All Things Work Together For Good

By John Bryant, CEO

A few weeks ago I had the wonderful opportunity to join Mary Anne and George Stuppy for lunch in Lancaster County. It was a blessing to hear their story of how God has led their lives, and in a real way brought them full circle in their relationship with Christ’s Home.

The story begins with Mary Anne who was brought to Christ’s Home’s Paradise Campus in Lancaster County as an 18-month old infant because her mother was not able to provide proper care for her. She lived in Paradise until it was time for 1st grade. As was the practice in those days, school age children were transferred to our Warminster Campus to attend school. So, Mary Anne was brought to Warminster.

Some of her best memories relate to staff, stories, and scripture. She remembers fondly some of the staff and made special mention of “Aunty Ruth and Uncle Ed” Jerchau. (NOTE: I met Ruth for the first time last year. Their names come up often by alumni of our program as people who poured the love of God into children’s lives – and did so faithfully at Christ’s Home for more than 30 years.) Mary Anne also fondly remembers one of her teachers – Mrs. Edna Brown – and the color chart on the classroom wall. Minnie Sellers and Mr. and Mrs. Warfield were also mentioned with appreciation.

Mary Anne shared some heartwarming stories, including the day that she and some other children raided the candy closet in the main kitchen. Annual events like the Christmas Party at the Bellevue Stratford Hotel in Philadelphia and Summer Camp in the Pocono’s gave Mary Anne pause to smile.

But the thing that Mary Anne focused on the most was scripture memorization. In those days the children learned memory verses with the starting word from each letter of the alphabet. Even after these many years Mary Anne began to recite several verses. The first one for the letter “A” is familiar to many of us: “All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.”
In listening to Mary Anne’s story, that verse holds special significance. Her life was not easy, as is the case for many of the children God brings to Christ’s Home. Living at Christ’s Home knowing her mother could not care for her was hard. At age 13, a new opportunity came to her as she was taken under the foster care of a lady in New Jersey, and eventually adopted by her. Mary Anne shared that in spite of this blessing much of the pain of her life experience boiled over and she was, by her own admission, a rebellious teenager. Her adopted Mother tried desperately to help her, including sending her to live with relatives in other states to try to find the right fit. Mary Anne spent her Junior Year in California, and her Senior Year in Vermont. All of these transitions added to the struggle of her life.

After high school Mary Anne had the opportunity to return to New Jersey and enter Glassboro State College (now Rowan University.) She soon discovered that she had a high aptitude for language. After graduation she began to teach Spanish, and then eventually earned a Master’s Degree in teaching English as a Second Language at West Chester State University.

Mary Anne found a teaching position at Penncrest High School in Delaware County, PA. A few weeks into the year her eye caught the eye of another young teacher by the name of George Stuppy. Eight months later, when that school year came to an end, they were married. Together they have enjoyed a wonderful life. God has blessed them with three sons who live in various places around the country. Their motto for marriage: “A courtship takes a lifetime.” That’s a good reminder for every married couple!

It turns out that teaching school was actually George’s second career choice. He had attended Drexel University, but upon graduation decided that a career in engineering was not for him and he felt that he wanted to teach. So he earned his teaching credentials and got a job at Penncrest High School. A few years later something inside him shifted his career motivation once again and he returned to school to become a dentist. Upon completion of this program, he and Mary Ann moved to Gap, PA in Lancaster County to begin his dental practice.

Now many years later George has a well-established practice. He has earned the trust and friendship of many of the people in the local Amish community. And, this is where the story takes a wonderful return to Christ’s Home.
One of their sons was a classmate and teammate of Aaron Wright, son of our very own Vernon Wright. About 15 years ago Vern took the opportunity to call George to ask him if he would consider providing dental care to the children at our Paradise Campus, realizing that neither the children nor Christ’s Home could afford to make payment. Vern barely got the question out of his mouth as George was responding with a resounding “Yes!” Over these past 15 years George has faithfully provided dental care to the children and has even secured care from dental specialists and oral surgeons when the circumstances warranted.

Isn’t it amazing to think that after these many years God would lead George to care for children living at the same place where his wife began her life? In its own way, this models beautifully the “A” that Mary Anne learned all those years ago as God works out all things for the good. George’s very humble statement to me was, “I just wanted to give back to the kids.”

Well, giving back is part of Mary Anne’s story, also. While she took a break from teaching to raise her family, she has been back teaching Spanish and English as a Second Language for 20 years. But, not where you might think. Because she wants to give back to children who need help and need a good start in life, Mary Anne leaves her home in Gap very early every day to travel to the Paul Robeson High School in West Philadelphia. On a good day, it takes her 1 hour to drive there, and at least 1.5 hours to drive home. Why does she do this? She says, simply enough, “I love teaching.” She told me that this was going to be her last year – but the twinkle in her said – “maybe not!” How could anyone – other than God – have been able to see how a little 18-month infant from the country would one day be teaching students in the city? Once again, all things working together for good.

