

Connie Maxwell MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2022 | www.ConnieMaxwell.com



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Baccalaureate, 39th Biennial
Alumni Reunion and more!



Connie Maxwell
CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

Connie Maxwell

EDITORS

Julia Bell
Julie Miner
Sarah Jane Scheirer

CONTRIBUTORS

Debbie McDowell

PHOTOGRAPHY

Julie Miner
Sarah Jane Scheirer
Kyle Thompson

PRINTING

Professional Printers, Inc., Columbia, SC

PRESIDENT

WILLIAM D. NICHOLSON II, Ph.D.
President

MISSION

Connie Maxwell Children's Ministries exists to restore the Faith, Family, and Future of vulnerable children and families through Christian services that emphasize ministry and healing.

VISION

To become a national leader in Christian ministries of healing for vulnerable children and families.

The *Connie Maxwell Magazine* is sent to alumni, donors and friends of the ministry. Send address changes or cancellation requests to: Attn: Jill Bryant, Connie Maxwell Children's Ministries, P.O. Box 1178, Greenwood, SC 29648-1178

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

(864) 942-1400 or (800) 868-2624

WWW.CONNIEMAXWELL.COM



Cover: A child makes a splash in the pool during the alumni reunion. **Above:** 2022-2024 Alumni Board officers and members pose for a quick photo. From left, President Ernest E. Mackins, Jonathan Castillo, Board Chairman Evelyn Cauley, Secretary Peggy Jackson Taylor, Margaret 'Mac' Garrison, Assistant Historian Lee Foster, Jo Ann Roakes Holley, Margaret Lunsford Dangerfield, Treasurer Randy Morgan, Ex-Officio Historian John Sheriff, and Gene Dangerfield.

Contents



4

New beginnings: Connie Maxwell celebrates recent graduates and Awards Day recipients.

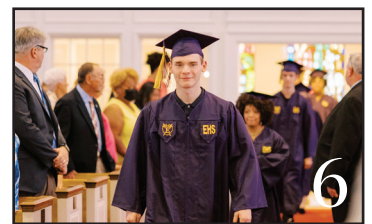


10

Smiles, Hugs, and laughter: Alumni and friends celebrate 39th Biennial Reunion.

Brookland Gala: An event for princesses

Staff from the Brookland Campus created a wonderful event their children will never forget!



6

Everyone Can Do Something
Foster Care Tour coming this Sept. to Simpsonville, Columbia, and North Charleston.



13



Connie Maxwell's Family is growing!!

On June 27, 2022, our first grandchild, Oliver Wooten Nicholson, entered the world. In a moment, our lives were changed by this precious miracle, and we will never be the same!! You may ask, "What does this event have to do with introducing our new Connie Maxwell magazine?" My answer,
Everything.

As Debra and I observed the miracle of birth, held Wooten's little hands and feet, kissed his precious forehead, and, yes, even changed his diapers, we were constantly reminded of the miracle of life. More than ever before, we embraced the sacred privilege of loving, protecting, and cherishing God's most unique creation,
A Child.

The recent Supreme Court decision, the birth of our first grandchild, and my mother's passing carried me to a place of greater conviction than ever before. Connie Maxwell now stands at the threshold of a bright and promising future. A future that holds the fate of thousands of children in our hands.

In fact, a generation of children awaits our obedience and compassionate response.

This edition of *The Connie Maxwell* spotlights the many ways we are working to heal and minister to children and families. From the feature on Connie Maxwell's longtime ambassador, Tony Atkinson, to a review of our 2022 Alumni Reunion, you will see and feel the wonderful way God is using our family to bring healing to children.

As we move forward to fulfill our "Decade of Dreams" plan/testimony and launch our campaign to fund our many initiatives, we are calling on each of you to wholeheartedly commit to joining us on this journey. These are defining times and will leave a legacy of faithfulness in the lives of children at Connie Maxwell.

Indeed, these "holy" opportunities are not for the faint of heart: it will take every one of us to surrender our time, talents, and treasures with an extra measure of faith and courage to give our best offering to children and families in Jesus name.

As always, thank you for all you do on behalf of our children and families at Connie Maxwell. Debra and I sincerely appreciate your prayers for Oliver Wooten Nicholson as he begins his faith journey and for all of God's children who desperately need us during these unprecedented times of challenge in our world.

William D. Nicholson II, Ph.D.
President
Connie Maxwell Children's Ministries



Oliver Wooten Nicholson

Brookland Gala

AN EVENT FOR PRINCESSES

By Sarah Jane Scheirer

The Connie Maxwell Brookland campus is a 164-acre regional home in Orangeburg, South Carolina, for school-aged boys and girls.

On this campus, two cottages house eight children, each with live-in staff. This campus provides a variety of activities for our children to enjoy, including recreation at the gym, a swimming pool, and fishing in the pond. Although there are plenty of fun activities on Brookland's campus, our children also have the opportunity to attend events at their local school.

A daddy-daughter dance was to be held at the school in the spring. Unfortunately, many of our children would not have the opportunity to take their fathers to an event like this. Knowing how important it was to them, our staff created a better alternative. It was decided that the Brookland and Adams campus in Chesterfield, South Carolina, would create their own dance just for the girls. Hosted at the Orangeburg campus, the Brookland Gala was held this past spring and filled the hearts of our precious girls and the staff that supports them.

