

# The Record

*News from Epworth Children's Home*



Epworth  
Children's Home

*Celebrating 125 Years*

*Annual Report Edition*

Volume 124, Issue 2 2021



*Makala*

The things that stand out most from our childhood influence who we become as adults. Our memories are our treasures. Maybe it is the way we fix our favorite snack the same way mom did, or it may be the way we repeat sayings that our parents and grandparents used. For the residents at Epworth, their memories and traditions are often a little good mixed in with much more negative and some really, really hard ones. However, the beautiful thing about calling Epworth home is that we have an opportunity to make new memories each and every day with our residents. We are in the business of re-writing stories.

For Makala, her time at Epworth is like a thread woven throughout the blanket of her life. Makala came to Epworth in 2008 with her sister and stayed with us for a few years before going to live with family members. Her time at Epworth was not

incredibly long, but it was deeply impactful. After receiving the Marines Officer Scholarship, Makala returned to Columbia to attend the University of South Carolina. Makala created this path to success for herself, from figuring out Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to decorating a dorm, she set her mind on her goal and achieved it. Walking into the University of South Carolina on her own, a college freshman with big dreams and a work ethic of gold, Makala was quickly reminded of the life skills she learned at Epworth. She could do her own laundry, manage her money, schedule her time wisely, keep her space clean, and even deal with living with someone else in a shared space. While her dormmates struggled and called their parents to ask the difference between detergent and fabric softener, Makala thrived.

*Continued on page 6*



## An Unusual Year

### Spring 2021

A Message from The Rev. John Holler  
President

I saw a photograph of a handmade sign not long ago. That sign read: “The dumbest thing I ever purchased was a 2020 planner”. I will bet many of us can identify with that thought. To say this has been an unusual year is an understatement.

Someone said, “I never thought the comment, ‘I wouldn’t touch him with a 10-foot pole’ would become a national policy.” But here we are wearing masks on campus, with children eating in their own cottages instead of in the dining hall, no campus volunteers, very few off campus excursions, out of school for a year, no team sports and all the while trying to figure out ways to expend teenage energy in appropriate ways.

During the year Epworth never closed and most of our staff members reported for work as usual. We treated the campuses and Hubs like hospitals that needed to function at top performance everyday for the benefit of the people we serve.

As you read this annual report issue of The Epworth Record, you will find that the year 2020 was a very productive year, and a year when new ways to serve took root and began to grow. You will also see there are some disappointments, largely due to elements beyond our control. In the next few lines, I will list a few in both categories. I hope you will read the report and discover some others.

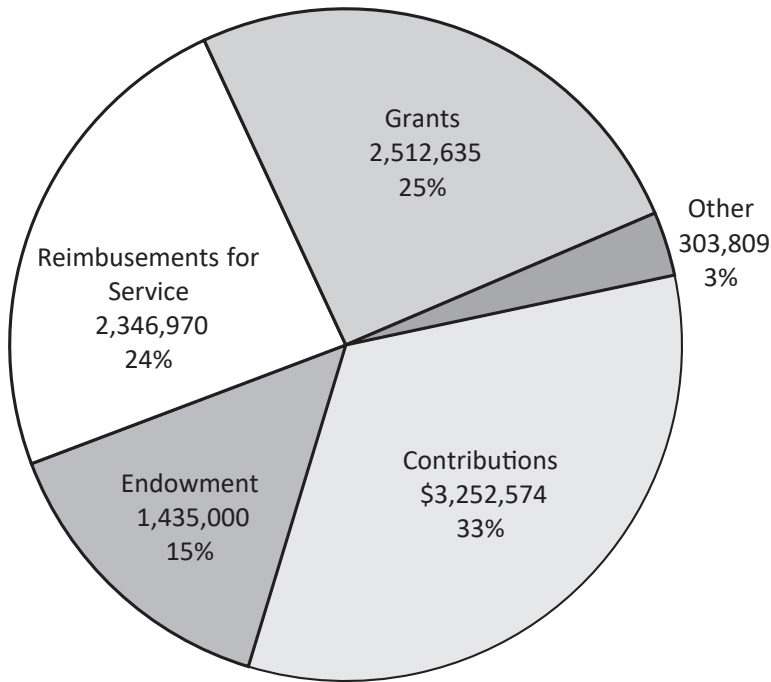
- Epworth completed 124 years of service as a place that exists to serve children, youth, and families through caring, accepting, safe communities where hurts are healed; hope is nurtured; and faith in God, and trust in self and others is developed.
- Epworth opened regional Hubs in Greenville and in Spartanburg to go along with those in Charleston and Columbia.
- Epworth established a counseling center on the campus of Highland Park UMC in Florence and is in the process of establishing a regional Hub in the Florence District.
- Epworth’s Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing continues to grow in program offerings as well as in the number of people served.

