petting the people's pets. They ate meals at the three churches with those affected by the storm, always leaving

hearts lifted.

When Stefanie learned that 80-year-old Reverend Keith Clark and his wife Linda were in danger of losing part of their apple harvest, she asked the men if they would like to help. The couple had served as cottage parents at Broyhill Home in the early 70s.

Rev. Clark didn't like asking for help, but his apples needed to be harvested before a hard freeze hit in two days. The Alverta Bolick men joined the other volunteers from the community.

With everyone working, 41.5 bushels of apples were picked in the two days prior to the freeze and saved the harvest. Of all the apples picked, the Alverta Bolick men picked 16 bushels.

"We reached up and picked the apples right off the tree," Rob says. "We picked them and ate some, too. Apples are one of my favorite fruits."

Rev. Clark has cared for the orchard for 25 years. His great grandfather started growing apple trees in 1923. His grandfather became the orchard steward in 1930. His daddy oversaw the orchard when his father was unable to care for the orchard. He helped his daddy, remembering as a small boy picking apples. His daughter Susan and grandson help him now.

"I couldn't have got all the apples in myself," Rev. Clark says. "The volunteers and the men from the home have big

hearts. It sure helped me."

After 22 days away from their home in Asheville, the men were able to return. There were 11 days without power and 20 days before running water was restored. A boil water advisory was



in effect for another month after they returned.

It is humbling to see how the residents are willing to help others. They jump in and work hard. Helping people devastated by Hurricane Helene receive needed supplies or working in an orchard, the shared joy and freely given smiles are like balm, helping others with their loss.



Joy Cove residents experience God's protection

By Jim Edminson, Editor

Hurricane Helene damaged infrastructure, businesses, and homes as it passed through Boone and the surrounding area. Hundreds were relocated in its aftermath. Regional resources were unprepared for the flash floods, landslides, and road collapses that followed. Usually, the foothills and mountains escape hurricanes, but this one pushed hundreds of miles inland and left massive destruction in its wake.

Located nineteen miles north of Boone is Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) two Joy Cove Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (IDD) homes— Lindsay Home for Women and Three Forks Home for Men. The drive to Joy Cove was treacherous to navigate after the storm quieted. But in the midst of the destruction, the long driveway up to the homes was undamaged.

Staff stayed awake during the night while residents slept, listening to the hurricane winds whipping. They could hear trees snapping on the back side of the mountain. It was terrible. But the next day, residents and care givers were surprised that there was little damage and only a few tree limbs in the yards.

"The homes sit high on a hill," Laura Combs, administrator (QP) for the two homes, recounts. "It was miraculous. Despite the chaos all around, the homes were minimally impacted and the eight residents were safe. It was their sanctuary. The Lord protected."

At the bottom of the drive, "it was like a war zone." The road to the right was washed out. Trees were down everywhere and mudslides washed across the landscape. The little church down the road was gone.

Without power or water, plans were made quickly to shelter the residents of both homes at Mills Home in Thomasville. The drive south to Boone the next day was bumper to bumper and lines at gas stations were long. The normal 20-minute drive to Boone took almost an hour and a half. Arriving at Little Cottage, they were welcomed by BCH leaders and Mills Home staff. Every need was met. Eight days later, they were able to return to their home.

"The men and ladies were amazing," Lindsay Home caregiver (DSP) Martha Whisnant says. "They knew we had a plan and that they were



Joy Cove's Lindsay and Three Forks Homes weathered Hurricane Helene after it wreaked havoc across western North Carolina. Above, residents Ben, Margaret, Matt, Victoria, Rebecca, RL, Ty, and Maria. Below, caregivers Billie Proctor and Martha Whisnant and Joy Cove QP Laura Combs.

safe. Although there was some anxiousness, they remained calm. The IDD home residents' safety and well being are always our priority."

Seeing how the community was working together to help each other was inspiring. The two homes attend Brushy Fork Baptist Church located not far from Joy Cove. The storm sent water

and debris onto the property, damaging the fellowship hall and leaving a thick layer of mud in the parking lot. Looking beyond their woes, church members began to clear things away to establish the church as a distribution hub. Residents from the homes joined others in volunteering. Needed water

and supplies were trucked in almost daily and unloaded. It was then divided and made available to people who remained in desperate need nearly two weeks after the storm.

