

From the Heart

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IN THIS ISSUE



3 Houston We Have Lift Off!

Join us for the dedication of the Single Parent Family Campus



4 Meet Gayle Jordan

PCHAS' Advanced Education Coordinator



6 Every Day is a Gift From God

Meet Christine Briley Upchurch

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CONGRATULATIONS Hats Off to This Year's Graduates!

In this issue, we celebrate our graduating seniors who are headed to college in the fall along with two college graduates. You'll read about where they are going and their plans for the future. We also give thanks to you and to God for enabling us to offer them a future with hope.



Melissa

College:
Hill College
(Major: Child Development)

Favorite

Activities: playing the trombone, doing hair and makeup.

Melissa came to the PCHAS group home at Itasca in 2003 when she was in first grade. In high school, she has been on the A-B honor roll and plays trombone in the marching band. After graduation, she will work full time at a hair salon and attend Hill College. She will miss her friends at the home and the PCHAS staff, who were so kind to her. She loves the way the people at the home have helped her while she has been there.



Shannon

College: Tyler Junior College

Favorite Activities:

babysitting the children in the nursery at church, reading, drawing and writing, dancing, and hanging out with friends

Shannon moved to the group home in Waxahachie in 2010 when she was in the 9th grade. Throughout high school, she volunteered in the nursery at Central Presbyterian Church. She is thankful for PCHAS and says that she has learned valuable life lessons in the home.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT Ed Knight



PCHAS President, Dr. Ed Knight, with Group Home Residents

It is always a happy occasion to see youngsters graduate from high school and launch into life. But, we know this is just the beginning of new opportunities and challenges ahead. We have done our best to prepare them to face their new beginning and we will continue to be a source of support and guidance, but whatever they achieve is truly up to them.

That's why I feel a double dose of pride in those who will be graduating

from college this year. Their focus and perseverance through adversities has resulted in achieving their goals and excelling in the process, and they have learned the value of continuing to set future goals. The best gift we can provide young people is to teach them how to develop a future vision filled with hope and possibility. Our marvelous employee, Gayle Jordan, is a great example of someone who learned to do that as a young person and now is guiding others in developing that important skill.

PCHAS remains dedicated to offering vulnerable children the safety and security of a comfortable home, while also challenging them to set goals and move steadily toward achieving them. This dedication is reflected in the story of 90-year-old Christine Briley Upchurch, who came to live in a

PCHAS Group Home in 1932 at the age of ten.

When Mrs. Upchurch came to PCHAS, she was one of a few hundred children served each year. Today we serve 4,500 children and families each year, and hope to serve more in the years ahead. I'm excited to announce the expansion of our Single Parent Family program, with new Single Parent Family program homes opening in Waxahachie, San Antonio and Houston. Working with two generations at the same time (mothers and their children), we help launch these families toward a new, more hopeful future. Thank you for your support of Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services, a launching pad for hope!

◀Continued from cover



Donald

College: Texas State Technical College in Waco (Major: Computer Fundamentals)

Favorite Activities: reading, video games

Donald came to the PCHAS home in Waxahachie in 2007. He is looking forward to attending Texas State Technical College in Waco because he is eager to start his courses in computer fundamentals. He is a member of the Technology Student Association (TSA), which is an organization for middle and high school students nationwide who aspire to be future engineers, scientists, and technologists. Donald enjoys attending Central Presbyterian Church's youth group and being a member of TSA.



Jessica

College: Not sure yet (plans to get an associate's degree in computer

science at a junior college, then move on to a four-year university to earn a bachelor's in computer engineering)

Favorite Activities: playing softball, video games, and hanging out with her family and friends

Jessica came to PCHAS at Itasca in 2013 when she was a senior in high school. She will be starting a full-time job this summer as a computer technician at a local company that provides computer networking services to major law firms. She plans to get an associate's degree in computer science at a junior college, then move on to a four-year university to achieve a bachelor's degree in computer engineering.



