

2017

*Merry Christmas, Seasons Greetings,
and Happy New Year from
The Henry and William Evans Home for
Children!*

This is a message of thanks -- our thanks to you for another year of unfailing response to children in need -- allowing them the chance to be safe, and to build on their dreams. Whether you chose to honor us with an annual contribution of money, services or goods, or you chose to honor someone else with a gift, your generosity has helped us to prepare children for a promising future. This is really quite remarkable. What you have done for yet another year is to create a cycle of love that competes with the effects of previous trauma and helps promote life-long resiliency.

Each year when I sit down to write this letter it gets harder. It's a time of reflection for me, and the magnitude seems to be compounded every time. The lives I've had the privilege to share here crowd into my mind, and it truly has been an amazing ride. Allow me to describe the current crew, and you may get an idea.

Our adults are my partners, friends and so much more. LaMishia is quintessentially competent. Maintaining her office as an inner-sanctum of organization and zero pet-hair amidst the chaos that is Liz-marc-world is truly one of her greatest feats. She glides through the front door, makes hilarious wise-cracks with Liz as she picks up 12 inches of phone messages, does a quick stop in my office to bump up the thermostat and quietly closes her portal. When she comes out for air it is with a full schedule of every activity for every kid including family meetings, school appointments, work schedules, group outings and entertainment happenings, individual therapy sessions, music lessons, dental and medical appointments, and an agenda for her next staff meeting. I LOVE her skills! What have I learned from her this year that I didn't expect? The concept of "protected time," (which, I'm gathering, is a little like having a vacation property in Brigadoon); and something called "essential oils," which I now know do not just come in 5 and 10w30 weight.



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Home for Children, Inc.**

330 E. Leicester Street, Winchester, VA 22601

Liz is, well, Liz. Besides being the voice of our home, the keeper of our books, and the artist behind our best foot forward when someone else sees us ... she's a bit of a wonderful mess. 100% dedicated, first to step up to make an extra meal when the house parents are over-extended, she's also the most likely to leave her keys in the refrigerator afterwards. EVERYONE loves Liz, including the kids who make faces and yell hi to her as they run past her window to catch the bus!

Nile is the epitome of confidence and consistency. He is our house father who has, over this year plus, overseen the complete re-organizing of every inch of space in and around our 10,000 square foot home plus alumni house plus 5 acre lot plus storage and garage areas. He has Pied Piper qualities that get our kids completely wrapped up in their chores and deriving pride and a sense of ownership from throwing themselves into old-fashioned hard work. Nile also has amazing instincts about the children under his care. He can read moods with a glance, and is a master at facilitating groups where children give permission to each other to make good personal decisions and demonstrate strong, positive peer support.

April is our house mother who spent the year making sense of all of the hard work of the re-organization, keeping the flow of resources moving with wish lists and volunteer groups to support and supply the kids. April is our "Shirley Partridge" (from the TV show). Part supermom, part hippy. She's got mega empathy skills, and can zero in on what a child is truly experiencing in our home, and she's never going to let you leave without your breakfast. When I fill in as a house parent, April leaves me a list of activities, meals, meds, shower times, bedtimes, favorite topics, sensitive issues, phone calls to avoid, phone calls to die for, and on, and on! April loves all kids ... and dogs! She often answers the door with a couple of teenagers behind her looking over her

shoulder to see who's here and a four legged creature under her arm just as curious.

Paul, our newest house father, is like a combination of Ward Cleaver and Al Bundy. I swear this guy is the calmest Dad I've seen in a long, long time. He can be inundated by frantic adolescent drama, and respond with the calmest, "Ok, so let me understand this. You will absolutely die if this person doesn't say these exact words to you in this exact way ... (pause) ... so how is that not letting them run your life?" Paul loves to teach by showing. He's always got his sleeves rolled up and hands into chores, projects, games, or whatever is afoot with the kids at the time, and the kids love it.