Our staff sent out a formal invitation to each child, and each girl

found the perfect attire for the event. At the event, each girl was presented with a tiara, a corsage, and words of affirmation. Brookland Campus Program Director Cody Cann stated, "The tiaras represent that they are princesses to a king. And as our heavenly Father is King of all Nations, that makes them valued princesses." A steak dinner was served, and the children enjoyed dancing the night away.

The boys on campus also gave a helping hand

for this event. Knowing how much this occasion meant to our girls, they helped serve and set up for the dinner and dance. A professional photographer was there to take pictures as the girls walked down the red carpet. Magnolia Tiller Photography out of Orangeburg captured our girls in awe during the night dedicated to them.

One of the girls who attended the event said, "I know that my real dad can't be with me, but at least I can be with my Connie Maxwell family."

The Brookland Gala was a fantastic event filled with lasting memories and a reminder to our girls that they are valued and the daughter of a King.

"I know that my real dad can't be with me, but at least I can be with my Connie Maxwell family."

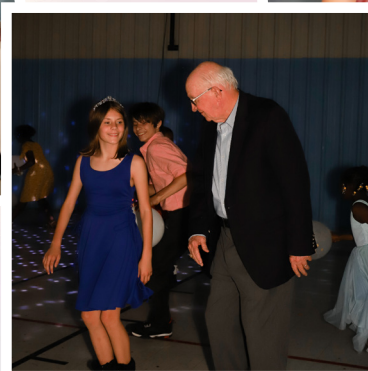
- Connie Maxwell Child



Top row from left, Paris and Eliana, Cali, Keiya and Kameka Jackson.



Bottom row from left, Aubree and Danny Nicholson, Cali and Tony Atkinson, Paris and Isabel.



From left, Eliana, Laci, Brittany Arant, Aubree, Paris, Allen, Ashton, Sandra Hutchinson, Arabella, Cali, Isabel, and Debra Nicholson.

Connie Maxwell CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES Brooklyn Gala





**Jason Wells, Allyson Charpia,
and James Wells lead their fellow
graduates down the aisle.**

New beginnings:

Graduates celebrated during Baccalaureate service.

May 22, 2022, marked a special day in the history of Connie Maxwell. Not only did it commemorate 130 years of the ministry, but it was a day to celebrate and recognize our 2022 graduates during a special Baccalaureate service at Connie Maxwell Baptist Church.

The six graduates were all smiles as they marched down the center aisle in their graduation regalia. All of the graduates were from the Greenwood campus and included Ashley Baca-Espinal, Allyson Charpia, April, and brothers Jason and James Wells. Luke, the son of staff members Tim and Stacy Higginbotham, was also a graduate and participated in the ceremony.

Three students pre-recorded graduate speeches to express their thanks and final goodbyes.

April had been at Connie Maxwell for two years. She described it as a 'wild, but great experience.' She thanked several people for their help during her time at the ministry, including her cottage parents, social workers, friends, and family. During her speech, April said, "dealing with a mental illness and being surrounded by amazing people can change you." She challenged the audience to encourage smiles in others. "Bringing a smile and being happy, I can say it brings other people a smile, and I encourage others to be the loving person you are and bring smiles." Her final words of advice, "never feel like you failed. You can always get back up."

James Wells had been at Connie Maxwell with his siblings for four years. He expressed how much he enjoyed his time at the ministry. He especially enjoyed the relationships he made with his cottage brothers and friends. James said, "I enjoyed spending time with people in the summertime, which was a lot of fun."

Jason Wells thanked all the impactful people he had met during his time at Connie Maxwell. "Everyone I have met has lifted me up and was there through all the trials and tribulations," he said. "I have gone through so much

through the years, but I have come out a better man." Jason expressed his love for everyone and hoped they would remember him as someone good. His final words were for people to follow their dreams. "I love every single one

of you all, and I hope you chase everything you want to chase. Don't get held back by anything. Keep your head up, and you will get through it."

Each graduate was presented with encouraging words, a Bible verse, and a Bible from their cottage parents. They also received a gift from the Connie Maxwell Alumni Association presented by alumnae Margaret 'Mac' Garrison, Bobby Jean Hall, and Kaye Webb.

Senior Pastor Stephen Johnson, pictured left, presented the graduates with a scriptural challenge from Psalm 56 during his Sunday morning sermon. He reminded them, "there is a crowd of people here to support you and want you

to know that they love you and care about you."

Johnson's message encouraged the graduates by acknowledging that life can bring ups and downs. "No matter what your life experience is, no matter what your past looked like, no matter what your present currently is, and no matter what your future holds—God is on your side, and He wants nothing except the best for you," he said.

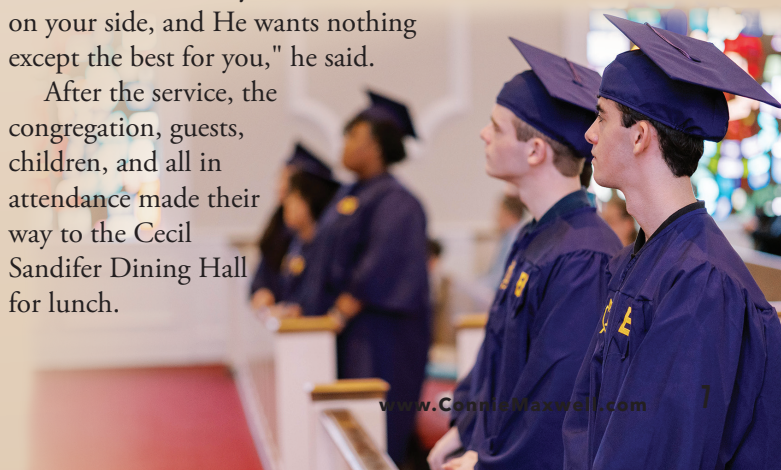
After the service, the congregation, guests, children, and all in attendance made their way to the Cecil Sandifer Dining Hall for lunch.

