



barium springs
grandfather home

the *journey*

Fall 2020

Children's Hope Alliance provides hope, health, and healing for children and families across N.C.

From hurting to healing

Misty finally gets to be a kid
page 3

Child and family get a new start

Child ACTT program helps Evan, parents
page 7

Finding forever families

Adoptive parents share love through stories
pages 8-9

Learning effective parenting

Mom and Dad learn skills to co-parent
page 11

On the right track

page 12





PO Box 1, Barium Springs, NC 28010
www.ChildrensHopeAlliance.org
1-800-320-4157

Hope, Health, and Healing for Generations

*The Journey, Fall 2020
Volume 6, Number 3*

President & Chief Executive Officer
Celeste Dominguez

Chief Operating Officer/Chief Financial Officer
Jason Ainsley

Chief Development Officer
Sarah Gray

Chief Information Officer
Lakisha Marelli

**Chief Program Officer
of Community-Based Programs**
Kevin Angell

**Chief Program Officer
of Residential Programs**
Stephanie Knowles

Board of Directors
Mr. Bill Wasulko, Chairman
Mr. Ron Turner, Jr., Vice Chairman
Mrs. Kimberly Lawrence, Secretary/Treasurer
Mr. Constantine "Costi" Kutteh
Mr. Spurgeon Mackie
Mrs. Kelley Earnhardt Miller
Dr. Laura Skinner
Mr. Otis Wilson
Mr. Teross Young

To be added, change your address or
unsubscribe from our mailing list, email
info@childrenshopealliance.org or call
1-800-320-4157.

Children's Hope Alliance is an equal opportunity
employer and provider. Financial information about
this organization and a copy of its license are available
from the State Solicitation Licensing Section at
www.secretary.state.nc.us/verification. The license
is not an endorsement by the State.

every journey is different...
and we're committed to walking side-by-side
with children and families along the way

To our Children's Hope Alliance,
Barium Springs, and Grandfather Home family,

Looking back on the last quarter, the word "change"
doesn't quite embrace the state of our world and
our communities. It's been a time of not only
surviving a storm ourselves, but of helping others
survive a storm that just might wash away all hope.
And it's our job to make sure that doesn't happen.



Since March, the team at Children's Hope Alliance has changed
its approach to meet needs in a post-COVID environment. Our
therapists and in-home workers have successfully provided therapy
and services to children and families through the use of telehealth,
our volunteers have donated Personal Protective Equipment to
ensure the safety of our staff, and our foster parents have navigated
COVID challenges and changes to their lives in addition to providing
excellent care for foster children in their homes. In spite of this
progress, however, the stress and anxiety caused by the pandemic
means we are needed more now than ever to help bring Hope,
Health, and Healing to many in desperate need.

As you read this issue of the Journey, I hope you will also take time
to read the words of some of our team members, or "Hope Heroes,"
as they talk about their work and what drives them to excel in their
role each and every day.

And most of all, I hope you are experiencing health and wellness in
your daily journey at this difficult time.

Regards,

Celeste Dominguez, President & CEO

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

From hurting to healing

Her Mom and Dad partied a lot. Misty just got used to it. As the oldest of four children, she would take care of her younger siblings and hope Mom and Dad would help her when they could. Eventually things went too far.

"Just seeing her (mom) snorting pills and then waking up with my siblings and us trying to wake her up," she said. "I was right there, and I just didn't know nothing – what to do, what to say. I just didn't know what to do."

When Misty's mother passed away from a drug overdose, she and her siblings found themselves at their grandmother's house. At just 11 years old, it was obvious she had experienced significant sexual abuse. Misty felt everything was out of control, and the only thing she could do to feel some release from her emotions was to hurt herself. Her grandmother didn't know what to do – she tried to support Misty the best way she could, but it just wasn't enough. Later that year, Misty ended up in the hospital.

That's when Children's Hope Alliance was able to help. Teaching Parents Sharyl and Hyggens Dormus took Misty under their wings and helped her regain a sense of control. They helped build a team of people around Misty that could each help in different ways.

