



December 2015

## Happy Holidays!

Keywords is back! We took a bit of a break this year but boy have we been busy! Did you see our new website? [Boardofchildcare.org](http://Boardofchildcare.org) got a total makeover!

Our board of directors and our leadership team have been thinking deeply about our strategic plan and the central goals BCC would like to accomplish over the next four years. One thing you'll start seeing soon is our new purpose statement (which replaces our old mission and vision statements): **enriching communities, one family at a time.** More on our strategic plan after the New Year!

With the holiday season already in full swing, it is important to take a moment and reflect on what we're thankful for. In Maryland, DC, West Virginia, and all points in between, we're thankful for the strides our program participants make every day – they are truly extraordinary people!

We're thankful for our staff, who with tremendous empathy, patience, and integrity, oversee the care and treatment of our program participants 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They do amazing work and are the backbone of our mission and method.

Finally, the holidays at BCC would be nothing without our dedicated volunteer Auxiliary, who recently packed 126 thanksgiving meals for any of our program participants whose families could not otherwise afford the special holiday meal and trimmings. Check out the video to see the box packing in action!

This is an exciting time for BCC. Each day is an opportunity to re-think and reshape our organization into one that delivers impactful change for our families and our communities. That's something we can all be thankful for!

Warmly,

Laurie Anne Spagnola  
President & CEO



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**President & CEO**

*BCC's Board of Directors approved Ms. Spagnola's new title of President and CEO on Nov. 18, 2015 to better reflect her position and responsibilities within the organization.*



## **Holiday meal is the real deal**

### **Participants and staff share cheer across all campuses**

With Thanksgiving behind us and Christmas almost here, we wanted to take a moment and recap what Thanksgiving was like at BCC this year (we'll do a full recap of Christmas at BCC in our January Keywords edition).

Many of BCC's residents head home to their families or extended family for the actual Thanksgiving holiday, so BCC celebrates Thanksgiving in the two weeks leading up to the last Thursday of November.

First up was Falling Waters – BCC's second largest residential campus – on Nov. 17. The program began with a lighting of the alter candles by one of the residents and continued with song and prayer, officiated by Rev. Randy Reid, BCC's WV Spiritual Life Coordinator. A video of thanks produced by residents was a program highlight, generating roaring laughter from everyone assembled.

A feast was served in the Falling Waters dining hall, prepared by campus cook Ann Bennett, and served by staff. Residents ate multiple servings each (typical teenagers!) and voted the Pennsylvania Dutch cream corn and unique combination of pumpkin and apple pie dessert as meal highlights.

The next day, Nov. 18, Baltimore hosted approximately 120 staff and residents for their Thanksgiving celebration. Spiritual Life Coordinator, Shawn Elbert, designed and oversaw a program of reflection, prayer and song, which included several residents reading missives of thanks.

Following a blessing by Rev. Dr. Stacey Nickerson, staff served a spectacular spread on tie-dye placemats (thank you to our invaluable volunteers!). The meal this year was fruit, cheese, Caesar salad, mashed potatoes, stuffing, and of course, sliced turkey.

On Thursday, Nov. 19, the Denton campus on the Eastern Shore hosted their Turkey Day celebration. Several of the community-based group homes also hosted separate dinners throughout the week.

*Special thanks to Marc LaRose, Ann Bennet, Debbie Kinna, and all of BCC's kitchen staff who make the holiday meals so special for our residents and staff!*





### Auxiliary Thanksgiving Basket Assembly 2015!

Record turnout and record assembly time!

The Board of Child Care Auxiliary has outdone themselves yet again! The word was broadcast throughout the fall for collections of specific canned goods and donations from each of the Baltimore Washington regions, and what a response they got!

Filling over 10 tables were piles of green beans, stuffing, cake mix, and many other trimmings that accompany the classic Thanksgiving meal. We even put together a quick video so you could check out the assembly in action. Look how fast we went!



See the video online here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e24aZvjye7c>

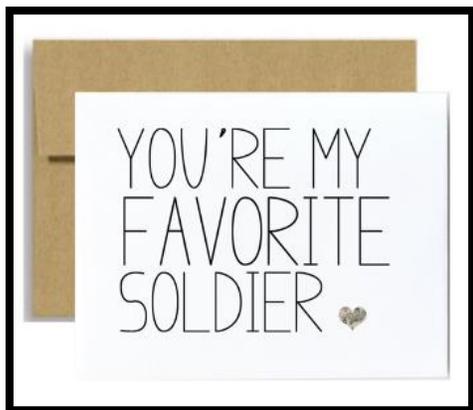


**Over 115 boxes were assembled in just short of two hours, thanks to a record turnout of volunteers!**

Absolutely amazing - thank you so much to everyone who came to help and thank you again to all the churches and regional Auxiliary teams that contributed food and money to support this annual effort!

