

SUNSHINE

THE MAGAZINE OF METHODIST CHILDREN'S HOME | FALL 2022



**THE ROAD TO
FAMILY**



Methodist Children's Home
Offering Hope Since 1890



Thank You for Supporting Our
Children, Youth and Families!

Methodist Children's Home is grateful for our faithful friends who contribute to a season of joy for our children and families. We are honored to have your support as we create special memories for our children. Your gifts bless those we serve not only during the Christmas season, but throughout the year.

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PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE



Trey Oakley, President and CEO

Methodist Children's Home (MCH) is blessed by those who entrust our staff with the resources needed to ensure our mission becomes a reality to the children, youth and families we have the privilege to serve throughout Texas and New Mexico. Thank you.

I am encouraged as I reflect on the many ways God worked in and through the ministries of MCH in 2022. As we enter the final year of our strategic plan, the number of accomplishments and improvements this year adds to an already long list of what has been produced by these strategic initiatives and action steps. I am excited to see how we close out this current strategic plan and start the process early in 2023 for a new long-range vision for MCH.

The strategic plan gives us focus and prioritizes what needs to be accomplished with our time, talents and resources. It is carried out by a workforce that is always on the lookout for the best ways to deliver on our mission and committed to flexibility to meet the immediate needs of those we serve. What results is the highest level of innovation for MCH – for God's glory and to better serve those looking to MCH for Christ-centered relationships, services and support.

In this issue of Sunshine magazine, you will read examples of some special ways MCH cares for children, youth and families through encouraging but also challenging times. This includes a new focus on capital improvements and program opportunities at our Boys Ranch now that we have completed the Building Hope capital campaign that provides 11 state-of-the-art homes and other upgrades at the Waco campus. I hope you will celebrate with us as you read these articles and reports, acknowledging that God is at work and has a role for each of us to play.

MCH is able to meet the needs of those we serve through the support of our generous benefactors and the stewardship of those resources by our staff and Board of Directors. At this time of year, I know there are many worthy organizations asking for donations. Because of the support we will receive from those who view MCH as a trustworthy ministry, thousands of children, youth and families across Texas and New Mexico will have the opportunity to flourish.

We will continue to give our best to empower all we serve to experience life to the fullest. As we look forward to 2023, you can be sure great things are happening at MCH and we believe even better things are still to come.

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THE ROAD TO FAMILY

BY RUSSELL RANKIN

Family. Just as there is no singular definition in the dictionary for “family,” the path to becoming one can seemingly take a million different routes. It is a journey 16-year-old Aaron and his adoptive parents, Ken and Jennifer Walker, are learning to embrace. They are committed to putting in the work, and Methodist Children’s Home is alongside them each step of the way, providing help, security and hope.

The Walkers became licensed for adoption 16 years ago but never took the steps to proceed with having a child placed in their home. It was their now 15-year-old daughter, Zoey, who brought up the topic again.

“In December 2019, Zoey started talking about it and said we should look into adoption again,” said Jennifer, who works as a third-grade teacher. “We said ‘why not?’ and in January 2020 we went to Arrow Child and Family Ministries and started the process.”

The Walkers expressed wanting to adopt a younger boy and immediately started receiving profiles of children to consider. Aaron, 14 at the

time, was included with the files. Getting ready for a camping trip in the summer of 2020, Aaron’s profile caught Jennifer’s eye again. Something hit differently this time.

“Just about everything he listed as a hobby or interest were things we enjoyed as well – like camping,” Jennifer said. “I told Zoey and Ken we needed to pay attention to this.”

“We saw Aaron’s picture a couple of times, but had thought we would be going younger,” Ken said. “For some reason, though, his face stuck in our minds. We talked about it all weekend while we were camping. Yes, he was a little older, but it is so hard to think about kids aging out of the system. It’s not about us, it’s about the kiddos. So why not a teenager?”

Aaron was born in the Houston area about the same time the Walkers first became licensed for adoption. His early years were unpredictable and involved stays with various relatives.

“I was young when things were going bad with my family,” Aaron said. “I didn’t really know what was

going on. I was separated from my mother when CPS got involved and I went to a children’s home. As I grew up, I came to understand it was for the better.”

Aaron lived at the children’s home for nearly a decade. Family life for him became the group home setting. One day, “they (the Walkers) showed up and kept showing up for six months,” he said, smiling. “That’s when I went home with them and we became a family.” Aaron officially became a Walker on May 7, 2021.

While an idyllic storybook ending would close here, not every path to becoming a family is a smooth one.

“Not coming from a traditional foster care background, Aaron was different,” Ken said. “He wasn’t used to being in a setting where routines and expectations are different from a group home. He went from a neglectful childhood to group care to us. It’s hard for any teenager to adjust to a new school, city and family and it’s amplified because of his circumstances. As hard as we tried to be a family unit, it was a struggle.”

According to Aaron, when communication and navigating family relationships became a struggle, he defaulted to looking for security elsewhere, which resulted in getting in with a “bad crowd.”

“I started to get into trouble and we would argue a lot at home,” he admitted. “I think a lot of it was my different upbringing. We just had trouble communicating.”

The Walkers looked for help and were referred to MCH Family Outreach in Waco, where they met with a case manager and discussed their relational challenges and learned about TBRI (Trust-Based Relational Intervention) techniques. Understanding Aaron’s upbringing, the case manager suggested placing Aaron in the residential program at MCH could be the stabilizing factor he needed at the time.

