



January 2016

## Message from the President & CEO

A belated Happy New Year to you all! I hope this email finds you well on your way to digging out from the blizzard. We have weathered the storm at BCC and are so incredibly lucky to have staff members who went above and beyond to make sure our residents were safe and well cared for. Over 100 members of our workforce helped keep our facilities open during the storm (many ended up sleeping at BCC the entire weekend!) Our hats off to them all for their amazing work!

I want to dedicate most of this Keywords newsletter to recapping what the holidays felt like at BCC. So many of you (and I mean many) reading Keywords helped make our success possible. From contributing to or organizing the Christmas appeal at your church, to donating to the Auxiliary calendar, to supplying gifts for individual kids or cottages, to donating items for the Auxiliary Christmas store, you made our holidays at BCC truly magical. Thank you!

Yours in shoveling spirit,

Laurie Anne Spagnola  
President & CEO



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## **Christmas 2015 at the Board of Child Care**

### **Recap of all the celebrations**

Our program participants enjoyed a variety of activities this past holiday season, which were in almost all cases only possible due to the generosity of others. Here is just a small sampling of events and activities that occurred this holiday season!

#### **Special Trip for the Residents:**

On December 7, 2015, three residents and a staff member drove to DC's Verizon Center to watch the Washington Wizards (114) take on the Miami Heat (103). Incredible seats, stolen balls, slam dunks, and a win for the home team made for an awesome evening! Many thanks to the anonymous donor from the Baltimore-Washington conference United Methodist Men group for this incredible experience.



#### **Collecting Donations:**

Thanks to the incredible support by area churches, businesses, and individuals, we were able to sponsor Christmas for every child at BCC! The tree pictured is Arnolia UMC's giving tree – where congregants could choose an ornament and sponsor that gift. Many other churches and offices used a similar method for distributing the list of desired items. However our donors chose to shop or donate, we thank you!



Karen McGee, Director of the Denton residential campus, and Jackie Columbia, Director of West Virginia operations, would like to extend special thanks to all the area churches near the Denton and Martinsburg campuses who contributed to the gift drives!

**Present Wrapping Volunteer Event:**

Thanks to the generosity of all the churches and individuals, we had many presents to wrap! Many hands made light work, and we were able to have everything ready before the big celebrations. Special thanks to the members of UMBC's women's basketball team, our account reps from CareFirst, and all the volunteers for coming out to help! The gifts looked incredible and your attention to detail, down to the final six-inch ribbon curl, was all evident in the final result!



### **Final Shopping Trips:**

A large portion of the Christmas sponsorship of gifts came in the form of cash donations. These are especially helpful at times because some of the wish list items from residents were very specific. BCC would like to say a very special thank you to Rev. Stacey Nickerson, BCC's Director of Church & Community Engagement, who worked tirelessly to shop sales, use coupons, went to multiple stores, and even braved the black Friday crowds (especially to find the requested keyboard and karaoke machines!) to stretch the donated dollars as far as they could go! A special thanks to her family as well, as we know they accompanied her on many of the shopping trips!

### **Christmas Stocking Assembly:**

Guy Everhart (BCC Board of Director Vice Chair) and his wife, Sue (Auxiliary Vice President), once again made stockings (124 in total!) for each and every resident at the Board of Child Care. Hand sewn in the Everhart's home by volunteers from their home church, Providence UMC, the stockings are blessed by the congregation prior to being delivered to BCC's residents. Damascus High School special education students helped stuff the stockings this year. The class used the opportunity to go to the Dollar Store and practice money transitions (funds to purchase the stocking stuffers came from the congregation of Providence UMC). Ed. Note: the Everhart's didn't take a picture of the assembly this year (too busy sewing!) but here is a picture from last year's group.



### Holiday Celebrations:

The special dinners and programs were followed by gift opening by the residents in their living units. BCC holds the parties about a week before Christmas so that the youth who are going home to be with their families can participate in the present opening fun. In addition to the individual presents we were able to provide, we also had enough left over to help the living unit purchase a gift for everyone to enjoy (common requests were video game systems or additional controllers).



### **Christmas Day:**

BCC had a total of 30 kids remain on the Baltimore campus on Christmas day. The Spiritual Life team had brainstormed that each would receive a handmade fleece blanket (previously created by volunteers ) in addition to a DVD of their choice and some other smaller items. Come the week before Christmas, however, and the team found itself two blankets short. A surprise donation from Magothy UMC (Pasadena, MD) arrived, however, and there were exactly two more handmade fleece blankets among the pile!

