

The Record

News from Epworth Children's Home



Finding a Family

Written By A Current Resident

A wise person once told me not to be a byproduct of my circumstances, but to let my circumstances be a byproduct of me. At the time, I did not listen; I failed to realize that this advice would be the only thing I could think about in my darkest moments. A lot of things have happened to me in the short 17 years I have been alive. I have overcome a lot of obstacles, but I like to think about it as if I am in a race and I must jump hurdles to get to the final goal. Success to me means you have accomplished everything you dreamed of.

One of the biggest things that has shaped me is being placed into foster care when I was 15 years old. Everyone always says that "God does everything for a reason," and I think the reason

I went through what I went through is to learn who I truly am. Foster care sometimes gets a bad reputation, but what people don't realize is that it is an opportunity to improve yourself and your situation. In my case, I decided to take my past circumstances and let that be my motivation for success. I persevered through it and I excelled.

My first day of foster care they took me to a place called Epworth Children's Home. When my caseworker first told me where I was going, I didn't respond well. My exact words were "I will not be like the little orphan Annie". When I finally reached the cottage, I first met a lady named Ms. Logan. She offered me a Gatorade and some chips. In my head, I thought "Why

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Epworth is New All Over Again

Fall 2019

A Message from The Rev. John Holler
President

Grandchildren, Bees and Trees

Nothing gets run over so quickly as the Thanksgiving holiday when thoughts turn to Christmas. This year was no exception, and I had instructions from the chief holiday coordinator to have a live tree in the house before the weekend expired. So the morning after Thanksgiving Day, two of our grandchildren and I set out in search of the perfect Christmas tree.

On the way to the Canoeing for Kids Christmas tree lot on Trenholm Road the children and I noticed a honey bee clinging tightly to the car's windshield. The bee became the focus of our attention, the source of great excitement, and "bee sting" stories from the children. Every time it looked as if the bee would be blown off of the windshield we would come to a stop sign or traffic light and the honey bee would get a new grip and the children's amazement would again be rekindled as our speed increased again. Yes, the bee made it to the Christmas tree lot!

Next there was a discussion regarding what should be done about the bee. We decided not to put it through a return trip, so I lifted the semi-frozen insect from the windshield with an Epworth brochure I had on the front seat, and placed the bee on a nearby shrub while our nine-year-old granddaughters shrieked with a mixture of laughter and fear lest the honey bee would take flight and come toward them.

With the winged hitchhiker on her new perch our thoughts quickly turned to the perfect tree. The first two (tallest trees on the lot) were vetoed. The next one selected passed all the tests and off we went to play hide and seek with last year's tree stand.

On the way home as the twins were talking to one another about the tree, my thoughts turned to the bee. I was certain her future was not very bright, and that she would not survive long by herself out in the cold. My thoughts then wandered to a statement made to me by our wonderful librarian at Epworth. She had suggested that I take a look at the bulletin board in Epworth's library. A space had been made on the bulletin board for individuals to write statements of thanks. There among many of the things that we could all likely list was the statement our librarian wanted me to see. One of our older teenage girls had written, "I am thankful to Epworth for taking me in." Wow! She cut right to the heart of the matter. All of us at one time or another need shelter from the storms, and both a heavenly father and a "neighbor" or two who will walk with us during our journey through the rainy seasons.

In its 123 year history how many children and youth have said, written, or thought, "Thank you Epworth for taking me in?" The numbers are in the thousands and there are thousands yet to come who will one day say, "Thank you, you were there when I needed you the most."

May the Spirit of Thanksgiving and the Joy of the world be with you always.

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would I want chips, look where I am at.” In my first few months at Epworth I was a very antisocial person. It wasn’t that I didn’t like the staff and other residents, I just didn’t know them. Once I got over that and talked to them, I found a family.

Epworth has really shaped me as a person. As I opened up, I saw a huge difference in myself. I started to care about things that I never cared about, like school. Epworth gave me the opportunity to go to one of the best schools in Richland One, Dreher High School, where I found my passion for music. I always had a love for music, but it was deepened through the experiences I had at Dreher and my music teacher. I also grew a lot. I blossomed from a childish little 15-year-old into a strong, ambitious 17 year old. Epworth offered me the support system that I never knew I needed to succeed and grow, support I now know that I craved before ever entering foster care.