In deciding to place him into the residential program, the Walkers also found a lifeline in his MCH case manager, Cory Cleveland, and Sara Beth Stoltzfus, director of admissions and family engagement at MCH.

“Family engagement is the shared responsibility where we engage and are actively committed to

supporting the entire family and not just providing care to an individual child or client,” said Traci Wagner, vice president for programs. “MCH is flexible and creative in family work and can tailor services to meet families right where they are and assist them in meeting their goals. Our desire is that every individual, couple and family who engages with MCH feels supported and equipped to face life’s challenges.”

Beyond facilitating admissions to residential care, Stoltzfus said a major part of her role is working with families to help them become stronger, more stable and better equipped. With healthy family reunification as a goal, Stoltzfus and her team facilitate Circle of Security classes with parents and caregivers.

“Parenting is not easy and being a teenager right now is not easy,” Stoltzfus said. “A key point we want to communicate through the admissions process and Circle of Security classes is that we value the parents’ role in their child’s life. We are not looking to take over, but to help and share the struggle with them.”

Circle of Security (COS) is a relationship-based early intervention program designed to enhance attachment security between parents and children. The program is based on research

revealing that secure children exhibit more self-esteem and empathy while also forming stronger relationships and performing better in school. Through the program, facilitators help caregivers identify children’s needs and determine the best ways to meet them.

Originally implemented in MCH Family Outreach offices, COS is now used in every facet of the MCH continuum of care. COS is designed to help parents and caregivers understand and meet the needs of their children while also recognizing how their own feelings can help or hinder their ability to recognize and react to those needs.

“Circle of Security class is a place for caregivers to come together and reflect on what security looks like for their child and how they can meet their child’s needs,” Stoltzfus explained. “It’s a class on reflecting, as well; caregivers look back at how they were raised and examine how that affects their parenting.”

“OUR DESIRE IS THAT EVERY INDIVIDUAL, COUPLE AND FAMILY WHO ENGAGES WITH MCH FEELS SUPPORTED AND EQUIPPED TO FACE LIFE’S CHALLENGES.”



▲ Jennifer and Ken Walker support Aaron as he lives at MCH by attending activities such as six-man football games on campus.

Stoltzfus said the Walkers are engaged and intent on learning how they can better communicate and grow as a family.

"They have conversations together with the other COS participants and ask questions like 'What else can we do?'" she said. "They've had a lot of 'aha!' moments in the class."

Ken, who works as an instructor at a local community college, said he is learning better communication methods and also how to reinforce acceptance and felt-safety with Aaron.

"We are learning so much in the Circle of Security class," Ken said. "The most important thing is that it's not always about a solution, but just time, presence and being a secure base for him. Do we wish we were all together? For sure. This is not what we would have wished for, but we know it's good."

While Aaron lives at MCH, the Walkers have flexibility to have family time together. The Walkers pick Aaron up every Sunday and have family dinner together and also watch Aaron play on the MCH Bulldogs six-man football team.

"Since being at MCH, I have seen Aaron's confidence flourish in the home with staff and his peers and out on the football field," said Cleveland, Aaron's MCH case manager. "I've also seen his relationship with his parents grow and get stronger in a short time."

"At the last home football game, I watched Ken pull out his phone to get a clip of Aaron playing, and almost on cue Aaron caught a long pass and scored a 70-yard touchdown," Cleveland added. "The smile on his dad's face said it all. He didn't have to tell me he was proud."

"Being at MCH has helped me grow a lot in self-confidence," Aaron said. "They're helping me learn to communicate better with adults and see a different perspective from my own. And they're helping me stay on the right path. And I know in this process my parents are working to understand me better and what I've been through. I know they're trying to hear and understand me and trying to get better at that, too."

Ken said their desire is for Aaron to feel safe and comfortable and know that he is not inadequate in any way.

"MCH builds that for all of us," he said. "MCH allows us to be part of his family and grow together. It's not just the access we have to Aaron, it's the care and attention we know he's receiving here. I'm not sure we would've agreed to place him anywhere but MCH. Family reunification is our ultimate ideal, but we know he's being supported in an incredible way here at MCH. It's a win-win in every way."

According to Jennifer, "Circle of Security is the best training we've ever had. We are all working on communicating better. We're being open-handed about the future, watching the progress we are all making."

"MCH gave a lot of hope back to us because it was looking hopeless," she added. "Having hope for our family is such a great thing."

"HAVING HOPE FOR OUR FAMILY IS SUCH A GREAT THING."



Aaron and his family receive support from MCH through the residential program and Circle of Security classes.

Stories of IMPACT

From the mesas of New Mexico to the coastal areas of the Gulf and everywhere in between, MCH Family Outreach offices are impacting communities through transformational services and support to children and families. The primary goal of MCH Family Outreach is to strengthen families to help them provide safe, stable and healthy family environments. Whether it is illness, conflict, school difficulties, parenting challenges, or needing assistance connecting to other community resources, MCH Family Outreach is committed to helping families flourish.

