

TENNESSEECHILDREN.ORG

summer

@TBCH

*a breath of
fresh air*



A note from Greg

I preached a sermon in the fall of 1998 that I would have filed away in my “Disaster! Never Preach Again” folder until a lady came up to me after the service and proclaimed, “That was a breath of fresh air!” I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry at her encouragement, but for some reason I can still clearly hear the words “breath of fresh air” like she said them yesterday.

Today would be a good day for all of us to have a breath of fresh air! What do you think about when you hear the word “fresh?” Do you think of fresh air that can be breathed without a mask? Do you think of fresh vegetables, fresh fruit, fresh flowers, or fresh water? As I think about the word “fresh” today, I’m thinking about a fresh start. To say something is fresh is to say that its original qualities have been unimpaired. This is what we do our best to give to the children who are a part of the ministry of TBCH. We want them to have a fresh start. We want them to know that in Christ all things can be made new, or could I say, fresh?!

Consider the New English Translation of Lamentations 3:22-23: “The Lord’s loyal kindness never ceases; His compassions never end. They are fresh every morning; Your faithfulness is abundant!” Do you need a fresh start today? Try placing your hope in Him! Thank you for helping our team at TBCH give a fresh start to some children and young people who desperately need it. Your support is like a breath of fresh air!

Bro. Greg

Bro. Greg, President/Treasurer





In this issue

In many ways, moving into summer at TBCH has been a ***breath of fresh air***—figuratively and literally. We've had new children come into our homes, new team members join our staff, and our campuses have finally started welcoming on-campus volunteers again. The easing of pandemic restrictions has brought more and more publicly smiling faces, and spending time in the fresh air seems like everyone's new favorite pastime. Fresh air is and always has been a gift from God, from the breath of life He gave Adam (Genesis 2:7) to the breath of the Spirit Jesus imparted to his disciples (John 20:22). As you turn the pages of this issue, we hope you enjoy a breath of fresh air and see God's refreshing Spirit in the ministry of TBCH.



TENNESSEE BAPTIST
CHILDREN'S HOMES

RESIDENTIAL CARE

Christian houseparents serving in family-style homes on three campuses across the state, providing safety and biblical guidance so children can thrive.

FOSTER CARE

Training and support for Christian foster parents through The George Shinn Foster Care Program, providing certified foster homes for children across TN.

FAMILY CARE

Working with churches and other organizations to create a network of local resources, changing the trajectory of families for the better.

1-800-624-8591

www.tennesseechildren.org
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P.O. Box 2206, Brentwood, TN 37024



Fostering a Helping Relationship with DCS

An Encouraging Update from our VP of Foster Care, Alisha Worthey:

Through our ministry, TBCH has successfully provided adoptive Christian homes for approximately 56 children across Tennessee over the past several years. This has only been made possible through God. He has provided the avenue for TBCH to meet the need that Tennessee DCS had in serving children in state's custody.

Since 2014, our goal and emphasis has been to recruit Christian families to provide safe, nurturing environments for foster children to live and call home while in state's custody. Families who foster with TBCH are vetted to meet not only the state of Tennessee DCS and federal standards, but also TBCH standards set by our Statement of Faith based on God's Word.

TBCH has been blessed to provide safe, Christian homes for over 400 foster children through the George Shinn Foster Care program since 2014. This has been accomplished with only a handful of Foster Care Case Managers scattered across the state. Caseloads are kept at a low manageable level (10 children per case manager) allowing case managers the ability to support foster parents in the trenches, recruit and train additional families to meet placement needs, and strengthen relationships with DCS.



Thinking about getting involved in Foster Care?

Visit our website at www.tennesseechildren.org/foster-care. There you can find FAQs, our Foster Parent Application, and info on training classes. You can also email us at fostercare@tennesseechildren.org or call 1-800-624-8591.

Foster Care Q&A

Samara Grant is our Regional Foster Care Supervisor in East Tennessee. She has an MS in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, served as an in-home intervention specialist, and has been recruiting and training foster parents for several years. Foster Care is complicated to say the least, and her professional experience allows for a unique perspective which we hope readers find enlightening.



