

The Record

News from Epworth Children's Home



Winter of senior year is an expectant time. Not only are the holidays and winter break around the corner, but college decisions loom, and the upcoming months are full of anticipation and excitement. Will the thick envelope bearing an acceptance letter arrive today? Which school did your friend gain acceptance to, did he get his first choice school?

The process is very familiar right now for one of our senior boys, James*. James came to us over three years ago at the age of 14 as a private placement, meaning that he was not removed from his home by the state. His mother placed him with us for what she described as behavioral problems. That being the case, upon arrival we expected to see these behaviors his mother described. When he settled in quickly and responded well to the structure and stability that are part of life at Epworth, his cottage staff were happy – albeit

confused. The cottage staff had a hard time reconciling the well behaved child before them, with the one they had expected.

Once his cottage staff had gained his trust enough for him to open up to them about his home life prior to Epworth, it came out that the relationship James had with his mom had been strained for as long as he could remember. For that reason, he had lived with his Dad for most of his childhood. Unfortunately, his dad became incarcerated and James had no choice but to live with his mother again. Once he was back in his mother's household, they started to have conflict with each other again, which is what led to James being placed at Epworth.

For James, being at Epworth was exactly what was needed for him to thrive. His peers and cottage staff at

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We Can Do Better *(Introducing The Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing)*

Winter 2018

A Message from The Rev. John Holler
President

Child well-being is made up of many indicators including family and social environment, financial stability, health, education, physical environment and safety. According to the 2018 Kids Count Data, South Carolina ranks 38th in a state-to-state comparison for overall child well-being. This ranking places the state in the bottom quarter percentile. Although data demonstrates some improvement nationally with categories of children's well-being such as economic well-being and health, there are declines in education, family and community domains.

Children who are raised in nurturing families have stronger personal connections and display higher levels of education and physical health. However, families who experience difficulty in financial stability and/or other risk factors exhibit higher levels of stress due to limited resources, such as, stable housing, health insurance and limited choices with education. Furthermore, stress caused from financial hardships, abuse, and or neglect may trigger depression and other mental health needs in adults and children.

Epworth's New Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing will address these indicators through its work with the faith-based community and other community partnerships. It will work with urban and rural communities in South Carolina by establishing missional outposts in United Methodist Churches. The work within the faith-based community will target poverty, educational needs, family environments, safety and other well-being factors.

Epworth Children's Home (ECH) along with the Pan-Methodist Commission on Children in Poverty wants every Methodist congregation to be involved with ministries that care for children who are experiencing risk factors. The belief of the Pan-Methodist Commission is that every church and every seminary can do something to advocate on behalf of children at risk. ECH is excited to join the Commission's challenge of making a difference in the lives of children and youth within the congregation and greater community.

Engaging children and family members through a collaborative strength based approach to interventions is the key to improving outcomes for well-being. The evidenced based practice work performed by the Institute will incorporate this strength based approach. This method will empower and encourage families to collaborate with staff and our faith-based partners to ensure the best interventions are put into practice to improve child and family outcomes and ultimately overall child well-being.

Caring relationships are the cornerstone of child well-being and are the foundation for healthy development. Children in foster care have greater barriers to overcoming obstacles in their path to well-being. Over 22,000 young people age out of the foster care system each year without a permanent legal connection to a caring adult. Part of this is due to frequent placement changes which often coincide with school and community changes as well. Young people aging out of care are especially vulnerable to deficits in their well-being. Bridging the gap with young adults aging out of foster care will be an important component of the Institute.

Hypothesis

The Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing will improve outcomes for children and families in South Carolina as they transition toward safety, permanency and wellbeing through its formation of partnerships with the United Methodist Conference and other faith-based and community partnerships in the state to mobilize 230,000 congregants for the provision of services to children and families.

