

A publication of Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes
Winter 2025

A Note from our President:

Wow! That's the theological word that comes to mind when I think back over 2025. I say that word partly because of the speed at which 2025 has traveled, but more importantly, I say that word because of what we have seen the Lord do through the ministry of TBCH:

- ⇒ Provided care for 242 individual children.
- ⇒ Witnessed a half dozen children come to know Jesus as their Savior and Lord.
- ⇒ Worked with over 80 different families in Foster Care.
- ⇒ Celebrated 18 adoptions.
- ⇒ Provided support for nine young adults who have aged out and are sticking with us so that we can help them get a college education or learn a trade.
- ⇒ Constructed three new homes on our Brentwood campus, two new homes at The Ranch in Millington, and have started moving dirt for new homes in Chattanooga.

I also say, "Wow!" because of your support. Without your prayers, your service, and your faithful giving our children who have found themselves in hard places would not be cared for in a safe environment, would not be introduced to Jesus, would not be placed in forever homes, and would have missed the opportunity to have their life path filled with hope and a future!

Thanking God for you,



Greg McCoy
President/Treasurer

Residential Care

Providing safe, Christ-centered homes on campuses in Millington, Brentwood and Chattanooga for children aged 5-18, and Independent Living Services for residents transitioning to adulthood.



Foster Care

Providing safe homes across the state through free training and support of Christian foster parents, and placement services through a no-cost contract with the Department of Children's Services.

Welcoming children in hard places with the love of Christ!
www.tennesseechildren.org

office@tennesseechildren.org • 615-376-3140 • PO Box 2206, Brentwood, TN 37024

Residential Care



Yes, our kids are helping decorate their new homes (like this little one adding a touch of color to the porch). We have been blessed by volunteer groups and individuals, including Clearview Baptist Church, and Laura Kirk and friends, rolling up their sleeves to help out by hauling boxes, cleaning, and setting up new furniture.

And after all the work, it's time to play. The Annual "Songwriter's Night" event, hosted by Larry Boone at his home in Brentwood, raises funds every year for the kids to enjoy some R&R at Dollywood.



FIRM FOUNDATIONS PROJECT

PROGRESS UPDATE: Children and houseparents moved into two of the first three new homes on the Brentwood campus recently. Two new homes are now completed at The Ranch at Millington (exterior and interior pictured here), and sitework is currently underway at the Chattanooga campus!



Support the Firm Foundations Project or get involved at one of our campuses (Brentwood, Chattanooga or the Ranch at Millington) by visiting tennesseechildren.org/residential-care.

Cans for Kids

Faith, a Trailer, and a lot of Love



Mrs. Wanda holding photos of her and Mr. Tilman, and Charles Ogg, original stewards of Cans for Kids

Tilman and Wanda Arant were hairdressers. Although Mr. Tilman has passed away, Mrs. Wanda is still going strong at age 88, and in their hometown of Dresden, TN, they are known for more than cutting hair, they are recognized for what they've done to raise money for the children who lived on our Barlett Campus and now the Ranch at Millington.

How did they go about raising this money? They collected aluminum cans, sold them, and sent the proceeds to TBCH. Cans for Kids is a story of obedience to a call.

"We belonged to a church that wanted to send money every month to the Children's Homes in Bartlett and the Boys' Ranch," said Mrs. Wanda. At the time the Arant's were members at Mack's Grove Baptist Church in Dresden. Because their son and daughter-in-law were serving at a children's home in North Carolina, the church sent them to visit the TBCH campus in Bartlett to see how their church could help.

Diane Chavers, who worked at the Bartlett campus, showed them around and let them see firsthand how the children were being cared for. After the tour, Mr. Tilman asked about a trailer sitting outside the old barn with some plastic bags around. "It's cans," Diane told him. "People bring their cans here and we sell them. Then we use the money to help with recreation for the children."

On the way home, he wondered, "I don't know why I can't do that...save cans and sell them, and send the money down there. I just feel like the Lord wants me to do that."

