



# Sharing

A publication of Florida Baptist Children's Homes

Providing Christ-centered services to children and families in need.

— Summer 2007 —

## Here's how you can help our children through the Mother's Day Offering

- ✓ Ask that your church receive a Mother's Day Offering.
- ✓ Find out the amount of the largest Mother's Day Offering your church has ever given, then establish a higher goal.
- ✓ Invite a Florida Baptist Children's Homes staff member or trustee to speak in your church.
- ✓ Pray and work that your offering goal will be met — for the children's sake.
- ✓ Plan to celebrate victory.

Please, give generously to the Mother's Day Offering; we'd prefer you do that through your church. In the alternative, you may complete and mail the envelope that's included in this newsletter or address your own envelope to P.O. Box 8190, Lakeland, Fla. 33802. Florida Baptist Children's Homes urgently needs

*(Continued on page 3)*

## She came to us 'completely broken,' now has TOP award

By LISA FIFER, Social Worker  
Florida Baptist Children's Homes

**TALLAHASSEE** Marian, who will turn 16 in May, was completely broken when she came to live at Florida Baptist Children's Homes one year ago. She had run away from home several times, she was relying on friends to feed and shelter her, and she was using drugs and alcohol to numb her emotional pain. She also had straight F's in school and no desire to do any better.

Marian agreed to come here because she refused to live with her parents, and all other options had run out.

Now, she is a bright, happy, tenderhearted and kind young lady who is definitely a positive role model in the Children's Home's Carlton Cottage. She is getting straight A's as an 8th grader at Tallahassee's Swift Creek Middle School and she's excited about all the

*(Continued on page 9)*

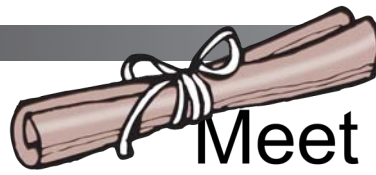


Your  
Your  
**Your  
Mother's  
Day  
Offering  
gift  
makes a  
difference.**

**Please give  
generously. A lot of  
boys and girls are  
counting on you.**

Statewide goal: \$1.3 million

**Florida Baptist  
Children's Homes**



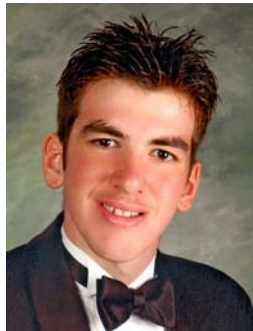
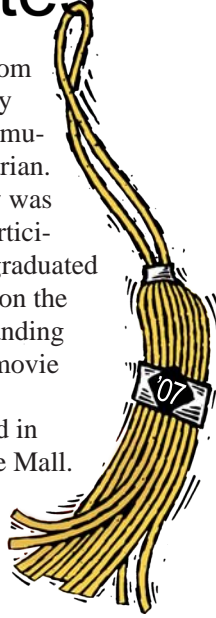
# Meet our graduates



**Ashley Forbes, 17**, will graduate from Kathleen High School in Lakeland on May 22. She plans to attend Hillsborough Community College on a career path as a veterinarian.

During her high school years, Ashley was a member of the school's Drama Club, participated in Early Childhood Education and graduated from Criminal Justice Academy. She was on the Honor Roll for three years, received an A+ Science Award and an Outstanding Academic Achievement Award. Additionally, she worked part-time at a movie theater.

Ashley came to live at Florida Baptist Children's Homes in Lakeland in March 2000. She regularly attends Lakeland's First Baptist Church at the Mall.



**Tyler Peavy, 17**, will graduate from Tate High School in Cantonment, near Pensacola, on May 24. He plans to attend Pensacola's George Stone Career Center to become a certified chef.

Tyler received all A's in ROTC, where he served as squad leader. He also received a Science award for having the highest grade average in the class. He worked part-time in a paper supplies business.

Tyler came to live at Florida Baptist Children's Homes in Cantonment in May 2003. He regularly attends Olive Baptist Church in Pensacola.

Reflecting on his experience at Florida Baptist Children's Homes, Tyler said, "I have acquired more discipline and more skills toward not being shy. I've been influenced by the Bible in many ways, and that helps me deal with some of that hot-leaded temper of mine."

Watch our  
2007 Mother's Day Offering  
5-minute video:

[www.FBCHomes.org](http://www.FBCHomes.org)



**Florida Baptist Children's Homes** is concerned about the boys and girls who are growing up in desperate situations and who, in some cases, have nowhere else to turn. Some of these children have been victimized by unspeakable neglect or horrific physical, sexual or emotional abuse. Some have been abandoned — thrown away! — by a parent or guardian. Some come from households that are experiencing a crisis; for example, a parent is in jail or rehabilitation, or battling

a debilitating terminal illness.

Florida Baptists are a missions-minded people. They have a long, proud history of giving their prayers and financial support to people in need throughout this state, this country, and the world.

Please, give generously to this year's Mother's Day Offering which is extremely important to the Children's Homes' ability to help boys and girls like these. The statewide goal is \$1.3 million. That's an attainable goal if everyone helps!



