

## **If not us, then who?**

Why Children's Hope Alliance is providing hope for children & families across N.C.

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*Hope, Health, and Healing for Generations*

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# every journey is different...

and we're committed to walking side-by-side  
with children and families along the way

To Our CHA, Barium Springs  
and Grandfather Home Family,

It can be difficult to say "yes," especially when  
saying "yes" means things could be hard. But  
that's what we do at Children's Hope Alliance.  
We say "yes" to helping the children that so  
many others say they can't help. But that's the  
very reason children like Kayla can find a forever home, the reason  
Logan looks forward to a future where he wants to be an engineer,  
and the reason Tarron can finally manage his anxiety and Mitchell  
has a positive relationship with his family.

Read their stories in the following pages. Take a moment to be as  
in awe as I am at the journeys these young people have made in  
their lives. Yes, these are challenging cases. It's challenging work.  
But if we don't do it, who will? Who will help these children who  
would otherwise be lost?

Our staff, foster parents, and adoptive homes are all willing to  
take a chance, get their hands messy, and stand by children who  
others may view as "impossible." And I'm very proud to say we are  
making a difference.

Regards,

*Celeste Dominguez*  
Celeste Dominguez, President & CEO







**MITCHELL**, age 14

CHA's Hawthorn Heights, the only youth shelter located west of Asheville, is based in Bryson City.

\*Child's name and photo have been changed for his protection, but his story is very real.

## A Relationship Repaired

The court decision was final. Mitchell wasn't going to be allowed to return home – not because of his mother or his father, but because of him. He was considered “ungovernable.”

Before that day in court, arguments between Mitchell and his parents happened daily. He didn't respect them. He didn't follow house rules. His parents still loved him, but they feared their relationship with their 14-year-old son was beyond repair.

When Mitchell entered through the doors at Hawthorn Heights at the beginning of the summer, he was still upset with his family. “They just want to get rid of me,” he said. And he was convinced the reason he had to live at Hawthorn Heights was because his mom and dad didn't love him anymore.

It took some time, but eventually Mitchell opened

up. He decided to put effort into setting goals. He participated in therapy. And he was determined to heal the damaged relationships in his life.

Mitchell's efforts paid off. He's done an outstanding job at Hawthorn Heights. He's become a role model for others and encourages them to do their best. He started visiting with his parents on a regular basis. He went home for overnight visits, and he and his family got along for the first time in years.

At his last team meeting, which included CHA staff members, his parents, and Mitchell, his mom and dad both said they both noticed a turnaround in his behavior. In fact, his father said he is happy the family is spending quality time together again. And the entire family recognizes their communication has improved drastically and they feel closer with one another as a result. ✨

\*Child's name and photo have been changed for her protection, but her story is very real.

# A journey past trauma

**GENESYS**, age 19



Eleven years ago, Genesys entered “the system.” She was 8 years old and had endured sexual abuse from cousins, as well as physical abuse and neglect from her mother. Like so many others, Genesys moved through placements in different homes. Fortunately, at age 13, she arrived in the home of the foster mother who still cares for her today.

After a tumultuous past, Genesys had to cope with feelings she didn't understand and didn't know how to control. That's when her foster mother started taking her to therapy sessions at Children's Hope Alliance Outpatient Services. The approach the therapist used with her addressed the trauma she had faced as a young girl, and it helped her to define her story instead of letting past events define her. She also learned how to regulate her emotions and engage in relaxation techniques.

Genesys' foster mother and each of the CHA staff members who have worked with her over the years are amazed at her resilience. She's found support through a church community, joined the PRAISE team, and dances with them each Sunday. She's learned how to be trusting, kind, and warm to others, even though others in her life had not always been kind or warm.

Last year, she went to her school prom, graduated from high school, reconnected with some of her family members, and continued to move forward on her journey.

Today, 19-year-old Genesys is taking with her the skills and strategies she learned through her participation in Outpatient Services as she searches for employment and begins her first semester in college. ✨





In the last issue of *Journey*, you read about a 15-year-old boy named Santiago who lives at the Grandfather Home campus. You may remember that he started attending the local high school. You may also remember that, as a freshman, Santiago made the varsity football team. And you may recall that more than anything, he wanted to find a forever home.

He had a terrific first year of high school. He participated

on the football team, and other kids at Grandfather Home enjoyed attending the games and cheering for him as he ran down the field. For the first time in his life, Santiago felt a sense of accomplishment and pride.

But he still wanted one thing: a family. And well before the end of his sophomore year, he will have that as well. Please join us in congratulating Santiago as he joins his forever family in the coming months. ✨

## By the Numbers

Why we do what we do...

