Children's Home News

The Road Home
Across The Mountains
And Through The Valleys

Volume 65 Spring 2018
The Road Home

It is not the destination, instead it is the journey, perhaps some of the greatest words ever spoken by Ralph Waldo Emerson. The Children’s Home Society’s journey began 122 years ago. The Society’s expansive journey has been supported by mission and by vision, by dedication and with fortitude, and often one road at time.

No matter where you are in West Virginia there is a road that leads to Children’s Home Society. Across the mountains, down through the valleys, to places where the rivers flow and the ridges run high, here we call it home. As this edition of the Children’s Home News reflects on our journey we are reminded that old roads have memories, where we started and where our journey has taken us thus far and to encourage us to seek the next new road, for we have not yet reached our final destination.

Our Mission

The Mission of the Children’s Home Society is to promote the well-being of children. Our current efforts are directed at helping children find lifetime families, protecting and nurturing children, and helping preserve and strengthen their families.

Our Vision

The Children’s Home Society, working in concert with other organizations and institution, assures that each child in West Virginia grows up in a safe and nurturing family that provides for his or her current and future needs.
The Children’s Home Society of West Virginia was founded by the Rev. Davillo W. Comstock. On May 4, 1896 a meeting at the Y.M.C.A in Charleston, WV was held by Comstock. There he met with other religious leaders of the community and together they worked to build a safe place for children. The Society’s main focus at that time was to place children in foster homes. However throughout the century the Society experienced an increase of youth and county wards which made it difficult to place them immediately with foster families. Therefore the idea of a temporary holding shelter was fostered and began what is now known as the Davis Child Shelter.

At the time the Society sought funding and support through a United States Senator and industrialist Henry G. Davis. On December 1, 1899 Mr. Davis committed $10,000 for the purchase of a building, $1,500.00 for furniture, and $1,000.00 annually for its support. The shelter was located on Washington Street between Brooks and Board streets in Charleston, WV.

On June 8, 1900 the Davis Child’s Transitory Shelter was dedicated which became a milestone in the history of the Society. The home was initially to be called the “H.G. Davis Children’s Home however Mr. Davis requested the “H.G.” to be removed. At the time the word “transitory” was added to the name as a reminder that no children would reside permanently at the shelter. Years later the shelter’s name was shortened to the Davis Child Shelter.

Over the years Mr. Davis supported the Children’s Home Society of WV. He made a donation every month of $100.00 to the shelter up until his death. He would pay for repairs and necessities such as clothing and toys for the children. Mr. Davis would often stop by the shelter and visit. In December 1915 Mr. Davis made his last trip to the Davis Child Shelter. He passed away a few months later at the age of ninety two.

This is just the beginning of his legacy helping the children of West Virginia.
The historic Johnston-Meek house is thought to be the second oldest home still standing in Huntington, WV. It sits on the corner of what is now Sixth Avenue and Second Street in West Huntington. But decades prior to the Civil War and any home construction, a 1772 decree by King George III gifted over 28,000 acres of land to John Savage and 60 others, all heroes of the French and Indian Wars. One of those heroes received a 400 acre plot of land. The property stretched from the banks of the Ohio River all the way back to the bordering hills of what is now Ritter Park. Since that time, the land has changed hands several times and plots were sold off to various buyers.

In 1843 Sampson Saunders, a man fondly remembered by history as someone who worked tirelessly to liberate slaves, became the newest owner. The following two owners, Isaac Frampton and brothers, William and John Johnston were also abolitionists and played a lead role in assisting and protecting African Americans searching for freedom. A three mile stretch along the Ohio River from 4th Street East to 9th Street West was known as a “Neutral Zone” for many African Americans fleeing Virginia to the promise land just across the river in Burlington, Ohio. The Johnston brothers used this property and that of their parents on Jefferson Ave. as a meeting location for the black community in the underground-railroad movement.