## Florida Baptist Children's Homes

P.O. Box 8190, Lakeland, Fla. 33802  
Phone (863) 687-8811  
[www.FBCHomes.org](http://www.FBCHomes.org)  
e-mail: [Children@FBCHomes.org](mailto:Children@FBCHomes.org)



### SOUTH DIVISION

#### MIAMI

7748 S.W. 95 Terrace, Miami, Fla. 33156  
Phone (305) 271-4121

#### FORT MYERS

4551 Camino Real Way, Fort Myers, Fla. 33912  
Phone (239) 275-7151

#### BROWARD COUNTY

20 N.W. 46th Ave., Plantation, Fla. 33317  
Phone (954) 797-1223

### CENTRAL DIVISION

#### LAKELAND

1015 Sikes Blvd., Lakeland, Fla. 33815  
P.O. Box 1870, Lakeland, Fla. 33802  
Phone (863) 688-4981

### NORTH DIVISION

#### JACKSONVILLE

2300 Bartram Road, Jacksonville, Fla. 32207  
Phone (904) 721-2711

#### GAINESVILLE

690 N.E. 23rd Ave., Suite C, Gainesville, Fla. 32609  
Phone (352) 377-2517

### PANHANDLE DIVISION

#### TALLAHASSEE

8415 Buck Lake Road, Tallahassee, Fla. 32317  
Phone (850) 878-1458

#### PENSACOLA

1000 Chemstrand Road, Cantonment, Fla. 32533  
Phone (850) 968-1114

#### MILTON

6797 Caroline St., Milton, Fla. 32570  
Phone (850) 626-8333

## Last Will and Testament

*Have you remembered our children in your will?*

# Offering affords an opportunity to take a stand for children

With retirement scheduled for May 1, this brief article represents my final submission to *Sharing*.

This publication is our primary communication piece to our many friends and supporters. It is mailed to approximately 33,000 homes. *Sharing* focuses largely on the children and families who are being touched by this 103-year-old ministry. We are very much aware that the stories of the children are our most powerful means for illustrating the pertinence and value of our mission and work.

I am happy that my final words to you wonderful people focuses on the importance of the annual Mother's Day Offering. For the past two years, the established goal has been not only met but exceeded. Success with this offering means more children are served in better ways. In addition, it means that our supporters are connecting with us and enabling us in making this good and tender ministry available.

We are grateful for what the Baptists provide through the



## As a matter of fact

By Dr. Jimmy McAdams

*Dr. Jimmy McAdams is Florida Baptist Children's Homes' President. His e-mail address is jmcadams@FBCHomes.org and his phone number is 863-687-8811.*

Cooperative Program but this source provides only about one-third of our budget. The Mother's Day Offering affords churches and individuals with a recurring opportunity to take a stand for children. What better way can you take such a stand than partnering with an organization with a century-old reputation of effectiveness, compassion and integrity?

Now, to my final word—really.

Thanks, dear friends! Thanks for having a heart for needy children. Thanks for acting upon your compassion. Thanks for giving us the chance to be your "hands and feet" in the noble task of bringing hope and healing to the boys and girls who come to our doors. I know you will be as encouraging and supportive to the next leader God has ordained for this position. Florida Baptist Children's Homes will always be about the task of making a difference. Today it needs your help as much as ever.

Florida Baptist Children's Homes is a haven for boys and girls who are growing up in desperate situations; in some cases, these youngsters have nowhere else to turn. Please, give generously to this year's **Mother's Day Offering**. Let's have 100% participation. Your gift will make a difference.

## Mother's Day Offering —

*(Continued from front page)*

these dollars to serve the boys and girls who need a Christian home, good medical care, nourishing food, proper clothes, and education.

We need your prayers, also.

Pray for our children and staff. Pray, too, that this year's offering will be the best ever so we can touch more lives with

Christian love, care and hope. *Thank you!*

Your Mother's Day Offering can honor or memorialize a loved one or friend. After you give your offering, complete and mail the form shown here. If so indicate, we'll send an attractive keepsake card, without mentioning the amount, to the person being honored or the family of the person being memorialized.

To the children, trustees and staff of Florida Baptist Children's Homes, this is to let you know that:

I am praying for the Florida Baptist Children's Homes ministry.

I have given a \$\_\_\_\_\_ gift for this year's Mother's Day Offering, to benefit the boys and girls of Florida Baptist Children's Homes. This gift is

in HONOR of       in MEMORY of

Mr.    Mrs.    Miss    Ms.    Dr.    Rev.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

I **DO** want Florida Baptist Children's Homes to send a card to the person being honored or the family of the person being memorialized, to let them know of my gift (without mentioning the amount). Send the card to:

Mr.    Mrs.    Miss    Ms.    Dr.    Rev.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

I **DO NOT** want Florida Baptist Children's Homes to send a card.

I am...

Mr.    Mrs.    Miss    Ms.    Dr.    Rev.

My name \_\_\_\_\_

My address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you!*

Please make your tax-deductible check payable to Florida Baptist Children's Homes and mail to P.O. Box 8190, Lakeland, Fla. 33802.

# Florida Baptist Children's Homes



**LAKELAND** Our children receive so many blessings at Florida Baptist Children's Homes.

Church groups come and spend afternoons barbequeing and playing with our boys and girls, friends donate money and service to our campuses, and gifts and surprises pour in during holidays. It is the generosity of God's people that helps make Florida Baptist Children's Homes a successful ministry throughout the state.

Our residents on the Lakeland campus have spent the last year giving back to the community. In small groups or large groups, within individual buildings and programs, our children have participated in many kinds of outreach projects.

The children have helped local homeless shelters by

helping serve meals on holidays and by donating art supplies to shelter day cares. They have aided Meals On Wheels with preparation and delivery of meals. A group of our children "adopted" a needy family in a local church and raised money for Christmas gifts. The children made a donation to UNICEF with money they earned through campus fund raisers. On each of these occasions, the children enjoyed helping, and worked hard to accomplish their goals and assignments.