Luis

College: Navarro College (Major: General Studies)

Favorite Activities: reading,

cooking, listening to music, and attending church

Luis came to the group home in San Antonio in August 2011. He is a good student and made the A-B Honor Roll during his senior year. He currently works at Sonic where he cooks and serves as a car hop. He was in Boy Scouts from the time he was a Cub Scout until age 18. He says he will miss a lot of things about his time on the Itasca campus. Luis says, "I really enjoyed being here. It was a good experience and it really shaped me into the person I am today. I am glad to be called a Presbyterian."



Demondre

Favorite Activities: all things computer-related, including

playing video games.

Demondre will graduate from the Waxahachie School of Choice. He is very interested in computers and technology. After graduation, he hopes to find a job that will challenge him – hopefully a job that involves computers or other technology.



James

College: Hill College (Major: Welding)

Favorite Activities: playing football

and watching television

James came to the home in Itasca during the summer of his junior year in high school. He looks forward to earning his welding certificate at Hill College and settling into life as a welder. He proved he was a hard

worker when he worked as a farm hand in the summer of 2013. He says he will miss having fun with the other children on campus and playing recreational sports.

CONGRATULATION GRADUATES!

HOUSTON WE HAVE LIFT OFF!

Join us in Houston July 9 for the Dedication of the Single Parent Family Campus

On July 9, more than 200 supporters are expected to gather at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Southwest Houston to celebrate the dedication of Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services' new Single Parent Family Program campus. The dedication will take place from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and will include remarks from the president of Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services, Ed Knight, the pastor of St. John's Presbyterian Church, Rev. Jon Burnham, and the Executive Presbyter of New Covenant Presbytery, Rev. Mike Cole.

The Houston Single Parent Family Program is one of three Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services programs that support single mothers and their children. The Houston campus will consist of four duplexes, a landscaped courtyard, and playground. The case manager will live on the campus with the clients, which will include up to seven families at any one time. The other PCHAS Single Parent Family programs are in Waxahachie and Weatherford, Texas.



Co-sponsors of the soon-to-be completed campus include the Greater Houston Builder's Association, HomeAid Houston, St. John's Presbyterian Church, New Covenant Presbytery, Ryland Homes and MASA Studio Architects. The purpose of the ribbon cutting and dedication ceremony is to celebrate the project and to give Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services and HomeAid Houston the opportunity to thank the donors who made the project possible. They will be

joined by representatives from Ryland Homes, the company that served as Builder Captain for the project, and the more than 90 sub-contractors who donated materials and supplies. Light refreshments and tours of the campus will follow the dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony. The public is cordially invited to attend.

For more information, visit texas.pchas.org or contact Margaret Barry, PCHAS Director of Communications, margaret.barry@pchas.org.

PCHAS STAFF PROFILE

Gayle Jordan, Advanced Education Coordinator

by Jared Scott Tesler and Margaret Barry



“I TRY TO GIVE THE CHILDREN IN PCHAS’ CARE THE LANGUAGE, VISION AND HOPE OF GOING TO COLLEGE.”

When Gayle Jordan was 14 years old, her mother, who was single and working two jobs, made a very difficult call to Presbyterian Children’s Homes and Services (PCHAS) in Itasca. She had decided that though she tried her best to provide for Gayle and Gayle’s younger sister, her daughters would be better off living in a PCHAS Group Home. “I’ve always admired my mother for being such a hard worker. She worked as a secretary from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at one company, then from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. at another,” said Gayle. “I also admired her for calling PCHAS—for realizing ‘My daughters deserve more than I can offer them at this time,’” said Gayle.

When she arrived at the Group Home, Gayle was a shy and self-doubting teenager. But with support from her Group Home parents and other PCHAS staff, she earned good grades in school, became a varsity cheerleader and was crowned homecoming queen. Gayle knew early on that a college education would open the door to opportunities her mother did not have. After college,

she worked as an elementary school teacher and served as Director of Development for Ovilla Christian School. In 2006, she was recruited by PCHAS and served as a Development Officer.