ABILENE: The Oakleys, a foster family in Abilene, have always loved having siblings placed together in their home. Over the last year and a half, they adopted two sisters on separate timelines – one in July 2021 and the other in June 2022. Early in 2022 both sisters started visiting with their baby sister who was placed with their paternal grandmother. When there was a placement disruption, the Oakley family was approached about having the baby sister also placed in their home. She arrived in their home in July. The older sisters have loved having their baby sister in the home with them and she has acclimated very well to the Oakley home. The family continues to maintain visits with the paternal grandmother in order to maintain that family connection.

ALBUQUERQUE: Cuidando Los Ninos (CLN) provides childcare and housing support for families experiencing homelessness. An MCH case manager began teaching Circle of Security classes at CLN for their participants. This was her second time working with CLN and her first in-person class.

The participants became a support for one another as they shared details of their challenges with their children. These challenges range from their interactions with the state's children, youth and family department, tantrums and potential foster care placements. The participants were presented with the option to continue a Connected Caregiver's class which they all welcomed as they wanted to continue to grow in their parenting skills and understanding.

BRYAN: Monica is a single mother of two teenage sons. She is employed with Texas A&M University as a custodial supervisor. Monica had transportation but her vehicle was not reliable to get her to work or her children to school. Monica would have to leave meetings with her MCH case manager early to ensure she could make it home safely. MCH nominated Monica to OnRamp, an organization that donates cars to people in the community. After the car is donated, OnRamp handles all routine maintenance and repairs for a year. After the review of her application, Monica was selected to have an interview. She did well on her interview and was chosen to receive a vehicle. This news was life-changing for Monica. MCH continues to partner with OnRamp and its amazing staff of people who make dreams come true. Monica enrolled in the GED program since she now has reliable transportation to attend the classes.

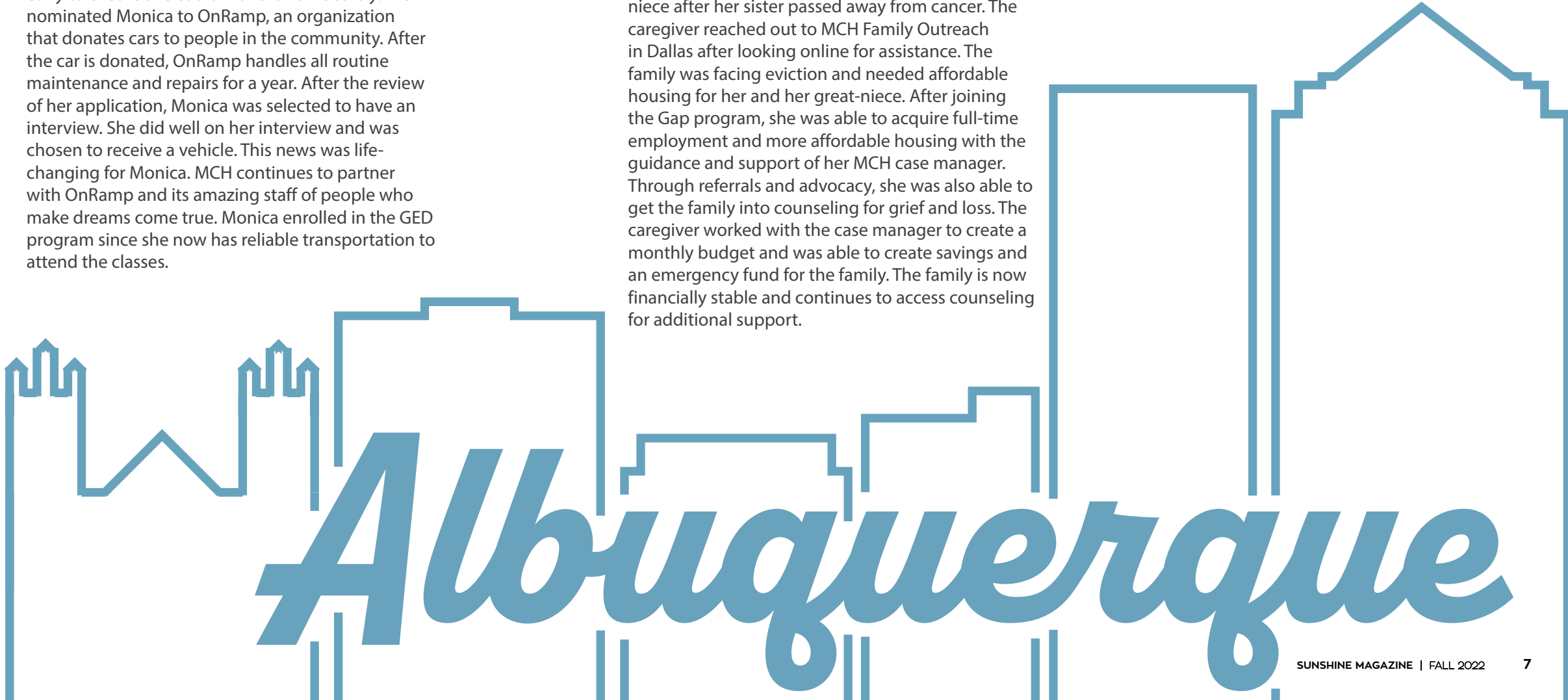
CORPUS CHRISTI: The Corpus Christi office served Mr. A, a single father raising three daughters, through the Family Solutions program. He initially reached out seeking information and guidance on better communicating with his daughters as they grow. He was also interested in information on budgeting, community resources and parent support. During services, Mr. A was able to successfully obtain affordable housing for his family. Mr. A and MCH continued to review and monitor his budget, he started a savings plan, connected with local resources and attended family events with his children.