## Children's Services Center ground breaking ceremony

Breaking ground for the Children's Services Center at Florida Baptist Children's Homes' Lakeland campus: (from left) Hannah Brooks, 8, daughter of House Parents Kim & Suzy Brooks; Central Florida Administrator Jamie Self; Trustees Danny Hutto and Don Whitman; President Jimmy McAdams; the builder, John D. Prah; and architect Samuel G. Sheets. Construction is expected to start soon on this two-story, 15,000-square-foot building that will house staff who provide support services for the children. It is expected to cost up to \$2 million.

## '...I could not imagine my life without her!'

By SUE LATTE, Social Worker  
Florida Baptist Children's Homes

**LAKELAND** Many people wonder, "Could I possibly love an adopted child as much as my own biological child?"

I received a letter from one of our adoptive families. Florida Baptist Children's Homes had placed an infant in the couple's home many months ago. Just recently, the adoptive mother gave birth to a daughter. This family now has two daughters — an adopted daughter

and a biological daughter very close in age. Some would wonder how a mother would feel about her two daughters. Is there a different level of love between an adopted child and your own "flesh and blood?"

This is an excerpt of what the adoptive mother stated in her letter:

*I think of the birth mother often. I wish she could see how bright, happy and healthy her baby turned out. She*

*is my joy! I would love to tell the birth mother that, at the impending birth of my daughter, what my fear was: "Could I love my biological child as much as I love my adopted?" I think many mothers must think that about a second child.*

*It doesn't matter whether your first was your own blood or adopted.*

*I would love to tell the birth mother that God made our adopted daughter perfect for our family and I could not imagine my life without her!"*

## Student learns 'I can be a powerful Christian witness anywhere'

*Desiree is a resident of Florida Baptist Children's Homes' Lakeland campus and a junior at Kathleen High School; she will turn 17 years old in May. She wrote the following:*

**LAKELAND** As I get closer to graduating from high school, I continually worry about what I will do in the future. I know for a fact that I am going to college, but to study what? I had considered politics or religion, two very different areas of

study, but I hadn't made my mind up on anything. Lately, I had been asking for God's help in making a career choice, and it seemed as if I wasn't getting any feedback.

However, a few months ago, I received notice that I had been nominated for Congressional Classroom, a program sponsored by (U.S. Rep.) Adam Putnam that allowed one

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# Student learns —

*(Continued from previous page)*

junior from each high school in the 12th congressional district to visit Washington, D.C. for a week. During this time, students would not only see the nation's capital, but participate in mock Congress.

Due to some unexplainable miracle, I was chosen to represent my school. I was extremely nervous, but I was also excited. I thought that God was trying to show me that I should get into government, and that this trip would show me which part of government I should go into.

The first few days of my trip were filled with sightseeing, amazing guest speakers, and a feeling of relief in my heart that I was not in school!

Towards the middle of the week, we began working on mock Congress. Each one of us had to choose a bill to sponsor from a list that we had received before the trip. Although I had scanned the list, I hadn't actually chosen one to sponsor. The night we chose our bills, we were asked if anyone felt strongly on a particular one. Out of nowhere, I screamed that I wanted the anti-partial-abortion bill. Afterwards, I felt like an idiot. This was one of the most controversial bills, and I had no idea how I was going to support it.

Later that night, as I was reading my Bible, the idea occurred to me that I should include some Scriptures in my argument. After all, Psalm 139 is the epitome of anti-abortion.

As I was discussing this with my roommate who is Catholic (I'm Baptist), we got into a debate that lasted until two in the morning. During this time, I was forced to recall

every piece of Scripture I had ever read (and) every sermon I had ever heard to help back up my arguments. I had partaken in formal debates in school, but never anything this exhilarating. I was not just fighting for something that was given to me in a prompt, but for something I believed in with all of my heart.

Although it was a friendly debate and there was no clear winner, I felt I had done God's name justice.

The next morning when I presented my bill, I did use scientific evidence to help support my views. However, in my closing arguments, I read Psalm 139. In real life, due to the separation between state and religion, this would have been political suicide. I may have received many awkward looks from the 19 other kids in the room with me, but my bill ended up getting passed unanimously. It took all of the strength I possessed to keep from crying with happiness.

This trip was absolutely amazing. I made so many wonderful friends, and I learned that politicians are real human beings like everyone else, not the cold-hearted villains the media makes them out to be.

I still haven't decided what I want to be, but I know that no matter where I end up, I don't have to abandon my beliefs and conform to society's standards to make a difference.

Although I learned so much from this trip about the United States Government, I more importantly learned that I can be a powerful Christian witness anywhere, in any situation.

## To be good stewards, all Christians should plan ahead

Lake Eufaula...Here we come! The boat is ready. All of the family has the same dates off from work. We have reservations for our favorite campsite at this Alabama lake. Menus are planned. I think we are ready for a great time at the lake this June. Is all this planning ahead necessary? Maybe not, but at least we can all relax and know that the hard work is done and we have a better chance of having a great time.

Planning ahead is something we all do in some way or another. We plan for church activities, work responsibilities and family events. But there is one area where many fail to plan ahead, and that is for the stewardship of all that the Lord has entrusted to them when they pass away. The plan I am talking about is a Christian Will.

