

SUNSHINE

THE MAGAZINE OF METHODIST CHILDREN'S HOME | SPRING 2023



Finding New

HORIZONS



Methodist Children's Home
Offering Hope Since 1890



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PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE



*Trey Oakley
President and CEO*

At Methodist Children's Home (MCH) we have daily reminders that God is always at work creating and re-creating in our ministry, staff, supporters and those we serve. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul encourages us by writing, "If anyone is in Christ that person is part of a new creation. The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived!" There are

certainly things as Christ followers that immediately change when we trust in God's unfailing promises. The hope for us all is also contained in this verse, the work of God in his new creation is ongoing, it never stops. We witness the fulfillment of this promise in so many ways at MCH.

We celebrate the launch of our newest MCH Family Outreach office, which is serving the Permian Basin area of West Texas. We look forward to seeing how God uses the programs and services of MCH to make an impact on children, youth and families in this region. We are grateful for the many friends of MCH – some established and some new – who are supporting our work there and helping us build strong relationships in the community.

While new programs and services are exciting, meeting needs and delivering cutting-edge, professional services has been a part of the culture of MCH for 133 years. Whether it is 1890 or 2023, MCH continues to extend a hand of fellowship to any organization or group ready to be about the Lord's work serving those in need across Texas and New Mexico.

In this issue of Sunshine magazine, you will read about families experiencing hope, young people receiving training and encouragement for the future, and other ways MCH is making a difference in the lives of those we serve. I am also pleased to introduce a new member of the MCH executive leadership team – you can read about Brooke Davilla's new role on p. 16.

Thank you for your support to empower all we serve to experience life to the fullest. Because of your friendship to this ministry, I am more confident than ever we are on the right path to becoming who God has called us to be for the children, youth and families of Texas and New Mexico.

On the Cover: Alma Vera (left), case manager with the MCH Family Outreach office in El Paso, uses the Family Solutions curriculum to help Perla Molina strengthen her family.

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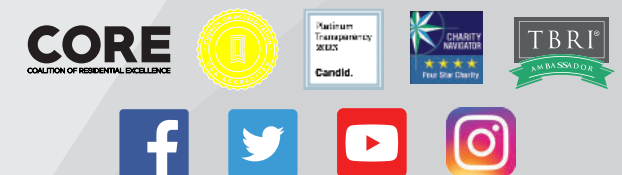
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Finding New HORIZONS

BY RUSSELL RANKIN



The dry climate in El Paso, Texas, gives crystal-clear visibility for miles and miles, especially from the top of the Franklin Mountains overlooking the city to the north. From this vantage point, the sprawling border town blends almost seamlessly with Juarez, Mexico, with only the Rio Grande River dividing the two cities and countries. To the east, the Hueco Mountains rise from the flat desert terrain, backed further by the ridges of the Guadalupe Mountains that travel into New Mexico.

Driving southeast on Interstate 10 out of El Paso, the community of Horizon City – where the comfortable, Southwestern-style home of Jose and Perla Molina is located – offers spectacular views of the mountain ranges that seem to encircle the area.

The Molinas have faced different kinds of mountains in their own lives – the looming, relational kind that once threatened to crumble and fall around them, bringing down their marriage and destroying their family. But with the help of MCH Family Outreach in El Paso, they now have a firm foundation with their eyes fixed on new horizons.

Jose and Perla married five years ago. Introduced by a friend who is married to Perla's sister, Jose said they "just clicked." Jose, a native of El Paso, brought Perla from her home in Mexico to marry and settle in the United States. Both had past relationships and brought children into their marriage. They've since added to the family and now have five girls: D Alexa, 15; Brianna, 11; Debbie, 4; and twins Madeline and Atiana, 2.

Creating a blended family was challenging for the Molinas, especially for Perla who did not speak English and had to rely entirely on Jose. The couple endured a yearlong separation early in the marriage. More recently, the stress of their home situation boiled to the point that one of the older girls mentioned to a schoolteacher that she was afraid of her stepfather. As teachers are required to do, a report was filed with Child Protective Services (CPS).

CPS directed the Molinas to enroll in a program to strengthen their family and provided Perla with a menu of community organizations she could select. After learning about the Family Solutions program from Alma Vera, case manager at MCH Family Outreach in El Paso, Perla knew she had found the organization that could help her family.

Family Solutions is available through all 14 MCH Family Outreach offices across Texas and New Mexico. The program provides a combination of individual and family services, case management and advocacy to help the family meet its needs so children grow to be healthy and successful at home, at school and in the community.

"Mrs. Molina voiced that she felt a sense of acceptance [with MCH] and we quickly built a rapport as we developed a plan to help the family," Alma said. "She responded so positively and immediately set goals that would help with her aspirations and with her family interactions and support."

Alma helped Perla set goals to strengthen her abilities to acclimate to the United States and give her tools to further provide and advocate for her family. She also helped her register for GED classes, citizenship classes, and English classes, so she would be able to assist her daughters with homework and school assignments. In collaboration with the PEN Project in El Paso, Perla enrolled her 4-year-old daughter in pre-K receiving Special Education services. The babies have also had medical needs that Alma helped the Molinas navigate.

Alma and Perla meet weekly at the family's home, usually while the older girls are in school and the babies are napping. Jose works in two-week shifts in the oil and gas industry more than 200 miles away in Pecos, Texas. He joins the meetings when he is home every

Perla Molina and her daughters speak with Jose Molina on a video call from their home in Horizon City, Texas. Jose works away from home two weeks at a time and connects with his family whenever he is able. ▼





When Alma Vera, case manager at MCH Family Outreach in El Paso, visits the Molina home for Family Solutions sessions, Jose Molina will often join his wife for the session through a video chat. Jose is thankful his supervisors give time for him to cultivate healthy family connections while working.

two weeks, and when he is away he tries to join the discussion through a video call.

"I appreciate both of their attitudes about the program," Alma said. "They're always available and participate fully. Mrs. Molina has responded positively to the Family Solutions program – she's putting in the work needed to see change in her family dynamics."