During an event at his daughter's school, Mr. A guided children and other parents in building a picnic table. The school now has several picnic tables for the children to enjoy for years to come. MCH staff have enjoyed witnessing his confidence as his parenting skills grow as he has strengthened his connections with community programs and within the school district.

DALLAS: Through the Gap program, the Dallas team walked alongside an aunt raising her great-niece after her sister passed away from cancer. The caregiver reached out to MCH Family Outreach in Dallas after looking online for assistance. The family was facing eviction and needed affordable housing for her and her great-niece. After joining the Gap program, she was able to acquire full-time employment and more affordable housing with the guidance and support of her MCH case manager. Through referrals and advocacy, she was also able to get the family into counseling for grief and loss. The caregiver worked with the case manager to create a monthly budget and was able to create savings and an emergency fund for the family. The family is now financially stable and continues to access counseling for additional support.

EL PASO: Liliana, a single mother of five children ages 9 to 17, sought services from MCH Family Outreach in El Paso after struggling with her ability to communicate and connect with her children. Initially, she believed she was a bad mother and focused only on her struggles and failures. Liliana experienced abandonment and fear as a child which she carried into her adult life. She lived in survival mode, providing only basic needs and putting the importance of bonding and connection with her children in a secondary position.

As time passed, she realized her children were defiant and rebellious. Some were isolating themselves while others were putting themselves at risk in order to gain her attention. Through the Family Solutions program, Liliana was able to revisit her own experience of attachment and trauma. This experience gave her a better understanding of safety and the importance of having a voice, two things she lacked as a child. As she unlearned her old habits, she began to change and learned to properly care and nurture her children. In addition to praising and redirecting her children in a positive manner, she can now make positive statements about herself.



Albuquerque

HOUSTON: MCH Family Outreach in Houston worked with a single mother having trouble finding stable housing and establishing herself and her four kids in the city. She found her savings slowly dwindling and was unable to connect to resources because she was new to the city. MCH was able to connect her to different community resources and assist her with obtaining everyday household items such as pots, pans, dishes, silverware, and cleaning items.

MCH staff walked alongside her as she completed tasks that looked completely different than those required in her home state, such as enrolling her children in school and applying for food and medical assistance. With the support of MCH, she accomplished her goal of moving into a brand-new apartment and becoming a licensed realtor in Texas.

KILLEEN: MCH Family Outreach in Killeen worked with a mother enrolled in the Nurturing Parenting class and a father who was simultaneously enrolled in the Circle of Security class. They completed the parenting education but desired additional support navigating the education system for their son. The parents feared their child was not being appropriately challenged in school and would display negative behavior in the classroom. An MCH case manager was able to provide information about the Family Solutions program and ways MCH can support them as they advocate for their child's needs in the classroom. This family is eager to continue receiving MCH support through Family Solutions case management.

LAS CRUCES: MCH Family Outreach in Las Cruces, New Mexico, worked with a single mother struggling to find community resources to help her meet the needs of her two children with autism. The family hoped to create a safe home environment, get reliable transportation and receive help to get back pay from Social Security.

MCH assisted in getting the daughters enrolled into school, procured rental assistance from a COVID relief program and helped the family with Social Security issues. This allowed the mother to buy the car the family needed.

Shortly after catching up on rent, the family received an eviction notice. MCH linked the mother to community resources that assisted with the cost of a short-term hotel. Another community connection, Project Vida, provided shoes and clothing for her children. MCH also connected her with Community of Hope rapid rehousing program, which assisted the family with first month's rent and deposit.

LUBBOCK: The Family Outreach office in Lubbock received a referral from a partnering agency for a mother and her two teenage boys needing family support, resources and parenting. The mother had relocated to Texas to participate in a program for victims of trafficking. She agreed to the move to provide a better life for her boys and to become a better parent. A month after she was in services with MCH, she was removed from the program that had sponsored her. This left her and her sons homeless with only the items they brought with them during this quick transition.

Her MCH case manager collaborated with another agency to provide food and shelter until permanent housing options could be made. Once the mother qualified for affordable housing, both agencies helped with upfront financial needs. Although she felt defeated just a month earlier when facing homelessness, the client now felt hope. She had been ready to give up and move back to her old life, but by the grace of God, a partnership of agencies was able to instill some faith and hope in this family. With the help of MCH, this mother has a home, a job that supports her and her children's needs, and her boys are enrolled in school. She worked hard learning how to better communicate and how to nurture herself and her sons.

SAN ANTONIO: MCH Family Outreach in San Antonio worked with a single mother having trouble meeting her family's basic needs. After losing her job during COVID and moving to escape a domestic violence situation, this mother struggled to make ends meet despite her best efforts.

MCH case managers helped connect the woman to several community resources to help with food and childcare assistance. The felt-support she received enabled her to begin a job search which led to her obtaining a stable position at a local surgery center.

With help from MCH she caught up on her utility payments and also developed a budgeting plan. She now has insurance for her family through her employer and is no longer reliant on food stamps to feed her family. The family continues to receive support from MCH and the mother hopes to begin working toward her goal of enrolling in a nursing program.