“

No matter what your life experience is, no matter what your past looked like, no matter what your present currently is, and no matter what your future holds—God is on your side, and He wants nothing except the best for you. ”

- Stephen Johnson

Senior Pastor, Connie Maxwell Baptist Church



Shining bright:

Students celebrated during Annual Awards Ceremony.

There is nothing more rewarding than being recognized for hard work. That's why, each year, the children at Connie Maxwell's Greenwood campus are celebrated for both their recreational and academic accomplishments. This year, those students were honored on the afternoon of Sunday, May 22, 2022.

The program kicked off with enrichment awards. Director of Enrichment Michael Gambrell explained how the ministry has helped children discover and enhance their God-given natural abilities throughout the 130 year history. "Whether that gift is a particular sport, musical talent, or a simple love for animals, we at Connie Maxwell Children's Ministries encourage students to pursue these gifts through extracurricular activities," he said.

Students can participate in activities at school, in the community, or on the campus of Connie Maxwell. This year, 28 students participated in 40 different extracurricular activities.

Many students received recognition for their performance, including most-improved awards, coaches' awards, and sportsmanship awards.

The second part of the program included the campus awards. Director of Education Brian Darrah explained some of the criteria for these awards. "The staff decide these awards and are looking at a lot of different things—a lot has to do with character, some has to do with academics, and a lot of it has to do with what potential we see in the kids," he said.

Many of the campus awards hold a rich legacy, having been established many years ago. "They have been created in



President William D. Nicholson II poses with Camden Drennon. He was the recipient of the Amber Harris Cannon Award, the J.K. Durst Award, and the Jamison Award.

honor of people who have served here or families who have supported Connie Maxwell," Darrah said. "We are honored to think about these folks, many who have gone on to be

with the Lord. That's part of what makes this special—it's part of the legacy and history of who we are at Connie Maxwell."

Below is a list of the campus awards and the recipients of each of those awards.

The Kiwanis Special Recognition Awards are given by the Golden K Kiwanis Club of Greenwood to a student from each of the three Service Delivery Teams who

have demonstrated a positive commitment to a worthwhile goal. Students receiving this award were Dana Baca-Espinal, Anthony Lipe, and Alyson Lipe.

“

Whether that gift is a particular sport, musical talent, or a simple love for animals, we at Connie Maxwell Children's Ministries encourage students to pursue these gifts through extracurricular activities. ”

- Michael Gambrell
Director of Enrichment





The James Parsons Award winners from left: Michael Williams (pictured with Brad Martin), Seth Stone (pictured with Michael Gambrell), and Jessie Wells (pictured with Sandy McManus).

The Jewell S. Brown Special Efforts Award is given to a student demonstrating persistence and effort toward accomplishing worthwhile goals. Anthony Lipe was the recipient of this award.

The J. Heyward Prince Courage in Adversity Award is given in memory of former Connie Maxwell President J. Heyward Prince to a student who has best coped with some adversity in their life, such as a death in their family, injury, illness, or other major disappointment. The student who received this award was Emily Charpia.

The James Parsons Awards are given by longtime friends of James and Gladese Parsons to students who have exemplified outstanding work ethic through the Connie Maxwell student work program. Seth Stone, Jessie Wells, and Michael Williams each received this award.

The H. K. Thayer Music Award is given to the student who has shown the most outstanding skills in the area of music. The recipient of this award was Ethan Charping.

The Gladese Parsons Award is given by longtime friends of James and Gladese Parsons to the student who exemplifies their Christian faith through service to Connie Maxwell Baptist Church. Daysha Bates was the recipient of this award.

The Amber Harris Cannon Award is given by the family of Stephanie Harris to the high school student who exemplifies the qualities of a Christian role model to younger students on campus through their character, service, and friendship. Camden Drennon was the recipient of this award.

The Mildred B. Harmon Award is given by her family and current staff to a girl and a boy between the ages of six and twelve making the greatest academic improvement

during the preceding school year. This year's award recipients are Aaron Bridges and Brandy Turner.

The Thomas N. Durst Awards are given to the girl and boy making the highest scholarship in middle school. Fernanda Lopez-Godinez and Michael Williams were this year's award recipients.

The Mrs. J. K. Durst Awards are given to the girl and boy making the highest scholarship in high school. This year's recipients were Chance Pettuce and Hannah.

The Thankful Heart Award is given by Iris and Greg Bullard in memory of Rena N. Grove to the student who, through their daily lifestyle, demonstrates and inspires the qualities of a caring and thankful heart. Jason Wells was the award recipient.

The Narietta Cheatham Award is given to a girl for dependability and unselfishness. This award is voted on by the students in residence at the Greenwood Campus program. Dana Baca-Espinal was the award recipient.

