

The Record

News from Epworth Children's Home



Ben Returns to Epworth

Here at Epworth Children's Home, we love nothing more than when we can watch a child's life come full circle from the person they were when they arrived at Epworth, to the person they became upon leaving, and even past that to the person they become in adulthood. Bennett Hiott is one of our success stories, and it became very clear on a hot Saturday morning in August as Ben led his volunteer group of friends who had returned to campus to put on an event for the children at Epworth, that Ben has truly come full circle in his life.

Ben came to Epworth at the age of eleven. He was living with his mom, a single parent. His mom voluntarily placed him at Epworth, and it was a tough adjustment going from his home to

the structured environment at Epworth, but Ben settled into Clinton Cottage quickly. "We were like a family, all the other kids in the cottage and me, along with our cottage staff. We had a real family vibe. We would play basketball and other games like we were brothers - and the cottage staff was like our parents. They welcomed me into the Clinton Cottage family."

Ben was at Epworth for 5 years. As he aged, he would eventually move from Clinton Cottage to Haas, then Cile Gray, and finally Doug Gray. At the age of 16, his mom welcomed him back into their family home, and Ben left Epworth. However, he quickly found himself in some trouble with the law and was then sentenced to 8 months in the DJJ system. While he was in DJJ, Ben managed to turn

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Fall 2018

A Message from The Rev. John Holler
President

Challenges and Opportunities

Sometimes it's the boys. Sometimes it's the girls, and on rare occasions it is both. The transition from a summer schedule to a school schedule along with the usual new residents that are added when the school year begins has been a bit more trying than in years past. It has not helped that school has stopped and started because of weather and other events. So, as young people will often do, some of our residents have been testing the limits of our policies and practices which involve encouragement, and discovering strengths and talents rather than strict rules and punishments.

It is also now more difficult to establish a positive culture in the cottages that influences new residents to conform to productive behavior, since residents stay at Epworth for shorter periods of time. Many of us on staff have been frustrated to a certain degree by some of the choices a number of our children have made recently.

Things came to a head when four of our boys refused to go to school one day because they did not feel like going. Then on the weekend one boy pulled the fire alarm in the cottage at night because the boys theorized that the fire alarm was so loud no one could hear the security alarm go off as some other boys opened a window to sneak out to try to meet their girlfriends. I am happy to report their plan did not work out all that well for the guys.

After the caper was discovered and the boys were back in place one of our senior staff members, who has been able to retain her sense of humor throughout this transitional period, sent a tongue-in-cheek text that read, "I don't know whether to compliment the boys for their ingenuity, or to be angry with them for what they did". I sent a text back that read, "I'm about fed up!"

That was the mood I was in when I came into work the next Monday. About 4:00 that afternoon there was a knock on my door. One of our young ladies who had just celebrated her 13th birthday wanted to tell me something. My thought was, "What now?" She came in, sat down, and thanked me for the birthday card that she had received with the dollar per year of age she had received with the card. Then she stated the reason for her visit. She had received \$14 rather than the \$13 she should have received. She had made the trip to my office to return the extra dollar.

I was amazed and renewed. What a wonderful example of a young lady doing the right thing for the right reason. I don't know that I would have had the personal integrity to do what she did at that age. Her actions reminded me of what is happening here and that growing up is about trial and error. Sometimes we push the limits, sometimes we make outstanding choices. Our opportunity as adults is to model and teach the "good stuff" and discourage the thoughts and behaviors that lead to destructive living.

Yes, I encouraged the young lady to keep the extra dollar and after some hesitation she did.

Now, about those boys...

what could have been a very negative, life altering experience into a positive. He got his GED, and vowed to turn his life around once he left DJJ.

Upon being released from the DJJ system, Ben finally had to decide what to do with his life. He went to college for a brief time, but felt that it wasn't



for him. Music had always been his passion, and he began to write lyrics and perform locally. His talent got him noticed, and Ben went from small stages in Columbia to touring nationally with well known musicians. When he returned to Columbia, he sold out ten concerts and played with artists like Lil Wayne, 2Chainz and Cardi B. He had already come a long way from the boy who had arrived at Epworth to the musician he had become.

Ben loved being a musician and touring. But after four years of performing, he was getting older, and he noticed the instability of the music business. He wanted to have a more stable, business-like career. He decided he would focus more on the marketing side of entertainment and other business, and formed his own marketing agency. This was one area where his experience at Epworth had helped to shape the man he would become. Speaking about what he learned while at Epworth that helped him later in his career, Ben says, "Some of the staff that I worked with gave me a sense of self-respect, honor

and a way to treat people. They taught me a healthy balance of street smarts and common sense that has carried over into business."