"When you see how the storm impacted the area all around us," Martha says, "you see just

how God meets every need, putting what you need or placing the right people to meet your need. You realize how the Lord is with you and helping you get through trying times."

Life has returned to normal in the Joy Cove homes. Breakfast and chores are completed early. Some residents have places to be, some have jobs. Others stay busy around the home. Everyone is back in place by dinner. The normal things are talked about but occasionally someone brings up the night of the big storm.



SIGN UP TO BE A
PRAYER
PARTNER

Join with us to receive monthly emails with specific ways you can pray for vulnerable boys and girls and all those we serve at Baptist Children's Homes.

VISIT [BCHFAMILY.ORG/PRAYER](https://bchfamily.org/prayer) TO SIGN UP OR SCAN THE QR CODE





Join us in giving thanks for moms and dads.

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

Example of inside name listings:

MOTHER

In honor of Mrs. Edith G. Banks
Given by Joseph and Mary Banks
In memory of Jane W. Smith
Given by Her Children

FATHER

In memory of Edward R. Morrison
Given by Edith Morrison
In honor of William F. Hughes
Given by Jennifer Phillips

MOTHER & FATHER

In memory of Mr. & Mrs. R. Jones
Given by Daughters Beth and Sarah

**Hurry!
Deadline is
July 1.**

**Questions?
For more information,
call 336-474-1209.**

Remember Mom and Dad

"Honor your father and mother."

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



Remember Mom and Dad! Make an honor or memorial gift.

Please check the appropriate box: ☐ Honor ☐ Memorial

In Honor or Memory of _____

Send Notice of Gift to _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

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

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

Name _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Give by credit card online at www.bchfamily.org/momanddad or call Faith Frazier at 336-474-1312.

Pete Knight helps recognize Vietnam veterans — Alumni prayer concerns and remembrances

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

Remember, this year's Homecoming dates are August 1, 2, and 3!

I became a bit concerned about **Pete Knight** several weeks ago when I opened my computer to Facebook and there he was, in a hospital bed looking like he was on his last leg. It was not a pretty sight to behold. His brother **Joe Knight** was in the room with him, so I relaxed a little because Joe's face looked relaxed without a worry on his mind. Being unable to pick up details from the pictures I saw, I made a phone call or two to find out what was going on but had no luck. Well, time marches on and I really needed to know if Pete was okay, so I just called Joe. Joe did not answer, so I called Pete himself. Well, that fellow was up and at 'em, going strong, out with his lovely wife surveying the countryside, but he took the time to give me six years' worth of history about his heart strings and for that I am so grateful. It all began around 2019 when he was at a church ready to be a part of the day's program. The pastor asked for all to rise for the morning prayer, so Pete rose. In just a few short minutes, Pete's heart began a double rapid fierce pounding in his chest. He plopped back into his seat with his own quick diagnosis of fibrillation. Somehow he got through the rest of the service. Lucky for Pete, a few years passed with no similar problems until just a few weeks ago. That put fear in his heart so he made a visit to his doctor. Not to be messed with, the doctor told him he needed to make a visit to the Elkin hospital for an electric shock. The doc also explained the simple shock procedure and it took away most of the fear and dread for Pete. To Elkin he went. When he awoke, he did not remember anything about the medical procedure, but he did remember his wife **Judy** sitting nearby

waiting to drive him home to 2712 Sloan's Mill Rd., Hamptonville, NC, 27020. Now he wishes to send his deep appreciation to all who have asked about him, sent cards, or lifted prayers on his behalf. He is back going strong in all aspects of his life but especially those related to the well-being of his country. He is well known in the Yadkin County part of our state partly because he ran for a public office and partly because he is past president of the NW Piedmont Purple Heart Association and is a member of the Yadkin County Veterans' Council. Also, he often takes part in military funerals across the state. So it was no surprise when he was approached about ten years ago to handle a very important task for the US Department of Defense. That task is to find as many people as he can who served the USA during the Vietnam War. After verifying certain important information about these people, he is charged with preparing and presenting a certificate to them verifying their contributions to this country during that war time period. This recognition is part of an effort to make up for there having been no effort after that war to honor those people who so honorably and valiantly served this country. Because of this wonderful program carried out by the US Department of Defense and citizens like Pete Knight, many US citizens who had never been recognized for their war time service for this country, have now received well-earned recognition. Several Mills Home people are in that group.