MISTY, age 12

"It feels really awesome," Misty said. "To have everyone stable, the same. I have had so many people in and out of my life that trust was not in my life. Now my team helps me feel safe enough to let trust grow back – or maybe grow for the first time in my life."

Our team helped her focus on education. She had missed a tremendous amount of school, but she worked hard to get caught up. She worked with reading and math tutors, and now she's where she is supposed to be in terms of schoolwork.

As time went on, Misty found that she could talk about her feelings instead of acting them out. She was allowed to just be a kid. She turned 12 years old, and she was expected to just act like a 12-year-old instead of an adult. And she started to experience joy.

"I feel like I can dream again," Misty said. "I want to go to college to be a cosmetologist. I want to be a stay-at-home mom when the time comes. I imagine myself as a healthy adult, being able to love my family."

Today, Misty is well on her way to reaching that dream. She is living with her grandmother and doing well. In her words, "I want to say thank you to Children's Hope Alliance for wrapping love and everything else I needed – even though I didn't even know or think I needed – around me!" ❀

Teen starts non-profit to help those in need



Sometimes you just meet an amazing person. Someone who is inspiring and focuses that work to make the world a better place.

One of those people is Ekin Aygen. She's 16 years old. And, she is amazing.

Ekin started the Heart2Heart nonprofit two years ago in order to make a difference in her local community.

"Basically, I have always had a passion for children," Ekin said. "I learned at a young age that you can help others, even when you are discouraged." So after reading stories about children on our website, she decided to dedicate a nonprofit to children who need it most.

And she certainly has done that! Through Heart2Heart, Ekin has coordinated supply drives, pizza parties, and filling needs for the kids and families served by Children's Hope Alliance.

Of course, Ekin has others who support her efforts. A group of 20 to 30 friends and classmates at Hough High School, as well as her parents follow her lead.



EKIN AYGEN

DETERMINED LEADER,
ORGANIZER, AND ADVOCATOR
FOR THOSE IN NEED

"I dream that one day I will inspire those like me, or younger than me, to use their voice, and make a difference."

But it's not always easy. Ekin said one of the biggest challenges is balancing her personal life and her nonprofit life. "I'll sometimes have to go to these events and I can't take all of my volunteers to every event. Sometimes I have to be selective about who goes where," Ekin explained. "I have to pick the people who can put my vision into motion... I make the decision that I feel would be the best for the nonprofit."

Overall, she finds the work more than rewarding and encourages other young people to do the same.

"Think of what your passion is about. At the end of the day, you're helping people and doing good for the community," she said. "Think about your life experiences and the people around you and what people would you want to see smile based on your actions."

Yet despite all of the good she's done, she still wants to do more. "I always wish I could do more," she said. "You guys [at Children's Hope Alliance], what you're doing is so inspiring. It emotionally tugs at your heart. I'm so glad I've been able to help."

Ekin and her fellow teens certainly have been able to help many of our children. And they perfectly embody the Heart2Heart motto: "Remember, everyone can do something, no matter your age, we all have the capability of making a difference. If we all join together, think of all the amazing things we would be able to accomplish."

If you're interested in learning more about Ekin and Heart2Heart, feel free to check out her website: <https://heart2heartnonprofit.com/>



Learning ABOUT TRUST

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

CLARA, age 10

Clara liked the horses. Every time she came near them, they just made her feel calm. And she trusted them.

Whenever she was around the horses, she didn't feel the frustration that typically ate at her insides or the anger that seemed to be "just below the surface" no matter how hard she tried to push it away.

Other than the horses, she didn't know who she could trust. In her 10 years, most adults had either hurt her, forced her to touch places she didn't want to touch, or made her feel badly about herself. So she lashed out. She wasn't going to listen to anybody, and they couldn't make her do anything she didn't want to anymore.

Clara's mother wanted to help her. She just didn't know how. But the therapist with the Intensive In-Home Services team knew what to do. When

he started to work with Clara and her mother, he worked to gain Clara's trust slowly. And everyone else on the team followed his lead.

Over the course of six months, the team worked with Clara to help her figure out what worked for her when she felt frustrated or angry – how to cope with those feelings instead of lashing out physically or verbally. They helped her figure out how to feel just as calm with people as she felt with the horses. They also helped her mother discover the best ways to support Clara – no matter what she was feeling.