**400,000**

The number of kids in North Carolina who have an emotional, mental, or behavioral disorder

**115,000**

The estimated number of NC children who do not live with a parent

**112,000**

The number of kids in the U.S. who are waiting to be adopted

**19,000**

Children who "age out" of foster care each year who are never adopted or reunified with family members

**1 in 4 within 2 years**

The statistic of foster children who "age out" of care and are later arrested

**1 in 2**

The number of foster children who graduate from high school

Resources:  
Adoption & Foster Care Analysis  
& Reporting System / July 2016  
Child Welfare Outcomes



\*Names and photos have been changed for the family's protection, but their story is very real.

## Help for a struggling young mother

At a time when she should have been thinking about getting a driver's license for the first time, Camilla had just given birth to a baby girl of her own. The baby girl was sweet and beautiful, but she was very fussy and difficult to comfort. It made first-time parenting very difficult for Camilla.

Unlike most girls at age 16, she was already married. Camilla was raised by parents whose traditions included a male-dominated household and arranged marriages. While Camilla did not dislike her husband, she did not care for his controlling nature. He cared for his daughter, but he made all of the decisions for the family – including the decision to refuse to attend marriage counseling, despite problems the couple was having in their relationship.

Camilla needed help. And the Catawba Valley Healthy Families program at Children's Hope Alliance offered resources and education for the young mother. The home visitor helped the family identify strengths they already possessed and helped them learn to build on those areas to overcome their challenges. She also linked them to community resources including food stamps, free children's activities at the public library, and medical providers.

When Camilla initially disclosed that the couple was having marital problems, the home visitor shared curriculum on healthy relationships and open communication. The home visitor continued to offer support as the couple tried to work through their issues, and ultimately the mother realized the relationship was not working for her.



She wanted the opportunity to choose her own husband.

When Camilla shared her decision with her parents to file for divorce, they were not supportive. They cut off their relationship with Camilla completely.

Now without her primary support network, Camilla turned to the home visitor for help. And, once again, the Children's Hope Alliance program helped the struggling young mother grow towards independence. While she continued her studies at school and started a new job, the home visitor helped her find ways to manage the stress that came with losing the support from her family and learning to share custody of the child with the father after the divorce.

Camilla is an excellent mother. Armed with CHA-developed materials about upcoming milestones, strategies for potty training, discipline, introducing healthy foods, effectively co-parenting, and a variety of other parenting topics, she had answers to her many questions.

Today, Camilla and her ex-husband have an amicable relationship and are effectively co-parenting. In fact, both of them agree that they get along better now that they are not married. Camilla has earned her CNA license and has been accepted into nursing school. She is working full time and has found scholarships to help pay for her education. She has made friends at work and is actively involved with her church. Her daughter is enrolled in preschool where she is learning letters and numbers, spends time with both of her parents, and is very loved. ✨

# WE'LL HELP YOU GET INTO THE SWING OF THINGS

## YOU CAN BE A FOSTER PARENT.

**1-844-791-3117**  
**[www.ChildrensHopeAlliance.org](http://www.ChildrensHopeAlliance.org)**







## COVER STORY

# Logan finds his forever family: Meet the Hoopers

**J**aime Hooper serves as the principal at a local elementary school where approximately 600 students walk through the front doors every morning. But there's one student in particular that stood out to her, and she remembers the first time she ever set eyes on him.

"I saw Logan, and I don't know what it was," she said. "You could tell he was a victim of circumstance. You could see he was dealing with a lot, after living with a grandparent who kept food in a locked cabinet above the refrigerator.

From that first day, Jaime kept track of Logan, just like she did with all of the other students.

But things changed one Sunday morning partway through his seventh-grade year.

Logan and his foster parents attended the same church that Jaime and her husband Jason did, along with their three children, 22-year-old Alli and 19-year-old twins Will and Wes.

During the service, Logan asked for prayers for a family – he wanted to be adopted – and then he walked to the front of the church to pray. Jaime walked up and knelt beside him.

"He knew his mother was going to die, he knew he was going to be adopted, and he was scared," Jaime explained as she thought back on that



day. "So I prayed for peace, and to know God had a perfect family for him and would take all the fear away. And I left it there."

That was the turning point. As Jaime walked back to sit with her husband, she knew in her heart that Logan would be a part of their family.

"We had no clue what the process was," she said. But the Hoopers learned quickly.

The whole family was on board, including Jaime and Jason's three children. "They were in full support," she explained. "We thought this family was complete. We had three of our own children and we were completely satisfied with our own children," she said. "But they never took a backward step. They were all in."

