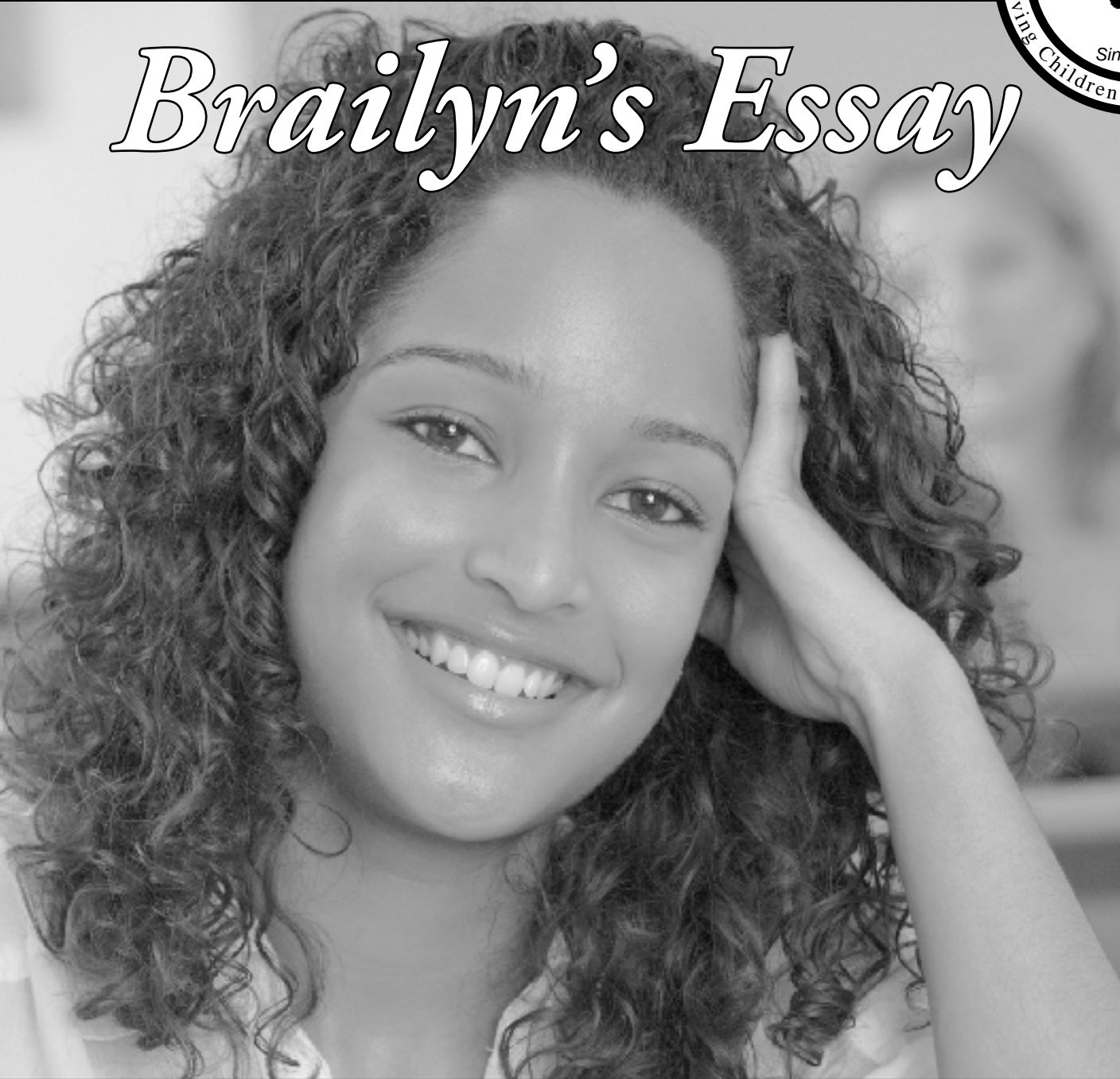


The Record

News from Epworth Children's Home



Brailyn's Essay



Brailyn has lived at Epworth for nearly two years. She is a senior at Dreher High School and recently turned 18. Her smile is contagious and she carries herself with confidence and self-respect.*

Recently, Brailyn completed a stack of college and scholarship application essays. She gave Epworth permission to reprint one of her essays below. The complete essay is provided with no changes to her original work.