Today, Clara still sees a therapist to help her maintain her skills, but the Intensive In-Home team isn't needed anymore. Like other kids her age, she's starting a new grade, and she's looking forward to what this school year brings. And she still enjoys seeing the horses during her weekly riding lessons! ✨

Getting the help he needs

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

By age four, Tristan still wasn't talking. He also couldn't drink from a sippy cup or eat solid foods. His parents were struggling with drug use and they never provided him with the support he required to meet his needs.

When he arrived at Children's Hope Alliance, his foster parents noticed he didn't really interact with others the way most children do – he didn't make eye contact and would seem like he didn't hear when people talked to him. They immediately brought him for an evaluation and he was diagnosed with autism.

Soon after, Tristan started participating in occupational therapy and things started to change. He learned to communicate using simple words like "Momma," "Dadda," and "No." He has also learned how to drink from a cup, use a straw, and try to eat with a spoon. He's even working on potty training and frequently enjoys spending time in his sensory swing.

In short, he is happy, healthy, and thriving – just like a child should be! ✨



TRISTAN, age 4



EVAN, age 15

What is Child ACTT?

Child ACTT (Child-Focused Assertive Community Treatment Team) is a unique science and technology-based, family-focused service with the mission to heal hurting children in their own homes and communities. Services are currently available to children, ages 12-18, who are at risk of being removed from their homes to go to a group home or hospital..

- Individual & Family Therapy
- Health & Wellness Coaching
- Psychiatry & Medication Management
- Care Coordination
- Crisis Management
- Enhanced Safety Planning
- Secure video & text messaging through new CHA Lifetiles App

For more information about this program, call **Michelle Benton at (704) 832-5567** or email **mpbenton@childrenshopealliance.org**

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

CHILD AND FAMILY GET A NEW START

Following a difficult time in his life, 15-year-old Evan returned home after living in a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) to help address psychosis, physical aggression, and runaway behaviors.

However, when he came back to live with his mother, stepfather, and younger sisters, the family was living in a hotel – trying their best to make a home.

The Child ACTT team focused its work on helping Evan and assisting his family. Our therapist and behavior specialist created opportunities for Evan to understand his diagnoses and find the best ways for him to manage his symptoms. In addition, under the supervision of the team's psychiatric nurse, Evan and his mother have both understood the need for consistency with his medication as a part of his treatment.

After just six months, Evan has made tremendous progress. He no longer suffers from psychotic episodes and does not run away or act out physically. He continues to attend therapy sessions, and he and his family understand Evan's diagnoses and the need for consistent medication.

Our Child ACTT team helped the family find housing, secure a deposit for the rental home, and helped them arrange for a moving van to deliver furniture donated by Partners Behavioral Health Services.

Evan is also being enrolled in the NC START program and will receive B3 respite services to help provide the family with additional community supports. Today, Evan reports that he is getting better thanks to his work with our team. His family sees his progress as well and says, "He is laughing more and is more like himself." ✨



JADE AND ARIZONA

Jade and Arizona had to take care of each other. As toddlers, they were exposed to, and fed, drugs. They were malnourished, neglected, and abused. Jade has been a mother to her sister as long as she can remember. Many days the only food they had was found in the trash can. They did the best they could to survive, but survival was all they had – they didn't feel safe, and they didn't feel loved.

When the two girls arrived at our foster parent Camille Fox's home five years ago, they were scared and unsure. They didn't have much, but Camille did everything she could to make sure the three-and-a-half year-old Jade and 18-month-old Arizona were comfortable; she asked them about their favorite foods and assured them they could eat whenever they were hungry.

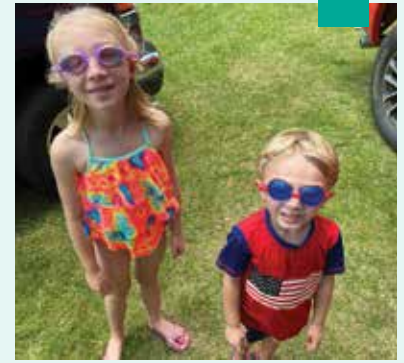
But habits can be tough to break, even for very young children. Arizona would visit the trash can several times a day. She would open the refrigerator and the kitchen cabinets, and when she saw food she would clap her hands. Jade, used to caring for her younger sister, would take food from the kitchen and hoard it to be sure she and Arizona would have enough to eat.