## "We had this missing piece and didn't even know it!"

Once Logan started transitioning from his foster home to the Hooper's home, a family bond formed quickly. "We were happy from the beginning. I think that was key," Jaime said.

But they also encouraged him to be honest with his feelings. "We told Logan: We are a family. We want you here and we want you to be a part of this, but we are a big package and if this is not what you want then you need to let us, or somebody, know," Jaime said to Logan.

It worked out. As time passed, Logan got used to the "pulse" of his new home and family, and settled into a new routine as the youngest of four children.

The Hoopers have provided consistency and stability, and that's made the transition easier. But there were challenges.

"He would ask what we were eating the next day," Jaime recalled. "He would take food from the



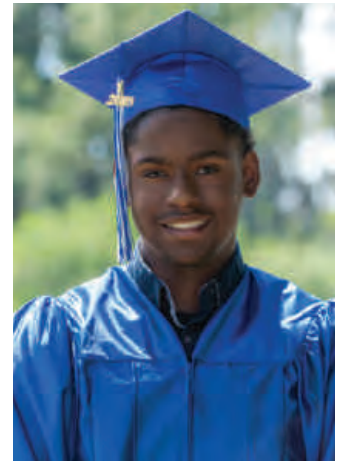
**Logan is being carried by his twin brothers, Will and Wes.**

kitchen and put it in his room. He would order food when he wasn't hungry so he would have it for the next day."

But that's all part of the past. Today, Logan enjoys a variety of activities, including basketball, running track and cross country, and playing video games. As he finished 7th grade last year, he earned all A's and B's on his report card and made the school honor roll. He's got big goals for the future, too – he wants to be a mechanical engineer and build roller coasters.

And the best part of the whole process for the Hooper family? "Watching him bloom," Jaime said. "Watching him turn into that kid that's gotten past a lot to be that happy kid." ✨

**For information on how CHA can help your family with fostering or adoption, call 1-844-791-3117.**



## Join today!

Each of us remembers childhood activities like being a part of a Girl Scout Troop, or playing on a Little League baseball team. And we want to make sure **you have the opportunity** to provide that same opportunity for a **kid in need** – who, because of you, will get to **“just be a kid” for the first time ever.**

## You're never too young to be a grandparent!

By joining the Grandparents Club, you are coming along side of us to help **change the lives** of some of the **most abused and neglected kids** in our communities.

For more information: 1-800-320-4157

## What is the Grandparents Club?

A grandparent plays a special role in the life of a child: To love, to encourage, to support – sometimes in ways that a parent cannot. That's why we created the Grandparents Club – to provide an avenue for kids who have been without love, without encouragement, or without support to learn how to be kids again.

While the basics like food, shelter, and treatment are typically covered through government contract reimbursement rates, the Grandparent Club provides funds for activities, special outings, or expenses that go “beyond the basics” – things like field trips, braces for crooked teeth, piano lessons, or participating in a family summer vacation. These are the funds that can allow our kids to have access to things that are a part of everyday life.

**Grandparents Club funds provide children and families with what they need beyond “the basics.”**


- Music lessons
- Cottage field trips
- School expenses
- Therapy supplies
- Extracurricular activities
- Sports equipment
- Motivational rewards



Members receive an exclusive bi-monthly newsletter and a birthday card from a child in our care.







CHA Community  
Partnership  
works to solve  
'Plague' of

# STUDENT DEPRESSION

It's not just a case of the blues.  
It's more like a plague that's  
affecting the lives of adolescents  
and young adults.

According to a current study published in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, this age group has experienced a significant increase in rates of major depressive episodes, as well as suicidal thoughts and behaviors in recent years.

And last year's National Vital Statistics Report, conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, mirrored these findings. According to that report, the suicide rate for persons aged 10-19 years increased by 56% between 2007 and 2016.

Area educators and those working in the field of mental health are all too familiar with these facts. Children's Hope Alliance (CHA) President and CEO Celeste Dominguez said she sees the trends in the faces of many of the youths served by the agency's Statesville campus.

"We serve children and youth with all sorts of mental health needs in our residential, day treatment, and outpatient programs," Dominguez said. "But those who struggle with suicidal thoughts and behaviors are common."

But even an agency with services as robust as CHA finds that a community approach is the most effective.

"A partnership approach supports the best outcomes for students," Dominguez said. "Working together with the school systems allows us to provide a comprehensive approach to care that provides mental and behavioral health services to students, which allows them to perform academically."

