

A young girl with her eyes closed, blowing bubbles. She is wearing a pink and white striped shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green and yellow, suggesting an outdoor setting. The bubbles are in various stages of being blown, some are large and colorful, others are smaller and just forming.

*from*  
**BROKEN** *to*  
**BEAUTIFUL**



Alabama Baptist  
**CHILDREN'S HOMES**  
& Family Ministries

**ANNUAL REPORT** // 2017

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*Dear Friend,*

2017 was an amazing year for *your* Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH)! We saw and shared stories of lives going "from Broken to Beautiful" through the work of Christ in many lives over this last year. I am very excited for you to read even more about the work God has done in others through the life of this ministry in 2017. I'm excited too, for you to get a glimpse of what He has already begun to do in 2018!

If you have met me, you probably turned to your friends upon my departure and commented on my height. I am 6'6" tall. I am almost always the tallest one in the room (unless my 6'8" son is with me!) It is quite common for me to see a shirt or a jacket that I really like and try it on only to find out that it is too small. I am accustomed to things being too small. I have to confess that I suspect God gets frustrated with me because He finds my faith to be too small.

I sometimes worry whether or not we can accomplish all that we set out to do in this ministry. One of the delights of my job is having a front row seat to see daily how God shows up and accomplishes wonderful, miraculous things that far exceed my expectations. When I see what God has done in 2017 and is beginning in 2018, it is one of the few times when I find myself saying, "This is too big!"

In 2017, God accomplished much through this ministry. At a meeting of our leadership team, we made a list of dozens of goals achieved and accomplishments for 2017. As we sat and looked at the list, we praised God for all He has done. We then had lively discussion to decide which seven accomplishments from 2017 were most share-worthy. Throughout this annual report, I'm excited to share with you in more detail about the following accomplishments:

- The completion and opening of Grace's House of Hope in Mobile
- 31% growth in services provided to children, a 12% growth in foster care, and 7% growth in the number of families served by Pathways Professional Counseling, one of our sister ministries
- Goals exceeded in church giving, individual giving, and in #GivingTuesday
- A foster care ministry launched in Lee County (serving Auburn and Opelika)
- Dozens of adoptions and reunifications with families
- We saw 22 children make first time public professions of faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.
- 2017 saw us celebrate our largest ever Camp of Champions!

I hope you will enjoy reading about these 2017 highlights and more over the following pages. Keep in mind that God is still very actively at work at *your* ABCH in 2018 and beyond. Thank you for partnering with us on this amazing journey.

May God richly bless you, as you are a great source of blessing for the children we serve!

Sincerely,

*Rod Marshall*

Rod Marshall  
President/CEO

# TOP 7 SEVEN of 2017

## Growth in Programs: Statewide

Serving children is our top priority, and we experienced 31% growth in services provided to children. Among other areas, this includes Campus Care, Shelter Care, and Foster Care, which alone experienced a 12% growth. We also saw a 7% growth in the number of families served by Pathways Professional Counseling, a sister ministry to ABCH. Pathways opened two new offices this year, bringing their statewide offices to 44 in total.



## Grace's House of Hope Opened

After breaking ground in 2016, God completed Grace's House of Hope in Mobile in 2017. This transitional living home was created to serve homeless mothers and their children during a difficult life season. The total cost of the home was \$1.7 million, but God brought individuals, churches and families who contributed \$1.3 million toward this new ministry. Within three weeks of opening this home, it was filled to capacity with mothers and children whose lives are being transformed by God's grace and hope. *More about lives impacted here on page 6.*



### Camp of Champions, Record High Attendance

We celebrated our largest ever Camp of Champions at Shocco Springs! We had 833 campers at Camp this year, which included a record 129 volunteers. The children who attended enjoyed a new sports track with a special time to show what they'd learned to their parents.

*More about Camp on page 20.*

### Growth in Financial Support

Giving exceeded our budget in several key areas! Church giving and individual giving were both higher than projected.

With the help of hundreds around the state, those long familiar with our ministry and many who are new to our ministry, we experienced an amazingly successful #GivingTuesday, raising over \$329,000! This generous giving from ministry partners helped to fuel growth in all areas of our ministry.



### New Foster Care Ministry

With great anticipation and excitement, we launched a foster care ministry in Lee and Russell Counties (serving primarily, the Auburn and Opelika areas). We are already seeing amazing growth in this part of the state through new homes licensed and new families signed up for foster parenting classes in 2018. We look forward to seeing what God has planned for 2018 and beyond in this community!  
*More about this new launch on page 16.*

### Adoptions and Reunifications All Year

All around the state, we saw 36 adoptions, many of those being sibling groups, and 85 children who were reunified with their parents or another family member! Our goal for children is to find permanence as quickly as possible. When it's not in a child's best interest to return to their biological families, as determined by the courts, being adopted into a forever home is a wonderful reminder of how God adopts us into his forever family and is truly something to celebrate.

*Special features on pages 8 and 14.*



### Professions of Faith Made

In 2017, we saw 22 children make first-time public professions of faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior, with 18 of those being at Camp of Champions! There is nothing more important to us than seeing children find themselves in the embrace of their loving, heavenly Father.



# New Direction in CHRIST

## Alabama Children's & Family

Emily Lepper came into our care in Decatur as a hurting and angry 16-year-old. Not only did she finish high school and college with us, but she also came to know Christ! She has been through a lot, and her house parent, Jim Harris, says of Emily:

"I saw a young, very troubled child with no hope, no future, no safety zone, destined to follow the family cycle of dead ends—but she didn't. I personally witnessed this defeated girl rise from her depths to become a strong, victorious, and focused woman because she learned to trust in the spirit of God! 'Em' showed us all that we can trust God! Just ask her . . . "

So that's exactly what we did! Following is our conversation with Emily:

### **What was life like before coming into care at ABCH?**

Life before coming to care at ABCH was very challenging. When my sister and I lived with my mother,

she regularly abused drugs and never had a stable relationship. I was 6 years old when my grandparents got custody of us. Soon after, visitations with my dad stopped, and later with my mom. From a young age, I was highly medicated for various mood and behavioral disorders. It was not unusual for the police to be called to our house due to the dysfunction in our home. I lived in 12 different homes by the time I made it to the Children's Home at the age of 16.

