

The Record

News from Epworth Children's Home



Cheyenne's Home

“Home.” That’s Cheyenne’s immediate response when asked the one word she thinks of when she remembers her years at Epworth. Epworth has indeed been Cheyenne’s home for most of her life. When she was five years old, she and an older brother came here to live as a private placement.

Now Cheyenne is 18 years old and a freshman in college, the first in her family to do so. And she was awarded over \$30,000 in scholarship funds to help finance her college career, as well as a new computer from a scholarship donor, a significant achievement for any student entering higher education. Cheyenne says without hesitation that “Epworth has given me much love and much help to get me where I am now.”

Cheyenne has grown into a successful and joyful young woman, graduating from Dreher High School last spring and now ready to enter Spartanburg

Methodist College as an enthusiastic freshman this fall. Although she is modest, Cheyenne is proud of her academic accomplishments. Not only did she graduate from high school with strong academics, she also worked in several capacities in service to the community, including work with the Urban League in Columbia. Along with her friends in Anderson cottage, Cheyenne managed and ran the concession stand at Epworth during various events, and has had a part-time job at Chick-Fil-A. She has already negotiated a job back at Chick-Fil-A for seasonal work when she returns to Epworth from college for Christmas vacation. Cheyenne says, “I learned a lot about putting myself forward and letting people know that I am a hard worker.”

Although she is interested in science, particularly those career opportunities that deal with animals, Cheyenne is also an accomplished artist. She enjoys painting as a

Continued on Page 3



It Is Changing Again

Fall 2016

A Message from The Rev. John Holler
President

Yesterday was like most afternoons at Epworth. It was 3:30 and school was over for the day. We could hear them coming as they came out of the elevator. The boisterous laughter of middle school boys. They popped into my office, tripping over one another as they came through the doorway. Their greeting ranged from, “Hi Rev.,” to “Hello Mr. Reverend Holler,” to a very soft spoken, “Hey”. They paused from their mission to exchange pleasantries, “How’s your day?”, “Are you going to the fair?”, “Are you going to eat in the dining hall tonight?” Then they revealed the main purpose of their visit: “Do you have any candy?” “I do” was the answer and motioned toward the magic candy box on the table in my office. It is magic because it never runs out of candy. The boys made their selections, expressed their gratitude, and rushed out of the door and on to their next stop.

In a few minutes five young ladies appeared and the scenario was repeated except that girls lingered a little longer and asked more engaging questions. Then they too disappeared. This sugar fix is part of the day and generally lasts approximately 30 minutes. Sometimes a child will have something he or she wants to discuss. If that is the case, the candy parade passes until concerns are addressed, then the parade continues. Then all is quiet again.

This part of the day is all about community building, forming relationships, and helping our children feel safe and comfortable around responsible adults. They also learn some of the “please” and “thank you” elements of social interaction.

One reason I am writing about these brief encounters with our younger children is because of the Children’s Rights lawsuit that is now in effect. As you may know, Children’s Rights, Inc., filed a class action suit against Governor Nikki Haley and the Department of Social Services in order to hasten reforms at DSS. One part of the federal suit will prevent many children who are 12 and under from being placed at homes like Epworth,

Thornwell, and Connie Maxwell. One of the major objectives of the settlement is to have as few children as possible placed in homes like those mentioned above in spite of the record of excellent service and success of these homes.

The affect on Epworth and many other children’s homes will be, in order to continue to serve younger children to the degree and manner they have been served, the majority of the younger children will need to be private placements, like Cheyenne who is featured in this issue of the Record.

The Epworth Board has been preparing for the time when fewer DSS children could be placed in children’s homes, and for the decrease in board payments that follows. Epworth depends on private funding much more than on board payments through DSS, however, DSS payments are a significant portion of Epworth’s revenue.

Approximately one year ago the Epworth Trustees, after much consideration, authorized an Epworth financial campaign to commence. The campaign will achieve several goals. One of the goals is to strengthen and help sustain Epworth’s mission to provide children of all ages a safe and nurturing place to live.