We learned a short time ago that **Harry Walls** had not been feeling well lately and then learned more specifically he had had two or three strokes. The word "stroke" strikes fear in almost everyone's heart so we are resting more securely in the last few days to learn he is

feeling better and regaining some strength. He has actually already signed on again for the NC Senior Games. He has entered them many times and returned home with record wins since their inception. His wife **Marie** has given him a bit of rest lately by typing some of his messages for facebook or email. I thanked her for that and for the reminder that she and Harry had enjoyed their second anniversary back in November and are obviously well into their 3rd year of marriage. They had been sweethearts at Mills Home, and lost touch with each other after Harry went into the Army and Marie went back to California where she was born. Friends might wish to send "get-well wishes" to Harry at this address: 800 W. Holy Hill Rd., Thomasville, NC 27360.

A note appeared on Facebook on April 3 from **Jim Hamby** saying: "Sissy went to Heaven this morning. Thank you all for your prayers. We're going to miss her big time."

Sissy was known at Mills Home as **Mary Hamby** and later as **Mary Whisnant**. She was the sister of Jim and the late **Larry Hamby** who entered Mills Home in 1959. Friends may send condolences to Jim at this address: 4214 Duff D. Hudson, NC 28638.

We were saddened to learn that **Mary Hunt Williams** died on March 21. Mary was the oldest of the four Hunt sisters who entered Mills Home in 1948. The others were **Polly, Martha, and Betty**. Two other sisters who did not live at MH were **Carolyn and Lynn**. Mary is survived by a son, **Larry Transou (Cheryl)**; a daughter, **Patti Shew (Russ)**; four sisters, **Martha Pridgen (Ed); Betty Marion; Carolyn Hall (Warren); and Lyn Marshall**; six grandchildren; and eight great grandchildren. Mary worked at Hunter Publishing Company for 30 years. She was a member of Palmyra Methodist

Church in Germantown, NC and was active in the Palmyra Women's Organization. She resided at Creekside Terrace Senior Living in Winston Salem, NC.

There was a memorial service held on Monday, March 24 at Palmyra Methodist Church with **Pastor Alicia Bowman** officiating. The family received friends following the service in the fellowship hall. The family requested that memorials be made to Baptist Children's Homes of NC, PO Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27361-0338. The family welcomes online condolences at www.burroughsfuneralhome.com.

A last minute note from **Phil Christman** from Facebook: "I've been in the hospital for the past seven or eight days and from the sounds from other patients on this floor, I'm in GREAT shape! Thanks to **Dana, Scott, Joan, Liz, Sony** and these great surgeons and staff I've got one more chance! On now to rehab! However, I do have a little ol' heart valve replacement coming up in a few weeks! Thanks to my family!"

Please begin looking around to locate items you will be willing to donate to the Homecoming Annual Silent Auction. It has been a great source of shopping opportunity and competitive bidding, good fun, and a great fundraiser for the Alumni Association for many homecomings. **Cecelia Townsend Wilkerson** says please deliver all items to **Cecelia and Mark** at the gym upon your arrival Homecoming weekend.

Brief reminders: Changes to addresses go to florapatton@ctc.net. Questions about the Columbarium go to **Sharon D. Stiles** at 704-685-2443.



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



Couple welcomes son to their family

Brandon and Reed's adopted son was born on Reed's birthday. They have chosen open adoption with the birth mom.



Girl and mother collect Easter baskets

Divine Vaughan and her mother, Tina, delivered 76 Easter baskets for the foster children we serve in West Central NC.



Brothers worship a risen Savior

Ben and R.L. celebrate Easter at Brushy Fork Baptist Church. The brothers live at Joy Cove Ministries in Zionville.



Friends of Children volunteers help

Oak Ranch in Broadway saw volunteers of all ages participate in its Spring Friends of Children missions day.



