

The Record

News from Epworth Children's Home



Khalilah Graduates!

Last year in the Winter issue of The Record, Khalilah shared her Epworth story of how she overcame fear in her life and found stability at Epworth in her teenage years. Being able to live in a structured environment, while keeping in touch with her family, put her on a trajectory for a great future. Part of that future recently became a reality.

On Saturday, May 13, 2017, Khalilah became the first college graduate in her family when she crossed the stage at Clafflin University. She earned a degree in marketing and finished her college degree with honors, earning over a 3.0 grade point average. Khalilah completed her degree while being a part of Epworth's Independent Living Program for young people ages 18-23 who are transitioning from Epworth's cottages into independent adulthood. With degree in-hand, Khalilah is now looking ahead to the next chapter in life, graduate school.

She has already lined up her first post-college jobs. This summer she is working at a local financial advisor's office. As she helps around the office, Khalilah is learning financial advice that many young people in their early twenties have not yet considered. She is learning the benefits of accelerated debt reduction, how to navigate the insurance marketplace, budgeting and the advantages of retirement planning. All of this information is exceptionally timely as is she looking to move into her first apartment later this year and is currently saving to purchase her first car.

Later this summer she will enlist as a counselor in Columbia's City Year AmeriCorps Program. There she will mentor other young people to improve educational outcomes for students and communities. Her City Year program builds from her experience last summer at Clemson University's Emerging Scholars summer camp for disadvantaged

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Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Summer 2017

A Message from The Rev. John Holler
President

YESTERDAY

One Hundred and twenty years ago the Methodist people of South Carolina heard the cries of hundreds of homeless children. With faith, hope, determination and scant financial resources, Epworth Orphanage was established by Annual Conference.

For many people, times were hard and life was harsh. The lingering effects of the civil war, poor health care, contagious diseases with high death rates, wide-spread poverty and lack of societal resources in our rural state contributed to a situation where many children had no one to help sustain them or give them guidance.

The City of Columbia helped the Epworth trustees located and purchase 131 acres of land and a 14 room unfinished home on the outskirts of Columbia for \$6,672.

Epworth quickly earned the reputation of a place for children in need to live. Soon desperate families began to drop their children off on the street at Epworth for their children to be cared for, receive education, learn to work on the Epworth farm and to see themselves as children of God.

When the caring people heard that hundreds of children were filling the cottages at Epworth, many responded by “working a day for Epworth” and donating those wages to the orphanage. On Mother’s Day, they remembered the children who were separated from their mothers. In Sunday School classes, children brought their pennies and nickels to send to Epworth. Epworth’s work day and Mother’s Day offerings and Sunday School collections were, and continue to be, the foundational support for Epworth’s children.

From those humble beginnings, thousands of children and families have turned to Epworth in their time of need. Each child’s situation was wrapped in a sad story, but with Epworth came the opportunity to create a beautiful new future.

As times changed in our nation and state, the old days of an orphanage farm faded into history but the work and the spirit of Epworth remains. Today, hundreds of children, youth and families still turn to Epworth each year for help, hope and healing. Throughout the years, Epworth’s ministry has revolved around one unwavering belief—that every child is a miracle.

TODAY

Today at Epworth, children continue to receive the comprehensive care they need to transform their lives. Epworth’s highly recognized and nationally accredited program was developed in active partnership with Cornell University. The CARE model of residential group care creates a trauma-informed environment for children to heal and grow. Epworth provides and facilitates medical care to overcome medical deficits. Specialized therapist meet with residents, and their families, to heal those emotional scars which may not be visible but are still very real. Epworth emphasizes academic success and provides tutoring to turn grades around at school. Children and youth develop life skills that prepare them for young adulthood, from opening a savings account to interviewing for their first summer jobs. And just as importantly, Epworth encourages each child to grow spiritually and see themselves as the true miracles they are.

Every day at Epworth, children who have experienced loss, abuse and neglect are given a new outlook on life. From excelling in the classroom to experiencing the fun and joys of childhood, children at Epworth are moving toward

lives of accountability, productivity and self-respect. With each step they are distancing themselves from a difficult past and walking boldly into the future.

TOMORROW

As Epworth moves into the future the challenge is to hold on to the things that continue to serve us well, while evolving in order to continue to be relevant in a rapidly changing child care world.

For over ten years South Carolina and other states have been under pressure from our federal government and extremely well-funded and politically influential organizations to remove as many children as possible from children's homes like Epworth, and use alternative placements for children in need of care.

In 2016 Governor Haley signed a class action federal lawsuit settlement that included the agreement that no children under six years of age are to be placed in children's homes, and relatively few children under twelve are to be placed in homes like Epworth.