Walking to my so called home, heart pounding louder and louder, I pass through trees and dirt rocks. The closer I get, the more my heart cries from knowing this day I will be just like a turtle trying to get to the other side of the mountain. I pray that God puts his shield over me to cover my scornful bruises and block out the bruises soon to come. This place is where my life began, but in my heart I knew this wasn't where it would end. After those exhausting 14 years of my life, I was placed in foster

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A Larger Mission

Spring 2013

A Message from The Rev. John Holler
President

Dr. James Anglin (who has been a periodic visitor on Epworth's campus) in his book *Pain, Normality and the Struggle for Congruence*, conducted extensive research with troubled youth and their staff in 10 Canadian group care facilities. He was surprised to find that the four letter word that group home residents used to describe their life experience was PAIN. All the youth who were interviewed spoke of deep emotional distress in their lives. Yet, when staff were interviewed they used labels for the youth's behavior like "disruptive" or "behaviorally disordered." Dr. Anglin now suggests a more accurate description of the negative behavior of many children would be "pain-based behavior."

The authors of the book *Deep Brain Learning: Pathways to Potential with Challenging Youth* remind the reader that Cornell University's, Dr. Will Bronfenbrenner's basic belief was "trusting bonds with children are the most powerful force in building healthy brains and behavior." Bronfenbrenner would articulate his belief by saying, "every child needs at least one adult who is irrationally crazy about him or her." Without trustworthy relationships and adults who care deeply, a child's chance for healthy development and productive behavior rapidly diminishes.

The authors of *Deep Brain Learning* go on to remind the reader that young people thrive in ecologies with caring families, concerned teachers, positive peers and supportive community. Children reared in unhealthy ecologies are likely to experience a host of emotional, behavioral and learning difficulties.

Epworth Children's Home is deeply committed to creating a culture that, at every level, is reflective of a caring, healthy ecology. Every resource at our disposal is used to move closer to the place where behavior, motivation and thought are not driven by pain or deficits, but rather by residing in a place where the bedrock is safety, the foundation is trust, and the building material is the unconditional positive regard

for and the belief in the unlimited potential of each child.



Part of the mission of Epworth Children's Home is to provide food, clothing and shelter for children who are in significant distress. A much larger part of our mission is to provide the resources and environment where every child who enters our campus has the opportunity to develop his or her God-given potential in a way that leads to a rich and productive life.

Brailyn's Essay

Continued from Cover

care. From then on my life changed tremendously for the better.

At home with my biological family, I was beaten and abused in so many ways it's hard to express them all. Not only that, but I was treated as if I wasn't worthy of living and was blamed for everyone else's downfalls. I was the light skinned child and because of that I was hated even more. My mother disliked me, and I could always see it in her eyes, the things she'd say and the stuff she would do, but I didn't let that take my life. I watched and basically took care of all my younger siblings. I nurtured them, fed them and held them when they were hurt. I cooked, cleaned and helped everyone even though I was treated so awfully. Through this all, I knew these people, who seemed to be the worst, brought me into this world and I would always consider them family because that fact would never change. Although this may have broken my heart, it didn't break me.

Years passed and finally I was placed into foster care. Here is where I knew in my heart that I had to take a major turn in my life. Just the thought of having support and comfort made my heart burst with joy. I was placed into a foster home with about six to seven

other children and teens. In this foster home, I was treated like family, but of course it wasn't perfect. My everyday routine was to get up early in the morning, dress the kids, get myself ready, go to school, return home, clean, watch kids, get them ready for another day, do my homework and start this routine all over. I knew being there wasn't the best, but this home was a major step from where I began. So I told myself to make the best of this and keep pushing forward.

Now, at the age of 18, I'm still in foster care loving and enjoying my life at Epworth Children's Home. Here is where my family lives. This is my home. During this time that I've been here, I've become more independent. I complete all school assignments without being told, I manage my time wisely and I take it upon myself to do extra activities at Epworth. I've become more involved by participating in cheerleading, FBLA [Future Business Leaders of America], and the school pageant for 2012-2013. Most importantly, my thinking has changed from resentment to delight, sadness to happiness, and fear to security. Being a part of the Epworth family has made me the resilient woman that I am and will always be.