Eventually the security that Camille provided, coupled with consistent love and support, allowed Jade and Arizona to trust her. The hoarding stopped, and both girls got used to regular meals. And their world expanded. The family of three took a trip with Camille's parents, nieces, and nephew to Myrtle Beach before the pandemic began.

After close to five years in foster care, Camille was able to adopt Jade and Arizona this March. The best thing about it in their words?

Jade: "I'm most proud of being able to go to school with Fox as my name now."

Arizona: "I'm proud that mommy chose me."



GENESYS AND BENTLEY

Ricky and Beth Whitlow adopted Genesys and Bentley. And they have some wonderful news to share: "We are currently awaiting the arrival of their new baby brother. We found out shortly after the adoption was finalized that we are expecting. We are firm believers that after two miscarriages and trying for over five years, this is the plan that God intended for us!"

DEDICATION

JOSEPH

Traci Weisner and Jena Johnson have a unique kind of dedication to children. They are foster parents who have dedicated themselves to caring for children with special needs.

At 10 years old, Joseph is sweet and bubbly. Jena and Traci fell in love with "his flirty nature, big eyes, and wide smile." He has special needs for his medical care because he cannot speak or walk, and he has serious chronic health problems. But that hasn't slowed down this amazing family. Joseph has been on several road trips across the United States, has seen many sights, and he has been to lots of water parks adapted for children with disabilities.

After many years in foster care, Joseph found his forever home in May of this year with Traci and Jena.





MATHIAS

Mathias was an independent young child. His mother loved him very much, but she struggled to take care of herself and didn't always know how to take care of an energetic two-year-old. There were days when the dishes piled up and it just seemed like it was too much to pick up the clothes, toys, and clutter around the house. It was easier to watch television and not worry about her problems. And Mathias was good at entertaining himself. He liked to play outside – he loved the dogs. Even though they were sometimes too rough with the small boy, she didn't really know how to control them.

The day it happened was horrible. She didn't know he had gotten outside. The dogs got too rough. When the ambulance arrived, no one was sure if Mathias would ever walk again.

After several weeks in the hospital, and many medical procedures, Mathias was released to the home of our foster parents Michael and Lynn Bryson. Mathias was their first-ever foster placement and they described his arrival as “both wonderful and scary.” Because of the accident, Mathias couldn't walk or talk. The Brysons lovingly changed his bandages, and provided him with a sense of structure he had never known before: regular meal times, a tidy home, and a television that was only turned on sporadically.

Within a few weeks, Mathias got used to the rules put in place to keep him safe. He went to appointments for speech and physical therapy, he worked at home to regain strength in his legs, and he started to learn colors, shapes, and numbers. He made tremendous progress – he slept through the night, he potty trained, and he started walking again.

Today, Mathias has a forever home with the Brysons. He knows he is safe, he knows he is valued, and most of all, he knows he is loved.

ISABELLA AND JAYDYN

When mommy was “sleeping,” five-year-old Isabella, or “Izzy” as she liked to be called, did her best to console her baby brother Jaydyn whenever he cried. She would try to entertain the not-quite-one-year-old by telling him stories or showing him things he could play with. She tried her best to take care of him. As time went on, the adults in their lives spent more and more time “sleeping” and the department of social services moved Izzy and Jayden to live in a group home as their birth parents struggled to control a drug addiction that was overpowering them day by day.

Over the next several months, Izzy and Jayden had some visits with their mother and phone calls with their father. Slowly, the phone calls dropped off and the visits became less frequent. It seemed the children were at risk of becoming yet another statistic of children who were victims of drug abuse.

But our foster parents Shane and Erin Lunsford had other ideas. As experienced foster parents, the Lunsfords knew they wanted to help Izzy and Jayden by providing them with a safe and stable home. The transition was not without some struggle. Izzy suffered with nightmares and sleepwalking. Jaydyn threw tantrums for no reason. Fortunately, Shane and Erin were prepared, and the children were able to have regular sessions with a therapist who helped them work through a traumatic past.