Epworth is in the pre-campaign phase of the campaign. The pre-campaign phase involves organizing the campaign, securing campaign leadership and other campaign volunteers, and of course, accepting pre-campaign gifts in order to help the campaign have a great start.

With help from all of our friends, Epworth will continue to serve children who are in state care, serve younger children from both public and private placements in ways we know produce excellent results, and serve children and families in new and promising ways.

And we will continue to hear, “Hi Rev. Do you have any candy today?”

Continued from Cover

hobby, and had one of her works chosen for an art exhibit at Columbia College. She is taking 17 credit hours of classes at Spartanburg Methodist this semester, and is especially enjoying her First Aid and Safety class.

Cheyenne gives much credit to Epworth's Barnes Learning Center for providing her with lots of academic support and tutoring over the years. She remembers academic support classes and tutoring when she was in elementary school, and members of Epworth's staff who have been there to guide her throughout her school career. She is especially grateful for Mrs. Christy Mooneyhan, Epworth's Vice President for Academics, who was always there to form a bridge between Epworth and school, and for Mrs. Laurie Brandes, Epworth's Director of Independent Living, who helped her with college admissions work, and of course, who assisted her with all those scholarship forms and applications. Mrs. Bundrick, a tutor at Barnes Learning Center, gets Cheyenne's special thanks for all those composition assignments she helped with.

When asked about special memories of her time at Epworth, Cheyenne is quick to mention wonderful Christmas celebrations, and how magical it was as a child to see all the happiness and sharing. She also fondly recalls all of the alumni weekends when former Epworth residents return to campus: "I always get them to tell me about their own lives when they lived here, and some of my favorite stories are about the old days when students would have dates here. They would have to sit in the living rooms of the cottages with their dates---and also with the cottage parents!" Cheyenne is most happy that Epworth has relaxed some of those dating protocols.



She also talks happily about the summer camp experiences that living at Epworth has allowed her to enjoy. One episode at Camp Glenayr, a small camp in Orangeburg for Epworth residents, sticks in her mind particularly well. As Cheyenne recalls it with much laughter, "I was so excited that I had caught a fish in the lake at camp. Once I got it pulled in and off my hook, Mr. Parker (Tom Parker, Epworth's activities director) told me that it was customary for anybody to kiss the first fish they ever catch. So, I kissed the fish. I will never forget that, and always smile when I think about it."

Cheyenne remembers parties, Epworth's annual Christmas shopping trip to Walmart, getting to visit lots of different places, and all the special events she has enjoyed during all her years living at Epworth. And most importantly for Cheyenne, although she is now off at college, she has not cut her ties with Epworth. She now is a part of Epworth's Independent Living Program, an initiative in which older students who are in college or the job market, live in a special dormitory

that approximates apartment living. When she is home for vacation or during holidays, Cheyenne will live with her fellow Epworth older students and receive tutoring and academic support if she requests it, full room and board, and the opportunity to merge right back into Epworth and its activities---and its feeling of home.

Cheyenne ended her comments and memories about her life at Epworth the same way she began the conversation, by talking about Epworth as her home: "Everybody here has always felt like family to me, from almost the first day I arrived when I was five. I feel close to the staff who have helped me so much. And I especially want to say how much I love Reverend Holler. He has helped me through some tough times, and he is always so kind and supportive. I even like to hear him preach. When he is the guest minister at the church on the Epworth campus, he makes you want to pay attention to what he is saying. I always do."



Buford Street UMC, Gaffney presented Cheyenne with a laptop for college.

