

The Record

News from Epworth Children's Home



Farming for the Future

As farmers, Sarah and Brandon Bowers know that growth doesn't happen overnight. Growth takes time and effort, light, warmth, nurture, patience, and honestly, a lot of hard work. While they have spent the last several years nurturing chickens, rabbits, cows and many other farm animals, for the last few months they have been nurturing and loving their foster son, D*. The Bowers met at Clemson University and after college they got married and Sarah moved to run the family farm with Brandon. They had their daughter, Romney Ann, and were working hard, busy with farm and family life. However, they knew in the back of their minds that foster care was something that they would like to explore. After both Sarah and Brandon began working at Thornwell, they realized that there is never a

perfect time to foster and that the need is now. During Thornwell's annual foster care conference, a speaker shared his story of being a foster child in California. He had bounced around from home to home when he arrived at his final placement, a family with a farm. There he found love, safety, and security. His favorite part of the farm was with the chickens, his own little retreat from the outside world. Brandon looked at Sarah during the presentation and said, "We have chickens." Two weeks later they reached out to Epworth to begin the process of becoming licensed foster parents. Shortly after, they learned about D. D had been in group care for the last five years. Once they were licensed, D came to them as their first placement, on International Day of Happiness. As a child of

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Epworth Pride

Fall 2020

A Message from The Rev. John Holler
President

Epworth's Institute Grows Legs

Approximately thirty years ago I read an article written by a noted authority who had written a series of books on strengthening and revitalizing the church, and on helping congregations regain a sense of mission and purpose. The author wrote about change, individual, congregational, and societal. This author was not a United Methodist, however, he seemed to have an understanding of the Methodist form of church government, and about setting goals and long-term follow through.

As this author addressed various societal issues, difficulties and opportunities he wrote what was to me a surprising thought, especially since it was coming from a non-Methodist. He wrote that if some of the problems he was writing about were to be solved they could be solved most readily through the United Methodist Church because of the structure and accountability that exists in our denomination. In my eyes, this structure resembles a corporate structure with built in supervisory and reporting mandates that can be mobilized for both individual and societal change.

That train of thought made an impression on me at the time. I even heard the author's statements quoted in continuing education seminars and in conversations regarding remedies for conditions that continue to plague humanity. For me, this underscored the importance of his words.

I have also observed that through the years our Wesleyan/Methodist goal-oriented structure and the systems of accountability are seldom utilized to the best possible effect. Not often does our connectional system function cohesively and put its time, energy, resources, and passion behind solutions to a problem that so profoundly degrades life.

Several years ago, thoughts began to coalesce as more definitive research became available pertaining to the tremendous damage that occurs daily to children, youth, and family systems because of neglect, abuse, abandonment, and scarce resources. The fallout of incarceration, homelessness, educational failures, increases in crime, drug and alcohol addictions, dependency, too soon pregnancies, and wasted lives of pain and hopelessness increases like fungus on a wet log. As more information surfaced about the human costs involved with maltreatment of children, youth, and extended family members, fresh statistics also became more readily available regarding the millions of dollars spent each year in South Carolina, and the billions spent each year on a national scale. Next, solution focused possibilities began to surface in the form of a question. If we put our hearts, minds, prayers, and resources together can we as an annual conference, plus friends, transform the failing child protective system in South Carolina. The answer is, "Yes!" with God's help we can, and so the concept for the Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing began to form.

The Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing is a major initiative that is in a unique position to change the landscape of child protection, and to strengthen families across South Carolina through remedial and prevention services. The mission of the Institute is to utilize a Theory of Change to improve the lives of children and youth from 0 to 23 by creating Centers of Excellence in churches and community centers across South Carolina. The objective is to create positive outcomes for children and families through coordinated research-based child and family methodologies combined with good “old fashion” prayer and care. This will produce outcomes of increased stability, academic success, emotional strength, and relational and employment skills. In short, it will help lift families out of generational cycles that have trapped many South Carolina families for ages.