In 1906, C.M. Davidson lived in the home and formed the Huntington Cold Storage and Commission Co. Later, in 1919 Mr. John Meek purchased the home and hired an architect who was also a descendent of John Johnston, to plan additions to the home. Among the many changes to the home and property, it is interesting to note that the original stones from the front porch became the structure for the fabulous fireplace in the sun room.

The amazing history of this home, and the love exemplified through its owners, runs congruently with the even more amazing history of the Children’s Home Society.

Many years later, in 1984, as the Society expanded across the state, it opened the doors of the Huntington Child Shelter (HCS) which is a mere few doors down from our new home. It has been told that during those days, the HCS staff often admired this historical home from afar and dreamed of having such a grand place to do the Society’s work. In 2005, the Huntington Child Shelter was transitioned to its current location on the outskirts of Huntington. In 2017, as the agency once again began to explore expansion and growth opportunities in the Huntington area, this historical property came up for sale as if it had been waiting for us all along. Inside the home, it feels as though we’re exactly where we are meant to be. The agency’s return to downtown Huntington sets yet another cornerstone in place to continue our long standing history of finding forever homes for WV’s vulnerable children. Much work lies ahead, but we are in good company with the many owners before us who also took a stand for those without a voice. As previous board member, Bob Nuzum once said, “what could be more important than helping kids?” Huntington needs Children’s Home Society now more than ever. As Site Manager for this amazing new office, I intend to start each day honoring the tireless efforts of those who came before us in this home, and I pray we become a beacon of light for a city in despair.

Janet Smith Vineyard
Forever Families
Center For Permanency

Hovah Hall Underwood
Children’s Home

Diana Lucas,
Regional Director
“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -- I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”

- Robert Frost
June Montgomery Harless Children’s Home

The Children’s Home Society’s, emergency child shelter, in Holden was opened on December 17, 1999 after years of planning, searching for property, and fundraising. Debrina Williams who at that time was a part time WE CAN coordinator, was given the task of making the shelter a reality. Mrs. Williams, as project manager, put together a group of 17 strong willed, determined individuals and set out on the shared vision of bringing an emergency child shelter to Southern West Virginia. A piece of property was purchased from the Duncan Fork Coal Company formerly known as Pennsylvania Mine Services, Inc., for the sum of $75,000. This became the location of the shelter. The home located on the property had been burnt and the damage was extensive after being purchased. The house was remodeled with an additional $360,000 spent in renovations. The shelter was brought from ashes to reality by 9 different contract companies, thru the gracious financial contributions of James “Buck” Harless, NBA legend Jerry West, Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation and others.

On December 17, 1999, a dedication of the shelter took place with several speakers. Senators Truman Chafin, and Earl Ray Tomblin, West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resource representatives CSM James Kimbler and DHHR Secretary, Joan Ohl and James “Buck” Harless. The shelter was named the June Montgomery Harless Children’s Home. In honor of the late wife of James Howard “Buck” Harless. Mr. Harless himself had been an orphan, raised by his aunt and uncle, after the passing of his mother. June was born on July 16, 1920 and married her High School sweetheart James Howard “Buck” Harless on February 25 1939, at the tender age of 18. After 60 years of marriage June Montgomery Harless passed away on April 27, 1999.

Since the opening, The June Montgomery Harless shelter, has provided a home to 1,850 children. The children while at the shelter always benefited from one of the Society’s longest running programs in Logan, the WE CAN Program. The program was started in 1987. The WE CAN program has held several events yearly. The WE CAN camp just completed 25 years and has welcomed 3000 campers. The WE CAN Christmas campaign also is a 25 year event that has helped 7000-8000 people within those wonderful 25 years. The success of this program would not be possible without fundraising. Two fundraisers have stood the test of time, the Vaudeville talent show, and the Celebrity dinner both celebrating 25 years and still going.

