

# The Record

*News from Epworth Children's Home*



## *Major Strides for Ryan*

It is a typical hot and muggy early summer Sunday afternoon in Columbia. Ryan\* rushes from his cottage to the church on Epworth's campus, hurrying to get there on time because he has MYF (Methodist Youth Fellowship) duties, and he does not want to be late. Ryan is the type of child who loves a job, and loves to get involved on campus. It was a natural fit for him to be selected as one of the two children on campus to represent the entire Epworth population on the MYF leadership team. However, the campus leader that Ryan is today is different than the boy that he was when he first arrived at Epworth.

Ryan was adopted by a family early on in his childhood, and his adoptive family provided him with a safe, stable home in his early childhood

years. When he became a teenager, however, his adoptive parents were overwhelmed and one day reported him to the police for a very minor incident. As a result, Ryan landed in the juvenile justice system. When it was time for him to be released back to the care of his adoptive parents, they decided not to welcome him back into their home. Heartbroken, confused and angry, Ryan entered the DSS foster care system for the second time in his life. It was at that time that Ryan came to Epworth.

Upon arrival, Ryan's cottage staff and case manager helped Ryan work through and overcome the events in his life that lead him to Epworth. Understandably, he held a considerable amount of anger and distrust for adults. Not only

*Continued on Page 5*



## Summer 2018

A Message from The Rev. John Holler  
President

### **Resolution to Ensure that Every Child in State Care Receives the Best Possible Care Submitted to the 2018 S.C. United Methodist Annual Conference**

#### Rationale

During the past fifteen years certain organizations that seek to reform the child welfare system at both the federal and state levels have made the effort through legislative efforts, funding restrictions, and class action lawsuits to have as few children as possible in institutional care (children's homes, group homes). Despite lack of empirical research data, well-funded and politically connected organizations have demonized children's homes as being harmful to children. They have cherry picked negative incidents and used them as examples to represent all children's homes, and have used correlations that do not stand up to scrutiny when compared to unbiased research standards. This has resulted in legislation and a class action federal lawsuit settlement that severely curtails using children's homes in South Carolina, no matter how high the quality of services, and how excellent the results or outcomes. Our former Governor decided not to contest the lawsuit, thus a settlement was signed in 2016 that has brought many unintended, but predictable consequences to many of South Carolina's most vulnerable children.

WHEREAS, Harm has come to children as a result of the impacts of implementation of the Michelle H. Settlement agreement and other directives in South Carolina, and

WHEREAS, The ruling of the Michelle H. Settlement shows bias without merit toward high quality, high performing, Level 1 residential group homes like Epworth, and

WHEREAS, There is no empirical research that demonstrates that care provided by foster families results in better outcomes in children than care provided to children in high quality group homes, and

WHEREAS, High quality residential group home care givers are more intensively trained and supervised than the majority of care givers in other child placement settings, and

WHEREAS, High quality, Level 1 residential group care results in positive outcomes above the norm for children who are in state custody, and

WHEREAS, DSS violated its own trauma philosophy and Best Practices placement disruption philosophy by moving children frequently, dividing sibling groups, placing children in substandard foster homes, placing children far from their homes of origin, placing children in substandard school systems, placing children in the first space available instead of considering which placement is in the best interest of the child, and

WHEREAS, Children twelve years of age and younger are moved from one placement to another to satisfy the age restrictions in the Michelle H. Settlement lawsuit causing additional trauma, and

WHEREAS, The presidents of Epworth Children's Home, Connie Maxwell, and Thornwell wrote letters to the court citing the variety and quality of services provided to all age levels for children placed with their agencies, and the presidents of Epworth and Thornwell testified at the settlement hearing and asked for exceptions in the settlement due to the high quality of work and positive outcomes for children in their care. Federal court judge Richard Gergel complimented the

work of all three institutions and cited Epworth, Thornwell, and Connie Maxwell as the highest performing homes in South Carolina, but granted no exceptions in the settlement with the State of South Carolina, and

