



CAROLINA children

Meet the Johnson Five

Doris and Shemroy Johnson are experienced parents of two adult children. They felt they had been blessed with their daughters and that their home and hearts were big enough to offer a set of children a safe and nurturing forever home. They had both come from large, close-knit families, so they embarked on a journey to make a difference in the lives of a group of siblings.

They never thought twice about bringing five children into their home. "So many children need homes, and siblings are the hardest to place," says Doris. "We knew if it were meant to be, everything would work out. Then the door flew open, and it was the right time."

Imani, 11, Jelani, 9, Amina, 7, Denzel, 6, and Rex, 4, came into their lives. The children had been separated in two separate foster homes. So, not only would they be members of a new family, but they would now all be together which had not been the case for years.

The Johnsons quickly began to work on identifying which child would occupy which room in their seven-bedroom home. When the children arrived for their new beginning, other family members were there waiting for them in a home filled with excitement. The rooms were ready and decorated in each child's favorite color with items which made it



The Johnson children on their adoption day

theirs. They did not skip a beat jumping out of the new 15-passenger van that the family bought so that they could travel together as a family.

"The first day we met them it was wild," says Doris. "In the midst of chaos, all we could say was 'Aren't they precious!' It was the best thing ever – a blessing – we knew it was our calling."

On May 19, CHS Senior Program Director Deborah Artis, who had worked with the Johnsons every step of the way, had the privilege of participating in the finalization of their adoption via Zoom.

"It was absolutely beautiful and touching to watch the many professionals involved in these kids' lives congratulate them on their adoption," said Deborah. "Each of the children was over the moon with lots of smiles and tears from all, big and small! Thank you to the Johnsons for being the forever family for these brothers and sisters. It truly takes a village and you are their village."



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

LEARN MORE about how our CHS families, supporters, and staff remain committed to our children now more than ever.



Children's Home Society
OF NORTH CAROLINA

Brian K. Maness, *President & CEO*

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While 2020 has brought about many adjustments that have been difficult, I am inspired by the adaptability of so many to overcome the challenges we have faced. Despite the uncertainties around COVID-19 and remote learning, the Johnsons eagerly moved forward with the adoption of five school-aged children and embraced them as family. Our staff have acclimated to virtual working environments and our essential workers are serving our families in-person with the utmost care for safety. Donors and sponsors have continued support despite changes in our fundraising activities.



Brian Maness

National Adoption Month gives us reason to celebrate the families who have grown through adoption and to recognize the many children who are still waiting for forever families. Mary, Joel, and Doris and Shemroy encountered entirely different situations, but all found adoption in their paths and joyfully welcomed children into their lives.

We continue to be grateful to our families for their commitment to children who need them now more than ever, to our staff who remain dedicated to our mission every day, and to our donors who generously support the children and families we serve.

Please take care and stay safe.

My best,

Brian Maness
President & CEO

Always there for
FAMILIES.
No matter what.



*More than 100 years
and counting*



DONATE TO THE LITTLE RED STOCKING FUND: chsnc.org/lrs

27-Year-Old Decides to Foster, Then Adopts 7-Year-Old

Excerpts reprinted with permission from Charlotte Agenda from story by Lauren Levine Corriher

Mary Murphy adopted her daughter Katie through CHS after serving as her foster mom for 15 months. Her interest in fostering piqued during her time evaluating grant proposals from nonprofits at the Leon Levine Foundation. One of the grant proposals they received was from CHS, and as Mary learned more about what kids in foster care experience and the requirements to foster, she was intrigued.

Mary had just a few days to prepare for her foster daughter's arrival and had limited information about her before meeting her. Mary knew her age. Mary knew she had lots of energy. Mary knew that she went by her middle name. Armed with these facts and a few more personal details about her birth family, Mary and Katie were together.

As the two were working to develop trust and a real connection, they also knew that there was a chance Katie could end up leaving Mary's home in order to be reunited with her birth family, which is always the state's goal for children in foster care. This didn't end up happening in Katie's particular case, and eventually her case plan shifted, and she became eligible for adoption.