Soon the Arants made a plan to do what Mr. Tilman believed the Lord was calling him to do. They took a 16-foot trailer, upgraded it to hold the cans, and Brian Mathis, owner and operator of Mathis Battery in Dresden, agreed to let them set it up in the parking lot of his business. That was in 2008, and the Cans for Kids trailer still sits there today.

Mr. Tilman began visiting churches in the Weakley County Baptist Association letting them know about this opportunity, showing a TBCH video, and getting them involved. Before long the trailer was full, and he hauled it to the recycling center. With the first check in hand, they returned to the Bartlett campus, where their donation of \$612.30 was received with warm gratitude.

Mrs. Wanda began promoting Cans for Kids, inviting a former resident to speak to the local WMU and writing articles for the local newspaper reminding people of the trailer and their need for cans. They even pulled the Cans for Kids trailer in the Iris Festival Parade in Dresden.



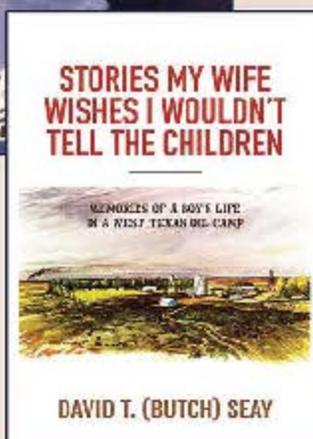
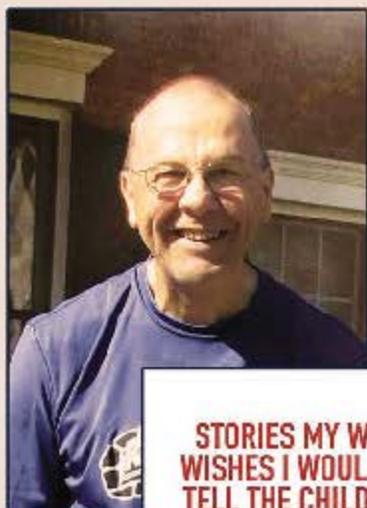
Russell and Jo Ann Wireman, who took over Cans for Kids and still serve today (Photo credit to David Atkins)

For the next several years, the Arants served as faithful curators of Cans for Kids, and when Mr. Tilman was unable to continue due to health issues, he recruited a good friend, Mr. Charles Ogg, to help with the ministry. He took over for the next 12 years after Mr. Tilman passed away in 2014, and handed it off to Russell and Jo Ann Wireman from Bible Union Baptist in Martin, who are caretakers of the ministry today, along with Allen Winstead.

This wonderful legacy of folks who keep Cans for Kids alive and well is a story of obedience and love. Collectively, Cans for Kids has raised more than \$40,000 for the children who lived at the Barlett Campus and now those who call The Ranch at Millington home.

“It was good work,” says Mrs. Wanda. “If Tilman could just see what is still happening, he would be so happy.”

AUTHOR SHARES STORY TO SUPPORT KIDS



David T. "Butch" Seay is a longtime friend of TBCH, and his most recent philanthropic endeavor is found in the pages of his memoir, *Stories My Wife Wishes I Wouldn't Tell the Children*. This humorous and heartfelt collection of anecdotes recalls his experiences growing up in an employee camp of a West Texas oil company.

All royalties from the book, which is available in paperback or e-book on Amazon, will be donated to TBCH and BrightStone, a ministry for special needs adults.

Not too many years ago, Mr. Seay was running instead of writing, having raised thousands of dollars as a perennial participant in our annual 5K race, Run for Kids. Living in Franklin and retired from LifeWay Christian Resources, he's also edited a variety of publications, and serves as an usher, deacon and senior adult Bible study teacher at Brentwood Baptist Church.

One reviewer wrote that his story is “told with honesty, warmth, and a touch of mischief, and invites readers to reflect on their own childhood adventures.” What appropriate content to support the kids of TBCH, who are experiencing their own stories and adventures with us today!

A legacy of love

Honoring a memory blesses children at TBCH

Keith and Donna Wills worked hard. They faced economic pressures but their hard work brought blessings. They made their home in White Pine and were members of First Baptist Church there.