Gayle was a successful fundraiser but she missed the education field. Now a certified school counselor with a master’s degree in education, she serves as PCHAS’ Advanced Education Coordinator and helps the next generation of Group Home residents graduate from high school and go to college. “I try to give the children in PCHAS’ care the language, vision and hope of going to college. My job is to help them realize their strengths and recognize their potential,” she says.

According to a *New York Times* article, “Out of Foster Care, Into College,” published November 3, 2013, two-thirds of children in foster care never go to college and very few graduate. Gayle is hopeful that children in PCHAS’ care will defy this trend. Every four to six weeks, she hosts workshops for

high school juniors and seniors on PCHAS’ Group Home campuses to help them understand the benefits of receiving a college education. She helps them apply for financial aid, takes them on campus visits, helps move them into their dorm rooms, attends their graduation ceremonies—basically everything a parent would do for a child in college. She’s their life coach and mentor.

“What drives me in the work I do is seeing students’ potential and helping them achieve their goals. They don’t all graduate from college, but if it’s one out of ten, that means somebody’s life has been changed,” Gayle said. “Part of providing Christ-centered services to children in need involves showing those in our care that they are beloved children of God. I see these students not for who they are today but for who they can become according to God’s plan.”

Photo: Gayle Jordan with Shannon, one of this year’s high school graduates.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Reflections by PCHAS College Graduates

MAKING MY DREAM COME TRUE



By Brittney Connor, former PCHAS Group Home resident

I will be graduating in May from Austin

College—a dream I never thought possible! College has been a long and arduous journey. Luckily, I have had many PCHAS mentors and an entire organization pushing for me to accomplish my dreams. It is because of PCHAS that I will be receiving my Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish with a minor in French. This is a huge honor for me. I am the first person in my family to get a college degree.

I never imagined I would go to college, much less make the Dean's list or graduate with a 3.8 grade point average! It's a miracle that I am not drug or alcohol dependent, that I haven't been to prison, and that I haven't been seriously harmed by the violence I experienced as a child. It's hard growing up knowing that you were born with the odds stacked against you, but there is a way to beat those odds, especially with the help of kind, caring, and loving people—like the people I found at PCHAS.

The words "after graduation" may be daunting for some, but I have so many plans that I can't wait to get started! I have applied for an English Teaching Assistantship at Columbia University with the Fulbright program. After my teaching assistantship, I will apply for a position with Teach for America and hope to teach in a bilingual elementary school in Dallas. I will also attend Southern Methodist University to earn a master's degree in teaching.

PROUDLY GIVING BACK



By Chris Craft, former PCHAS Group Home resident

I will graduate in May from The University of Texas

at Austin with a Bachelor's degree in Social Work. At UT, I was inducted into the Phi Alpha Honor society, the national honor society for social work students, which requires a 3.8 grade point average. After completing a field practicum at the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, I will work for Child Protective Services as a Conservatorship Specialist, then, in 2015, will pursue a graduate degree in social work.

During my senior year at UT, I was involved with policy advocacy initiatives at the Texas State Capitol, including meetings with legislators, policy researchers, and a National Association of Social Workers' "speak out" event on the steps of the Capitol. I've taken a specific interest in several bills in the Texas legislature, including Texas House Bill HB 304, which calls for a cap on caseloads for Child Protective Services caseworkers.

A LESSON IN PERSEVERANCE



By Jessica Venegas, Former PCHAS Group Home Resident

I will receive an Associate of Science degree from

Navarro College in May, and will pursue a Bachelor of Science in Nursing at The

University of Texas in Arlington shortly thereafter. While in college, I worked part-time as a Patient Care Technician at Baylor Hospital. PCHAS has been a huge blessing in my life. I wouldn't be the person I am today without the PCHAS staff who convinced me that I have what it takes to accomplish my goals. I have overcome many obstacles in my life, but I gain strength from a quote by Catholic priest and missionary Walter Elliot: "Perseverance is not a long race; it is many short races one after the other."

