



LET IT SHINE

125 Years of Ministry



Alabama Baptist
CHILDREN'S HOMES
& Family Ministries

Annual Report 2016

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The little **CANDLE**
that God inspired Father Stewart
to light down here on earth
must be a bright **SHINING STAR**
in his heavenly crown. ROSA ANDREWS, FORMER ABCH MATRON

Dear Friends of ABCH,



2016 was another amazing year in the life of *your* Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries! Our mission to protect, nurture, and restore children and families through Christ-centered services continues to be a critical need in our state, and Alabama Baptists and our other supporters have once again generously provided for us to seek to accomplish that goal. God is doing amazing things in Alabama, and it is a privilege to be used by Him to accomplish His plans.

The prophet Jeremiah brought the Word of the Lord to the nation of Israel in exile, "I know the plans I have for you; plans to prosper you and not harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future." In 2016 (and for the last 125 years), God has said to the fatherless in Alabama these same exact words over and over again. *Your* Baptist Children's Homes cannot give these children hope or a future . . . *but* we know who can!

In 2016, we saw God accomplish wonderful and miraculous things! Some of these included:

- We cared for 464 children and provided 77,247 days of care to children and families.
- 26 children made first-time professions of faith at our annual Camp of Champions! We also had our largest Camp attendance in our history.
- We saw almost 30% growth in our Foster Care Ministry. At the end of 2016, we had 166 Christian foster families all across the state. We had a 25% increase in the numbers of days of care provided to children through our foster homes.
- We broke ground on a new Family Care home in Mobile.
- Many of our children were recognized for academic and athletic achievements.
- Two young ladies in our care were invited to sing with their high school choir at the service commemorating the 75th anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Every day in this wonderful ministry, we see God taking broken lives, and doing what only God can do . . . restoring wholeness where once there was only brokenness. It is our privilege to introduce them to the very Author of Hope who turns their tears and mourning into joy and laughter.

As we move into 2017, we are excited about new opportunities and new leadership. Our ministry is blessed by long-serving employees. However, several key leaders retired in 2016 or early 2017. This gives us a unique opportunity to reward current employees with the honor of moving them into leadership roles. We anticipate continued growth in our Foster Care and Family Care Ministries while maintaining stability in our Campus Care and Shelter Care Ministries.

From changes in laws, to cultural shifts, and varying trends in church giving, 2017 and the years to come may present us with some unique challenges. But we remain steadfast in our belief that God is never surprised, nor has He forsaken us, and that Alabama Baptists (and other like-minded believers) are not deaf to the cries of the fatherless. We count it a privilege to be your servants in ministry to some of the "least of these."

I hope you will enjoy celebrating with us all of the wonderful things God has done in the lives of children and families in Alabama in 2016 and will commit to pray for us in 2017 as we continue to *protect, nurture, and restore children and families through Christ-centered services.*

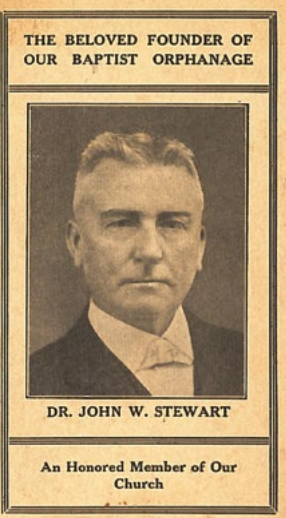
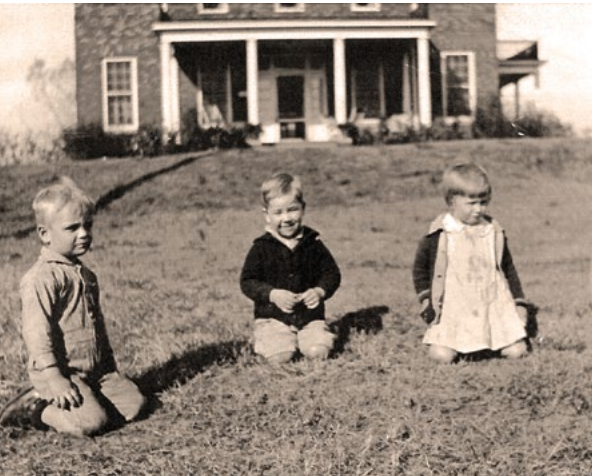
Sincerely,

ROD MARSHALL
President/CEO

CELEBRATING 125 YEARS OF MINISTRY



On February 14, 2016, our ministry reached its biggest milestone to-date— We celebrated 125 years of serving children and families through Christ-centered services!





Going back to where it all began, many staff and community members were in attendance on that Sunday morning at Evergreen Baptist Church, February 14, 2016, as our yearlong anniversary officially began. Our President/CEO Rod Marshall reminded us all that day of the incredible legacy the Lord has brought forth through a ministry that began simply with three orphans in Evergreen, Alabama, and the response of men and women in our churches to stand in the gap for children in need.

125 years later, we now care for hundreds of children each year—nearly 10% of

all children in foster care in Alabama. Our offices stretch from the top to the bottom of the state, and we are regularly recognized as the most diverse childcare agency in Alabama. We even created a special website to help share our history and vision in greater detail: alabamachild125.org!

Many groups joined in the celebratory fun throughout the year—churches and associations held birthday parties with special offerings or needs drives, corporate partners chose us to be their beneficiary, and children collected and donated needed items or financial gifts

on our behalf. In addition, each ABCH office commemorated this special time in their own unique way, whether that was a Low Country shrimp boil, a party with balloons, games, and birthday cake, a pizza party with the kids in care, or hosting guest speakers on campus to share special ABCH insights with staff.

Anniversaries are a beautiful time to stop and reflect on a special period, and we certainly took time to do that this year. God has done amazing things through the ministry of ABCH, and we are confident that even better days and more reasons to celebrate are ahead!



TWO PEARLS OF PEARL HARBOR

Dreams Coming True in Care

Have you ever had the joy of doing something you've always wanted to do? Two high school girls in Campus Care in Decatur, Mandy* and Oni*, don't have a bucket list written, but in their busy days of school, church, playing softball, and singing, they do take time to dream.