Alma said the meetings involve working on mindfulness, self-care and self-awareness, followed by "discussion about the family, where they are emotionally and what resources the family needs."

"Mrs. Molina is very smart," she added. "She's been a business owner and has medical experience. Having five children has been a struggle, especially with the health of the babies."

Having CPS involved in their family was a wake-up call for Jose and served as a catalyst for a true heart transformation.

"For me, it was finding Jesus Christ that helped me take a stand and determine 'that's not going to happen to my family,'" he said. "When you start to learn about Jesus, it changes everything about your life. Before, I didn't think about [Perla's] emotions, her real needs and what she might be struggling with. I thought only from an economical mindset – that I've got to work to provide. Now, God has helped me understand I need to pay attention to other things. I came to value these because of Christ in my life. It takes time and patience and a lot of work, but my mentality has changed and I know I need to fight for my family."

“When you start to learn about Jesus, it changes everything about your life.”

"I'll be honest, when we first got the CPS case, I was really rebellious," he admitted. "But growth comes through bad times. I hear about it every day at work – divorces, kids being abandoned and neglected; it's

happening all over. Family Solutions is such a great program for families – it has been so valuable for all of us. We need more of this."

Perla said the changes in her husband are evident.

"There has been such a huge change in his life – we've learned to be friends," she said with a smile. "He talks to me, he helps with the children. Our communication is better and we help each other. I receive a lot of emotional support and he asks me about my needs."

Perla said working with Alma and MCH Family Outreach has helped her change, as well, and the lessons she is learning through Family Solutions are helping her be a better parent for her daughters.

Jose and Perla Molina credit the MCH Family Solutions program for helping their family navigate the challenges they have faced. Their oldest daughters, (left to right) Brianna and D Alexa, are a big help to Perla while Jose is away at work.



"It's quite difficult to ask for help, but I'm learning that I have to be healthy myself before my family can be healthy," she said. "I've grown in confidence – I wasn't confident before about learning English. I wasn't feeling secure about going to a school to learn."

"I've also learned to be open-minded with my daughters when communicating with them," she added. "I was very strict. But I've learned that I can be friends with my daughters without losing authority."

Jose said he wants to do everything possible to rebuild health and connection in his family and expressed gratefulness for the resources MCH Family Outreach in El Paso provides.

"MCH is really helping us achieve growth in our family," he said. "Before, I thought the way to do it was to keep our problems inside the family. But now I like to consider us a family in recovery. It's a process to defeat the bad things that happened. Ms. Alma told me in the beginning

– "If you are willing, we can help you." She has been such a great help to us, to my wife especially. There's nothing we've asked that she hasn't had a solution."

As healing takes root and the Molinas continue to learn valuable principles from Family Solutions, mountains that were once threatening are becoming a part of the horizons of a secure future.

"I want to help our daughters get ahead and thrive in school," Perla said. "And I want to continue working to build a healthy marriage and family. MCH has helped so much with that and we are so thankful."

Jose knows there is work still to be done, but is committed to the work.

"We need a lot of healing – the girls, my wife, myself – and a lot of emotional support," Jose said. "It's my hope that we get that healing and then grow successfully in life as a family and together take on what life puts in front of us." •

Perla Molina and Alma Vera meet in the Molina home weekly and discuss how the family is working toward the goals they have established for better connection and health.



YOUTH PROFILE

COLIN

CHANGING HIS MINDSET

BY JEAN WRIGHT

Allison Smith doesn't mince words describing the impact Methodist Children's Home is making in the life of her son, Colin.

"It was by design MCH came into our lives," she said.

Colin was 12 years old when his family relocated from Indiana to Texas in 2018. They moved again two years later during the COVID-19 pandemic. After changing districts and missing a significant amount of school due to quarantine protocols, Colin struggled academically and socially. Instead of engaging with others, he internalized his needs and began isolating himself.

"That was challenging because I missed a month of school," Colin said. "When I returned, I could never get ahead of my work because of the time I missed."

Colin's mother said they knew he needed additional support and she is thankful their family discovered MCH.

"Colin needed to learn how to be vulnerable with his emotions and responsible for his role in society," Smith said. "The pieces that led us to MCH came together at the right time."

Colin said he is open to new experiences, so as he learned about MCH he felt like he wanted to give it a try. He is grateful for his positive experiences on the MCH Waco campus.

"It's been cooler than I imagined," he said. "I have my own bedroom and bathroom. We even have a game room! I'm a confident and independent person, but the staff understand who I am and allow me to be me here."

MCH staff work to help children discover and develop their strengths, gifts and talents. Colin has enjoyed several leadership opportunities.

"I enjoy planning events for the Student Council," he said. "I also had fun putting together a competitive game for the teachers and students at school during March Madness [college basketball tournament]. I'm a leader by nature and encouraged others to participate which was a lot of fun."

In addition to leadership roles, Colin enjoys a variety of hobbies, including modifying and racing remote control cars. He also appreciates anime, which is computer-generated animated films. He said the art and character development in anime motivate him.

"Some of the characters have tragic backgrounds which are relatable to the kids at MCH," he said. "The stories remind

me that I could have had a very different future if it wasn't for my family. It puts my own upbringing into perspective."

Colin is grateful for the love and support provided by his family. "My parents know me better than anyone," he said. "They would describe me as a dependable and open-minded person. I want to be known as someone who doesn't judge others. My family taught me the value of always being kind because you never know what someone is going through."

In addition to learning important life lessons from his family, Colin knows he has experienced growth while living at MCH.

"I'm a more accepting person now because I realize all people struggle with something," he said. "The things that are hard for me are also hard for others. I've learned that when you put in the work, it will change your mindset and, if you can change your mindset, you can change your life. It's a process, but you can do it over time."

Colin continues to put in hard work in school and extracurricular activities. He recently completed 9th grade at the University of Texas–University Charter School on the MCH campus. In addition to the Bulldog Student Council, he played on the six-man football team and participated in the anime club.

As Colin reflects on his time at MCH, he offers advice for youth who will come to MCH in the future.