The J. K. Durst Award is given to a boy who exhibits gentleness, manliness, and dependability. The recipient of this award was Camden Drennon.

The Nesbitt Q. Cline, Sr. Scholarship, is given in memory of Mr. Neb Cline to a student in or entering higher education who exemplifies good moral character, Christian ideals, and a desire to further their education. This year's award recipient was college sophomore, Olivia Pullen.

She is currently studying at Carson Newman University in Jefferson City, Tennessee.

The Jamison Award is given in memory of Dr. A. T. Jamison to the most outstanding student in character and leadership. This year's award recipient is Camden Drennon.

Dana Baca-Espinal



“Everyone Can Do Something” with Foster Care

By Julia Bell

David and Katie Bennett are trained foster care parents living in the Midlands with three foster siblings and their biological child. Both serve in ministry — David on staff at Lake Murray Baptist in Lexington, Katie with the South Carolina Baptist Convention (SCBC) — and say they always felt the call to serve vulnerable children.

“This is our family’s way of living on mission and walking in obedience to what the Lord has called us to do,” Katie says.

“During the pandemic, when we were stuck at home, we saw the empty bedrooms in our home. We had the desire to grow our family and began to ask how we could steward the resources God gave us. We knew we wanted to become licensed through Connie Maxwell Children’s Ministries, finished that process, and had our first placement in December 2020,” David recalls.

The brothers arrived first, now ages 11 and 13, and a 10-year-old sister joined them a little over a month later. In the time since, the couple admits to many highs and lows, calling it “the most difficult thing the Lord has ever called us to do,” yet are quick to credit their deepened reliance on God and assistance from Connie Maxwell as helping them in every step of the journey. Their eyes have been opened to the hardships within the foster care system and the great need to love these children and their families well.

Connie Maxwell’s dedication to caring for vulnerable children and families with the love of Jesus has only grown in its 130 years of existence. Over the last decade, a strong connection with the foster care system developed as Connie Maxwell began training, supporting, and serving as a liaison to families like the Bennetts. The reality is not everyone will be called to foster a child, but all Jesus followers can explore ways to become involved in loving these children.

According to Vice President for Strategic Initiatives Jay Boyd, the foster care ministry at Connie Maxwell serves the most at-risk population of children who are in DSS custody. “Children enter the foster care system due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment, and it can be one of the scariest times in their life. Training, licensing, and supporting foster families allows us to extend the arms of our ministry to the most vulnerable children in South Carolina and ensure they experience the love of Christ”, Boyd says.

Church partnership is critical to the success of this ministry in the community. The love of the local church is introduced through church members who are called to foster. But caring for these children is challenging, and families need a variety of ongoing assistance and support.

The Bennetts are transparent about their journey and say fears about fostering are “totally legitimate.” What if the family gets attached to the children and then they leave? What if the children have baggage or trauma? How will these children affect a family’s biological children? Katie says fostering “requires a lot of sacrifices — of us as a couple, of our biological child, our parents who became grandparents overnight to three children they’d never met. And we couldn’t do what we are doing without our local church family.”

“This is our family’s way of living on mission and walking in obedience to what the Lord has called us to do.”

- Katie Bennett
Foster Parent



Connie Maxwell has also been a lifeline for the couple beyond the training and licensing process, advising for home inspections and even navigating the foster care system after placement. Katie describes it as unparalleled advocacy and support, including Christmas presents for the children, grocery gift cards, and events with other foster families. “Connie Maxwell does a great job with tangible, practical things and supports us emotionally, mentally, and spiritually,” she says.

That support helps the Bennetts as they introduce the children living in their home to the One that will never leave them. David sees “redemption and restoration happening in their lives, and that’s rooted in the gospel. When they entered our house, their lives were marked by brokenness. We see how much they’ve healed in the 1.5 years since being here, and a lot still needs to happen. The gospel can literally take that which was broken and make it new and whole. It has been a joy to see how God has done that.”

Katie says church support has been crucial, recognizing “our kiddos had no background with the Bible or a local church. The greatest joy has been to have our children in a church that has loved and accepted them for who they are. We have a front-row seat to watch their hearts soften to the gospel, going from having no understanding to being able to articulate the gospel and know who Jesus is.”

The Bennetts say foster families are desperate for help but are often reluctant to ask for it. Boyd has noticed this common theme among many foster parents throughout his time in ministry. Connie Maxwell is in the process of bringing more tools and support that can equip local churches to wrap around foster families in their church and community. “While Connie Maxwell provides lots of resources and training to our foster families, our reach is limited and will never replace the local church. Their church family is in the best position to assist with things like babysitting, providing meals, sending notes of encouragement, and many other things to show support,” Boyd explains.

“Not every family is called to foster, but every family is called to foster care,” Katie says. “We are not superheroes. We are just average people, asking the Lord to sustain us with every step and every day that goes by.”

According to the South Carolina Baptist Convention SERVE Team Leader Jon Jamison, the state convention is a connector for individuals and churches pursuing a deeper presence in foster care ministry with a trusted partner like Connie Maxwell.

“As Connie Maxwell has renewed its vision to address South Carolina’s vulnerable kids, they recognize residential care is important, but we all need to become more involved in foster ministry,” he says. Crediting President Danny



The Bennett family.

