

2015

Merry Christmas, Season's Greetings and Happy New Year from The Henry and William Evans Home for Children!

Dear Friends,

It is a wonderful task to thank you for your kindness! While completely inadequate, considering the results of your sending good things our way, this is my annual attempt. You have allowed us to share another year in the lives of amazing children. Whether your contribution came in the form of cash, services, or other items we needed; the following is a testament to the love that you sustained.

This year we had a couple of extraordinary events happen. Our program director resigned after 16 years (Thank you, Laura!). Her place was filled by senior social worker LaMishia Allen, who has been placing children with us for most of her 15 year career. LaMishia brings both an understanding of what the Evans Home offers to children who need us most with the passion felt by a loving guardian of those kids.

We also gained new house parents! Jack and Beth Ann let us know in January that they were going to pursue another path, while still fostering children, and generously helped us train their replacements. As Mike and Winona continue into their 14th year (Holy Moly!), they are now joined by counterparts Nile and April DeShong. Nile and April have years of experience in childcare and are thrilled to be a part of our happy home. And we are blessed to have them!

One of the most remarkable things about hiring new people is seeing this place through a new perspective. As they try us on, and we try them, we get to test ourselves in healthy ways and reinvent the parts that need it. This also happens to a

lesser extent with each new child who enters, but less so because the kids have less of a point of reference or willingness to speak up. Fascinating how history repeats . . . I started wondering about the last time I hired a new program director and house parents at the same time and looked back at a letter I wrote in 2000:

"Last summer, the house parents and program directors (Frank, Judy, Pat, Carole, Laura R. and Laura K.) re-vamped nearly the entire daily living program for our children. I cannot express my pride at the willingness of these people, all veterans in child care, to be willing to discard and/or rework the very tools of their trade. What followed was a completely new and inspired way of managing the lives of our children, with new interventions which empower the children and challenge them to take control rather than relinquish it. Sounds pretty complicated, but ultimately the children are much more invested in their daily routine, and able to shape it themselves during spirited family meetings."

I continue to be proud of my people, and thankful for the open, hopeful and loving perspective they bring to our program!

Here's just a sampling of our fun this year.

January began with two of our middle school boys doing travel wrestling thanks to scholarships paid by the coach. We had a January birthday party, a pizza party thanks to the Women of the Moose, and went to a flute

concert at Shenandoah University!

In February we did painting and crafts at home and at Polka Dot Pot, Girls on the Run, and a pancake breakfast at Round Hill UMC. (Plus our own Chili Dinner at Braddock Street!)

March meant wrestling tournaments and baseball tryouts, an 18 year old's birthday, and a suicide prevention walk at Shenandoah University. We also painted wood hanging art for our rooms, went to Kiwanis Pancake Day (!), and partied with Phi Mu Alpha (music fraternity).

In April all of our older kids went to LFCC for a tour and orientation with the Great Expectations coach; we celebrated a 13-year-old's birthday, and the whole group went to Cumberland, MD for an autism walk with house mom Winona.

We also needed some Spring house and yard makeover help, in a big way! Kevin Levi came and rewired our kitchen for our new dishwasher; American Woodmark and our own Ann Wallinger came and hit our gardens; Braddock Street UMC sent an army to take on everything from organizing our recreation and woodshop buildings to rebuilding our girls' clubhouse; and Victory Church came and painted!

Also in April we went to a Wizards game (!), painted mason jars for our rooms, and ended the month with armband night at the carnival.

May started with our senior running the 10K, everybody parking cars in the field

before the parade, and then a personal meet and greet with Kevin Jonas! Later in the month we learned archery without putting any eyes out (or windows, or . . .). We also celebrated two events at Handley: senior chapel and graduation. Chapel, because for the first time ever, the speaker designated by senior leadership was a student rather than faculty: our student! He was spectacular, receiving a standing ovation.

Summers are always crazy fun for us. With older kids juggling family outings and vacations around work schedules, and younger kids doing the same around day and overnight camps. This year we also managed a really cool trip to the TRACON center and Cold War museums, plus a unique "behind the scenes" tour of Old Navy, where we got to learn what it would be like to work there from stocking shelves to dressing mannequins.

Throw in pool parties, a camping trip, laser tag, water parks, theme parks, and the fun was afoot!

But wait! School started August 10? Yowzah!

This fall was great fun with our new fire-pit thanks to Lowe's, who redesigned our pavilion. Then they partnered with Sherwin Williams and painted inside! A girl-scout troop attacked one of our storage rooms inside as well, and First Christian came and repaired the drywall damage from last winter in our Lloyd House.

One of the community groups who came to help us this year included a

contractor who was painting a small section of metal roof (the main house is shingled). As I walked by below, he casually said, "Hey, you KNOW you need a new roof on the whole building, right?" Right. Right on cue we had three new leaks added to our existing intermittent shower in the living room over the next few weeks. The estimate? \$36,000.00. I can't figure out why our current roof wasn't covered by warranty? It was just built in 1952 . . .

We were guests at Robert and Luciana Duvall's farm in early October, a tea party at the Snowden's, and celebrated Halloween with a harvest party at the home of our new house parents, Nile and April (followed by trick-or-treating back home where we enjoyed our pumpkins thanks to Virginia Farm Market).

And here we are in the holidays again. So hard to believe!

We started this year with 12 children, and after some came and left our current family is seven. We also have four in the Lloyd House, our alumni house next door, three of whom are attending college and working. The fourth is working full-time at Shockey's, and we have also provided partial support to over a dozen other former residents this year.