"Always set a goal for yourself," he said. "It can be small or short-term, but have a goal. For me, the first step to achieve my goals is about taking responsibility. I'm not perfect, but I can educate myself and make extra efforts so I can have a successful career and provide for my family in the future."

Martha Sandoval, MCH case manager, said Colin is eager to continue exploring new interests.

"We have seen Colin expand intellectually, socially and personally in so many ways," Sandoval said. "We are proud of his progress and the confidence he has gained since coming to MCH."

Colin credits MCH for helping him recover academically and teaching him the value of accountability. Above all, Colin knows he is supported and is taking ownership of who he was designed to be, one step at a time. •

Reality Check



Reality check – checked off the list! In March, students at the University of Texas–University Charter School participated in the second annual Reality Check event designed to give exposure to real-world challenges such as budgeting and buying a home or car.

Held on the MCH Waco campus, MCH staff and representatives from local businesses guided high school students through the event. Students first selected a career and learned what type of salary they might expect to receive, then were tasked with managing real-life expenses like doctors' visits and childcare. Many were surprised by the cost of living and discovered compromise is key.

"A lot of kids wanted sports cars, but they didn't like how much it ate up in their budget," said Debra Knox, Independent Living residential supervisor. "We helped them realize they could get an additional job or lessen their budget for other essentials. But we really encouraged them to give up on the sports cars and put their money toward higher priorities."

Many students rose to the challenge and worked hard to make their budget fit within the paycheck their desired career might provide.

Amelia Cluke, case manager on the Waco campus, speaks with MCH resident Virginia as she assesses her progress during the Reality Check event.



1.) Realtor Jenny McCaslin discusses mortgage options with Zauria and Ei'Terrian. 2.) MCH President Trey Oakley encourages Tryston as he works on budget planning. 3.) Camille, Tranizya and Destiny talk with staff from the MCH Transition Services program. 4.) Cortney Richardson, student events and volunteer supervisor, works with Cadence during the Reality Check event.

"Our students were determined to not finish in the red," said Cortney Richardson, student events and volunteer supervisor, who organized the event. "They learned how to make financially sound decisions and how to manage their incomes well."

"I'm focused on my career goals and don't want to waste anything away."

Lacey, a senior hoping to attend Blinn College and then Texas A&M University to become

a veterinarian, was assigned a hypothetical 1-year-old child as part of the Reality Check activity. "I learned about the push and pull of budgeting and I learned just how much childcare costs," Lacey said. "I had \$500 left to spend or save after going through the reality check. I'm focused on my career goals and don't want to waste anything away."

"This is my favorite event of the year for our students," said Trey Oakley, MCH president and CEO. "We foster a culture of learning and I am very proud of the work our staff and partners have done to ensure another successful Reality Check event. This serves as an eye-opener for our youth and ultimately helps them prepare for life beyond our care."

Thank you to local businesses who invest in our children's growth.



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Douglass Nissan of Waco



Many community groups participated in the Outdoor Education program throughout the spring including the Waco High School football team and athletic staff; a group of staff members from the Waco Center for Youth; and fifth graders and staff members from the South Waco Awesome Guys & Girls (SWAGG). A special thank you to our student workers, Dalton and London, and MCH staff who assisted Tim Price in these events.



OUTDOOR EDUCATION

This spring saw more of the expansion of the Outdoor Education program at MCH as a number of community groups experienced team-building exercises and recreational activities at the MCH Boys Ranch. The program, led by Tim Price, functions to help youth at MCH and community participants “build a sense of courage to live life to the fullest and help them grow into best versions of themselves,” Price said.

Activities include the Alpine Tower, kayaking, fishing, horseback riding, camping, and team games. Many community participants expressed the learning experiences provided through Outdoor Education are life-changing.

“Some of our student-athletes have never experienced outdoor activities like kayaking or fishing before,” said Linden Heldt, head football coach and athletics coordinator for Waco High School. “To see our young men have fun off the field here and build up their team skills in a different way is priceless.”

Traci Wagner, vice president for programs, explained the Outdoor Education program is “a living picture of our MCH commitments to Five-Star Service and Culture of Learning. These types of events don’t happen by accident and I appreciate the hard work our staff and partners put in to serve our youth and communities.”

For more information about the Outdoor Education program, contact Tim Price at (254) 867-6168 or at TPrice@MCH.org.



DAY STUDENT PROFILE

ELIZABETH & GEORGE

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

BY SARAH BELLAFFIORE

It's rare to come across a teenager fully confident in their own skin – let alone to cross paths with two such teens. But that's exactly who Elizabeth and George are in the Day Student program at the University of Texas–University Charter School at MCH.

"Elizabeth and George are both leaders and they don't even recognize it," said Clarence Degrate, Day Student program coordinator. "We have student leaders who may be bolder; these two are quiet but lead by example. A lot of other kids look up to them."

The siblings are humble by nature, something Degrate and other staff say draws people to them.

"Their kindness has always stood out to me – that's just how they were brought up," said Amy Grisham, director of school support. "Elizabeth and George's parents are so supportive of them and that support fuels their children's willingness to try new things."

Elizabeth and George's parents are from Mexico and their mother, Nancy, is grateful her children have a wide array of opportunities to flourish at the charter school.

"I want my children to have a good education so they can achieve anything they want and to have a better life than what my husband and I had," Nancy said, as tears filled her eyes.

Elizabeth agreed with the way her mother and MCH staff described her family's dynamic.

"George and I are thankful our parents gave us a better life," Elizabeth said. "I am looking forward to being the first in our family to go to college."

Elizabeth, Liz for short, enrolled in the Day Student program two years ago as a freshman and continues to seize every opportunity the charter school offers.

"We didn't have any sports or other extracurriculars at our previous school," Elizabeth said. "Being on a team and participating in other activities gives me time to connect with my friends and strengthen those relationships."

Being on a team also provides opportunities for mentorship and Elizabeth has developed a special bond with her basketball coach.

"Liz makes me smile all of the time and is such a beautiful person," said Akira Levy, an MCH athletics coordinator who coaches the girls basketball team. "She gets it done on the court too! She goes after whatever I instruct her to do and is a natural leader on our team."