While they were a blessing at their church, they longed to share their home with a child that would share their name. So, in the late 1970s, a time when the choice to adopt had very limited resources like adoption grants, adoptive parents' support groups, internet guides, etc., to help them, they reached out on faith and adopted their beautiful little daughter, Tonya.



Keith and Donna Wills' daughter, Tonya Kaye Wills

The family thrived together. Mr. Wills taught Sunday School, Mrs. Wills worked in children's ministry and Tonya knew the love of her family and congregation. A year after her high school graduation, Tonya was the victim of a trailer fire. Words could not express her parents' loss.

Yet, the Wills continued to live and minister for decades. Together they planned to honor Tonya after their deaths to bring resources to assist children in crisis at TBCH.

Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes is honored to receive a permanent endowment fund in memory of Tonya Kaye Wills to serve children in our Residential Care and Foster Care programs—a family's legacy of love to help children in crisis know the love of God's family.

Their choice to establish this endowment does more than honor the memory of her daughter. Mrs. Wills also included the following words in the opening lines of her last will and testament—a powerful testimony of her unwavering confidence in Jesus:

I, DONNA FAYE WILLS, having received the Lord Jesus Christ into my heart as my personal Savior and Lord, and being fully confident His atoning blood did take away my sins and am assured by the Holy Scriptures that I will live eternally in His presence, do hereby bequeath my material possessions to those who are dearest to my heart and with my fervent prayer that they too may know the joy and contentment that comes from knowing the Lord Jesus Christ personally, that the eternal shall always be more important than the temporal, and that the Bible should be the standard for all life and conduct.

To all who read or know of this Will, let it be remembered Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. May God bless you as He molds, and shapes you unto His service.

For more information on designating a charitable bequest to TBCH, please email office@tennesseechildren.org with "Charitable bequest assistance" in the subject line, or visit tennesseechildren.org/get-involved/#planned-giving

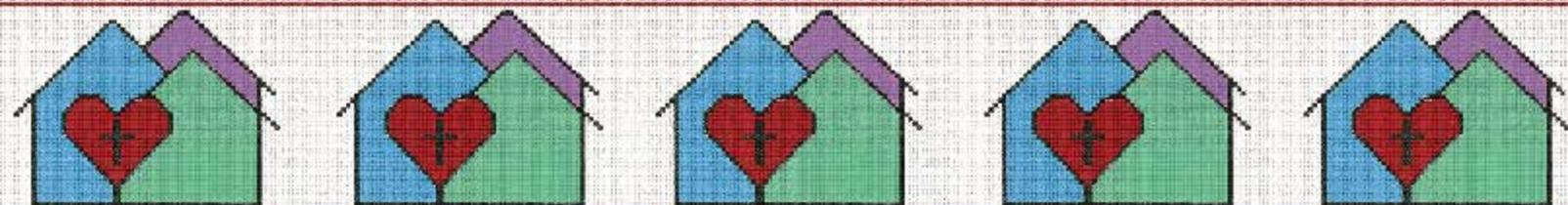
Honor and Memorial Gifts

have been given in tribute to those named here, and we are deeply grateful for their love and support of the children in our care.

Alice A. Fox
Annie L. Smith
Barbara K. Stow
Barbara Segrest
Bedford Byrum
Betty Sue Bradley Goodwin
Bill and Martha Knight
Billy H. Pryor
Bobby McDaniel
Bobby R. Jackson
Brad and Tracy Boucher
Burl McMillan
Carl E. Tallant
Cheryl Crawford
Cindy Worley
David Massey
Donna Howell
E. G. Mullinax
Ernie Jones
Eugene and Erma Jean

Fannie Rupe
Gary Francis
Gerald L. Stow
Gladys Jackson
Hazel Patterson
Henry & Kathleen Howell
Henry Cotham
Hubert Spann
Hugh A. Hampton
Jackie Shumpert
James Nowell
Janet Campbell
Jarrett B. Millsaps
Jeanette W. Palmer
Jimmy White
Joan W. Franklin
Joe Casey
Joyce Modert
Karen Coutts
Karen Surber
Kathy Kimsey