Caine Dials, Shelter Supervisor/Site Manager
The Lewisburg Child Shelter opened in December, 1992 and was located in Fairlea, WV. In 2012, after many years of dealing with water issues that impacted the structural soundness of the building, a decision was made to pursue property for a new facility. A capital campaign was initiated and the search began for the perfect location. Eventually, we purchased the MeadWestvaco building, which offered the perfect layout for a new facility and included a large, paved parking lot which has since been converted to a basketball court for our residents, and a large grass lot across the street where talks are in the works to build a gymnasium. The Greenbrier Valley Children’s Home (GVCH) opened its doors on August 1, 2015 and is able to provide a home for 14 children with single bedrooms, with the ability to house up to two additional children on emergency status when necessary. The facility includes a large kitchen with a separate dining area, a spacious recreation room where children can study and play board and video games, a living room for movie and television viewing and a visitation room where our children can visit with their families and social workers in private. The Greenbrier Valley Children’s Home is a fully operational AMAP facility with over 20 AMAP certified staff. The shelter now has an on-site physician who visits once a week to provide medical services to our children and recently, in conjunction with two other shelters in Region IV, hired a full time psychologist to provide mental health services for our children.

In 2016, our community sustained a crippling flood, resulting in the loss of life and destroying numerous homes and businesses in our area. Feeling the call of service to our community, our staff were able to help people who had been affected by the flood. For several days, first responders and private citizens were able to get a hot meal, hot shower and dry clothing at the shelter. For a short time after the flood, GVCH became the hub for donations from other areas of the state and even from other states and was able to disperse food, cleaning items and clothing to folks who were starting over after the flood. Word of our work in our community began to spread, and soon we were receiving monetary donations to help. With these donations, we were able to help some families and businesses purchase appliances they lost in the flood. While we didn’t realize it at the time, we were building lasting relationships with members of our community that would turn out to benefit our facility and our children. As of this date, we have served over 300 children at GVCH.

The Lewisburg Community Based Services office was opened a few years after the original shelter opened and was housed in the shelter basement. Growth in the number of programs provided led to renting office space for several years before finally purchasing the current office in Fairlea. Over the years, this office has provided family preservation services, truancy diversion and the Right From The Start program in Greenbrier, Summers, Monroe and Pocahontas counties. In 2009, we started our Permanency program, and in 2015-2016, 200% growth in that program led to the opening of the Summersville Permanency office to serve Nicholas, Fayette, Braxton and Webster counties. In 2012, a decision was made to discontinue the RFTS program and the two staff providing those services were transitioned to the Permanency program.

On December 5, 2017, we were able to announce the completion of the capital campaign for GVCH, having raised over $600,000 through grants, fundraisers and individual donations. Much of the success of the Lewisburg site is owed to our active Advisory Council, currently 15 members strong. Their hard work and dedication to the mission of CHS, as well as the daily work of our site, is immeasurable. Our annual fundraisers, including “Make It Right For Kids” Night, the Gwen Clingman “Saturday Supper and the Rupert Blue Blast 5K, as well as our statewide Mother’s Day and Little Red Stocking campaigns, would not be possible without their enthusiasm and support.

Janet Richmond, Regional Director
In 1982, through the assistance of the West Virginia Legislature, Children’s Home Society opened several new shelters in the state, including the Martinsburg Children’s Shelter. The Martinsburg site operated a ten bed facility in downtown Martinsburg, which was later moved about five miles outside of the city area to Vanclesville. The local residents had mixed opinions of the shelter program but the local community eventually came to support the agency through community partnerships with a local church group.

The agency’s development of the Martinsburg shelter is the first of what would be many programs in Martinsburg. At the time, Director of Shelter Services for the agency located a 2 story farmhouse that served as the site’s emergency shelter. A separate garage space was used to provide community based services including family preservation services and Right from The Start.

In the early 1990s the agency purchased the current shelter property still located at Compassion Drive in Martinsburg. After some construction the agency renovated the property to serve as an 8-bed facility and offer community based services including family preservation services and Right from The Start.

During Deb’s service with the Society, she managed to effectively build partnerships with the local Department of Health and Human Resources and enhance the emergency shelter services to ensure the best care for youth served by the program. In 2001, the Martinsburg office became the Eastern Panhandle provider for the statewide Truancy Diversion Program. Children’s Home Society became the umbrella for the local Children’s Collaborative and the Partners in Prevention program.