Elizabeth has certainly made her mark at MCH, having participated in basketball, volleyball, choir, Ag Sciences, outdoor education, and volunteer opportunities. The 16-year-old junior is also decorated in academics and hopes to graduate early in May 2024 and eventually become a pediatrician. She already has a head start, thanks to the charter school's partnership with the Greater Waco Advanced Health Care Academy (GWACHA). The program offers students opportunities to gain experience in the medical field and earn certification as a nurse assistant (CNA) upon graduation.

"We are doing clinicals now in nursing homes," Elizabeth said. "It was nerve-wracking at first, but I have gotten used to performing my clinical duties on actual patients. I have learned a lot of medical knowledge in GWACHA and the staff have also taught us how to look for good job opportunities and network."

George is two years younger than his sister. The freshman has become a quiet standout since coming to the charter school.



Above: Ag Sciences, Outdoor Education, and basketball are just a few of the programs and teams George and Elizabeth participate in through the MCH Day Student program. ▲

"Liz told me all about the good things she was experiencing at MCH and I didn't want to miss out on the fun," George said with a smile.

George admitted it took him some time to adjust to the new school environment, but staff were impressed with how he handled different situations with grace.

"The thing that impresses me about George is even when he came to us as an 8th grader, he never fed into his peers' behavior," Degrate said. "He is always smooth and easygoing. The other kids don't try anything with George either. They know who he is and look up to him."

Like his sister, George has fully embraced the Day Student program at MCH by participating in football, basketball, track, anime club, outdoor education, Ag Sciences, and volunteer work. The smaller class sizes at the charter school also give space for George, Elizabeth and other students to build a rapport with their teachers and school staff.

"It is really rewarding to witness their success," said Allyson Welch, case manager for the Day Student program. "Liz and George used to never ask for help, but now they truly advocate for themselves and help lead their peers in their own unique way."

The duo's success was celebrated at last year's school award ceremony in the Harrell Memorial Chapel on the Waco campus. Elizabeth and George were recognized numerous times for their hard work in academics and extracurricular activities, applauded by their friends and family, as well as the entire school and many MCH staff members who were in attendance.

"The award ceremony was fun because we ended up with a lot of medals and awards," George said. "Our friends were amazed Liz and I were being called up over and over again. They were really proud of us."

The adults who pour into George and Elizabeth were full of pride in that moment as well.

"I will never forget that day because the Day Student program really shined during the award ceremony," Degrate said. "Liz and George really represent us well!"

"My husband and I are so proud of everything our children are doing and that they have the courage to take on so many new and fun challenges," Nancy said.

Last summer, Elizabeth and George were the first Day Students to be part of a spiritual development camp.

A group of MCH residents and MCH spiritual development ministers attended a weeklong camp in Glen Rose, Texas, that provides safe spaces for youth and adults to share, grow in their faith and create lasting Christ-centered relationships.

"George was the only boy from MCH in our group at the camp," said Ron Britton, spiritual development minister. "We stayed in the same cabin together and got along famously. Whenever there were hard moments for other kids, George remained positive and encouraged them to be more optimistic. He was a positive influence on the cabin group."

Small group discussions and various recreational activities cultivated opportunities for George and Elizabeth to freely express themselves and make new connections at camp.

"We both made more friends at the camp and it was a nice experience," Elizabeth said. "I still keep in touch with some of the girls I met."

Opportunities for growth and fun experiences contribute to setting the Day Student program apart, Grisham explained.

"We don't focus on just educating our students at the charter school," Grisham said. "We work to help students grow as well-rounded people. Elizabeth and George have grown in their confidence and they really make our jobs easy because they are amazing kids."

"I would encourage other students who are interested in the Day Student program to give it a try," George said. "You may discover a lot of good things and people, like Liz and I have." •

MCH launched the Day Student program in 2012 for students in Waco and surrounding communities needing a smaller academic setting. Day Students are eligible to participate in all MCH extracurricular activities such as athletics, summer camp, homecoming, and prom. Day Student graduates also have access to Transition Services and Independent Living resources, including scholarships for college or vocational school. The program maintains a 100 percent graduation rate.

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

■ COMMISSIONERS ENGAGE REGIONAL MCH MINISTRIES

The MCH Development department and President and CEO Trey Oakley hosted regional Commissioners meetings in Dallas and Houston this spring to give friends and supporters an opportunity to engage with MCH staff working in local communities and learn more about the ministry.

Commissioners are volunteer ambassadors from communities across our service area of Texas and New Mexico who advocate and raise awareness for the ministries of MCH. Historically, Commissioners gather in Waco to receive updates about MCH, learn about new programs and plans, and hear from Development and Program staff about how to advance the mission of the ministry within their areas of influence.

"After meeting with our Commissioners virtually for a couple of years because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were excited to gather again face-to-face," said Lyle Mason, vice president for development. "We felt holding these meetings in a regional format would be a good way to strategically introduce our Commissioners and other supporters in these areas to more of our frontline ministries – work that is going on right in their own communities." Mason added that future meetings are being planned in other parts of the MCH service area.

At the Dallas meeting on April 18, Commissioners toured the MCH Family Outreach office serving the Metroplex, met outreach staff and learned about the various ministries and programs serving children, youth and families.

Addressing the group at a dinner afterwards hosted at First United Methodist Church of Coppell, Oakley said MCH continues to be proactive in addressing needs throughout Texas and New Mexico.

"We aren't waiting for people to find us online or come across our website; we're going out and meeting families where they are," Oakley said. "We have a 133-year legacy of service excellence, but we know every case is unique. These MCH Family Outreach staff members are rolling up their sleeves on a daily basis, going into homes and communities in the Dallas area and meeting with families in difficult situations."

Oakley added that while the generous support of benefactors empowered MCH to make an impact on more than 10,000 people last year, "we know even in the community surrounding this beautiful church there are 10,000 more who need us. That is why we need Commissioners and supporters who advocate for us in their churches and communities and remind those in their spheres of relationship that MCH is a strong and equipped service provider."