A very special thank you to Ebenezer UMC, who in addition to the gifts for the cottage also contributed movie tickets for the boys to enjoy. On Christmas Day they went to see Star Wars!



### **Above and Beyond!**

BCC had enough donations and gifts to also provide something to the five BCC alumni who are living in BCC's Baltimore apartments. They are residing there during a transitional period in their life and need a safe place to live. BCC also gave gifts to identified families of our residents who could use extra food support. Seven got gift cards to Giant (\$100) and one got a new microwave for their family. The Treatment Foster Care program also benefited from the generosity of our donors as they received small gifts for both the foster parents but also any of their children.

## **Caminos Program Closes Its Doors**

### **Girls program opens in its place**

In May of 2014, Board of Child Care became the only residential facility in Maryland selected by the Federal government to work with a very special population of youth: children who came across the border of the United States from Central America in an attempt to reunite with a family member.

Titled to honor the Spanish translation for “journey,” BCC’s Caminos program offered short-term shelter care, education, medical, and placement support to migrant children. The majority were from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Before placing children with a US-based family member, BCC’s case managers conducted background checks, fingerprinting and extensive interviews. All children who came through BCC will ultimately go before an immigration judge, who will decide if they can remain permanently.

Just about a year after Caminos opened, BCC received word from the Federal government that our grant would not be renewed. This was purely a fiscal decision and was part of a consolidation of bed counts nationwide. The quality of programming or service delivery was not a factor. Caminos officially opened on May 19, 2014, and operated for nearly 15 months, serving boys and girls between the ages of nine and 18. The official closing date of the program was Sept. 30, 2015

BCC had the opportunity to achieve some incredible outcomes for these very vulnerable youth, including victims of human trafficking. Caminos served 279 unaccompanied children in total. Out of all the minors released from the program, ~ 20% were released to sponsors in Maryland and the surrounding states.

Prior to Caminos, all 109 beds on the Baltimore campus were set aside for referrals from the state of Maryland’s various social service departments. With Caminos closed, fifty beds were now available again. Kelly Berger, former program director for Caminos, championed the relaunch of a girl’s residential program to use those empty spaces.



*Caminos boys enjoyed their first experience with snow ever!*

“As group homes across the state close and many programs are moving away from working with girls, we have confirmed this is a need,” said Berger. “The cornerstone of the girls’ program was born from what we saw in the Caminos program and the knowledge we can do something better for those we serve.”

Girls with unresolved traumas, including those who suffered from sexual abuse, parental neglect, involvement with negative peer groups, or even human trafficking, are the new program’s target. BCC welcomed the first female residents to the new program at the end of 2015.



## Residents take day trip to Annapolis for Military Bowl game

### “Experience of a lifetime” made possible by partner charity, Tickets for Kids

There’s no event uniquely tied to Annapolis that matches a Navy football game. An F-18 flyover, the cannon firing after every Navy touchdown and the singing of the Navy alma mater at the game’s conclusion make Navy home games both special and memorable.

For a half dozen Board of Child Care residents, Dec. 28’s game was made possible thanks to [Tickets for Kids](#), a non-profit organization from Pittsburgh, PA. Ushered by BCC’s Recreation Coordinator, Justin Pruscetto, residents took in Navy’s 44-28 win over Atlantic Coast Conference foe Pittsburgh at Navy-Marine Corps Stadium in Annapolis.

A few logistical hiccups aside – parking never comes easily in Annapolis – the residents made it to the stadium in time for the flyover and stayed through past the start of the fourth quarter as Navy marched to a school-record 11<sup>th</sup> win.

“A couple of the kids told me this was not just the first collegiate but first sporting event they had ever attended,” Pruscetto said. “It was great for me to experience seeing them enjoy that thrill of walking into the stadium, seeing a flyover, hearing the roar of the crowd and everything else that is part of attending a game.”

Tickets for Kids provides tickets to children who wouldn’t otherwise have an opportunity to attend. The tickets came courtesy the University of Pittsburgh.