This year's Moe's Burrito Dash, sponsored by Moe's Columbia, was a fun "filling" event! People of all ages came out to run and volunteer. Youth groups, scout groups and schools stood on the side lines with signs and water as they cheered on the runners. Epworth was awarded a check for \$3000 in honor of the six winners of the race. More than 250 runners took the challenge of running the 5k and eating a "racewrecker" burrito at the half way mark. We encourage all our Friends to begin training for next year's race. You can walk or run, and the burrito is optional, unless you want a chance at the prize money. Throughout the morning, in the midst of all the laughs and cheers, the message for the day was,

"HOPE IS UNSTOPPABLE!"



The Flemming's Legacy

Mr. William "Bill" Flemming came to live at Epworth Orphanage in 1932 at the young age of seven. His father became ill and his mother wasn't able to take care of him and his two sisters. "My pastor and a congressman worked it out so I would go live at Epworth," he said. "My sisters stayed with my mother. They thought a boy could take care of himself, so they sent me to Epworth." Five years later, when Mr. Flemming was 12 years old, his father died of Tuberculosis.

In the late 1930's Epworth, and the world in general, were very different places than they are today. Farming was a way of life and Epworth had more than 250 children living on nearly 400 acres. Mr. Flemming remembers those days well. He tells stories of working on the farm at Epworth. In the mornings, half of the boys would work the

farm and the other half would go to school. In the afternoons, they would switch. "Oh, I've broke corn, picked tomatoes, shelled corn and bailed hay," he remembers. He didn't share much about his schooling, but on page 19 of the January, 1940 edition of The Epworth Record, it reads, "The following is a list of the honor roll students by grades for the term ending Dec. 8...Sixth Grade – William Flemming."

Two of Mr. Flemming's happiest Epworth memories were of Christmas and his Matron, Edna Paris. "She was so beautiful," he said. "She was just a beautiful person with a beautiful heart. She was like a mother to me," he said. "Christmas was a beautiful time too. The people at USC always brought Christmas. We weren't allowed to ask for anything over \$1.00. We would send our letters to



Society of 1896

Santa.” One year, Mr. Flemming asked for a special type of pocket watch. “What made this watch special was that you could see it at night. It had a little light in it.” Mr. Flemming remembers how happy it made him to unwrap that watch. “There was always a little thing of candy and a piece of fruit in there too.”

After Epworth, Mr. Flemming joined the Marines. He laughs and says, “The Marine Corps was a piece of cake compared to Epworth. I had already learned respect for my fellow man and how to share.” Mr. Flemming experienced a great deal of change as a child: his father’s illness, moving to Epworth, his father’s death and then joining the Marines to name a few. In 1942, Mr. Flemming’s life changed again. While he and a group of Marines were in the ocean test firing a new model of machine gun, a hurricane came up and killed everyone except Mr. Flemming and the one Marine who pulled him from the ocean. He was immediately sent to the Bethesda Naval Hospital in Washington, DC. “That’s where they sent the President,” he said. “It was the day before Thanksgiving, November 24th, 1943. I remember, because I remember what was on the menu for Thanksgiving.”

After his hospital stay, another change came for Mr. Flemming. This change he calls “life saving.” Mr. Flemming met his angel, Mary Johanna Lacovaro, and five weeks later they married. “I had other girls,” he said. “Mary was the only one who ever swept me off my feet, and she did it for 70 years. I don’t have to build Mary up; any lady who’s been with a man for 70 years has to be a special lady.” To hear Mr. Flemming tell his life story, it is undeniable that the love they shared was deep and real. “The good Lord sent her to pick me up, and that was the greatest thing that ever happened to me.”

Mr. Flemming spent the next part of his life as “a little ol’ mail man” in Washington, D.C., delivering mail to the White House. He delivered mail for

Nixon and Kennedy. He retired in ’64, and he and his angel, Mary, settled in Florida with their three children. “We have always been home owners,” he said proudly. “We have a beautiful life and family. We are very blessed.”

On November 17, 2012, Mary Lacovaro Flemming passed away surrounded by her loving family and the caring staff of HPH Hospice Care Center in Brooksville, FL. “Mary loved Epworth,” said Mr. Flemming. “When we were in Sumter visiting my mother, we always drove by to visit with my matron, Edna Paris.” In March of 2013, Mr. Flemming decided to make a generous donation to Epworth in memory of his loving wife. “If it weren’t for Epworth, I would not have made it,” he said. “I want to thank them for what they’ve done for me.” Mr. and Mrs. Flemming are the newest members of the Epworth Society of 1896, and the legacy of care they have chosen to share will continue to transform the lives of every child who calls Epworth home. Their legacy, is the future for the children, and will continue to sustain the ministry of Epworth for years to come. Our thanks to each of them for their faithful witness and generosity to Epworth and the children.