There are almost 1,000 United Methodist congregations in South Carolina, and 225,000 United Methodists. The organizational structure of our conference is present. A new campus has been purchased to house the headquarters of the Institute. The Every Child is a Miracle financial campaign is in play to help fund this initiative. The Institute has grown legs and centers have opened in the Columbia District, and hubs have opened in the Charleston District, Spartanburg and Greenville Districts, and will soon be opened in the Pee Dee region in the Florence and Marion Districts, and with an outpost in Lake City and other more rural communities.

The Institute will be comprised of eight to ten centers, each with its own specialty area. Eventually, as resources are available, Hubs of select centers will be established in each district, and outposts will be established in less populated areas. Through the Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing, Centers, Hubs, and Outposts, and with enthusiastic congregational participation, thousands of lives will be transformed in the name of Christ who said, “Let the children come unto me. To such belongs the kingdom of God,” and who also said, “I say unto you, in as much as you have done it unto one of the least of these, you have done it unto me.”

Rarely does an institution, a conference, a collection of people have the opportunity to make such a profound and lasting difference in thousands of young lives. The opportunity is here! The time has come for United Methodists and friends all across our conference and beyond to complete the work of establishing the Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing, and the Centers of Excellence in every region of our state.

Continued from cover

trauma with years in the foster care system, the Bowers knew that it would be a process and a learning curve with D as a part of their family, but they took it day by day. They invested in D by taking the extra time to kick the soccer ball after dinner, to lie on the living room floor and color, to teach him about the farm and how to gather the eggs and feed the rabbits. D is still learning a lot about life in the Bowers family and life on the farm. Every day the Bowers are able to see signs of growth, from his patience with his new little sister Romney Ann to the realization that it is okay to make mistakes, and ask for forgiveness, to the desire to learn new skills like playing the clarinet. The Bowers and D are taking life one day at a time. It is hard, but rewarding work. There are no days off for farmers or foster parents.



The Residential Program

The residential program at Epworth Children's Home primarily serves children ages 12-18. Children come from DSS as foster care placements or directly from their family or a caregiver as a private placement. These vulnerable children come to Epworth from situations beyond their control. Within the residential program Epworth provides a well-rounded, comprehensive care approach including: counseling services to every resident (and to their families if that is a beneficial option), spiritual formation and support, recreational activities, and educational assistance with tutoring by certified teachers. The staff in the residential program are trained under the Children and Residential Experiences (CARE) model, which was developed by Cornell University. The model teaches childcare workers how to work in the best interest of children and create conditions for positive change while in residential group care. The children live on the 32-acre Millwood Campus in Columbia, SC in cottages with other children in the same age group and same gender along with their staff. The staff in the cottages consist of four Life Skills Specialists (two are always on duty at a time), one Cottage Coordinator and one Case Manager. Residents can stay at Epworth for a short or long amount of time, and over the years we have seen thousands of children graduate from High School and enter the Epworth Center for Independent Living, the Military, college, career training, and enter the workforce.



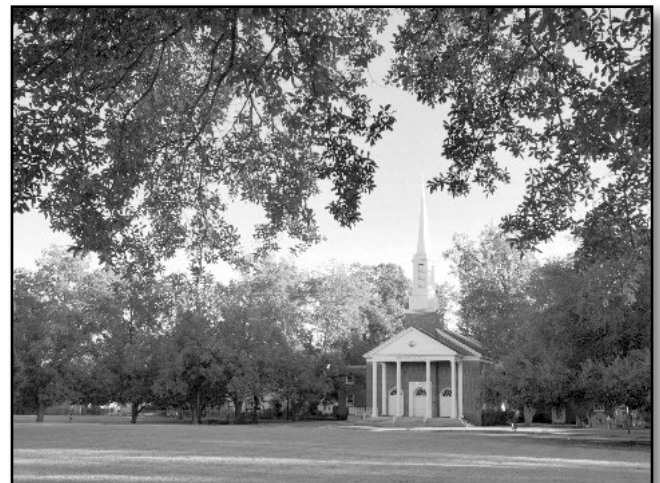
Counseling Services



Recreational Opportunities



Tutoring Services



Spiritual Growth Opportunities

The Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing



The Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing was created in order to best serve the needs of vulnerable children and families across the state of South Carolina, across a variety of channels and situations. The Institute is comprised of “Centers of Excellence” that target specific, immediate needs in the state and together provide comprehensive care for the children and families who need some assistance. The Institute works to be proactive and evidence-based in its approach to successfully address trauma, family dynamics and long-term life enhancement by the means of prevention and remediation.

