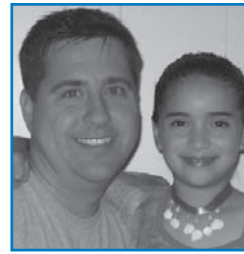


Blue SKIES

FALL 2009



Methodist Mission Home

Giving God's Children a Faith, a Family, a Future

IN THIS ISSUE:

From My Heart

(Page 2)

Volunteering at MMH Pennies & Prayers

(Page 3)

Honors & Memorials

(Page 4)

Rhythm & Chimes

(Page 5)

Adoption Services: The Ford Family

(Page 6)

Adoption Awareness Capital Campaign

(Page 7)

Around Campus

(Page 8)

Reaching for Higher Places

13 students cross the stage at 35th Annual Graduation ceremony

The 35th annual Southwest Center for Higher Independence (SCH) graduation ceremony was about to begin. Thirteen young adults with disabilities who had worked hard for the past year and a half waited patiently in another building on campus as friends and family filed into the Perry Chapel at Methodist Mission Home in San Antonio, Texas on June 26 to celebrate the students' success.

As they waited, some graduates read over the speeches they would present to the audience. Some of the young women applied finishing touches to their makeup. Some of the young men horse-played. Every one of them smiled.

They had all come to SCHI for a transitional education. They hoped to gain life and vocational skills so they could reach their personal level of independent living. On this day, the royal blue cap and gown each of them wore signified they had done just that.

"I'm proud of myself because I made it," said Ian MacKay, who was diagnosed with autism at a young age. "Graduating means being successful in one area and moving on to another area."

Graduate Anastasia Saenz, who was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, had come to SCHI longing to make friends. A year after entering the program, she's leaving with more than she could have ever imagined.

"This is a stepping stone that is going to lead me to a higher place," Anastasia said. "I may be disabled, but that doesn't mean I can't make a difference."

Also making a difference in his life is Jared



(Back row) Jon Savells, Ian MacKay, Michael Borbonus, Louis Johnson, and Henry Plavets. (Front row) Anastasia Saenz, Vanessa Mills, Beuford Ackers, Jeffrey Bohan, Jared Ellis, and Kerna Bethelmy. (Not pictured) Zachary Brown and Matthew Harrison.



SCHI graduate Jared Ellis receives his certificate of completion from SCHI Director Dennis Tucker at the 35th annual graduation ceremony on June 26.

Ellis. Ellis was one of four deaf students who graduated from SCHI. He says he has learned to be more responsible since he started the program.

"I have learned to take care of my laundry and other important things," Ellis said. "I have learned how to manage my money and how to



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See Graduates...Page 2

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Chaplain

HELEN HUFF
Adoption Services Director

DENNIS TUCKER
SCHI Director

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FROM MY HEART

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

Hope inspired by God. Sometimes we forget God has a plan for us. When we lose our way, we turn to family and friends for help. We turn to God in prayer. We ask Him to help restore our hope.

For 114 years, Methodist Mission Home has been a home to people in need. People whose hearts are broken. People in pain. People who are lonely. People who have lost hope.

The needs of the people we serve are ever-changing. The compassion, love and dedication we deliver through God's grace is steadfast.

Adoption is our ministry's tradition. We have placed more than 5,680 children in loving homes. Birth mothers and adoptive families come to our home for courage and love as they make life changing decisions.

Young adults with serious disabilities come to SCHI (Southwest Center for Higher Independence) totally dependent on others. We guide them on their personal journeys – overcoming fears, learning difficult lessons, and taking responsibility. With new vocational and life skills, SCHI students achieve independence with dignity and pride.

Seven years ago, we realized an opportunity to work in collaboration with other non-profits. The Genesis Cooperative was born. Our campus has been transformed into a vibrant and interactive community – a place where people are enriched and empowered in their spiritual and physical lives.

Remember God's promise of a future with hope, as you give prayerful consideration of your holiday gift to our Home. Together we are helping people find renewed hope... Giving God's Children a Faith, a Family, a Future.

Jennifer Sample
Executive Director



Graduates moving on



SCHI graduates Henry Plavets, Anastasia Saenz, and Jon Savells are all smiles before the big ceremony.

ride the bus."

Also graduating from SCHI this year were Beuford Ackers, Kerna Bethelmy, Jeffrey Bohan, Michael Borbonus, Zachary Brown, Louis Johnson, Vanessa Mills, Henry Plavets, Matthew Harrison and Jon Savells. Graduate Jennifer Hutton was honored posthumously.

For more information on SCHI visit the MMH website at www.mmhome.org or call 1-800-842-5433.