The Lunsfords have many happy memories as a family with Izzy and Jaydyn. They traveled to New York City, they have visited amusement parks, and they have played games and shared laughter. But the best memory by far is the day Izzy and Jaydyn were adopted. “That step lets them know we are in this forever.”



STRUCTURE

ADOPTION

SAFETY

A photograph of a family of four walking away from the camera on a path covered in fallen autumn leaves. The father is in the center, wearing a light-colored sweater and khaki pants, with his arms around the mother and son. The mother is to his left, wearing a colorful striped sweater and jeans. A young girl in a pink sweater and boots is on the far left, and a young boy in a white sweater and jeans is on the far right. The background shows trees with yellow and orange autumn foliage.

What legacy will you leave?

Create your legacy with a Named Endowment and make a difference in the lives of hurting children and families.

We can help you make a gift that creates a legacy of remembrance for you and your loved ones.

The purpose of a Named Endowment fund is to financially sustain the mission and work of our organization. The principal of your endowment is kept intact and only the annual earnings, typically income and a portion of the capital growth, are used to fund current needs. Your named endowment will ensure that we can carry on our important work in the years to come.

Your gift will be maintained in perpetuity and make a lasting, meaningful difference. And, it will grow to become a permanent legacy of support for our good work.

There are several ways in which you can make an endowment gift either today or as part of your estate plan.

For more information, please contact Sarah Gray, Chief Development Officer
704-872-4157 or sggray@childrenshopealliance.org



LEARNING ABOUT EFFECTIVE PARENTING

Connie and Matt had never agreed on how to discipline their child. And ever since Angela entered her pre-teen phase, the 11-year-old's sass was pushing them both to the edge.

The couple decided years ago to share custody of Angela, but recently things were getting more difficult and Matt was getting angry. He felt he couldn't control Angela anymore because she just refused to listen. He got so angry, in fact, he resorted to punishing Angela inappropriately.

As the Intensive Family Preservation Services staff members worked with Connie and Matt, they focused on helping the two communicate positively and develop consistent house rules, discipline methods, and appropriate consequences. These new methods were so effective that the two parents have been able to co-parent their daughter effectively. And they've both noticed positive results.

Angela started responding to both her father and her mother, and she ended last year with a spot on the Honor Roll at school. She's also been exploring her talents as an artist. ✨

ANGELA
age 11

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

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

Getting on the right track

DOUGLAS, age 13

Douglas heard the judge read the charges against him. Something about sexual battery. He had been in court before and knew the kids he ran with were bad news. They just got caught. This time was different.

He knew the girl at school had told him to stop and he knew she was mad, and that just made him mad. But he still didn't understand why the judge kept talking about a battery.

Douglas' parents were at their wits' end. When they learned about the charges against their son, they were horrified. None of their other four children seemed to struggle like Douglas. He never seemed to completely comprehend the impact of his actions or the importance of doing well in school – it just never clicked with him. And they knew the school was tired of having to deal with his behavioral issues in the classroom.

They were glad the court referred them to a service that might help him. As soon as Douglas met with

our Specialized Treatment of Perpetrators (STOP) team, they felt he could actually make some progress.

The psychologist provided an IQ test and discovered that Douglas had substantial intellectual limitations and challenges. In fact, they were going to work with the school to have Douglas follow an "Occupational Course of Study" curriculum.

At that point, the team developed an action plan for Douglas and helped him build his skills of making friends and getting along with others. He has made great strides and his parents have seen a huge difference in his behavior at home.

For the first time, Douglas is excited about his prospects for the future. He wants to be a mechanic and enjoys learning about cars, trucks, and anything that has a motor. Now that he's on the right track, and getting help from a supportive team, his story can be called nothing short of a success. ❁

STOP PROGRAM

SPECIALIZED TREATMENT OF PERPETRATORS

The STOP Program provides specialized services to youth who have been adjudicated for sexually harmful behaviors through the Juvenile Justice system. These youth, some as young as 8 years old, have been court-ordered to complete evaluation and/or treatment services. Non-adjudicated youth may also be served based on a case-by-case basis.