Frances Pope Hewitt

Epworth is pleased to announce that Frances Pope Hewitt has joined us as our new Senior Director of the Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing.

Frances is a Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor and a Licensed Addictions Counselor in the State of South Carolina. She is also a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor and Licensed Clinical Addictions Specialist in the State of North Carolina, and is a Master’s Level Addictions Counselor at the National level. Frances is a South Carolina native, and a graduate of Ben Lippen School and Lander University. She earned her Master of Education in Community Counseling from Clemson University in 2003. Frances has over 17 years of clinical experience in the behavioral health care field. For the past six and a half years, Frances has been the Clinical Director for the Mental Illness Recovery Center, Inc., (MIRCI) in Columbia, SC. Prior to working at MIRCI, Frances lived and worked in the mountains of Western North Carolina.

She has spent her career advocating for those who could not advocate for themselves. When Frances is not working, she enjoys spending time with her husband, traveling, reading, and running. We are so excited to have her on the Epworth Team!



The Epworth Center for Family Engagement

The Center for Family Engagement is home to Epworth's Foster Care Program. Epworth recruits and trains individuals and married couples across the state of South Carolina for both Family Foster Care and Therapeutic Foster Care. For years, Epworth has been serving the foster children of South Carolina through the residential program, but in an effort to serve even more children and families across a wider age range and range of needs, Epworth established the Foster Care Program. Epworth believes that every child is a miracle and deserves a safe and loving home. The Foster Care Program has an office in the Midlands, Upstate and Lowcountry with one coming to the PeeDee region soon! Epworth Foster Families benefit from proven, research based training and around the clock support from the Epworth Foster Care staff members. From the moment a couple or individual decides that they would like to know more about foster care, Epworth's staff is in frequent contact with them, answering questions, solving problems and overcoming barriers. Epworth brings a huge network of churches that support the foster families with prayer, household items, meals, childcare and many other ways. Epworth also provides families access to the Epworth Children's Home resource closets, parenting support groups through Circle of Parents®, tutoring services for children and access to Epworth's other service areas like the Epworth Early Intervention Center and the Epworth Center for Counseling. As of today, 53 foster children and counting across the state are in the care of Epworth Foster Families. As Epworth continues to grow – it is the hope and desire of Epworth to continue providing safe environments that foster happiness, good mental health, bright futures and love.

The Epworth Center for Independent Living

The Center for Independent Living (IL) has been a part of Epworth's ministry for several years and was previously referred to as the Higher Education Program. This center helps young adults ages 18-23 who normally would have "aged out" of traditional residential care or foster care placements. In order to be a client of the Center for Independent Living, young adults must be enrolled in higher education, working full-time, enrolled in a job training program, or enlisted in the military. Many of the residents in Independent Living are doing several of those at once. The IL program is located on the 19-acre Trenholm Road Campus where residents live in a cottage set up college-dorm style with other residents of the same gender, and staff. The staff work with residents to teach important life skills such as money management, decision making, coping with stress, effective communication skills, job training and much more. They are also able to attend counseling at Epworth's Center for Counseling, just across campus from their cottage. The goal of Independent Living is to start young adults off on the correct foot, and set them up for success. Traditionally, kids that age out of foster care have a higher risk of being homeless, incarcerated, or in an abusive relationship than teens raised in a traditional home. The Independent Living program works to break those cycles, and see young adults reach their educational and vocational dreams.



