

LifePrints

• Homes for Children • Foster Care • Pathways Professional Counseling
• Family Care • Family Enrichment Workshops

APRIL
& MAY
2010

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ALABAMA
BAPTIST
CHILDREN'S
HOMES &
FAMILY
MINISTRIES

*Building Hope
Restoring Lives*

Successful

from **Paul Miller,**
President/CEO

**NOT PERFECT,
& PATIENT... SEEKING**



Mother's Day and Father's Day will be celebrated in the coming weeks, and I am pleased that we have these special remembrances for these important individuals in our society. Those of us who have been blessed with loving parents are grateful for their contributions to our lives, and that gratitude should be expressed.

Most of us who are parents will admit in all honesty that we have made mistakes. Dr. James Dobson has said, "There is hardly a parent alive who does not have some regrets and painful memories of failures as a mother or father. Children are infinitely complex, and we cannot be perfect parents anymore than there can be perfect human beings." No, there are no perfect parents, but the parents who are humble, seeking to follow Biblical principles, loving, caring, and patient will find that children will normally be very resilient and forgiving of our mistakes, and that helps to make parenting a very rewarding experience.

Unfortunately, there are many parents who are not following Godly principles and, in fact, are abusing, neglecting, or abandoning their children. This week I was reviewing the results of a recent survey that reveals that Alabama has a much higher rate of physical and sexual abuse than the nation at large. I believe the Christian community has a responsibility to demonstrate the redemptive message of Christ and provide services designed to break the cycle of abuse and neglect that is in so many families. Sixteen years ago The Children's Homes created **Pathways Professional Counseling** to strengthen families and provide intervention for families and children in crisis. In 2009 we served 2,654 individuals through this counseling ministry.

Through our **Family Care Ministry** we also provide services for homeless mothers who are committed to providing for their children, but need help with an immediate crisis situation.

Our best efforts at prevention will not eliminate the need for loving and caring foster homes, and house mothers or fathers who will serve through our campuses, group homes, and emergency shelters. I am so grateful for these dedicated men and women who have committed their lives to serving as substitute parents. If you know of individuals who are serving in these important roles, I encourage you to affirm them and pray for them.

Many of you who are reading this article are faithful to support the ministries of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries through your financial support. On behalf of the children and families who benefit from that support, I want to say a hearty "thank you." If your church is not supporting this ministry, please consider encouraging them to participate in our Annual Children's Homes Offering, and then give to support that offering. This time of year would also be an excellent time to give in memory or in honor of your mother or father.

Paul Miller, Children's Homes
President/CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Miller".

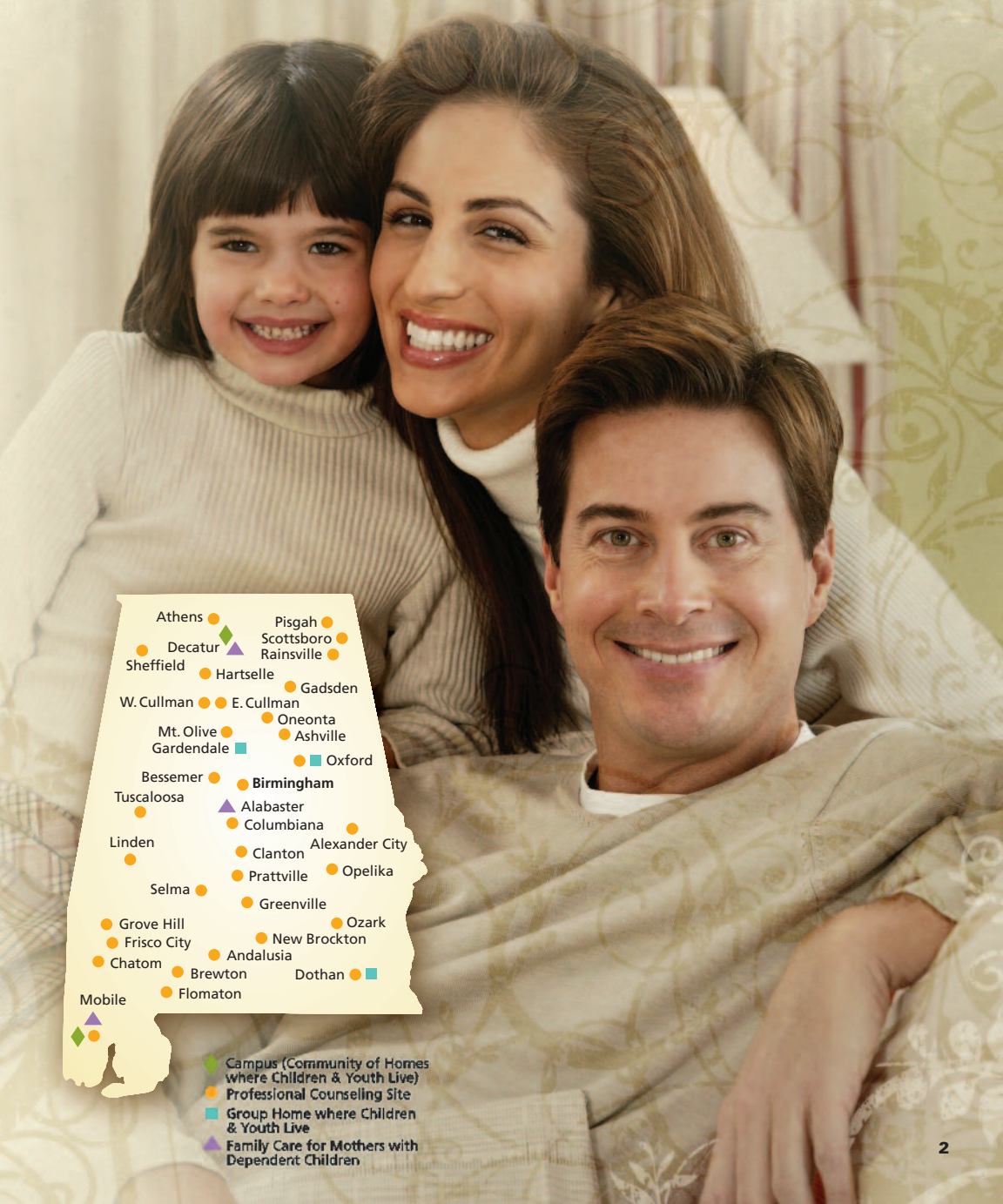
Email your questions and comments to pmiller@abchome.org.



