

# The Record

*News from Epworth Children's Home*



## Epworth Children's Home

*Celebrating 125 Years*



## *Redefining Family*

If you had met the Conroy family a year ago, they would have looked like your average family -- Mom, Dad, and three wild and fun boys. However, over the past year their family has grown in ways that they would never have imagined. After looking at their sweet family of five, they decided that they had more love to give and decided to start the process of becoming a foster family. When they first started the paperwork, they had no idea that this decision would impact their family forever and grow their love tenfold.

Shortly after becoming licensed, the Conroy's received their first placement call for two little girls, ages one and three. Within a few hours they grew from a family of five to a family of seven, with three of the littles being under three years old. Their house is louder than ever, with a little chaos and a lot of

laughs, and more diapers than one can count. As everyone adjusted to this new normal, all the kids connected seamlessly and naturally, as though the girls had always been there, a simple reminder for all that family is full of love, not just shared genetics. Family is Friday night pizza nights, neighborhood walks and scooter rides, lake days and tubing, bedtime stories and little prayers before dinner.

On the day the girls were placed with the Conroy's, they did not only gain two new family members, but a whole community of family. Two of the girls' teen sisters are in Epworth's residential group home, and the Conroy's have gone above and beyond to connect with them and include them in their family. They FaceTime the girls regularly, take them on adventures, and include them in the little girls lives. They visit them in their cottage at Epworth and Mrs.

*Continued on page 3*



## *Working Together for Good*

Fall 2021

A Message from Beth Williams  
President

I was honored three years ago when Rev. John Holler asked if I would consider joining the wonderful team that makes Epworth Children's Home such a special place. I enthusiastically agreed and it has been an exciting three years as I have watched the organization grow and touch many lives across South Carolina. When Rev. Holler retired this summer, it was bittersweet as he has been a wonderful mentor, leader and friend to me. However, I am also excited for the opportunity to continue his legacy and vision that began with the Institute for Child and Family Well-being.

Our mission at Epworth is to serve children, youth and families in Christian communities where hurts are healed, hope is nurtured and faith in God, self and others is fulfilled. Our mission is fundamental to who we are but to share why it is so important to me, I would like to share a little of my own story.

I was raised in a small town in Tennessee with loving Christian parents and it was a happy childhood until I was 13 years old. That year my mother was diagnosed with cancer, and she lost her battle within a few months. As a 13-year-old, I was angry and in pain from the overwhelming grief and loss. The anger continued throughout my teenage years and had it not been for the women from my church who looked after me, I'm not sure where I would be today. Mrs. Norma, especially, took me into her home and called me her adopted daughter. She loved me with many hugs, family meals, and several talks guiding me to stay on the right path.

I recall sitting on my porch one day as a teen and having the desire to work in cancer research one day so that I could help children avoid the pain that I was experiencing. Although I didn't have the scientific skills needed for research, God had other plans for me, and I am thankful to have opportunities to make a difference in the lives of children who are in pain. God led me down a path to continue helping those who are suffering from loss and grief. Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. God has a plan and purpose for all of us, including the children of Epworth. We all share a common purpose to help those in need and suffering.

As this year draws to a close, we at Epworth celebrate that even with the pandemic, we have been faithful in our mission to be in the business of healing hurts, nurturing hope, and developing faith in God, self, and others. As we close out the "Every Child is a Miracle" Campaign, I want to thank you for both your financial support and your prayers.

With your support, we have been able to expand our footprint into four regions of the state. As of today, we have nine churches that are partnering with us to provide office space for Epworth staff so that we may continue our mission. Epworth is providing family preservation services as well as foster care for children and youth across the state. We are so grateful for each of you and as we continue the vision for the next 125 years, we need you walking along side us caring for those who are hurting.

Because there are so many children in pain, we will continue to be bold in our efforts to expand our services throughout the state. Because so many of you have generous hearts, we can set ambitious goals for being in ministry with larger numbers of children and families through the superior services we provide.



Conroy loves to spend girl time with them getting their hair and nails done. The older girls are still able to be involved in their little sisters' lives, and they know what milestones they are reaching and what their current favorite cartoon is. This has made the transition for the little girls much easier, since they are still connected with their family, but it also has had a profound impact on the older girls. Cheryl Singletary, the older girls' Cottage Coordinator at Epworth, says this about their relationship with the Conroy family:

"I have seen such a remarkable change in the girls; they are happier. The Conroy family is such an inspiration; the love and affection I've seen shown to Jayla\* and Taylor\* is overwhelming. The girls are truly blessed to have this family in their lives. There is an abundance of joy and pride that is felt whenever they encounter this family. As the Cottage Coordinator of Dantzler, I can honestly state that this is one of the best connections I've seen in a very long time."