The site also expanded services to support the need for foster and adoptive homes in the Eastern Panhandle in the early 2000’s. Adoption and foster care homes were developed to support private adoptions, foster care placements and intercountry adoptions.

In 2002 the addition of over 15 additional Truancy staff prompted the Society to expand the Martinsburg’s site to include an office dedicated to community based services. The first of many offices was in a former funeral home on King Street. The office relocated 3 more times before finding a forever home.

In 2005, Children’s Home Society of WV was determined to be the best suited agency to serve as the umbrella agency for a newly developed program in the Eastern Panhandle, the Safe Haven Child Advocacy Center. Stemming from a national trend to address the child welfare’s process in responding to allegations of sexual abuse, the local Kids In Transition collaborative identified a need to establish such a service in the Martinsburg area.

Sheila Hamilton, former WV Board of Education member and Shepherdstown resident joined the Martinsburg advisory board in the late 2000’s. In 2009 Ms. Hamilton was elected to the Board of Directors, an impactful step toward the Society’s effort to broaden board membership to include representation from communities across the state.

In 2010, Deb Barthlow and Sheila Hamilton facilitated the acquisition of the 653 Winchester Avenue property purchase from City Hospital. The historic home now serves as the central office for the Society’s Child and Family Services office in Martinsburg.

Victoria Slater-Madert, Regional Director
“You don’t climb mountains without a team, you don’t climb mountains without being fit, you don’t climb mountains without being prepared and you don’t climb mountains without balancing the risks and rewards. And you never climb a mountain on accident - it has to be intentional.”

- Mark Udall
The Shelter that would become the Southern West Virginia Exceptional Youth Emergency Shelter was originally opened in 1982 as the Beckley Shelter under the supervision of Bill Martin. It was in a different location than it is today. It originally was on West Virginia St. in Beckley. In 1983, members of the neighborhood claimed that the shelter residents were responsible for the increase in crime in the area. The complaint was ruled on the Beckley Board of zoning Appeals. The ruling was that the neighborhood was for single family/residential dwellings only and required the shelter to relocate out of the neighborhood. The shelter was relocated to Cherry Street in Daniels WV, the site in which it currently resides. It was renamed the Cherry Hill Shelter. The Shelter went through several supervisory changes. In 2004 the shelter underwent a major change. It became the Beckley Exceptional Youth Emergency Shelter (EYES) and became the only shelter that specialized for children with special needs. In 2011, the name was changed to the Southern West Exceptional Youth Emergency Shelter. The Southern WV Exceptional Youth Emergency Shelter serves kids from all 55 counties in WV. They specialize in children, age 7 to 17, with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The shelter is currently the only shelter in the state that specializes in these type of youth.

Will Perkins,
Shelter Supervisor

Southern West Virginia Exceptional Youth Emergency Shelter

Children’s Home Society of WV in Morgantown is the second oldest non-shelter, non-Charleston site in the state. According to history books, Children’s Home Society of WV in Morgantown provided services to assist Martinsburg until their program was developed. The Morgantown Site opened on September 1, 1971. The staff have a combined 31 years of service to Children’s Home Society of West Virginia. The site currently employs Norma Whitacre, Administrative Assistant (28 years of service); Brandi Davis, Child and Family Services Supervisor (3 years of service), Kathryn Jalazo, Permanency Social Worker (1 of service) and Jessica Staley, Permanency Social Worker (9 months of service).

Brandi Davis,
Program Supervisor

Morgantown Child and Family Services

Will Perkins,
Shelter Supervisor

www.childhswv.org
In 1979, concerned for the safety and well-being of children and youth being seen in his courtroom, Judge Arthur N. Gustke opened the Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Youth Services Corporation Shelter Care Facility with the help of a group of forward thinking and innovative community members.

In 1992, the Shelter Care Facility was purchased by Children’s Home Society of WV and was renamed to the Arthur N. Gustke Child Shelter, in honor of the shelter’s founder. Judge Gustke remained involved with shelter and its residents until his death in 2009.