When this happened, Mary didn't hesitate to work to make their mother-daughter relationship permanent. It's a choice Mary explains was a no-brainer. "The reality is that Katie is my daughter, and she's been my daughter from very early on. I'm not going to give up my daughter."

Though she loves getting to watch Katie grow, learn, and develop confidence through typical kid stuff like bike riding and swimming, Mary admits her uncommon life situation can feel isolating at times.



Other friends are just getting married, and Katie's friend's moms are significantly older than Mary is.

But ultimately she says, "This wasn't the plan, but it's better than what the plan was. It's been the best thing ever. It's been the hardest thing, no doubt. But it's almost surreal. I love her so much more than I ever knew I could love someone."

CELEBRATING RECENT ADOPTIONS

Name	Age	Cameron	11	Drayden	5	Iradessa	8	Karina	1	Mariah	4	Sierra	17
Aabryan	3	Carley	2	Duncan	17	Irie	9	Karsten	10	Mariana "Adira"17		Sincere	10
Aaron	5	Carly	18	Eden	2	Isabella	4	Katelyn	12	Marlake	3	Sire	4
Abby	7	Carolenna	6	Ekho	6	Jack	7	Kathleen	14	Maryam	5	Skylar	12
Abigail	3	Carolyn	10	Elias	6	Jacob	5	Katie	8	Matthew	12	Socorra	16
Abigail	10	Carrie	7	Elijah	4	Jacob	2	Kaydence	6	Maxx	4	Spirit	15
Addison	1	Cassidy	10	Eliut	11	Jacob	11	Kendall	9	Melani	5	Star	11
Adrian	5	Chandler	15	Ella	7	Jada	7	Kennedy	5	Michael	10	Sunnayah	17
Ahngel	13	Chandler	0	Elorah	2	Jahmir	5	Kiasia	12	Miracle	13	Sunnayah	16
Ahnor	2	Charles	11	Emerald	4	jaiden	9	King	4	Mylia	9	Tamia	13
Alaina	8	Charles	11	Emily	10	Jamal	10	Kollin	13	Mysiah	10	Terrence	6
Alia	5	Chloe	3	Emmanuel	16	Jamarío	15	Kristina	9	Nadia	10	Trenity	4
Amaziah	11	Christian	13	Ethan	7	Jamauri	17	Kumar	8	Natalie	9	Trequan	16
Amethyst	16	Christian	6	Ethan	13	James	3	Kyrsten	13	Nevaeh	11	Trinity	15
Anna	2	Claudia	4	Evan	9	James	1	Lacey	13	Neveah	6	Trinity	15
Anthony	5	Cloey	9	Faith	2	Jamiaiah	8	Landon	5	Opal	1	Tristan	12
Ashton	11	Codie	17	Faith	14	Janat	6	Laylia	8	Peter	5	Tristen	10
Austin	12	Colby	11	Gage	7	Jatarion	12	Leah	15	Preston	13	Tyreke	14
Autumn	7	Collin	9	Genesis	8	Jesiah	10	Leah	8	Riley	2	Wa'meek	12
Ava	6	Collin	17	Giana	4	John	2	Leigh	9	River	10	Wydzum	14
Avian	10	Connor	11	Godfrey	17	Jonah	2	Lexx	16	Robert	12	Xander	3
Baby	1	Dakota	2	Grayson	4	Joseph	10	Liam	4	Royce	7	Yedaiah	19
Baby	1	Damari	12	Guilia	5	Joshlynn	14	Lilly	4	Ryder	2	Zaliyah	11
Brady	6	David	14	Hailey	19	Joshua	15	Logan	13	Sarah	8	Zyaire	9
Brandon	13	Davion	10	Hailey	10	Josmar	14	Luke	3	Savion	7	Zytavian	16
Brandon	14	Delilah	4	Harley	6	Julia	5	Lylith	2	Selena	10		
Braydon	4	Desmond	3	Harvey	6	Julious	15	Macey	6	Serenity	3		
Braydon	13	Destiney	11	Hattie	5	Justin	12	Mackenzie	4	Shai	3		
Brayson	8	Devon	6	Haven	14	Kadrien	8	Madison	12	Shawn	4		
Brielle	3	Dillon	2	Hayden	11	Kaitlyn	15	Malcomb	10	Sheila	9		
Brittney	16	Donald	14	Henry	15	Kanesia	10	Malus	6	Shyianne	18		