www.alabamachild.org
1-888-720-8805

Parents...

YET HUMBLE, LOVING, CARING,
BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES



Building HOPE RESTORING *Lives*

Dear Fellow Baptists,

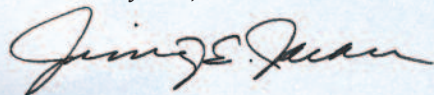
We are all very much aware of the financial climate in which we live. Such times as these tend to create a fear of what may lie ahead. To deal with the uncertainty, many people cut back on their giving. Others do not have as much to give because of a reduction in income or the loss of a job.

In spite of these concerns, God's work must go on. In fact, the financial problems cause an even greater need for sacrificial, generous giving. A case in point is our Alabama Baptist Children's Homes ministry. With the increased financial pressure has come an increase in the number of homes being disrupted. Counseling needs are more pressing.

While the resources may be less than needed, the ministry responsibilities are multiplied. What is the answer? You and me. Can we trust God to take care of us as we give to take care of those whose needs are even greater than ours?

We have answered that question over and over again. Yes, Alabama Baptists can trust our Lord. Every extra gift means so much. Let us join together to meet the growing demands of the life-altering work of our Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries.

Love in Jesus,



Dr. Jimmy E. Jackson

President, Alabama Baptist State Convention
Pastor, Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville



What Churches Are Accomplishing Through The Annual Children's Homes Offering

In 2009, you served 3,340 children, families and individuals through the Christ-centered ministries of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. Whether through our group homes, foster care homes, Pathways Professional Counseling, homes for mothers and their children, or other ministries, these children and adults were protected, nurtured and restored through our Christ-centered services.

Alabama Baptist churches are instrumental in providing hope for tomorrow to those in need. Your church gifts through the Annual Children's Homes Offering accounted for 30.98 percent of the operating budget of the Children's Homes in 2009.

That means your partnership covered all expenses for a little more than 16 weeks in 2009. During those 16 weeks, your partnership provided:

- Homes for the children in our care
- Clothing for those children
- Homes for homeless mothers with dependent children
- School supplies
- Beds in which to sleep
- Medical and counseling care
- Scholarships to help Pathways Professional Counseling stay true to its commitment never to turn away a person in need just because of his or her inability to pay

You are helping provide hope and wholeness for children and families through knowing Christ. Thank you for partnering with us in Building Hope and Restoring Life.

Would you please ask your pastor and church leadership to support the Children's Homes through the Annual Offering or budget gifts? If they have not done so, they may order complimentary promotional inserts, posters, envelopes and a DVD by contacting Kay Taylor at ktaylor@abchome.org, or 1-888-720-8805, Ext. 105.

Ways to Contribute to the Annual Offering

Did you know there is more than one way to collect the Annual Children's Homes Offering in your church? From holding a one-day emphasis to contributing year-round, Alabama Baptists are supporting the Children's Homes in a variety of creative ways. Here are some ideas:

- Mother's Day is Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries Sunday. Use this day to invite someone to share about the Children's Homes ministry in your church, and then collect an offering for the Children's Homes.
- Father's Day is also a good time to emphasize the importance of family and the work the Children's Homes does in providing family structures for children who cannot live with their birth families. Invite a Children's Homes speaker to share with your church about the ministry, then invite church members to support the ministry.
- Encourage the children in your church to collect a Mile of Pennies for the Children's Homes. Sixteen pennies place side-by-side equal 1 foot, and 5,280 feet equal 1 mile. One mile of pennies equals \$844.80.
- April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Invite one of our professionals to speak to your church about preventing child abuse in your church.
- April is also Counseling Awareness Month. Invite one of our certified professional counselors to share the ways in which we are healing and restoring families and children who have been affected by abuse.