During this flurry of federal legislation and court action, Epworth Trustees, four years ago, adopted a strategic plan that includes the main goals of:

- I. Continuing to remain a Superior Residential Child Care Ministry
- II. Expanding the Missional Impact Beyond the Campus Boundaries by Diversifying its Programs
- III. Reaching the point of Financial Sustainability in order to operate Independently of Government Funding

Last year Epworth purchased a second campus in order to improve and expand services to children and families. Located on the nineteen acres that join Trenholm Road UMC in Columbia, the property and 14 buildings will enable Epworth to move into the future and remain a leader in child care in our state.

The second campus will enable Epworth to establish, in partnership with other organizations, The Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing. This institute will encompass Epworth's current and expanding array of services and educational initiatives. In addition, Epworth seeks to address the significant need of providing services to children and families in rural South Carolina where there is often a lack of local resources and a support frame work for families in crises.

Every Child Is A Miracle Campaign

The Epworth Board of Trustees and the delegates of the 2017 South Carolina United Methodist Conference have authorized Epworth to conduct its Every Child Is A Miracle financial campaign in order to strengthen and sustain the work of Epworth Children's Home as it moves into its second 120 years.

Why A Campaign At This Time?

Epworth is responding to the changing needs of children and families and the changing landscape of child welfare at a state and federal level. In short, Epworth continues to evolve to meet the challenges of children and families.

The main components of the campaign:

(assuming a \$10,000,000 campaign)

- I. Purchase and renovation of the second campus - \$3,000,000
- II. Strengthen and expand Epworth's programs by creating The Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing - \$3,000,000
- III. Increase the permanent Endowment of Epworth Children's Home - \$3,000,000
- IV. Support our sister institution of Hartzell School and Fairfield Orphanage at Old Mutare Mission in Zimbabwe - \$1,000,000

Over the next few weeks and months the organizational structure of the campaign will be put in place. My hope is that as many of you as possible will assist as Epworth's ambassadors in this campaign in order to continue to help all the children we can as well as we can, with all the resources we gather.

Empowering Gillian's Artistic Expressions

Last Spring, Epworth received a call from Dreher High School that one of our residents, Gillian, had not yet arrived to Art Class. Her cottage staff were concerned, but not surprised. Gillian had done this before. In fact, this was Gillian's 19th tardy to a class since her arrival at Epworth in November.

Gillian, at the age of only 15, has been in and out of foster care since the age of two. She has been enrolled in seven different schools since starting middle school and has never completed an entire year of school in one place. In November, at the age of 14, she was dropped off at the SC Department of Social Services' office by a family member who stated, "Gillian's behavior is out of control." Her behaviors are actually in line with children who experience the trauma of abuse, neglect and/or abandonment. She has multiple siblings spread out across the state in and out of DSS custody. Gillian's story has many facets that Epworth and DSS are still working to unravel.



The opportunity to build trust or have any amount of consistency has not been bestowed upon this young girl. Missing class is an indication that she has not developed an appreciation for her education, and that she is "anticipating" the next move. She is choosing not to engage in something she may learn to care about, like art, which Gillian actually enjoys very much.

Through it all, her staff sees a spark in her that is working its way to the surface. She is learning to shine as her trust and consistent life and schedule grow. In December, one of her sisters was placed at Epworth. Gillian was ecstatic. The staff members work to ensure the two get to spend adequate amounts of time together one-on-one.

Just a few weeks ago she enjoyed a birthday party hosted by her Cottage Partners, a local group of volunteers. Without prompting by staff, Gillian personally thanked each volunteer and expressed how much it meant to her to have a "first" birthday party.

Epworth and Gillian's high school worked to develop a behavior modification plan that Gillian is beginning to accept and embrace. Her grades improved on her last report card, and her school attendance and participation improved dramatically. She is engaging with others in the cottage and learning to express herself through her art, the very class that she once skipped so often.

Gillian, with all she has been through, has a long road ahead of her, but she is a bright young lady with a great deal of potential to create a wonderful future. As a trauma informed agency, Epworth staff receive substantial training on pain-based behaviors and the reality that children will often take baby steps forward and at times giant steps back. They are not deterred. They continue to encourage residents and work one-on-one with them to meet their goals and provide care that is always focused on the best of interest of each child in Epworth's care.

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"I love kids," Khalilah said. "I just love talking with them and hearing about what they are going through. Kids these days know so much more than most people think. It is great to just talk with them about what they have experienced and help them however I can."

Khalilah also reaches out to those younger children at Epworth to help them follow in her footsteps. Recently she spoke to our residents during worship at "Graduation Sunday" and emphasized the importance of education, whether it is through a college or university, the military, or another path – keep learning. "No one can take away your knowledge. They can take your clothes, your money... but they can't take away what you have learned."

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A Partner in Mission: The SC United Methodist Foundation

Each year the South Carolina United Methodist Foundation provides a valuable partnership for the care of children at Epworth. The Foundation, founded in 1977, supports Epworth and seven other Methodist institutions of the South Carolina United Methodist Conference.