**Names have been changed to protect identities*

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 student finished high school a semester early and has already enrolled in college
- 1 student earned a full academic/football scholarship to Alabama A&M
- 16 children participated in chorus, football, basketball, volleyball, and/or softball

- 40+ academic awards earned by our children
- 2 students took their first mission trips this year
- 3 of our boys got to go to the beach for the first time
- 1 child won "Student of the Month for Leadership"

- 1 amazing, new "Ensor Memorial Playground" was built and dedicated, as well as a complete renovation of the basketball and volleyball court
- 61 community or church presentations by staff

One of those 61 speaking engagements included Dr. Michael Smith, Chief Operations Officer for North Alabama, who was invited to speak in Washington, DC, at the National Association of Social Workers National Conference!

One of those dreams came true, thanks in part to their hard work to raise funds, and in part to our generous donors who funded half of each girl's trip to Hawaii, as they traveled there last December with their school choir to perform at the Pearl Harbor 75th Anniversary Commemoration Service!

What began as pure excitement over the idea of traveling to this dream-come-true destination, soon turned into something far more meaningful. They were immersed in a new culture with new learning experiences for a week in the tropical paradise of Oahu, "The Gathering Place."

As people gathered from across the globe to "honor the past and inspire the future," they celebrated our veterans, both fallen and surviving. Mandy said of the service, "We sang with a few other schools and with a barbershop quartet too. The mayor talked and so did some of the survivors. Some though, were too old to speak, so someone spoke for them."

Oni said that in addition to tours, the beaches, food, and attending a luau (and dancing the hula!), another highlight was being in the memorial parade, "We sang the national anthem and then got to walk in the parade, coming in behind the veterans." And they loved getting to see and meet some of our veterans! "It was very emotional to see them," said Oni, "In the parade, they were crying. I think they were really happy. It made me cry."

The girls were able to tour the USS Missouri and literally walk through history. "I (Mandy) never thought about history

like that until we got on the ship. It was more than I thought it would be. You could see all the notes they had written home. That was my favorite thing, reading their notes. I started crying reading them, just imagining them wanting to go home."

Overall, being there to them was "amazing." One donor who helped support their trip, who also shares their sentiment, is Ron Musgrove, a third-generation ABCH supporter. When he heard about their opportunity, he knew he wanted to be a part of their experience by giving. For him, it was personal, as his dad was a Pearl Harbor survivor.

Ron shares that though he never really knew his dad, he said, "A few years ago, I had the chance to visit Pearl Harbor with my wife. It was amazing for me to be there, knowing my father had been there 70 years earlier. It was great to get to walk through an idea of some of what he had experienced. I wanted to be a part of helping these girls travel there too, to help honor my father's service."

Mandy and Oni know that this trip was one that God provided. "I'm glad he gave me the opportunity to go," shares Oni. They both expressed that had they been "home," before coming home to ABCH, they would have never considered the possibility of doing something like this, "Neither of us would have ever had this chance. Ever."

And on that note, they wanted to say a big thank you to our donors; both for helping with their trip and in their everyday . . .



"I just want to say thank you. Your help was a humongous help for us! If it wouldn't have been for you, we would have had to raise all of the money to go, and we probably wouldn't have been able to. We are blessed," said Mandy. "Not many kids get out of the situations like we've been in. I'm just glad God took us out of those situations. We are super blessed."

Feeling the weight of that truth, with tears dotting her eyes, Oni added, "Thank you. And I hope God blesses you. I've been blessed just to have the opportunity to go. If I wasn't here (at ABCH), I don't know where I'd be."

Edited for space. A full version, including more of Mandy's photos (seen above), may be read at alabamachild.org/PearlHarbor.

SERVICES AT A GLANCE

- Campus Care
- Shelter Care
- Foster Care
- College/Transitional Care
- Pathways Professional Counseling
- Educational seminars on Child & Family issues



BREAKING GROUND ON HOPE

A New Family Care Home in Mobile

Through the years, we've seen many families torn apart due to job loss, financial difficulties, substance abuse, domestic abuse, or other life circumstances. While serving at-risk children and their families (often led by single mothers), we saw a great need to help them get back on their feet. That was why we started the Family Care program.

90 children cared for in Foster and Campus Care

7 spiritual decisions made by children in care

4 families graduated from our Trauma Informed Partnering for Safety classes

1 student attended college

5 adoptions

4 girls danced in Debbie's School of Dance year-end recital

11 new foster homes added

20 of our kids a month, on average, enjoyed free Firehouse Subs, thanks to their generosity

1 Bath & Linen shower from the WMU Leadership Team of Mobile, benefitting Family Care

4 Saturdays in September, our boys played on a soccer team (and loved it!)

50 community or church presentations by staff

This program for single moms and their dependent children can last for up to 12 months. Due to limited space and location, our home in Mobile closed in 2015 with plans to rebuild in order to offer even better services to families in that area, and we are quickly heading that way. On December 4, 2016, we broke ground there on a state-of-the-art facility that will serve up to seven families at one time!

Mothers who come into Family Care are given the tools to rebuild their lives in a safe and healthy space during this transitional time. Dana Watson, Chief Operations Officer for South Alabama, has served with Alabama Baptist Children's Homes (ABCH) for over 10 years, and in that time, has seen many lives impacted through this program.

He says, "Family Care is a unique ministry that allows the family to stay intact while direct care staff addresses the spiritual, financial, and physical needs of the mother and her child(ren). Through this valuable program, we've seen mothers leave better equipped to live independently, provide for themselves and their children, maintain steady housing, meet their educational goals, and gain employment. This positively impacts the family, but also strengthens the community in which they live."

Every day in Family Care, we see a direct impact on multiple generations as these mothers work hard to ensure a better life for their children's present and future. How fitting, that our key donors for our new home in Mobile also recognize the value of investing in the future through what God has placed in their hands today.

One of those donors was the people of Central Baptist Church. After many years of ministry in the Mobile area, they decided it was time to close the doors to their ministry and invest in another. They gave us the proceeds from the sale of their building, and combined with some existing assets they had, that gift became the seed money that allowed us to begin this new ministry opportunity for families in Mobile.

Long-time supporter of the work of the Children's Homes, Dr. E. Grace Pilot of Mobile, also has a vision for the future. She has faithfully labored to impact communities in need and has passed those values down in her family. Having been a part of the Family Care project in Alabaster years ago, her generous spirit has recently influenced two other generations of Pilots.

Together, she and her family were instrumental in helping us see our Family Care Mobile project come to fruition. Not only were her children involved, but they got their kids involved too. Her son, Curtis Pilot, said, "We got her grandkids involved because we want to teach them now, to be sure the next generation is thinking that way (of helping others) too."