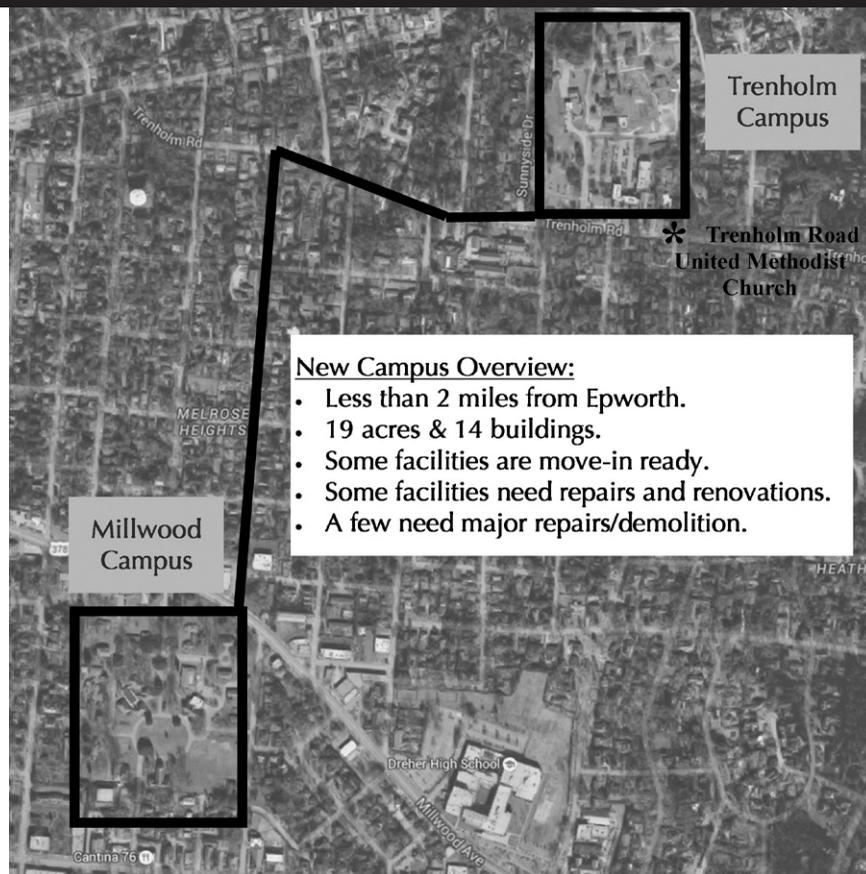
New Epworth Campus, Programs C

The 2016 calendar year has brought many new and exciting opportunities to the ministry of Epworth Children's Home. Recent property and program expansions at Epworth now create the potential to serve significantly more of South Carolina's most vulnerable children and families.

In late-winter, Epworth trustees purchased the property of the former Carolina Children's Home in Columbia. The property had not served as an active residential children's home in several years and most of the 19-acre campus had been vacant for over six months. The new property is located less than two miles from Epworth's historic campus on Millwood Avenue. The additional property provides Epworth with the opportunity to expand services to a growing number of children and families.

Epworth's residential cottages will continue to serve children on the Millwood campus, just as it has for 120 years. The residential program is known nationally for its high standard of group care for children who have experienced loss, abuse and neglect. Epworth remains committed to residential group care as the core of its ministry, but new opportunities now provide the potential to extend care to more children and families in need.

One service expansion that is already running on the new campus is the Epworth Foster Care Program. Epworth received its child placement license from the South Carolina Department of Social Services in the summer of 2016 and hired a case manager and recruiter for the program. By the end of the summer, the program opened



New Campus Overview:

- Less than 2 miles from Epworth.
- 19 acres & 14 buildings.
- Some facilities are move-in ready.
- Some facilities need repairs and renovations.
- A few need major repairs/demolition.

in a building on the new campus, which provides training rooms, counseling areas and office spaces. The program seeks to recruit foster families, initially in the greater Columbia area and later in a larger geographic footprint, who are vetted, trained and supported by Epworth.

Epworth will provide these families with all of the resources necessary to provide the same high standard of care that children already receive in the cottages at Epworth. The foster families will fill a vital need in South Carolina by enabling more of the over 3,000 children in foster care in our state to experience Epworth's nationally recognized model of care.

In addition to helping more school-age children in foster care, Epworth is also using the new campus to expand its successful Independent Living Program for those young people transitioning out of foster care and into independence. The program not only provides safe living conditions for those

Create Potential to Expand Ministry

young people, many of whom would otherwise be homeless, but it also equips them with the education, life skills and social interactions necessary to be a productive and successful adult.

Fueled by a 100% high school graduation rate in the last five years from Epworth's residential program, the program has grown from serving only a few young people to nearly 20. This rapid growth strained available space at Epworth's Millwood campus, but the addition of the new campus has alleviated that strain. Two buildings on the new campus can provide studio-style dormitories for more than 30 young people. These buildings are being upgraded and outfitted to serve these young people.