There was another factor that influenced Ben's decision to "settle down" and form a marketing agency. He had met the woman that would become his wife, Kayla. He saw a future with her and wanted to make a more stable life for the two of them. Fast forward to today, and Ben's company is representing major, national brands (like jewelry company Kendra Scott, as well as Major League Soccer and Facebook) and continues to grow and take on more employees and clients. But the biggest blessing came in the form of a pregnancy announcement! Kayla is currently 6 months pregnant with the couple's son, due this winter.

Through all of his experiences at Epworth and beyond, Ben has never forgotten his roots and the people who helped to shape who he is today. "The biggest thing is not settling in your life. As long as you have good morals, and put one foot in front of the other, you can do anything you want to do in life." It is very evident that Ben has come full circle in his life, watching him interact with the kids during his event on that hot summer day in August. Ben is definitely a success story here at Epworth, and we hope that his message and life story will inspire others, as it has inspired all of us.

Are you one of our young alumni? Connect with others who lived at Epworth by visiting our website at www.epworthchildrenshome.org/alumni.



Pictures from Ben's campus fun day he provided over the summer.

Kathie Wilkes

If there was one word that could best sum up Kathryn Wilkes (Kathie's) life, it would be "service." Ms. Kathie (as she was known to the kids she worked with at Epworth) was a tireless volunteer and advocate for children's ministries. She had a long career at Lexington-Richland School District 5, where she touched many children's lives at Chapin Elementary and Lake Murray Elementary. She was also a mother to her three children, and a grandmother to her nine grandchildren.



At her church, Chapin United Methodist, Kathie began a youth ministry that led them to Epworth. Her circle, the Marjorie Derrick Circle, became cottage partners with Stokes Cottage at Epworth. On her application, Ms. Kathie wrote that she wanted to volunteer because, "I love children, and Jesus loves the little children, and I would like to share His love with them." Slowly but surely, Ms. Kathie and her circle adopted this cottage and became permanent fixtures on campus. From hosting a meal or an activity with the elementary girls in Stokes, to refreshing their living spaces, Ms. Kathie was determined to enrich the lives of the residents in any way possible.

Unfortunately, Ms. Kathie became ill and was unable to make it to her cottage partner events. When the girls of Stokes Cottage learned of Ms. Kathie's illness, and her inability to come to cottage partner events due to her health, they did not let that stop them – they simply went to her instead. The Stokes Cottage girls arrived at Ms. Kathie's

bedside, bringing her food and cards, anything that they could think of to cheer her up and brighten her day, just as she had done for them countless times. One resident asked if she could pray for Ms. Kathie, and before long every girl from Stokes Cottage surrounded her, holding hands and praying for her. It was a special moment, and one that we at Epworth will cherish for a lifetime.

Ms. Kathie left this life for her heavenly home in March 2018, but her spirit, determination and service still lives on at Epworth. Just this summer, Chapin UMC, in partnership with Union UMC, completed a cottage renovation for the girls at Dantzler, fully revamping the space. From top to bottom, floors to ceiling, no surface was left untouched. At the completion of the project, everyone took a step back and marveled at how much the space had been transformed. Ms. Kathie would have been proud.

We are so thankful for Chapin UMC and all those who serve our children like Ms. Kathie did. If you would like to get involved, please contact Beth Robinson, our volunteer coordinator, at brobinson@epworthsc.org.



Kathie Wilkes (right) was always eager to help the children and encouraged friends to be involved as well.

Foster Care Lemonade Stand

Epworth's Foster Care Program is quickly growing as individuals and families in Columbia and the surrounding areas are stepping up to open their hearts and homes to children in need. The program currently has fourteen licensed foster homes and just as many completing the process. While not everyone may be able to foster, everyone can do something to impact the foster care community. No matter your age, ability, or schedule, your passions and talents can make an impact.

This was recently proven true by five special girls, who unprompted, wanted to do something to help foster children. Their "something" came in the form of lemonade stands. Sisters Vivienne, Lucy Katherine, and Betsy Fonte are the daughters of Chris and Katie Fonte who are currently in the process of becoming a licensed foster family with our program. They set up their stand weekly throughout the summer to bring awareness to their Rosewood neighbors. Mary Scott Handell, daughter of Epworth Foster Parents Kevin and Katy Handell, along with her friend, set up their stand and created a colorful sign with a powerful message- "You are not alone."

The efforts of all of these young businesswomen raised over \$200 for the Foster Care Program. You too can show foster children and foster parents that they are not alone. From spreading awareness and raising money with lemonade sales, to supporting foster parents or even becoming one yourself, it takes a village. Epworth's Foster Care Program is very thankful for that village!