Blue Skies is the official newsletter of Methodist Mission Home. Your comments, suggestions and ideas for future issues are most welcome!

Please write:

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E-mail

kiko@mmhome.org

Or visit us on the Web at:

www.mmhome.org

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Please note: We use our mailing list for internal use only and do not sell or release names to other organizations or businesses.

VISIT METHODIST MISSION HOME
ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



Students from Bob Beard Elementary in San Antonio get instructions during their volunteer work at Methodist Mission Home.



Volunteers from the Access Program in Prairie View A&M break a sweat as they transport mulch to plants around the SCHI building.



Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church volunteers stand proudly in front of a pool house they helped complete.

For more information about how to volunteer at Methodist Mission Home contact Saren Spicer at 1-800-842-5433 or email saren@mmhome.org.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL CHALLENGE

PENNIES & PRAYERS

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL MISSION CHALLENGE

Thank You Vacation Bible Schools!

FUMC Atlanta
Atlanta, TX

Suncreek UMC
Allen, TX

Chapel Hill UMC
San Antonio, TX

FUMC Paris
Paris, TX

Whitehouse UMC
Whitehouse, TX

FUMC Throckmorton
Throckmorton, TX

St. Luke's UMC
San Angelo, TX

FUMC Springtown
Springtown, TX

Coker UMC
San Antonio, TX

St. Paul's UMC
Albuquerque, NM

Crosby UMC
Crosby, TX

Tyler Street UMC
Dallas, TX

FUMC Liberty
Liberty, TX

La Trinidad UMC
San Antonio, TX

FUMC Brownwood
Brownwood, TX

Aldersgate UMC
San Antonio, TX

FUMC Roswell
Roswell, NM

FUMC Weatherford
Weatherford, TX

Gethsemane UMC
Houston, TX

FUMC Livingston
Livingston, TX

FUMC Levelland
Levelland, TX

FUMC Crockett
Crockett, TX

FUMC Mineola
Mineola, TX

Grace UMC
Springfield, OH

New World UMC
Arlington, TX

FUMC Humble
Humble, TX

Faith UMC
Spring, TX

Epworth UMC
San Antonio, TX

FUMC Jasper
Jasper, TX

Harlandale UMC
San Antonio, TX

Grand Total: \$6,460.35

IN HONOR OF

Gina Symon

Dianne Boehme and Ermine Armstrong
Leonore Shield
Arturo and Raquel Mariscal
Rev. Donna Strieb and John Strieb
Elizabeth Hughes
Rev. Yu and Michele Yu
Mr. Kenneth Schwenke and Sallie Gordon
Sonya Willis
Joan and William Labarr
Louise Addison Taylor
Sharon Lord Daggett

Mary Kay Ray

William Chumbley

Anna Kuhn

Carolyn Conyers

Meg Phillips

Tom and Susan McClung, Jr.

Ron and Jennifer Ronhaar

Gina and Paul Ronhaar

Colleen Winter

The Butler Family - Tom,
Paige, Lauren and Marissa

Elizabeth Clymer Byrd, her husband and their two precious boys

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Clymer

Melanie

Paw and Momma Sue

Women of Rockbridge

Rockbridge United UMC

Cindy Kiblinger

Greg, Lee, Ben, Lauren and
Nathan Kiblinger

Dan and Renee Boyd and children, David and Taryn

Wayne and Mittie Ann Perry

Glen Cleckler

Jim, Jane and John Burkholder

Matthew McCauley

Dad and Roberta (Ro)

Kat Kaden

Dr. William Bryan III

Joni Way

Christopher McMaster

Rhonda Lawrence (mom)

Dr. Eric McKinney

Shirley McKinney

Sonya Willis

Carol Perkins

Travis Wall

LaVerne Wall

Kurt Wall

Glen Cliett

Becky Cliett

The Fenter Family

Mr. and Mrs. Douglas James

Louise Addison Family

Reverend Bill Smith

Martha McCasland

Mr. and Mrs. Gerald McCasland

Sharon Lord Daggett

Summer Rydel

Mr. Bill Gibson

William Kinzie/The Kinzie
Foundation

David S. Fuller, M.D.

Dr. Clark Terrell

MMH UP FOR THE CHALLENGE!

This year, Methodist Mission Home (MMH) has received two exciting challenge grants from **Canadian UMC** and the **Blue Bird Auxiliary of the Methodist Hospital** for a combined total of **\$35,000**.

The funds from Canadian UMC and the Blue Bird Auxiliary provide outreach, education, and support services to teens and young women who are facing an unplanned pregnancy and young adults with disabilities.