Epworth's Independent Living Program serves primarily those children who grew up and graduated from high school as a resident in Epworth's cottages. The new space provides the potential to serve other youth transitioning out of other points in the foster care system. The opportunity has already paid off in at least one young lady's life. Epworth's program recently



The New Foster Care Program Staff work from the new campus.

accepted a former foster child who had not lived at Epworth, and who had become homeless, jobless and desperate at the age of 19. Within weeks of coming to Epworth she had a part-time job, a written career plan and began applying to trade schools to help make that plan become reality. The new campus enabled the program to extend services to her in a situation that in the past may not have been possible at Epworth.

The potential of these programs and the new campus have the opportunity to shape Epworth's ministry in new and exciting ways. As some of these opportunities develop, such as the Foster Care Program and Independent Living Program, the Epworth trustees and administration are currently assessing short and long-term needs to ensure that Epworth's ministry is sustainable and vibrant for the next 120 years. Epworth is inviting individuals, churches, foundations and organizations who would like to learn more about these programs and how they may join the movement to meet the needs to please contact Epworth at 803-256-7394.



The Independent Living Program has room to expand at the new campus.

Sean's Dream Comes True

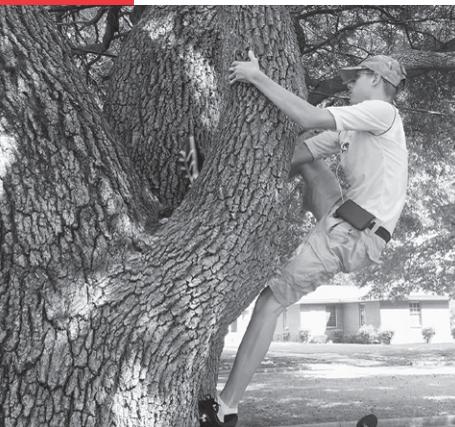
Sean looks up with a wry smile on his face and says, "You know, I've climbed every tree on the Epworth campus." This interesting feat, as well as some very happy memories, are what Sean wanted to talk about as he prepared to leave Epworth to join the Army at the end of August. Sean came to Epworth five years ago when he was in high school, and here he found a stable, compassionate environment full of people who helped him become a young adult.



Sean describes himself as a loner when he came to Epworth, having lived in a household without any other children. One of his first Epworth memories is the fun and happiness he gained from meeting new people his own age and having friends with whom

to interact and share experiences. "I was so happy when I got to Epworth and found friends quickly. Every day at high school I made friends, but it was really nice to come back to Epworth after school and have my real friends here."

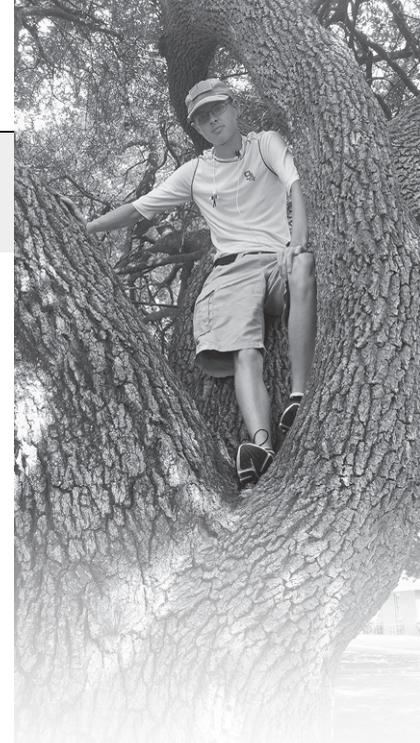
Entering the Army is a lifelong dream of Sean's. "Ever since I was a little boy, I have wanted to be in the military. Now, getting to enlist and get ready for basic training is very exciting," Sean explains. He will complete his basic training at Fort Sill in Oklahoma, a long way from home. Sean says he is ready for the travel and looking forward, as he puts it, "to be in the Army and be a success."