Through a unique partnership with Iredell-Statesville Schools (I-SS), CHA provides mental health assessments, individual and family therapy sessions, and safety planning to youth who may be experiencing a crisis or feeling suicidal. The partnership also supports

school staff to meet the mental health needs of students by putting protective factors in place as soon as needed.

"We take an interdisciplinary approach to our practice employing licensed counselors, teachers, social workers, therapists, psychiatrists, nurses, and medical doctors who work collaboratively to provide high quality, low cost, total health care to our clients," Dominguez explained.

I-SS isn't the only school system the child and family-serving agency has helped. Two years ago, a student in Mecklenberg County committed suicide and CHA team members were dispatched to provide on-site counseling and therapy.

During the 2018-19 school year, CHA provided on-site school-based counseling services at several I-SS schools, including Pressly, Cloverleaf Elementary, South Iredell High School, East Iredell Middle School, NB Mills Elementary, and Statesville Middle School.

This school year, CHA will be working with I-SS administrators to identify other schools where on-site counseling can be provided, and the two groups are working together to apply for a grant to fund full-time mental health counselors in the school system.

Other community partners have played a role as well. Generous support from the United Way of Iredell County has enabled CHA to provide mental health counseling to underinsured or uninsured youth in the district who cannot afford the cost of care.

## Profile of a Student

The partnership efforts with the Iredell-Statesville School system also include a day treatment program at Pressly School in Statesville. This program, staffed and supervised by CHA employees, is designed to meet the mental health needs of students while they receive instruction from I-SS teachers.

Tarron is one of these students. Challenged by severe auditory and visual hallucinations, he would see and hear things that, in reality, did not exist. And these things frightened him so much that he suffered from frequent panic attacks. It seemed it was impossible for Tarron to focus on schoolwork, much less to perform well. In fact, prior to entering the day treatment classroom, he was only able to attend school for half of the day.

The first task for this 13-year-old boy and the CHA staff members was to figure out how he could manage the anxiety that threatened to attack at any time. And headphones were a key piece of this solution. Every day last year, Tarron would wear noise-canceling headphones to create a sense of peace. Soon, he developed a level of comfort with staff members and other students that allowed him to address the anxiety head-on.

This next step was a bit more challenging. One of our team's clinicians worked with Tarron to learn how to "boss back" voices he heard and visions he saw. He took charge of his thinking for the first time. And soon, he was able to stay in the classroom all day. He made friends, and became that student who others sought out to work with on projects and activities.

By the end of the school year, Tarron successfully completed the day treatment program by meeting his goals. And he succeeded in academics as well: he earned a 4 (the top score) on his end-of-grade test in science.

Today, Tarron continues to improve, manages his anxiety on his own, and started this school year in a traditional classroom setting. ✨







## An Easy Way to Help Our Cause

If you are **70½ or older**, rather than simply take your withdrawal this year, you can direct your IRA administrator to distribute a gift from your IRA to our organization. Any amount you transfer counts against your required minimum distribution (RMD), and you can direct up to **\$100,000** to your favorite causes this year.

### Making an IRA Rollover Gift is Easier Than Ever

- Contact your IRA administrator. Because of the popularity of the **rollover**, most administrators provide forms and a procedure to help you make a rollover gift.
- You can direct a transfer of up to \$100,000 to be made this year from your IRA to a qualified charity.
- You will pay no income taxes on the amount transferred.  
Note: Because you are not claiming the transferred amount as income, you will not receive an income tax deduction for your gift.
- Please contact us to let us know how you would like your gift to be used.



**70½**  
OR OLDER

YOU CAN  
DIRECT UP TO  
**\$100,000**

# Rollover

## Your IRA for Good

### Are you frustrated by the required minimum distribution rules?

- You must withdraw a portion of your IRA each year based upon your age.
- You must pay income tax on the portion you withdraw.
- You will face stiff penalties if you fail to withdraw your RMD.

By taking a distribution from your IRA this year, you will likely pay more in taxes and may even reach a higher tax bracket. Rolling over part of your IRA's "required minimum distribution" or "RMD" to a charity like ours can help reduce your tax bill while supporting our cause.

You may not be aware that Congress passed a law that gives you another option for your IRA withdrawal. While you must withdraw a certain amount of money from your IRA each year, the **IRA charitable rollover** gives you a way to avoid paying income taxes and still meet your RMD.

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# Learning to trust again after past trauma and loss

Foster family helps teen experience life in a healthy family environment

The four children would often go without food and adequate clothing. Sometimes their mother would be so mad at the energy and unruly nature of the children that she didn't know what to do, so she hit them. It was a chaotic environment without much structure or support.