### **What were the biggest changes you experienced in that time?**

The biggest change for me was when I became a Christian. I stopped fighting those who were trying to help me. I soon came off all my medication, grew in my faith, and began setting goals. Through my walk with Christ, I have grown not only as a Christian, but also as a person. I have had to deal with forgiveness and various

# DECATUR *high* LIGHTS

**5** NEW HOMES licensed for foster care

**1** ADOPTION

**3** REUNIFICATIONS to family

**40** community or church PRESENTATIONS by staff

**2** students GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL and moved to college campuses

**1** student signed and began to play football for Alabama A&M University on a full academic and athletic SCHOLARSHIP

**2** former residents GRADUATED COLLEGE

**19** students earned various HONOR AWARDS from their schools

**4** PROFESSIONS OF FAITH

# Baptist Homes Ministries



Pictured, Emily outside of our Birmingham office

obstacles, and like most things, it's not always easy and takes discipline. It means a lot to me to be able to share the different ways the Lord has been involved in my life and has brought me to where I am today.

**This past year, you were able to work as an intern in our Birmingham office—what was that like?**

I always knew I wanted to give back to ABCH in some way, but had no idea what that looked like. I never imagined how much I would enjoy my time there. For me to work with the Development and Communications teams, as well as those involved with supporting ABCH, truly meant a lot. Being able to personally call donors and thank several of them for their prayers and donations was important to me, so that they could see how they are helping those in care of ABCH.

**What is life like today?**

I graduated from the University of Montevallo with a

Bachelors of Arts in Marketing in December 2017, and finding a job was something I prayed about a lot. The Lord provided, and I recently moved to Rhode Island to work for APC by Schneider as a Sales Consultant. At times, it can be challenging, and there are several things different here than in Alabama.

**How do you feel you were most impacted through your time at ABCH?**

I feel I was most impacted through the stability, unconditional love, and support received from my house parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harris, from the guidance I received from all who work there, as well as those directly involved (in supporting). When I think back at all the obstacles and successes I've had, it's clear that the Lord has played a huge part in my life and has brought me to where I am today.

# Refuge and Hope in FAMILY CARE



# D

Dru and Chereta are single moms who are hard-working, bright, articulate, hopeful, and loving. And for each of them, for different reasons, they found themselves homeless and scared about their futures before getting connected to our Family Care ministry in Mobile. Our new home opened last October, and House Manager, Rachel Burden says, "The seven moms we have here are great; they really are buying into the program and working hard to do what they need to do for their families."

Dru, bright and bubbly with short, pink and black curls, is in her mid-twenties. She's from Mobile but has moved a lot since she was 16. She began paramedic school, was unable to finish—but has thought of going back. She also has a 6-month-old son, Taylor. "He's awesome," she says, "He's so smart and into everything!"

As she begins to share her story, it's easy to see that

she too, is smart, as well as polite and warm. It turns out that her mom was very sick, and that brought her back to Mobile. After her mom passed away, Dru stayed and eventually became pregnant. After her son was born, they didn't have a permanent home, and soon found themselves in dire need. She says she ended up in Family Care because she had nowhere else to go.

"I think I cried when I came here. It's a wonderful place. They've helped us so much. I had thought about giving my child up temporarily until I could get through this . . . then I found this place. This is so helpful for single moms.

"Here, I'm able to save money, fix my credit, learn new stuff. My prayer request and main goal is stability. I hope to get a car that's paid for and a house so my son doesn't have to go through what I did . . . Everything happens for a reason. I'm grateful we're safe."



# MOBILE *high* LIGHTS

**5** PROFESSIONS OF FAITH

**4** foster parent FELLOWSHIPS were held

**6** students had PERFECT ATTENDANCE

**23** REUNIFICATIONS to family

**5** students were on the HONOR ROLL this year

**1** child was awarded a good character AWARD and highest AR reading ACHIEVEMENT

**1** REGIONAL ADVOCACY BOARD launched for volunteers

**1** child received a most improved behavior AWARD

**12** NEW HOMES licensed for foster care



Pictured left, Dru; right, Chereta, Joshua, and Jeremiah

Also safe in our care is Chereta and her two youngest sons, Joshua (4) and Jeremiah (6). Chereta is in her 30s, somewhat shy, but very thoughtful in her words—she even dreams of writing a few books one day! She exudes a certain calm and peace, and after learning about some of the storms she’s been through, it’s clear that this peace comes from the Lord.

She’s from Mobile, but has lived most of her life in Florida. Joshua, who is medically fragile, began having a lot of health issues. She needed a better support system than what she had, so she moved back to Alabama.

She says, “We stayed with different sisters and in hotels, and at one point, were in a home. I couldn’t keep my job though because of Joshua’s sickness. My car got repossessed, and I lost my home again . . . I couldn’t find anything. I was back in the same situation.

“I was at the breaking point. I reached out to a friend and wondered if I needed to give my kids up . . . I was in over my head. I felt like a failure. I think my friend knew someone at the Children’s Homes. When I called, this home had just been open for a week. It felt like God had already worked it out, and we moved in later that month.”

Chereta feels like this is her chance from God to get things right. Like Dru, her main prayer request is stability for her and her boys. She wants to learn from her past and raise her boys up to know God and to fear him in love and respect.

We are grateful to be a part of these journeys and ask you to remember our moms in prayer as they learn to lean on the Lord in new and stretching ways.

Read more of this story at [alabamachild.org/moms](http://alabamachild.org/moms)

# Fishing, Hunting, & ADOPTING



# A

Andrew is a pretty typical 17-year-old. He likes to fish and to hunt. He enjoys football, and he does not like tomatoes, but his favorite food is pizza, and he accepts that irony. He wants to work outdoors and hopes to someday become a game warden. In most ways, he is a typical 17-year-old, except maybe for the fact that he was recently adopted.

Through no fault of his own, Andrew had been in the foster care system since age 12. He was first placed with us, with a single, matronly lady. He was taken to church, had clear rules to follow, and his life had lots of structure. It was in this new and different season that he began to hear the Lord's voice and made the decision to accept Christ into his life!