We are extremely grateful for the support of both Central Baptist and the Pilot family. There are many, many families whose lives have been, and will be, wonderfully impacted through their kindness and generosity. This kind of giving legacy is part of what has helped sustain our ministry over these past 125 years, and will continue to help lead the way for the future.

And those future days are readily on the mind of ABCH President/CEO, Rod Marshall, and how Family Care distinctly fits our ministry model, "The purpose of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries is to protect, nurture, and restore children and families through Christ-centered services. Our Family Care ministry clearly addresses all three of our core objectives. We *protect* these mothers and children from a sometimes brutal and hard-hearted world. Once they begin to feel safe, they can accept our *nurture* as we disciple them and befriend them. It is a delight to watch a family go from victim to victor, from hopeless to hopeful, from fragile to strong as they are restored to healthy independence from us, but dependence upon God."

Last year, ABCH was able to serve 49 mothers and children through our other Family Care homes in the state. In its last year of operation in 2014, there were 12 families helped in Mobile, and we've since had 119 referred there alone—clearly, the need for this ministry to mothers and children exists! We look forward to a day later in 2017, when our new Family Care doors will open and even more families will be forever changed through those serving as the hands and feet of Christ in Mobile.

SERVICES AT A GLANCE

- Campus Care
- Foster Care
- Family Care
- College/Transitional Care
- Pathways Professional Counseling
- Educational seminars on Child & Family issues

A photograph of a child's hands, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and a red beaded bracelet, reaching out to touch a large green maple leaf on a wooden surface. The surface is covered with various autumn leaves in shades of red, orange, yellow, and brown. The child's hands are positioned in the upper right quadrant of the frame, with the left hand gently touching the green leaf and the right hand resting nearby. The background is a rustic wooden plank surface.

TURNING LEAVES AND HEARTS: A SALVATION STORY

At Alabama Baptist Children's Homes (ABCH), our foster parents and staff see our children go through a lot as a result of their past and the tough situations they've experienced. Sometimes it's pain or sadness, frustration or shame, or a combination of all of those things. But other times, we get to see them "come alive." We get to see the Kingdom of Heaven grow by two tiny feet.

117 children cared for in Foster Care

47 moms and children served in our Family Care program

1 child received the “Putting Things First” award and good character award

17 new foster homes added

1 child received the “Character in Action” award for displaying exemplary character at his school

1 child received “Most Improved Student” at his school

7 volunteer teams served our Family Care homes in Gardendale and Alabaster

7 adoptions

1 profession of faith

47 second-graders volunteered their money and time to help Family Care Alabaster

Read more about these generous second-graders in a blog post we shared about them earlier this year at alabamachild.org/Westminster.

Kaytie Graves and her husband, Matthew, became foster parents in November of 2011. Their journey started at church when they heard about two babies who needed a home. They couldn't shake the sad reality of what was happening to those children. “That is where the sparks started,” Kaytie said, “We wanted to be able to make a difference for children in need.” Kaytie spoke with a friend whose family had fostered through ABCH, then called us and registered for classes. From that point, the Graves were all in.

Thinking back on her time fostering, Kaytie said, “Since the very beginning, we have loved our partnership with ABCH. We love that everyone involved truly loves these children and are fighting hard for them. Most importantly, we love that Christ comes first, and it shows!”

In July of 2015, Sasha*, a 5-year-old little girl, came to live with the Graves, to join her twin brothers who were already placed in their home. Kaytie said that, when she first came to them, Sasha lacked emotional attachment and struggled with having good self-esteem. Now, Kaytie says, “I can honestly say she has attached to me, Matthew, and her brothers. She is so confident in who she is . . . She is an amazing girl, with a beautiful soul. She is a deep thinker and works hard to do the right thing. She is so smart, kind, and full of joy and silliness!”

Just a little more than a year later, Sasha's life again changed forever. Kaytie tells the story well: “Every night as we tuck Sasha in, we help her to say her prayers . . . she

started going through a phase where things would scare her at night, so we started teaching her a Bible verse to say after her prayer time and started talking to her about what that scripture really meant—that any time we are afraid, God is there protecting us, and that whenever we feel scared, all we have to do is talk to Him. He will listen and protect us because He loves us. Eventually she started asking more questions about God.”

“One day in September, I had the kids outside playing, and she was finding leaves and bringing them to the table next to me. She had a pile of green ones and a pile of brown ones. One leaf was bigger and had a smaller leaf still attached to it. I instantly wrote down what she said as she observed it, to remember just how she said it: ‘Hey Mama, this tall leaf is like Jesus and the other one is like us! We are connected to Jesus all the time; isn't that cool, Mama?’ She also went on to talk about how the brown leaves were people who didn't believe in Jesus, and started taking all the green leaves and placing them with the brown. She said, ‘This is us telling them about Jesus.’ I was in awe of her wisdom, and it was a powerful message from a sweet, innocent child.”

Later that fall, Sasha began to ask about asking Jesus into her heart. Kaytie and Matthew explained how important this decision is, as well as made sure she understood sin and how, in His love, Jesus died for our sins and rose again and is seated with God in heaven today. They told her that if she believed these things,

that she could pray and ask Him to come live in her heart.

“After the prayer, Sasha smiled so big, gave us big hugs, and said, ‘Now I get to live forever in heaven with you, right?’ We told her yes, that she was now a Christian, and had made the biggest decision of her life. She was so excited, and at church the next day, she told everyone she saw. She also asked about getting baptized, and she is over the moon about it!”

In that precious moment of Sasha's life, Kaytie said she felt so proud and honored that she was chosen for that huge and wonderful moment, as well as thankful that Sasha is now saved and loves Jesus. “I will cherish it forever,” Kaytie says, “This world is so broken, yet has so much beauty if you take the time and look. God is working. And as a foster mom, I'm thankful to everyone who takes time to give, pray for, and serve these children, because they are so worth it. I wouldn't trade this life of foster care for anything!”

**Name has been changed to protect identity.*

Story has been edited for space.

A full version can be found at alabamachild.org/Sasha.

SERVICES AT A GLANCE

Foster Care*
Family Care
College/Transitional Care
Pathways Professional Counseling*
Educational seminars on Child & Family issues

**These services are also provided through our nearby Montgomery office.*



ALL IN THE FAMILY

A NEW DAY



This past fall, we saw two journeys end and two new ones begin.