If you would like more information about including Epworth in your will or estate planning, please contact Mrs. Mitzie Schafer, Director of Development, at 803-256-7394.



Kevin's Story

As our seniors begin writing essays for college and scholarship applications, they are often asked to reflect on a significant time in their lives. *Kevin gave Epworth permission to share portions of his essay and his story. He will turn 18 over the summer. He and his three sisters arrived at Epworth in 2008. Kevin wrote about the moment his mother told him they would be living apart for a while. In his words:

"The reason we came to Epworth was because my mother wasn't financially secure and we constantly moved and missed school. One day we stopped moving from house to house and began moving from hotels to motels. My mother sat me down one day and told me that we were going to live without her for awhile until she got back on her feet. My mother didn't tell me she was taking us to a group home though."

Kevin and his sisters arrived at Epworth when Kevin was 13 years of age. He was joined by one of his older sisters who was 15 at the time and his two younger sisters ages 12 and 7. In all, there are 13 siblings in Kevin's family. Kevin and the sisters who came to Epworth with him were the only ones living in SC with their mother at the time. They had moved down from the north a year earlier. Kevin wasn't attending school regularly, nor was he eating on a consistent basis. He remembers not caring about his grades or his behavior, because he had learned that he would move again before he stayed in one place long enough for his grades and misbehavior to follow him. He didn't have to build relationships with anyone and that meant he didn't have to respect anyone's expectations. The day he moved to Epworth he expected that pattern would continue, and he would be back with his mother soon. It didn't take long for Kevin to realize his move

to Epworth would be different.

"I was scared, worried, frustrated and confused about why my mother was leaving us. She really didn't tell us her exact reason. My perspective changed that day. My first night, I didn't sleep because I thought about my future and what I could do to help my mother. I had two choices – I could stay and try to better myself or run away that night and find my mother."

As Kevin shared his story with Mrs. Mitzie Schafer, Director of Development for Epworth, she asked him why he stayed. "My staff saw me staring at the door that night," Kevin answered. "He asked me if I was thinking about running. I didn't say anything, I just kept staring. He told me I had two choices. I could either, stay and handle the situation like a man, or I could leave and let my mother worry about me ending up behind bars because I spent my life angry and foolish."

Mrs. Schafer asked Kevin, "What did you decide?"

"I decided to stay," he replied. "I thought about my father and how he never did anything for me. How he left us and spent time in prison; he lives in a van now. I thought about my mother and how she grew up in foster care too. I thought about how she couldn't support us. I decided I wasn't going to be like that. As I talked to my staff I realized that I wanted more, and staying here would help me do that. I could be different. I am different."