In 2016, the Foundation donated to Epworth over \$10,000 from its operations and another \$8,000+ in restricted endowment gifts. Over the last decade over \$85,000 in Epworth donations have been facilitated by the work of the Foundation. These funds are directly used for everything from direct care needs of the children to scholarships and educational funds that place Epworth's residents on the path to a bright future.

"The South Carolina United Methodist Foundation is a valued partner in Epworth's ministry," said Rev. John Holler, Epworth's President. "The Foundation's work to cultivate a culture of endowment giving and planned giving not only makes an impact today but will continue to make a meaningful impact for the years to come."

The mission of the Foundation is to cultivate, develop and administer current and deferred gifts for the endowment to support United Methodist institutions, agencies, and local churches as well as other church-related ministries and charitable purposes. The foundation also encourages planned giving among United Methodists. Since 1999, the Foundation has distributed over \$3.8 million to ministry beneficiaries.

For more information please stop by their offices on the Epworth campus or contact Roger M. Gramling, D.D., President SC United Methodist Foundation, Inc. P.O.Box 5087 Columbia, SC 29250-5087 (803)771-9125 or scumf@bellsouth.net.

Foster Parent Recruitment Launches

As a response to fulfilling Epworth's vision to provide superior services for the greatest number of individuals and to meet a growing need in our state to provide high-quality foster care, Epworth Children's Home has launched a Foster Care Program and has begun recruiting foster families.

This program expands Epworth's capacity to serve children and families in need. The program primarily serves children that are currently not served in Epworth's residential program. The initial foster homes will serve in the Midlands area (Richland, Lexington, Kershaw, Sumter, Fairfield, Calhoun counties) with plans for future expansion into other geographic areas in need.

Currently Epworth is assisting a number of families with the application and licensing process. The first cohort of families is expected to receive their licenses in the coming weeks, enabling these homes to serve one of more than 4,000 children currently in the foster system in South Carolina.

The vision for the new Foster Care Program is grounded in the understanding that foster families and the children in their care are fully supported by Epworth's commitment to excellence. Foster families benefit from proven, research-based training and support from the new Center for Foster Family Engagement

located on Epworth's second campus in Columbia. The children who reside with foster families benefit from participating in successful counseling, tutoring, and extra-curricular activity centers that model services currently offered to children in Epworth's residential program.

The Foster Care Program serves children in our community by incorporating Epworth's commitment to providing comprehensive care for all clients. Epworth's pledge to recruit loving, nurturing families builds upon strong existing relationships within United Methodist congregations and other community networks.

If you are interested in learning more about becoming a foster parent, please contact Epworth at 803-256-7394, or visit epworthchildrenshome.org

"Instead of raising children who turn out okay despite their childhood, let's raise children who turn out extraordinary because of their childhood."

-LR Knost

Be a Foster Parent

Visit epworthchildrenshome.org
to learn how you can become
a licensed Foster Parent
for a child in need.



A Cheerful Giver to Epworth!

Again this year, Epworth was surprised by a generous gift of \$10,000 from an anonymous donor in the community. The gift marked only that it was from “The Cheerful Giver” and was routed through the Central Carolina Community Foundation in Columbia.

The Cheerful Giver’s contribution is nearly 100 times the average donation to Epworth (the average donation to Epworth is about \$100), so when the check arrived, there was plenty to be done. The donation could provide about a month of meals in the dining hall for all of campus, tutoring for our middle schools students for a school year, family counseling for residents approaching family reunification, food and living allowances for our college students for a semester, or a month of supervision in one of Epworth’s cottages.



Rev. John Holler accepts the anonymous donation from “The Cheerful Giver.”

Epworth recognizes that not every donor is able to give at such a level as the Cheerful Giver, but yet, if ten people give \$1,000, or 100 people give \$100, or if 1,000 people give \$10, collectively everyone can make the same kind of impact as the Cheerful Giver’s anonymous gift. And when pulled together, the gifts will mean that all of these needed services for the children of Epworth will be met.

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

5 Stars for Epworth Early Intervention Center!

Epworth’s Early Intervention Center (EEIC) was awarded the ultimate five star rating (with a perfect score of 100!) for high quality Early Intervention Services by the South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (SCDDSN). The new rating system was implemented to assist families with selecting quality services for their children with special needs. The EEIC provides home-based services, a half-day preschool, weekend respite and DDSN Intake services for young children with special needs.





Epworth
Children's Home

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Invest. Care. *Transform.*
(803) 256-7394
www.epworthchildrenshome.org

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.

Food Truck Rodeo

Tuesday, September 12, 2017
5:00-8:00PM @ Epworth

Mark your calendars for the 5th Annual Epworth Food Truck Rodeo presented by the Friends of Epworth. Sample a wide variety of culinary creations from the best food trucks in Columbia! Bring a picnic blanket and enjoy music, games and fun for the whole family. No admission or parking fees but donations are appreciated. Proceeds from the event will benefit Epworth Children's Home.