After 31 years in ministry with ABCH, former Area Director for Northeast Alabama Ted Embry, and wife Nora, felt God's call leading them into retirement. True to God's nature of preparing the way for his children, he had been readying for eight years Amber Albright, an intern turned social worker in Decatur, to now lead future ministry efforts in the Oxford community.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 6 adoptions
- 2 professions of faith
- 23 community or church presentations by staff
- 24 foster homes
- 76 children were served in Shelter and Foster Care
- 1 child received an award for Safety Patrol
- 1 child received a Jacket Pride Award for academics, attitude, and attendance
- 1 walking/bicycle track, 2,000 feet long, was completed
- 1 storm shelter was donated and installed free of charge to our campus
- 6 new families experienced Camp of Champions
- 20 bicycles were donated by the Calhoun County Sheriff's group

For the past eight years, Amber Albright served on our Decatur campus with much devotion, love, and passion for the calling the Lord has put on her life. In her time there, she helped countless families and was a part of much program growth.

Some of the most fulfilling things she describes experiencing is being a part of reunifications and adoptions, "Seeing the joy on adoptive parents' faces and sensing the happiness and relief from the kids, knowing they are now part of a forever family. It's also wonderful to see children being restored to their (biological) families, to see that work come full circle; to see parents making progress and children happy to go home, knowing they are going back to a safe environment, and (knowing) we have fulfilled our duty to restore these children and their families."

Ted Embry began his career in serving children and families as a social worker with us in Mobile in 1985. He later became Director of Social Services, and in 1997, the door opened for him and Nora to break ground in Oxford with a brand new ABCH ministry presence.

"I just had some tremendous opportunities in Mobile that positioned me to be able to respond to greater opportunity when we moved to Oxford, and the trustees identified this geographic area as a void. We needed a presence here. They asked me if Nora and I would move to Calhoun County and begin a new work, and we were eager to do that."

Ted and Nora each have always felt called to serve children and families. For his part, Ted credits that desire, outside of

the universal call to all Christians to this type of ministry, to his own experience as a child growing up in a healthy home with parents that loved him. Knowing that there were children out there who have never experienced what he knew about basic care and parental love, Ted desired to do something about it—with his life. So he dedicated his 31-year career to serving other people, and most of all, to glorifying God.

"Ted cannot go anywhere without seeing someone who he feels compelled to pray for and frequently asks them if he can pray with them right there on the spot," says Rod Marshall, ABCH President/CEO. "He exemplifies servant leadership."

Former ABCH President/CEO Paul Miller echoed that sentiment: "For the last thirty-plus years, he has been on a journey that God uniquely prepared for him. Because of Ted's obedience and faithfulness, many children's and families' lives have been changed for the better, fellow workers have been encouraged, and God's name has been glorified."

Ted feels that every child deserves the right to grow up in a healthy family, and he wanted to respond to children who don't have that assurance, "So they can know that God cares, and somebody cares, for them."

And Amber will continue that legacy of love and care in Oxford.

When asked about her favorite thing in the ministry, she beams, "The kids, by far. I love Christmas time and seeing their faces, or celebrating their birthdays. And in Oxford this year, the community really

went above and beyond to ensure that our children had a great Thanksgiving and Christmas, despite their circumstances of having to be away from their families during the holidays. We have the most gracious supporters, and we truly cannot do this without them!

"And there are the little things too—getting sponsors for Valentine's Day who bring treats, or churches who bring Easter baskets, for example. We get to see how much it means to the kids to *simply be remembered*. That's what I love."

"And when I think about scripture that encourages me in my work," she says, "One that I often think of is the verse Jeffrey and I focused on at our daughter Analeigh's adoption, *"Every good and perfect gift is from above,"* James 1:17. In addition to Analeigh, I think about all the kids that have come through our ministry. In God's eyes, these children are gifts—precious, lovable, full of value—and what a joy it is to be able to serve them."

Please join us in praying for both Ted and Amber as they begin these new life seasons!

SERVICES AT A GLANCE

- Family Care
- Shelter Care
- Foster Care
- Pathways Professional Counseling
- Educational seminars on Child & Family issues

NEWLY NAMED

ADOPTED INTO LOVE

Joy Cowart always wanted a huge family. She remembers from "back in the day," watching shows like *Oprah* with stories of people who had adopted kids from all countries, how their stories really resonated with her.



- 2 professions of faith
- 1 adoption
- 61 children cared for in Campus and Foster Care
- 2 honor roll students
- 2 students selected into the gifted program at school
- 11 children in choir, band, gymnastics, cheerleading, t-ball, basketball, and/or volleyball
- 1 student earned a place at our local magnet school
- 3 GPS trainings (fostering) held to now service Dothan, Troy, and Chancellor
- 2 children were selected to be on their school's homecoming courts
- 2 Lunch and Learns were hosted for our community

Through the help of donors, our Campus Care children attended a reading program last summer through the University of Alabama, Lego Camp, the Callaway Gardens Christmas Light Show, the movies, and a Harlem Globetrotter game!

Since childhood, her heart was drawn to missions, but she wasn't sure how that calling and her dreams for a huge family would work together.

She says, "My husband, James, and I had difficulty getting pregnant. I miscarried, then we had Madilyn, and then after two more miscarriages, we learned that we would not *physically* be able to have any more children. We began contemplating what God may have in store for our family." It was in this season in 2003 that she and James began their journey with ABCH. First serving as relief house parents on our Dothan campus, they eventually transitioned into foster care.

After fostering for many years, they felt led to take a break. Joy says by the time they got back into foster care in 2013, they had laid down the idea of adoption due to the closed doors they had faced. So once again, they opened their home for fostering, convinced it would be like their other experiences—short-term, with a break, and then receiving a new placement, and so on.

However, the first placement they received in 2013 became the most unlikely blessing for them all. Three little girls who didn't even know their real names, but only their nicknames—TaTa, JaJa, and NaNa—came into the Cowart home, hungry and malnourished; neglected, having been severely deprived of the most basic care.

Joy describes the first six months as, "Absolutely insane. The littlest was 20 months old and not talking. The two older ones were in pull-ups at nearly 4 and 5

years old. And the oldest had some major behavioral issues. Madilyn, a teenager at this point, really stepped up to the plate! She helped us so much with the girls."

"Time goes on, and you find yourself wondering if you're making a difference. It's so hard in the day-to-day. But then for people to see you out and say, 'Wow, they've come a long way', or, 'they're such different children.' And you think back, and you're like, *Oh, yeah, six months ago, we didn't leave the house!* Or to watch them come home from Sunday School and hear them say they've asked Jesus in their hearts! Those kinds of things are what makes it worth it on all those hard days."

