



A safe refuge for children who are in need of a home.

3rd Quarter 2019

## From the Executive Director;

Here we are in the dog days of Summer anticipating Fall, with so much for which to be thankful. I share with some sadness that Jody Davis has decided God is calling him elsewhere to another role in God's kingdom. As many of you know, Mr. Davis has been serving as our Executive Director, but he and Debbie have actually served a total of seven years and were our first houseparents, helping to open Covenant Children's Home. We wish him well as he pursues a new chapter in his life. His wife, Deborah Davis, is staying with Covenant Children's Home (CCH) as our Program Director. So, we will recruit a new Executive Director. I have stepped away from Board duties and will serve as Interim Executive Director for the time it takes for God to bring us a new Exec. to CCH. I have been involved in the background on the board since the inception of CCH, so I am no stranger to this ministry.

Let me first say our team at Covenant Children's Home first and foremost thank God daily for all of you our supporters who have stood by this ministry for over 10 years since we opened our doors. As of mid- 2019, over 75 children have come to live for a season with us. We have cared for kids in need of all ages and backgrounds, both girls and boys and our family continues to take shape. Right now, we have a total of 5 boys and girls from age 5 to 13.

We are also very pleased to introduce houseparents Jeff and Susan and Curt and Bunny who came aboard in July for the most important job of walking out this very special ministry each day with the kids. They are seasoned houseparents with lots of experience, coming to us from Florida Baptist Children's Home.

Recently I was reading Coach Tony Dungy's new book The Soul of a Team, where he shares the key principles for any type of team, football, non-profit or otherwise. Tony believes that what makes a winning team are these four principles:

- Selflessness
- Ownership
- Unity
- Larger purpose

May we all heed Tony's advice. If you want to be part of this team, we welcome your support. Financial support is always critical to the effort, but so are volunteers and other in-kind services. If you have been thinking about getting involved, please contact our office, 489-2565. Elsewhere in this newsletter are pictures and an update on where we are on our 2<sup>nd</sup> house.

Only by the Grace of God,

Avis Marie Craig, Interim Executive Director

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. **Philippians 2:1-4 (NIV)**

Angelique sat silently by herself on the couch. While this house was a very busy place, she usually felt alone in the noise and daily happenings of the home she had been placed in. Angelique was alone.

She had been removed from her biological parents due to abuse and neglect. Now, her life was filled with broken placement after placement. She wanted a home, but these placements weren't her home. She would push the boundaries of each foster family. Did they love her? Could she trust them? The constant rejection of not being wanted filled her life with failure after failure in her heart. Through the years she had learned to make choices based on her eagerness to be loved and accepted but they conflicted with her fear of being rejected. Now, she sat silently as the thoughts of those choices and consequences flooded her mind. In a rush of emotions and disappointments, she exclaimed to the house parent as he passed by, "Mr. Curt, I am such a *mess-up!* There is nothing I can do that isn't all messed up. Every choice I make is bad! I'm bad!" This stopped the house parent in his tracks. As he stared at her trying to make sense of this latest outburst, she looked straight in his face and said "Mr. Curt do you still love me?"

A softness came into the eyes of a man that had come to fill the role of father, protector, teacher and guardian. "Hon," he said, "there's something you need to understand about Ms. Bunny and I. What you **do** has no bearing on whether or not we love you. We love you because we **choose** to love you. You are precious to us. **Now**, we may not agree with your choices and may think they are wrong, but they will never ever make us not love you." Her eyes began to tear and her face brighten through the cloud that had formed in her mind.

Angelique's story is so common in the world of the Children's Home. Events not of their own making have thrust children into a world of fear and brokenness. One longing rings through their thoughts and actions - "Is there anyone that really loves me?" Often times they make wrong choices in their efforts to fill that empty place that has risen in their lives someone that would shine a light of hope in their often bleak and hopeless world.

Covenant Children's Home believes that we can be that beacon of hope for these children, an anchor in lives that are full of torment.



It may be Hot Summer days and nights right now, but fall is on the way and Work Continues on our Second HOPE Home

By the end of July, our road extension to our second home at Covenant Children’s Home was paved and site improvements completed. That means we are another step closer. I can almost hear the voices of those children who will soon find shelter and safety at CCH in the new HOPE home as it continues to take further shape. This home will provide for 6 children along with house parents to care for them. With two homes, our capacity will increase from 8 to 14 children, at a time when there is a critical shortage of homes for foster children in our state, region and the counties we serve.

If you haven’t been by in a while, we now have the slab and block walls up and are at 35% complete. With the onset of fall, we want to focus our attention on completing the fundraising to close in the house and see the roof in place, and then on to completion. That will happen as our community continues their support for this much needed home.

Please ask God to direct your heart in helping us move HOPE cottage forward.

And Remember together *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”* Phil 4:13 (NKJV)

From the Building Committee – Brian Ruane and Avis Marie Craig



# HOUSEPARENT PERSPECTIVE

## MEET OUR NEW HOUSEPARENTS !!!!!



Jeff and Susan Becker joined the CCH family as houseparents in June 2019. Married for 28 years, the Beckers have been working with children and teens for more than thirty years. Jeff, a licensed and ordained minister, has served in churches in a variety of capacities, from youth pastor to associate pastor, interim pastor, and more. Susan has been a preschool teacher, children's pastor, behavioral health professional, as well as working with children in other capacities. Together, they have served in houseparent roles (houseparent, teaching parent, childcare worker) for about ten years altogether, in addition to raising two children of their own.

Jeff and Susan, with their children, Nate and Millie, travelled in itinerant ministry as Jeremiah 29:11 Ministries from 2001 until 2013. Now grown, Nate and His wife Jessica are serving as missionaries in the favelas (slum communities) of Sao Paulo, Brazil. Millie lives in Niceville, Florida, where she works as a dog trainer.

After about a twenty-year hiatus, the Lord brought the Beckers back into the ministry of houseparenting in 2017. They are excited to be here in Dunnellon and look forward to seeing the Lord work in the lives of children and families through the ministry of Covenant Children's Home.

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Curt and Mary Ellen Simmons have an extensive history of working with broken families and at-risk children. From over four decades of ministry in the pastorate, youth pastorate and music/worship to the last eight years as primary house parents, they offer maturity and experience to the wonderful team at Covenant Children's Homes.

Curt, a licensed and ordained minister, is often heard to say, "What we try to bring to every child God brings our way is to demonstrate the unconditional love that our Heavenly Father has shown to us." His humor and wisdom are a powerful combination, bringing guidance and smiles to the many children he's loved on through the years.

Mary Ellen, more fondly known as Ms. Bunny, brings a powerful heart to the ministry here at Covenant Children's Home with her own testimony of God's grace, protection and healing. She spent much of her professional career as a marketing director, but she was committed to working with children and lead children's programs in the church. When God called them to be house parents, Bunny realized how deep her passion was to offer hope to these precious children. As she embraces each of them, she can hear and understand the brokenness each child comes from and offers hope and love as God uses her to demonstrate His unfailing love and faithfulness to them.

Curt and Bunny have six wonderful children and fourteen beautiful grandchildren spread across this country and in Australia.



Able, who works with Curt and Bunny, is a registered therapy dog.

"Able makes me happy when I'm sad."  
Anthony



“Thank you God, for a nice home to live in  
and always having a full belly.”

Dinner time prayer from one of the kids

## Contact Us

For more information.

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Visit us on the web at

[www.covenantchildrenshome.org](http://www.covenantchildrenshome.org)

Check out our Facebook page.

Making a difference one child at a time.

### **Covenant Children's Home**

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PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE