

The Record

News from Epworth Children's Home



David: A Young Man Ready to Succeed in Life

David* is a leader. David is a young man regarded by his peers at Epworth as someone to emulate, a friend to look up to. David is a hard worker with his mind set on a future that will lead to a career in science. David is industrious, always looking for things to do to help others. David is unfailingly polite to everyone around him.

The remarkable thing about David is that he is such an outstanding 19-year-old young man despite the difficult life that he has had. Before coming to Epworth two years ago, David had gone to eight different schools, including three different high schools, and had experienced a tumultuous family situation that resulted in a great deal of instability and stress. Many of us would have become discouraged and wary after the burdens of such a hard early life, yet David has always looked forward, with a clear eye on his future.

When David arrived at Epworth to live, he was getting ready to enter his senior year in high school. He had already been to three different secondary schools and had also been thwarted by the pandemic which had forced him to take most of his classes online. As a result, he began his senior year of high school behind in the number of credits he would need to graduate on time.

David did not let this challenge overwhelm him. Working carefully with the academic counselors at Epworth and Dreher High School's guidance department, David was given the opportunity to double up on some of his classes, taking on a heavier academic load. While most high school seniors complete the majority of their requirements for graduation during their sophomore and junior years, and take an easier class load their senior year, David was working harder

*Name changed for confidentiality



Reasons to Celebrate

Summer 2022

A Message from Beth Williams
President

Over the past month we have had lots of opportunities to celebrate at Epworth. Part of our joy comes from celebrating two of our youth here at the Columbia campus who recently graduated from high school. One of them plans to attend Midlands Technical College in the fall and the other is undecided about life's next step, but they both share a hope for the future. I recently asked one of the graduates who is transitioning over to Epworth's Independent Living program if he was excited to be moving over and he responded with, "Yes but I'm nervous about the change." This young man recently received a scholarship from the Joy Sunday School class at Shandon United Methodist Church and will use this in his studies at Midlands Tech.

All of us experience anxiety when starting something new, whether it is a new job, new location or a new school. The difference that sets many of us apart from our youth is the support and stability we already have in our lives that make change a little less anxiety provoking.

Our program in the Center for Independent Living serves youth ages eighteen to twenty-three who are aging out of the foster care system. Often these youth would be homeless if places like Epworth did not exist. According to the National Foster Youth Institute, 20% of foster youth will become homeless the day they turn 18 and 50% of the nation's homeless population spent time in foster care.

What does aging out of care mean and why is it bad? Aging out of foster care is a term used for youth who have reached the maximum age that a state will support them. In South Carolina a youth may remain in state supported care until their 21st birthday. However, many youths choose to leave care voluntary when they turn eighteen and attempt living on their own. Whether youth leave on their 18th or 21st birthday, many do not have a family member or a support network in their lives to help them bridge the transition into living on their own. Too often foster youth will leave care without caregiver support, resources and knowledge needed to navigate life outside of care. With little or no money to support themselves and often with no family members to turn to, many find themselves without a permanent place to live.

According to an Annie E. Casey Foundation report posted May 2022, that lack of stability and social support is what leads to many youths falling into the problematic statistics listed.

- One in five report experiencing homelessness between ages 17 and 19, and over one in four (29%) report being homeless from 19 to 21
- One in five youth report being incarcerated between ages 17-19 and 19-21
- One in 10 report having a child (i.e., giving birth or fathering a child) between ages 17-19, with nearly one in four (23%) saying they became parents between 19-21
- By age 21, over two-thirds (70%) have a high school diploma or equivalent
- Just 57% report being employed (full- or part-time) at age 21

We beat the statistics listed above through our programs at Epworth. For years we have offered the opportunity for our Millwood campus residential youth to transition into our independent living program. However, we began serving youth referred externally directly into this program in 2018. We place youth from the Department of Social Services, Department of Juvenile Justice and private referrals into this program.

Youth who want to participate in the program must complete either a career or education track. Most of our youth are doing both, completing higher education courses and employment. We recognize that most youth are not ready to graduate from our program even on their 21st birthday and allow those who are participating to remain in the program up to their 23rd birthday. We want to ensure that the youth are given the best chance for success.

Staff within our independent program go the extra mile to help youth who are anxious feel at home from the moment they step inside the door. Our staff nurture, equip and teach our youth the tools necessary to live outside of our campus. That is one of the reasons that our independent living program is expanding and has a waiting list for youth who qualify for the program.

Recently we had the opportunity to celebrate Epworth's alumni by welcoming them back to campus for the first time since the onset of the pandemic. Many alumni voiced how Epworth changed their lives by teaching them skills that they were able to use upon leaving this campus. Although they were given tools that assisted them upon graduating out of the program, many admitted that having a program that would have allowed them to stay past 18 years of age would have been ideal. We are grateful to continue giving youth the opportunity to succeed in life outside of supported care. The more children and youth served at Epworth means more youth provided an opportunity to beat the statistics.

Gathering of The Epworth Alumni Association

Alumni and friends of Epworth Children's Home gathered for their first homecoming since the beginning of the COVID pandemic on Sunday, June 26, 2022. This is no ordinary alumni group. Those who gathered form a close relationship based on their shared experiences over the years at Epworth. They are more than just friends; they are family.

The association is made up of past residents, staff, and friends. In the early years, residents studied together, played together, worked together, and grew up together. They didn't have a lot of things, but they had each other. Coming together during homecoming gives them an opportunity to relive the memories.

In recent years, Epworth has changed, and residents don't arrive on campus before first grade and stay until they graduate. However, the Epworth Alumni Association is just as important as ever.

If you lived at Epworth for any length of time, worked at Epworth, or are a family member of a past resident, you are invited to become a member of the Epworth Alumni Association. Please contact Sherri Mims at smims@epworthsc.org or by phone at 803-256-7394 for more information.



It Takes a Village... and Epworth is that Village for Many of its Residents

“We cannot live our lives alone. Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads from one to another that create opportunities to make us better and more whole.”
Herman Melville

Continuum of care: a group of services and programs that bring coordinated, integrated care that follow an individual through time, adapting to their changing needs.

Donna became part of the Epworth family when she was placed with an Epworth foster family after being removed from her unsafe, unstable home. As her 18th birthday approached, the area Foster Care Director recognized that she would benefit from extra guidance and support as she aged out of care and introduced Donna to Epworth's Independent Living program. The Center for Independent Living provides young adults who have graduated from high school and aged out of regular foster care with a place to live, work, study and prepare for life on their own. Through assistance with higher education, job skills training, or life skills education, residents in the independent living program have the opportunity to learn how to become successful adults while living in a supportive environment on Epworth's campus.



Not long after arriving at the Independent Living Center, Donna began to struggle with the pain from her turbulent childhood. Staff recognized that she was approaching a crisis point and were able to connect her with Epworth's Center for Counseling, just across the campus. Donna is now receiving clinical care there that is helping her to move beyond the crisis to fully embrace the opportunities she has to live a successful adult life in the community.

For over 125 years, Epworth Children's Home has been hailed as a safe, nurturing place for children who have been abused or neglected to find a home. Epworth, for all these years, has given its residents safety, support, compassion, enrichment, and opportunities to grow. With the newest programs through Epworth's Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing, children and families across the state have the opportunity to benefit from a coordinated, integrated approach that meets children and families where they are and supports them at different stages of their journey to health and wholeness.

Donna's story is a perfect example of how Epworth's services mesh together to bring help and support in this continuum of care to its clients. Her story is not unique among Epworth's clients. As in the quote from Henry Melville, Epworth is working to nurture “invisible threads” that can connect clients to multiple services as each situation requires, helping children, youth, and young adults to find support and opportunities that lead to happier, healthier, and more meaningful lives.

Thank you, Point Hope UMC!

Our apologies to Point Hope United Methodist Church in the Charleston District for failing to include them in the Annual Report in the list of congregations that supported Epworth at the \$10,000 level or higher in 2021.

Shandon UMC Couple Establishes Endowment Fund

William (Bill) B. and Joanna Speed Walkup have established a major endowment fund for the benefit of Epworth Children's Home. Bill and Joanna established the fund in memory of their parents; thus it shall be named the John H. and Adville B. Walkup, and George M. and Miriam O. Speed Memorial Fund. The Fund becomes part of the Epworth Children's Home permanent endowment fund.

Bill and Joanna wanted to honor both sets of parents for providing for their families and teaching them to help people who were in need. Mr. and Mrs. Walkup reported their parents immersed themselves in the life of their churches and in the communities in which they lived. Both sets of parents worked through the time of the Great Depression and learned to value a dollar and to share their time and resources with their neighbors.

Bill also reported that his family had experience with adoption, including his grandmother who was adopted after her father was killed during the civil war. He also expressed the joy they are experiencing in having three adopted granddaughters who have been adopted into their family by their grown children.

Bill also stated that his uncle, Bill Baskin, from Bishopville would invite Epworth children to come and spend the summer with his family. He said that one of the students who went to Bishopville even married into the family. The experiences with the children Bill's uncle would bring to Bishopville gave Bill an appreciation for the good work Epworth was doing to help children have a variety of positive experiences.

Bill has provided part-time jobs for Epworth residents in past years. Bill and Joanna both had the pleasure of having friends at Hand Junior High and Dreher High who were Epworth residents.

Joanna reported that her parents were good people who helped others in the community. Her father was always very supportive of missions, and her mother would take food and visit shut-ins and others who needed assistance. "They stayed close to the church and were good Christian role models." Both Bill and Joanna stated that the wonderful work that Epworth has done for over a century has been a great inspiration to them over the years.