PAYING IT FORWARD



By Rosealexander (Rose) Mann

I will graduate from Sam Houston State University (SHSU) with a Bachelor of Science degree in

Political Science and Criminal Justice. While in college, I served as a volunteer mentor through the university's FORWARD Program, which gave me the opportunity to mentor other youth who were "aging out" of the foster care system. My long-term plan is to be an attorney and to advocate for youth in the criminal justice system. I can't thank PCHAS enough for helping me in so many different ways. I also thank God for all He has provided me. During tough times in college, I relied upon the scripture found in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!

MEET CHRISTINE BRILEY UPCHURCH

Former PCHAS Group Home Resident

by Cynthia Hartman

After her mother was killed in a car accident, Christine Briley Upchurch came to PCHAS' Itasca Campus with four of her eight siblings. She remembers the date of her mother's death—November 18, 1933—the day after her tenth birthday. Her father, an itinerant farmer, was unable to care for the younger children himself, and through the intervention of a pastor at their Presbyterian church, the children came to Itasca in 1934.

"There were nine of us altogether," recalls Upchurch. "The five youngest children came to PCHAS. The other four were old enough to be on their own—my three oldest sisters were married and my older brother would soon be married."

At age 90, Upchurch has a surprisingly good memory of her childhood, especially the years spent in Itasca. While she's fuzzy on specific details and dates, she knows that she was well cared for at the home and cannot recall ever wanting for anything.

Although the days and weeks after her mother's death were filled with grief and confusion for the family, she recalls that coming to PCHAS did not frighten or discourage her. She and her siblings were split up to live in separate buildings, but Upchurch did not feel alone or lonely. She grew to love her house mother, Lottie Shanklin Zarbock, and shared a bond with her that lasted throughout her lifetime. Upchurch recalls, "Mrs. Zarbock would have a daily devotional in her room for all of us girls before school. That was especially gratifying for me as a child because it was a constant reminder of the Lord's presence in our lives."



Life at the home in the 1930s was always busy. The children went to school only in the mornings, and there were numerous chores to do in the afternoons. The home at that time had a laundry and a full-fledged farm, which provided some of their food. The girls worked in the laundry, washing and ironing sheets and dining linen (they used cloth napkins and table cloths at the time), and the residents' clothing, while the boys took care of the farm animals and other outdoor chores.

There was a strict disciplinary code, which was necessary for managing so many children. Upchurch recalls that for the most part, she always received "outstanding" and "satisfactory" marks for her behavior. She laughs as she remembers that the one "unsatisfactory" mark came when she had to stand on a chair in the president's residence to retrieve some special glasses that were needed. She had neglected to put a towel or covering over the material on the seat and was later marked down for her behavior.

Not all was work, discipline, and school, however. Upchurch recalls that there was plenty of fun as well. "I remember going to summer camp in Cisco, Texas, for at least six summers, and we had so much fun in the outdoors. And when the new dining hall was built in 1938, we used the basement as a skating rink in the winter. I still remember a young man who was the fastest skater among us. Oh, and Christmas was always such a wonderful time!"

She recalls that area churches would send clothes to the children throughout the year and presents at Christmas. On Christmas day, the children would pile their presents on their beds and would spend the morning visiting each other's rooms to see what everyone had received.

Her oldest sister Maxine, who was married and lived nearby, acted as a surrogate mother for the younger children, making sure they were well cared for and had spending money. She would come to visit as often as she could and take the children to church with her. Upchurch says it was a special treat to drive to church with Maxine and her husband. "They had an actual car. When we went to church at the home, we drove back and forth in a flatbed truck, which was big enough to accommodate a large number of children. When we went to church with Maxine, we got to ride on the inside. Oh, we thought that was special!"