Mary Anne and George are delightful. It was a joy to visit with them. Happy, content, humble, smiling, and caring are words that come to mind easily when you are with them. But during our conversation Mary Anne shared some of the very difficult things she experienced as a child. They are not all pleasant memories. And for many years the pain lingered in her heart and life. But, with a quiet smile she said, “I’ve learned to let go of the painful parts, and hold on to the precious parts.” And, that may just be the lesson each of us needs to learn in order to allow God to work out all things for good in our lives.

Our thanks to Mary Anne and George for their willingness to share their story with the Christ’s Home family and for giving back to the next generation.
Meet the Development Team

Vernon Wright
Vernon began his service at Christ’s Home in 1989. Along with this family, he served in various roles in the Children’s Services program and knows firsthand the joys and difficulties of being a House Parent. Since March of 2000 his time has been devoted to developing relationships with friends and donors to encourage on-going support for Christ’s Home in his role as Chief Development Officer. His leadership in this area has emphasized the formation of a comprehensive giving program including individual, corporate, church, foundation and estate giving. A graduate of The King’s College and also the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Vernon was a youth pastor and then a pastor prior to joining the staff at Christ’s Home. Vernon and his wife Lois celebrated 35 years of marriage in July, and have three daughters and one son. He is grateful to God for the many supporters who contribute to important projects, and the growing number of vital programs provided by Christ’s Home. He counts it a blessing to develop relationships with people who share in our mission and vision to impact the lives of children and senior adults.

Paul Baur
Paul Baur joined the Development Department in June of 2016 as the Associate Director of Development. His role includes managing our donor database, developing relationships with key donors in the Bux-Mont region, communicating with community groups, and handling many of the logistics of special events. Paul has had an interesting work history with a focus on Ephesians 2:10 which instructs believers to walk in the good works God has planned for us to do. He spent 17 years working for Tastykake (which was started by his grandfather in 1931), in Anaheim California, Roanoke Virginia and last in the Philadelphia area. In partnership with a close childhood friend, Paul added a landscaping business to his rigorous ownership of a Tastykake route that had him starting his days at 1AM. During his daily devotional time, Paul would earnestly ask God what he could do that would be more of a ministry to help others, rather than just earning a living for his family. In 2001, God led him to found Impact Thrift Stores which today has 5 stores, over 200 employees, and a legacy of donating over $2 million to local charities during his 13 years as President and CEO. Paul also served for 10 years on the board of Bethany Christian Services. Paul sees his knowledge of the business world and his many connections in the greater Philadelphia area as a good fit with the mission and vision of Christ’s Home. Paul has been married to Allison, his college sweetheart, for 34 years and they have 4 daughters.

Chalon Bossert
Chalon Bossert received her BA in Journalism from Temple University and then spent several years as an academic advisor at Temple before the birth of her first child. She joined the Christ’s Home staff in 2006 as the Grants Coordinator. Her key responsibilities focus on researching potential grant opportunities and preparing 30-40 grant proposals on an annual basis. She does a wonderful job to keep the Development Department on schedule throughout the year in an effort that requires collaboration with staff in various departments. Chalon also assists with special events hosted by Christ’s Home, and other community events that offer the opportunity to share information about our programs and services. In 2016, Chalon accepted the responsibility to oversee our presence in social media. Along with her husband Doug, Chalon is the busy mother of a daughter and two sons.
This sweet little four-year-old boy was knocking on the front door of the Cottage. I knew his name already, so when I opened it up I said “Hi Trevor!” Bewildered and excited he said “How did you know my name?” He spent his first day in the Cottage trying to figure out how we knew his name before we ever met him. He decided to settle with the fact that it must have been put in our hearts before, and we did not object to him thinking that.

Trevor came to us with a Mom who was right down the street and a Dad who was in a halfway house in Philadelphia. Both parents had addiction issues that prevented them from caring for Trevor. Upon his arrival, my wife and I reached out to both parents that night, to assure them of Trevor’s whereabouts. We instantly got ahold of the Dad and several days later reached the Mom. Both opened up about their stories, which were layered with guilt and failure. That began a very real relationship with the parents and child.

Trevor was a rambunctious, dear little boy who struggled greatly with the fact that his parents were not taking care of him. He had bouts of anger and rage, trying his best at the age of four to tell us all he felt abandoned. We took him to the dentist to find out he had 11 cavities, and Baby Bottle Syndrome. Trevor was left in his crib with several bottles of milk to satisfy him while the parents would engage in drug use. Gradually over time with us, his behaviors (and his teeth) got better, as he interacted with the consistency of our model, and the love of our staff. We could see him begin to trust. He came to know the Lord three months into being at Christ’s Home, after realizing that prayer worked. He would wake up in the middle of night with a nightmare, of course he would wake us up too. He wanted us to pray with him. He had found real hope when he reached out to the Lord in prayer during times of distress.