WHEREAS, The Michelle H. Settlement is written in such fashion that in practice a child must be placed in any available foster parent home, even if the home is a fair to poor quality placement, before a high performing children's group home is considered for placement.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That in order to ensure there are sufficient therapeutic placements for the children who need them, no child or youth who has not been assessed as needing a therapeutic placement shall be placed in a therapeutic foster parent home. DSS shall cease placing non-therapeutic children in therapeutic foster parent homes as a solution to meeting the requirements of Michelle H.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That sibling groups shall not be separated unless it is demonstrated through a clinical assessment that it is in the best interest of the sibling group, and/or that one or more siblings are not behaviorally compatible with a certain placement setting. Age shall not be the determining factor for dividing sibling groups.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the South Carolina Department of Social Services personnel refrain from the practice of placing children in the first and or closest bed available without regard to the quality of services, and instead after assessing the needs of a child place the individual(s) in the place best suited to meet the child's needs.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the maximum number of children residing in a foster parent home be reduced to six, rather than eight as is now permitted. This total number shall count biological and other children residing in the home.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a committee of no more than eight people shall be appointed by Bishop Holston. The committee shall include at least two Epworth staff members, and shall be drawn from members of the Pan Methodist campaign for children in poverty. The purpose of the committee is to research and provide a plan to help resolve practices in South Carolina that result in unintended negative consequences due to state and federal policies and practices. This committee shall convene no later than September 15, 2018.

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, That Epworth Children's Home, Thornwell Children's Home, and Connie Maxwell Children's Home, due to their request at the settlement hearing of the Michelle H. lawsuit, their records of high quality children's services and outcomes, their national accreditation by the Council of Accreditation (COA), be recommended by The South Carolina Annual Conference, which represents the 230,000 United Methodists in South Carolina, to receive exemptions from the Michelle H. lawsuit settlement that relate to the restrictions regarding age, county of origin, and length of stay of children in state custody.

Respectfully submitted by:

John E. Holler

President, CEO Epworth Children's Home

The Rev. Debra Armstrong  
Epworth Trustee

The Rev. Daniel Burbage  
Epworth Trustee

Mr. Marion Freeman  
Epworth Trustee

The Rev. James Friday  
Epworth Trustee

Mr. Vic Hannon  
Epworth Trustee

The Rev. Michael B. Henderson  
Epworth Trustee

Mrs. Tara Jeffords  
Epworth Trustee

Mrs. Charlotte Jones  
Epworth Trustee

The Rev. Smoke Kanipe  
Epworth Trustee

The Rev. Dickie Knight  
Epworth Trustee

Mrs. Laurie Matthews  
Epworth Trustee

Mr. David Murphy  
Epworth Trustee

Ms. Cindy Nord  
Epworth Trustee

Mr. John Pate  
Epworth Trustee

Mr. John Roberts  
Epworth Trustee

The Rev. Jerry Temple  
Epworth Trustee

This resolution was overwhelmingly adopted on June 6th, 2018 by the 2000 delegates who represented the 230,000 United Methodists in South Carolina at the SC United Methodist Annual Conference in Greenville, SC.

### *Dancing with an Epworth Star!*



Earlier this spring, Coldwell Banker hosted a Dancing With The Stars charity event to raise money for Epworth Children's Home. The event featured eleven Coldwell Banker real estate agents competing in various forms of International Ballroom and Latin Dance learned at Elite Ballroom Dance Academy in Columbia. The agent contestants competed against each other, and trained with a professional dance studio for 12 weeks leading up to the event.



During the event, Rondell, a resident at Epworth Children's Home, performed an original dance to Michael Jackson's Thriller with four international professional ballroom dancers. He was also honored to serve as one of the celebrity judges for the competition. Rondell loves to dance, and hopes to open his own studio in the future.

This year's event raised over \$43,000 for the children at Epworth and plans are already underway for next year's competition.

### *A Graduation Surprise*

Louise is a resident of Epworth Children's Home's Independent Living Program who is midway through her four-year college degree program at the University of South Carolina. Earlier this year, she decided to take a break in her studies to enlist in the Army National Guard Reserves. Her goal is to work in police and crime investigation and having military experience would be helpful in attaining her career goals. Her first assignment was this winter was being stationed at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri to complete her basic training.