Get the latest Auxiliary information and upcoming dates online: [boardofchildcare.org/volunteer-auxiliary/](http://boardofchildcare.org/volunteer-auxiliary/)

*Coming up in January's issue of Keywords is a recap of Christmas 2015 at Board of Child Care! A huge thank you to everyone who has already contributed.*



## **Thank you cards evoke an emotional return Strawbridge participates in Operation Welcome Home**

Few reunions are more emotional than a service member's return from a tour of duty.

Students at the Board of Child Care's Strawbridge School have made these returns a little richer by participating with Maryland's Operation Welcome Home (OWH) to create hand-made greeting cards for service members to receive at Baltimore-Washington International airport.

Operation Welcome Home boasts having greeted over 600,000 military personnel in Baltimore since 2007. BWI receives the highest number of returning veterans in the nation annually, according to Kathy Thorpe, founder of Operation Welcome Home – Maryland.

"A lot of these troops have no idea we're going to be there, and they're so touched to see any effort to welcome them home," said Thorp. "It's too difficult to describe if you haven't seen it. When the veterans see these cards, and the posters and people welcoming them home, they're often overcome with emotion."

For many veterans, BWI represents the first leg of many before they return to family and friends. BCC's involvement started in August, 2015, with over 50 handmade Operation Welcome Home cards.

"We read about OWH and thought it was an awesome idea to provide our troops with "Welcome Home" banners and cards," said Shawn Elbert, BCC's Spiritual Life Coordinator for the Baltimore campus. "Usually, when you talk to young people and students about doing a community service project it is met with some hesitancy, however, this time was different. Our residents made heartfelt cards and you could sense they were truly appreciative and thankful for all that the service men and women of this country do to protect our freedom."

The cards from Strawbridge students were collected by Elbert and dispersed to veterans in late October. None of the veterans who received them knew who they were receiving a card from, a dynamic Thorpe described as thrilling.

"You watch them stand there and read the cards and realize it's a real flesh and blood reminder of what they protected and who they protected while they served," Thorpe said. "It's the innocence, the sweetness, and the honesty that stands out to the soldiers."

Elbert said the cards represent the first step in building a bridge with this segment of the community.

"We've really made a connection with our kids and hopefully, between the community and troops who live and work in and around us."



## 2015 Children's Sabbath Workshop Recap

### How long must a child cry for help?

That was the question and theme of the Board of Child Care's second annual Children's Sabbath workshop, hosted at BCC's Baltimore campus on Saturday, October 17, 2015.

Rev. Stacey Nickerson, BCC's Director of Church and Community Engagement, said the program reached attendees on a deeper level.

"There's a lot of people who don't understand what children and young adults at BCC have been through, what they're afflicted by, and what BCC's programs actually do for them," said Nickerson. "The Children's Sabbath represents so much of who and what we are at Board of Child Care. We are advocates for children who need a voice."

"It can be transformative when people see firsthand what we do," said Nickerson, who served as emcee for the workshop. "For most people it's the first time they've been on one of our campuses."

BCC President & CEO, Laurie Anne Spagnola, attended the program and spoke to the group.

"To have her out there with us was great because she's one of our biggest assets in a context like that – she's so engaging," Nickerson said. "She sits with people, has real conversations, shows genuine interest and makes such a difference for us."

The celebration moved Eboni Roach, one of the attendees, to offer her thanks in a letter to Spagnola.

"I was just inspired and richly blessed during 2015 Children's Sabbath," Roach said. "I am still taking in the impact the meeting has made and what impact it will make for my future."



During the program, children from Ames Memorial UMC in Baltimore sang in a music ensemble (pictured above) – directed by Rev. Randy Hudson – the same children who attended Camp Life, a camp funded by both a monetary grant and also the use of some BCC social workers and staff from BCC.



A sermon was offered by Rev. Michael A. Parker, II from Ames United Methodist Church in Bel Air, MD (pictured above). Parker's perspective was unique because his cousin was a former resident at BCC. Following a served lunch, a panel convened to engage discussion about ending child poverty issues.

Nickerson offered special thanks to Darlynn McCrae, a staffer from the Baltimore Region of the United Methodist Church, Parker and Spagnola.

"One of the things we're focused on is measuring outcomes ... I think events like this help us learn how spirituality fits towards achieving better outcomes," Nickerson said.

*A very special thank you to all the participants who came out for the 2015 Children's Sabbath Workshop. We hope to see you all again next year!*



## Atwater to the rescue

### Former BCC staffer calls on peers in time of need

Following an act of violence inside a classroom that closed Renaissance Academy High School in West Baltimore the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, a former Board of Child Care social worker quarterbacked a heartwarming and significant act of social action.

Hallie Atwater (LCSW-C), who worked at BCC from 2011-13, had planned to open the Renaissance Academy High School food pantry to community members in the Upton/Druid Heights neighborhoods of west Baltimore.