But for the Conroy's, it doesn't even stop there. Epworth has also been able to connect them with the foster families of the girls' other siblings, and they have built strong connections and developed a community with them. Because of this, they are able to include everyone in birthdays, special events, celebrations, and milestones. They are redefining what family can look like, and it is trickling down to their children. Cash, the Conroy's oldest son, is so proud to be part of a foster family and loves to tell people that he has 12 brothers and sisters and 2 of them live in his house.

Foster care can be tough, but it is also a beautiful and life changing experience to be a part of. Mr. Conroy reminds us that there is eternal value in investing in these children, families, and entire communities. That there is immense joy when a child sees the beach for the first time, or gets up the nerve to jump into the lake, or trusts you enough to let you do their hair for the first time. The Conroy's remind us all that children in foster care are not bad kids, but kids who have been through hard things at no fault of their own. They just want to play volleyball and run track and get embarrassed by their family at school and have nice little notes in their lunchbox. They want safety and consistency and for you to care, about them and their whole family. Although the Conroy's do not know what the future will hold for them, they are pressing forward with one motto in mind: Fear Less, Love More.



DONALD MCKNIGHT  
AND  
JACKIE MCKNIGHT



## *125 years of service, but who are the faces behind those years?*

### ***Donald McKnight - An Epworth Alumni Spotlight***

Epworth Alumni Donald McKnight, Resident at Epworth from 1936-1946.

Q. What is something that you do in your life today because of Epworth?

A. Work hard, take nothing for granted, be happy wherever life takes you, make others happy, take care of people and make sure your family comes first.

Q. What was happening in the world while you were at Epworth?

A. 1936 - the depression, 1942 - the draft age in the United States was lowered from age 21 to 18, 1945 - the United States drops two atomic bombs on Japan, bringing an end to the Pacific side of the war.

Q. What piece of knowledge would you share with Epworth's current residents?

A. Work hard, never give up, save money, be kind, help out your neighbors, spend wisely.

Q. What was your life after Epworth like? Tell us about your careers and family.

A. After graduating from Epworth in 1946, I joined the Navy and retired after 20 years of service in 1966.

Christmas of 1954, Betty and I became engaged and were married on July 23, 1955. We had John in 1956, Cathy in 1958 and Michael in 1961. We have 4 grandchildren and 2 great-granddaughters. All the kids live in CT within an hour's drive. I have lived in Newington, CT since 1964.

To this day, I still contribute monetary donations to the Children's Home in hopes for a better life for kids than what I had. My daughter also contributes each year in my honor.

# A Million Little Miracles

Every day at Epworth, we witness a million little miracles. With each of our programs serving children and families simultaneously, there are so many good things happening at once. We are thankful to celebrate these highlights of the last quarter from a few of our programs.

Last month, in the residential program, a staff member was sitting at the dining table during study hall and assisting Anna\*, a brand-new resident, with her homework. One of the questions on her homework was "If you could choose a place to be to make you happy, where would it be?" and Anna wrote down Asbury Cottage. When the staff member started a conversation about her choice, she said that Epworth is the best thing that has ever happened to her. She said that at Epworth she is not scared, she does not have to fight, and we listen to her. We even help with homework. She said that she feels at peace here and is grateful for this place. We are so thankful that we can be a safe space for Anna.



In Epworth's HOMEBUILDERS® Program, while working with a family, Epworth staff realized that a large barrier to keeping the family together was that the family was at risk of eviction. After two months of working tirelessly to provide additional aftercare support and family counseling, Epworth staff helped the family receive rental assistance. With the help of this rental assistance, the family is no longer at risk of eviction or worried about homelessness and can focus on keeping their family happy, whole, and healthy.

In Epworth's Center for Independent Living, client Daniel\* is accustomed to getting up early due to his job in public safety. He is turning 21 years old in a few months and is maintaining a full-time job with benefits. Currently, he is deciding between renting an apartment and buying a house with the funds he has saved during his time in the Center for Independent Living. On his day off, he came down the hall just after I arrived and asked me to unlock the laundry room. I asked him where he was heading so early on his day off, when most people would be sleeping in. He said he had several job interviews today. As he prepared to leave for his interviews, the staff on duty gave his clothes a once over. He said he was going to interview at his favorite restaurant. We laughed because Daniel is known for his love of our family meals. I asked him if he was applying at the restaurant to be in management. He said "Of course, I don't go anywhere unless I am trying to be a leader."