Kayla was one of the middle children. She didn't do well in school, and she didn't know how to handle any of the emotions she was feeling at 8 years old. Over time, neighbors noticed, teachers at school noticed, and social services noticed. All four children were removed from the home to keep them safe: one of Kayla's sisters moved to another state to live with relatives, her two other siblings went to live somewhere else, and Kayla found herself alone for the first time. That was five years ago.

After two years of living in different foster homes and even a pre-adoptive home, Kayla suffered another loss – the family who had said they were interested in adopting her decided they couldn't move forward with the adoption because they didn't have the skills needed to help Kayla regulate her emotions and find peace with her past.

Like so many other youth who enter “the system,” Kayla needed help – real help to address a past filled with violence and neglect, help to address all of the emotions wrapped up inside her that she didn't know how to handle, help that allowed her to move forward.



Early in 2016, Kayla found that help. That's when she came to live with a therapeutic foster family at Children's Hope Alliance. It wasn't an easy transition. At the time, Kayla was struggling to heal from the trauma she had experienced in her life and find a place where she belonged. She felt unwanted by the adults she thought loved her, so she didn't know if she could trust any adults. The result was a child who was unable to express her feelings in healthy ways: she pushed people away, she shut down, and she had frequent tantrums.

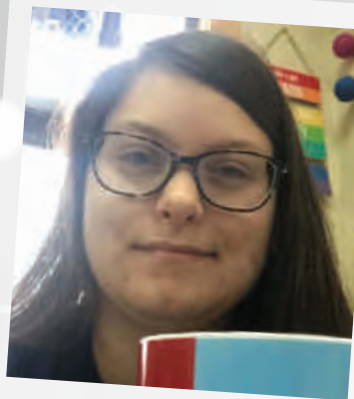
But Children's Hope Alliance staff members, including a well-trained therapist, and the CHA foster family were committed. In therapy, Kayla began to face her past trauma. At home, the foster parents helped her to experience life with a healthy family. Using interventions from the Teaching Family Model, with support from the therapist and other team members, the foster family was able to teach her how to express her emotions in healthy ways when she was upset.

Kayla has made tremendous progress. Recently, she completed her stay with the therapeutic foster family and is now living in a forever home. She is thriving in her new community and learning to trust her new forever family, just as she trusted her previous foster family. And, most importantly, she's excited about what her future holds. ✨





## STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Teaching in a non-traditional environment has its challenges, but it allows me the freedom to prepare students for the real world. The ability to do hands-on projects that are supported by the entire staff here at Grandfather Academy is truly a special experience. The close-knit community of staff means everyone works together for the benefit of the students.

**NATASHA WILLIAMS**, Academic Coordinator, Grandfather Academy



I enjoy being an advocate for the population the agency serves. I enjoy being able to empower people that are in difficult situations and to help change their attitude toward treatment. The most rewarding thing for me with Intensive In-Home is being on the "front line" and helping my families heal and thrive.

**BRYAN GILLILAND** - Senior QP, Intensive In-Home Services

My previous field experience includes supporting children and families in crisis, working with youth to build skills needed for successful transition into adulthood, and providing therapy to children whose lives are impacted by struggles with mental and behavioral health. Drawn by the energized staff and natural beauty of the campus, I knew from the moment I arrived that Grandfather Home for Children was a place for healing, learning, and growing.



**SHARON PHELAN**  
Residential Therapist, Grandfather Home for Children/Children's Hope Alliance

### SHAMEKA CHAMBERS

Director of Outpatient Services



The mission to provide Hope, Health, and Healing for generations speaks directly to my role as the Director of Outpatient Services, in addition to my professional code of ethics. Families entrust clinicians as we coach them through skills development, which promotes change and hope for the future. Our holistic approach to treatment supports the children and families' mental, spiritual, and physical health. Clinicians are facilitators of the healing process, supporting the client as he/she learns to cope with their past and present pain and as he/she grows into their healthier self. Healthy children lead to healthy adults, who will later give birth to the next generation. Outpatient therapy can be seen as a first step toward prevention, and I am honored to be a part of CHA as I do my part to support generations to come.



**"I get to help families in crisis and give them hope."**

**AURORA ZAHOS**, Family Preservation Specialist

Aurora works tirelessly with families through the Family Preservation Services Program. She is always positive and driven to support the family's achievement of their goals. Aurora is a wonderful asset for our families. Being bilingual is an added bonus, as it allows us to reach out to the Hispanic community and provide needed services to a growing population that is underserved.



Post Office Box 1  
Barium Springs, NC 28010

**Adopting one child  
won't change the world;  
but for that child,  
the world will change.**



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