“The stories we hear from the Board of Child Care is why we come to work every day,” said Chris Anderson, Manager of Ticket Relations at Tickets for Kids. “Giving a child an opportunity to experience what so many of us take for granted is exciting because you never know what the long-standing effect it might spark positively for the kids.”

Pruscetto called the entire day, “quite an experience.”

“The kids were excited from the minute we got in the van, but when we started to see the signs for the stadium and the exit, they amp’ed up even more,” Pruscetto said. “Our kids didn’t realize how loud it gets when a touchdown is scored or some other big play is made. That’s the part of the game you don’t see and hear when you watch on television, so for them to be able to see it and hear it was special.”

## Auxiliary News

The busy Christmas season was a HUGE success – thank you to every volunteer who came to help assemble, unpack, repack, sort, and prepare for our Christmas events. The Auxiliary would also like to extend a huge thank you to all the churches and Key Persons who make these events possible every year!

### Christmas Parties for TFC

The Auxiliary once again sponsored two Christmas parties for the Treatment Foster Care families. From live music (thanks to Tropical Soul Band!), donated catering (thanks Marsha Frisby Catering!), professional photography (thanks Darren Woodus!) and gifts for all the TFC parents, their kids and the TFC residents themselves, everyone had a great time. A very special thank you to Benjamin Overby (BCC Information Technology team member) for filing in as this year’s Santa!



### Roller-Skating Trip

The Auxiliary was able to sponsor a special roller-skating outing for some of the Baltimore campus residents. This is a great example of how funds collected during Auxiliary membership drives are used!

## Auxiliary Christmas Stores

The purpose of the stores is to allow BCC youth and their families an opportunity to shop for Christmas presents for others in their lives. Prior to arriving at the store, each youth receives a shopping sheet and they fill out whom they would like to purchase presents for. Once they arrive at the Christmas Store, they fill out what they have purchased for each person on their list (so they don't forget anyone!). All the store items are donated by United Methodist Churches from around the conference!

New for 2015 – the Auxiliary invited five pre-selected families of Baltimore BCC residents to shop. The families were identified by BCC's social workers as otherwise not being able to provide gifts for their other household members. This is part of BCC's focus on increasing family involvement throughout its programs, and ties in with its new purpose statement of: enriching communities, one family at a time.



### Shopping in action

As residents took it in shifts to go through the Christmas stores, one theme united them in their quest. The person who was always the toughest to shop for?

Mom.

Auxiliary volunteers often heard comments that the kids wanted, "to find my mom the best present!" or, "my mom deserves the best present here because she's done so much for me." One of the volunteers admitted that she always asks to operate the jewelry table every year. "I especially love helping the boys pick out jewelry. They are so cute as they hem and haw over all the options, trying to find the perfect thing!"

"The store is a very special event because many of the children come through the doors having never shopped for so many people before." said Julie Wernz, President of the Auxiliary. "But once they see that they can find something for everyone, they become less nervous and start smiling and telling each other what they've found. Everyone walks away with big bags full of gifts for their families and those who are closest to them. It's a great moment and one of my favorites each and every year."





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

If you would like to volunteer, please email Julie Wernz, Auxiliary President, at [jwernz@gmail.com](mailto:jwernz@gmail.com)

## In Brief



### CARF Accreditation Site Review Complete!

Our CARF accreditation site review was held Dec. 14-16. The acronym stands for the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitative Facilities. During our exit interview, our auditors informed us that out of the 1,838 standards they looked at across all our facilities, programs, and support departments, the Board of Child Care met 98.4% of them! That is an extremely good score for a first time accreditation (CARF replaces Council on Accreditation – COA – that we had previously). We expect a full report from CARF international some time in February.



### Wesley Seminary Class Visits BCC in January

The twelve graduate students were exploring how different outreach ministries address the special educational needs and challenges of urban student populations. Their tour of BCC's Baltimore campus was one of many to organizations throughout Baltimore. Special thanks to Rev. Dr. Hunt for arranging this opportunity for his students!



### **Thank you Together We Rise for the Sweet Cases!**

On December 21, 2015, twenty care packages were dropped off for the benefit of those in foster care. Each bag was hand decorated with a fun picture or cartoon, and contained all sorts of goodies for the kids and their siblings. Pictured left: Laurie Anne Spagnola, BCC's President & CEO, and Danyelle Crawford, a BCC TFC Social Worker.



### **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)



### **Box Top REMINDER!**

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

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