He then went to live with foster parents, Chris and Lisa Ashcraft, when he was 13. The connections they made

were almost instant. He and Chris bonded that first weekend while at a fishing tournament together. Fishing is an activity they both love, and Chris says it was great—even though Andrew out-fished him! Andrew enjoyed being there, but was on the journey to go back home, and after four months, he went back to his mother. Unfortunately, within six months, things had gotten hard at home again, and Andrew found himself once again in foster care.

Around that same time, two other foster children in Chris and Lisa's home left, opening up a spot just in time for Andrew to come back to them. Lisa says they thought it would be short-term, as one of his family members was pursuing his adoption. That fell through though, as well as another family's attempt to bring him into their home.

# BIRMINGHAM *high* LIGHTS

**15** ADOPTIONS

**27** REUNIFICATIONS to family

**1** PROFESSION OF FAITH

**1** Family Care mom successfully completed the JOBS FOR LIFE program

**1** student got his DRIVER'S LICENSE

**1** student made the school FOOTBALL TEAM

**3** College Students served in COLLEGE CARE

**12** NEW HOMES licensed for foster care

**1** child made so much progress at school that he went from being mostly held out of class to the ALL A HONOR ROLL



Lisa, Chris, and Andrew on adoption day

Feeling discouraged, and wondering if he would ever have a forever home, he began to ask them if they might adopt him someday.

As foster parents, they were trained with the understanding that foster care was designed to be temporary, with the hope of reuniting children to their biological families. With this in mind, Chris and Lisa never thought adoption was something God was calling them to, and so their answer was always a kind and gentle, no.

Months later though, after much prayer and what seemed to be a divinely appointed conversation with ABCH Church Relations Manager, Steve Sellers, Lisa and Chris knew God was telling them to reconsider the decision to adopt. So, at a special dinner one night, they asked Andrew if he would be okay with them

adopting him. At first, he thought they were joking! And when he realized they were serious, tears came to his eyes.

When asked what he felt was the best part of his life so far, Andrew responded, "My adoption day. It was the best day I have ever had. It was perfect. It was like it was my day. It was the first time I have ever felt like I had a home."

Lives like Andrew's are going from broken to beautiful every day. Hope is being restored. Families are being formed. Grace is falling down upon us. God is good.

# Showing His LOVE

# M

Missions had always been on Ricky and Debbie Thacker's hearts, and going somewhere overseas had been something they talked about doing when they retired. God certainly called them to missions—but little did they realize it was just a few minutes away from where they lived.

Almost ten years ago, Debbie worked as a secretary in our Birmingham office, and Ricky was a pastor. "We were asked if we could stay at the campus home in Gardendale so the house parents could have some relief time."

Those few days forever changed their lives. The house parents decided to turn in their notice, and the Thackers were asked if they would step in while they searched for new house parents. "After about a month . . . Ricky called me during lunch one day and said, I think the Lord is leading us in this direction," Debbie said.

They were house parents in Gardendale for four years, and in 2013, the Gardendale home transitioned to one of our Family Care homes. The Thackers missed being with the kids, and they decided to move to Oxford when a position opened up to work at Friendship House, a Shelter Care home providing short-term care to children while a more permanent plan is put in place. Children stay in shelter anywhere from a few days, up to a few months.

They learned right away that these kids need a safe, stable environment. "We try and find ways to make it easier for them, to make it as stable as possible," Ricky shared, "since many kids aren't sure what's going on or who to trust."

"These kids come from hard places and experiences, and I am amazed by their resilience," Debbie said. "You



## OXFORD *high* LIGHTS

**6** PROFESSIONS OF FAITH

**1** child, after dropping out of school prior to coming into our care, was re-enrolled through a credit recovery program and got **BACK ON TRACK TO GRADUATE** with her peers

**1<sup>st</sup>** TRAIN RIDE for children in care at our Friendship House, from Anniston to Birmingham

**5** children received the **HONOR ROLL AWARD** at their school

**5** NEW HOMES were licensed for foster care

**2** ADOPTIONS

**22** REUNIFICATIONS to family

**22** FOSTER HOMES at year end

**1** GRANT AWARDED from Kiwanis Anniston

**1** child plays school BASKETBALL and 4 BOYS play FOOTBALL for the city league

**Pictured, Ricky and Debbie Thacker, at the Friendship House**

realize some kids don't have things we take for granted every day, such as running water, clean clothes, power, etc. I hope and pray we can show them something different, something better . . . to show them the love of Christ."

Debbie and Ricky love spending time and sharing new experiences with the kids, such as trips they've taken to the Smoky Mountains. Several kids have never been on a trip like that, or even a place that far. Even everyday experiences, like going to a movie theater or the mall can be exciting because many haven't often, if ever, been before.

"I remember one time a girl was with us, and she was invited to a birthday party by a little girl in her Sunday School class," Debbie said. "It was the first time she had

ever been invited to a birthday party, so we went to the Galleria for a hair cut. She was absolutely amazed." This sweet little girl was taking in all the amazing sights at the mall when she came across something she'd never seen before—an escalator. "I explained that these were moving stairs, and we probably went up and down the escalator six or seven times, because she loved it!"

It's the small things that truly make a difference in the lives of these children. The first-time experiences, the stability, even things like a warm meal that is always there. The kids that come through the Friendship House may barely remember Ricky or Debbie's names, but they'll certainly remember the love and care while there. Debbie says, "We can point them to the one who is, and can be sound and secure for them—Jesus Christ."

# True Life CHANGE



# W

"We don't know all the abuses she's really endured because she was passed around so much," Kim McGainey Area Director of Southeast Alabama shares about 15-year-old, Kari\*.

What we do know about Kari though, is that she is a sweet girl, and despite her chronological age of 15, she functions more as an 8 or 9-year-old, due to the severe head trauma she had suffered at the hands of her mom.

As hard as it is to comprehend, her mom's discipline often included yelling and severe punishment, including striking her about the head with an iron skillet. There was so much scarring in her head that there were scabs, so her social workers had to carefully shave her head so they could be treated and heal properly.

"She had a very tough upbringing that included pretty severe emotional and physical abuse by her mom. She (mom) would pass her to all kinds of people; an 'aunt' or 'uncle'—but none really were. They were people who just agreed to keep her," says Kim.