What are the objectives?

- Primary focus on safety, regulating emotions, and having good relationships with others
- Prevention of further sexualized and non-sexual problematic behaviors
- Social and family environments are integrated into services

What does the STOP program do with kids?

- Provides a Comprehensive Clinical Assessment and Clinical Evaluation
- Involves family members in treatment
- Develops an individualized Safety Plan for home, school, and community
- Provides weekly group therapy
- Provides individual and family therapy
- Collaborates and communicates with the Department of Juvenile Justice

For more information about this program, call **(704) 832-2200 Ext. 2332/2333** or visit www.childrenshopealliance.org/stop/

With social isolation and lack of access to services caused by COVID-19, **there has been an increase in the prevalence of mental health issues** in children and their parents.

Nearly 1 in 6 adolescents aged 12-17 experienced **a major depressive episode** in the last year.

More than half of these adolescents **did not receive treatment.**

Of adolescents who used mental health services last year, **57% received some school-based mental health services.**

35% of them received mental health services **exclusively at school.**

1 in 6 U.S. children aged 2-8 years (17.4%) **had a diagnosed mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.**

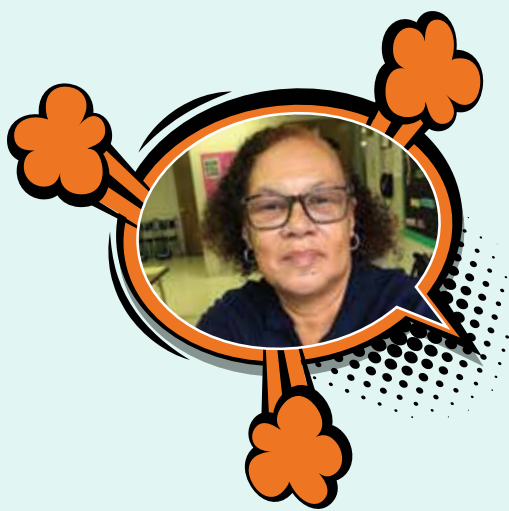
More than 1 in 3 adults reported **symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder during the COVID-19 pandemic** compared to 1 in 10 last year.

During late June, 40% of U.S. adults reported **struggling with mental health or substance abuse.**

#BETHEHOPE

Sources: SAMSHA, JAMA Network, Center for Disease Control (CDC), KFF analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Pulse Survey 2020





**BOBBIE
SAMUELS**

Day Treatment Case Manager

A typical day for me starts with talking to each student as they arrive

to class and sharing positive thoughts to help them start their day. I help them with school work when needed and I help them problem solve when they are frustrated.

All of the kids are my favorite, each one has a success story to tell and it is hard to choose just one to talk about. To name a few, one student went to prison, but he searched social media to find me and tell me that he wished that he had not left. He remembered me as being a positive role model for him. He's now married with five children and a grandchild. And there is another young man who was quite mischievous, but he makes sure through social media that I stay in touch with him and his family.

This is not just a job. It's a ministry to reach out and help. This field helps you to grow to know who you are, and as you grow you gain your inner strength you can reach out and help the kids we serve. This is a job that means helping others, and especially through COVID-19 this is more important than ever.



I started my medical career in general pediatrics as I have always loved working with kids,

but instantly saw the high demand for mental health and the lack of quality access to care. I had the good fortune of training with a pediatrician who believed in helping his patients as much as possible without referring them out (sending them to another professional). He taught me so much, and made me feel that if I educated myself I could help. I eventually obtained my secondary mental health certification, and basically pediatric mental health has been my passion ever since.

Part of my job is to do the best I can to erase any stigma associated with seeking treatment for mental health issues and to help families craft the right treatment plans, so that they can all realize their true potential. Seeking help for mental health issues isn't something anyone should be ashamed of and something the community should shine a light on, rather than ignore.

**LISA
WHITLEY**

Child Assertive Community
Treatment Team Nurse Practitioner



I wake up and come to work every day for the "goosebump moments"

— from earning the trust of my patients and their families, to really making sure they feel heard. I want them to understand what their medication is for, how it works, and why I am selecting it for them. And if it doesn't work we change it, because we don't take medications that don't work! I want my patients to be successful. When a child or parent comes back to see me and tells me, "I don't know what you did, but don't change it" or something similar, those are the goosebump moments!