The three major disappointments this year were:

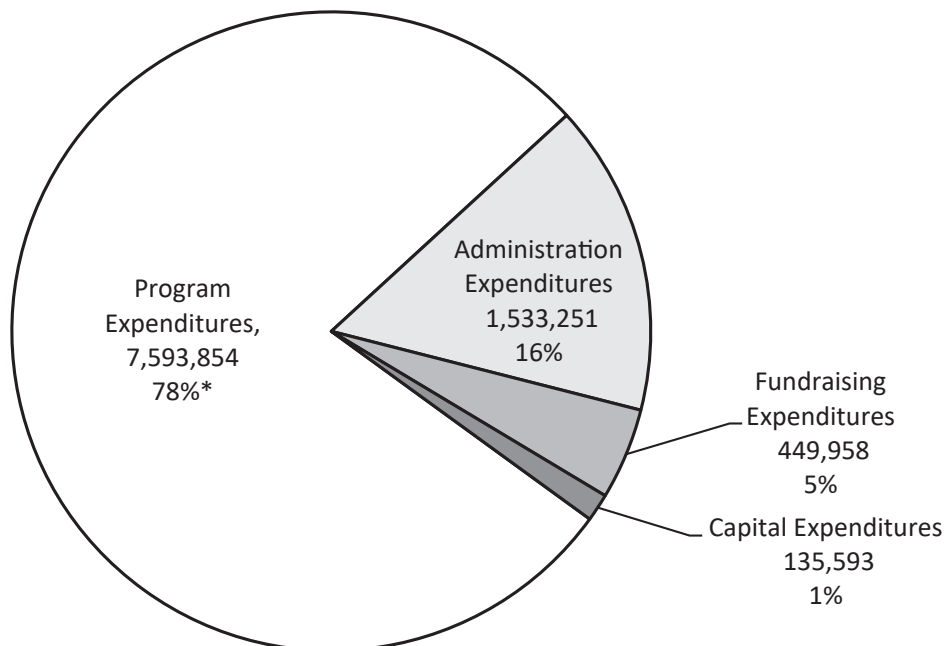
- The campus residential program was reduced to 39 individuals during the height of the Covid pandemic. The first reason was we closed the campus to new admissions for the safety of our children and staff members. The second reason was a federal court order that pressured S.C. DSS to move as many children as possible out of group homes because it was suggested that we might put children at risk of contracting Covid. We are thankful this did not prove to be the case. This court order continues to be in effect, however.
- The second disappointment was the drop in academic achievement of many of our students as they and the school system struggled with e-learning. They, and we learned from the first e-learning experiences and we and the school system were better prepared this fall semester. Epworth employed extra tutors and held e-classes in the Barnes Learning Center on our campus.

**2020 Revenue Sources**  
**Total Revenue \$9,850,988**  
(Unaudited)

**Revenue**



**2020 Total Expenditures Excluding Depreciation**  
**Total Expenses \$9,712,656**  
(Unaudited)



\*Program expenditures are consistently above 80%. Due to expansion the percentage fell just short this past year.



## 2020 Residential Service Figures

*January 1st – December 31st, 2020*

- Year-end residential population 12/31/2020: **35\***
- Average residential population for 2020: **52**
- Total Days of Care Provided: **16,311**
- (53%) 46 out of 87 of residents discharged from Residential Care were reunified with family or placed with a family member
- Total number of children served in 2020: **125**
- Gender: Male: **45%** (56 of 125)      Female: **55%** (69 of 125)
- Race: African American –75/125 =**60%**      Caucasian—50/125=**40%**
- Ages: (0-6) = (3 of 125)= **2%**  
(7-12) =(8 of 125)= **6%**  
(13-21)=(114 of 125) **91%**

\*Federal judge issued an order for children to be removed from group care out of concern that children may contract COVID. This proved to be a baseless concern.