Also disheartening about Kari's story is that for most of her life, she was never called by her name. She was just referred to as, "that girl."

Kim says, "Our goal was to make her feel safe, comfortable, and loved. Because I knew she had not been called by name, we focused on things we could do to help build her self-esteem. We decorate the rooms for each child when they come into care. So for Kari, we bought big letters and spelled them out on her wall so it was the first thing she saw when she walked in, big and bright!"

# DOTHAN *high* LIGHTS

**6** PROFESSIONS OF FAITH

**2** NEW PLAYGROUNDS built for children in our Campus Care home and office

**7** children earned ACADEMIC or CITIZENSHIP HONORS

**16** ADOPTIONS

**2** students participated in a 2-week JUNIOR POLICE ACADEMY with the Dothan Police Dept.

**2** children selected to HOMECOMING COURT

**8** REUNIFICATIONS to family

**1** student HONORED for participation in ROTC

**13** students played SPORTS, 1 sang in CHOIR, 1 was selected SGA TREASURER, 1 participated in FFA (Future Farmers of America)

**10** NEW HOMES licensed for foster care

**2** children accepted into the GIFTED PROGRAM at their schools

Despite all that she's been through, Kim says that Kari was a delight. And even though we didn't have her in our Campus Care home for very long, what she experienced while she was with us was truly life-changing. She was able to participate in a youth retreat at church, and in that time, she accepted Christ and was baptized shortly after.

Kim says, "She really understood that the Lord loved her. She had never experienced that kind of love before, and she wanted SO badly for her mom to know that kind of love. I was honored to be with her at her baptism, and as we were waiting on those steps, I'll never forget the sweetness of the moment when Kari looked at me and said, 'I need to pray for my mom.'

"She prayed the most sincere prayer. She prayed that her mom could forgive her too, because she knew she had also not been kind to her. She prayed that God would heal their relationship; that she could be the kind of daughter she needed to be to her mom—to be a positive light for her. It was amazing."

Not only does Kari now know her name, but her heavenly father does too, as her name is forever written on the palms of his hands.

*\*Name and photo have been edited for privacy reasons*

# The Road to HOME



# F

***"For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told (Habakkuk 1:5b NIV)."***

Bobbi Olson, ABCH Social Worker in Montgomery, feels this verse perfectly sums up the lives of two little boys who transitioned from our care in 2017, after several years of being in foster care. Separated from their siblings when they first came to us, they were scared, uncertain, and in need of hope.

Bobbi says, "As believers, we find that Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, gives us hope and certainty. Foster care . . . is engulfed in hurt and loss, but also restoration and redemption, especially when children gain stability and permanence. It is the Gospel in action."

For two brothers this year, Jaxon\* and Luke\*, years of instability came to an end. Because of mitigating circumstances that prevented them from being reunified with their parents, their stay in foster care was longer than expected. Month after month passed, and they longed to go home to their family, or to even just find a place to call home.

Despite all the heartache and struggles they've endured over the last couple of years, Jaxon and Luke learned something in this season that many of us struggle to grasp—they learned what it was like to live out the faith of a child and to see God provide.

Bobbi says, "At a family visit not too long ago, the oldest was so excited as he exclaimed, 'I just know I'll be home for Christmas this year!' Our hearts were broken





## MONTGOMERY *high* LIGHTS

- 6** NEW HOMES licensed for foster care
- 2** REUNIFICATIONS to family
- 4** children played BASKETBALL, SOCCER, FOOTBALL, or GYMNASTICS/CHEERLEADING
- 3** children made significant GRADE LEVEL IMPROVEMENTS in their reading abilities
- 1** child was named STUDENT OF THE MONTH
- 1** student participated in JROTC at his high school
- 1** student received an AWARD FOR "MOST IMPROVED" in English
- 2** of our children participated in a Troy University CHEERLEADING EVENT and got to go onto the field during half time

for him, as it seemed that it just would not be so . . ." But then, how often have we seen God choose to work things out in ways that defy our logic?

Through many amazing efforts and the dedication of the children's previous and current foster families, combined with the faith of a mustard seed, much time, effort, and prayer, God worked in His own way and time to provide these precious boys permanency with relatives, just days before Christmas!

"After years of being transient and unsettled, and after an extended time in foster care, their transition to permanence was their faith come to fruition. These two boys found a *place to call home*. Even more importantly, they learned that their heavenly father hears their cries, rewards their faith, and meets them in their time of

need," says Bobbi. She adds, "Looking back, you could not have convinced anyone involved in this situation that this part of their story would end this way. Most, if not all, would have said it was not possible. But isn't that the God we serve? He takes the impossible and makes it possible for His Glory."

Throughout our ministry this year, we were privileged to see a total of 85 reunifications to parents or family members across the state! These 85 children, plus 34 who were adopted, all found a place to call home in 2018. Please continue to pray for peace and permanence for the children and families in our care.

*\*Names and photo have been changed for privacy reasons*



Alabama Baptist Children's Homes Social Worker, Elizabeth Williams, has been a tremendous blessing to our Dothan families for years. Beginning in 2017, she began serving children and families in the newest frontier of our foster care ministry, which has taken root in the Auburn-Opelika region!

Elizabeth began her service with ABCH in Dothan four years ago. Before coming to us, it had been her prayer for several years that the Lord would lead her to a social work position within a Christian agency. Her local church had supported the Children's Home in Troy, and, when she was a young adult, she and her husband completed their home study with ABCH, enabling them to become adoptive parents.

After helping Elizabeth start her family twenty years ago, Elizabeth's role has come full-circle several times now, as for the past four years, she has served others in their family journeys through ABCH.

"The families I have met so far have been the most rewarding part of beginning this program (in Auburn-Opelika). They are all so interested in serving the Lord and making sure they follow His plan for their lives and for the lives of the children and birth families they will encounter in this process," Elizabeth said.

By the end of 2017, four families were licensed in the Auburn-Opelika area, and three children had been placed. So far, 2018 has started with great interest, as eleven families have begun foster parent training classes this winter!