The Better Parts of Life

With the overwhelming bad news in which we are all swimming, I received a needed lesson on perspective from Grace* recently. Grace has obtained four jobs in six weeks since she arrived in the IL center to prepare to begin college full time in Columbia in the fall. Grace is quiet, smart and an extremely hard worker. Her feminine bedroom is filled with scripture quotes, study bibles, and motivational sayings. I recently drove her across town to fill out some paperwork for her latest job.

Earlier in the week she received a letter from one of her parents in prison. During our car ride, she told me of her entire life in and out of foster care, of being moved around the state with various extended family members who would send her on to someone else. She mentioned her little siblings who had been adopted. I asked, "Did you want to be adopted".

"Their parents did not want me; they wanted little kids," came her matter of fact answer. She was not allowed to have contact with them, heaping hurt on top of trauma. I told her any family would be proud to have her. I wanted to tell her that Epworth was proud to have her, but my eyes filled with tears and I had to catch my breath as I drove on.

She continued, "I went to some therapy that helped me accept what I have lost, but really I just look at the better parts of life".

Next time I am having a bad day, I will remember my resilient role model in my cottage who chooses only to look at the "better part of life". Most likely, she will be at work, church or college classes, working to make a positive life for herself with the opportunities she has been given. The Independent Living family is indeed proud to have you, Grace.

-Written by Laurie Brandes, Director of Independent Living

The Epworth Early Intervention Center

The Epworth Early Intervention Center (EEIC) is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year! For the past four decades, the EEIC has been serving families with children who have special needs, developmental delays and/or disabilities for children ages 0-5. The EEIC was established to accommodate children with a wide range of developmental needs, as well as provide information, support and education for their families. The EEIC has a preschool located on the Millwood campus in Columbia, SC where they serve both preschoolers with developmental delays and typically developing preschoolers who serve as "role models" for the class. The EEIC also offers home-based early intervention services with Early Intervention Specialists that serve families across the Midlands as well as cooperative respite for families.

We have the honor of educating and nurturing families as their children grow and develop from birth through the early school years. We believe that each child is a miracle, and we are here to support families as their children reach their God-given potential.

- Jessica Mearns, EEIC Director



The Epworth Family Care Center



The Epworth Family Care Center (FCC) is the only program of its kind in the state of South Carolina. The FCC works with mothers who have substance use difficulties who still have custody of their children. The FCC steps in and provides comprehensive care to the entire family to help them be successful in the long-term. The Family Care Center is located on Epworth's Millwood Campus currently – but as it continues to grow and flourish it will likely move to the Trenholm Campus for more capacity to help families. Mothers receive treatment for substance misuse from the LRADAC, as well as parenting skills and child development counseling and training in the FCC. The families, as a unit, work on life skills such as healthy relationships, mindful living, spirituality, leisure and recreational health, nutrition and wellness, budgeting and educational/vocational services. The ultimate goal of the Family Care Center is to provide holistic recovery services to the family unit that results in family preservation, end cycles of abuse, and more successful recovery stories. The FCC works diligently to keep families healthy and whole.

Through a lot of coaching, modeling, encouragement and spiritual guidance, Anne finally felt a sense of permanency and stability for the first time in a long time. With the chaos around her slowing down, Anne was able to develop a sense of trust and was ready to put in the hard work.*

*- A quote about Anne,
A recent graduate of the Family Care Center*



The Epworth Center for Counseling

The Epworth Center for Counseling was established in 2019 on the Trenholm Road Campus in Columbia, SC. The Center for Counseling was established to serve the emotional health needs of the community, adults and children, as well as the most vulnerable populations with limited access to mental healthcare. It is Epworth's desire that no one would miss out on the mental health care that they need due to finances. The center accepts Medicaid, private insurance, private pay and works off of a sliding fee scale. Telehealth is also available to both new and current clients, so that factors such as transportation, coronavirus, or a demanding schedule don't create a barrier to mental health wellbeing. The Epworth Center for Counseling is equipped with professionals to serve children, adults, families, couples and provide group therapy. It offers parenting classes for foster parents, biological parents and kinship care givers, who are working to provide stability and a safe environment for children no matter the family dynamic. Community and self-referrals are welcome as the Center for Counseling continues to grow and serve South Carolina.