Why does everyone need a Christian Will? The most important reason is stewardship. Just as we are to be good stewards of all the Lord has entrusted to us now, we also

### Investing in young lives

By Charlie Cox



*Charlie Cox is Florida Baptist Children's Homes' Vice President for Financial Development. He keeps people informed about how they may invest in the lives of needy children and, at the same time, receive financial benefits. To contact him, call 863-687-8811, write to P.O. Box 8190, Lakeland, Fla. 33802, or send e-mail to ccox@FBCHomes.org*

need to make sure that we have a plan to transfer that stewardship to other responsible stewards at our death. We also need a Christian Will so that our family does not have the burden of making difficult decisions in a difficult time. A Christian Will can also give us peace knowing that we have done our best to plan for stewardship, family and friends.

Planning ahead can be difficult, but preparing a Christian Will does not have to be. There are good Christian attorneys, financial planners and other

professionals who can assist you in preparing your will or making changes to a current will. Florida Baptist Children's Homes has Development staff throughout the state who are willing to assist you in taking the first step.

We also have some printed materials that can guide you through the process as well. If you would like to speak with someone or receive materials about preparing your will, please contact me.

head

# Florida Baptist Children's Homes



**MIAMI** In February, the Miami campus was blessed with a gift of 61 highly valued porcelain dolls that are a part of a collection of more than 450 other special dolls. The special

collection belongs to a dear lady who is a member of Cutler Road Baptist Church. She has collected dolls from all around the world for several years. Her desire is to share them with the girls in our care.

Many of the dolls have documentation as to their names — Lucy, Kylie, Morgana, Christina, Annika, Nicole, Dani, Moonbeam, and others; stories behind the dolls' creation; and what they symbolize.

After a brief stay in the Miami campus office, the dolls (*pictured here*) will be distributed to our girls. Several of the dolls will be used as gifts that our children will be able to share with others as they have opportunities to do Mission Projects throughout the summer. What a unique gift and most wonderful blessing.



## *'I will do whatever is needed to make my dreams come true'*

**FORT MYERS** All of us at Florida Baptist Children's Homes' Fort Myers campus gave a big salute to Josh after it was made official that he was named Battalion Commander for his JROTC division at Dunbar High School.

This is an honor given only to seniors; Josh takes extra pride in this appointment since he is in his junior year. This alone would be a giant achievement, but Josh was also notified that he was a finalist to represent his school at Boys' State, held at the capital each summer. This is for outstanding achievement in all areas of a student's life.

How was Josh able to be an honor student, an outstanding defensive back on the football team, commander of his JROTC division, all while holding down a part-time job and taking an active part in his youth group at McGregor Baptist

Church? "I know it will take work to be successful in my long-term goals, and I will do whatever is needed to make my dreams come true," he replied. His dream is to get an appointment to a military school and follow that with a career in the military.

Sounds like everything is going Josh's way? Not always. Last winter, he broke a bone in his shoulder and had to drop out of wrestling. This was his first attempt at competitive wrestling. However, Josh didn't let this stop him for long; he was out running a mile each night, and as soon as the doctor allowed him, he was back in the weight room.

Josh is a young man striving to be the best he can be. We all support him and are proud to be a small part of his life. Please keep Josh in your prayers.

## Fort Myers foster care program growing; ladies group home planned

**FORT MYERS** The Lord has blessed Florida Baptist Children's Homes' Foster Care program here in Fort Myers. We've had continual growth of foster homes since our first contract year (2004-2005) with Children's Network of Southwest Florida.

In the fall of 2004 we had only one licensed foster home; now, we have 22. Three more foster homes are in the initial licensing process now, and an additional seven families are completing the required Modeled Approach to Partnership in Parenting (MAPP)

training classes with us. This would potentially give us a total of 32 licensed foster homes before June 30. We have more MAPP training classes scheduled this year for those wanting to become foster parents.

*(Continued on next page)*

## *God provides unique opportunity to minister to drug-addicted mother*

**FORT MYERS** James & Michelle Farrer have provided a safe Christian home for many foster children; theirs was one of the first that Florida Baptist Children's Homes' Foster Care program licensed in Fort Myers.

Near the end of 2006, the Farrers took in three brothers. While nurturing and caring for the boys, they also began to establish a relationship with the siblings' biological mother who was struggling with a drug addiction. As the relationship

grew stronger between the Farrers and the boys' mother, the Farrers encouraged this woman to attend a Celebrate Recovery Ministry at their local church; it's a ministry for those who struggle with drug addictions.

Not only have these foster parents been able to minister to the children placed in their home, but God also provided a unique opportunity for them to minister to the mother of this sibling group in a special way.



## We shared God's love on Valentine's Day

By JODIE MALDONADO, Enrichment Coordinator  
Florida Baptist Children's Homes

**MIAMI** It's a secret. Well, it *was* a secret anyway. The staff of Florida Baptist Children's Homes' Miami campus planned a surprise Valentine's Day party for our children. We had a red-and-pink heart explosion in our Dorris Emergency Shelter. There were streamers, heart bowls, heart ornaments, and a photo backdrop for photo opportunities.

The children came home from school and were greeted with a big surprise. We had chips and dip, homemade goodies and *lots* of chocolate. The children loved it, but the child care staff may not have been so pleased with the instant sugar rush the young people experienced.

The girls were all given stuffed animals, but the children's favorite part of the party appeared to be the photo op. They all enjoyed posing for the camera and getting pictures for their memory books. They loved having the staff there, acting silly with them.

It was our goal that the children all have a great time, but also that they can have Valentine's Day everyday in their hearts through the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We intend to make this party a tradition on the Miami campus for years to come. But remember: it's a secret.