CHS to Launch the Institute for Family

Building on our 118 years of expertise in promoting the right of every child to a permanent, safe, and loving family, CHS is creating a new entity called the Institute for Family. While CHS will maintain its focus on providing services to clients, the Institute is an opportunity to further our mission by addressing the broader systemic issues that impact many types of families. The Institute will expand on CHS's groundbreaking work — and engage even more people to promote the power and importance of family.

A long-term initiative, the Institute for Family intends to ignite a movement to elevate family well-being by sharing transformative,

inspiring family stories, and bringing thought leadership to those with the influence to make a difference for families.

We envision that it will be a catalyst, not only for families, but for improving systems and communities on a national level. The Institute has been created with a generous gift from Margaret and Smoky Bissell who share our belief that, in their words, "Family is the foundation of everything."



The Institute has three initial areas of focus that will drive priorities, goals, and activities that lead to positive change:

Compel Transformative Changemakers

Work with legislators, donors, and public/private sector leaders to shift from a child welfare system to a family well-being system so that all families have every opportunity to stay together and fewer children will need foster care.

Empower Parents Raising Children

Establish an online platform to provide quality, accessible parent education content to help parents be the best they can be for their children.

Engage Local Community Influencers

Engage thought leaders by starting a conversation about the power and importance of family through storytelling, creating more champions for families.

In our efforts to develop the best approach to providing parent education information, we are conducting a parent survey. We invite you to participate in this brief (5-minute) survey to help identify what topics are most important, where parents get information now, and how they prefer to get parenting information. Survey can be found here: chsnc.org/parent-survey

The Institute for Family will inspire influencers, changemakers, and parents to promote family as the foundation for healthy children and strong communities.

CHILDREN AWAITING ADOPTION



Lacie, 11

Lacie is a bright, affectionate, and energetic young lady who enjoys watching movies and listening to music.



Adrianna, 15

Adrianna is a very strong-minded young lady who is looking for a family ready to watch her ambition take her places.



Khei-Mele, 6

Khei-Mele is a little boy looking for a family who is very active and loves the outdoors.



Julia, 10

Julia is a beautiful, smart, and kind child with an outgoing personality who will speak up and advocate for herself and for others.

Please visit www.chsnc.org for more information about these and many other children who are available for adoption.



Hope for the Holidays

Children's Home Society
OF NORTH CAROLINA

GIVE A GIFT TO A CHILD IN FOSTER CARE
TO MAKE THEIR HOLIDAY WISHES COME TRUE!

This holiday season, Children's Home Society of NC is working hard to ensure that for over **650 children** in our care, their holiday wishes will come true. Many will not be able to celebrate the holidays with their families this year, and your gift will ensure that a child in our care will have a reason to celebrate.



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TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE
IN THE LIFE OF A CHILD,
PLEASE VISIT:



chsnc.org/hopefortheholidays

What Happens When Youth Age Out of Foster Care?



25%
will have no
high school
diploma



1/2
will be
unemployed by
the age of 24



1 in 4
will be involved
with the justice system
within two years



71%
of young women
will be pregnant
by 21



1 in 5
will be homeless
after the age
of 18

"Our young people are constantly advocating for themselves to beat the odds stacked against them and to create positive change in our community."

Carmelita Coleman, SaySo Director

SaySo (Strong Able Youth Speaking Out) is a statewide association of over 500 young adults in foster care and alumni of foster care who remain committed to elevating youth voice in support of those who have experienced substitute care. SaySo advocates for foster care at the local and state government levels, informing legislators of the challenges and opportunities facing youth in foster care.