For more information on these or other ideas, please contact us at 1-888-720-8805.





ask

Q: I am a new father and want to know what my son will need to hear from me in the coming years.

A: Whether you have a son, daughter, niece, nephew, or other children in your life the way you relate with them will shape them for years to come. Certainly we are all called to care for children in our churches. Dr. John Trent has taken the blessing that Isaac gave to Jacob in Genesis 27 and broken it into five categories*:

1. Appropriate and meaningful touch.
2. A spoken message. Many families believe that showing love to one another is enough. However, it is important to communicate and verbalize your love and hopes to your children.
3. Adults should attach a high value to the child's life and communicate the child's worth in God's eyes and also in the eyes of the parent/relative.
4. Adults should communicate the fact that the child has a special future. (Jer. 29:11)
5. Adults in the child's life should maintain a genuine commitment to the child. The relationship should be consistent whether it is daily contact, conversations over the phone, or visits with loved ones. Family members can be creative in how they demonstrate their commitment and unconditional love to their child/teen.

Children have many needs. Certainly their physical needs are a vital part of what caregivers spend their time meeting on a daily basis. In addition, there are many emotional and spiritual needs that children have. Read Genesis 27 when you have a moment to remind yourself of the call on your life to speak these truths into the lives of children.

*Information taken from Dr. John Trent's "The Blessing".

Anne

April
is
COUNSELING
AWARENESS
month

Q: My husband and I are having marital difficulties. He doesn't see any benefit to getting help with our marriage because he views that as having other people in our business.

A: Counselors often hear that one spouse is more open to accepting help from an outside party than the other. Rest assured that if one spouse from the marriage is willing to seek to strengthen the relationship, it can be beneficial to that individual as well as the marriage.

Some advantages to seeking help alone include the fact that you have the ability to receive affirmation concerning the feelings and trials you are currently experiencing. There can be great benefit to a friend or counselor normalizing the fact that marriage can be very difficult and takes a great deal of work. In addition, by seeking counsel you can gain a wealth of tools to utilize as you work on your marriage. Such tools include: learning how to truly listen and hear your partner; using "I" messages rather than pointing fingers at the other person; and conflict resolution skills. Finally, if you seek Christian guidance you can examine the Biblical model for marriage with your counselor.

In "Divorce Busting" by Michele Weiner-Davis, she discusses the value of being the one to take an active step for your marriage. Even if the changes feel small, it can be significant if you are willing to change your marriage by changing yourself. Another key component of strengthening any relationship, according to the book, is noticing that unhealthy patterns of verbal exchanges create difficulties in the marriage. Many times we want to blame one another rather than the relationship dynamics. Couples should identify the communication patterns that work and avoid the unhealthy patterns.

In conclusion, seeking help alone for your marriage may feel hopeless. However, benefits include gaining tools to build on the foundation of your marriage, looking at a Biblical model for marriage, and identifying destructive patterns that must be eradicated. It is never beneficial to blame your spouse, but it is helpful to work on the patterns that are deteriorating your marriage.



Hope restored

Bob and Sue* lost contact with their father early in their young lives when their parents divorced. Ten years later, they lost their mother to drugs, and ultimately jail, when she was arrested for a serious drug charge.

They arrived at the Children's Homes, having lost all they had known – their home, family, friends, school teachers and classmates.

Initially angry, defiant and depressed, Sue began asking Beth*, her foster mother, questions about God, Jesus and what it meant to be a Christian. She listened as Beth explained about Jesus' love and forgiveness. For the first time, Sue began to sense hope. Although she was excited, she was also scared. Would this be just another loss for her? Would this promise of hope rekindled only end in despair? Through Beth's encouragement, Sue found the strength to risk giving her life to Christ. They prayed together for forgiveness and for Sue to accept Jesus as her Savior.

Sue's entire world changed. Everyone around her saw the positive impact that becoming a Christian had on Sue. She was determined to take the same strength and stubbornness that had characterized her life and put it to good use. Her foster mother helped her memorize Paul's verse: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)

Once prone to being in trouble at school, Sue became a "model" student. The assistant principal, who had been a part of so many discipline reports, told Beth he had seen such a positive change in Sue.

Sue's decision to trust in Jesus and the positive change that brought was noticed by one who knew her better than anyone else. Her brother was so impacted by her change that he, too, wanted to know how to become a Christian.

As a high school senior, Bob was facing more loss and challenges. But he knew he could face whatever the future held with his new-found faith and favorite Bible passage: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

It was a wonderful day when these two young people were baptized at their church. For the first time in their lives, they knew what unconditional love felt like. They became living testimonies of how God can take lives filled with despair and loss and fill them with hope and a future.

**Names changed to protect the children's privacy.*



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