We need the help of churches, UMWs, UMMs, youth groups, and people like you to meet this challenge. Every dollar you donate will be doubled!

This is an incredible opportunity to double the impact of your gift to Methodist Mission Home. Please complete the reply envelope enclosed in the center of this newsletter. Mark your contribution to the challenge grant and mail to MMH before **Dec. 31, 2010**.

Thank you for your continued support!

IN MEMORY OF

Ruth Downs Evans

Alfred Evans, Jr.

Our parents

Eric and Suzan Carter, Jr.

Nancy Andersen

Keith Andersen

Patrick Smith

Warren, Sue and Dolly

C.C. Armstrong

Lucy Armstrong

Mrs. Rohan

Ann Wallace

Kiven R. Groneman

Dorothy Fields
Mr. and Mrs. Randy Allred
Cari Allred and Doug Cavin

Jim McGoodwin

Rose Putteet

Leon Pape

Ethel Pape

Dutch and Lucy Hooks

Lilla Savage

Robert Seeds

Rachel and Garland Moore

Aretta Echart

Yvonne, Bob, Tobin
and Libby Nations

Leslie Harding Kolb

Carolyn Conyers

Angela Barnett

Kathleen Blanchard

Mrs. Dorothy Stluka

Marvin Stichler

IN MEMORY (Cont.)

Ann Haught

Keith and Mary Ormston
Kevin and Cheryl Ormston

Charles Bobb

Jeff, Molly, Jared, Jordan Garner

Jerry Lowenstein

Tom and Angie Fryer

Cynthia Faye Lindsey

Rock Hill UMC

Faye Chenault

Dr. and Mrs. Daniel

Clyde Mertz

Mr. and Mrs. Alex Oates

Jim Rusche

Martin and Pat Fiedler

Lou Davis

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Ralph Jones

Valerie and Gordon Slade

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Patrick Coyle
Yvonne Nations

Stella Ledbetter

Dr. Roy Ledbetter

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Mr. or Mrs. Martin Fiedler

Haywood J. Perkinson

Carol Perkins

Mrs. June Kinzie

Dr. William B. Kinzie/The
Kinzie Foundation

Katherine Woldhagen

Connie and David Brakebill

Angela Barnett

Kathleen or Neil Blanchard

John Goodman

Leon and Jean Reeves

RHYTHM & CHIMES ENSEMBLE



Christina Dittmer may be deaf, but that doesn't stop her from enjoying music.

As a member of the musical performance ensemble "Rhythm & Chimes," which is made up of students of the Southwest Center for Higher Independence (SCH) at Methodist Mission Home (MMH), Christina plays the hand chimes despite her disability.

Along with Christina, 11 other students with disabilities including cerebral palsy, spina bifida, autism, and those who are deaf, performed their first public concert at the 2nd Annual Summer Festival of Music and the Arts on August 23 at the Carver Community Cultural Center.

"Rhythm & Chimes" was formed at MMH in April 2009 with the help of the Dreams Fulfilled Through Music program led by director Mary Kay Archuleta.



Ryan Zevick greets his mother after the August 23 concert.



J.P. Sautner shows off his skills playing two chimes.



Director Mary Kay Archuleta conducts the Rhythm & Chimes ensemble at the 2nd Annual Summer Festival of Music and the Arts.



SCHI students get ready to play the hand chimes during their first public concert at the Carver Community Cultural Center.

Creating a Family

Keith and Melissa Ford say it's important to keep an open line of communication with everyone during the adoption process.

Melissa and Keith Ford knew they would adopt a child “someday,” but never imagined how exciting the process would actually be.

The Fords spent a lot of time researching open adoption. Their family also had questions about what “open adoption” meant exactly.

“I think many people see it as ‘co-parenting,’ but it’s really nothing like that at all,” Melissa said. “We had to educate our own families about all these things.”

Methodist Mission Home (MMH) Adoption Services Director Helen Ruttenberg says in an open adoption, the birthmother places her child with a family she has chosen. Once a “match” has been made, a Cooperative Plan is completed by both the birthmother and the adoptive parents. This Cooperative Plan is a contract that is based on trust between the adoptive parents and birthmother.

“This document serves as a guideline that maps out future contact between the birthmother, adoptive parents, and adoptee,” explains Ruttenberg. “In most cases, the birthmother will want yearly updates and photos. In some cases, she may want some contact throughout the child’s life. In other cases, the birthmother may not want any contact at all. It depends on the comfort level of all parties. However, MMH educates adoptive families about open adoption.”

When the Fords found MMH in 2005 while searching for adoption agencies in Texas, they were pleasantly surprised when they learned it was less than a mile from their home.