## AUBURN *high* LIGHTS

**3** CHILDREN CAME INTO OUR CARE

**4** NEW HOMES licensed for foster care

**2** of our babies attended their FIRST FOOTBALL TAILGATE

# New Place SAME MISSION

Elizabeth shares how encouraging it has been to see families in the Auburn-Opelika area stepping up to serve as the hands and feet of Christ as they care for His children. There is a great need in this part of the state for foster homes, and we are grateful for the doors the Lord has opened to begin serving there! Many local churches, the surrounding community, families, and ABCH staff members like Elizabeth continually uphold our ministry in prayer and service and have helped us see this new growth in care.

We received a substantial amount of financial support from donors and nearly 15 churches to launch this new program in East Alabama. Key to this support is First Baptist Church Opelika. They not only provided financially to help us get started, but they are also

providing Elizabeth with office space—both rent and utility free—as well as training space and childcare services for families attending these training classes! What a blessing, for so many. We are so grateful for this Kingdom partnership!

As we continue to recruit, train, and license more homes, we are prayerful and hopeful to see God grow and lead more hearts to him as we point children in the Auburn-Opelika area to the source of true life and hope, Jesus Christ.

# An Amazing JOURNEY

# M

"My wife, Gail, died in October 2010. The first year was not bad. The second year though . . . was bad," says Joe. Now in his seventies, living in pain he could no longer bear, he reached out to Pathways Professional Counseling. Since that time, his life has been turned upside down in the best of ways.

Joe says, "I was sitting here in the sunroom, remembering Gail. I looked down at my signet ring, and I remembered something I had been so selfish about, that I never apologized to Gail about, and I sat there weeping. And then, it was almost like an audible voice I heard saying, *Don't you realize you've been doing me the same way all these years?* I knew this was God speaking (to me) through the Holy Spirit.

"And that brought more tears. That was the beginning of realizing there was much more to it than just grieving over Gail."

Rod Campbell, Pathways counselor serving in central Alabama, says that Joe first came to him five years ago, having great difficulty processing grief after the death of his wife. "As we began to talk, we discovered that Joe's grief process was essentially blocked by a lifetime's worth of struggle with loss, going back to early childhood."

Joe learned about Pathways through the St. Clair County Baptist Association newsletter, but put off calling for months. Eventually though, he called, and things began to change. "When Rod saw me in January of 2013, I went with the attitude of, *I'm going to tell him*

# PATHWAYS *high* LIGHTS

14,460

DIRECT  
COUNSELING  
hours

23

Number of  
COUNSELORS

2

Counselors presented at  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE,  
CAFO 2017, in Nashville

3,490

CLIENTS  
SERVED  
(in session)

44

Number of  
LOCATIONS

2

Highly trained Pathways  
counselors LED A ONE-WEEK  
COURSE for working  
with kids with trauma at  
Samford's School of Social  
Work. These master's level  
students then attended  
Camp of Champions as  
special needs buddies.

4,430

INDIVIDUALS  
SERVED  
(clients and those  
engaged in a  
therapeutic meeting  
outside of a session)

9

Counselors completed  
various TRAININGS,  
CLASSES, and EXAMS

8

ARTICLES were written  
in partnership with  
*The Alabama Baptist*

A NEW BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
was formed for PATHWAYS  
PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING

everything.' And I did. So in that first meeting, I began dredging up almost 70 years of grief."

Joe, through a broken voice, still moved at the love and understanding he began to experience that first day at counseling, says, "He listened. He listened with the compassion of Christ, and at the end, he shared scripture. I remember driving home and thinking, 'There is hope.'"

He adds, "I had no idea what an amazing journey it was going to be and that walls would come down. It went far beyond whatever expectations I had . . . I have realized that there's not going to be any progress unless you look the past eyeball to eyeball . . . It's been an amazing journey for an old man. I'm not the man I was when my wife died."

Rod would seem to echo those sentiments, "Through his time in the counseling process, Joe has experienced significant healing, growth, change, and freedom. He has worked very hard for his progress and has seen God do a great work in him."

Joe shares for anyone in a similar situation, "Find a counselor. There IS hope. And tell it all. Don't keep any of it in . . . A licensed counselor must keep it confidential . . . There is hope; you don't have to deal with it by yourself . . . The wounds are there. God's allowed those wounds, but he's also the healer of those wounds."

Read more of Joe's story online at [alabamachild.org/joe](http://alabamachild.org/joe)

# Support Around the STATE

## Trees for Hope // Mobile

On November 28, the first annual Trees for Hope event, benefitting the children and families in our care, was held at Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile—and what a special night it was!

Our team in Mobile, along with our new Regional Advocacy Board was instrumental in seeing the night go smoothly for our 250 guests. Attendees participated in a silent auction for a chance to purchase a variety of themed and pre-decorated Christmas trees and wreaths, just in time for the Christmas season, while they enjoyed heavy hors d'oeuvres, fine coffees, and desserts!

Along with the silent auction, they had the opportunity to bid on weekend getaways, unique dining and culinary experiences, fun family activities, and valuable household services in the live auction, all while learning more about

the ministry of ABCH and how they can be involved.

In all, \$39,500 was raised, and we are so grateful to event hosts, EnSec Pest and Lawn, Air of Excellence, and founding title sponsor Dr. Chris Mullenix, for their vision and work to support our ministry. Development

officer, Josh Farmer says, “Trees for Hope was no small undertaking, yet these men knew that their time, energy, resources, and effort would ultimately impact the lives of children and families. To all of our sponsors, thank you for partnering with us to host an event that will allow ABCH to continue to protect, nurture, and restore children and families through Christ-centered services.”

## Camp of Champions // STATEWIDE

What a big and exciting time we had at Camp of Champions! Our annual Camp event is a uniquely ABCH experience for our foster families, staff, volunteers, and children in care. Over 25 years ago, Camp of Champions was created to be a fun time for the kids in our care. As the years have passed, it has become a time of both refreshment and growth for our parents, and an awesome time of fun and learning for our kids! We’ve grown from 70 to nearly 850 campers—the kind of growth and impact that only God could design.

For many of the children in our care, Camp is a time that they can “just be kids.” They may come from backgrounds of heartache, abuse, or neglect, but at Camp, they get to take part in many of life’s simple joys—eating watermelon, swimming for hours, staying up a little past bedtime, trying new adventures, laughing with other kids.