Atwater had planned for families in the neighborhood to visit on Wednesday to enjoy a full and healthy Thanksgiving Day meal. Those plans changed when officials closed the school for the rest of the week, which meant scheduled donations for the pantry were undeliverable.

Deciding it was vitally important to provide access to the pantry as planned, Atwater set to work on a plan B. She connected with two BCC social workers, Kelly Berger and Maria Shrum, and asked for help.

With the need for food now circulating quickly through the BCC community via text messages Tuesday night, the response plan came together.

Rev. Stacey Nickerson, Director of Church and Community Engagement at BCC, worked with Shawn Elbert, Baltimore Campus Spiritual Life Coordinator, to distribute the leftover Thanksgiving baskets assembled by the BCC Auxiliary as well as the results of a canned food drive held over Thanksgiving by BCC residents.

BCC also helped Atwater collect donations from staff members, family, and friends, which all together contributed over \$500 in grocery store gift cards and additional food and turkeys for Renaissance Academy families. The Maryland Food Bank also played a significant role in this effort.

In less than 24 hours, Atwater was ultimately able to secure replacement donations of food and allowed 155 families in the Upton/Druid Heights neighborhood and several students to receive a Thanksgiving basket for their family to enjoy.

“Today’s media culture makes it easy to generalize an entire school or neighborhood based on one bad incident,” Atwater said. “One of my primary duties as a social worker is to provide an alternate narrative when an incident paints an entire neighborhood or school community.”

Atwater points to what she learned at BCC for some of her response to the situation.

“BCC laid down an excellent clinical foundation for me,” Atwater said. “This was an unusual circumstance, but I was able to manage and access the environment because of what I learned through the clinical supervision at BCC. A huge thank you once again to everyone who responded in my schools time of need!”

## In Brief

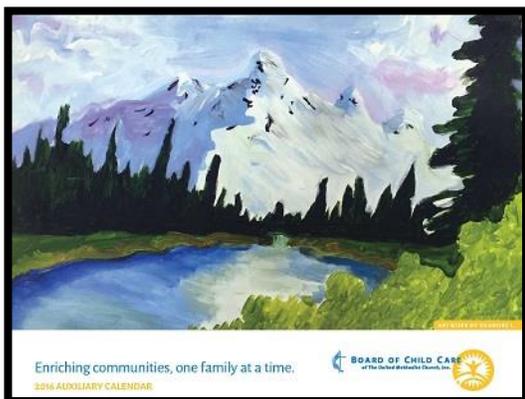


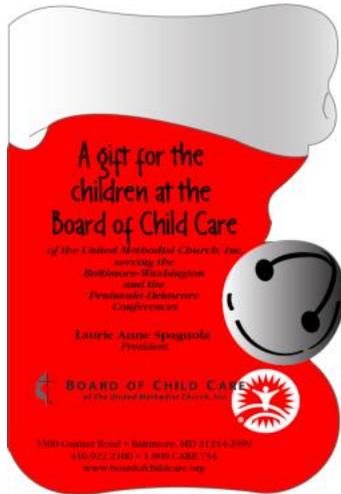
### Cove Value Award Winners

The inaugural winners of BCC's core value awards were announced at the All-Staff meeting Oct. 28. The winners were **Janine Fahey** (Safety; Baltimore), **Christine Hill** (Integrity; Baltimore), **Candis Johnson** (Empathy; Pasadena OMHC), and **Tevin Kyer** (Impact, Denton). Congratulations and thank you to all our staff who make such a difference in the lives of children every single day!

### 2016 Auxiliary Calendars Mail December 14!

Our 2016 calendar comes out next week. If you do not receive one this year please send an email to [communications@boardofchildcare.org](mailto:communications@boardofchildcare.org) or call 410-922-2100 x5284 and we will be sure to both send you one and add you to our mailing list for next year. Many thanks to all our youth who contributed artwork for this edition’s pages!





## Red stockings out of stock!

We had an incredible surge in demand for them this year (well beyond even our highest estimates), and unfortunately are currently out of stock. We have ordered more red stockings, but it will be a tight turn around to get them out before Christmas.

We will be sure to send your requested amount to you as soon as we get them. The Christmas brochures, while not a perfect replacement, could be helpful as a short-term replacement for this year.

All of our brochures are mail-ready – simply add a first class stamp and drop them in the mail. Alternatively, to save postage, send all of them in one envelope back to the Board of Child Care.

Thank you so much again for participating in our Christmas Appeal. Wishing you and your congregation a very Merry Christmas!



## Box Top REMINDER!

A New Year's resolution – put a little zip lock bag or small container on your countertop and collect those box tops! Strawbridge School received a check recently for over \$2,000 thanks to your efforts! Wow!



## We're Hiring!

Do you want to make a difference in a child's life? Child care worker, registered nurse, social worker, and special education teacher positions are just a few of the openings we have. Check out all available fulltime and part time positions on our careers webpage.

[www.boardofchildcare.org/careers](http://www.boardofchildcare.org/careers)

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