Q: What advice would you give someone who is considering becoming a foster parent?

A: Being a foster parent takes patience and understanding, but it can be so rewarding. My advice to anyone interested in becoming a foster parent would be to lean on the Lord for guidance. Believing that He is sovereign in all things is one of the most important beliefs you can have as a foster parent. There are times of immense joy and inevitable sadness during this journey, and it is all for the glory of God. When considering being a foster parent, it is also important to look at your support system. The saying goes, “it takes a village,” and that is true with foster care. Support can come from your church, family, or friends but I have found that it can be an arduous process without support. Before starting, evaluate your motivation. I like to tell my foster parents that unconditional love is absolutely needed, but it takes a lot more than that love. It also takes patience and a commitment that does not easily waver. Lastly, so many people will say they do not know if it is the right time to foster. To that, I would just like to say that there will never be a perfect time because fostering will change your life. However, if you truly feel as though the Lord is calling you to foster, He will walk with you through every step!

Q: What misconception about foster kids do you most often encounter?

A: The biggest misconception about children in foster care is that they are “bad” kids. In foster care, there are different levels that children can be placed in, and I have been fortunate enough to work with all those levels. Not once have I met a bad kid. However, I did meet children who were misunderstood, misled, and unloved. Those feelings lead to children having behavioral issues that can take years to sort out, but that does not make them bad. I think the best way to explain undesirable behavior is that every behavior is an expression of a need. I would encourage foster parents and even the general public to search for what need is being met by an expressed behavior. That process is not as simple as labeling a child as bad, but it sure is a great way to understand these children through an empathetic, trauma-informed lens.

The best example of this that I share with my foster parents is when I worked at a therapeutic agency. I was working with a young boy who constantly struggled to keep his room clean. It would be pretty filthy at times, and I had such a hard time understanding why this was so difficult for him. His adoptive parents just thought he was being defiant. After working with him for several months, he finally admitted that he liked to keep his room this way because when he lived with his biological parents, that is how they kept their home. He said by doing this, he felt more comfortable. He felt as though it made him closer to his biological family. It’s an experience that I will always keep with me because it was the first real-life experience I had regarding a behavior meeting a need for a child.

Watch for more Foster Care Q & A in the next issue of @TBCH. Thank you, Samara!



Volunteers Continue to Make Oakdale Beautiful

Volunteer groups play an important role at TBCH, not only serving our Residential Care campuses, but also by supporting our George Shinn Foster Care Program. Our Oakdale location, which transitioned into a foster home for large sibling groups in 2019, includes a large home, nearly 75 acres of land, and a long list of maintenance and improvement needs. For decades, hard-working volunteer groups have invested their time and efforts here. A recent “Clean-Up Day” saw a convoy of pickup trucks, equipment, and volunteers streaming onto the grounds. Folks from Memorial Baptist Church in Crossville, Mossy Grove Baptist Church in Harriman, and First Baptist Church Rockwood, as well as our own Brother Greg and staff members, showed up to beautify the property and begin repurposing one of the structures into a maintenance shop. Their support means the foster family living here will continue to have a nice, safe place in Oakdale to welcome children who need it most.



Bracelets for Foster Care

Helping the children who live at TBCH can be both creative and industrious, two traits Anne Quillen Bledsoe employed to raise money to support foster care.

Anne Quillen is a third grader at Holy Trinity Montessori in Nashville. She was inspired by a former teacher who served as a foster parent and an adoptive mom. That inspiration sparked the idea to make and sell bracelets, and donate the proceeds to The George Shinn Foster Care Program of TBCH. Her charitable business venture brought in a total of \$478! She and her mother, Susannah, made a special trip to our Brentwood campus to personally deliver the gift to some of our Foster Care staff.

Her generosity and creativity are a blessing to our staff and the kids in our Foster Care Program.



Anne Quillen with Foster Care staffers Alyssa and Kim



Volleyball Team Serves Up Support

Tony Hoekstra, and the volleyball team he coaches, have found a new way to serve TBCH, and we think it's an ace!