If you would like more information about how you can make a difference for children in your community, we would love to talk with you! You may contact Haley Huff at 803-828-7724 or hhuff@epworthsc.org.



The Epworth Early Intervention Center



Respite Cooperative

Are you the parent of a child with special needs? Do you need a break? Since 2002, Epworth has provided a monthly Respite Cooperative at the Epworth Early Intervention Center. Children ages one to twelve years, who have developmental delays and disabilities AND their siblings enjoy a fun play period in a safe environment while their parents have the opportunity to go on a “date,” run errands, or rest. Parents take turns serving as volunteer caregivers, along with other trained volunteers. For three hours once a month, the children play, watch movies, and eat dinner while their parents enjoy a much needed respite. If you are interested in participating, please contact Jessica Mearns at (803) 681-0212.

Home-Based Early Intervention

Once again, the Home-Based Early Intervention Program housed at the EEIC has completed its third-party quality assurance review, conducted on behalf of the South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, and has received a score of 100% compliance on key indicators of both administration and early intervention expectations. Epworth was the first qualified provider to contract with SCDDSN to provide early intervention services in the community in the early '90s. Since that time, the Home-Based program has consistently provided high quality, developmentally-appropriate, family-oriented services for children identified as having developmental delays, disability and/or who are at-risk for developmental delays. All services are provided by Early Intervention Specialists in natural environments, including homes, child care settings, the homes of family members and/or friends, parks, libraries, or any other location where children can be found. Referrals may be received by Epworth from BabyNet for children birth to three years of age and from SCDDSN for children ages three to six years who



are found eligible by the referring agencies. If you have any questions on how to access screening by these agencies, please contact Jessica Mearns at (803) 681-0212.



Preschool Program

The Epworth Early Intervention Center provides an inclusive Preschool program designed to serve children with developmental delays and/or disability and their typically-developing peers in a traditional early education setting. Any

necessary accommodations are made by specialized teachers to ensure progress towards developmental and educational milestones identified in individualized care plans. The only program of its kind in the state, the EEIC Preschool, nearing its fortieth anniversary of excellence in early education, boasts a small class size of only ten students per day with three teachers and a teachers' aide. This faith-based program nurtures age-appropriate empathy, kindness, respect, and care for peers in addition to ensuring that our children make significant developmental progress towards identified milestones. For additional information and/or to visit the program, please contact Jessica Mearns at (803) 681-0212.

All three programs of the Epworth Early Intervention are nationally accredited by Council On Accreditation (COA). Additionally, the Preschool program is state-accredited by ABC Quality, ensuring compliance with high quality early education standards.



Epworth Planned Giving

Thinking Ahead: Maximize Year-End Giving with a Planned Gift

With new federal tax laws in effect, now is a great time to look ahead to the end of the tax year and maximize charitable contributions through planned giving. Depending on an individual's financial situation, donors may have opportunities to give in new ways this year. Below are a sample of planned gift options to consider:

- Charitable Gift Annuities pay you income for life. The Epworth charitable gift annuity program now allows donors to receive a guaranteed lifetime rate of return of as high as 9½% (based upon age) in return for a gift to Epworth.
- IRA Charitable Rollover saves on income tax (For Ages 70 ½ or Older!) An IRA rollover generates neither taxable income nor a tax deduction, so donors benefit even without itemizing. Also, IRA charitable rollover gifts can satisfy all or part of minimum required distributions.
- Bequests and Estate Gifts establish your legacy. When reviewing will and estate plans, including the children at Epworth can establish a donor's legacy. Monetary or remainder bequests, and listing Epworth as a beneficiary of life insurance are simple ways to make an estate gift. Donors making estate gifts of \$25,000 or more are added to Epworth's prestigious giving club, The Society of 1896.



For additional information, please contact Andrew Boozer, Vice President of Development and Communications, at 803-256-7394 or abooser@epworthsc.org.

Always check with your accountant or tax advisor for how this general information might relate to your particular situation.



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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.

Food Truck Thank You

THANK YOU!

Thank you to all who came out on October 2nd, 2018 for the Friends of Epworth's 6th Annual Food Truck Rodeo. It was a wonderful night filled with food and fellowship on Epworth's Campus.

The Friend's next event is Dancing with the Stars! This event will be held in January, and is structured just like the TV Show of the same name – except all proceeds benefit Epworth Children's Home! More info to come, but in the meantime check the Friends of Epworth's website for updates at: www.friendsofepworth.org.