At Camp, new friendships are made, and our family ties grow even stronger as the Gospel is shared—and often received. For 18 young campers this year, they heard and





responded to the gospel with a personal profession of faith while at Camp!

So many leaders, volunteers, donors, staff, and churches come together to make Camp happen, and we couldn't be more grateful for the both the present and eternal impact you are making. Thank you for your partnership in making Camp of Champions a sweet reality for so many children and families.

### #GivingTuesday // STATEWIDE

What an amazingly sweet day of generosity we experienced in our fourth year of participating in the global #GivingTuesday effort! We were so moved by your gifts, emails, social media shares, and prayers for our ministry!

Financial support of #GivingTuesday for our children and families totaled just over \$329,000—far exceeding our goal of \$250,000 (which included \$125,000 of matching funds).

Lives are impacted everyday at ABCH. Your donations help to provide food, clothes, shelter, family

environments, and love to children in need. In addition, children hear the gospel while in our care and are regularly pointed back to Jesus Christ as their ultimate healer and hope in life!

Here are a few, fun facts from #GivingTuesday 2017:



TOTAL FUNDS RAISED FOR #GIVINGTUESDAY (WITH \$125,000 IN MATCHING GIFTS), FAR EXCEEDING OUR ORIGINAL GOAL OF \$250,000



Social media sharing on #GivingTuesday

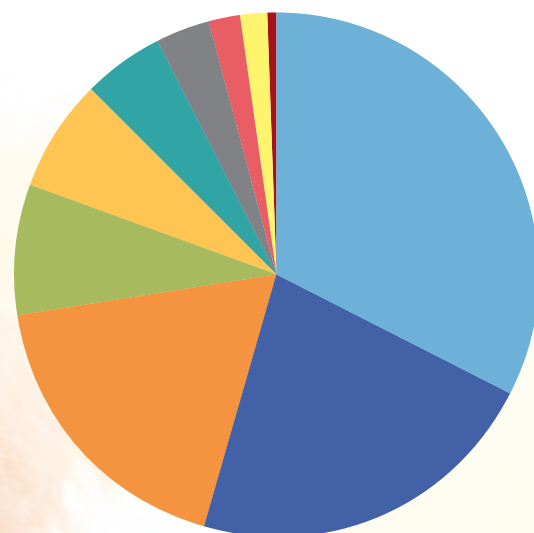
*In addition to these events, ABCH representatives hosted local Lunch & Learns for the ministry and were able to take part in regional and national events like Christmas Open House, the Kris Banister Memorial Golf Tournament in Cullman, the Hope & Wholeness Dinner in Dothan, the Alabama Baptist Convention, the State Evangelism Conference, and multiple missions conferences. In all, ABCH staff was engaged in close to 200 speaking engagements to church or community groups.*

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION // 2017\*

## 2017 INCOME

(listed from largest to smallest \$ amount)

Endowments & Trusts	\$4,697,029	32.6%
Churches	\$3,187,926	22.1%
Individuals	\$2,608,174	18.1%
Foster Care & Campus Care	\$1,130,943	7.9%
Estates & Legacy Gifts	\$997,789	6.9%
Foundations & Grants	\$715,424	5.0%
Counseling Services	\$488,496	3.4%
Businesses	\$305,591	2.1%
Cooperative Program	\$241,235	1.7%
Events & Fundraisers	\$30,200	0.2%
Other Income	\$5,870	0.0%
<b>2017 TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$14,408,677</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## 2017 EXPENDITURES

Foster Care	\$3,630,428	30.1%
Campus Care	\$2,925,256	24.3%
Pathways Professional Counseling	\$2,266,946	18.8%
Family Care	\$704,500	5.9%
College Care	\$244,674	2.0%
Family Aid	\$97,463	0.8%
<b>ADMINISTRATION THAT MAXIMIZES RESOURCES</b>		
Development	\$1,264,895	10.5%
Administration	\$525,240	4.4%
Communications	\$384,309	3.2%
<b>2017 TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$12,043,711</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



EVANGELICAL  
COUNCIL FOR  
FINANCIAL  
ACCOUNTABILITY

\*The 2017 totals above are unaudited and generally reflect cash received and cash spent during the calendar year 2017. 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 2017 independent audit will be available once it is final.



## Church Partner Spotlight:

### VALLEY GROVE BAPTIST

In pastor Jeff Logan's eyes, they fell a little short of what they normally like to do. But when their gift came in, ABCH Church Relations Manager Steve Sellers wept. Valley Grove Baptist Church in Remlap has given faithfully to ABCH for years, but this year was a little different, because in summer 2016, the church lost its building to arson.

"They've been in the process of rebuilding. I used to be in the insurance business, and I know that probably most churches are underinsured," Steve said. "So for the people of Valley Grove Baptist to dig deep in their pockets at a time like this was sacrificial and touching," he added. "They are a very loving church."

Despite what they've been through, they haven't forgotten who they are or what they're about. Jeff says, "You can't out-give the Lord. He always blesses beyond what we can even imagine." Soon after Jeff first met Jesus, he went with a group to tour our home in Troy, and that visit stuck with him. "I've tried to encourage every church I've been a part of to contribute," he said.

So at Valley Grove, every week they do a penny march with their children, and then annually at our Christmas Open House in Decatur, someone takes the offering and shares it with our team.

"I think the Lord holds a special place in his heart for children, and we want to do the same," Jeff said. "I feel like the money is used for a great cause to help those children have a chance in life they wouldn't normally get, and our church wants to be a part of that."

*This feature was written in partnership with The Alabama Baptist newspaper*



## Legacy Donor Spotlight:

### JACK KINLEY

If you talk to Jack Kinley for just a few minutes, you will know two things for certain—he loves God with all his heart, and he has a big heart for serving children. For over 50 years, children across our southern states of Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama have benefited from the kindness and generosity of Jack and his wife, Gwen (now deceased).

Now almost 90 years old, a veteran, retired pastor, and active Russell Association volunteer, Jack first began to support children in need while he and Gwen were pastoring in Georgia. Jack says, "Every year at Thanksgiving, the churches in that association got together and loaded a truck with lots of things and would take it to the Georgia Baptist Children's Home. That's where we first got involved. We left Georgia, and then in Mississippi, got involved with the Children's Homes there in the same way."