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## Epworth Early Intervention Center (EEIC)

*2020 Data*

*The EEIC serves children with developmental delays and disabilities.*

Preschool: 25  
Home-Based: 92  
Respite: 7 children from 4 families  
Volunteers: 3  
Student Interns: 0

Total contributions to the EEIC were \$9,440.00

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## Epworth Family Care Center

*2019 Data*

*The FCC serves mothers with substance addictions and their children. The families live together in a cottage on Epworth's campus and receive treatment as a whole family.*

Total number of mothers served: 8  
Total number of children served: 12  
Total number of graduations: 8

## Epworth Foster Care Program

Midlands: (Opened 2018)

87 Total clients were served this year (non-duplicated)

- Top 3 placing counties were Richland, Lexington, & Greenville
- Client gender
  - ◆ 55% Male
  - ◆ 45% Female
- Client Age –
  - ◆ 64% were between 0-5 years old
  - ◆ 23% were between 6-12 years old
  - ◆ 13% were between 13-18 years old

Lowcountry: (Opened August 2019)

42 Total clients were served this year (non-duplicated)

- Top 3 placing counties Charleston, Dorchester, & Berkley
- Client gender –
  - ◆ 33% Male
  - ◆ 67% Female
- Client age –
  - ◆ 60% were between 0-5 years old
  - ◆ 36% were between 6-12 years old
  - ◆ 5% were between 13-18 years old

Upstate: (Opened March 2020)

8 Total clients were served this year (non-duplicated)

- Top 3 placing counties Pickens, Greenville, & Anderson
- Client gender –
  - ◆ 25% Male
  - ◆ 78% Female
- Client age –
  - ◆ 25% were between 0-5 years old
  - ◆ 50% were between 6-12 years old
  - ◆ 25% were between 13-18 years old



## 2020 Individual & Business Sponsors

*\$10,000 or more for Annual Operational Support*

Aflac Charitable Fund

Anonymous

Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Blanton, Jr.

Bonner Family Private Foundation, Inc

Ms. Catherine Bowen

Chris and Rustin Britt

Building Systems Solutions LLC

Mr. W T Cassels, Jr.

Central Carolina Community Foundation

C W and Dorothy G Love Foundation

CG Fuller Foundation

Franklin\* and Peggy Ann Coahran

Consolidated Multiple Listing Service

Dana B David

David and Mary Jo Monts Charitable Trust

Deborah Lee and Patrick Tomlin

Dorothy D Smith Charitable Foundation

Elevation Church, Columbia

Marion and Cindy Gramling

Hootie and the Blowfish Foundation

J C Wilkie Construction, LLC

JWF Company LLC

Law Office of Kenneth E Berger

David and Rebecca McPherson

Mr. and Mrs. C R Padgett

Dan and Karen Reider

Dr. and Mrs. John Schaberg

Steve and Kim Shellnutt

Ms. L Kaye Vallentine

Ruth Camp Campbell Foundation

The SC United Methodist Foundation

The Wolfe Family Foundation

Gifts to the "Every Child is a Miracle" campaign are not reflected in these totals.

## Epworth Academic Points of Interest 2019-2020

- During the 2019-2020 school year, 88% of residents tested below grade level in reading on initial assessment testing.
- By the end of the 2019-2020 school year, 75% of those residents had shown improvement in their reading scores on follow-up assessment testing. 47% of those residents improved their scores by more than a grade level.
- During the 2019-2020 school year, 89% of residents tested below grade level in math on initial assessment testing.
- By the end of the 2019-2020 school year, 72% of those residents had shown improvement in the math scores on follow-up assessment testing. 49% of those residents improved their scores by more than a grade level.
- During the 2019-2020 school year, 2155 tutoring sessions were offered. (Note: This number is significantly lower this year due to tutoring ending two months early due to COVID-19)
- During the 2019-2020 school year, the tutoring center provided eight certified tutors, and a Career Counselor that served 127 residents.
- During the 2019-2020 school year, 74% of residents maintained an overall “C” average or higher. (Note: COVID and e-learning had a negative effect on academic achievement).
- During the 2019-2020 school year, 90% of residents had two or fewer behavioral referrals during a quarter. (Data based on one semester only due to schools closing for COVID-19)
- 100% of seniors graduated or earned their graduation equivalency diploma (GED) at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. This is the eighth consecutive year with 100% graduation rate.