Perseverance is persistence in something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success. I think I fit that definition perfectly. I went to high school and no matter what was going on in my personal life I still managed to make it on the Honor Roll every quarter. I became a part of the National Honor Society, I took on various activities in church and on campus, and I still managed to succeed no matter what. Once Epworth gave me the opportunity to find a place to put my anger and frustration, I found that I can finally feel my feelings without letting them take over my life.

Foster care has really shaped me into the person I am today. It helped me find my passion for music and the strength to know that tomorrow will be better. As a young teenager I always tried to put foster care behind me, but as I look back now, I wouldn’t trade it for the world. It gave me the tools to grow into a strong woman who is going to succeed, no matter what.

Visit Epworth!

We love having groups visit our beautiful campus to learn more about the history and day to day operations. Being on campus will give you a better sense of what we do as an organization while also having the opportunity to see exactly how your generous contributions are used. You may even have a chance to sample some of our famous Epworth Peanut Butter Ice Cream!

To request a tour, please contact Sherri Mims at smims@epworthsc.org or complete the tour request form on our website at www.epworthsc.org. Click on PLAN A VISIT under the GIVE and VOLUNTEER drop-down menu.

If you would like to join us for worship on a Sunday at 11:00 a.m. then tour the campus, Pastor Pamela Richardson will lead your tour. Sunday tours begin at 12:30 p.m.

You may contact her directly at 803-256-7394 or prichardson@epworthsc.org.



St. Andrews Parrish UMC

Haas Buddies

Written By Our Faithful Cottage Partner Leader, Fran Lewis

The congregation of First UMC, Bennettsville has always supported the children and staff of Epworth with its prayers and financial support to the Annual Mother's Day and Work Day Offerings. However, 8½ years ago the members of the Pledger Hodges Sunday School Class of FUMC decided to make an additional commitment to this vital ministry by volunteering our God given talents to serve within a connectional ministry with a cottage of awesome middle school boys and their counselors housed in Haas Cottage. Through our service and especially presence in the lives of these young men, many opportunities to witness to our Haas Buddies about the love and joy of Christ have been afforded to us. Our excitement with our Epworth friends soon spilled over into our church family and many other members joined in the Epworth experience. As our relationship with the staff and boys in Haas Cottage grew stronger, so did our walk with Christ. We are grateful to have been given God's favor to participate in this fulfilling and rewarding ministry.

Memorable moments for Cottage Partner Members

One of our real pleasures has been to treat our Haas Buddies to lunch at Golden Corral. How pleased I am when I see how much they enjoy choosing whatever they want to eat! Of course, some of them start with all desserts and then get other more healthy foods later. I was especially surprised to watch one person start out with a plate of broccoli. He then got more broccoli and finally desserts. What fun it was for me!

– Carolyn Wallace

After any interaction with our Haas Cottage buddies, I feel so blessed. What a great group of young men! I am constantly amazed as to how the boys seem so comfortable with their lives at Epworth. Without knowing, they project a sense of security and love that Epworth provides for them day in and day out. Epworth is the life changer for the young men who call Epworth home.

- Betty Souther

During our fourth cottage partner activity the group hosted a cookout to celebrate the beginning of a new school year for our Haas Buddies. As we were packing up to leave, we were asked by one of the boys if he could take a picture of us. During our previous activities, it was evident to us this young man was struggling with his identity. He seemed to be somewhat immature as compared to the other boys. His sponsor and others in our

Sunday School Class made sure to show a double dose of God's love to him through individual time with him on our activities and communicating with him through the week with cards, letters and special surprises. Our Sunday School Class lined up in front of our church van for the picture. The young photographer was handed one of our cell phones. He kept directing us to spread out. I finally said, "Honey, we aren't going to be in the picture if we keep moving apart!" His reply will always be etched in the center of my heart, "I want to make sure to see the words First United Methodist Church Bennettsville printed on the side of the van. When I see your van and those words, I feel loved!"