While in Missouri, she contacted Epworth frequently. She considers Epworth "home" and her friends and staff as family. One afternoon she called Ms. Ieshia Gee, her Epworth case manager, to let her know that she was almost done with the first round of training and graduation and family day was coming up soon. Though she did not come out and say it, Ms. Gee could hear in her voice that Louise wished someone could be there to see her graduate from basic training.

With the help of generous donations collected from the United Methodist Women's Advocacy Day, Epworth was able to buy Ms. Gee a plane ticket to Missouri for graduation. Chapin United Methodist Church also provided a donation to help with transportation and meals so that Ms. Gee and Louise could celebrate her achievement.

After graduation, Louise and her fellow graduates broke rank. She looked across the field, and there was Ms. Gee smiling from ear to ear. Tears streamed down Louise's face as just like the other new soldiers, her family was there to celebrate.



was there emotional work to be done, but Ryan had missed so much school during his tumultuous teen years, that there was no way he would be able to graduate by the time he would age out of school. Christy Mooneyhan, Epworth's Vice President for Academics, recognized that the best course for Ryan was to enter the GED program. As Ryan worked towards his GED, he started to open up to his friends and staff. He set a goal for himself to earn his GED and was steadily working toward it. Along the way he gained confidence and learned to trust in the adults around him.

Soon Ryan began to think about his future. He began think about what kind of jobs he would enjoy, both while he was studying for his GED and also as a career. He started applying for local jobs off campus, but he hit another stumbling block. As is often the case with children in the foster care system, Ryan did not have a copy of his birth certificate or social security card. Without those documents, no one would hire him.

As Epworth worked with him to complete the document requests, he had to put his job search on hold. Not letting that hurdle stop him from moving forward, he asked if he could shadow the Epworth operations and grounds team on their daily tasks around campus. He quickly started learning about building maintenance and general repairs that happen every day around campus. It became increasingly common to see him riding around on the maintenance golf cart, accompanying the staff on their duties that keep the campus running.

As he became more involved with the operations of campus, Ryan decided that he wanted to get involved in the church at Epworth by joining the MYF leadership team. On his application he wrote "I would like to help our community flourish and to spread the word about God...Helping the community makes people smile." It was an easy choice for Pastor Meg Cook, our campus Minister, to appoint him to the leadership position.

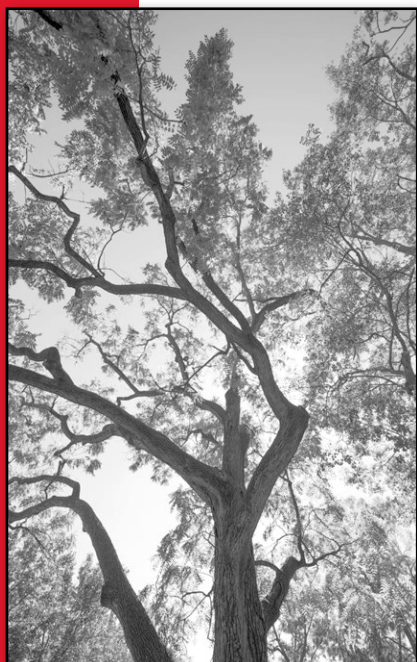
This spring, the day of his GED test finally arrived. Ryan was nervous, but he knew he had put in the work in preparation for the test. "He set a goal for himself and met it, and was determined to do well," Ms. Mooneyhan said. He easily passed his test, and everyone on campus was extremely proud of how far he had come.

Since his arrival at Epworth, Ryan made tremendous strides both on campus and off. With his GED in hand, Ryan turned his energy to deciding what to do for a career in the future. As he weighed his options, Ryan enrolled in Epworth's Independent Living Program. Located on Epworth's new second campus, the Independent Living Center is designed for young people who are "aging out" of the foster care system and high school to live in a more independent setting that both supports them and provides them with the skills needed for independence.

Ryan now has a job off campus at a local restaurant and still helps the Epworth operations team when he is able. Physical activity and also being part of a team working towards a goal appeals to Ryan, and he has always had an interest in the military, so he is considering a career in the army. With Epworth's support and helpful guidance, he has been speaking with a recruiter and plans to enlist in the fall.