TRANSITION SERVICES: The Transition Services program worked with Luis, an alumnus of the charter school at MCH who is now a first-generation college student. (Read more about this student on page 18 of this issue of Sunshine magazine.) This young man's family emphasized the importance of education beginning at a young age, and now he is working toward his educational goals at McLennan Community College with hopes of becoming a real estate agent. The Transition Services team provides ongoing case management as young people navigate the many challenges that come with independence.



San Antonio

TYLER: MCH Family Outreach in Tyler worked in conjunction with the Bryan outreach office to help a Gap family in the Tyler area. A grandchild was placed with the grandmother but they had not had a previous relationship. She was at a loss of where to begin to get him services. The MCH case manager connected the grandmother to several community resources and helped her fill out the necessary forms to get assistance. The case manager also began TBRI sessions with the grandmother to give her the tools she needed to start connecting with her grandson and how to handle some behaviors. MCH was able to provide the child with supplies and clothes as he began school. The case manager equipped the grandmother with budgeting knowledge to help her understand where cutbacks could be made to free up additional funds. With assistance from MCH, she now feels more equipped to handle the behaviors of a child who has been subjected to trauma. She was very thankful to have MCH as a part of her journey.

WACO: Waco Family Outreach is working with a client introduced to MCH through a presentation at Inspiracion Waco. The client has three children, one of whom was abused by a family friend. This traumatic event deeply affected this family, adding fear and anxiety in both caregivers and children. The client came to Waco Outreach hoping to receive help navigating counseling resources and guidance in parenting adolescents. The Waco case manager shared information about additional community resources, such as Shepherd's Heart Ministry, and helped the client understand legal information given to her from American Gateways.

The caregiver has been timid about making community connections due to seeds of mistrust sewn by the traumatic event. MCH gave the client information on teaching sewing classes and potentially selling her items at local markets. With the help provided in case management the client is on track to teach sewing classes at the Good Neighbor House and her husband has been more open to bridging cultural differences and building relationships with others in their community. •

Waco

YOUTH PROFILE

KAT FINDING HER VOICE

BY ANNA JORDAN

Talking with Kat* in the charter school courtyard at Methodist Children's Home is not a simple task, but for good reason. The 16-year-old greets and hugs nearly every person who walks by. Every teacher is her "favorite teacher."

Energetic from the moment you meet her, Kat welcomes everyone in with a smile and a desire to know them better. It's hard to imagine she wasn't always this bubbly and outgoing. In fact, Kat would have described herself as reserved before coming to MCH.

"I didn't like to talk much when I was younger," Kat said. "I was always shy. When I came to MCH, I met people who wanted to get to know me and I started talking a lot more."

Rachel Yglecias, Kat's teacher and Student Council sponsor, has observed her growth since meeting her last August.

"Kat has grown tremendously since I met her," Yglecias said. "As a freshman, she struggled making new friends and advocating for herself. Now, she's able to make friends and she can tell me exactly what she needs to be successful in class. It's been amazing to see how much she's grown as a student and a young lady."

Not only has Kat grown into a more talkative person, she's also found her voice in singing. Kat's interests vary from drawing to karate and she has participated in almost every extracurricular activity available to youth at MCH. Singing in the choir, however, is one of her favorites.

Performing didn't always come naturally to Kat. Though she has always loved to sing, she wasn't comfortable doing it in front of people.

"I'm braver since being at MCH," she said. "When I was younger, I was going to perform but panicked

because there were so many people in the audience. It scared me and I ran off stage. Since I've been here, I feel like I've become more confident."

Coming out of her shell and getting used to performing has been an important part of Kat's experience at MCH. Singing is clearly important to her and one of her dreams is to be on a television show like *The Voice*.

One of the things she attributes her growth to is help from her choir director, MCH Spiritual Development Minister Jillian Sims.

"When Kat first joined our music program in Spiritual Development, she was nervous to sing in front of her peers for fear of being judged," Sims said. "However, Kat's tenacity and great love for singing pushed her to take every opportunity she could to sing in worship and other events. Her persistence and bravery have afforded her the ability to confidently say 'yes' to every opportunity to share her talents today."

Sims helps Kat gain courage by offering correction, encouragement and helping her connect to the songs she performs.

"Kat has an extensive knowledge of Disney songs and is particularly fond of the stories of individuals who overcame their own fears and limiting beliefs to realize their true potential," Sims said. "Connecting Kat to the messages in those songs while challenging her musically and encouraging her to share the gifts she has helps reinforce those truths in her own life and grow in confidence."

That confidence will continue to carry Kat through whatever path she chooses to take in her future. Until then, she'll continue to invest her time in all MCH has to offer. •

**Student's name has been changed*



MCH FALL SPORTS

AND HOMECOMING

The Methodist Children's Home Bulldogs at the University of Texas-University Charter School on the Waco campus had a great fall sports season! The charter school is part of the Texas Christian Athletic Fellowship (TCAF), and MCH residents and Day Students are able to participate in athletics and extracurricular activities. The MCH six-man football team finished third in district play and made it to the TCAF quarterfinal playoff game. The Lady Bulldogs finished fifth in volleyball district play. Great job, Bulldogs and many thanks to our Athletics staff for all you do!

In September, students and staff also celebrated homecoming week with themed spirit days and a homecoming court during the Friday night football game. Students in the new floral design class created mums and garters for themselves and fellow classmates. Charter school staff joined students as they attended class dressed up for themed days such as Camo Day, Decades Day and MCH Spirit Day.