When it looked like parental rights would be terminated, DHR began talking with the Cowarts about adoption. They began praying in a new way about their role in these girls' lives. When they found out the birth mom was expecting a fourth baby girl, Joy says that was the, "Game-changer. The tilt. The things this mom was saying to the social workers about this baby just broke my heart. She was unwanted by her—but deeply wanted by me. Before she was even here, I felt an attachment."

So they began to talk with Madilyn about the idea of adoption. Joy thought for sure she would be opposed. In stark contrast though, her reply was, "Well of course they're going to stay. Of course they are."

They were there. They were theirs.

The huge family Joy didn't know she'd ever have, but had always dreamed of, was real. And just as parents pick names for newborns, as these girls were

adopted* into their new family, they got new names too. Names they know. After 868 days in their care, Taya Justice, Juliet Hope, Naomi Joy, and Lila Faith are now forever Cowarts.

Joy shares that it felt like God said to her, "You know, you laid it down, adoption, so how about I give it back to you . . . times four . . . and at one time? In a big, crazy package that doesn't look anything like you thought it was going to—but it's awesome."

Husband James says, "When we first got the girls, it was to give them a safe place to stay temporarily. After about a year, they stopped being 'the girls' and became 'my girls.' The addition of the baby, shortly after this change, completely won over my heart as a daddy. I look forward to watching them grow up into Godly, successful women."

"And I don't know if we're done or not," says Joy, "We joke that we have a 12-passenger van and still have 5 seats! So, I don't know that we're finished. We're open to whatever God has for us."

**Though most of the process took place in 2016, the girls were officially adopted in early January 2017.*

SERVICES AT A GLANCE

Foster Care
Campus Care
Pathways Professional Counseling
Educational seminars on Child & Family issues

A group of people, including children and adults, are holding hands in a circle. The focus is on the hands in the foreground, which are clasped together. The background is slightly blurred, showing more people in a similar arrangement. The overall mood is one of unity and support.

WRAPPING AROUND FAMILIES

CHURCH AND
COUNSELING SUPPORT

Number of Locations **42**Individuals Served **4,066***(Clients served in session & individuals engaged in a therapeutic meeting outside a session)*Number of Counselors **24**Clients Served (in session) **2,885**Pathways Direct Hours **13,495**Speaking Hours **130**

Counselors Rhett McKenzie and Dwight Wilson served 30 IMB missionaries who transferred to Alabama from various field placements worldwide, with counseling support, both as a group and one-on-one.

Our counselors wrote seven articles shared in the Faith & Family Series for The Alabama Baptist newspaper and contributed to many more.

Counselors Lisa Keane and Kristin Lowrey, with Rod Marshall, were chosen to lead a break-out session at the national Christian Alliance for Orphans (CAFO) conference in Orlando last spring.

Every Wednesday night, families bustle in from their cars and scatter across various buildings to get to their respective classes on the campus of The Church at Brook Hills. For those tucked away in Modular 16, something really special happens. Foster families across Birmingham receive support and counsel here, and for many, this turns the course of a child's, and their family's, direction.

According to Anita Bucher, who coordinates the Foster Care Ministry Team at Brook Hills, the Wednesday night Support Group started in the fall of 2013. So far, they have ministered to 52 families in fourteen churches, and many of those are parents who foster with ABCH.

"Before that time, we had been supporting our foster families in various ways for four years (offering childcare vouchers for parents going through GPS training, providing meals, furniture, diapers, toys, clothes, and prayer support). But we recognized that our families needed opportunities to come together in a safe place to share their challenges and to seek solutions from people who 'get it,'" said Anita.

"When we started the Support Group, we met two times each month. After two months, the foster parents said that the time together was so encouraging and refreshing that they wanted to meet every week. We also schedule speakers and topics that equip our families and provide CEUs." *(Continuing Education Credits; every foster parent needs 15 hours annually to keep their license to foster.)*

Foster parents routinely tell Anita that they couldn't foster without the love and support of this group. Two of those parents, Erin and Tim Lott, who foster with ABCH, have greatly benefitted from this time. Erin says, "I'm not sure we would still be fostering if it were not for the Foster Care Support Group at Brook Hills. Foster parenting is a different type of parenting, and it is essential to come together often to encourage and support each other."

Anita says that some of the greatest wisdom that is shared in the room comes from the parents, and how the Lord uses their individual journeys to speak into each other. And for what the parents aren't able to offer, many experts do. Pathways directors and counselors, Lisa Keane and Kristin Lowrey, are regular speakers at these meetings.

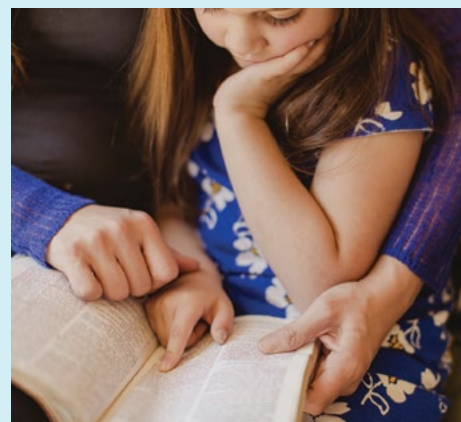
Lisa shares of the experience, "Working with the Foster Parent Support Group at Brook Hills is a huge honor and privilege. We get to meet with foster parents who are on the front lines of providing healing care for children in the system. Sharing evidence-based strategies for dealing with behavior, teaching techniques to help a child accept love, and listening to foster parents as they grieve the loss of a child that has returned home, are all ways we have had the privilege to nurture these foster parents so that they in turn, can best nurture the kids in their care."

"Tim and I look forward to the times when Lisa and Kristin join us," said Erin, "And during those times, they have helped change my internal script as a mom (biological, adoptive, and foster). On the

difficult days, I can hear them in my head reminding me: he is so precious . . . I could be setting the bar too high with this child . . . I have to connect with my kids before I correct them . . . we need to have fun together today, and so many other valuable reminders."

In addition to sharing their professional insights, Anita says that the patience and wisdom of our Pathways counselors with any and all questions parents have shared, is so valuable as well. "Parents love that they can go home and immediately put into practice the things Lisa and Kristin have shared. They tell me that they've seen positive results after implementing changes in the way they handle sensory issues and behavioral difficulties, and that they are always encouraged when they leave Modular 16 on Wednesday nights. They are thankful for the incredible resources and people who support them."