School collects items for missions week

Students at Sheets Memorial Christian School in Lexington collected food for BCH children for its missions emphasis.



Retreat uplifts the birth mothers

Their were 15 re-dedications and professions made by birth mothers at the retreat by Christian Adoption Services.



Pastor Luis leads sunrise service

Children, cottage parents and staff gathered at Mills Home amphitheater as Pastor Luis led the Resurrection Sunday service.



Odum Home blessed by local WMU

WMU from St. James Missionary Baptist in Lake Waccamaw collected food for children at Odum Home in Pembroke.



Friends aid at Cameron Boys Camp

Volunteers tackled a variety of service projects at Cameron Boys Camp for its Spring Friends of Children event.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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



MAY

- 2: Christian Adoption Services (CAS) Rocky Mount, NC Golf Tournament
- 6: North Carolina Baptist Aging (NCBAM) - AAIM State Leadership Conference Thomasville, NC
- 7-10: Ride to Clyde motorcycle ride - ridetoclyde.com

JUNE

- 18-22: Camp BAM, NCBAM, ncbam.org

AUGUST

- 23: Hope in Style, Greensboro Country Club - hopeinstyle.org

FRIENDS OF CHILDREN

Saturday one-day missions for all ages--

- May 10: Kennedy Home, Kinston
- May 17: Odum Home, Pembroke
- Sept 6: Oak Ranch, Broadway
- Sept 13: Kennedy Home, Kinston
- Sept 20: Mills Home, Thomasville
- Sept 20: Odum Home, Pembroke
- Sept 20: Camp Duncan, Aberdeen
- Oct 4: Cameron Boys Camp



Info and registration at bchfamily.org/foc



every CHILD foster & adoption ministry

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

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.

Call Sam Barefoot at 336.474.1224



#3641

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

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



David Melber to speak at Homecoming, June 7 & 8 — Please send articles about growing up at KH

By **John Thompson**, 102 Maritime Court, Havelock, NC 28532 (252) 671-3515 jbsthompson43@gmail.com

The 2025 Kennedy Home Homecoming is right around the corner—June 7 and 8. Have you made your plans to attend this year? Our guest preacher-speaker will be our brand new “CEO”, **David Melber**. He is looking forward to visiting and getting to know our alumni. He and his wife **Tera** will be staying in the duplex right in the middle of campus. They will be arriving on Saturday. So, be sure to give them a real warm alumni welcome. Hurry and make your motel arrangements. I hope you already have them.

Larry Gilliam, our alumni president, called a meeting of the alumni officers and I was able to attend. We made all the plans for the whole weekend. Larry is a very good leader for the alumni. Below is a schedule of some of the Homecoming event so you will know what time to arrive. We begin the day with a great Car Show. You will see show class and road class cars, trucks, and motorcycles. There will also be a hot dog lunch. **Clayton Pate** has worked very hard to invite folks to come and show their vehicles. The show begins at 9:00 a.m. and will last until 1:00.

Registration is 1:00-3:00 in the gym. From 12:00-3:00 p.m. the Silent Auction will take place in the gym. Bring your donations and help to set up in the gym. Bingo with prizes is 2:30-3:30.

Supper is at 5:00 in the gym and the cost is included in your registration. The Business Meeting starts at 6:30. Contact Larry at 252-833-0389 with any agenda items—including nominations for new officers. Following the business meeting, there will be a time of just plain old fellowship until you go to your motel.

Sunday begins with coffee and refreshments from 9:00-10:00. Sunday school is in the church sanctuary with **Donald Wetherington** teaching from 10:00-10:30.

Following Sunday school, I will leading choir practice in the choir loft. Let's try to fill it. **Doris Russ** will be playing the piano this year. Spread the word to help us have a huge choir.

Worship is from 11:00 until 12:30 and will include our pledges to the flags and several different speakers. **CEO David Melber** will bring the morning message along with several folks giving testimonies.

Lunch is served at 12:30 at the gym and is provided by the Kennedy Home Administration.

The group photo at Cedar Dell is at 2:00. You will not want to miss it! The photo will go on our Kennedy Home facebook page for all to see.

Tours of Cedar Dell and the farm are from 2:00-4:00. Please make plans for Saturday and Sunday.