It will accomplish this through a framework that encompasses social supports and emotional wellness, physical health, safety, mental health, and economic well-being. The Institute is made up of Centers of Excellence. The initial Centers which are the foundation of the Institute are listed below:

- The Center for Family Engagement
- The Center for Child and Family Counseling
- The Center for Independent Living
- The Epworth Center for Social Enterprise
- The Epworth Family Care Center

Implementation of Change

This project will be made up of phases that will incorporate the Centers listed above and others, over a period of 4 years. The Centers will be headquartered on the newly acquired Trenholm Road campus. However, there will be missional outposts in regions of the state outside of Columbia. As phases of the implementation plan are incorporated, the footprint for service delivery will expand.

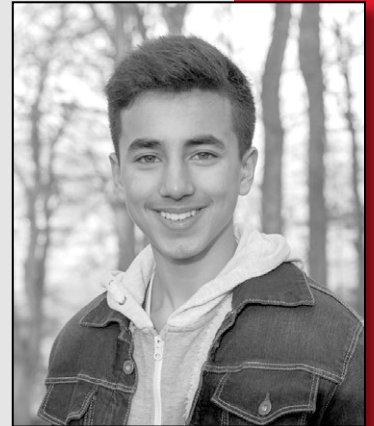
The Center for Family Engagement will be one of the largest and the first Epworth Center to establish a missional outpost. This first outpost will be located in the Charleston District, because research demonstrates this is the area with the greatest need. Charleston District Superintendent, Sandra Stevens-Poirel, is working with Epworth's Chief Operations Officer Beth Williams to open the Center in a suitable location.

The Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing goes hand in hand with The Every Child is a Miracle \$10,000,000 financial campaign. As both of these initiatives move forward children and families will regain hope and have opportunities to experience life in ways they never thought possible.

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Epworth, as well as his teachers and coaches at school, have all seen him develop over the years as he pushes himself to achieve more in every aspect of his life. He is a respectful and kind young man, who works hard and wants to do well.

His hard work and determined spirit started to get him noticed on the football field at Dreher. He showed up for practice on time, worked hard, and never missed a practice or a game. He had a talent for the sport that got him noticed as well, and his coaches described him as a pleasure to coach and have on the team. Attending his games became an event that his Epworth staff and fellow cottage mates looked forward to throughout the fall. They would all gather in the stands to watch James on the field and cheer him on. And it wasn't just on the field that James excelled, either. His schoolwork and grades were a point of pride for him just as much as his athletics. His teachers describe him as a pleasure to have in class, and as a student that they could always rely on to participate in classroom discussions.



This winter, with his senior year well underway, James started to think more seriously about where he wanted to go and what he wanted to do after high school. He liked the structure that Epworth provided, and wanted to go somewhere where he could continue to have the same sense of order and routine that he found so comforting at ECH. When someone mentioned to him that The Citadel has a special program that helps to admit children that come from a foster or group home background, it seemed like a perfect fit for James. He filled out the application, even securing a recommendation from Rev. John Holler, Epworth's President. He expressed the sentiment about James that everyone who knows him would agree with – James is a hard worker, an honest and trustworthy individual, and The Citadel would be lucky to have him.

So for now, James is in the same boat a lot of high school seniors are in this time of year, as they await the news of where the future will take them. Wherever that road leads for James, whether it is The Citadel or another school, we know he will end up a successful young man.

Tori's Update

Last year, we published a story about a girl named Tori* who was singing in the choir at school and had performed in the 2017 Governor's Carolighting at the State House before Christmas. We wanted to give you an update on what has been happening in Tori's life since we last wrote about her.

Tori arrived at Epworth just over two years ago, at the age of 14. She had moved around many times during her childhood, and had been forced to take on adult responsibilities since she didn't have adults in her life who were taking care of those for her. Additionally, she had suffered from physical abuse prior to Epworth.