MCH staff from the Development department, Programs, MCH Family Outreach and President and CEO Trey Oakley interact with Commissioners and supporters in Dallas eager to learn how to advocate for MCH. ▲

The mission of a Commissioner is summed up by the acronym **M.B.A.:**

Make a Gift – a financial gift is a powerful testimony of commitment to this ministry. It is often easier to ask others to make a financial gift when you have made an investment also.

Be the Bridge – Some churches believe they already support our work through denominational funding, but they do not. Others have grown up in Methodist churches and never heard our story. Commissioners can help us inform people by connecting MCH to the various groups in their church.

Advocate for Support – We rely on the support of faithful churches giving to MCH. Commissioners can talk to their church leaders to advocate for a special offering in support of MCH.

To learn more about serving as an MCH Commissioner, contact Kelly Lawson at KLawson@MCH.org or (800) 853-1272.

TRANSITION SERVICES PROFILE

RAINN

A FOCUSED DETERMINATION

BY SARAH BELLAFIORE

Rainn knows her life could have been dramatically different without her faith in God and the support she has received from Methodist Children's Home.

"I could've been dead, but my faith has gotten me through everything in my life," said Rainn, a 22-year-old enrolled in the MCH Transition Services (TS) program. "God has been with me every step of the way – from my placement at MCH to now sharing my story that He designed."

Rainn and her four siblings were removed from their mother's home by Child Protective Services (CPS) when she was 11 years old. She moved from home to home for nearly four years – staying with her pastor, her grandmother, foster families, and eventually living at emergency shelters. Then MCH stepped in.

"MCH became a true home for me," Rainn said. "My eyes were opened even more because I saw how God was working in my life and how He was changing me."

Rainn graduated from the MCH charter school in 2018 as salutatorian. Two weeks later, she moved to Corsicana, Texas, and started her collegiate journey at Navarro College. She became a peer tutor, made the Dean's List and graduated with her associate's degree in applied sciences in 2020.

"Everyone knows when I set my mind on something, that's it – I'm going to get it done," Rainn said with a smile. "I even gave one of my final presentations at Navarro while I was in labor with my daughter! The pandemic was still at its height and everything was virtual. I had my iPad on my hospital bed tray and did what I had to do."

Those closest to Rainn strongly affirm her determination to beat the odds.

"It is Rainn's sheer willpower that has kept her going," said Kenneth Alexander, Rainn's TS case manager. "She could have easily stopped going to school after having her first child. But she didn't. Rainn is a survivor and she knows what she wants in life."

After graduating from Navarro College, Rainn and her daughter, Ocean, moved to Fort Worth where she enrolled

in the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA). Rainn recalls bringing her now 2-year-old daughter with her to classes from time to time. The young mother graduated with her bachelor's degree in social work in December 2022.

"I want to beat the statistics," Rainn said. "I am a part of the 2 percent of youth in the foster care system who have gone on to college and graduated with a bachelor's degree. Now I'm going for my master's degree in social work at UTA and I'm also enrolled at Texas A&M University pursuing a bachelor's in business at the same time – and I'm not stopping there."

"I want a PhD," she stated emphatically. "I want to be that success story and I'm not going to stop until I get there."

Rainn's ultimate goal is to create what she calls "her own version of Methodist Children's Home" for young adults who have aged out of the foster care system and have nowhere else to turn.

"I grew up in the system and I'm going to be the one to change it," Rainn said. "I want to provide a home for large sibling groups in foster care so they don't get separated from one another."

In addition to gaining knowledge through her schooling, Rainn gained even more insight and experience through her internship with Unlimited Potential. The nonprofit organization in the Brazos Valley is geared toward helping the exact demographic Rainn wants to empower in the future – young adults, like her, who have aged out of the foster care system.

"I'm living in a nice apartment; I'm in school, have a full-time job, and have two healthy, beautiful kids," Rainn said. "I'm still making it. Nothing is stopping me. I'm showing my kids and everyone else that I am not finished yet."

"I want youth at MCH and other young adults to know that no matter what situation you are put in, it can always get better," she said. "God has something greater for you. Life is hard. But it's not going to get better just because you say it's going to get better. It's going to get better when you're determined to make a change." •

■ DAVILLA NAMED TO NEW VICE PRESIDENTIAL POST

Trey Oakley, president and CEO of Methodist Children's Home, announced the hiring of Brooke Davilla to the position of vice president for organizational effectiveness.

Davilla has served as assistant vice president for programs at MCH since 2021. In her new role, which begins June 1, 2023, Davilla will provide leadership and support in the areas of Human Resources, Quality Improvement, and Employee Communication and Engagement. Davilla assumes the role from Bryan Mize, vice president for strategic initiatives. Mize will transition on July 1 to a part-time role as a strategic initiatives specialist where he will assist the president and executive team on selected projects based on his experience and expertise developed over more than two decades at MCH.

After receiving a master's degree in social work from Baylor University with a concentration in community practice, Davilla began her career at MCH in 2010 as a foster care case manager in Waco and transitioned to director of Waco Family Outreach in 2013. She was promoted to the

role of program administrator in 2020 before being named assistant vice president for programs.

"During her tenure at MCH, Brooke has provided leadership to all areas of our continuum of care including residential, transition services, foster care, family preservation, aftercare, and educational services," Oakley said. "Brooke's knowledge of MCH, leadership skills and community engagement will serve her well in this new role."

In addition to her program experience, Davilla serves an adjunct professor for the Diana R. Garland School of Social Work at Baylor. In this role she educates emerging leaders about organizational assessments and strategic development methodologies through the lens of social welfare.

Davilla has led staff development opportunities at MCH, evaluated programs and systems needing improvement, participated in strategic planning, and provided leadership during the Council on Accreditation (COA) process.

"In her role as vice president for organizational effectiveness,



Brooke and I will work together to develop strategies that support the agency's strategic vision and culture of excellence in all areas under her supervision," Oakley said. "I am excited to see how God will utilize Brooke's knowledge, experience, and personal gifts to help shape the future of organizational effectiveness at MCH."