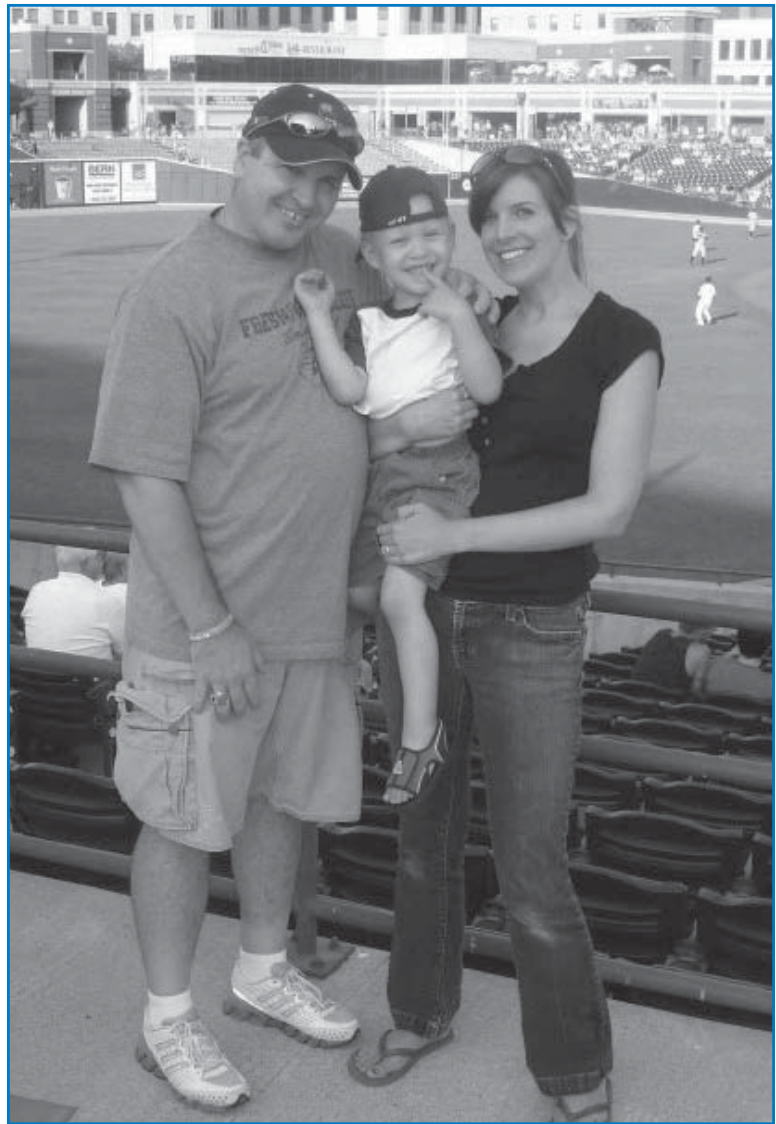
“We immediately loved MMH – the staff, the program, everything,” said Melissa. “At first we had questions about whether to adopt overseas or domestic. After attending an Adoption Information Seminar (AIS) at MMH, we decided that domestic was right for us.”

Soon after, a birthmother told MMH adoption counselors that she had seen the Ford’s family profile and was interested in choosing them as the adoptive family.

“Our first meeting was very short,” Melissa said. “The birthmom was very emotional and couldn’t stay very long. I think that was the first time the reality of her decision really hit her. Our counselor called to assure us that her tears were only because she liked us so much, and she wanted to know if we would adopt her baby boy.”

Thrilled and a little overwhelmed, the Fords met with the birthmother during the two months prior to the birth. The birthmother even invited Melissa to escort her to her doctor’s appointments.

“It meant a lot that she invited me,” Melissa said. “We really wanted to know her. From the talks we had at the doctor’s office,



The Ford family - Keith, Melissa, and Brody - enjoy a day at the ballpark. Brody was adopted from Methodist Mission Home in 2005. Melissa says they were thrilled when she received the call that a birth mother had chosen her and Keith as adoptive parents.

I learned things about her that we didn’t get from the paperwork. Now, I can tell our son about his birthmom.”

Two months later, little Brody Aaron was born. Melissa says she and Keith feel it’s important for him to know his history. They want to have an open line of communication with their son about his adoption.

“I started a baby book for him after we first met his birthmom and his adoption story is in there, along with pictures and his bracelet from the hospital,” Melissa said. “He likes to look through the book and talk about it all.”

Melissa says the best thing for a couple to do if they are looking into adoption is to do a lot of research before starting the process. This includes reading a lot of adoption books and passing the information on to the rest of the family who also might have questions.