Penny Maready Batten, daughter of **Mr. and Mrs. Earl Maready** who were houseparents of Williams Cottage, reached out recently. I remember Earl working in the garage on the campus. He was very nice to Becky and me by coming over to our house to work on my vehicle. Penny was one of my best piano students also. Penny wrote a note to let us know that **James Franklin Pender**, 72, of LaGrange went to be with the Lord. **Mr. and Mrs. Jones** were houseparents at Lenoir Cottage after the Lord called them to serve on the campus. I was looking through all my papers and found an article about **Nanette Maready**. She is Penny's sister. I know the Maready family is proud of her also. After graduating from North Lenoir High School in Kinston, Nanette was included in the listing “Who's Who Among American High School Students.” She was also a member of the National Honor Society in her junior and senior year.

Katie Parker wrote me a note thanking everyone for all their prayers and support for her sister **Avon**. She is at home taking

breathing treatments and strong antibiotics and resting. Avon still needs for us to keep praying for her. Katie and Avon have always been big helpers with Homecoming activities.

Lou Pearl Simmons was a house-mother at Pollock Cottage when my wife **Becky** and I were called to serve the Lord at Kennedy Home from 1972-1977. Right away, she became one who helped us learn how to work and how to help all the folks at Kennedy Home. She showed us the ropes of what to do working with more than 130 children. Some time after Lou Pearl went to be with the Lord, her daughter wrote a note to me. Her daughter found a letter in her mother's bible and sent a copy to me. I'm going to give you some of the things that came right out of Lou Pearl's heart. It begins with a little history. This is what she wrote: “It was in 1912 that **Captain and Mrs. William Lafayette Kennedy** gave their estate of 1,200 acres for an orphanage. They asked to keep 50 acres and Cedar Dell mansion as long as they lived. The first cottage was built and opened in 1914 which was Biggs Cottage. Mrs. Kennedy was still wanting there to be another cottage. Mr. Kennedy had given her diamonds for her birthday, Christmas, and their anniversary. She had a large broach made of diamonds but she was not satisfied until she asked Mr. Kennedy to sell the diamonds back to the place in New York where he bought them. So he did and she had Hardee Cottage built. It was finished in 1917. The day the keys were turned over to her, she died that night. Mr. Kennedy died in 1927. From time to time, another cottage would be added. Pollock was built in 1935. This made 11 cottages in all, two all-girl cottages and three all-boy cottages. We also have six family-style cottages where brothers and sisters would live in the same house. Did

you know it took 35-60 half-gallon containers of milk per month and 40-60 dozen eggs per month plus all the other good food we had to feed the children? I also remember our drapes were in real bad shape but someone gave us some new ones. At that time we got 22% of the total Thanksgiving offering. If we did not get the Thanksgiving offering, 30% of our children would have needed to leave.”

Lou Pearl asks where would the children go? Jesus said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me.”

I was told that Mr. Kennedy would sit on the porch and talk to the children and give them some money for every dead mouse they would bring to him. He couldn't see very well, so some would bring the same mouse over and over.

I need many Kennedy Home youngins' to write me a letter to share in my column. I think this would really be appreciated by all the folks who contribute regularly to the Baptist Children's Homes.

Please remember me in your prayers. My health isn't doing to well. As you know, I am 81 now. One of my sons, **Scott** and his wife **Melisa**, invited me to come live with them. I really appreciate this. It seems that I am beginning to fall a lot. I used the walker for a while but now I am trying not to use it. My other son, **Johnny** and his family, take me to meetings and places I have to attend. The Lord has really given me a great and loving family.

Send me some letters to share! Mail them to: 102 Maritime Court, Havelock, North Carolina, 28562 I really need your help if I am to continue writing my column every issue. Love to you and all the KH youngins. — jt



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

"Whosoever" invited to come

By Jim Edminson, Editor

The downtown area congregations, led by ecumenical ministers, walked along Main Street. The Methodist praise band filled the air with music, calling the crowd to worship on this Palm Sunday. The believers follow a 50-year tradition as they walk with palm branches upheld, uniting for the joint outside service.