Finding Family in Surprising Places



Seventeen-year-old Ray faced many challenges without steady and loving parents in his life. Having been a young teen in foster care, he worked through therapy and counseling to address the effects that neglect and trauma had caused. After two years in foster care, Ray met Zenobia, a CHS Child-Focused Recruiter. Child-Focused Recruitment, a program rooted in the idea that "unadoptable is unacceptable," serves almost 800 children and teens who risk never being adopted.

As Ray and Zenobia explored extended family and other meaningful connections to find a potential solid, permanent family and foundation for him, Ray remembered his auto mechanics teacher, Joel. Joel inspired Ray to embrace his love for taking car engines apart and putting them back together. He became Ray's first choice as they reconnected and spent time together after Zenobia's outreach. Eighteen months after Zenobia and Ray began working together, Joel applied and was approved to be Ray's guardian and forever family.

Family can come in many forms and may be found in surprising places. Every child deserves the chance to have someone to call family, who will be a stable, dependable, and loving foundation for them throughout life.

Heart for Giving to Children and Families

“Sometimes when you donate money, you wonder what it’s really being used for, and does it really help. We like seeing the positive impact of our support.”

A few years ago, Felicia and Barry Dyer found themselves in a new and unfamiliar phase of life – newly retired as empty-nesters and recently relocated to the coast. They wanted to give back to the community and soon found their volunteer niche with a couple of local organizations and a new church. Having recently sold their business, they also had earmarked some funds from the sale that they planned to dedicate to charitable causes, so the Dyers began some online research.

As they searched for organizations to assist, the common thread that most appealed to them was children. Barry says, “Children need help and guidance from a parent or guardian. The most support is needed there.” In addition to CHS, Felicia and Barry also support organizations focused on at-risk children and those with disabilities.

When they first discovered CHS online, they knew immediately that they wanted to contribute because of the children and families who would benefit. They could tell that CHS was a good steward of funds, putting them to great use by providing a wide array of educational programs designed to help both parents and youth move forward in a positive manner.

The *Stories from My Heart* videos of children waiting to be adopted particularly pulled at their heartstrings. They questioned how they might help these children who risk aging out of foster care without a permanent home, and these children compelled them to make their first gift. The



Dyers see this population as particularly vulnerable, so the Child-Focused Recruitment program and SaySo are both specific areas of interest.

The Dyers don’t have a family history with foster care or adoption, yet they recognize the critical importance of CHS to children and families and hope that others appreciate this positive impact and will be moved to donate too.

November is National Adoption Month

Each year in November, there is a focus on awareness-raising efforts to help support professionals working each day to find permanent families for children and youth in foster care in our communities. This year’s National Adoption Month theme is “Engage Youth: Listen and Learn.” It is well known that teenagers are less likely to be adopted, often because of their age, and are much more likely to age out of foster care without strong or stable family support. Securing lifelong connections for teens in foster care, both legally and emotionally, is a critical component in determining their future achievement, health, and well-being.

Children’s Home Society has celebrated more than 16,000 adoptions since 1902. With over 12,000 children in foster care in our state, and 500-plus aging out each year, we continue to work tirelessly in our mission to promote the right of every child to a permanent, safe, and loving family.





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Children's Home Society's Annual Holiday Soirée

is a festive evening where friends and supporters in the Charlotte area have come together to create, help, and strengthen families in the warm spirit of the holiday season. This year, in today's virtual environment, the Soirée will be online on December 5 from 7:30-8:00 so that our friends across the state can join in the fun of a live auction, raffle, and brief program to share the love of family.

*Mark your calendars for December 5!
More details to come.*

MISSION

To promote the right of every child to a permanent, safe, and loving family.

VISION

To be a leader in transforming families and communities so children can thrive.

CORE VALUES

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Excellence. Innovation.

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