At the Valentine's Day party: (Standing, from left) Administrator Randy Rankin; Audrey Josey, Residential Services Director; and Development Officer Willie Garcia. (Seated) Nicole Wynter, Child Care Worker.

## Fort Myers campus poised to help more children

By EVERETT D. RAFFERTY, Director of Missions  
Royal Palm Baptist Association

**FORT MYERS** In the late 1980s and the early '90s, the leaders of the Royal Palm Baptist Association (RPBA) had a dream that one day a Florida Baptist Children's Home would be constructed in our area. After much prayer, work and negotiations, a contract between the RPBA and Florida Baptist Children's Homes was signed. Construction of the home, known as the Southwest Florida Children's Home, was completed in 1992.

Since then, the partnership has worked remarkably well. The RPBA Children's Home Committee and Florida Baptist Children's Homes staff have worked together to make the home the best it could be. Many children and families have been ministered to and many have accepted Jesus into their hearts and lives. We praise God for these successes.

The Association is poised to take another giant step of faith in its drive to practically answer the prayers of needy children through people, places and plans. The step of faith is called *Embracing the Future*, a Capital Campaign to fund a Children's Services Center and renovate the Southwest Florida Children's Home.

In 2004, a foster home recruitment and training arm was added to the Southwest Florida Children's Home's programs. The plan is to build a Children's Services Center that will provide space for staff, volunteers and foster parent training.

Embracing the Future Campaign,  
Royal Palm Baptist Association  
5481 Briarcliff Road, Fort Myers, FL 33912  
For more information: 239 433-2292  
*Please make check payable to Royal Palm Baptist Association*

It will also provide space for education, tutoring and counseling for all of the children served on the Southwest Florida Children's Home campus.

The Southwest Florida Children's Home has taken the type of wear-and-tear you would expect with the hundreds of children who have lived there since 1992. Renovations will provide an overall updating of the home and furnishings. Old office space will become living space for house parents, and current house-parent space will be improved upon to make these areas more functional and appealing.

The challenge now facing the Association is raising funds for two projects, the addition of a new Children's Services Center and renovation of the existing home.

The combined estimated cost of these two projects is \$750,000, with the Children's Services Center building and furnishings costing an estimated \$500,000 and renovation of the existing home to be around \$250,000.

## Fort Myers —

(Continued from previous page)

The Fort Myers campus is also expecting to add a group home for adult ladies with Developmental Disabilities. Protected Harbor is the name of the organization that wants to build the Home on the Fort Myers campus, and they have entered into a contract with Florida Baptist Children's Homes and the Royal Palm Baptist Association to do just that. It is hoped that this group home will be operating by the summer of 2008.

Please keep us in your prayers as God continues to challenge us to do great things with Him.

*Embracing*  
**THE FUTURE**



Artist's rendering of the Children's Services Center

# Florida Baptist Children's Homes



By PAULIE FERGUSON, Regional Services Director  
Florida Baptist Children's Homes

**CANTONMENT** On February 13, four boys and four girls from Florida Baptist Children's Homes' Pensacola-area campus visited some of the young patients at nearby Sacred Heart Children's Hospital.

The Children's Home staff is in the process of teaching our children to minister to others, and we wanted to do something special for Valentine's Day. As the staff planned this visit, some of the children were a little hesitant about going because they hadn't been inside a hospital before. But after we talked with them, most of the children were excited about going. House parents Bobby & Cathey Anken-



Visiting Sacred Heart: Crystal (left), 12, and April, 16.

bauer, along with one of our volunteers, Hank Martin, took our residents.

Our children gave the patients stuffed animals, candy, and hand-made cards. It was quite a learning experience for everyone who participated. Eight-year-old Darius asked, "Is that boy sick? He doesn't *look* sick." Crystal, 12, saw a female classmate. Crystal and Darius realized that children their age can get sick and get better, like the boy who didn't *look* sick. They were even able to visit a 2-year-old patient.

Megan Seeley, Sacred Heart's activities coordinator, invited our children to come back: "Thank you, and please don't wait for a holiday."

## Everyone is a winner in this community race

By TIM PUTMAN, Development Officer  
Florida Baptist Children's Homes

**TALLAHASSEE** "Racers take your marks. Get set!" The crack of the shot sent feet scurrying as cheers of encouragement filled the air on Saturday, March 3rd. The second annual Thomasville Road Baptist Church (TRBC) Community 5K and 10K race had begun through the streets of Tallahassee, beginning and ending at the church. The race culminated months of planning and coordination by the race's leadership team including Race Director Grae Bevis, Connie O'Brien and Angela Olexa. Their efforts resulted in a communitywide, well-sponsored event coordinating more than 100 volunteers. Proceeds from the race benefit Florida Baptist Children's Homes and the Debbie O'Brien Scholarship Fund.

The fund began as a memorial to a dear friend and TRBC member who loved children. Debbie O'Brien died in a 1998 automobile accident. It was her love for the Lord and love for

children that inspired her family and close friends to honor her by establishing a scholarship in her name. Funds from the scholarship are used to provide educational and special activities for residents of the Children's Homes' Tallahassee campus, and have paid for activities such as summer day camp, specialized tutoring, college and seminary tuition, and summer vacations. Through this fund, Debbie's impact on children's lives continues today.

Proceeds given to Florida Baptist Children's Homes this year will be used to replace old playground equipment that must be removed for construction of a residence to be known as the Mary York Cottage. The new playground will provide our children with a safe, fun place to enjoy the outdoors.