Mr. and Mrs. Walkup agreed to have this article published in The Record in hopes that it may inspire others to think of ways to help children who come from circumstances that require some extra help to have a chance to lead a productive life. Epworth's permanent endowment fund primarily contains funds that forward thinking people have left in wills and through gifts such as the John H. and Adville B. Walkup and George M. and Miriam O. Speed Memorial Fund.

The Trustees of Epworth Children's Home have gratefully accepted this generous gift and in a gesture of appreciation name cottage number 4 on the Trenholm Road campus the Walkup-Speed cottage in memory of John and Adville Walkup and George and Miriam Speed.



Adville B. Walkup



John H. Walkup



George M. Speed and Miriam O. Speed

Churches Show Appreciation for Foster Parents

“Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love.” ~ Mother Teresa

United Methodist Churches showered our foster families with small gifts of great love during Foster Parent Appreciation Month. Two United Methodist Churches hosted dinners for their area. One congregation stepped up at the last minute to provide childcare for five families that would have been unable to attend otherwise. United Methodist women from one church provided lunch for all family members who attended. And thirty-two United Methodist churches from seven districts assembled appreciation baskets to gift foster parents within three of our program areas.

Foster parents are called to be foster parents. Care for children improves as foster parents grow in experience. Church support can give foster families a sense of connection and care that can help them continue when things are difficult at home. What seems like a small thing to a congregation or small group can mean a great deal to families that are doing the best they can to make a difference in the lives of children who are hurting.

Epworth is grateful for the small things done with great love by our United Methodist partner congregations. If your congregation is interested in partnering with Epworth to support foster parents in your area, please contact Rev. Kathy James, Director of Church Relations 803-256-7394 or kjames@epworthsc.org.



Church Support of Foster Parent Appreciation Month

Anderson District:

Traveler's Rest UMC (dinner)
Grace UMC, Pickens (baskets)
St. Andrews UMC, Easley (baskets)

Charleston District:

North Charleston UMC (hosted dinner)
Boone Hall UMC (childcare)
Remaining Churches that provided baskets:

Stallville UMC
Jehovah UMC
Trinity UMC
Bethany UMC, Charleston
Bethany UMC, Summerville
Jerusalem UMC, Cross
Zion UMC, Cross
Wesley UMC, Ladson
Point Hope UMC
Johns Island Parish UMC
St. Mark UMC
Centenary UMC
Old Bethel UMC
Joshua UMC
Hibben UMC

Columbia District:

Chapin United Women in Faith Circles, Flowers Circle, Marjorie Derrick Circle, and Helen Rainey Circle (lunch)

Florence District:

Lamar United Women in Faith (baskets)

Greenville District:

Sharon UMC (baskets)

Greenwood District:

Troy UMC, Mt. Lebanon UMC/Kinard UMC charge (baskets)

Marion District:

Latta UMC (baskets)

Spartanburg District (baskets):

New Beginnings UMC
Reidville Road UMC
Silver Hill UMC
Montgomery Memorial UMC
Liberty UMC
Cherokee Springs UMC
Trinity UMC

**If your church participated and is not listed, please let me know.*

than ever to take on extra academic work so that he had enough credits to graduate.

His hard work was successful; David graduated from Dreher on time this past spring. This is quite an accomplishment for a young man whose life has been filled with such huge challenges. It is also an accomplishment that has not gone unrecognized at Epworth. Tameka Massey, David's case manager in Epworth's Center for Independent Living, praises David as, "someone all the other kids look up to, a young man who has learned to advocate for himself in describing what he needs to do to succeed." Ms. Massey continues to say that, "David looks for things to do to help others; he genuinely cares about his fellow residents at Epworth. He is also so polite and mannerly and sets a fine example for others."

Since graduating from high school, David has moved on to live at Epworth's Center for Independent Living, a place on campus where older youth can live more on their own and have an opportunity for support in attending college, receiving job skills training, and life skills education so that life on their own someday will be easier. David has already gotten settled in his new campus home and has a job for the summer. The Center for Independent Living staff members are also working with David to help him get his Social Security card and to help him take driver's education classes so that he can get his driver's permit before the summer ends.

This fall David will attend Midlands Technical College where he hopes to begin his study for a career in some aspect of science. Recognizing David's hard academic work at Dreher, his leadership at Epworth, and his potential for success in life, the Joy Sunday School class at Shandon United Methodist Church just awarded David a scholarship to help with his college expenses. In amazement and appreciation for this support, David said, "I was so happy that they thought I could do the work at college and be successful there. I will never forget their help."

As David prepares to begin this next important stage in his young life, he reflected back on his first days at Epworth and said, "When I got to Epworth, I felt like part of a family, a real family, for the first time, and I felt that way from the very beginning. Everybody made me feel so comfortable from the start and I knew everybody was there to help me."



Epworth's Annual Work Day Offering

September 11, 2022

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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.

A thoughtful way to honor or remember a friend or loved one is with a gift to Epworth. The honoree or designee will receive a card notifying him or her of your very kind gift. The form below is made available for your use.

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