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DAY STUDENT PROFILE

QUENTRELL

RISING ABOVE

BY SARAH BELLAFFIORE



Basketball has been part of Quentrell's life since he could walk, but he admits he can't quite spin a basketball on his finger. He's determined and keeps trying – a trait the 17-year-old has learned as a Day Student at the University of Texas–University Charter School at Methodist Children's Home.

MCH launched the Day Student program in 2012 for students in the Waco community wanting a smaller educational setting. Quentrell ("Q" to his friends and teachers) came to the charter school as a "small, reserved sixth-grader," recalled Clarence Degrate, coordinator of the Day Student program. "It's been great watching him grow."

"I didn't want to talk to anybody at first," Quentrell said. "But the school staff and coaches helped me get out of my shell."

"He is always smiling and is really funny now," said Amy Grisham, director of school support. "Q is always positive, even during hard times." Hard times are what led Quentrell and his siblings to the Day Student program. Charlesetta, Quentrell's mother, learned about the unique opportunity through her friend and school support specialist, Rachel Swain.

"I wanted my kids to go to the charter school because I didn't graduate from high school," Charlesetta shared. "I always tell my children I want better for them. This school is the best thing that has ever happened for them."

"Q is not a product of where he comes from," Grisham said. "He has risen above that. He's proving that he wants better. He really makes me proud."

Quentrell's attitude, communication skills and raw talent have helped him succeed in athletics at MCH. He is active in football and ran track for a season, but basketball has his heart. Quentrell has played basketball with the MCH Bulldogs every season since he was a seventh grader on the school's first junior high team, making him one of the most tenured athletes in the program.

"I always wanted to be part of a team and win," Quentrell said. "Playing with my teammates has brought me closer to them as friends."

"Quentrell leads by example and is consistent," said Matt Rodgers, director of athletics. "He always gives his best effort in anything he does and the other guys see that."

Quentrell plans to pursue a career as a barber after he graduates in May 2023. He has been developing his skills while practicing on his cousin, who is a barber.

"I just want to be successful," Quentrell said. "I want to be a businessman. I want to have enough to take care of my family and others who have helped me."

Quentrell and his mother are grateful for the opportunities and resources the Day Student program and MCH provide.

"The Day Student program has been so genuine to my family," Charlesetta said. "They didn't have to help my family, but they do out of the kindness of their hearts because the love is there."

Allyson Welch, case manager for the Day Student program, said Quentrell has become a strong advocate for himself and his two younger siblings.

"I know he's going to do great things because he's brilliant," she said.

Quentrell has learned many lessons over the last six years at MCH, but said one rises above all others.

"Never give up when stuff gets hard," he said. "Just keep going."

Day Students are eligible to participate in all MCH extracurricular activities such as athletics, ag science programs, summer camp, field trips, homecoming, and prom. Day Student graduates also have access to Transition Services and Independent Living resources and are eligible for scholarships for college or vocational school. The program maintains a 100 percent graduation rate.

For more information about the MCH Day Student program, call (254) 750-2600 to speak with Clarence Degrate, Day Student program coordinator, or Allyson Welch, case manager.

■ AGGIE SERVICE DAY AT MCH

The Texas A&M Corps of Cadets Squadron 8 volunteered at the MCH Boys Ranch in October. The group of about 50 cadets, who range from freshmen to seniors, dedicate a day of service each semester to serve outside the Bryan/College Station area.

"We like to be hands-on because we like to see how our service impacts the communities we help," said Alex Sellman, the community service officer for Squadron 8. "We like to give back however we can to Texas communities because so many help us as cadets at Texas A&M."

The group spent the morning trimming trees and improving a campsite at the Boys Ranch. The cadets later assisted MCH staff in facilitating an event for adoptive families connected with post-adoption services at MCH Family Outreach in Waco. Families took hayride tours of the Boys Ranch, participated in arts and crafts activities, climbed the Alpine Tower, and played outdoor games.

"The help we received from the cadets was incredible," said Tim Price, director of outdoor

education and recreation at MCH. "They took on projects at one of our campgrounds that would have taken a single person a whole day to do. We are so grateful for their contributions." •



▲ **Members of Squadron 8 of the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets work at the Turkey Trap campsite at the MCH Boys Ranch.**

■ BOYS RANCH MASTER PLANNING UNDERWAY

The Board of Directors of Methodist Children's Home unanimously approved a staff proposal to begin a master planning process for the MCH Boys Ranch. This action comes after the success of the Building Hope capital campaign that added 11 new state-of-the-art homes and other important upgrades to the Waco campus.

"The response to the Building Hope campaign is a testimony to how our amazing supporters respond when MCH makes the case for how we are called to move forward," said Trey Oakley, MCH president and CEO. "I know this will be the same outcome when we determine what opportunities we have at the Boys Ranch."

Initial discussions call for building new homes at the Boys Ranch that are modeled after floorplans used on the Waco campus. The floorplans foster increased supervision, common areas for relationship building between staff and residents and incorporate trauma-informed elements into all areas of the homes. The master plan will also include a thorough evaluation of existing structures and a determination of all that is needed moving forward.

"We have an opportunity and responsibility to do our part to ensure the Boys Ranch continues its legacy of care first started in 1971," Oakley said. "Our goal will be to produce a plan giving MCH flexibility to be our best for those who need us now and in the future at this location."