In addition to this kind of service in Birmingham, our Pathways counselors regularly support parents and children all across Alabama. Learn more at pathwaysprofessional.org.



LIGHTING THE WAY FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Camp of Champions // STATEWIDE

Our annual Camp of Champions is a fun and special experience for foster families and children in care! From every corner of ministry in the state, our families come and enjoy a few days of loving care while being trained and encouraged in their foster care and Campus Care journeys. While parents are in session, kids are in classes learning more about God's love for them and also enjoying activities like the climbing wall, bazooka ball, and paint ball!

Mobile area foster mom, Angie Howard, said of Camp 2016, "We've been foster parents for almost six years and have had 15 foster kids. As soon as we got here, he (my husband, Mark) wanted to go to the class for the veterans who had been foster parents for a while, to help them not get burned out, and immediately, God just spoke to our hearts and gave us exactly what we needed."

God is so faithful to always supply what we need, and for 26 young campers this year, that need was met in a personal profession of faith while at Camp! Praise the Lord! We are so grateful for our leaders, volunteers, donors, staff, and churches who together, make Camp happen for nearly 800 campers. You are truly helping to change lives!





Birthday Party at the Parks // BIRMINGHAM ▲

For the second year, volunteer leaders of the ABCH Regional Advisory Board (RAB) planned and hosted the community at Railroad Park and Regions Field for a 125th "Birthday" Party at the Parks (PATP)! Families enjoyed a day of fun, and with the support of many sponsors, we were able to provide quality entertainment for our foster families and campus children while raising awareness for children and families in need.

Foster mom and RAB member, Heather Hancock, says of the day, "PATP has quickly become a family tradition my kids look forward to every spring. They love the idea of being able to run barefoot, hopping from one inflatable to another while being loaded up with snow cones, popcorn, and cotton candy. And I love it for the community. I love being able to help create and participate in an afternoon of connecting . . . It's always refreshing to be reminded that as foster parents, we are loved, valued, and not in this alone, and PATP is an afternoon of just that."

Heritage Farm Day & Trail Ride // DOTHAN

Now in its eleventh year, this day on the Maddox Farm is full of activities like horse-drawn wagon rides, yard games, inflatables, and much more. Craftsmen and artisans began early, as booths were set up to share local goods, and scents of sugar cane boiling and smoky BBQ wafted through the air. It's a day that the Wiregrass community at-large comes together to support our children and families in Dothan, and we are so blessed by their love and support!

Kris Banister Memorial Golf Tournament // DECATUR

"FBC Fairview, for the past twelve years, has made an eternal impact for those in our care at our Decatur campus. They caught the vision of (ABCH supporter) Kris Banister, of sharing and showing the gospel to the fatherless. The whole church works passionately to have a Christ-centered event," says ABCH Church Relations Manager Steve Sellers. Sponsored by First Baptist Church Fairview Brotherhood and organized by Sandra Banister in memory of her husband, Kris, this annual tournament in Cullman graciously benefits the children in care on our Decatur campus and is a yearly hole-in-one. In their twelve years of hosting this event, over \$100,000 has been donated! ▼



Christmas Open House // STATEWIDE ▶

Despite the cold and rainy December weather, people by the thousands drove to our campuses to visit our homes and children at our 2016 Open House. In Decatur, Dothan, Mobile, and Oxford, guests enjoyed festive decorations, holiday foods, and guided tours, many from our children. Chief Operations Officer for North Alabama, Dr. Michael Smith says of their day in Decatur, "Open House 2016 was a fantastic event with over 1,000 people turning out to show support for ABCH. Our church partners, donors, and community members are a tremendous blessing in providing care to the hurting children of Alabama. I hope to see many new faces, as well as our faithful friends, at Open House in December 2017."

Empowered to Connect Conference // BIRMINGHAM

We had the opportunity to host nearly 50 attendees at this first-time web simulcast from the Nashville area. This two-day conference features multiple speakers and is an annual time of in-depth training designed to help foster and adoptive parents, ministry leaders, and professionals better understand how to connect with "children from hard places" in order to help them heal and become all that God desires them to be. Our space was filled to capacity, and we look forward to hosting this again in 2017!

In addition to these events, ABCH representatives hosted local Lunch & Learns for the ministry and were able to take part in regional and national events like the Unfailing Love Retreat for foster and adoptive moms, kNOW More Orphans conference, the Alabama Baptist Convention, the State Evangelism Conference, and multiple missions conferences, events, and speaking engagements.

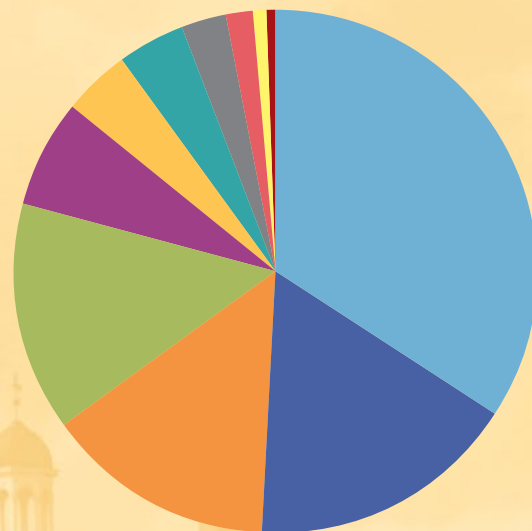


2016 FINANCIAL INFORMATION*

2016 INCOME

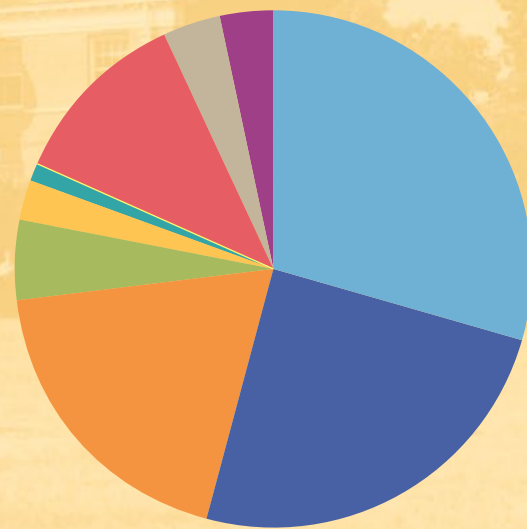
(listed from largest to smallest \$ amount)