When they moved to Alabama in 1968, their service to children continued. Jack says the churches he pastored had always supported ABCH and always tried to have good children's programs. It was always important to him and Gwen to be involved, even giving above what they gave through their churches.

"We wanted to do what we could for children. I became more familiar with ABCH when I pastored in Troy at Bush Memorial. There are so many children in need. ABCH and others try to provide a home atmosphere for them. I think that's important.

"I just hope I can keep helping them for a number of years. The Lord's been good to me, and we've always enjoyed helping people who didn't get help otherwise. I can only do so much, but I'm glad I can do what the Lord allows me to do."

*To learn more about legacy giving, visit [alabamachild.org/legacy](http://alabamachild.org/legacy)*



## TOP 25 CHURCHES GIVING TOTAL

1. Opelika First Baptist Church (Tuskegee Lee)
2. Church of the Highlands
3. Double Oak Community Church (Shelby)
4. Pell City First Baptist Church (St. Clair)
5. Christ Fellowship Church (Birmingham)
6. Henagar Baptist Church (Sand Mountain)
7. Cathedral Church of the Advent
8. Hunter Street Baptist Church (Birmingham)
9. Athens First Baptist Church (Limestone)
10. Spring Hill Baptist Church (Mobile)
11. Trussville First Baptist Church (Birmingham)
12. The Church at Brook Hills (Birmingham)
13. Mt. Sterling Baptist Church (Choctaw)
14. Eastern Shore Baptist Church (Baldwin)
15. Clanton First Baptist Church (Chilton)
16. Redemption Church (Mobile)
17. Mt. Zion Baptist Church (East Cullman)
18. Samson First Baptist Church (Geneva)
19. Shades Mountain Baptist Church (Birmingham)
20. Fairview First Baptist Church (East Cullman)
21. Huntsville First Baptist Church (Madison)
22. Dauphin Way Baptist Church (Mobile)
23. Luke 4:18 Fellowship (Mobile)
24. Maytown Baptist Church (Bessemer)
25. Decatur First Baptist Church (Morgan)

## 2017 ABCH Leadership

### President/CEO

Rod Marshall, Ed.S, LPC-S

### Service Team

Chip Colee, Ph.D  
*President, ABCH Foundation*

Ross Hickman, LPC-S,  
Registered Play Therapist–Supervisor  
*President, Pathways Professional Counseling*

Michael Smith, PhD, LICSW-PIP, MBA  
*Chief Operations Officer, North Alabama*

Dana Watson, LMSW, MACE, MAMBE  
*Chief Operations Officer, South Alabama*

### Area & Program Directors

Amber Albright, LMSW  
*Area Director, Northeast Alabama*

Jay Boyd, MA, CCNL  
*Director of Development*

Dawn Caballero, SHRM-CP  
*Director of Human Resources*

Dr. Robert L. Dewhurst, Ed.D, CCNL, CFRE  
*Director of Legacy Planning*

Michelle Drashman Glassford  
*Director of Communications*

Patrick Fitzgerald  
*Director of Information Technology*

Lisa Edwards Keane, MAMFC, LPC-S,  
Registered Play Therapist–Supervisor, NCC  
*Clinical Director, Marriage & Family  
Pathways Professional Counseling*

Kristin Lowrey, LICSW, PIP  
*Clinical Director, Children & Adolescents  
Pathways Professional Counseling*

Kim McGainey, LMSW, MA  
*Area Director, Southeast Alabama*

Elise Vincent, LICSW, PIP  
*Director of Social Services, Birmingham*

Grace Wood, CPA  
*Interim Director of Finance & Accounting*

## 2017 Boards of Trustees

### Children's Homes Board

*Protect, nurture, and restore children and families  
through Christ-centered services*

Ms. Lana Hawkins, Arab (Chairman)  
Mr. Paul Huckeba, Hoover (Vice Chairman)  
Mrs. Charolette S. Hamby, Vestavia (Secretary)  
Mrs. Laura Graham, Tuscaloosa  
Dr. Ray Hammock, Fairhope  
Mr. Marc Ivey, Valley Grande  
Mrs. Derry Johnson, Fultondale  
Mrs. Kelly McMurry, Trussville  
Mr. Les Myers, Vestavia  
Mr. Allan Neill, Florence  
Mr. Phillip A. Padgett, Cragford  
Mrs. Leah Stephens, Montgomery  
Rev. Jim Tate, Dothan  
Mr. Terry Wilhite, Cullman  
Mr. Winston Wilks, Henagar  
Mr. Randy Winton, Brewton

### ABCH Foundation Board

*Support and advance the mission and ministry of ABCH*

Mr. Chris Blackerby, Hoover  
Mrs. Helen Fisk, Birmingham  
Mrs. Laura Graham, Tuscaloosa  
Dr. Scott Guffin, Vestavia Hills  
Mr. David Lyon, Birmingham  
Dr. Robert Record, Birmingham

### Pathways Professional Counseling Board

*Restoration through specialized, Christ-centered counseling*

Dr. Chris Crain, Odenville  
Mrs. Kim DeShazo, Trussville  
Dr. Blake Kersey, Decatur  
Mr. Ken Lass, Trussville  
Mr. Zach Stacey, Peterman  
Mr. Alan Taylor, Trussville