On the other hand, many of our former residents have also helped us, including two who put on a yard sale on our property, and a single mom in Louisiana who does a matching program through her employer every year so we can buy

Christmas presents for our kids (because she remembers how great Christmases are at the Evans Home!).

Here's our current crew (names changed, of course):

Rudy turned 10 this year (party!) and the little man is not really physically quick. On a liquid scale, he's like molasses or King Syrup. On the other hand, he truly is as sharp as they come . . . and funny! House parents are always talking about word games he plays with them that are way sophisticated and hilarious. His favorite activity is reading. And his least is probably walking. So he combines them, when the latter is necessary, and his cruising speed is usually about five to seven words a step. "Hey, why don't you go get your laundry so we can get your wash started . . ." begins an epic pilgrimage to the first room on the left (silently narrated by J. K. Rowling).

Darleen is Rudy's sister, and she is 12. She also has an extremely dry sense of humor. The second time I met her, I overheard her making a funny comment about the color of our "guest" bathroom (which has the unfortunate ambience of the inside of a very old pumpkin), and I told her I thought she was funny. She spun around and said, "Yes, I am HILARIOUS." I asked her if there was anything we could get for her to make her feel more at home, and she said, "I want to play viola again like I did when I was little." Viola, really? Like the violin? I asked? "They are not the same," was the cool but dead serious response. I'll see what we can do, I said, and the smile that came back could have melted my darkest mood ever. I needed to make a call to a very special friend at Shenandoah Conservatory.

Maurice is getting ready to leave us. A tough-on-the-outside, soft-on-the-inside 13 year old who spends so much energy keeping up appearances that he sometimes forgets what role he's trying to maintain. This is a kid I wish we could have for a long time. The kind of kid you want to follow around with a camera until you can string together enough candid photo shots to then confront him with and show him what a delightful person he is when he's not being self-aware. He's a lovely young man, full of kind instincts and generous thoughts. With a lot of hard learned reasons to keep his armor intact for some time to come.

Conrad is our frustrated musician, skateboarder, car enthusiast, artist and magician. He struggles with mood control and just about every other typical teenage boy syndrome, at times a few. He is also brilliant. Although he is bored with it now, and doesn't play much, I sat down at the piano a couple of years ago and played a tune. He had never played before. He sat beside me and played the same tune. By last year he was performing in church on Sundays in Stephens City. When he goes to a skateboard park, we need to make sure he's wrapped up like the Michelin Man because he tries, and nails, tricks by those who have been practicing for years. His recent interest is magic. Scary! (Now if he could just make his homework appear.)

Jacky is our most recent addition. She moved in in August. She's 16 and pretty sure that the sun and stars revolve around the exact spot she occupies. Wait, I have a daughter at home the same age, and she ALSO is pretty sure that . . . (sigh). Jacky has an amazingly charming side to her outgoing nature. We were at a bene-

fit program for the Evans Home last weekend and a woman won a raffle worth some cash. The woman went to the announcer and quietly donated her winnings back. Jacky observed this and was on a mission. She found one of the sponsors and asked if the winner could be found so that she, personally, could thank this kind person for supporting her home. I wasn't in earshot when the connection was made, but the smile that the woman gave me said volumes. Pretty cool.

Jennifer has been with us for three years now. Her teachers were absolutely buzzing at our Christmas party last week about her amazing potential. What a world of difference from the quiet, underachieving 12 year old that came in our door. She's learned so much . . . how to study hard, play hard, braces on, braces off, all the while balancing the crazy world of the Evans Home with the wonderful, ever-present and solid love of her father. But recently she's discovered a new frontier even more formidable for a 14 year old girl. Boys! And so it begins.

Sam is 15. Large for his age, and fit, with a steady gaze and an easy presence (even with adults). But the weight of personal responsibility is heavy on Sam, and he is a natural follower. He is scheduled to leave fairly soon and move back to a neighboring community. I asked him how things would be for him there and he said, "They are expecting me to play basketball, baseball, football, soccer, track and cross country!" (I was a little surprised he missed badminton and

chess.) One of the sweetest things about Sam is his relationship with little Rudy. I do hope he will always remember the joy he brought to that little boy during their big-little brother time together here.

Jordan left us this year! He was graduated from Handley, threw an opening Winchester Royal's pitch into medium orbit, and spent the summer worrying the house parents and other kids to the absolute ends of their limits. And then after Kris went through what felt like an eternity of meetings and interviews and walk-throughs, HE MOVED OUT! Don't get me wrong, we adore Jordan. And we're still in touch with him, a lot. He was with us for 10 years. He now has some assisted living support and is doing wonderfully on his own. Kris found a perfect apartment for him, that we were able to help furnish for him, although we refused his wish for a barbeque grill in the living room (sigh).

On behalf of the children and adults of the Evans Home, I thank you for all of this.

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and Happy every Holiday you celebrate!

My wish and hope for you this year is that your home is as filled with love as ours is!

Gratefully,

Marc



Evans Home Staff: Marc Jaccard, LaMishia Allen, Kris Short, Liz Brenner, Winona & Mike Powers, Nile & April DeShong

Evans Home Board of Directors: *Ann Wallinger, Chairperson; Dan Martin, Vice-Chairperson; Liza Carr, Secretary/Treasurer; Kim Craft; James DuBrueler, Jr., Brian Hester, Netty Hottel, Maggie Major, Sheriff Lenny Millholland, Mayor Elizabeth Minor, Stephen Shendow, Stuart Wolk*



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