MCH program leadership has been diligent in researching how MCH can be even more effective in meeting the needs of children, youth and families seeking residential placements. The proposed upgrades at the Boys Ranch that will come from the master planning process will further equip MCH in these efforts.

"I am so proud of the way we care for people and serve clients through our current programming," said Traci Wagner, vice president for programs. "Our leadership team continues to feel a burden in answering the call to do more. This commitment from our staff and Board of Directors will certainly help us do that in the days to come."

MCH staff sees this as a first and important step in revamping the Boys Ranch. More details on the Boys Ranch master plan will be shared in future issues of Sunshine. •

■ MCH TRAINS BEXAR COUNTY AD LITEMS

Representatives from Methodist Children's Home shared specialized material during a recent ad litem training put on by Bexar County.

Melissa Olmos, director of MCH Family Outreach in San Antonio; Marissa Smith, program administrator;

Melissa Olmos, director of MCH Family Outreach in San Antonio, leads a course on Trust-Based Relational Intervention for Bexar County officials. ▼



and John Warren, community engagement and training specialist, provided training on TBRI – Connected Caregivers during the session. An ad litem is someone appointed by the court as a guardian or attorney to represent the best interest of a child or be their legal representative. The training was tailored for an audience of individuals working in the court system.

The MCH presentation discussed the services MCH provides to the families the court members serve, an outline of TBRI and its professional applications.

"Meredith Chacon, one of our MCH Board members, connected us to Bexar County for the purpose of sharing TBRI and ways to apply TBRI principles in the legal community," said Traci Wagner, vice president for programs. "TBRI is valuable and useful in any setting where humans interact, including the court system where life-changing decisions are made. What a testimony of hope and healing from Bexar County to welcome in these principles and skills." •

■ MCH RESIDENTIAL SUPERVISOR RECEIVES 'STAFF OF THE YEAR' AWARD

Stephanie Cummings, residential supervisor on the MCH Waco campus, received the award for "General Residential Operation Staff of the Year" from the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services (TACFS). General Residential Operation, or GRO, is the term used by Texas state licensing for residential childcare facilities like MCH.

"It is such a joy to see Stephanie receive this honor," said Tanequa Newton, MCH director of residential services. "Stephanie is so genuine in her approach to her work and she goes the extra mile in everything she does. She nurtures her staff and the youth in her care so well, and they love her in return."

MCH President and CEO Trey Oakley said Cummings "is such an asset to MCH and an example of the dedicated and committed staff members at MCH."

Cummings was recognized at the TACFS Administrators Conference held in October in Round Rock. A group of MCH leaders attended the conference, which connects approximately 1,400 child welfare professionals with the latest information and training on effectively delivering services. •

Top: Stephanie Cummings (second from left) attends homecoming at MCH to encourage youth participating in activities.

Bottom: MCH staff attend the TACFS annual conference.



LUIS

PREPARING FOR THE NEXT STEP

BY SARAH BELLAFIORE

Luis always wanted to go to college but he wasn't sure it would be possible. Now, the 19-year-old first-generation college student is preparing for his next step in life.

"I am setting an example for my brothers and sisters," Luis said with pride. "If I can go to school and graduate, they can, too."

Luis was raised in Mexico where education was a priority in his family. Driven by his determination to succeed, Luis moved to Texas to find more opportunities. His journey wasn't without challenges.

"I had a bit of a bad attitude back then, so I moved around quite a bit between relatives," Luis shared.

Eventually, Luis' parents could no longer financially support him and a relative looked into the residential program at Methodist Children's Home in 2017.

"I just really wanted to go to school at that point," Luis said. "I was determined to make it at MCH, go to school and graduate. If not, I knew I wasn't going to make it in life. I knew school would help open some doors for me."

Luis gained more than a high school education at the University of Texas–University Charter School on the MCH Waco campus. His passion for fitness led to life-changing experiences in athletics. During his freshman year, Luis was a kicker for the MCH Bulldogs six-man football team that won a state championship. He also played basketball and ran track.

"As an athlete, I learned to be disciplined and consistent – that has helped me now as an adult," Luis said.

After graduating from high school in 2020, Luis transitioned to the MCH Independent Living program (ILP), where residents are provided case management, financial assistance and other resources to adjust to college or the workforce.

"When I first met Luis, he was a go-getter," said Ernestine Sample, Luis' ILP home parent and later resident advisor. "He was full of ideas and goals. But he didn't have the road map to get where he wanted to go." With help, Luis learned to maintain a budget,

set up appointments, keep up with schoolwork, and create a healthy work-life balance led by faith.

"I was never really into church when I was younger," Luis said. "One of the other ILP residents, Johnnie, brought me to Jesus. He and Ms. Sample really led me to a relationship with God. My walk with Jesus has helped me change."

"Luis is a totally different person now," Sample said with a smile. "He plans everything and is putting the work behind his words. Luis is using the tools he has learned here at MCH to set the foundation for his next steps."

Dustin Hughes, Luis' case manager, said his growth has been phenomenal over the last several months.

"Luis is intentional about taking steps that will help him later in life and not just looking at how to get by from week to week," Hughes said. "He knows what he wants and has dived in."

Luis is working toward obtaining a real estate license in December. He is currently enrolled at McLennan Community College and will graduate with his associate's degree in May 2024. He dreams of one day owning a real estate brokerage and having a family.