These traumatic experiences had compounded over time, and when she arrived she was a very withdrawn and timid child who would rarely speak to anyone, and who seemed to shy away from any attention that came her way. Over time, as we described in the previous issue, Tori came out of her shell. Leading up to last winter when she began taking leading roles in her performing arts extracurricular groups, and singing with the choir!

We are so pleased to report that Tori has continued to excel both at school and in her extracurricular activities! She is still a member of the choir, and performed again this year with the Carolighting Choir as they lit the tree outside the State House. In addition, she appeared in the play "Fiddler on the Roof" performed by the drama club and held at her high school in November. Not only that, but Tori has taken on leadership roles both on campus and off.

Tori enrolled in the Teacher Cadet Program at school, and helped to organize and lead a Teacher Cadet Day at USC. Tori hopes to become a teacher one day, and is participating in classroom observation at Hand Middle School. She has become a part of the Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF) leadership team on campus, and her staff now describe her as "an active and talkative child, who has many good ideas

and lots of enthusiasm." A far cry from the withdrawn and timid child that arrived at Epworth only a little over two years ago!

With the support of her cottage staff, campus Pastor, and all of the community at Epworth, Tori continues to blossom, discover her talents and prepare for her future. We are thrilled with the progress Tori continues to make, and know that she has great things in store for her future.



The Holiday Season at Epworth

Even though Christmas is right around the corner, the holiday season and celebrations have been in full swing since November! The following is a glimpse at life on Epworth's campus during the last two months of the year.

Our annual "Christmas with Epworth" program kicked off the season in early November. Christmas with Epworth is our gift program that helps ensure every child on our campus has a wonderful Christmas morning opening gifts that they have selected. In early November, each child sits down with our Christmas committee and puts together their wish list. The items are loaded onto our website, and donors can sign up to donate whichever gift they would like to give. The gifts are then purchased and shipped directly to the donors, who hold onto them until Christmas Drop Off. Christmas Drop Off consists of ten days in early December when the gifts are brought to campus, sorted and wrapped. Wrapping was done by volunteers from Union United Methodist Church's Joy Sunday School Class, and a group from Riddle and Bloom. With an average of 75 children on our main campus, not including our Independent Living residents on our Trenholm campus, and other programs like Foster Care, our Christmas list and the logistics that come with it can be quite the task! We start early and check our list more than twice to make sure every child receives the special gifts of their choice!

Our residents thoroughly enjoyed the Christmas Party held by American Legion Post 6 and Richland County Sheriff's Department at the Colonial Life Arena. This is an event our residents (and staff that accompany them!) look forward to each year. Featuring a DJ, good food and a dance floor, our children can be seen dancing alongside deputies and Sheriff Lott himself! Coach Dawn Staley has also attended the party for the past few years, and brings along with her a pair of shoes for each of our children, directly from her shoe charity "InnerSole." Our residents have a ball at this event and truly enjoy the opportunity to "kick" back with these generous members of the community.

On a Saturday morning a couple weeks ago, our residents loaded up onto busses and arrived at Wal Mart for a shopping spree, furnished by The Scott Hannon Foundation! Each child received a gift card in the amount of \$125 and can buy whatever they would like. We also bring an empty van and truck to help bring back the purchases, which range from bicycles to large stuffed animals to sports equipment, and everything in between! The children love this opportunity to shop for themselves, or maybe to purchase a little something for a friend as a Christmas present. It is so much fun to watch them roam the store, searching for the perfect thing to complete their wish lists!

At our church on campus, the holiday celebrations are in full swing as well! On December 9th, Pastor Pamela held our campus' Christmas party, which kicked off at the church. Called "Christmas in R&B," it was a singalong of



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Investing in Care!

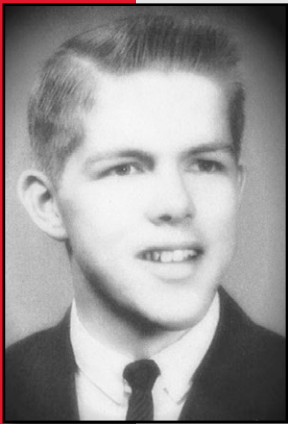
traditional Christmas songs and hymns, jazzed up with an R&B flair. Afterwards, residents, staff and staff family members gathered in the dining hall and enjoyed supper and fellowship together.