Tony has been coaching for 25 years, and his girls' 12 and under team at Anthem United Volleyball Club in Chattanooga recently dropped off a donation of \$252—proceeds from a challenge that helped their team's performance while helping the kids in our care.

"The team was inconsistent serving the ball in play. They were having trouble with confidence against the competition. I challenged them to serve the ball in for a charitable organization."

Tony learned about TBCH when one day, out of curiosity, he drove onto the campus. He worked nearby and was impressed by the non-institutional atmosphere and the "family home" concept.

"I suggested TBCH, and they responded with great enthusiasm and better serving," he says, "their focus became how much money the team was making for the Children's Homes." The terms of the challenge were one dollar per point if the team won the set. During the process, they won eight sets in a row and even outscored an undefeated team! After a successful and much-improved season, the girls delivered the gift in person, as a team, demonstrating that serving is a good thing on and off the volleyball court.



Pray. Serve. Give.



A slow, deep breath reduces stress, encourages peace, and serves as a reminder of the blessings of God. Thank you for reading our stories and sharing in all the good ways God has blessed us through our supporters. Here are some ways you, too, can help:

➞ PRAY

Pray for the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of our children and staff. Our most valuable support is prayer!

➞ SERVE

Serve one of our campuses or a local foster family in practical ways, like volunteering, tutoring, or delivering a meal. You bless us when you share your talents with us!

➞ GIVE

Give a gift. Whether you give one time or become a monthly donor, you are helping provide homes, meals, and services to the children in our care. Legacy giving also provides for the future needs of this ministry, so we encourage you to consider putting TBCH in your will.

Contact us for more info or volunteer opportunities, and donate today online at tennesseechildren.org, by phone at 1-800-624-8591, or by mail to P.O. Box 2206, Brentwood, TN 37024.

Smiles and Gifts from WMU

The Women's Missionary Union has been supporting Christian ministries like TBCH for 133 years, so it should come as no surprise that despite "going virtual" this year, they still came through in a big way to support the kids at TBCH.

TBCH was chosen as the ministry project for their annual Get-Together & Connection event. Since it took place online, participants were encouraged to ship Amazon wish-list items directly to TBCH, and the outpouring of generosity was nothing short of amazing! Dozens of those familiar smiling boxes arrived, totaling more than \$3,500 worth of items, from sheet sets to office supplies.

Some packages included heart-warming notes of prayers and encouragement for our kids and staff:

"Heavenly Father, may the child that sleeps between these sheets find comfort and peace from the sorrows of this life; but most of all may they become a child of God. In Jesus name I pray, amen. From Y.H."

"Sending lots of love from Somerville, TN! So thankful for the opportunity to be a part of your life. May God bless you abundantly!"

The delivery folks probably didn't realize they were serving as WMU ambassadors every time they dropped off a load of gifts at our state office. The ladies of WMU really went over and above this year to show their love and generosity toward TBCH, and we appreciate them for their efforts!





Left to right, Ms. Bette, Ms. June, and Nicole

Thoughtful Neighbor Shares from her Abundance

Ms. June lives at The Heritage, a retirement community just a short drive from our campus in Brentwood. Since March of 2020, she's been faithfully supporting TBCH in a way that is as practical as it is unique.

When she first moved in, she received a welcome kit that included a Williamson County map, and took note of the close proximity of our Brentwood campus.

"I've always had a place in my heart for traumatized children," she shares. Her husband had been a refugee at six years of age, so she understands what it means that some kids come from hard places.

One of the benefits of living at The Heritage is the "Dining Dollars" meal allowance. Ms. June realized it was nearly twice what she would ever use for herself, so she decided to find a way to donate the surplus. "The Children's Homes just popped into my head, and after two phone calls I connected with Nicole." Nicole Andrus, our Special Events Ministry Assistant in Brentwood, now visits with Ms. June and picks up her donation monthly. To make the gift even more special, Ms. June chooses "treat" items when she orders—things like shrimp and steak which are not normally on the menu for our kids.

Recently she has enlisted other residents of The Heritage to participate, with special shout-outs to her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Clark, Ms. Barbara, and Ms. Bette Mackie, all of whom have followed her lead. Neighbors like Ms. June are not only a blessing to us, but also to the whole community. The way she thoughtfully shares from her abundance shows that children matter.