Compared with last year's race, this year's grew substantially in its impact in the community and the Children's Homes, according to Connie O'Brien: "We added over 100 more racers (a 33 percent increase) this year than last year." There was a total of 400 racers and more than 100 volunteers, including staff and residents from Florida Baptist Children's Homes' Tallahassee campus. This year the race raised \$20,000; the previous year, \$12,000. By including the Gulf Winds Track Club and pursuing Grand Prix status in the quality of its race, the TRBC race leadership team believes it will continue to expand the number of runners and participants in forthcoming years.

"Many runners use this race as a preparation for marathons and other races," said Mrs. O'Brien. "...We believe next year we will have Grand Prix status which will draw many more racers from all over the area including other states like Alabama and Georgia."

The love and hard work of these friends provides needed support and spreads the word about Florida Baptist Children's Homes, honors a dear friend and sister in Christ, and continues to reach out into the community for His kingdom sake. In this race, everyone is a winner.



Handing out water to the runners: (from left) Marian, 15, a Florida Baptist Children's Homes resident; House Parent Shirley Caram and her 10-year-old son, Joey.

## She came to us 'completely broken' —

(Continued from front page)

possibilities her future may bring.

Last month, Marian won the Tallahassee Outstanding Performance (TOP) award at her school for academic excellence and consistently displaying moral integrity, leadership, and service toward others. This is an annual award, voted by the school's teachers and given to only one student. It is the highest honor a student can achieve at Swift Creek.

Marian desires to draw nearer to God and, most of all, to be obedient to His will for her life — a life that is forever changed thanks to the Lord's work through the people of Florida Baptist Children's Homes.

We asked Marian to write her thoughts for publication here. This is what she wrote:

*I arrived at the Children's Home about a year ago. I moved into a cottage with (House Parents) Ed and Shirley Caram. The Carams had a heart for me before they even knew me. The house parents at the Children's Home take good care of me. They are nurturing, they help us to build relationships with people, and they witness to us through the devotion time that we spend together every night.*

*Devotion time is my favorite time of the day. I learn about*

*God and His will for my life. I accepted Jesus Christ into my heart at the cottage a couple of months ago. My house dad, Mr. Ed, led me to the Lord. That was a special time for Mr. Ed and me. The Lord knew that I needed a Christian family; that's why He sent me here. Yes, I have a biological family, but they are not able to give me the Christian life that I need and want.*

*The Children's Home (Carlton Cottage) has become my home, my family, my safe place. I will be here until I am 18 years old. My house parents are here for me now and will be a part of my life when I leave here. For some of us, the Children's Home house parents and office staff are the only true Christian family that we will ever know.*

*The Children's Home was there for me when I most needed someone.*



Marian with her TOP award and her teachers: (from left) Sally Anderson, Jeanne Schroeder, Lauren Mathis, and Grace Lourcey.

By JERREE WHITE, Social Worker  
Florida Baptist Children's Homes

**NAVARRE** "Wow! I knew the need was great, but had no idea our home would be filled so soon!" These were the words Anthony Pantlitz uttered in February when I asked his wife, Felicity, and him to give shelter to a 15-year-old girl and her 5-month-old baby. It was only 20 minutes after I had told them that Florida Baptist Children's Homes had licensed their Navarre home, southeast of Pensacola, to provide foster care.

The Pantlitz family didn't miss a beat. They said yes, put sheets on the bed, opened the crib, and met their first placements at the door with huge smiles on their faces. Those children stayed only a few days. Immediately afterward, the Pantlitzes welcomed their second placements, biracial sisters 13 and 10 years old.

Anthony & Felicity and their three biological children are uniquely qualified to open their home to children of different races and backgrounds. They were born in British Guyana and immigrated to New York — he, about two decades ago; she, about five years later.

Anthony worked in the federal prison system as a minister. About three years ago, when the war in the Middle East intensified, he was called to active duty as



With open arms and a smile, Felicity Pantlitz welcomes her second foster group.

They see themselves as wonderfully blessed and want to share their home, their love and, above all, their Jesus with children who have come through difficult times.

Just after receiving their second placements in February, Capt. Pantlitz received deployment orders for Afghanistan where he was still serving at press time; the deployment was for at least three months. Because of that, I asked the Pantlitzes if they wanted to have the two girls moved and be assigned no foster placements until Anthony returned. "Oh, no!" Mr. Pantlitz quickly replied. "Felicity says *I* can leave, but she's not letting these girls go! They have already taken up residence in her heart."

While Anthony is serving in the Middle East, Felicity is doing what she can to combat child abuse and neglect on the home front. What a wonderful asset they are to Florida Baptist Children's Homes' foster come program!

a U.S. Air Force chaplain and assigned to Hurlburt Air Force Base near Fort Walton Beach. His family moved with him.

In Guyana, in New York, and now in Florida, the Pantlitz family has constantly had a heart for children in need.

'She's not letting these girls go! They have already taken up residence in her heart.'

# A mother's love stays with us for a lifetime

Do you recall the excitement you had as a child picking out the very special gift for your mother for Mother's Day?

Some years I would take my money and search up and down the aisles of the local Five & Dime. Others years I would pool my money with my siblings to get a nicer gift. Of course, "nicer" could only be defined by a mom.

I will never forget the year my older sister and I found the perfect sand art at the Five & Dime. I don't remember how much we paid for it, but it couldn't have been much more than \$5 or \$10. I was home recently visiting my parents and guess what I found – that sand art. My mom has kept that "nicer" gift all these years. Amazing!