Legacy Gifts**	\$5,308,550	34.2%
Churches	\$2,585,705	16.7%
Endowments & Trusts	\$2,219,596	14.3%
Individuals	\$2,184,162	14.1%
Foster Care & Campus Care Income	\$1,050,448	6.8%
Businesses	\$661,300	4.3%
Foundations & Grants	\$629,944	4.0%
Pathways Professional Counseling	\$431,883	2.8%
Alabama Baptist Cooperative Program	\$247,378	1.6%
Events & Fundraisers	\$116,015	0.7%
Other Income	\$84,606	0.5%
2016 TOTAL INCOME	\$15,519,587	100.0%



2016 EXPENDITURES

Foster Care	\$3,078,926	29.5%
Campus Care	\$2,586,568	24.8%
Pathways Professional Counseling	\$1,993,182	19.1%
Family Care	\$527,522	5.0%
College Care	\$244,201	2.3%
Family Aid	\$115,616	1.1%
Outreach	\$11,920	0.1%
ADMINISTRATION THAT MAXIMIZES RESOURCES		
Development	\$1,185,601	11.3%
Administration	\$375,581	3.6%
Communications	\$334,670	3.2%
2016 TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$10,453,787	100.0%



EVANGELICAL
COUNCIL FOR
FINANCIAL
ACCOUNTABILITY

*The 2016 totals above are unaudited and generally reflect cash received and cash spent during the calendar year 2016. This financial information is not compliant with generally accepted accounting principles, as it does not include revenues and expenses that do not impact annual operations, such as investment gains/losses, depreciation, and gifts-in-kind. A copy of the complete 2016 independent audit will be available at alabamachild.org once it is final.

**Legacy gifts (wills and estates) are very challenging to predict or plan. We have been remarkably blessed with a few, quite exceptional legacy gifts over the years. The second largest estate gift we have ever received occurred during 2016, making this a truly outstanding year from an income standpoint. The majority of this gift was designated for one specific area of our ministry and cannot be used for our general budget. We are very grateful for this gift and are truly blessed to serve alongside stewards who use their estate as a means of making a Kingdom impact in the lives of children, even after their passing.

Shining a Light on DONORS

CHURCHES

A Called Community

Benji and Haley Johnson are not only foster parents with ABCH, but they also lead at Chalkhead Baptist Church in Ozark, Alabama, where Benji serves as the senior pastor. God began to speak to them about the great need for foster care, and Benji shares that the support of Chalkhead Baptist through their fostering journey has been undoubtedly vital to their family.



Benji said, “[The children] have a faith family in Chalkhead. The congregation loves them as if they were born and raised among them, [having] gone over and above to make our children feel accepted and loved.” Chalkhead’s love, Benji says, helps teach their children the importance of a faith family in life.

The staff at Chalkhead first heard about ABCH at an annual association meeting. They were able to see the work we do and the need that exists for support. The church generously decided to partner with us, helping to meet our financial and volunteer needs.

Others in their church also began to foster, and Benji is grateful for the effects he’s seen. “Having so many foster children in our church family has allowed the church body to grow in the realization of the desperate need in our world for Christ. Understanding that hardships and devastation exist right in our community has led to an awakening in the hearts and minds of believers in our church.”

INDIVIDUALS

Gifts from Grief

We have amazing donors all across the state, and Lloyd and Catherine Gaddy are no exception. They’ve known about the Children’s Homes for years, and Catherine says, “We’ve always cared about it but weren’t always as faithful to give as we are now, and even now, we don’t do as much as we’d really like to.”



The reason they started to give is one we don’t often hear. Catherine shared that what made giving really special to them was the fact that their only child, Mike, was killed in September 1988 (*family photo above, taken shortly before his passing*). She says, “After that, it just seemed like the right thing to do, to take care of a child. We didn’t have anybody anymore.” The Gaddys have given faithfully for decades now, wonderfully impacting the children in our care.

When asked about encouraging others to support ABCH, Catherine encourages “grace gifts,” giving in memory of a loved one who has passed on. She says, “They (the Children’s Homes) notify the family, and I think it’s good to remember them with this gift, knowing that a child will benefit.”

Despite their deep grief and even walking through cancer herself for the past two years, Catherine says that God is still good and kind. “God takes care of us in so many ways, we can’t even recognize it when it’s happening. But with each passing birthday, it’s been a long, good life.”

TOP 25 CHURCHES GIVING TOTAL

1. Trussville First Baptist Church (Birmingham)
2. Spring Hill Baptist Church (Mobile)
3. Hunter Street Baptist Church (Birmingham)
4. Church of the Highlands
5. Henagar Baptist Church (Sand Mountain)
6. Brookwood Baptist Church (Birmingham)
7. Antioch Baptist Church (Lamar)
8. Eastern Shore Baptist Church (Baldwin)
9. Pell City First Baptist Church (St. Clair)
10. Shades Crest Baptist Church (Birmingham)
11. Mt. Sterling Baptist Church (Choctaw)
12. The Church at Brook Hills (Birmingham)
13. Maytown Baptist Church (Bessemer)
14. Samson First Baptist Church (Geneva)
15. Fairview First Baptist Church (East Cullman)
16. Shades Mountain Baptist Church (Birmingham)
17. Winfield First Baptist Church (Marion)
18. Dauphin Way Baptist Church (Mobile)
19. Huntsville First Baptist Church (Madison)
20. Courtland Baptist Church (Muscle Shoals)
21. Mt. Olive Baptist Church (Tuscaloosa)
22. Odena Baptist Church (Coosa River)
23. Bower Memorial Baptist Church (Conecuh)
24. Silver Run Baptist Church (Russell)
25. Living Faith Baptist Church (West Cullman)

LEADERSHIP

Spreading Vision and Hope for Tomorrow

2016 ABCH LEADERSHIP

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Chief Operations Officer, South Alabama

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Clinical Director, Marriage & Family