Nicholson’s leadership in this area, Jamison affirms the desire to “not rest or be satisfied with the number of vulnerable kids being just reduced; Connie Maxwell strives for the number zero.”

Boyd hopes gospel ministry within the foster care system will spread through South Carolina churches. “Pastors already know what the Bible says about caring for orphaned and fatherless children. Most have heard the troubling statistics and growing needs facing the foster care system. What is sometimes less clear is how to respond and where to begin,” Boyd says. “Now more than ever, Connie Maxwell is committed to providing all churches — big or small — with a customized strategy to mobilize their church to be on mission.”

Connie Maxwell has “apprenticed” with FaithBridge Foster Care, a trailblazing foster care and church engagement ministry out of Alpharetta, G.A., which has

provided resources, program structure, and networking assistance. “I looked for the ministry doing foster care at the highest level, and God led us to FaithBridge. Our partnership will enhance our foster care ministry and allow us to equip churches that want to make an impact in the foster care system. We are at the beginning of something

special, and I’m confident this will only grow,” Boyd says.

For individuals and churches who want to learn more about this ministry, Connie Maxwell, in partnership with the South Carolina Baptist Convention, is hosting the “Everyone Can Do Something Foster Care Tour,” featuring Jason Johnson. The event includes lunch and will be held from 11 a.m. to 1:20 p.m. on each of the following dates and locations: Tuesday, September 6, at First Baptist Simpsonville; Wednesday, September 7, at First Baptist Columbia; and Thursday, September 8, at Centerpoint Church at Remount in North Charleston. The seminars are free, but registration is requested to prepare for the events. Visit www.ConnieMaxwell.com/Everyone for more information and to register.

“While Connie Maxwell provides lots of resources and training to our foster families, our reach is limited and will never replace the local church.”

- Jay Boyd
Vice President for Strategic Initiatives

EVERYONE CAN DO SOMETHING

FOSTER CARE TOUR



presented by
Connie Maxwell
CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES



featuring
Jason Johnson

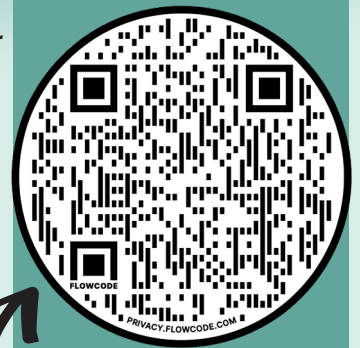
*National Director of Church Mobilization and Engagement for
Christian Alliance for Orphans*

*"We believe everyone can do something to
support children and families affected by foster care.
I'd like to personally invite pastors, church leaders, and Christian
foster care advocates to join us as we discover how to build an
'everyone can do something' culture in your church."*

TUESDAY
SEPT. 6
SIMPSONVILLE

WEDNESDAY
SEPT. 7
COLUMBIA

THURSDAY
SEPT. 8
NORTH CHARLESTON



REGISTER NOW

Learn More!

conniemaxwell.com/everyone
(864) 942-1400

This event is FREE, but registration is required.

in partnership with



Smiles, hugs, and laughter: Alumni gather for 39th Biennial Reunion

One of the most beloved events returned to Connie Maxwell this spring. June 10-12, almost 500 alumni and family members returned to the Greenwood campus to celebrate the 39th Biennial reunion. Four years had passed since the previous reunion when one slated for 2020 was canceled due to Covid concerns.

The weekend did not disappoint, with great weather, fun activities, and fellowship. Friday morning kicked off with a golf tournament at Star Fort Golf Club. A fishing tournament began at Maxwell Farms pond at 9 a.m., and visitors had the opportunity to ride horses later that day. That evening, hundreds of alumni gathered for the early bird dinner at Maxwell Farms. Guests enjoyed boiled peanuts, corn from the farm, grilled chicken, and other delicious sides as they swapped stories and hugs. Alumni Lee Foster led the team that coordinated and cooked the food.

Saturday began with the business meeting at 10 a.m. It was followed by lunch and a ceremony at 1:30 pm to dedicate the athletic field in memory of George K. Teasley. That evening brought a changing of the guards as Dr. Ernest E. Mackins replaced Margaret “Mac” Garrison as the new president of the Alumni Association. Garrison served in that role for the past four years.

“This is it folks—bitter sweet,” said Garrison. “I want to thank you for allowing me to be your president. It’s been an honor to serve. This has been the best reunion that I know of, and I want to thank everyone for being there for me.”

When Mackins took the podium, he focused on the importance of relationships and shared a little about his story. “My life hasn’t been easy,” he said. “I think that anyone who knows me knows that.”

He reflected on his past at Connie Maxwell and spoke about how he arrived at 12 years old in 1981 full of anger. “I didn’t feel like anyone wanted me,” Mackins said. “I didn’t feel like anyone cared about me, let alone wanted me to be successful. Today is different.”

Mackins attributed much of his change to a relationship



“ This is it folks—bitter sweet. I want to thank you for allowing me to be your president. It’s been an honor to serve. This has been the best reunion that I know of, and I want to thank everyone for being there for me. ”

- Margaret ‘Mac’ Garrison
Outgoing Alumni President



Dr. Ernest E. Mackins

Janet,” he said.

Mackins also thanked others who poured into him during his time at Connie Maxwell and beyond, including former Connie Maxwell President, the late Heyward Prince, Rev. Jay and Ruth Collins, Jack and Evelyn Cauley, and the late Gene Bishop.