Prior to coming to Epworth as a high school student, Daniel had many behavior struggles, including a brush with juvenile justice. He responded well to the structure of the Millwood campus, forming bonds with several staff members. It was an emotional day when he graduated high school and moved over to independent living. Daniel developed leadership skills and we have nicknamed him "the man of the house" since we have an all-female staff. Daniel mentors the younger men in the program and is always willing to take on extra tasks in the center. After being awarded a car from the Foster Parent Association, he saved enough money to purchase his own car. Recently, Daniel graduated from the program with numerous vocational certifications. He entered the community with newfound confidence, a savings account, work experience on his resume, and many life skills under his belt. While we miss him, we know he will return to visit when staff cooks our famous family dinners.

*-Laurie Brandes, Director of Center for Independent Living*



Often times, the little miracles that we experience in the Epworth Early Intervention Center Home-Based program are the small steps between big milestones that occur in children and families' lives. This week, Nikki Happe, Early Intervention Coordinator, shared that she was blessed to have been able to help a family take concrete steps to address their concerns regarding their child's development. When Mom expressed concerns about what looked like a new behavior for the child, during which the child seemed to disengage with physical movement expressions that were unusual for the child, Nikki affirmed Mom's concerns and recommended that she speak with her pediatrician to rule out potential medical changes. Nikki also recommended that the family request a referral to developmental pediatrics to help identify a cause for the child's sudden physical and cognitive differences during play. One of the core roles of those serving in



early intervention is to provide a sounding board for families when difficulties arise that they are not sure how to address. Through strategic interactions with families, and expertise in child development, EEIC staff support families of children with special needs in a variety of evidence-based and family-focused ways.

*-Jessica Mearns, Director of Early Intervention Services*

At Epworth Children's Home, each child and family we encounter are a miracle, and each step they take in healing is worth celebrating.

## Volunteer Spotlight: Eagle Scout Aidan

**M**y scouting journey began when my younger brother joined scouts. I had tried out Girl Scouts before, but it just wasn't quite the right fit for me. Shortly after my brother joined, Scouts BSA announced that they were allowing girls to form troops and participate in BSA activities. I was very excited, and so my dad helped me sign up with a troop that was forming in my local area. Troop 2870 has been such an influence in my life and I have learned so much about the outdoors and survival skills. I have made amazing friendships with people that I would never have met had we not all been brought together through Scouting.

I got the idea of working with Epworth Children's home when my mom and I were brainstorming one day. I had gone back and forth between a few different options, but I knew I wanted to do something with foster children. Three of my younger siblings are adopted, and I have always felt a strong urge to help foster children. So, when we ran across Epworth I thought that this was the perfect place. I read all about the programs, and was struck by how many areas they managed to reach. As a college freshman myself, I particularly liked their Higher Education/Independent Living Initiative, and coming from a large family appreciated the Homebuilders program as well.

The main premise of my project was to enhance the appeal of the parking lot and entrance of the Williams-Brice Recreation Center. After mapping out my main course of action, my dad, brother, and I removed all of the old and overgrown shrubbery and groundcover. Then my Troop came out and helped me to prepare the ground for new plants. We then added an assortment of new shrubs, as well as laying down sod and mulch.

I am very thankful for the opportunity to complete my project with Epworth Children's Home. All of the people I met here have been supportive and encouraging of the work I was doing. I am very grateful for the support that I have received from the Epworth staff, my family, and my troop throughout this process.



*-Aidan King, Troup 2870*

## *The Clock is Ticking, and the Future is Bright*

Six years ago, The Rev. Tim Rogers and I met with Bishop Holston to discuss the possibility of a comprehensive campaign to strengthen Epworth's existing services, and an expansion plan to reach more children with both remedial and preventive services, to help unify our conference around a common missional goal, and to help sustain God's work through Epworth long into the future.

Out of that meeting came a pledge of support for a proposal to the South Carolina Annual Conference to consider, and hopefully adapt, a conference-wide financial campaign for Epworth Children's Home. The plan was presented, considered, and unanimously adopted by our Annual Conference.