Keith McBrayer
Keith Reynolds
Kelly Campbell
Launa Mae Eden
Leann Drinnen
Matthew J. Strickland
Melvin Sloan
Mrs. Gail
Naomi Gray
Nora and Ella Hicks
Norman Williams
Peggy Lorean Taylor Reed
Peggy S. Patterson
Robert W. Segrest
Ron and Mardi Lucas
Rosella Ross
Stanley Scott
Sue M. Ellis
William 'Billy' Copeland
William Harrison Donathan



Pray • Serve • Give

How do you like to give?

Our champions support us in a variety of ways, including employer giving campaigns, donor advised funds, our Neighbors monthly giving program, and estate planning. Contact us for info or help!

TBCH is COA accredited, and a registered 501(c)(3) organization.



Foster Care

Praise the Lord for 18 adoptions in 2025 so far!

Each of these children and their forever families have a story. From an adoption journey lasting more than a year to the blessing of a Safe Haven baby, God provides them homes in miraculous ways.



We Love Our Foster Parents!



TBCH hosts Foster Parent Appreciation events every year to encourage our current foster families and bless them for the great work into which God has called them. These are also opportunities for our foster parents to invite and introduce someone to TBCH who might be interested in learning more about foster care. Dozens have already participated this year at events in East and West Tennessee, and a third event is coming up soon for our foster families in Middle Tennessee.



Take a step of faith toward Foster Care! Email fostercare@tennesseechildren.org or visit tennesseechildren.org/foster-care



PAYING IT FORWARD

Thank you to David Eller for the following story (his wife, Susan, is a case manager at our Chattanooga campus), and for the family who gave permission to share it.

In contrast to our current social mantra, what's in it for me?, Jesus taught, in what has been dubbed The Golden Rule, to do unto others as has been done unto you. A common phrase for this nowadays is *pay it forward*.

Susan and I were blessed to see a precious example of paying it forward in the chambers of Hamilton County Court. We were there, because someone was paying it forward, LyNawn, who was once a child resident of the Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes in Chattanooga three or four decades ago.

LyNawn, now in her fifties, and her husband Paul, appealed to the courts for a kinship adoption of William, who has been in their custody since 2019. William was born with numerous bio-mechanical issues requiring constant medical attention. When LyNawn and Paul took custody of William, medical neglect was replaced with a parental determination to do whatever possible to give William a normal life. William, a little miracle who was never expected to walk, is now scurrying all over the place. And you better not blink, because now you see him, now you don't—fast!

Beginning with LyNawn calling Susan for advice about adoption, and with the help of Attorney William Vetterick, they made their way through the legal process. The judge was visibly moved and soon became smitten as she looked across at William who had gone through so much—smitten enough to give William one of her gavels, letting everyone know how deeply moving this event was for her.

When asked what motivated her to take on the responsibility of raising William, LyNawn said, "the Children's Home did it for me, I'm just paying it forward."

What a wonderful way to start our day! Congratulations to LyNawn and Paul, thank you for paying it forward, and to William, who handled that gavel like Thor's hammer—what a miracle!

Pennies & Pie

Foster Care Supervisor Kim Morgan was invited to speak at Walnut Grove Baptist Church in Mountain City recently, and they packed the house. Each Sunday, their kids go on a "penny march" to collect spare change from the congregation, then once a year, they have a "Pennies & Pie" night when they eat together and roll the collected change. While there, two of their littlest members presented Kim with \$1000 for TBCH—all from the spare change of a handful of folks who love Jesus and want to show it by blessing the kids in our care.





Kelly Campbell, with Piece Corps quilters Judi DuBois, Kathy Leif and Linda York.