The Parkersburg Site received a $50,000 Innovation Grant from the Parkersburg Area Community Foundation in 1998, to provide services to children and youth who were at risk of substance abuse. Around the same time, the Parkersburg Site received a grant from the Sisters of Saint Joseph Charitable Fund that allowed the site to open a Parent Resource Center. These two grants allowed the Parkersburg Office to begin the neighborhood work that continues today.

In 1999 the Parkersburg Site received Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds. The funds allowed the site to initiate the WE CAN Mentoring Program, the Truancy Diversion Program, and transportation services. The Parkersburg Office continued work with various local foundations to provide funding to continue and expand the neighborhood work. The site received a Safe and Drug Free Communities Grant which aided in the expansion of community based services. That summer, the Parkersburg Site began a Summer Youth Program with the help of these grants.

Following a successful capital campaign in 2004, the Gustke Shelter moved from its Latrobe Street location to its new home on St. Marys Avenue. The Parkersburg Site began its Early Childhood work by offering Right From the Start and Birth to Three services. The site opened a satellite office in Ritchie County to provide adequate coverage for Right From the Start services.

In 2005, the site began afterschool programming at McKinley Elementary School, located next door to the community based office. Children’s Home Society expanded Foster Care and Adoption programming to the Parkersburg area. And in 2007, in partnership with Youth Services System, the site began offering services to homeless youth in Wood County with the start of the Transitional Living Program.

In 2009 The Parkersburg Site reinvigorated the WE CAN Mentoring Program. And in 2011, the Parkersburg Office expanded Early Childhood services with the start of the Parents as Teachers Program. The program received national accreditation in 2016 for its exceptional work with children and families. The staff were later recognized at the Parents as Teachers national conference in Philadelphia for being 1 of the first 14 programs in the country to receive the Blue Ribbon Affiliate status.

The Parkersburg Site initiated Safe at Home services in Wood, Wirt, Ritchie, Calhoun, Gilmer, Pleasants, and Doddridge Counties in 2017. The site opened a satellite office in Gilmer County to provide adequate coverage for Safe at Home and Parents as Teachers programming in the outlying counties.

Shelley Plauche-Adkins, Regional Director
Paul Miller Home was opened in 1982 under the leadership of Pat Winston. The Paul Miller Home property was donated by Paul Miller. Mr. Miller owned and operated several coal mines in McDowell County and served as Mayor of Northfork at one time.


In November 1989 the New Paul Miller Home held its grand opening ceremony and was ready to serve ten children.

During the early nineties Home Base Services were provided throughout McDowell County by Children’s Home Society working out of the Annex building. In-Home services were provided that helped to keep children in home with their families. As Home-Base services expanded the program was moved into the old Dairy Queen building in downtown Northfork. Eventually Truancy services were provided until the closure of that program. Having the Paul Miller Home and Home-Based Services under the guidance of Children’s Home Society allowed a single mother with 6 kid’s ages 3 to 11 to be housed in the Annex building for about 5 days until housing could be found.

The impact of having Children’s Home Society in McDowell County not only helped this family, but has also helped the economy and provided jobs and opportunities for a large number of individuals.

Today, the old Dairy Queen in downtown Northfork, is now the Children’s Home Society’s Forever Families Community Center, which provides support and community engagement as well as foster care and mentoring services.

Al Wade,
Regional Director
July 1, 1987 Children’s Home Society (CHS) adopted the Southern WV Child Abuse and Neglect Program and expanded the WE CAN Program with Volunteer Coordinators serving 9 counties in Southern WV (Mercer and Summers from the Princeton location housed at DHHR).

On September 1, 1987 Children’s Home Society opened an office in the old Leggett Building on Mercer Street in Princeton and hired Peggy Rossi, Sheila Williams and Wanda Robbins to provide adoption services.

By September 1988, Sarah Whitaker had been hired and opened the CHS Office at 316 Oakvale Road. With this new office several new programs emerged as well - RFTS, in-home services, Family Preservation services, family visitation services, the Children First Parent Education Program, foster care to go along with adoption and WE CAN programs.