The EVERY CHILD IS A MIRACLE campaign as adopted contains four priorities:

**I. Purchase a second campus - \$3,000,000**

There are many additional children who need the services that Epworth can provide. Epworth continues to expand its present capacity and programs with the purchase, renovation, and staffing of the former Carolina Children's Home campus. This 19-acre, 14 building campus is now being used for residential, counseling, foster home, and other support services. Epworth has borrowed funds on a low interest short-term note. The amount currently owed on this second campus is \$2,311,000. (Naming opportunity available)

**II. The second priority of the campaign is to establish and grow GROUNDBREAKING PROGRAMS through the INSTITUTE FOR CHILD AND FAMILY WELLBEING. - \$3,000,000**

The experience and knowledge gained through 125 years of ministry enables Epworth to comprehend emerging needs and changes in the landscape of child and family welfare, and to effectively plan to meet the needs of children and families in the future.

Through this Institute, the number of strong foster families has increased dramatically, the bridge program for older youth transitioning from group care to the world of work and independence has been enlarged and strengthened, the Family Care program for mothers and their young children has been strengthened and equipped. New Hubs and satellites are being established in churches across South Carolina. The immediate need in this area is for \$250,000 to establish a missional Hub in the next district.

**III. Global Child Wellbeing - \$1,000,000**

Epworth believes in serving not only the children and families in South Carolina, but also in serving others across our connection as part of its mission and outreach. This campaign will provide for some of the most urgent needs of the children and youth at the United Methodist facilities in Zimbabwe, Africa. Just as Epworth serves the needs of children and families in South Carolina, Fairfield Children's Home and Hartzell School provide for the needs of children who have no reliable support, in the area surrounding the Old Mutare Mission and Africa University. If our Conference is successful in raising \$1,000,000, a tithe of our campaign, for Hartzell and Fairfield it will be worth \$10,000,000 to



those agencies. It is rare that we have an opportunity to multiply our gifts by 10. If you would like to earmark a gift to the Global Child Wellbeing portion of the campaign in honor of Bishop and Mrs. Holston, please indicate this on your campaign gift.

There is also the Bishop's Committee for Children. For a gift of \$10,000 or greater a person or group will be entered on the permanent roll of the Bishop's Committee for Children. Bishop Holston will be notified of your generosity. Contact Lisa Fusco for more information.

#### IV. Long-Term Sustainability - \$3,000,000

In the past ten years I have seen several long serving child care institutions close their doors and there are more to come. It is vitally important to have a solid endowment that can bridge the gap during times of transition and economic change. Therefore, Epworth's Board of Trustees has set a target of growing Epworth's permanent endowment by \$3,000,000 through this campaign.

The income generated through Epworth's endowment each year enables Epworth to serve its children and families in superior ways. This income also enables us to not be overly dependent on a single source of income. This gives Epworth the freedom to do what is best for clients instead of what the changing service flavor of the month may dictate.

Epworth's endowment has grown because caring people for many years have designated gifts to be set aside in a permanent fund that not only grows, but also provides an annual income for the care of the children Epworth serves. Many have done this through their wills or through designated gifts.

The Every Child is a Miracle campaign is entering its final phase and the clock is ticking. Because of Covid we at Epworth have not been able to hold church visitation events, and dinners, and all the normal campaign activities associated with major campaigns. Yet within a few weeks we are confident we will be able to announce that we have reached the \$8,000,000 mark!

This means we have only a few months left to raise the final two million dollars. The final two is vital for Epworth to accomplish what we have set out to accomplish. What a great celebration it will be to announce, at the end of Epworth's 125th year, at the South Carolina Annual Conference that the goal has been met, that lives are being changed in new ways, and in new places the love of God and the generosity of His people is colossally evident.

If you would like to discuss or would like more information about the campaign, please contact Lisa Fusco at [lfusco@epworthsc.org](mailto:lfusco@epworthsc.org) or (803) 256-7394 or John Holler at [jholler@epworthsc.org](mailto:jholler@epworthsc.org) or (803) 256-7394.

*John Holler, President Emeritus*



## Christmas Giving

The holiday season will be here before we know it. We are so thankful for your generosity to Epworth during this time of year. Due to mailing delays, we ask that you please send in any honorariums and memorials on or before December 1st so that we are able to ensure timely delivery of the card to the recipient. You can also make honorarium and memorial donations online at [www.epworthchildrenshome.org](http://www.epworthchildrenshome.org) to avoid any delays.

Thank you for remembering Epworth during this Christmas season!



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Beth Williams  
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.

## Did you know that we now have 6 foster care offices across the state?

### Upstate Office

7 Shannon Dr.  
Greenville, SC 29605  
864-704-7863

### Upstate Office

778 John B White Sr Blvd,  
Spartanburg, SC 29306  
864-704-7863

### Lowcountry Office

303 Central Ave.  
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### Rock Hill Office

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