Our volunteer cottage partners have been on campus helping our children celebrate the season, too! Trenholm Road United Methodist Church helped decorate our cottages and campus during the first weekend in December. They have made our campus look beautiful, and holiday ready! Members from Jordan, Union and Bethlehem United Methodist Churches (all from Manning, SC), took Waddell Cottage to go see the Columbia Classical Ballet's performance of the Nutcracker at the Koger Center. Midtown Fellowship's Humphrey Life Group hosted holiday crafts and decorating with some of our middle school girls. Shandon United Methodist Church's Journey Sunday School Class hosted a Christmas dinner for our boys in Doug Gray cottage. And our Doug Gray and Cile Gray cottages participated in a play called "Return to Bethlehem" at Grace United Methodist Church in N. Augusta. They were shepherds, townspeople and fishermen!

These are not the only events and parties happening on our campus, and we would love to feature them all if space allowed. We are so grateful for all of our donors, volunteers and friends who help make the Christmas season special for our children!



Following Footsteps of Epworth Alumnus Gary Black ('62)



As James is completing his senior Dreher high school career with an eye towards attending college at The Citadel, his journey is following in the footsteps of an Epworth alumnus from decades ago, the late Gary Black. A minister in rural Anderson County arranged for Gary to come to Epworth as 12-year-old after turmoil struck his family. Gary would spend the rest of his childhood at Epworth. As other alumni recount, he was always a leader of the boys' cottages and someone others looked up to.

Gary graduated from Dreher in 1962 and earned a full academic scholarship to The Citadel, where he graduated with honors in 1966. He went on to serve with distinction in the United States Army, serving in Vietnam with numerous awards including two Bronze Stars and a Purple Heart. After leaving the Army due to injuries sustained in wartime, he settled in Aurora, Colorado, where he met his loving wife Jeannette. They raised three children and ran a restaurant and hotel until 1990, when Gary went back to school to become a CPA.

In his retirement, Gary continued to love being with his family, including his four grandchildren. He loved to cook and gather for a meal, especially if the meal ended with a bowl of ice cream (likely a habit picked up in his youth at Epworth)! Gary never spoke much about his troubled childhood, or even his time at Epworth, but throughout his adult life he provided for his family and humbly created a beautiful life for himself and for the generations of his family that now follow. Upon his passing in the summer of 2018, his family encouraged memorial gifts to be sent to Epworth.

As a leader at Epworth in his day, many young men followed Gary's footsteps. Today, new generations of his own family and his Epworth family continue to walk in those honorable footsteps.