Mackins reminded the audience of how influential they could be in the lives of others. “When you are sitting back and asking ‘what can I do,’ this is what you can do,” he said. “Yes, we need money, yes we need finances, but we also need a genuine love for the kids. Relationships where people share words of encouragement and acceptance centered around the love of Jesus Christ never fail—there is always a possibility for hope and success.”

Mackins finished his speech by challenging the alumni to be different and strive for something greater. “It’s a privilege to stand before you as your Alumni President,” he said. “This we can do together—we can make a difference.”

The Alumni Association is a way for alumni to stay in touch with and serve the children and help with other ministry needs. At each reunion, alumni vote on a project to raise money for and complete. This year, alumni voted to move forward with new entrance signage to the main campus. This gateway signage is part of the Decade of Dreams 10-year strategic plan. For more information about how you can get involved with the Alumni Association, please reach out to Dr. Ernest Mackins or another member on the committee.

The weekend ended with a packed church service Sunday morning at Connie Maxwell Baptist Church. Pastor Emeritus Rev. Doug Kauffmann presided over the service. He spoke from Mark 14:1-9 and preached a message titled, “What She Had in Her Power to Do, She Did.”

Mark your calendar for the next reunion to be scheduled for spring of 2024.

he developed with the late Bobby Wines through an assigned work-set. He was eventually able to move into the cottage of Bobby and Janet Wines. “I wouldn’t be standing here today if it wasn’t for Bobby and



Past Alumni Presidents pose for a photo. Bottom row, from left: Carie Lee McClendon, Virginia Faye Beam, Sue Tafta Sheriff, Lesley Taylor, Nick Compton, Evelyn Cauley, Margaret ‘Mac’ Garrison, Kaye Webb, Aggie Cox Cooper, Bob English. Top row, from left: Marvin Dangerfield, George Hunter, Jack Steinburg, Eric Taylor, Mack Baltzegar, and Jerry Friedner. Not pictured is John Sheriff.

“When you are sitting back and asking ‘what can I do,’ this is what you can do. Yes, we need money, yes we need finances, but we also need a genuine love for the kids. Relationships where people share words of encouragement and acceptance centered around the love of Jesus Christ never fail—there is always a possibility for hope and success.”

- Dr. Ernest E. Mackins
Incoming Alumni President



Above: children and families enjoyed pool time on Saturday. Below: Margaret ‘Mac’ Garrison is all smiles with her great niece Rielly Person, left, and granddaughter Karah Garrison, right, as they try to catch a few fish at Maxwell Farms pond Friday morning.





1.



2.



3.



5.



4.

1. The alumni gather for a group photo before noon on Saturday morning. 2. Winners of the fishing tournament are all smiles. From left, Justin Dixon, Alicia, Steven Jones, Wade Castillo, Fernanda, and Ryleigh. 3. Golfers strike a pose before they tee off. From left: Aaron Patriquin, Ernest E. Mackins, Chris Charles, Margaret 'Mac' Garrison, Tim Dillard, Chris Beckam, Will Patterson, Manning and Marty Gambrell, Bryson Rowe, Brad Martin, Tim Wines, Brian Patterson, and Jonathan Charles. 4. Family and friends gather after the dedication of the athletic field for George K. Teasley. From left: Dr. Ben and Polly Davis, Evelyn and Jack Cauley, Racine Cooper, Annette Teasley, John and Sue Sheriff, William Teasley, and Trent Teasley. 5. Lucy Charping leads the daughters of alumni and former staff member Clint Smith around the horse arena.

Blast off!

Aeronautics camp comes to campus.

Greenwood School District 50 hosted an aeronautics camp June 13-16 for our elementary, middle, and high school children at the Greenwood campus. Children from our residential program, crisis care program, and two children from our foster care program were able to participate in the camp. The students enjoyed the hands-on experience, creating a variety of rockets, including water rockets, stomp rockets, straw rockets, homemade rockets, and commercial grade rockets.



1. From left, Kayden Parker, Jay and Jessie Wells put the finishing touches on their rockets. 2. Teacher Randy Creswell prepares rockets for the launch. 3. Wynter shows off her commercial grade rocket that she put together. Background photo: Eli watches intently as his rocket flies through the air!



Maxwell Farms is home to statue created by alumni Mack Baltzegar



Maxwell Farms is showcasing a new statue that was created by alumni Mack Baltzegar. Amazingly, it was sculpted using metal clothes hangers and was inspired from the story of Don Quixote, a Spanish epic novel by Miguel de Cervantes. Don Quixote's horse that the statue is based on is named Rocinante.

Alumni and former staff member John Sheriff noticed the statue at Mack's house, and thought it would be great to get it to the farm where children and visitors could enjoy it.

Creating the platform for the sculpture involved many people. Special thanks goes to Tony Burton for providing the cedar. Harold McConnell and Alex Young cut the cedar into boards. Alex Young and John Sheriff built the cedar platform. John and his wife, Sue, current board chairman and alumna, poured the concrete base along with Alex Young. And finally, John and Brad Martin created the landscaping around the platform. There are plans to add additional lighting and benches to this area in the future. Pictured below, from left, Mack Baltzegar, Zoey, Emma, Evi, Lauren Jones, Brad Martin, John Sheriff, Tim Wines, Sue Sheriff, Alex Young, Tony Burton, and Harold McConnell.