Do You Plant Seeds?

Growing up in the Lowcountry of South Carolina, my family attended Varnville United Methodist Church. For as long as I can remember, my parents were active in this small-town church with both of them serving on church council and singing in the choir. My father, an educator and high school and elementary school principal, served as administrative board chairman and my mother, active in the community, school, and church, led Vacation Bible School. I have wonderful memories of my parents serving others selflessly both inside and outside of the walls of Varnville UMC. So many times, I watched my mother take a homemade peach pie to a shut-in or my father lend a helping hand to a struggling student after school. Like clockwork, every May on Mother's Day, my parents would give each of us a dollar bill so that we would learn the importance of supporting Epworth Children's Home through yearly offerings. Kindness was modeled to us time after time and in so many different and tangible ways. Education and the well-being of young people were passions of my parents and I am pleased to now be able to honor them through Epworth.



Having parents who demonstrated Christian living and giving, and because I am eternally grateful for the wonderful life that I have been given, the Bess and Bill Ware Endowed Fund at Epworth Children's Home honors them and carries on their love of children while also ensuring that every child has an education. In addition, supporting Epworth's Every Child Is A Miracle campaign is incredibly important to me. Every single day, Epworth is making a difference in the lives of children, young adults and families across our state through its Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing. Knowing that children are being placed in loving foster homes receiving the comprehensive care that they deserve led me to want to support this campaign through joining the Bishop's Committee.

My parents were seed planters for me. With every act of kindness, every meal delivered, and every dollar donated, they planted seeds of faithfulness and generosity in me. We are called to help those in need and I am appreciative that Epworth is a place where children receive the love, joy and hope that each one deserves. I am thankful that Epworth also offers opportunities for me to honor my parents. Will you and I be seed planters for future generations?

- written by Barbara Ware

Miracles Need Your Help!

For generations, Epworth has made the difference in the lives of children and families. Now is the time to prepare for the next 124 years!

As you have read in this issue of The Record, Epworth is responding to the changing needs of children and families as well as the changing landscape of child welfare at a state and federal level. The primary purpose of the Every Child Is A Miracle campaign is to enhance, expand, and sustain the life-changing ministry to children and families, who with Epworth's resources, are given the opportunity to move from lives of generational poverty, pain, and hopelessness to lives of faith, hope and productivity. You have read how Epworth is already addressing these needs through the establishment of the Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing and each of the centers within it. With your help, Epworth will reach its goal of \$10 million which will ensure its sustainability for the next 124 years.

The Every Child Is A Miracle Financial Campaign has four primary funding priorities:

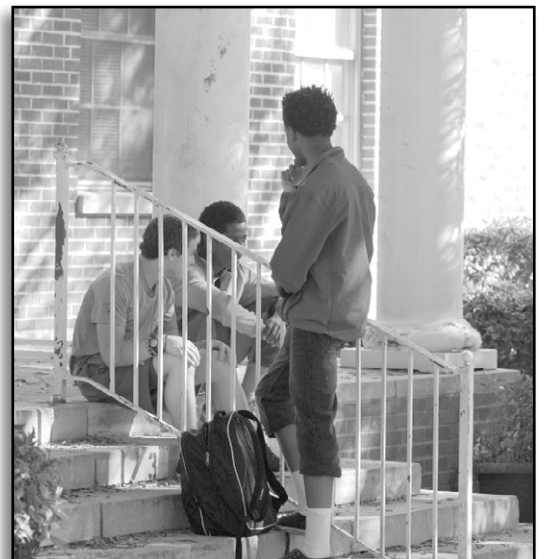
I. Residential Expansion

There are many additional children who need the services that Epworth can provide. Epworth is now expanding its present capacity and programs with the purchase, renovation and staffing of the former Carolina Children's Home located just two miles from Epworth's historic Millwood campus. This is a 19-acre campus on which there are 14 buildings that can be used for residential and other support services for at-risk children and families. To secure this property, Epworth has borrowed funds on a short-term basis at a very low rate of interest. Goal \$3,000,000