Epworth's New Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing

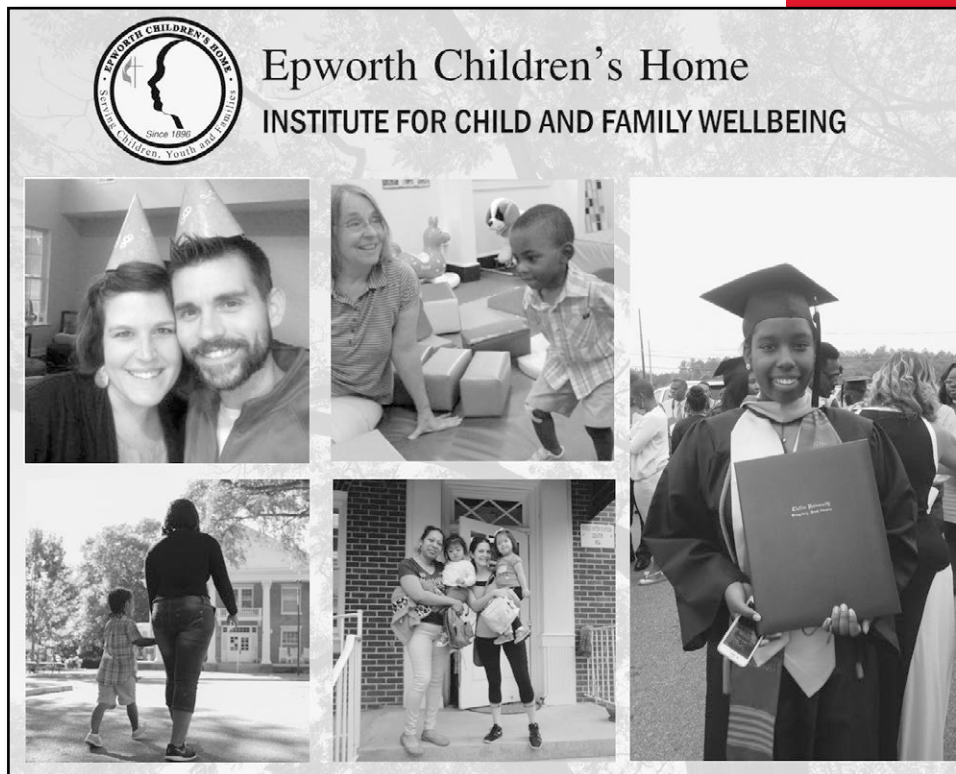
We are excited to announce the launch of Epworth's new Institute! The experience and knowledge gained through Epworth's 120-year ministry enables us to see firsthand emerging changes in the landscape of child welfare and to plan effectively to meet the needs of children and families in the future. Epworth is now working to further fulfill its mission through the establishment of the **Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing**.

The Institute will comprise of many centers of excellence for each of these immediate needs in our state and will be headquartered on the recently acquired second Epworth campus, the former campus of Carolina Children's Home in Columbia. In cooperation with the South Carolina Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, the Pan-Methodist Campaign for Children in Poverty (six denominations, collaborating to challenge, strengthen and enable congregations and other organizations across the state to establish a variety of services available to children at risk to poverty), and other partners, the Institute will have a service footprint in cities and communities across the state of South Carolina.

Our new Institute is designed to meet immediate needs in South Carolina. Among the planned centers of excellence include:

- **The Center for Family Engagement**
Recruit, license, train, and support strong foster families. Support kin caregivers and biological and adoptive families in need. *(Columbia location established in 2017, Charleston area location planned for early 2019, other locations to follow)*
- **The Center for Independent Living**
Expand capacity of, and increase the service array of the currently highly successful Higher Education program at Epworth.
- **The Center for Child and Family Counseling**
Help both children and adults overcome the effects of grief, loss, and trauma.
- **The Center for Social Enterprise**
Partner with other organizations to give Epworth clients opportunities to learn positive work practices, and enable clients to experience hands on entrepreneurial experiences. *(Project #1: Epworth Ice Cream)*

Plans are already underway for these and other centers. Epworth plans to roll-out services as needs are identified and resources are secured through the Every Child Is a Miracle financial campaign.





Epworth
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.

Save the Date!

We have some exciting events coming up in 2019 that you will not want to miss! Mark your calendars now for the following events:

Coldwell Banker and Friends of Epworth's Dancing with the Stars will be held January 26th, 2019. Twelve contestants from around the Midlands will compete in various forms of International Ballroom and Latin Dance. All proceeds benefit Epworth Children's Home. It is a night you will not want to miss!

The Friends of Epworth's Annual Palate Party will be held on March 9th, 2019 at Hay Hill Market. Featuring an elevated menu with pairings for every dish, this event is a must for anyone who considers themselves a foodie! All proceeds benefit Epworth for this event as well.

For more information about these events, please visit The Friends of Epworth website at www.friendsofepworth.org. We look forward to seeing you at these events in the New Year!