Tony Atkinson: “Let me tell you my story”

By Julia Bell



Tony Atkinson

restoration continue to grow.

“In the beginning, Connie Maxwell was an orphanage, but today a small percentage of residents are true orphans. The more things change, the more they stay the same, as our world still has hurting children. Children are there now for many different reasons that Satan has used to divide families. But Connie Maxwell has made so many positive changes that affect the lives of the hurting,” Atkinson says.

According to President William D. Nicholson II, Atkinson has been the “voice, heart, and spirit” of Connie Maxwell for more than twenty years. “Whenever I was with Tony in churches, schools, or even grocery stores, everybody recognized him as the face of Connie Maxwell. When they saw him, they saw our kids,” Nicholson says. “There is no way to measure the impact he has made on thousands of kids through the years. We will miss him, but I know in my heart...Tony will always be in the hearts of our children!”

Atkinson’s own childhood included a striking experience that shaped his faith and perhaps his lifelong tenderness toward children. Born on a farm in McBee, S.C., Atkinson was the eighth of nine children. The family lived about a half-mile from a Methodist church, and when the weather

Tony Atkinson may have officially retired as Director of Church Relations with Connie Maxwell Children’s Ministries in December 2021, but he continues to tell stories about the place he loves. In fact, it seems his love for children and families and his desire to share messages of hope and

was nice, they’d walk to church on Sundays accompanied by a little dog that waited patiently outside the church to walk them home again. When he was five years old, a vehicle tragically hit and killed Atkinson’s brother, a sister, an aunt, and the dog.

“This shaped my thoughts on God. I wondered, ‘why me?’ Why was I allowed to live,” he says of that life-changing moment.

He went on to graduate from Hartsville High School, earned degrees from Spartanburg Junior College and Clemson, and then a Master’s in Education from Western Carolina University. Before joining the Connie Maxwell staff, Atkinson spent his entire career in the field of education.

He served as a teacher, coach, and principal for ten years, then as an administrator at Williamsburg Technical College for 17 years before retiring (for the first time) at age 51. His second retirement happened after serving as an independent school headmaster in Lake City for eight years.

“I did not plan to return to work but thought I’d play golf and fish, you know, doing things retired people do,” Atkinson says with a laugh. “But God had other plans.”

“Whenever I was with Tony in churches, schools, or even grocery stores, everybody recognized him as the face of Connie Maxwell. When they saw him, they saw our kids.”

- William D. Nicholson II
Connie Maxwell President

Atkinson was introduced to Connie Maxwell through his daughter, who became a house parent after her family moved to Greenwood about 27 years ago. President Jimmy McAdams approached Atkinson with job openings and ministry needs, and he soon accepted a role in human resources. Within six months, Atkinson took on the additional responsibilities of visiting churches which led to him being named Director of

Church Relations.

In this role, Atkinson spoke with congregations across the state most Sundays and regularly visited four to five churches daily, often leaving information at the door that “made a big impact, rather than just sending something in the mail.” Four years ago, Atkinson moved his office from Greenwood to the Brookland Campus in Orangeburg to be closer to his

home. This season was especially poignant for Atkinson, who says he enjoyed spending time with the Brookland children and developed many close relationships there.

Whether making visits to congregations, speaking at civic club meetings, or other church events, Atkinson always used his ability as a powerful storyteller to engage his audience. He told captivating Connie Maxwell stories like this one about a young boy's birthday wish:

When the boy's cottage mother asked what he wanted as a birthday gift, he asked to see his birth mother. The cottage mother arranged a meeting on his special day at a restaurant halfway between Connie Maxwell and where the boy's mother lived. After sitting and waiting for a while, it became clear the mother was not coming, and the two journeyed back to Connie Maxwell. Later a supervisor offered to take the young boy out for ice cream to try and celebrate. He responded, "No, sir. Me and Ms. Bridgette had a good time today anyway."

"When I heard this story, my heart broke, and tears filled my eyes," Atkinson says. "Thank God that this little boy had a cottage mother, Ms. Bridgette, and Connie Maxwell."

This story is one of many included in the book *Someone Held My Hand*, a

compilation of Connie Maxwell stories and memories written by Atkinson and his friend Gene Bishop, who grew up at Connie Maxwell, was a champion for hurting children, and also served on the Board of Trustees for 15 years.

Published in 2012, the book has more than 21,000 copies in print and continues to reach people with stories of hope and restoration that have come from Connie Maxwell's ministries through the years.

Bishop, who has since died, was Atkinson's best friend. "We talked at least once a week. Gene served on the Connie Maxwell board and wrote a book about being raised in an orphanage. One day over

breakfast at a local restaurant, he shared the idea about writing a book of some of the stories I told when I would speak. We ended up with 51 God stories."

It was also Bishop's idea that the authors autograph every printed book, which Bishop accomplished prior to his death. When Bishop encouraged Atkinson to write a book about the stories of his own life, Atkinson says it only seemed right to name it *Let Me Tell You My Story*. The book is currently being written.

Also, plans for official retirement are underway, which Atkinson says will include "day trips within a two-hour distance from home" to discover backroad restaurants and, most importantly, spending time with family. Atkinson and his wife Amelia have been married 58 years and have two adult children and five grandchildren. After calling Lake City home for more than 40 years, the couple moved to Summerton to be closer to family and are members of Summerton Baptist.