II. Strengthen and Expand Programs

The experience and knowledge gained through this 124-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. Our new Institute is designed to meet immediate needs in South Carolina, including increasing the number of strong foster families for children; building a bridge program for older, at-risk youth transitioning to Independent Living; providing for mothers and children during periods of difficult transition, keeping them together; and more. Goal \$3,000,000



III. Permanent Endowment Growth

The endowment provides for the children at Epworth today – and those who will arrive in the years to come. Throughout the generations, faithful donors have entrusted Epworth with managing a modest endowment of invested funds created from gifts of all sizes. The majority of these funds, up to 5% per year, are used to make up the difference when annual gifts and other income are unable to support the entirety of Epworth's mission. Certain funds within the endowment are reserved for specific purposes and programs, such as scholarships and other designated programs here at Epworth. Goal \$3,000,000



IV. Global Child Welfare

Epworth believes in serving not only the children and families of South Carolina but also others outside its geographic reach as part of its ongoing work with mission and outreach. This campaign will also provide for some of the most urgent, immediate needs identified by the South Carolina United Methodist Church's sister conference in Zimbabwe. Just as Epworth serves the needs of children and families in South Carolina, Fairfield Children's Home and the Hartzell School provide for the needs of orphaned children in the area surrounding the Old Mutare Mission and Africa University in Zimbabwe. Goal \$1,000,000



As of this writing, \$6 million has been raised in gifts and pledges, so we are now asking you to prayerfully consider a gift or pledge over and above your usual support of Epworth to help us reach our goal of \$10,000,000 which will ensure Epworth's dynamic future. As you are considering a gift, please be mindful of an opportunity created by Jonathan Holston, Resident Bishop of the South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church. Membership in the Bishop's Committee is available to individuals, churches, church groups, businesses, foundations and others who wish to support the campaign at the \$10,000 level. Pledges may be multi-year and Bishop's Committee members will be recognized on a permanent plaque at Epworth. Estate planning is another wonderful way to support Epworth. Planned gifts are directed to the endowment which is so important in Epworth's sustainability for the future.

Naming opportunities are also available for rooms, common areas and buildings on the Trenholm Campus. This is a splendid way to honor or surprise a love one or memorialize someone who made a significant contribution to your life.

Please contact Lisa Livingston Fusco (lfusco@epworthsc.org) or John Holler (jholler@epworthsc.org) at 803-256-7394 or by email if you would like more information on how you can be involved with the campaign. Additional information may also be found at www.everychildisamiracle.org.

As always, we thank you for your commitment to and continued support of the children and families served by Epworth.



Epworth
Children's Home

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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.



CIRCLE of Parents®
Sharing Ideas. Sharing Support.

As Epworth expands our capacity to support the well-being of children and families, we have partnered with Circle of Parents® to create safe spaces for parents to learn from one another in a model that strengthens families. Epworth is the state partner to Circle of Parents, a national organization that provides training and technical support for the development of parent-driven support groups with a parallel children's program. Parents gather in a confidential, non-judgmental setting to learn from each other and grow as parents with the help of a trained facilitator while children are cared for in a parallel program called a Children's Circle. We hope to partner with churches throughout the annual conference to offer training and support so that churches can be in ministry with families in their community using this evidence-informed model. What group of parents in your community do you want to be in relationship with? Single parents, grandparents raising grandchildren, parents of children with disabilities or another group? Contact Kathy James at kjames@epworthsc.org for more information or to begin planning your Circle of Parents.

You are invited to join the
**BISHOP'S COMMITTEE
FOR CHILDREN**



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 from 1 to 4 years.

For additional information, email or call
Lisa Livingston Fusco or John Holler
at (803) 256-7394
lfusco@epworthsc.org or
jholler@epworthsc.org

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

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