Pathways Professional Counseling

Kristin Lowrey, LCSW, PIP

Clinical Director, Children & Adolescents

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Dr. Travis Coleman

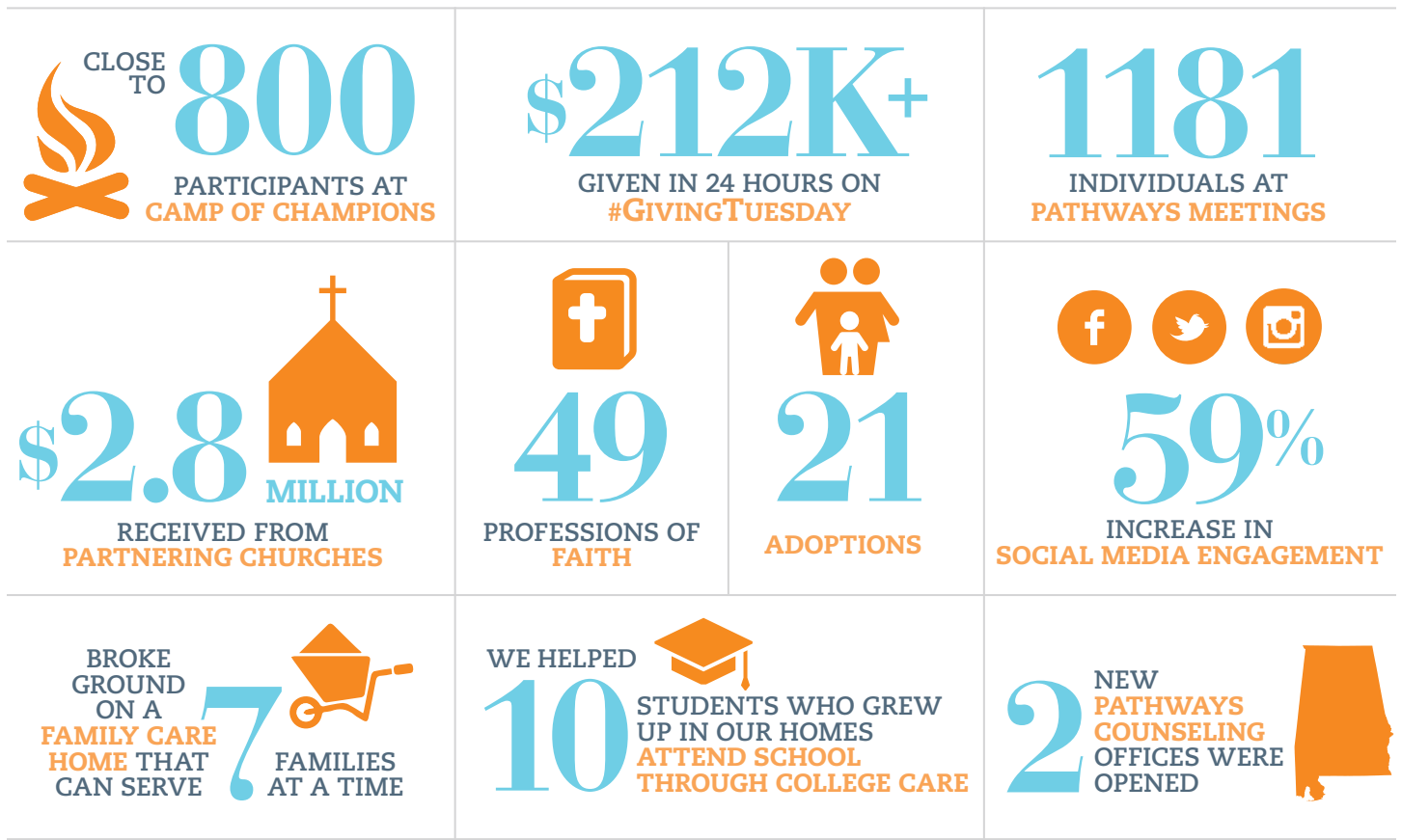
President,

Alabama Baptist State Convention, Prattville

HONORARY LIFE MEMBER

Dr. E. Grace Pilot, Mobile

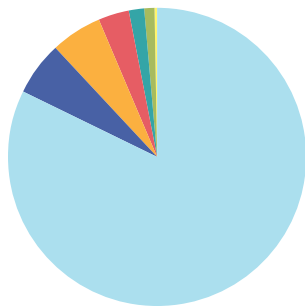
ABCH 2016 HIGHLIGHTS



Children & Families Served

2016 TOTAL SERVED:

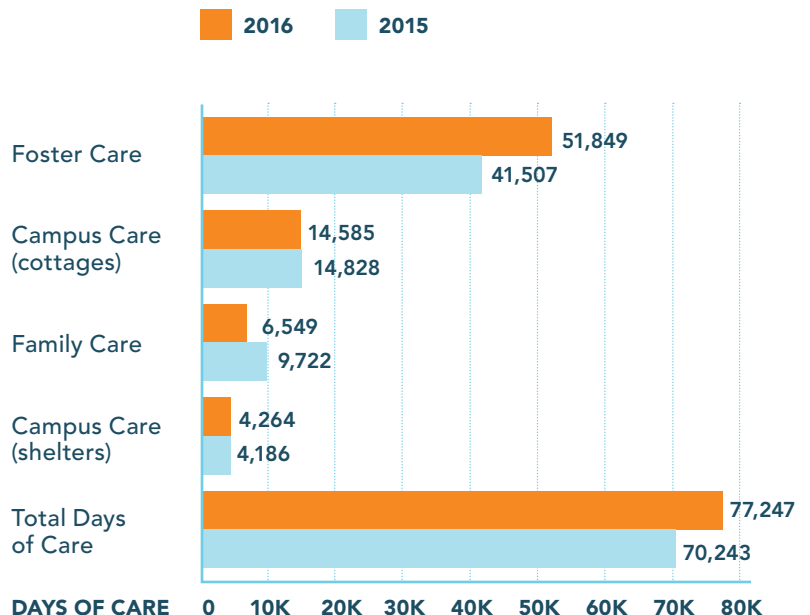
4,945



- Pathways Professional Counseling: **4,066**
- Foster Care: **294**
- Family Aid: **274**
- Campus Care: **170**
- Help to children when one or both parents die: **82**
- Family Care (mothers, dependent children): **49**
- College Care & Independent Living: **10**

Days of Care

FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES SERVED



We aren't content to
just be a **LEGACY.**
OUR MISSION *is too serious*
not to continue.

ROD MARSHALL, ABCH PRESIDENT/CEO



Why we exist: **OUR PURPOSE**

The purpose of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries is to protect, nurture, and restore children and families through Christ-centered services.

The result we hope to see: **OUR VISION**

Hope and wholeness for children and families through knowing God

PO Box 361767 | Birmingham, AL 35236 | (888) 720-8805

EMAIL: info@alabamachild.org | WEB: alabamachild.org

Our main ministry locations are in Birmingham, Decatur, Dothan, Mobile, Montgomery, and Oxford.
For area specific contact information, as well as counseling offices around the state,
please visit us online at alabamachild.org/locations.