As Upchurch got older, she would often help her house mother Mrs. Zarbock care for those in the infirmary. Says Upchurch, “Mrs. Zarbock was in charge of the infirmary and it just happened to be connected to my building. I enjoyed helping her with patients.” She remembers caring for other residents when an outbreak of influenza occurred in the late 1930s. She also remembers that as an older teenager she would assist Mrs. Zarbock when she filled in for other house parents when they were on vacation or had to be away for other reasons. This experience gave her a new appreciation for the dedication and devotion of the house parents at the home.

Upchurch left the Itasca Campus in 1942 at age 19 and lived with her sister Maxine while attending business school. She married her high school sweetheart in 1943. He went into the army shortly thereafter. Upon his return, he attended a Baptist college and eventually became a pastor at a Baptist church. He served as a pastor for 17 ½ years. Upchurch loved the experience of being a pastor’s wife and to this day leads a women’s church group.

When asked about her time on the Itasca Campus, Upchurch says that, for her, life at the home was good and that all of her physical, emotional, and spiritual needs were met, and then some. She says, “I never wanted for anything. We all had clothes on our backs and enough to eat. We went to school and learned the value of work and discipline. I had spending money and I even had perms in my hair, if you can believe it!”

Had it not been for Presbyterian Children’s Homes and Services, she says she does not know what would have happened to her. She calls PCHAS a “marvelous organization that is divinely necessary.” She hopes that today’s children can feel the love of God through the care they receive at PCHAS, much as she did as a child.

When her husband died a few years ago, she received a card with the following inscription, which she says is a sentiment that guided her when she was a child and continues to guide her today:

“Each new day is a gift from God;
So remember, whether it’s a good day
or a bad day—
It’s always a God loves you day!”

Mrs. Upchurch’s mother was a devout Christian. She loved her church and loved to sing hymns to her children. “That is the abiding memory I have of my mother—her singing hymns to us children,” said Mrs. Upchurch. To this day, I love those hymns. It was my mother who instilled the love of God in me—and I believe that has made all the difference in the world for me.”

Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services is a 501(c)3 charitable organization. All gifts are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. We do not render professional tax advice. Each person should consult a professional advisor.

Are you receiving duplicate mailings or no longer wish to be included on our mailing list?

Contact us:

1.800.888.1904

info@pchas.org

Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services
Development Office
4407 Bee Cave Road, Suite 520
Austin, TX 78746

Be sure to include your complete name and address.

Connect with PCHAS



For sound financial management and transparency, PCHAS has earned a four-star rating from Charity Navigator, the highest ranking the non-profit organization bestows.



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Your church can make a
big difference in a child's life.



As your congregation prepares to celebrate the Church's birthday, please consider designating 40% of this year's Pentecost offering to Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services (PCHAS). Your support will make a big difference in the lives of at-risk children. Each year Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services helps more than 4,500 children and families in Texas and Louisiana. **Lend your support today.**

If you plan to make the PCUSA Pentecost Offering a part of worship next year, we are asking that you dedicate the 40 percent offering for local children's ministries to Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services. PCHAS will help you publicize this offering with bulletin inserts, "Minute for Mission" or other resources for use in your congregation.

You're Invited!

Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services cordially invites you to attend these exciting events this summer and fall:

**May 17: Open House, Single Parent
Family Program House, Waxahachie**

Contact Cyndi Fuller, cyndi.fuller@pchas.org; 972.937.1319

May 17th: San Antonio Graduation Party

Contact Signe Frederickson,
signe.fredrickson@pchas.org; 210.618.7067

June 14th: Itasca "Exes Day" Reunion

Contact Judy Offutt, judy.offutt@pchas.org; 254.687.2302

**July 9th: Houston Single Parent Family Campus
Dedication and Open House**

Contact Jana Hobbs, jana.hobbs@pchas.org; 281.389.8772

August 2nd: Waxahachie Campus Reunion

Contact Akilah Davis, akilah.davis@pchas.org; 972.937.1319

October 16th: San Antonio Luncheon

Contact Signe Frederickson,
signe.fredrickson@pchas.org; 210.618.7067