Davilla holds certification as a Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) and a Licensed Child Placing Agency Administrator (LCPAA). She and her husband, Marcus, live in Waco and are parents to 3-year-old daughters Brooklyn and Katelyn; Jacob, 21; and Marcus, 26, and his wife Alli, who have a 1-year-old daughter, Lennon. •

■ MCH STAFF RECOGNIZED FOR YEARS OF SERVICE



Thirty-six MCH employees were recognized for their tenure at a service held in March. The employees, marking five, 10, 15, 20, 30, and 35 years of service to children, youth and families in Texas and New Mexico, represent a total of 425 years of ministry at Methodist Children's Home. •

■ ALBUQUERQUE HOSTS CAREGIVER EVENT

The MCH Family Outreach office in Albuquerque, NM, hosted a Caregiver Empowerment Group (CEG) in March that served 21 parents, caregivers and children at the Explora Children's Museum.

CEGs are designed to provide support to caregivers by enhancing their knowledge, helping them cultivate new skills, providing them with access to community resources, and providing a space where

they can receive support and encouragement from peers. Topics often discussed in these groups include financial issues, legal matters, children's behavior, self-care, advocacy, and family bonding.

Having the event at a museum allowed the children to socialize and engage with their peers in a positive way while parents and caregivers shared parenting stories with one another and MCH Albuquerque staff.

Nicole Goodman, director of Family Outreach in Albuquerque, said the event was one of the best-attended CEGs.

"Our goal is to continue to host CEG on days when schools are closed," she said. "In doing so, families will have an opportunity to spend time together while engaging with likeminded



The Family Outreach office in Albuquerque utilizes fun games for the whole family in addition to support groups.

individuals and peers. Also, we have arranged for each person in attendance to have free admittance to the museum after each CEG. We received feedback from one family who stated their preteen children spent four hours in the museum after our group meeting in February." •

■ ABILENE CASE MANAGER RECEIVES COMMUNITY AWARD

Rachel Lopez De Castilla, a case manager in the MCH Family Outreach office in Abilene, received the Child Welfare Award at the Champion for Children conference in Abilene. The annual award honors individuals who are helping children and families lead better, safer lives and celebrates the unsung heroes who dedicate their lives to assisting communities to take better care of vulnerable children.

According to fellow Abilene case manager BrieAnna Vine, "Rachel is a skilled case manager and clinician who meets her clients where they are. She is

thorough, organized and effective in her cooperation of care for MCH foster children. We are blessed to have her expertise and wisdom on the team."

The Champion for Children conference helps communities throughout the Big Country region of Texas kick off Child Abuse Prevention/Awareness Month, which is observed in April each year.

"At MCH we are dedicated to providing Five-Star Service, Authentic Accountability, Focused and Flexible Ministries, and promoting a Culture of Learning for our clients, staff



Rachel Lopez De Castilla receives the Child Welfare Award at the Champion for Children conference.

and community partners," said Traci Wagner, vice president for programs at MCH. "We are proud of Rachel and the way she represents MCH so well in Abilene community." •

MCH COMPETES IN MCLENNAN COUNTY JUNIOR LIVESTOCK SHOW

MCH residents and Day Students attending the University of Texas–University Charter School participated in the annual McLennan County Junior Livestock Show at the Extraco Events Center in Waco. Thirteen students involved in the MCH Ag

program showed animals in the Goat, Sheep and Swine divisions, with seven moving on to the Sale of Champions. “Our students represented MCH and the charter school FFA chapter in championship form,” said Steve Kruse, ag teacher at the charter school.

“I truly feel like the animals are secondary to what we are trying to accomplish with our students – I tell people all the time we are using a four-legged creature to help mold and make these students into better people.” •



▲ Roman shows his entry in the Swine division at the McLennan County Junior Livestock Show.

<u>Goat Division:</u>	<u>Swine Division:</u>
David	Alyssa
<u>Sheep Division:</u>	Bryce
Anthony	Cadence
George	Christian
Landon	Dalton
Michael	Roman
Tranizya	Tryston

MCH STAFF EARN TBRI PRACTITIONER STATUS

Three MCH employees earned their TBRI Practitioner status in February at a regional conference in Jacksonville, Florida. Laura Bonner, clinical and compliance administrator; Kevin Brown, director of training; and Ethan Varzeas, staff trainer, are now able to teach the TBRI Caregiver Package trainings to our staff and collaborative partners.

MCH has a longstanding relationship with the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development (KPIDC) at TCU as a TBRI Ambassador Organization. TBRI-trained MCH staff are frequently utilized to educate other organizations in TBRI.

“It was a great week of in-depth learning on TBRI, meeting new people, reconnecting with people

we haven’t seen in a while, sharing about MCH, and learning more about other organizations,” Bonner said. “We are excited for MCH to have three new practitioners and ready to start training and leading discussions on TBRI principles.”

MCH also endorsed employees from Youth With A Mission (YWAM) El Paso/Juarez and Reflection Ministries in Midland – agencies MCH has collaborated with over the last year – for acceptance to into the

TBRI Practitioner training. Both organizations had representatives earn their TBRI Practitioner status in Jacksonville who returned to their agencies to work toward TBRI implementation in their areas of service with children and young adults who have experienced harm in the Juarez, Mexico, and Midland communities. •

From Left: Kevin Brown, Darren Jones (KPIDC), John Warren, Laura Bonner, Ethan Varzeas, and Henry Milton (KPIDC) at the regional training. ▼



BULLDOGS MAKE HISTORY AT STATE TRACK MEET

The MCH Bulldogs made history on April 22 at the Texas Christian Athletic Fellowship (TCAF) State Track & Field meet in Boyd, Texas. The boys team finished first overall and took home the Men’s Championship award, a first for the MCH team. The girls team finished fifth as a team, “which is extremely impressive considering the girls team had five student-athletes,” said Matt Rodgers, MCH athletic director. Several youth also set both personal and new MCH records at the state track meet.