How wonderful to be part of a community that gathers on the Sunday morning before Easter to join together, to hear the Word, to sing psalms and songs, to unite in prayer, and to witness with their presence the work of the Spirit among them. The churches' five to seven block walk echoes the steps of predecessors who saw value in being a group traversing a common way to meet God in preparation of Holy Week.

I am a proponent of walking. Lacing my shoes most days of the week, I trek my neighborhood along a path forged months ago. Most days, I am a solitary walker; some days I walk along with others, encountering like-minded neighbors. The discipline is important since sometimes the spirit is weak, but I am always glad to have walked when I return to my desk, lungs filled and limbs limbered, ready to tackle my work once more.

From baby's first steps, to walking to the front of the room to give a speech in the fifth grade or across the stage to receive a high school or college diploma, to walking down an aisle to begin the journey of matrimony, to stepping into the hospital room of a dying father or mother and putting one foot in front of another with hands held firm, carrying the body of a loved one to their final resting place, walking is a natural part of living. We are made to walk. From the design of our hips to the construction of our feet, walking is intended as our primary form of locomotion.

Walking benefits both physical and mental health. Weight management, reducing risks of heart disease, stroke, and high blood pressure, and lowering risks of chronic disease such as cancer, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's. Walking releases endorphins, reducing stress and anxiety. I contend it benefits the spirit as well.

Our Savior while on this earth demonstrated the benefits of walking as He ministered along His way, meeting people where they were and journeying with them as He taught and counseled, calling them to better versions of themselves. His example, in more ways than one, showed His people the way to be fully human.

Jesus walked in and out of the desert where He repelled temptation and communed with the Father. He walked from Nazareth to Cana and performed his first miracle at the request of His mother. He walked on water and walked in triumph on that first Palm Sunday to the adulation of the crowd. He walked up to Jerusalem and to death upon a cross to save you and me from our sins and unrighteousness. And He walked out of a borrowed tomb in resurrection glory three days later!

Scholars estimate from New Testament accounts that Jesus walked approximately 3,125 miles during his three-year ministry, traveling throughout Galilee and Judea. In all of that walking, our Lord encountered a range of people with various intents and beliefs, with both common and unique needs, and He walked with them. He does the same for us now. Many are the believers who can testify to the eternal benefits of walking with the Savior.

Kathy and I walk on vacation trips. We hold hands, window shop, and talk as we observe the world around us. We slow down and find ourselves smiling at people, offering a friendly hello as we pass by or when our paths intersect. In San Antonio, we walked with jubilant

crowds after the Spurs won a regional championship at the Alamodome. In New Orleans, we trekked all the way down Carrollton Avenue from the French Quarter to Audubon Park. We walked through each of Savannah's twenty-two squares and along harrowing mountain cliffs near Abiquiu, New Mexico. We strolled arm in arm along Michigan Avenue in Chicago with no particular destination in mind—each time, united by a life-long love for each other.

Walking, celebrating God's incredible creation, being renewed by the Spirit through prayer and thanksgiving. Walking, following Jesus. He calls us to come after Him. He invites us, time and again, to commune with Him, to learn His ways, to unite with other like-minded believers to accomplish what He sets for us to do in this life.

For more than an hour, following the services at the downtown churches, congregants worshiped together in the town square. The people, called by Christ's own name, bowed heads, raised voices, smiled, and listened. This crowd waved palm branches and called Hosanna! It was a beautiful flashback to Jesus's triumphal walk to Jerusalem. And just a few days later, He gave His very life to save us from sin.

He still ushers "whosoever" into everlasting fellowship with the One God upon profession of faith. He still invites "whosoever" to walk with Him in spirit and in truth. And, dear people, "whosoever" surely means each of us. Let's listen and respond as the Lord Jesus Christ speaks: "Come. Follow me."



**Whatever your VBS theme,
make vulnerable children
your mission.**

Designate Baptist Children's Homes as your missions emphasis for your VBS.

Call to schedule your Baptist Children's Homes speaker to share the stories and the needs.

Download an information sheet, activity pages and other resources to share with your children.

Your VBS children will learn how prayers and support can help the lives of vulnerable NC boys and girls.

Information and resources for your VBS can be found at bchkids.org