“Clearing up misconceptions is the first big hurdle,” Melissa said. “Then you realize it’s not as hard as you think it’s going to be.”

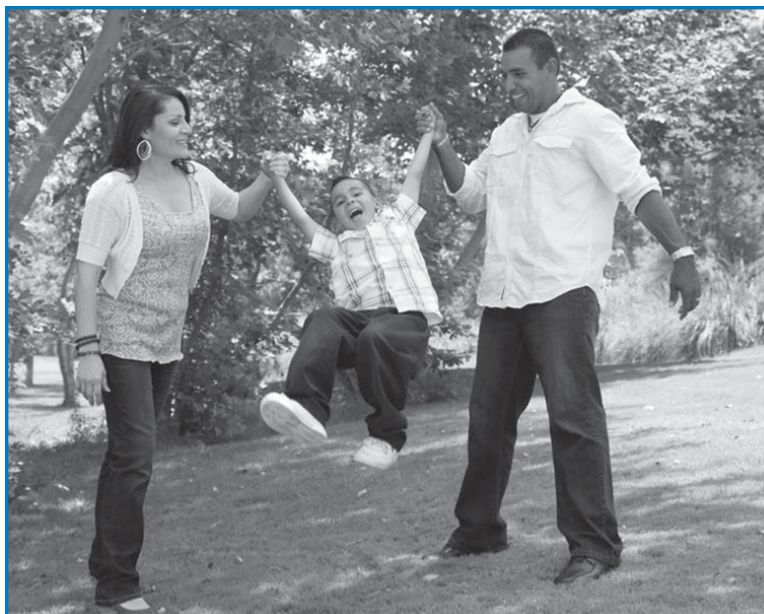
ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH & OLDER CHILD ADOPTION

November is National Adoption month, a month set aside to raise awareness about the adoption of children and youth from foster care.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau supports many activities that promote the adoption of children and youth from foster care. National Adoption Month raises public awareness about the thousands of children and youth waiting in foster care for permanent, loving families.

For over the past 12 years, Methodist Mission Home (MMH), through our Older Child adoption program, has been working with the State of Texas to find Forever Families for children in foster care. MMH works on your behalf to find a good match to a child or children to complete your family.

Upon coming into our program you will be required to complete a PRIDE training course through the state. PRIDE stands for "Parent Resource for Information, Development, and Education" and is a 30 hour pre-service training. This training is required by Child Protective Services (CPS) for any family wishing to foster and/or adopt a child in the State



of Texas.

If you would like more information on Older Child adoption, please contact MMH adoption counselor Angela Botello at 1-800-842-5433 ext. 107.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN AND OTHER CONSTRUCTION

Generations of Promise - Capital Campaign

- SCHI Dorm renovations completion is expected in January, 2010; Maternity Center work is planned for early 2010.
- Remaining \$450,000 for Phase 1 for expenses related to government funds, i.e., legal, survey, appraisal, title, fundraising consultant, is to be raised from individuals and foundations. We plan to reach this goal by December, 2009.
- Phase 2 goal \$2.5 million; priorities are being developed for interior Cafeteria and Administration buildings, exterior all buildings, entryway, walkways and landscaping.
- Phase 2 fundraising and renovations completion are expected in 2011.

FUMC Edna builds outdoor chapel at MMH

This past summer, volunteers from the First United Methodist Church in Edna, Texas went above and beyond when they renovated an outdoor chapel on the grounds of Methodist Mission Home.

"Mission is what we are about," said FUMC Edna Pastor Bernard Richea. "People with an outlook for mission live a mission for life."

Sandy Fellers, Mission Coordinator at FUMC Edna, said for this mission project they wanted to do something inter-generational. "As a group we wanted our mission work to be open to everybody," Fellers said. "We wanted it to be a learning experience for our youth."



Volunteers of the First United Methodist Church of Edna work together to renovate an outdoor chapel at Methodist Mission Home.



SCHI students enjoy their time under the covered outdoor chapel renovated by volunteers of the FUMC of Edna.



Methodist Mission Home
Giving God's Children a Faith, a Family, a Future

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AROUND CAMPUS



Independent Living Trainer Angela Wilhelm (left) translates for employers of the Lancer Corp. who came to SCHI students about job opportunities.



Current SCHI students Danielle Glassner (left) and Lindsey Williams spend part of their afternoon folding laundry in the SCHI laundry room.



Recent SCHI graduates Vanessa Mills and Jon Savells enjoy a homecooked dinner Jon prepared in the SCHI kitchen.



Independent Living Trainer and counselor Yvette Marroquin applies lipstick to recent SCHI graduate Anastasia Saenz before the ceremony.