A satellite office for the Princeton operations was established in 2000 to house the Truancy Diversion, and Family Visitation programs on the first floor of the ChildLaw Offices on Honaker Avenue. By 2002 the satellite office expanded and occupied the entire building, allowing all of the Princeton programs to be housed under one roof. With the Truancy Diversion Program fading away, followed by the grants for Family Preservation and Family Visitation, the foster care program grew as did the Supervised Visitation and Exchange Program, while the WE CAN program fluctuated according to available funding, but always providing a safety net for at-risk youth.

While we were struggling financially and seriously considering a major downsizing as a result of Social Necessity shift in funding for visitation and family preservation and other in-home services, we were rescued. Verna Blankenship decided to become our benefactor and help us find a permanent home, until we found our new home, she paid our rent.

In the fall of 2006 we moved into our new CHS home at 603 Harrison Street in Princeton and settled in to where we thought we would be forever….then in 2012, Mr. Dick Preservati made us an offer we could not refuse. Turns out that he wanted our Harrison Street property for a major expansion to his church, Sacred Heart Catholic. Once he found out what CHS is all about, he was eager to support us, and continues to support our Princeton CHS Office.

In the fall of 2013 we moved into the remodeled just for us, old Princeton Library and our new permanent address is 205 Center Street. With the help of 2 local foundations and the Richard Preservati Family Foundation we enjoy a debt free “Home”. Our current array of programs and services include: WE CAN Mentoring Program, Foster Care and Adoption, Supervised Visitation and Exchange Services, Parenting Apart Education Program for divorcing parents, and child therapy services.

Joanne Boileau, Regional Director

www.childhswv.org
The Romney site of Children’s Home Society is located in the rural hills of Hampshire County, the oldest county in the state of West Virginia. Hampshire County was founded in 1754 by the Virginia General Assembly, taking parts of Fredrick and Augusta counties of Virginia. Romney is the oldest town in the state of West Virginia, founded in 1762 with a current population of 1759 people living in this small community. Our site is located in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia and we partner with the Martinsburg site which is approximately an hour and a half away from our location.

Our site was founded in the early 1980’s as the Romney Child Shelter. It was opened around the same time as the Paul Miller Home and the Martinsburg Child Shelter. Our shelter originally served children ages 7 to 18, boys and girls. Around 2007, this changed to serving youth ages 12 to 18, both boys and girls. We serve up to 10 residents at our shelter. Over past years, this site has offered truancy diversion and family preservation services. In 2008, our site began offering foster care and adoption services to the five county area of Hampshire, Hardy, Grant, Mineral and Pendleton Counties. We have recently been contacted by families in Tucker County and will begin working with families in that county as well. In the past ten years, approximately 25 children and youth have been adopted by our local families. When all of our current home studies are completed, we will have 15 approved families to provide love and care to our children and youth. This is the largest number of foster families we have had since 2008! In 2013, we started offering mentoring for our youth in our shelter. This is done by one on one mentoring as well as groups that come to the shelter to work with all of the youth as a group. Last year, our youth really enjoyed making gingerbread houses with a local civic group at Christmas time.

Our site has grown and flourished in community engagement in the past several years! We have many churches, civic groups and businesses that have been partnering with us to provide for the needs of our children and youth! Our little stocking campaign is our biggest fundraiser of the year and incorporates approximately 150 businesses in 9 counties and three states! Our Christmas campaign for our shelter, foster youth and those children in our community always amazes us. The generosity of these folks is astonishing! We have groups who have already asked to make dinners for our youth at Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas every year! We have other groups that like to host picnics for our residents throughout the summertime in our wonderful pavilion that was built by volunteers of a local mission group last year. This same group re-decorated our shelter bedrooms and provided beautiful landscaping. When we hear that it takes a village to raise a child, we are a prime example of how this is true! We could not provide for all of our children and youth without the love and support of our community!