Katie is our new house mother. She has a ready smile that lifts the lowest mood or sustains the brightest one. And she is another mad scheduler! I know if I ask, "How can I help?" she can casually direct me to multiple locations in order, with precise and correct instructions. Left to my own devices I have been known to arrive at the wrong school asking for the wrong kid too many times to count. Katie also has a remarkably calming influence, completely in control as she goes about the bazillion machinations of running the house. And she finds it fun! Among her notable additions, Katie has brought **curry** into our kitchen!

So Paul and Katie are new. They replaced Mike and Noni, who retired after 15 fabulous years last December. But it took a while to find them. And when we did, (in like, March) it took a while to get them! They were working with children in Korea, and couldn't begin with us until September. That left April and Nile working both shifts solo much of the year, with LaMishia and me filling in with an occasional assist from our old friend Frank Page! The kids got to meet Katie and Paul a few times via Skype, and they sent us a care package full of crazy Korean things to eat that made our lips

numb. And now they're here!! What a well-worth wait it's been.

Our children, who shared some or all of the past year in our happy home, will always carry with them our faith in them and our love, as well as the commitment of support if the going gets a little rough. Their names have been changed here, for confidentiality:

Jennifer has had 3 boyfriends this year. And when it's over, IT'S OVER. Apart from being a great student destined for college after next year, she's been busy with work, flute, 2 AP classes, Academic Team, and a bunch of other regular stuff. Drama!! When she's telling a story about something that happened with her friends, get comfortable and ready for the long version. Her dad had a scare in the hospital, and she was very vigilant about visiting with him and seeing the doctors to get details, follow-up orders, etc. She was also really great with younger girl who was a handful. Homecoming, Prom, and everything else amazing was on her calendar. She has received mail from colleges near and far, and wants to do something medical. Jennifer is going places!

Kyle is our High School Senior and is preparing for a transition into our Lloyd House (alumni house). He has great weeks and challenging ones, don't we all, but his seem to be driven in part by his obsession of the month: sunglasses; paper planes; car magazines; guitars; skate boards; the amazing thing is that the variety of his magic bag seems boundless ... and the focus, when it lands, is like a Labrador on a wet tennis ball ... unshakable. This is the guy who has seemingly limitless talents, and the handicap that comes with that: when good performance comes easily, it must be hard to make yourself do the hard work to become great.

Raymond "Let's have another 'do nothing' day except this time it doesn't end with a dog dying."

This kid is the walking book of quotes. Brilliant, always journaling (usually in the form of working on his own original comic book series). This is an eccentric 70-year-old in a 12-year-old body. He even stoops and bends down to pick things up like he has a bad back. When asked, the doctor reported no spinal issues, and the kid finally showed he has the perfect ability to touch his toes. He just thinks it's easier to go into a slow slouch, down, down . . . ending up almost fetal, and then rising by sliding his feet out and arms slowly up like my 11 year old Newfoundland coming off a ceramic tile floor.

Billy (Willie), our family dog for so many years, left us this year, hence the quote from Raymond. What an amazing little guy. We all miss him. Lots.

Dana, 14-year-old sister of Raymond. Viola, Latin, Interact Club, would love to spend her free time studying and re-doing every assignment until perfect plus one. The other girls were thrilled when she went to Homecoming ... and danced! Her sense of fairness is just as strong as her work and study-ethic, and she often calls house meetings to bring attention to observed injustices. When I'm filling in as the "B" team house parent, I always feel confident going to Dana for a referee call when I'm asked whether such and such is against the rules.

Sal very comfortably finds a place in the back of the class and then looks for an opportunity to entertain. He never intends to be defiant or lazy, but somehow always winds up as the last kid finished with his chore, or the last out the door for an activity. Still, amazingly aware of emotional needs of those around him, and often goes out of his way to be kind. He's 14 now, and at that awkward time of in-between that we all remember so well. Most memorable event this year? I'm guessing the surgery to have something removed from his ear.

Moving on.

Amy left us this year, and moved in with a foster family. She is still a regular visitor, however, and we love it! Even though she no longer officially lives here, she holds the record for most notes in the “suggestion box,” and she continues to dominate our hearts and attention as she completes her senior year of high school!