Many of the children we care for have never experienced the joy of giving such a gift to their mothers. They may not have had the money or perhaps they didn't know where their mother was on Mother's Day. Maybe their mothers didn't know how to accept such a gift. But no matter what, these children love their mothers. What is it about a mother's love that stays with us for a lifetime?

Every dollar you give to Florida Baptist Children's Homes through the Mother's Day Offering goes to help us teach our children to hold on to that love they have for their mothers. We are able to help them understand why they

## Practically Speaking

By Carl Willis



Carl Willis is Florida Baptist Children's Homes' Vice President for Programs, responsible for quality assurance, policies and procedures, and staff training. His e-mail address is [cwillis@FBCHomes.org](mailto:cwillis@FBCHomes.org) and his phone number is 863-687-8811.

should always love their mother. We may not agree with some of their mother's decisions or like the harm they may have allowed to come to their child. But we know love and forgiveness is key for these children to move on and grow into productive citizens.

Your dollars also help us to provide "substitute" moms for these children. Our House mothers, Foster mothers and Adoptive mothers step in to fill

that gap in these children's lives. I can't recall the number of times I have watched our children climb in the laps of these moms and give them a big hug. I have seen these ladies wipe the tears from the children's eyes, and I have watched them laugh so hard with these same children that they have tears in their eyes. Isn't that what moms do? They laugh and cry with their children.

Your dollars allow "our" moms to minister to "their" moms. We reach out to our children's mothers and show them we love them, too. That simple act of accepting our children's mothers has allowed our children to respond to our guidance. When their mothers know we care, they care about what we know. They listen to our guidance also. Then we can all work together to put their families back together.

So, this year when you give to the Mother's Day Offering, remember all the moms you are helping. And by helping them, you are helping our children.

## Order your free VBS Coloring & Activity Books, video

Once again this year, Florida Baptist Children's Homes is offering free, 12-page *Coloring & Activity Books* for Vacation Bible School students, so they can learn about this 103-year-old ministry to disadvantaged, abused and abandoned boys and girls. And, new this year, there will be a free DVD

included in your shipment of books. Geared toward children, the DVD is a short, informative and entertaining overview of the Children's Homes. It features ventriloquist Julie Boyd and her likeable, funny, and animated wooden partner, "B.C. Homes."

The books and video are made available, upon request, to VBS Directors, Ministers of Education and Pastors throughout Florida. Why a VBS *Coloring & Activity Book* and video? Because Vacation Bible School is such a powerful learning time, we have developed these materials for children to use as a part of their missions education. Our children in church need to know there are other boys and girls who don't have stable homes, security, love: all the things children should be able to expect from family.

Your VBS boys and girls will have lots of fun coloring the scenes and doing the activities, and they'll enjoy the video too! If your VBS takes an offering to benefit Florida Baptist Children's Homes, these materials can be a helpful tool to generate awareness and participation.

Thank you for your faithful support. Use the accompanying coupon or order online at [www.FBCHomes.org/vbs.html](http://www.FBCHomes.org/vbs.html)

Supplies are limited. Order today.

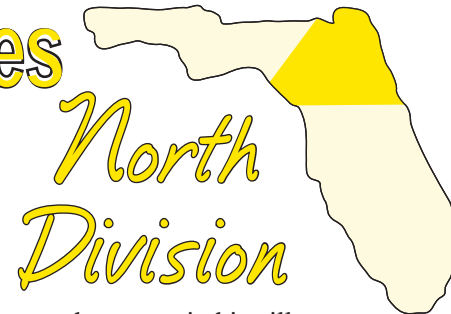
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Send to: VBS Coloring & Activity Books Florida Baptist Children's Homes P.O. Box 8190, Lakeland, Fla. 33802

# Florida Baptist Children's Homes



**JACKSONVILLE** The Second Annual *Friends of Children* Dinner for the North Division was held March 22 on the campus of the Baptist Home for Children in Jacksonville.

Members of the *Friends of Children* effort invited friends and associates to learn about the Children's Home ministry, its history and most recent accomplishments. Vice President Charlie Cox and Area Administrator Randy Harrison reviewed the work of Florida Baptist Children's Homes around the state of Florida and locally in North Florida. Development Officer Victor Spangler introduced the evening program with a description of the *Friends of Children* purpose and function and closed with an invitation for those in attendance to partner with the Home in its ministry to children.



Habtom Bahre (above) and Darryl Hesler



better life in America. His mother and grandmother had passed away when he was a young child. His father moved to another village to seek work, leaving young Habtom homeless on the streets in his village. Undetected, Habtom and his friends boarded a cargo ship at night. The ship arrived in the port of Jacksonville. Ultimately, Habtom was welcomed into the Children's Home where he was cared for until his graduation from Englewood High School in 1993. Mr. Bahre is a spokesman for the Children's Home and is a role model to the boys in our Parker Cottage, the cottage in which he grew up.

Darryl Hesler was honored as Volunteer of the Year 2007 for the North Division. Mr. Hesler initially volunteered in 1998 and has faithfully contributed more than 1,500 volunteer hours in this nine-year period. "Darryl's gracious willingness to take on about any project we needed accomplished has made him invaluable to the children and home," stated Administrator Randy Harrison. Also, perhaps his most important contribution has been the recruitment of 15 additional volunteers who, through their weekly visits to the campus, have provided more than 5,000 hours of service to the Home.

*Friends of Children* and these honorees are invaluable partners in the ministry to the children of North Florida.