Note: Data for Assessment testing is based on residents who are at Epworth at least 90 days.





*Continued from Cover*

Makala's memories and skills go far beyond that of laundry skills and time management, they are a part of who she is today. Her relationship with Ms. Wolfe who was Makala's case manager but now serves as Epworth's Director of Admissions, taught her that having just one person to believe in you and cheer you on can make all the difference. She learned the powerful impact of a positive environment and how a Sunday morning in church is so much more than an item to check off a to-do list. Makala found a passion and love for running through Girls on The Run, and ran track all through high school, and continues to keep physical fitness a part of her everyday life. Her time in the gardening club mixed with her grandmother's love for gardening has resulted in her being an avid plant lover.



Makala's story continues to evolve. She has returned to Epworth as an intern in Asbury Cottage, where she works directly with children and teens. She reminds the teens that no matter how angry you are, how bad your reputation is, or how unfair life has treated you, that they are able to do hard things, succeed, and write their own story – just like Ms. Wolfe taught her years ago. She is in the trenches, teaching children to affirm themselves and work hard on improving themselves, because it is worth it. In addition to her work at Epworth, she is also influencing her younger sister. After seeing her hard work and success in college, she is inspired and is taking steps towards attending college next year.



We are thankful that Makala chose to come back to Epworth to give of her time and skills to the residents here. She reminds us every day that you can make your own family wherever you go. We are so proud to have been a part of Makala's life and we will be cheering her on as she finishes her degree in Women and Gender Studies this May and then is commissioned as an Officer into the US Marine Corp.

We are proud to be part of your family, Makala.

*Makala and Ms. Wolfe*

*Continued from Page 2 - Rev. Holler Article*

- The third disappointment is really a three in one that developed because of Covid quarantines. Epworth was not able to host a public gathering to consecrate its new campus, the 125th birthday party had to be altered, and the public phase of the Every Child is a Miracle financial campaign has been muted because of social distancing. We are approximately \$1.5 million short of our target at this point. We had hoped to be at the \$8 million mark.

Additional bright spots were:

- The total number of people we serve daily is 261 and this number continues to rise. For most of the children and others we serve this number represents a 24-hour type of service.
- Charitable giving increased for the 14th year in a row.
- The second campus on Trenholm Road in Columbia is teeming with life and enthusiasm. Shortly, one building will be occupied by the expansion of our Independent Living & Higher Education Center. Another building will house the Family Care Center in order to provide more space for the moms and children in that program.

Indeed, it was a year that most of us were delighted to say "Goodbye" to, but it was also a year where we experimented with new ways, learned new things, and gave thanks for the ability to adapt and prevail. We all thank you for rallying to support God's work through Epworth.

# Mollie – How Community Broke Down Barriers to Foster Care



A little over four years ago at a Serve the City Event with Midtown Fellowship in Columbia, Mollie learned about Epworth Children's Home and the need for kind and consistent volunteers. Feeling called to action, Mollie and her Lifegroup connected with Beth Robinson, Epworth's Volunteer Coordinator, and became Cottage Partners with Anderson Cottage, which is primarily high school girls.

Mollie quickly learned that when you are volunteering with high school girls, you do not need to have all the answers, or the very best advice, or the funniest jokes. You just need to be willing to meet them where they are and love them through it. This experience and these relationships made such an impact on Mollie that she soon realized that perhaps it was more than a volunteer opportunity but rather a sign for her future. Mollie is now preparing to become a licensed Foster Parent through Epworth!

After having foster care on her heart for several years and feeling the calling of "why wait?", Mollie knew that her first call would be to connect with Epworth and start the process of becoming a licensed foster parent. A large part of why Mollie feels like she is ready to take on this role now is because of support from her community. Her boss also decided to become a licensed foster parent through Epworth, and they have been walking through this process together. Her next-door neighbor is a pediatrician, so she already has healthcare lined up. On her street are eight of her best friends, willing to pop over at a moment's notice to babysit, bring a meal, go on a walk or just be an extra set of hands. She has a church community with other foster parents who are open and willing to share any advice or baby clothes. She has Epworth's support network of resource closets, churches, foster parent support groups and supportive staff.