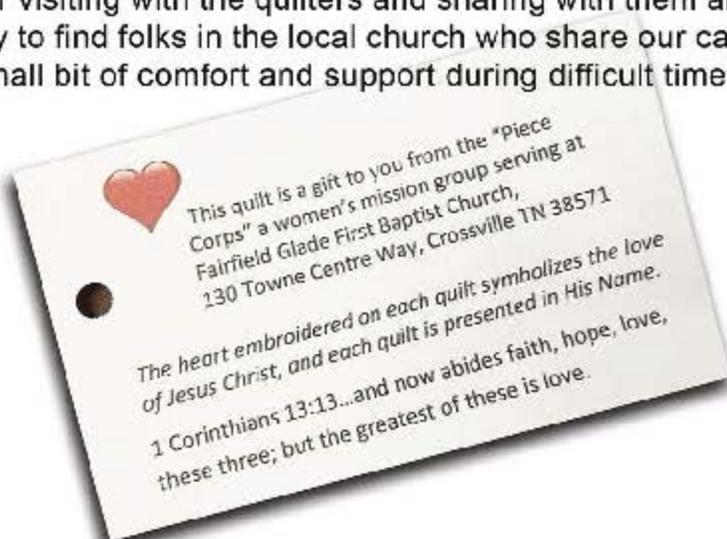
Quilters Got it Covered!

During morning service on Easter Sunday, a volunteer at Fairfield Glade First Baptist Church asked, "Do any of the children at the Children's Homes need a quilt?" This was a natural question, coming from a member of the "Piece Corps" Quilting Ministry. This group meets every week from September to June for the sole purpose of piecing together quilts to be shared with others, like the local police, hospitals, and people who have experienced natural disasters. Many are shared with organizations like Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes.

After being asked that question, Kelly Campbell, Church Engagement Specialist for TBCH and member of Fairfield Glade, began to inquire of fellow TBCH staff. It was determined that the Residential Care campuses were "covered." However, the Regional Supervisors for our Foster Care Program answered with a resounding YES. How many quilts could they use? 50! Kathy Leif, Piece Corps organizer, fielded the request, and promised to check their inventory. About a week later, Ms. Leif called to say the quilts were ready to be picked up – all 50 of them.

On a Tuesday not long after, five large clear bags were ready and waiting in the youth room, where the quilters were busy on the next round of quilts. The bags were filled with an assortment of quilts of all colors and patterns, from tractors to game board pieces, lovingly created to be used as a source of security and comfort for the children in TBCH foster homes across the state.

After visiting with the quilters and sharing with them about TBCH, they were loaded up for delivery. It is a joy to find folks in the local church who share our calling to care for children in hard places who need a small bit of comfort and support during difficult times.



Each Piece Corps quilt comes with this tag. We'd love to hear how your church uses its talents and resources to care for kids in hard places. Contact us to share your stories!

Welcome New Staff!



Leah Edgren, Foster Care Case Manager (Jackson)

Leah earned her BSW and MSW from Union University. "I am looking forward to meeting many amazing people who truly love the children in foster care and want to see them succeed. I am excited to make an impact in the lives of children!"



Hannah Borstad, Director of Independent Living (Chattanooga)

Hannah earned her BA in Religion from Carson-Newman, and her MSW from Southern Advent University. Included in the experience she brings, Hannah is a former intern at our Chattanooga campus. "I am excited to be part of a team that loves the Lord and desires to honor Him through serving children and young adults. I have already had the blessing of seeing the impact they have on the lives of those on campus."



Serving in any role at TBCH is a blend of faith, talents and ministry. We believe houseparenting in our Residential Care Program is an especially unique calling of the Lord requiring a faithful step of obedience, and we currently need Christian couples to answer that call. Visit TENNESSEECHILDREN.ORG/CAREERS to see those and all opportunities available.



REMEMBERING LINDA LUDINGTON

Linda Rose Fitz Ludington, 78, who retired from TBCH after more than 20 years as a social worker at our Chattanooga campus, passed away September 14. She studied at Carson-Newman University, earned her social work degree from University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and was a member of Ridgedale Baptist Church. Joyce Hague, one of our case managers in Chattanooga, remembers her fondly, "She was a wonderful lady who really loved our kids, and taught me and Susan (Eller) so much." TBCH is grateful for Mrs. Ludington's dedication to serving children here, and our prayers of condolence go out to her friends and family.



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