Left to right: Bob Hines, Theo Odom, Leslie Hines, Fran Lewis, Betty Ann Souther, Hubert Meggs, Jennie Meggs

Tierra's New Car



By Laurie Brandes, Director of the Center for Independent Living

Learning to drive, getting a license and a first car are big milestones for almost every teenager. For youth in foster care, learning to drive and obtaining a first car can be a big challenge. A limited number of driving lessons are provided by the Department of Social Services (DSS), but youth typically don't have family that can give them extra practice or hand down a used car as their first vehicle. The teens in my family learned to drive on my grandparents' farm with the old vehicles used to get around the property and dump trash. Foster youth generally don't have those kinds of opportunities.

Tierra, one of our Independent Living (IL) residents, was able to obtain her license at 17 years old. She moved into the IL program following graduation and her 18th birthday. She immediately impressed the staff with her maturity and motivation to better herself. After graduating high school with an excellent GPA, she was awarded several academic scholarships to continue in higher education. She worked full time at a local restaurant and was registered at a community college for fall semester. Tierra was given the nickname "Sweet T" in the cottage because of her big heart, sweet spirit, and kindness to others. She showers her younger siblings with gifts, love, and support.

After Tierra settled into the IL program and college, the IL staff recommended her for a car award from the On The Road Again Program. This program is offered by the SC Foster Parent Association. This program repairs and awards donated used cars to deserving foster youth. The students have to meet several criteria before receiving a car. They have to demonstrate self discipline, mature behavior and motivation to become responsible adults. They have to receive recommendations from their staff as well as DSS worker. They have to save a good bit of money in advance, because the recipient must take on the financial responsibility of car insurance, taxes, tags and maintenance of the vehicle after they receive it.

The IL Center was thrilled when we were notified that a car was available and awarded to our "Sweet T". A few days prior to the presentation, her IL case manager, Ms. Gee, was helping her through the process of comparing car insurance policies and purchasing coverage. At one point in the life skill lesson, Tierra was overcome with feelings of gratitude and excitement. Tears began pouring down her cheeks as Ms. Gee helped her finish the transaction. Tierra said she was crying because she was so grateful to everyone who was helping her receive a car.

The day of the presentation arrived, and many people gathered on the main campus to show their support of Tierra as she received her car keys from both the Foster Parent Association and the donor. As the time of the ceremony approached, Tierra once again began crying tears of joy and appreciation. As part of the presentation, I was happy to let the large crowd know why Tierra was selected to receive a car. "Tierra has a generous heart. She is very giving towards others", I stated. Turning toward our "Sweet T", I added, "Today is your day to receive a gift".

Update: Tierra is enjoying the independence of driving herself to her job and classes. Instead of spending her money on ride sharing for transportation, she is putting gas in her own vehicle. She is learning about auto maintenance, vehicle ownership, and is preparing for her second semester of college. She is interested in studying science after she transfers to a four year university. Tierra continues to inspire and serve as a role model for everyone associated with the Independent Living Program.

For more information on the Foster Parent Association and the On the Road Again Program, visit <https://ontheroadagain.sc/>.

The Holiday Season at Epworth

Christmas is right around the corner but 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 his or her Cottage Coordinator 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 five days in early December when the gifts are brought to campus, sorted and wrapped. Wrapping was done by wonderful volunteers. 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 and the Family Care Center, 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, A'ja Wilson, former USC women's basketball player who now plays for the Las Vegas Aces, and Coach Dawn Staley who also has 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. Each young person was provided with a gift card and University of South Carolina posters and hats.

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 to 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 sibling or 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 8th, Pastor Pamela held our campus' Christmas party, which kicked off at the church. Afterwards,



residents, staff and staff family members gathered in the dining hall and enjoyed lunch and fellowship together.