She may be a single foster mom, but she certainly is not on this journey alone.

If you are being called to learn more about foster care whether you are a single person or part of a couple, Mollie has a few reminders for you.

The need is greater than the fear of change.

You can do hard things.

Trust the Lord.

Mollie will continue serving as a cottage partner with the Anderson girls, and she is hopeful that her relationship with those girls will help her be a better foster parent, and hopeful that being a foster parent will help her be a better mentor to the girls. At the end of the day, her message for her cottage girls and for her future foster children is simple – I am in this with you and I am not going anywhere.

Mollie's story reminds us all that no matter what your current life stage is like, you can serve the vulnerable children of South Carolina. You can be a foster parent, a helpful neighbor, a supporting manager, a servant-hearted church member, a committed babysitter, or just a listening ear. You can do hard things.



# *Volunteer: Thank You*

Regardless of the circumstances that came about in 2020, our volunteer family proved that service could take many forms. Volunteer groups discovered the importance of staying connected virtually and with great creativity and effort volunteers offered activities, meals, and donations without missing a beat. When Christmas came around, volunteers and donors showed up and mailed gifts in, dropped gifts off, and went above and beyond to ensure that each child at Epworth was not only safe, but also had a fantastic Christmas full of love!

The traditional African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child,” has been shared in literature and lessons across the globe for many years. The underlying meaning of the proverb is that to raise a child, children, or to help our youth, requires the service and sacrifice of many. The service and sacrifices of various individuals and groups are just a small portion of the village that supports each resident at Epworth Children’s Home. To all who have heeded the call to provide services through volunteering, we say thank you! Thank you for being a part of our village!

This year may have been different but the heart and desire to serve others was evident in the generosity of our volunteers and donors. Thank you!



# *Planned Giving: How Would You Like To Be Remembered?*

Planned giving is a wonderful way to remember Epworth and to provide for its future through your estate plans. All through Epworth's existence, forward thinking individuals have remembered the children in their estate planning. The majority of these gifts have been relatively modest, but together these legacy gifts make a difference and enable Epworth to provide superior care. Additionally, these estate gifts allow Epworth to welcome children regardless of their ability to pay for services.

Epworth is funded through three primary sources. Annual donations by individuals, church organizations, businesses and others provide 55% of the needed resources. Partial reimbursements from agencies for children they place here are about another 25% of funds. Income from Epworth's endowment provides the remaining funds necessary to provide exceptional care. Estate gifts, unless otherwise directed, are placed in the Epworth endowment to support the children now and for generations to come. Epworth's Board of Trustees carefully stewards the endowment to ensure the greatest return on investments while its conservative spending policy allows the endowment to grow.

Planning your estate is an important task. The financial, tax and legal implications in the planning process can have a major impact for you and your loved ones. As you prepare your documents, consider this: how would you like to be remembered? Leaving a planned gift to Epworth can be an important part of your legacy. A planned gift for the benefit of the children at Epworth can:

- Provide tax incentives for you, your estate, and your heirs;
- Create peace of mind knowing that your wishes and priorities will be followed;
- Lessen the burden for heirs by clearly communicating your desires;
- Exhibit the importance of assisting vulnerable children to your heirs and future generations.

When you are ready, please talk with your financial/legal advisor and contact Lisa Livingston Fusco at Epworth to begin planning your legacy.

By Lisa Livingston Fusco (lfusco@epworthsc.org | 803.256.7394)





# The Society of 1896

The Society of 1896 recognizes those donors who have notified Epworth of an established gift of \$25,000 or more in their estate plans.

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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.**

## *125th Celebration - Help Us Celebrate*

In honor of Epworth's 125th year of service – we want to hear from you! Do you have any of the following?

- A family member who grew up or spent time at Epworth?
- A story about your time at Epworth as a resident, volunteer, or employee?
- A photo from you or a family members time at Epworth?
- A record or mailing from the past?

You can send any of these to us by email at [communications@epworthsc.org](mailto:communications@epworthsc.org) or by mail at 2900 Millwood Ave, Columbia South Carolina 29205.



**Epworth**  
Children's Home  
*Celebrating 125 Years*



**Epworth**  
Children's Home  
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***Mother's Day Offering  
Sunday, May 9th 2020***

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