Reflecting on a career spent in education and loving children well, Atkinson shares that his family started the Atkinson Family Education Fund for the residents at the Brookland Campus in Orangeburg. The fund provides financial assistance for educational needs and any that affect a resident's educational experience, including extracurricular activities. Donations may be made through Connie Maxwell with the designation "Atkinson Family Education Fund," and mailed to P.O. Box 1178, Greenwood, S.C. 29648.

“When I heard this story, my heart broke, and tears filled my eyes. Thank God that this little boy had a cottage mother, Ms. Bridgette, and Connie Maxwell.”

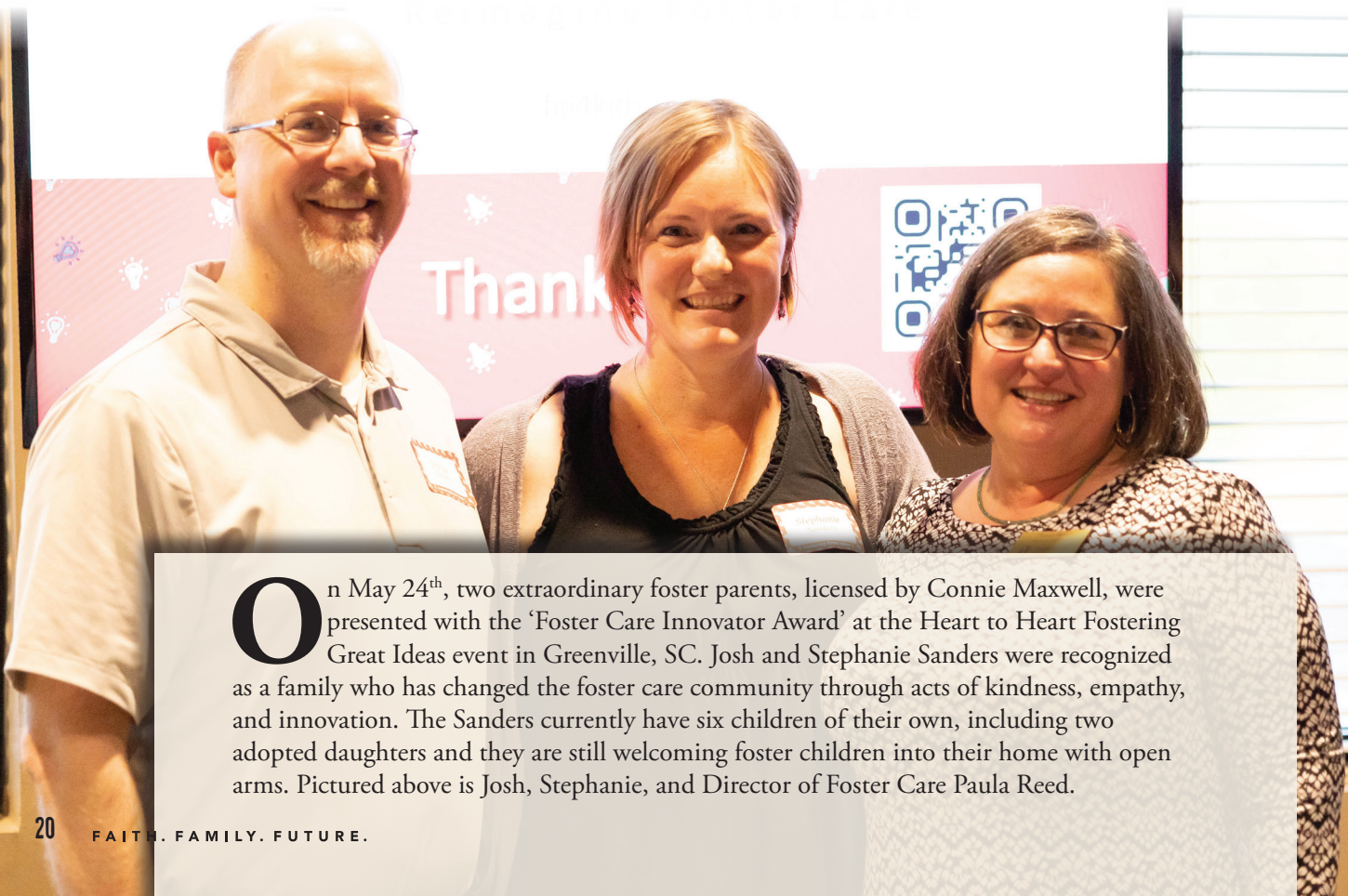
- Tony Atkinson



Tony Atkinson pictured from left with Cali, and Isabel during a recent Gala on Brookland Campus.

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Congratulations to our Foster Care 'Innovators'



On May 24th, two extraordinary foster parents, licensed by Connie Maxwell, were presented with the 'Foster Care Innovator Award' at the Heart to Heart Fostering Great Ideas event in Greenville, SC. Josh and Stephanie Sanders were recognized as a family who has changed the foster care community through acts of kindness, empathy, and innovation. The Sanders currently have six children of their own, including two adopted daughters and they are still welcoming foster children into their home with open arms. Pictured above is Josh, Stephanie, and Director of Foster Care Paula Reed.