Many of the student-athletes had never participated in track before this season. The team is made up of MCH residents and Day Students who attend the University of Texas–University Charter School on the Waco campus. Darell Williams, athletics coordinator, is the newest member to the MCH Athletics staff and brings his expertise in track and field events from his 28-year coaching career.

“I told our student-athletes at the beginning of the season that we were going to win state,” Williams said. “It was a goal they couldn’t even fathom then. But they were eager to learn and they put in so

much hard work to attain that new state title.”

The team took on a new mindset and conditioned themselves every day to attain their goals – even working out together on weekends. The culmination of their talent, hard work and determination manifested into what Williams called “something special” at the TCAF State Track & Field meet.

“The kids were checking the app on their phones to see how we were progressing in points as a team,” William said. “I got emotional because they were winning and I knew no one could catch up to us. Then, I saw one of our young men and he gave me a hug.”

After the final relay, all of the participating teams and their supporters gathered around centerfield. The stages were set, medals prepared and point totals were in. The announcer shared the results and the entire MCH Bulldogs team cheered and hugged one another.

“There was just sheer happiness in that moment,” said Williams, whose son is a Day Student and part of the track team. “Feeling our

kids’ energy and watching them proudly hold up that trophy – there’s nothing else like it.”

Williams shared the rapport the team has built goes beyond winning medals and trophies.

“We have the opportunity to help these young people grow in life. Sports are one of the greatest tools to help students grow into adults because they learn responsibility and accountability.”

The MCH Bulldogs already have their eyes set on their next goal.

“Our team knows the only thing that can stop us, is us,” Williams said with a smile. “We plan to take home the state title again next year.”

Congratulations to the incredible Bulldogs Track & Field team and to the MCH Athletics staff who continue to empower MCH student-athletes to experience life to the fullest on and off the track. •



Left: The track team celebrates with the boys state title trophy. Above: Bryce runs in the 4x100 relay for the MCH Bulldogs.

GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORIAL GIFTS

GIFTS MADE FROM JANUARY THROUGH MARCH 2023

HONORARIUMS

Pastor Mike and Kathy Alexander
Les and Karen Leskoven

Dr. J.A. Allen’s 40th Birthday
Sharon and Al Wertz

Dr. Janelle Brinck
Craig and Dowanne Jones

Kelly and Mark Bryant
Claudia Kay

David Chaffin
Curt and Jan Cole

Dr. Jeff Clark
Les and Karen Leskoven
Trey Oakley

Hank Coleman
John Farrell

Cordova Family
Joe Bullock

Alex Davis
Will Davis

Mavanee and Lee Edgington
Frank Busch

First Methodist Women of Corsicana
Les and Karen Leskoven

Alice Fry
Les and Karen Leskoven

Flossie Gibson
Peggy Hollingsworth

Loraine Hartranft
Joni Manon

Bill and Amy Hindman
Babara Neilson McGraw

John and Bennie Adams Hook’s 100th Anniversary
Don and Joni Hooks Holdridge

Howard Family Legacy
Charles and Ann Cantrell

Sylvia Huckabee’s 85th Birthday
Marilyn Cherry

Sylvia Huckabee
Christopher Huckabee
Phyllis Sarkaria

Kayleen Leonard
Joni Manon

Angie May
Joni Manon

Mary Milner
Claire Unger

Charles and Ellen Morris
Bob and Rubyetta Cain

Glenda Novak
Les and Karen Leskoven

Mrs. Betty Petersen
Mike and Debbie Burke

Ms. Bobbi Pytlik
Mrs. Jami Lovelady

Andrew Ramsey
Roy and Becky Kemble

Betty Rosenbaum’s 90th Birthday
Rev. Byron Jarratt

Ena Dennis Stoesser
Dr. Lowell and Betty Carraway
Sandra Wallace

Melodi and Lance Tripp
A.A. Schellenberg

John R. Warren’s Birthday
Becky and Quentin Warren

Claire Wertz’s 35th Birthday
Sharon and Al Wertz

Tom Wilkinson, Jr.
Les and Karen Leskoven
Trey Oakley

Ronnie and Evelyn Williams’ 50th Anniversary
Totsy Cunningham

Pastor Wayne Williams
John and Sandra Haldeman

Billy and Rose Wood
Bob and Rubyetta Cain

MEMORIALS

Arnold and Wanda Alberts
Gary and Mary Alberts

Roger Anderson
Edna Thompson and
Kerri Coleman

Wilson and Iona Barfield
The Wilson and
Iona Barfield Family

Shirley Ann (Dishman) Bass
Vivian Dishman Curry
Peggy Osborne

Elvin and Lloyd Ola Bearden
Michael and Molly Bearden

W. Carroll Blewster Sr.
Calvin Grubbs

Lou Ellen Bliss
Richard and Gretta Davis

Corey D. Blubaugh
Lynda Blubaugh

Gwendolyn Dixon Boehrne
Joe Farney
Andy and Linda Henderson
Ralph Palmer and
nieces and nephew

Laura Lee (Bell) Bordelon
Flossie Gibson
Mrs. Bobbie J. Muhlinghause

Robert Calvin Brown
Doris Brown Family
Sharon Cannon
Patty W. Courtney
Johnny M. and Janet Howle
Irvin Poff

Vonda Kay Brown
Charles and Carol Brown

Billie Jean Bruns
Katie Bonilla
Elizabeth Fink
Butch and Dottie Knudson
Harry Joe and Debra Thornhill