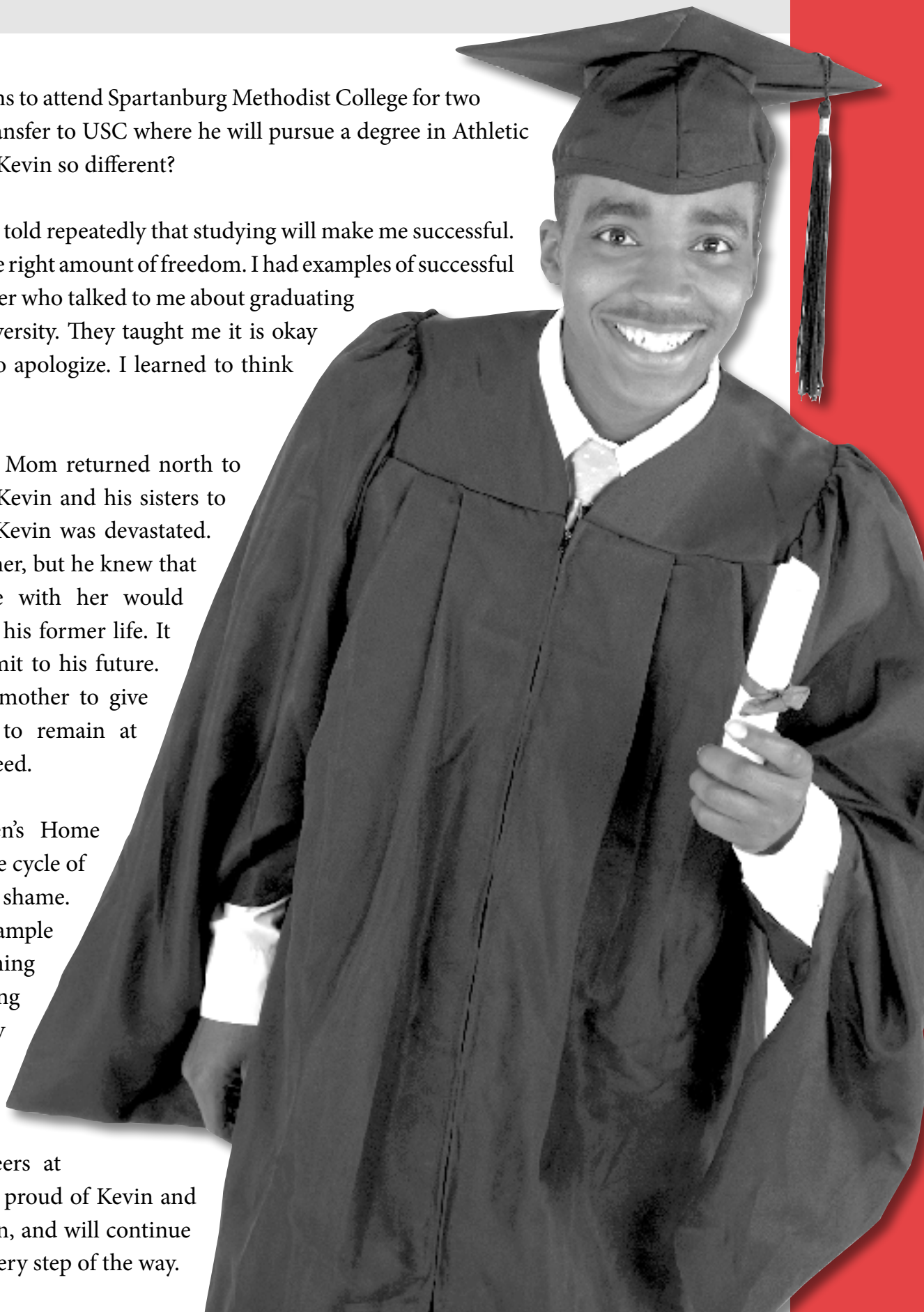
Kevin is indeed different. Kevin maintains high grades. He is a leader for his cottage mates. He has held a part-time job for more than one year in the same place. He considers himself

an athlete. He plans to attend Spartanburg Methodist College for two years and then transfer to USC where he will pursue a degree in Athletic Training. Why is Kevin so different?

“At Epworth I was told repeatedly that studying will make me successful. I was given just the right amount of freedom. I had examples of successful men like Mr. Carter who talked to me about graduating from Claflin University. They taught me it is okay to mess up, but to apologize. I learned to think things through.”

Last year, Kevin’s Mom returned north to live. She wanted Kevin and his sisters to return with her. Kevin was devastated. He loves his mother, but he knew that returning to live with her would mean a return to his former life. It would mean a limit to his future. Kevin asked his mother to give him permission to remain at Epworth. She agreed.

Epworth Children’s Home works to break the cycle of abuse, neglect and shame. Kevin is a clear example of the transforming power of nurturing care and quality life skills lessons children receive at Epworth. The staff and volunteers at Epworth are very proud of Kevin and his transformation, and will continue to be with him every step of the way.





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Rev. John. E. Holler, Jr.
President

**Children's names have been changed for confidentiality.*

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The mission of Epworth Children's Home is to serve children, youth and families through a caring, accepting and safe Christian community, where hurts are healed; hope is nurtured; and faith in God, self and others is developed.

BBQ Thank You



This year's annual Cook-Out-for-Kids BBQ to benefit Epworth was rainy, but successful. The Alumni Association members worked hard for the entire year planning the event to help raise money for the children who call Epworth home today. Donations are still coming in, and final totals will be announced at the annual Alumni Homecoming Weekend. Encourage your church to participate next year by attending, volunteering or (if you are far away) by hosting a BBQ at your church to benefit Epworth. Check out www.epworthchildrenshome.org/alumni for more information. Thanks to the Alumni and all the volunteers who made it such a special day!