We Love Our Houseparents!

To say that houseparenting is challenging is like saying Mt. Everest is tall. It's true, but ridiculously understated. Currently, 29 individuals have committed to live in homes on our three campuses, dedicating themselves to caring for up to eight resident children, 24/7 while on duty. The different hats they wear is seemingly innumerable—mentoring, counseling, teaching, caregiving, cooking, cleaning, fundraising...and their duties go beyond their households. They work in professional teams alongside case managers, administrators, counselors, and school personnel. They maintain campus facilities, run commercial kitchens, serve as event staff, and continually participate in training to adapt and equip themselves to better serve the children in their homes.

And when people ask (which they sometimes do), "So do you have a real job, too?" they smile and try to explain an occupation that comes with a handbook which seems as thick as Mt. Everest is tall.

Houseparents make up 37% of the staff at TBCH, and it is worth stating that we would not be the ministry we are without them. That is why this June we hosted our first TBCH Houseparent Summit and Appreciation Lunch at our state office in Brentwood.

Thanks to the leading effort of Laurie Gardner, who serves as our Accreditation and Training Specialist, all 29 TBCH houseparents from all three regions were invited for a day of encouragement, connection, and appreciation. "We are striving to create as much of a sense of family within our staff across the state as we do in the individual homes on our campuses," Laurie said. Those who attended represent nearly 209 combined years' worth of houseparenting experience.

The event, a TBCH version of a Hawaiian-style luau, included a devotion by guest pastor, Jeremy Young from City Church in Murfreesboro, a special lunch served by state office staff members, team-building activities, speakers, and time to spend together sharing stories, ideas, and advice. For many, it was their first opportunity to meet fellow houseparents from our different campuses, and a welcomed chance to laugh, empathize, and form new friendships.

Jordan Frazier, who serves at the Brentwood campus, had this takeaway from the event, ***"It's not often you can sit in a room and know that others in that room understand your biggest struggles, fears and difficulties. This event, more than anything, focuses on encouragement through community."***



Interested in our Residential Care Program?

Visit us online at www.tennesseechildren.org for information about our campuses, houseparenting, and getting involved in your part of the state.

Reunification Sweet as Honey for Mom and Kids

One of the most important goals of TBCH is the reunification of families, which often involves a great deal of work on behalf of the parents or guardians involved. Brittany and her two children are a beautiful picture of what it looks like to reach that goal.

Her kids came to live at TBCH while she completed a two-year program at Thistle & Bee, a non-profit organization in Memphis helping women overcome hard circumstances.

"It was a difficult decision to make, but I knew in the long run it's what was best for all of us. Their whole life was shaken up and if it wasn't for my bad decisions, they wouldn't have to go through that. The guilt slowly faded away when I realized that keeping them with me was way more selfish than having them placed and cared for by other people. My life was a mess and it spilled out into their little lives."

Thistle & Bee is a unique (and sweet) residential and therapeutic clinical program for women. The job skills training involves beekeeping, harvesting honey, and the business of producing and selling honey-related items like lip balm and soap. The revenue generated supports the program and gives the participating women a source of income.

While TBCH was able to welcome the children and provide them a safe home, Brittany was busy as the bees she was keeping—getting a driver's license, paying off debt, gaining job skills and diligently following through on personal and professional plans in hopes of a successful family reunification. That hope became reality following her graduation in May!

The transition after reunification can be a challenging process. "It's going okay," she says, "we're still trying to get in the groove and get adjusted. Overall, I think we are doing well." She also has an encouraging perspective to share with other families in hard places. "Understand that to be the best parent we can be, we sometimes have to make hard decisions in the best interest of the children. Reach out for help. Ask for advice. It's not selfish to get yourself together because if you are not at your best, it will without a doubt show in your children's lives. Give yourself grace and room to grow."

She has grown in many ways through her experience. "I know I'm a better mother. It's given me the opportunity to be present for my children." She is now a full-time production and sales assistant for Thistle & Bee, and continues beekeeping. She is also using her experience to give back to the community through a connection with another non-profit that helps women and girls in need.