Jack “David” Byrd
Julie and Doug Mitchell

Peggy Sue Wyatt Cable
Charles R. Cable

Glenda Jean Cain
Steve and Gail Millard

Frances and Julian Caswell
Judith Ann Caswell

Gary Chapman
Joan Wu

Otto and Janell Clary
Sidney and Pam Clary

Susan Cockrell
William Constantine

Geoffrey Collins
Shirley Bowen

LaRue Cooper
Richard Ray

Gene A. Cox
Bobbie G. Cox

Edgar A. Curtis
Peggy Dickerson

Janie McGuire Dawson
Marc and Becky Clark

Clarita Dennis
Steve and Norma Runyon

Myrtle Anne Dethloff
Margaret Gressett

Mary and Jack Dwyer
Judy and Jim Dwyer

Katherine and Boyd Eaker
Judy and Jim Dwyer

Fay “Jerry” Gerald Edwards
Karen Furman

Janice Darlene (Cowen) Enderson
Reverend Kenneth and
Janna Byrd

James Robert Evans
Dr. and Mrs. Marcus E. Young

Virginia Luce Fleming
Ms. Sue Lowery

Portia Gaines
Eleanor, David and Andy Ginn
Leroy and Carol Newman

Christine Gardner
Elizabeth Sojourner

Gerald Dean “Jerry” Garland
Alice Sappington

Bill Giddens
Cedar Springs United Methodist
Wynnetta Johnson

Bobby Gilliam
Jennifer and Luke Gilliam

Sharon Gayle (Rodgers) Goble
Gary and Cheryl Rodgers

Carolyn Faye Kidd Griffin
Dr. and Mrs. Marcus E. Young

Donald W. Griffis
Dr. and Mrs. Marcus E. Young

Charlotte Ann Gump
Gregory Cannon
Colliers Company

Robert Harding
Ruth Wilkins

Doris Marie Hart
Ray and Lori Day

Chester Harth
Charles Huffman

Donna Hayes
Sandra Perdue

Kathryn Janette Hayes
Charles and Carol Brown

Jane Heitman
Larry & Martha Maxwell

Reverend Raymond W. Heilener
Loretta and Ray Day

David Henshoher
Anonymous

A.L. Herrington Jr.
Dr. and Mrs. Marcus E. Young

Nancy Jane Holle
Will and Monica Blackwell

Henry Honzell
Jean and Ross Clayton

Patricia “Patsy” Ruth Horick
Mike and Ilene Miller
Crys and Ed Zinkiewicz

John Francis Hough, Sr.
Penny Hough

Herman and Helen Huffman
Charles Huffman

Molly Huffman
Charles Huffman

Eldora May Janacek
Melvin and Linda Bruggman

Jerry L. Jarvis
Ginger and Ronald Sandwina

Samuel David Jeppson
Jasmine Hall

Hubert and Reba Johnson
John Roskosky

Marjorie (Brown) Johnson
Robert Brown

Boyce Loyd Jones
David and Deborah Hanson

Jerry Jones
Rev. Ellen Ely

Laura Criscoe Jones
Carolyn Saunders

Darwin Linsey
Marjorie Pyle

Theresa Loftin
Pam Goergen

Theodore “Skip” Londres
Les and Karen Leskoven
James and Laura Milam

Laverne (Poole) Maresh
Laura McDowell and Kevin Hood
Becky Maresh

Ann Maze
Gail Stephens

Jerry F. McCarty
Harold and Margaret Porter

Robert McCormick
Reverend Kenneth and
Janna Byrd

Diane Wells McDowell
Veritex Community Bank

Andrew McMahan
Steve and Gail Millard

Dorothy C. McReynolds
Russell McReynolds

Carolyn Ruth Meyers
Fred Nelle

William Johnny Michalik
Beverley and Craig Grace

George Riley Middleton
Lonnie and Nancy Kay McIntosh

Robbie Milhollon
Steven and Tere Garlington

Ernest McNeil “Mac” Moore
Leroy and Carol Newman

Carroll Moran
Les and Karen Leskoven

Matt Morris
Charles and Linda Reichenau

Louisa Mulkey
Robert Turner

James Roland Mullins
Greg and Robin Pruitt

Ashley Renee Nicholas
Trey Oakley

Richard Odom
Dr. and Mrs. Marcus E. Young

Reverend B.J. Osborn
Lionel W. King

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Sydney Underwood

Bryson Jacob Poteet
Bill and Jerry Way

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Darwin T. Purvis

Bobbie Simmons Rankin
Les and Karen Leskoven

Janet Rawlings
Bobby Rawlings

Carolyn Reat
Julie and Doug Mitchell

Marilouise (Eschen) Reid
David and Sue Eschen

Charles Elton Roden
James and Laura Milam

Mildred and Elmer Rodgers
Gary and Cheryl Rodgers

Sue Rosser
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Totsy Cunningham

Rosemary (Cowser) Sancton
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Reesa Roberts-Smith

Mrs. Mary Smith
Joe and Jami Lovelady

Shayne Smith
Wanda J. Hancock

Bryan Ross Smitherman
Robert and Lori Wilhite

Tony Ross Smitherman
Barbara Cole

Carl Bennett Spooner
Carolyn E. Ferguson

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Dolores Staggs

Gladys Stroh
Reverend Kenneth and
Janna Byrd

Peggy Sharon Sturgill
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Candy and Leslie Mallonee

Carolyn Corwin Thomas
Frank and Marcy Parker

Ronald Frank Thomas
Steven and Tere Garlington

Cody Tibbets
Shirley Rhoads

Joy Tibbets
Michael Tibbets

Plez and Adele Todd
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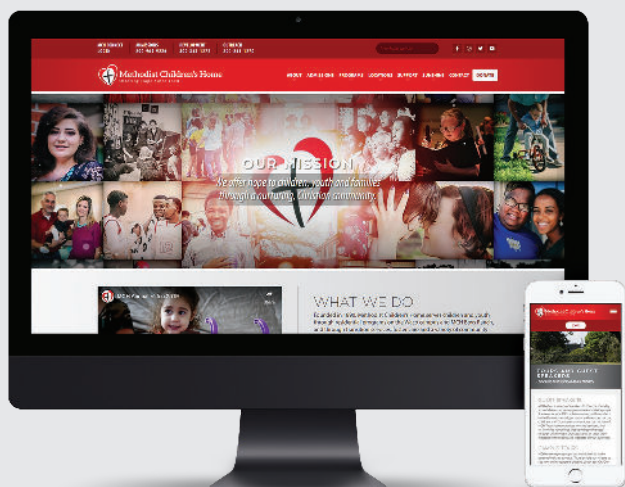
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METHODIST CHILDREN'S HOME