The evening's festivities included two special recognitions. The first was the honoring of Habtom Bahre as Alumnus of the Year 2007. Mr. Bahre, accompanied by his wife Terhas, spoke of the impact the Jacksonville Home had on his life and the influence for Christ that has changed him personally. Mr. Bahre, along with four other boys fled their native country of Ethiopia in 1988, seeking a

## A lesson in God's timing

By AMBER DUFRENE, Social Worker  
Florida Baptist Children's Homes

**JACKSONVILLE** Throughout my personal walk with God, He has taught me a great deal about Providence and HIS timing. My experiences at Florida Baptist Children's Homes only serve to validate that "God's ways are not our ways" and that His providence, control and foresight are far greater than our human understanding. This was most elegantly exemplified in the following example.

Everyone at FBCH who knew the McDonald family anticipated the approval of their foster home. As God would have it, delayed background checks, and screenings held up the process much longer than normal. All of our attempts to speed along the process failed. It is no coincidence that their licensure process took all of 9 months to complete. As it turns out, God was birthing a plan that only He could have accomplished. With very little anxiety, knowing that God was in control and that He had a special child or children in mind for the McDonald home, the tasks that were in our control were completed and the McDonald's were finally licensed on March 1, 2006.

When Lynn came to the Jacksonville campus of the Children's Home on March 30, 2006, no one thought she was any different than any of the other blonde-haired, blue-eyed, seven year old girls found in foster care. Her story is not

unlike many of the others we saw on a daily basis. She and her younger sister and older brother were brought into custody for allegations of neglect and physical abuse. Sadly, her siblings were placed in the McDonald's foster home, while she was placed in the residential program in Jacksonville.

As staff would quickly learn, Lynn was in fact different. She turned out to be a very challenging little girl. Almost from the beginning Lynn presented with challenging behaviors in school and in the cottage. No amount of redirection or positive reinforcement could help keep her behaviors in check. Lynn was quickly becoming one of the more challenging young ladies of which FBCH staff had worked. She was very angry and would often become aggressive when confronted. No one felt they had the answer to reaching her. Propositions for increased sibling visits and possible over night visits with her siblings seemed to only intensify her aggression.

From day one of the placement, the McDonald's, a brand new foster family, were instrumental in getting Lynn placed in their home. Even while they struggled with the aggressive behaviors of Lynn's little sister and knowing the challenges Lynn presented, Mr. and Mrs. McDonald advocated for more sibling visits, over-night and weekend visits. However, due to Lynn's aggressive behaviors, she was unable to go on any of the visits. Eventually, she was Baker Acted and removed from

(Continued on next page)

*If you need a speaker for your Mission Group, Sunday School, Mission Fair, Worship Leadership, Banquet, Senior Adult Group or Civic Club, call us. We are available. We can present a program on our services, on the social issues that necessitate the existence of a Children's Home, or on ways one could help. We can lead your regular worship service as a pulpit supply, too; we have several ordained ministers on our staff. Contact the nearest Florida Baptist Children's Homes facility. See page 2 for addresses and phone numbers.*

## Women's ministries and 'Open House' welcomes Jacksonville community

**JACKSONVILLE** Each year the WMU and Women's Ministries from the 16 county area of North Florida conduct one of their monthly meetings in the Price Chapel at the Baptist Home for Children in Jacksonville. This tradition affords an opportunity for fellowship and an update on the work of the Children's Home during the past year. Jewel Perritt, Vanita Baldwin and Hilda Cowsert led this year's meeting and pianist Anna Gray provided the music. The boys from Meninak Cottage, ages 5 to 11 years old, provided the special music entitled "Do you love Jesus? Yes, I do."

For several months these ladies have collected non-perishable food items at their churches in order to "pound the

pantry" at the Children's Home. This enables the Home to "stretch" its food budget. The outpouring from this year's effort was gratefully received.

In conjunction with the meeting, an Open House was conducted, allowing the local community, as well as church congregations, to visit the cottages, staff and children. A barbeque lunch was served to over 350 guests. Horseback rides, inflatables and "Christian Clowns" provided fun things for the children such as face painting and balloons. Tours were conducted by the children and staff. Foster Care and Adoptions staff were on hand to discuss this part of the ministry with interested guests.

## A lesson in God's timing

*(Continued from previous page)*

the residential program. She was placed in a foster placement located not far from her siblings and the McDonald's. The McDonald's continued to diligently seek a waiver allowing Lynn to live in their home (with Lynn's two siblings and their own children). Despite the apprehension from FBCH staff, God's providence again took precedence. He worked it out for the McDonald's to provide childcare during the day, which after only a week turned into a full time placement. Lynn's aggressive behaviors continued.

The McDonald's understood that this was just an angry, wounded little girl. Their heart was to see Lynn thrive and know the love of Christ. After much redirection and an almost failed placement, the McDonald's along with the Holy Spirit and an occasional intervention by FBCH staff, Lynn began to redirect her own behaviors and became a happy, stable little girl. The McDonald's continued to advocate for more visits

with the biological parents and even went so far as to work with the parents themselves, in an attempt to show them the love of Christ and to help teach them the skills they themselves had learned.

Lynn and her siblings were placed in a relative caregiver placement in New York, but the McDonald's continue to have regular contact with the children and their parents. This family is proof that even when we don't understand what God is doing, he knows what is best. He knew before Lynn and her siblings were born that they would need the McDonald family to show them His love. Jeremiah 29:11 tells us that "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Thanks to His Divine Providence, Lynn and her family will forever know the Love of God because of the wisdom and sacrifice of one amazing family.

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