"I want a boy and a girl," Luis said. "I want to be prepared so I can be a good father and provide for my family."

Humbled by his experiences at MCH, Luis is grateful for those who continue to help him and for the lasting Christ-centered relationships he has found.

"I used to be really hard-headed and argumentative, so I'm blessed the ILP staff stuck with me," Luis said. "I'm especially grateful for Ms. Sample because she helped me grow from a boy to a man. I owe a lot to her and will never be able to repay her."

"It's not even a hope for me, I know Luis is going to be successful in life," Sample said. "He is going to be the best – hands down."

"It feels like everything is coming together," Luis said. "I'm at peace knowing that when I leave here, I will be prepared for the next step." •

GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORIAL GIFTS

GIFTS MADE FROM JULY THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2022

HONORARIUMS

The Aaron Ables Family

Mrs. Jami Lovelady
Kallie Barley and Colton Covington's Engagement
Amy and Shelby Barley
Barbara Ann Bauernfeind
George and Cathy Goolsby
Bay Harbour U.M. Army Bay Harbour UMC
League City, TX
Kathryn and Ken Janicek
Mayme Blanton
Robert, Margaret, Patrick and Brittany Blanton
Jeannie Evans
Kristen Bowder
Barry and Suzanne Willis
Dylan Reid Bruns
Thomas and Theresa Bruns
Jonathan Cordova and family
Joe Bullock
Campbell and Peggy Cox
Navarro Cox
Dr. Jack Kyle Daniels
James and Laura Milam
Gary and Nancy Davis' 50th Anniversary
Totsy Cunningham
Elaine Eiland's Birthday
Amy and Shelby Barley
Penny Elliott
Alice Sheffield
Mother's and Father's Day
First United Methodist Church
Carthage, TX
Eleanor Ginn
Nolan and Miles Summers
Shanna McBride Haigh's Birthday
Anonymous
Tommye Hall
Mary Tinkle
Benjamin Keith Hancock
Sarah Ann Brannan
Margaret Hernandez
Anonymous
Dee, Emit and Tucker Hill
George and Nancy Hill
Howard Home Legacy
Charles and Ann Cantrell
Lee Duncan Goble
Helen Mullins Habler
Lexie and Mary Lou Gregg
Betty Ann Huddleston
Anonymous
Mary Beth Kauk
Kelly Lawson
Rev. Tom and Mrs. Janet Kennedy
Nolan and Miles Summers

Leisha Kingston
Deanna Hazelwood
Leroy United Methodist Church, Leroy, TX
Candy Branch
Les and Karen Leskoven
Trey and Karen Oakley
Vernon and Jewel Lockridge
Ms. DeLeah Lockridge
Lucy Bunch Long
Lucy and Rick Long
Lyle Mason
Randy and Lyn Mason
Steven Mason
Randy and Lyn Mason
Kevin and Judi Mayne
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Greg McCormack
David and Sally McCormack
Doreen and Greg McCormack
Shannon McCuaig
Kelly Lawson
Sandra McGaha
Angela D. Thompson
Drayton and Elizabeth McLane's Service
Anonymous
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Elaine Peterson
Dana Kimmey
John Porter
Sandy Porter Robinson
Egidio Mario Previtera
Buzz and Virginia Adcock
Kenneth and Velva Riddle
Anne Ramming
Alma Jo Scott's 90th Birthday
Amy and Shelby Barley
Le'Ann Solmonson
Les and Karen Leskoven
Trey and Karen Oakley
John and Judi Thomas' Wedding Anniversary
Totsy Cunningham

Robert and Betty Thompson
Russell and Meredith Armagost
United Methodist Women Ash Lane UMC, Euless, TX
Charlotte Everett
Sherry Vaughan
Virgil Vaughan
Faye Vick
Amanda Vick
The Marriage of Brittani and Zane Wagner
Amy and Shelby Barley
Tripp Walker
Kyle and Jari Carlisle
Sandra (Stoesser) Wallace
Nancy Salmon
Roy and Ruth Seaberg
Mrs. Jack Stoesser
Mark Ward
Paul and Terry Amos
Marc and Lexi Flach
Andrew Watson
George B. and Nancy K. Hill
James Webb
Elaine Faircloth Lee and Ronnie L. Lee
Krista Webb
Elaine Faircloth Lee and Ronnie L. Lee
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Lavinia Richards
Joy Wilkes
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Bob and Shirley Zimmerman
Darrell and Lory Zimmerman

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Carrol Johnson
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Charles Cable
Nelda Ruth Cade
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Andy Carson
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Monte T. Cunningham
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Beverley and Craig Grace
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Larry and Jan Green
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Vince Scolaro
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Arlene Miller
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Lee Duncan Goble
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Darwin Purvis
Milton H. Ramsey
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H. Jo Gerald
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Russell Theodore Schoepf
Diane Cutaia
Gerald and Etna Scott
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Edward Earl Waters
Sue Shell
Alice Watson
Robert A. Collins
Britain “Brit” Rice Webb IV
Elaine Faircloth Lee
and Ronnie L. Lee
Baby Karen Webb
Elaine Faircloth Lee
and Ronnie L. Lee
Laurel Alexander Webb
Elaine Faircloth Lee
and Ronnie L. Lee
Robert Webb
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and Ronnie L. Lee
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Rosemarie Williams Foster
Dr. Tom Williams
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Billy Wilson
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