TBCH exists for the purpose of helping families like Brittany and her children, considering it a privilege and a Biblical responsibility to be a part of her story. "I'm very grateful for TBCH," she says, "I truly believe they were loved and well taken care of."

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Celebrating the Graduates



Seth and Abraham



Glerys

Please pray for our grads! Glerys plans on participating in our Independent Living Program and attending Chattanooga State. She wants to pursue a career in social work. Seth will also join the Independent Living Program and wants to study welding. Abraham has already started basic training, beginning his career in the military.

#BeatingTheOdds

Research clearly shows that kids in foster and substitute care have a harder time in school than their peers, so when a resident of TBCH achieves educational success (like this young man from The Ranch being honored at his school), we proudly celebrate. But it is more than just beating the odds--it's investing in their future.





Campers at The Ranch

The Ranch at Millington recently served as a temporary campground for a wonderful group of volunteers. Tennessee Campers on Mission arrived in RV's and trucks with pop-ups in tow for a few days of help and hard work.

Campers On Mission is a national fellowship of Christian campers and volunteer workers, sponsored by the Adult Volunteer Mobilization Unit of the North American Mission Board. The Tennessee chapter has been a regular supporter of TBCH for decades, having completed groundskeeping, storm repair, maintenance, and building projects on our campuses across the state.

During this most recent trip, they completed several projects at The Ranch, including getting the new entrance gate hardware installed and working properly. The staff and kids at TBCH are grateful for the support of these friends and the fruit of their labor.



Events!

What we've been
up to and what's coming
up next...

Hope Hines Fore Kids Golf Classic



The 2021 Hope Hines FORE Kids Golf Classic at Nashville Golf & Athletic Club was a hit with golfers and sponsors who helped us raise more than \$50,000 this year!



TopGolf in Chattanooga

Our first ever "Drive It Home" TopGolf Tournament in Chattanooga was a great success. Not only did we raise funds, we also made new friends. More than 200 players and supporters filled the venue to enjoy the evening with us.

The 2021 Mother's Day Offering



Last year's challenges kept many churches from opening their doors on this important day of giving for TBCH. This year, in-person services on Mother's Day have given a significant boost to the efforts of our supporting churches. We are so grateful for the hundreds of churches who ordered promotional materials and for all the faithful Mother's Day Offering participants!

Mark your calendars for these upcoming events...



West Tennessee Golf Tournament

After last year's postponement, The Champions Fore Children Golf Classic returns this fall, scheduled for Sept. 24, at Stonebridge Golf Course in Lakeland.



I Cared for One

We're bringing back our I Cared for One event, live and in person! This special gala dinner is scheduled for Sept. 16, at The Factory in Franklin.

For more information or to register for any upcoming events, visit
tennesseechildren.org/events or call 1-800-624-8591

Say Hello to Our Newest Staff Members



ABBIE THOMAS

Abbie Thomas unofficially joined the TBCH family when her husband Dylan became our new Ranch Assistant, and they moved their family to The Ranch at Millington. Now Abbie has officially joined the team as a Daily Relief Houseparent, allowing her and Dylan to fill in with those duties as necessary. Her willingness to wear a new hat is sure to help life at The Ranch run a little more smoothly.



HANNA MEAD

Hanna Mead is our newest Foster Care Case Manager in the West Region. Originally from Rockford, IL, she earned her master's in social work from Union University, where she was a graduate assistant for the Union EDGE Program. "I've always had an interest in Foster Care," she says, "I'm most looking forward to building relationships with the TBCH children, families, and staff!"



A.J. AND BRANDI THOMAS

A.J. and Brandi Thomas, from Florence, AL, will be serving as Houseparents at The Ranch. No strangers to this ministry, they have been involved in foster, residential, and group home care since 2013. They are adoptive parents of two (both grown), and their youngest child will call The Ranch home along with them. "We felt like God was calling us here to be part of this team...TBCH reflected the kind of morals and service that we felt we valued as well. God put us in the doorway."



Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes

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