Sean's memories of his time at Epworth are full of the Christmas celebrations, alumni weekend festivities where he worked along with Epworth alumni, and times with volunteers, the "cottage partners" of the cottage in which he has lived at Epworth. He also remembers fondly special times like going to movies,

Carowinds, and a trip to the Bubba Gump restaurant in Charleston where, according to Sean, he ate a record number of shrimp.

On a more serious note, Sean has another memory of Epworth that he says will profoundly affect the rest of his life. During his initial adjustment upon arriving at Epworth, he toyed with the idea of dropping out of high school. With help and encouragement from Epworth staff, he realized that this would be a mistake. He worked hard to get his diploma, and has come to understand that this diploma is his gateway to success as an adult. "I couldn't have joined the Army and made that dream come true if I hadn't graduated from high school. Everybody at Epworth made me realize that," Sean explains. His message to current Epworth students is to complete their high school education and never consider dropping out of school.



Members of Shandon UMC, Columbia at Sean's last church service at Epworth.

When asked where he would like to travel during his time in the Army, Sean gives a thoughtful and optimistic answer. He responds, "Anywhere I go for the first time is the best place I have ever been." This sort of open-minded and forward-looking philosophy will serve Sean well during his Army experience, and speaks highly of the young adult Epworth has helped him to become.

Harrells Leave a Legacy of Caring for the Children



Mr. Archie and Mrs. Mary Frances Harrell

For over 50 years, Archie Harrell and his wife Mary Frances, owned and operated their jewelry business, A. A. Harrell Jewelers. Located in the downtown Columbia shopping district known as Five Points, and just a short walk from Epworth's Campus, the jewelry store became a Columbia icon. Originally the store was located near the modern day restaurant, Yesterday's, and later on Saluda Avenue in what is now Drip Coffee. The Harrells operated the store until 2010, when they retired with Mr. Harrell at the age of 93 and Mrs. Harrell was 88.

While they took pride in their business they built together, the Harrells were faithful members at Cedar Creek United Methodist Church in northern Richland County, where Mary Frances was a lifelong member. Over their 63 years of marriage, the Harrells always looked for ways to take care of children. While they did not have children of their own, they did have beloved nephews, nieces, and later great nieces and nephews.

Mr. and Mrs. Harrell also created a legacy of caring for children by remembering the children at Epworth in their estate plans. Mr. Harrell died in 2011, only one year after retiring, and Mrs. Harrell died in the summer of 2015. As a beneficiary in their estate, the children at Epworth will be blessed by the Harrells' generosity today and in years to come.

The Harrells' gift, like all estate gifts received at Epworth, was placed into the Epworth endowment. The earnings from the Epworth endowment supplement the annual donations from individuals, churches and businesses to provide nearly 2/3rds of Epworth's operating expenses each year. The endowment provides the long-term stability needed for Epworth to sustain its ministry for the next 120 years and beyond.

Establish Your Own Legacy

Just like the Harrells, you can establish your own legacy by providing for the children at Epworth long after your time on Earth is complete. Through estate plans, stocks, gifts of property or other assets, anyone can make a special legacy gift to Epworth. These gifts can be as simple as a bequest in one's will or a transfer of appreciated stock or retirement funds. Many legacy gifts provide significant tax benefits to the donor while ensuring that children at Epworth have everything they need today and in the years to come.

For more information on legacy giving, please contact Andrew Boozer, Vice President for Development at 803-256-7394 or aboozer@epworthsc.org.



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Children's Home

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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.

Alton's New Love



When eight-year-old Alton* arrived at Epworth, the staff discovered that he was far behind his peers in his reading skills. He was enrolled in Epworth's afterschool tutoring program to receive extra help. He was also matched with a mentor who just happened to be a local public librarian. His mentor read with him and they frequently explored the local library together. Soon, Alton had not only improved his reading skills and school grades but he now loved reading and did it "just for fun." Earlier this summer Alton was reunited with his family after two years at Epworth. As he and his mentor met for the last time before the reunification, the mentor asked Alton what he wants to be when he grows up. Alton replied, "I want to be a librarian."

You can read more about Alton's reunification online by clicking "Stories" at epworthchildrenshome.org.