The boy who came to us who was so hurt and angry because of the trauma he experienced in his childhood has made a true evolution into a promising young man. He is a hard worker, who cares about his community, and a natural leader. As he steps forward into young adulthood, Ryan has made major strides and is ready to go boldly into the future.

## Epworth Planned Giving



### Higher Rates on Charitable Gift Annuities as of July 1

Epworth is pleased to announce higher rates of return on charitable gift annuities as of July 1. These higher rates were recently recommended by the American Council on Gift Annuities – and are as high as 9.5%. The older the individual, the higher the rate of return.

Here are the new rates of return for various ages, effective July 1:

Age	Rate of Return
65	5.1%
70	5.6%
75	6.2%
80	7.3%
85	8.3%
90+	9.5%

The charitable gift annuity program allows you to receive a guaranteed lifetime rate of return of as high as 9.5% (based upon your age) in return for your major gift (\$10,000 or more) to Epworth.

### Here are some of the advantages of the charitable gift annuity:

- *You can substantially increase your income -- and your spouse's income -- for life.*
- *Much of your income from the gift annuity will be treated as tax-free income to you.*
- *You will receive a significant income tax charitable contribution deduction, based upon your age, the rate of return and other factors.*
- *If you contribute appreciated stock, any capital gains will be favorably treated.*
- *Your gift annuity will benefit Epworth – and the needs of so many deserving children.*

Your rate of return from the gift annuity is fixed for life at the time you make your gift. Your income payments can be distributed to you on a monthly, quarterly, or other periodic basis.

We would be glad to provide you and your financial and estate planning advisors with additional information – including a personalized example – at no obligation. Rates are available for all ages, for single and married individuals.

### Age 70 ½ or Older? Save on Income Taxes and Help Epworth Through Your IRA

Did you know that if you are age 70 ½ or older, you can contribute up to \$100,000 per year from your IRA directly to Epworth, and avoid paying income taxes on such a distribution? This is known as a qualified charitable distribution. It is limited to IRAs, and there are other exclusions and considerations as well, so please first consult with your attorney, accountant, or other professional advisor.

With the recent changes to the tax law, especially those affecting whether you should itemize, this can prove to be one of the very best ways to support Epworth. This is an important new opportunity to be tax-wise, support Epworth, and yet not have to itemize!

For additional information – at no obligation – on the tax advantages of the charitable gift annuity and/or the qualified charitable distribution through your IRA, please contact:

*Andrew Boozer, Vice President for Development, Epworth Children's Home, 803-681-0170 (direct line), [aboozer@epworthsc.org](mailto:aboozer@epworthsc.org)*

Transforming lives!

# Epworth

## ICE CREAM®

Epworth's famous peanut butter ice cream has been a special treat for children and guests for decades. It has become a part of the very fabric of the Epworth story.

Soon, Epworth's ice cream (along with some new flavors!) will be available off campus as a social enterprise. The Epworth Ice Cream Company is an innovative startup business developed by the Friends of Epworth, where ice cream is sold commercially and 100% of profits are donated to support the children at Epworth.



The Epworth Ice Cream company will launch product sales this summer and you are invited to help this social enterprise grow! Visit [epworthicecream.org](http://epworthicecream.org) to see where the ice cream is available and to sign up to receive updates to get the "scoop" on how you can support the children at Epworth one delicious treat at a time.

For more information or to receive updates about Epworth Ice Cream, please visit

[www.epworthicecream.org](http://www.epworthicecream.org).





**Epworth**  
Children's Home

PO BOX 50466  
COLUMBIA SC 29250

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Columbia, SC  
Permit No. 424

Invest. Care. *Transform.*  
(803) 256-7394  
[www.epworthchildrenshome.org](http://www.epworthchildrenshome.org)

Rev. John E. Holler, Jr.  
President

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

In an effort to be good stewards of God's gift, please help maintain current records to help with mailing costs.

**Make corrections on the label and mail it back to us.**

- ☐ Name Change
- ☐ I receive more than one copy
- ☐ Address change
- ☐ I'd like to receive this publication by email

☐ Please remove me from the mailing list

**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, October 2nd, 2018**

**5:00-8:00PM @ Epworth**

Mark your calendars for the 6th 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.