STEPHANIE HERRERA

Treatment Alternatives for
Sexualized Kids Case Manager



Families and children are all unique. We go through different experiences that shape us into who we are.

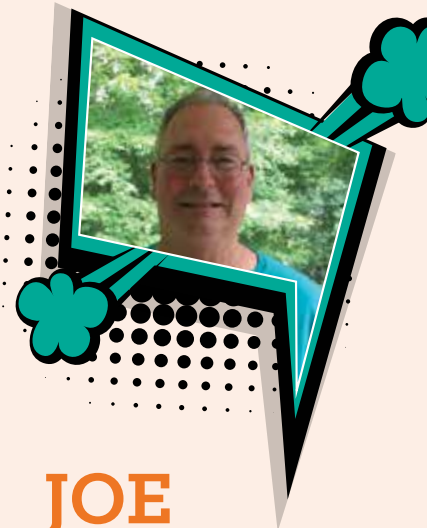
There comes a time in life when an event or situation is difficult to navigate, unbearable, or even traumatizing. Sometimes, people do not know where to start or where to turn and need to ask for help. That is where the help of a social worker comes in handy. A social worker takes on many roles: educator, counselor, advocate, and so much more.

A typical day for me is filled with meetings with families and children to discuss treatment progress and receptiveness. I research topics related to TASK's 3 main components (self-regulation, risk reduction, and relational impact) and put together a lesson plan for skills development and our kids' TASK "homework." I document and complete paperwork to provide continuity of care for our clients and describe their treatment progress.

One of our biggest success stories was a boy who had been referred by a family member. The boy presented challenges, including mental health diagnoses and learning disorders, and he was impulsive. At first, he was not attentive, he was aggressive, and he would get up and walk out. In getting to know him, I discovered that if you gave him a job, he would complete it and feel good about it. By building a rapport with him, he was able to learn what he needed to learn, and I am happy to report that in the end he was able to get along well with others, was attentive, engaged in his treatment, and receptive to therapy. The thing that hit home was at the end of his treatment he passed along a note that said: "Thank you for helping me."

In this crazy, uncertain, and ever changing world, my job as a Post Adoption Support Specialist has somewhat changed. I still provide services, as requested, to Post Adopt families in my region. However, much of my services are provided on the phone and through computer. Years ago, I asked a neighbor how his day was going. He replied, "My day is going great, and getting better!"

A good day, for me, starts out when an adoptive parent contacts me, requesting post adopt services. As I listen to that parent share his or her family issues, revolving around their adoptive child(ren), I try to formulate a response or plan that may assist them, in whatever capacity that may be. Twice a month, my co-worker and I facilitate a virtual support group for foster and adoption families, and once a month we offer a virtual training. My day gets "better," as I feel a sense of worth and value, knowing that I am doing everything in my power to assist these parents and their families during their journey.



**JOE
BARKOWITZ**
Post-Adoption Support Specialist

One of my favorite clients is an exceptional woman, who has adopted four children. Her two older children were adopted internationally. Her two younger children are biological brothers adopted through DSS foster care. When her second child was a young teen and having some significant behavior issues, her husband at the time decided to leave, saying that he couldn't deal with all the behaviors. This was on Christmas Eve!

Although extremely difficult, this woman endured and successfully parented her two older children. Soon after, she fostered and adopted the two brothers. The older boy is rated moderate on the Autism Spectrum, and his younger brother has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. On top of all of this, she has volunteered her services by helping to train new foster parents, as well as volunteering at her church when time allows!

My "work" with her was to visit with her, listen to her, and, as she says, give her "adult time." She recently remarried and her family is doing well. To commit her life to, and lovingly take care and parent, four extremely needy children is a miracle. She is a saint!



Post Office Box 1
Barium Springs, NC 28010



**Not every family
has a child,
but every child
needs a family.**

**Foster-to-Adopt
Parents Needed**

Call us today at 1-844-791-3117

#BETHEHOPE