Sally Johnson,
Regional Director
“On the mountains of truth you can never climb in vain: either you will reach a point higher up today, or you will be training your powers so that you will be able to climb higher tomorrow.”

- Friedrich Nietzsche
The Kathleen and John Faltis Children’s Shelter is located in Muddlety WV, which is a rural area. The building is the retired Muddlety Grade School. It is fitting that this building continue to nurture and provide a safe haven for children. The area is woody and quiet, with plenty of room outside for the children to play and run. But it is close enough to Summersville to be convenient to community resources.

The Kathleen and John Faltis Shelter is a 14 bed facility serving children from the ages 12 to 18. The shelter was dedicated in the memory of Kathleen and John Faltis, who were tragically killed in a helicopter crash in October 1997. Their friends, Patty and Bill Bright began the campaign to fund the shelter in their memory which became a community wide campaign. Both Kathleen and John Faltis were involved in enriching the community. John was a Morgantown coal executive. He joined the Anker Coal Group as its CEO in 1975. He founded Anker’s place in the coal industry, selling to independent power plants and disposing of the resulting fly ash. He assembled Anker’s current holdings buying up the fields and plants cast off by other operations. In 1995, COAL magazine reported that John ‘built a company from the yard sale of others.’

Kathleen was also very involved in community enrichment. She was the co-founder of the North American River Runners. She was a corporate officer of Mountaineer Retreading, Inc. of Clarksburg, and was a board directors division president of the WV Travel and Hospitality Association from 1985 to 1997, she was appointed to the West Virginia State Board of Education by Governor Cecil H. Underwood.

Over the years there have been many changes to the shelter, a shift in the age group of children served. We now can serve fourteen children rather than ten children. We are currently in the process of building some new offices for our psychologist who is on site twice a week and the other office for the two relief nurses who will be available throughout the week to meet the children’s needs. There have also been many dedicated, compassionate and passionate people to work within these walls, that I would say have been heroes to the children we serve. But the one thing that has not changed is their drive and commitment to facilitate all of your children to permanency and their forever home.

Laura Arbaugh, Regional Director
The Wheeling Office First Opened in 2013. The Wheeling office opened due to an identified need for foster and adoptive homes in the Northern Panhandle including Hancock, Brooke, Ohio, Marshall, and Wetzel counties. As part of the Children’s Alliance collaborative this need was identified and Youth Service Systems offered Children’s Home Society space in their building to get the office started. For the next two years Children’s Home Society staff worked tirelessly and diligently through community engagement efforts to spread Children’s Home Society’s message and values across the northern panhandle. In July of 2014, the agency was providing services to approximately three families and had completed one adoption of twins, one international adoption, and had a placement of a foster child. The agency slowly began to spread the word that the need was for families to give children loving homes and it was our hope to assist families in growing their families while providing homes for children in need. By September 2016 The Wheeling office had grown so quickly that the need for more space was identified and through our long lasting partnership with Youth Services systems we were offered more space in their building and the office moved to the second floor. During the next year the Wheeling office established some strong foundational relationships in the community with the Partners in Prevention Team with the Ohio County Family Resource Network, the Boscov’s Friends Helping Friends Campaign, The Foster Love Project of Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, and other local stakeholders. Over the next year the office continued to expand our reach and staff to grow the program to provide services to over thirty children in our permanency program. In the Fall of 2017, the Wheeling office again decided that in order to reach more families and help more children the office was ready for a move. A location was identified in November of 2017, and the office made an official move on January 2nd 2018. The Wheeling office continues to grow and expand our permanency program across the northern panhandle. This new year started a new direction for the Wheeling office with our new location to continue to provide for West Virginia’s most vulnerable children and families. The Wheeling office has had the opportunity to serve over a hundred children since 2013 and has finalized twenty adoptions including foster to adopt, private adoptions, and international adoptions.

Stephanie Strope,
Program Supervisor
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DAVIS CHILD SHELTER  
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EXCEPTIONAL YOUTH EMERGENCY SHELTER  
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Director Emeritus


* Deceased

Chief Executive Officer

Stephen R. Tuck