The parents would come sporadically. The Dad’s involvement increased the more we engaged him in phone conversations. Two months after reaching out to the Dad, he made a very real decision to trust the Lord with his life. He would show up on visits with his Bible, wanting to share with his son what he had learned. Dad would always give us the update on how many days he had been sober. Conversations with Dad would happen 3-4 times a week, and soon the whole Cottage began to look forward to Trevor's Dad coming to visit. Meanwhile the Mother was a different story. She would come but only with the Grandma; rarely called; and would let Grandma do all the talking. My wife and I took to praying, knowing that the Lord wanted her as well.

Almost one year into Trevor being with us, he became very sick. I took him to the ER and his Mom and Grandma came too. We spent from 6pm-6am at the ER. During this 12 hour time with the Mother, she disclosed that over the last year her addiction got worse, and she became addicted to cocaine. This was the reason she was so distant with us. She also shared that six weeks prior, she saw "Heaven is for Real" and right there in the theatre made a decision to trust the Lord as her Savior. She then checked herself into rehab and had just gotten out. In the following days, she began to interact with us generally three times a week; she got a job right across the street; and began visiting Trevor frequently. Exactly one year and two weeks after Trevor had showed up at my doorstep, I got to take him to his Mother's doorstep to be reunified for good to a sober, born again Mother! Trevor’s Dad, while stable, was not able to obtain housing big enough for him and his son. He would go onto visit with him at the Mom's house.

Two years later, Trevor still calls me to talk. We talk about all the good times we had while at the Cottage. I check with him to make sure he is still trusting the Lord, especially when he is scared. He assures me he is with a resounding “Of course Uncle Nick!” Every time he tells me that our hearts were connected from before he got there (because I knew his name), and will always be connected in a special way. I never disagree, and am never able to keep a dry eye when hearing this.
Making A Difference

The word “legacy” speaks to the ideal of living our lives in such a way that it makes a profound difference in the lives of others. It also speaks to the idea of longevity – living life consistently well for a long time.

For the past several years we have held a Legacy Celebration in the month of October. It is interesting to note that this is our anniversary month. Christ’s Home first opened its doors to children in Philadelphia on October 1, 1903. For 113 years, and counting, God has blessed Christ’s Home with a legacy of caring and compassion for children and senior adults, alike.

Each year at the Legacy Celebration we present awards to people or organizations that are making a real difference in the lives of people at Christ’s Home. This year’s recipients were the following:

The **Legacy Service Award** is presented annually to a member of the staff who lives out the Mission of Christ’s Home on a daily basis in such a way that it encourages and motivates others to do the same. This year’s recipient is Mary Kowalski, who has served for more than 30 years as a Certified Nursing Assistant in both Skilled Nursing and Personal Care during her career.

The **Legacy Volunteer Award** was presented to Nancy Hyde who gives more than 10 hours of her time per week in support of the Activities Program at the retirement community. Nancy is continuing a role she enjoyed during her working years and loves to invest her time helping others find joy in their day.

The **Legacy Support Award** is presented to a vendor who provides outstanding service to the residents of the retirement community and who supports the work of Christ’s Home through financial support, as well. This year we proudly presented this award to Contract Pharmacy Services, based in nearby Warrington, PA. Accepting the award was their President, Ann Borrell.

Our thanks to all of this year’s recipients for demonstrating what it means to “live a legacy” each and every day. Congratulations!
Gifts in Memory of  Gifts given between July 12, 2016 and September 30, 2016.

Mr. James Pope In Memory Of Aaron Summers  Mr. George Jolly In Memory Of Henry C. Styles
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Hannan In Memory Of Barbara Reinbrecht  Mr. and Mrs. J. Christopher Harrison In Memory Of John Bryant Sr
Ms. Dolores Keller In Memory Of Barbara Reinbrecht  Mr. David Kings In Memory Of Margie Yardumian
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Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Chesterton In Memory Of Barbara Reinbrecht  Ms. Kathryn Jackson In Memory Of Margie Yardumian
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Ms. Donna Mirkovich In Memory Of Barbara Reinbrecht  Ms. Lisa Gruber In Memory Of Robert P. Stillwell
Ms. Marianne Gralt In Memory Of Barbara Reinbrecht  Mr. Scott Wolpert In Memory Of Robert P. Stillwell
Ms. Barbara DeFlavis In Memory Of Barbara Reinbrecht  Mrs. Bernice Cleveland In Memory Of Sieglinde W. Knobloch

Gifts in Honor of  Gifts given between July 12, 2016 and September 30, 2016.

Cardone Family Foundation In Honor Of George Zauflik  Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Stebner In Honor Of Gloria Anderson and Ronald Kramer