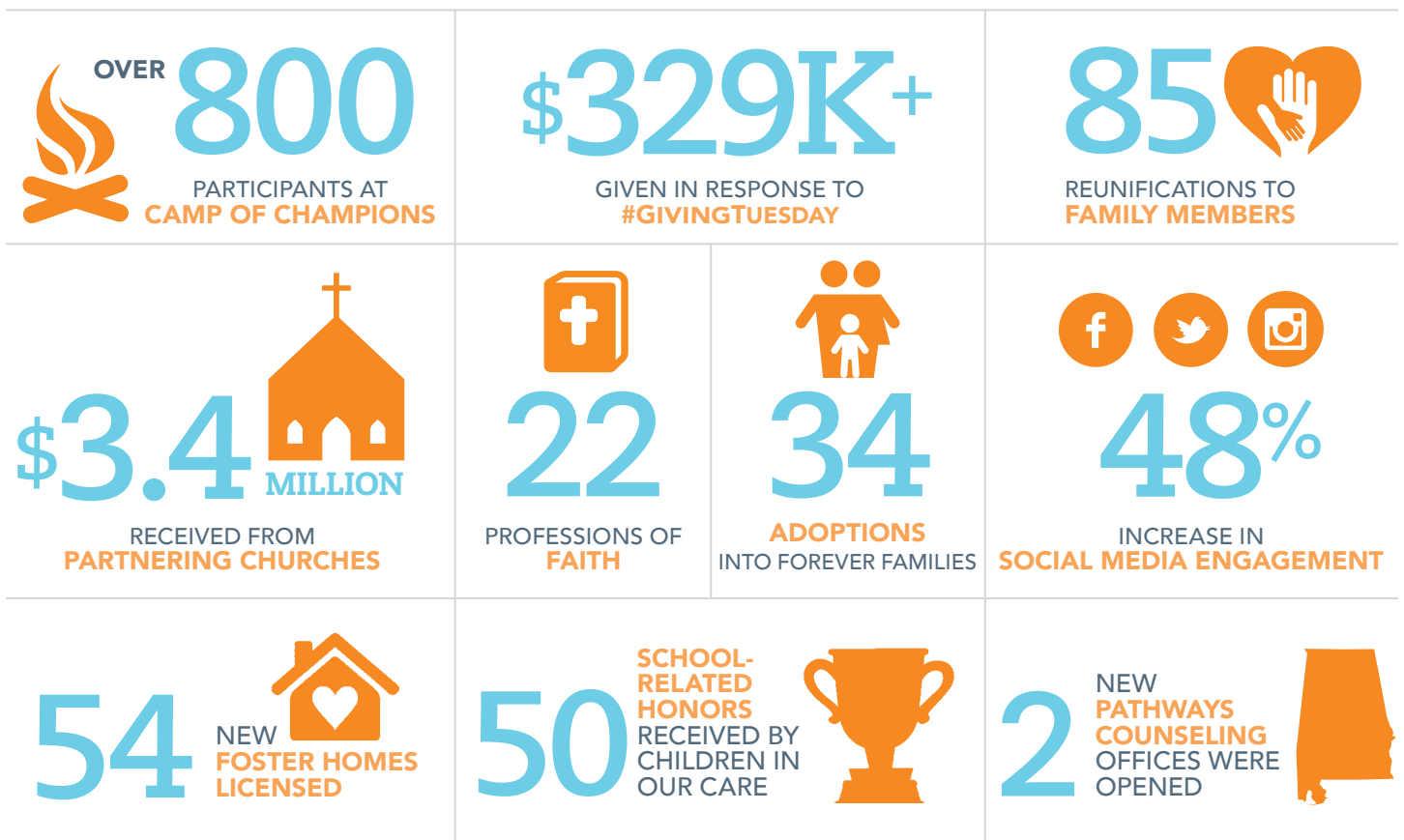
### Honorary Life Member

Dr. E. Grace Pilot, Mobile

### Ex-Officio Members

Dr. Rick Lance, Executive Director  
*Alabama State Board of Missions, Montgomery*

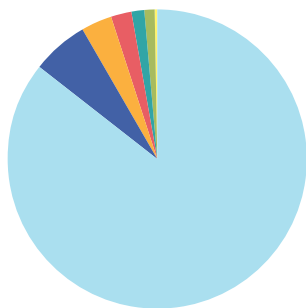
Dr. John Thweatt, President  
*Alabama Baptist State Convention, Pell City*










## Children & Families Served

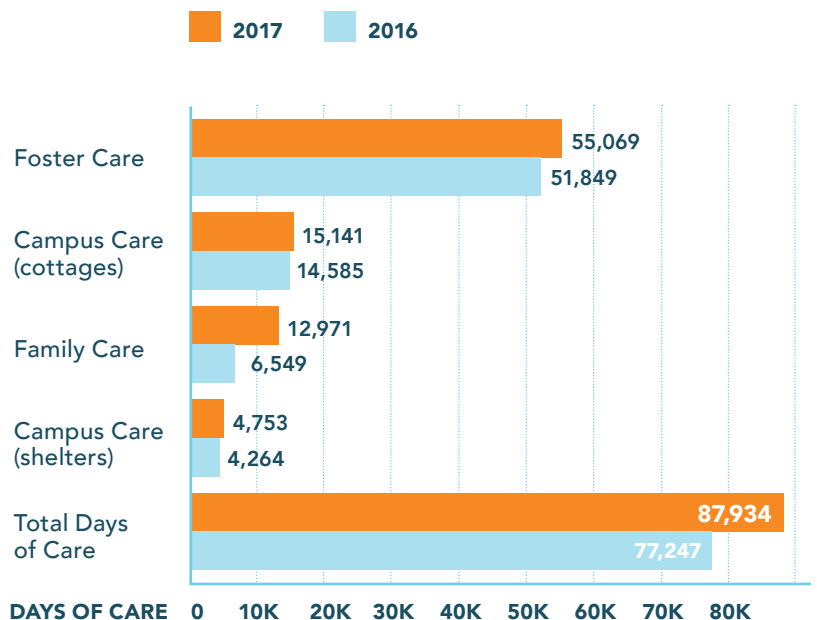
2017 TOTAL SERVED:

**5,170**



-  Pathways Professional Counseling: **4,430**
-  Foster Care: **311**
-  Campus & Shelter Care: **180**
-  Family Care (mothers, dependent children): **106**
-  Family Aid: **82**
-  Help to children when one or both parents die: **53**
-  College Care & Independent Living: **8**

## Days of Care FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES SERVED





Alabama Baptist  
**CHILDREN'S HOMES**  
& Family Ministries

### *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

P.O. Box 361767 | Birmingham, AL 35236 | (888) 720-8805  
EMAIL: [info@alabamachild.org](mailto:info@alabamachild.org) | WEB: [alabamachild.org](http://alabamachild.org)

Our main ministry locations are in Auburn-Opelika, Birmingham, Decatur, Dothan, Mobile, Montgomery, and Oxford. For a complete listing of services available at each, as well as counseling offices around the state, please visit us online at [alabamachild.org/locations](http://alabamachild.org/locations).