Our volunteer cottage partners have been on campus helping our children celebrate the season, too! On November 23rd, Trenholm Road United Methodist Church helped decorate our cottages and campus. They made our campus look beautiful, and holiday ready! 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 were treated to a delicious dinner hosted by Grace United Methodist Church, North Augusta. Our Stokes Cottage girls were invited to take part in Union United Methodist Church's Living Christmas Story. Central United Methodist Church, Newberry, hosted a Christmas Party for all residents at their church.

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!

The Cheerful Giver Surprises Us Again This Year!

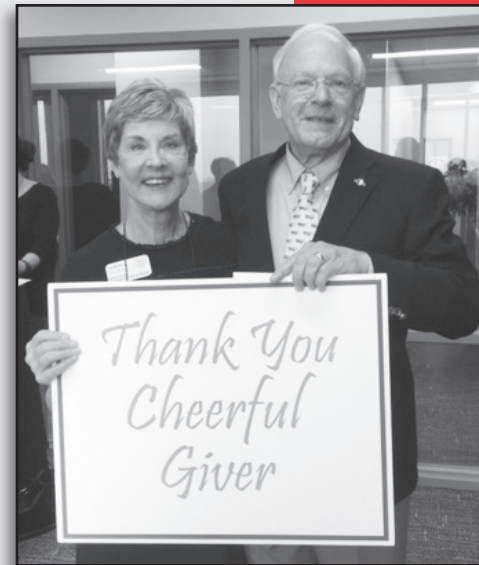
On August 16, 2019, Epworth was one of over 40 local nonprofits that received \$10,000 each from the anonymous "Cheerful Giver." For three years now, Epworth has been surprised with this generous gift which is directed through the Central Carolina Community Foundation.

Ten thousand dollars is a considerable gift for Epworth considering the average gift is near \$100. So what will a gift of this size do for Epworth? It could cover the cost of meals in the dining room for a month, counseling for residents and their families approaching reunification, a month of supervision in a single cottage, tutoring for middle school students for the year, or food and living allowances for our college students for a semester.

Every donor impacts Epworth each year, and for these gifts, we are thankful. While the Cheerful Giver is able to support Epworth at a higher level than some, when everyone gives what they can afford, the children of Epworth reap the benefit of the services they need.

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)

Thank you, Cheerful Giver, for your continued belief in and support of the mission of Epworth!



Reverend John Holler and Jo Ann Turnquist, President and CEO of the Central Carolina Community Foundation

Save The Date!

Coldwell Banker and Friends of Epworth's Dancing with the Stars will be held March 28th at River Bluff High School. Twelve contestants from around the state will compete in various forms of international ballroom and latin dance. All proceeds benefit Epworth Children's Home. You don't want to miss it!



Epworth
Children's Home

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www.epworthchildrenshome.org

The Rev. John E. Holler, Jr.
President

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**Children's names and pictures have been changed for confidentiality.*

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The mission of Epworth Children's Home is to serve children, youth and families through caring, safe Christian communities, where hurts are healed; hope is nurtured; and faith in God, self and others is developed.

You Are Invited to Join the

BISHOP'S COMMITTEE OF 500

By making a pledge to contribute \$10,000 or more to Epworth Children's Home's Every Child is a Miracle campaign to be paid over a period of from 1 to 4 years

For additional information, email or call Lisa Livingston Fusco or John Holler at (803) 256-7394

lfusco@epworthsc.org
jholler@epworthsc.org

*Every Child is a Miracle,
but some miracles need your help.*



Donate Your Gently Used Car



Epworth Children's Home is in need of gently used vehicles to transport children and youth to school, healthcare appointments, afterschool activities and part-time jobs.

epworthchildrenshome.org | 2900 Millwood Ave. Columbia, SC 29205 | 803-256-7394



Hosted by the Epworth Alumni Association

**Saturday, April 4, 2020
11:00AM - 3:00PM
at Epworth**

**2 PM 40th Anniversary Celebration
of the Early Intervention Center**

BBQ
Fundraiser

*\$10/plate (\$5 kids);
\$30 Boston Butt
Bake sale & more!*



**BBQ, Music, Classic
Cars,
and Fun for All!**