Dillan was with us to attempt a transition from a more structured placement to independence. This guy has it all. Looks, talent, charm and humor in spades. He was a great influence on the rest of the group, in the words of our house mom, “more like a coach to them, pushing them to be better . . .” Unfortunately he wasn’t quite ready to handle as much independence as we needed from him, himself, and he moved out to get more support.

Rose was with us for a couple of very memorable months this year. An 8 year old with some formidable inner challenges, she was well-behaved enough at home but apparently off the rails in school. She wound up needing more structure and treatment than we could provide or procure for her here, and we do hope she is finding that combination now. One of the sweetest things to watch with her was the interaction she had with much older Jennifer during her short stay. What a warm and supportive relationship from the start.

Caroline and her brother moved in after their older sister Amy left us for another home. Caroline is obviously enjoying being the oldest direct family influence in her younger brother’s life. Like her sister before, she would think it perfectly natural if I put her on the payroll as junior staff. She has the “correct” opinion about everything going on with everyone else (not just her brother), and is more than happy to jump right in with it. She’s also extremely helpful with tasks, generally positive when

she’s not busy correcting someone, and extremely talented both academically and musically. When there’s laughter down the girl’s hall, she’s usually in the fray.

Timmy is the younger brother. At age 10, he had a tough time moving in at first, needing lots of TLC at bedtime. But we’re definitely past all that now, and what a fun little guy he has become! Always ready and willing for whatever is up, he seems to really enjoy both activities with our nutty bunch as well as his visits with family. He even handles sometimes helpful quips from his sister in stride – most of the time. (Don’t we all have that one well-intentioned someone??)

Peter joined us in September. He turned 18 in November. How hard must it be to attempt to assimilate into our group while keeping an eye on such fast approaching independence? All in all he is doing it with great dignity. Not all the time, but most of the time for sure. This young man has a world of potential in many ways, but the most striking is his natural ability to be liked. Seriously, putting him in a crowded room is like throwing a breadcrumb in a pond. He’s a celebrity waiting to be celebrated. Won’t it be fun to watch what he does with this magnetism?

James came to us in October. He’s also 17. This guy has a ton of priorities bobbing around in his head, and his struggle is real. He is such a gentle soul, with lots of possibilities waiting for him. The challenge is daunting to think about, isn’t it? Going through the pains and fears of senioritis (for lack of a better term), with only well-intentioned basic strangers to help you through? And here we go again. Let’s get this one into college?!

Dee Dee came in, did a lap around our living room, moved into the Girls’ hall, and then moved right out. Seriously. She was with us for 3 days I think? They

were great days though, but a court hearing presented another option . . . one that we deeply hope will be as wonderful for her.

Victoria is our newest. She's in a ton of extra-curricular stuff at High School, both musical and athletic, and she's fun! Lots of energy, and the house parents all report that since her arrival, the Girls' hall is often LOUDER with hilarity in the evenings than the Boys'. (Which I can tell you is saying something, since I've been a keeper at that Boys' Zoo.)

As always our year has had its ups and downs, triumphs and near misses, and overall it's been an absolute blast. It was brimming with recitals, concerts, meets, more concerts, and games. We hosted a whole series of Life Skills workshops, a Writing workshop, Craft workshops, a Magic workshop, and cooking class. We went to art exhibits, museums, lots of shows of all kinds, zoos, all kinds of athletic events, movies, restaurants, festivals, the beach, the river, the bay, amusement parks, and a demolition derby. We performed volunteer service everywhere we could think of. We cried some and laughed a ton. It is indeed a profound privilege we adults in the Evans Home feel about the time we share in the lives of these children. They inspire us by virtue of their perseverance, resilience, and their capacity for joy. Because of them, ours truly is a family atmosphere, full of love and celebrations of talents, potential and dreams.

Without your support, none of this would be possible. Thank you.

On behalf of the adults and children of the Evans Home, I wish you the happiest of holidays and a wonderful New Year!

Sincerely,



Marc Jaccard
Executive Director



**Henry & William Evans
Home for Children, Inc.**

330 E. Leicester Street, Winchester, VA 22601

Evans Home Staff: Marc Jaccard, LaMishia Allen, Liz Brenner, Nile & April DeShong, Paul & Katie Williams

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