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## *The Miracle of Christmas*

### **Celebrating Small Beginnings**

As I think about Christmas, I am reminded of the irony and paradoxes in the original Christmas story. Mary and Joseph were not well known, except in God's eyes, and wound up in the small village of Bethlehem. There was no room for them and baby Jesus in the inn so he was born in what amounted to a stable and laid in a manger. The first birth announcement was not made to kings but rather to lowly shepherds who were largely discounted and ignored. Yet from these small beginnings where God was actively moving, Christ came. This baby grew into the man who healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead and forgave sins. All of Israel was turned upside down, ultimately leading to Christ's death on the cross, resurrection and the breaking of sin's curse. From the small beginnings in Bethlehem the power of Christ has now been released into changed lives across the centuries.

Our experience here often parallels the original Christmas story in that from small beginnings Christ changes lives in big ways. Typically, a broken and angry teen arrives on campus. The first sign of progress may be a smile on their face. Often behind in their education, unfamiliar with succeeding in school, there is a small breakthrough as they begin to earn a good grade or show genuine interest in their studies. Initially they may be completely self-absorbed but there comes that day when they express genuine concern for someone else. These are small signs along the way that Christ is moving. They continue to build until they break forth in power.

The evidence for this has never been clearer to me than a few weeks ago when one of our former residents joined me to share her testimony at a supporting church. I remember the struggles and challenges she and her family were facing as she arrived. I also remember the difficulties that were worked through during her time here and small signs of Christ's work along the way. However, on that morning, Christ's power was on full display as I witnessed the young vibrant woman she has become. She successfully completed high school and is now enrolled in college. She found confidence in Christ that allowed her to be a cheerleader in high school. What joy I experienced to watch her confidently share her testimony of Christ's power and to see how it ministered to the people at this church. She and every life that is changed here at the Joy House is another Christmas miracle.

As we approach the year-end I know it is a time that many of you consider ministry investments. The funds we realize in year-end giving serve as a solid foundation for beginning the next year. If you would like to make an investment in continuing to see lives changed through this ministry we would be grateful. You can find instructions on making a year-end gift on the following page. Thanks so much for your partnership and consideration. Through the presence of Christ I hope you experience your own Christmas miracle during this season when we celebrate His birth!!!

*Merry Christmas,  
Steve*



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Annual Banquet**  
Date: April 17, 2018  
Time: 6:30 PM  
Place: SharpTop Cove

## Destructive Distractions to Life in Christ - Teen Spotlight

My name is Leighanne. I am seventeen years old and have been at the Joy House for about 10 months now. I was raised by my biological mom and her various boyfriends until I was 9. I was surrounded by drugs, fighting, parties, abuse and anything else a child shouldn't be around. I was not raised in a Christian home and never heard much about the Lord until I was adopted at 10.

My new parents started taking me to church and slowly introducing me to God. For a while I thought being a Christian was just calling yourself a Christian, doing the right things and reading the Bible, so for a long time I did that. That worked for a few years because nothing bad was happening in my life, and I had a good relationship with my parents, so to me I didn't really need a real relationship with God; well, I was wrong.

When I was 14, on October 17th of 2014, I got the news that my biological mom was in the hospital on life support and not going to live. At the time, this news didn't really bother me because 90% of me just didn't want to believe it, but slowly it started to affect me. I started realizing that she was actually gone. I started thinking about my future husband and children, and how she wouldn't be there to meet any of them. When all of this got really hard on me, I pretty much just shut down. I shut my parents, family and God out of my life and started relying on drugs, friends, and boys for happiness. For a couple of years all of these distractions worked on keeping me happy and distracted, until I got caught.

After I got caught doing all of the bad things I had been doing, as expected, I got grounded, and I'm not just talking about getting my phone and TV taken away; I'm talking like hardcore house arrest. I had a lot of time to think about what I had done. My parents thought that I needed some serious help, so they started researching. They discovered the Joy House, and after a couple months of researching, I got accepted.

My first couple months at the Joy House were really rough. I got in trouble constantly and was really depressed. On the outside I had a smile on my face and looked happy, but on the inside I was torn apart. This was when I finally realized that I couldn't do this life on my own. I started to talk to the teachers, houseparents, and Mr. Darren about my struggle with my faith. They all had incredible advice and helped me a lot.

The houseparents have been challenging me to stay constant in the Word and to stay constant in my relationship with Christ, and it has been so helpful. I think a lot about where I would be right now if it weren't for the Joy House, and honestly, I would either be in jail right now or close to it. Before the Joy House I didn't even think I would graduate from high school, let alone college, but now I am in my junior year of high school and planning on graduating next December with hopes of going to Liberty University to work towards a profession in the NICU. Knowing that the Lord pulled me out of the deep, deep pit I was in and gave me another chance to graduate and go to college is so comforting. It makes me wonder about all of the other powerful things He can do. Overall, I am very thankful that the Lord has put me in the Joy House, and I am very excited to see what else the Joy House and the Lord can do for me.



## Year-End Giving Instructions



If you are mailing a gift it must be postmarked no later than **December 31, 2017**. If you want to donate online, you may do so by going to [thejoyhouse.org](http://thejoyhouse.org) and clicking on "**Give.**" You can make donations online until midnight on December 31, 2017. If you want to give the donation to us personally, it must be in hand by midnight on December 31, 2017.

We will not be maintaining normal office hours from Monday, December 25th through Friday, January 5th. However, if you need to speak to Steve personally regarding a year-end gift you can contact him by leaving a voicemail or by email at [steve@thejoyhouse.org](mailto:steve@thejoyhouse.org). He will be checking both of these and will be glad to contact you.

*Restoring teens and families through Christ today  
to change the course of future generations tomorrow.*

## Too Good to Be True? - Receive Georgia Tax Credit to Help our Teens

What if you could make a difference in the education of a teen at The Joy House through dollars you are already going to spend? What if you could receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit by helping a Joy House teen with their education? The good news is you can through the Georgia Private School Tax Credit Program. For the past few years we've had some great partners who took advantage of this unique way to give and it has been a tremendous blessing to us.

You can get all the details on how to take advantage of this opportunity by going to our website [thejoyhouse.org](http://thejoyhouse.org) then click on the "Get Involved" menu item across the top then select "Education Expense Tax Credit" in the drop down. If you need more information please contact Steve at 706-253-7569 or [steve@thejoyhouse.org](mailto:steve@thejoyhouse.org). Thanks for your consideration and we hope many of you will choose to take advantage of this as we roll into the New Year and make a difference for a teen at The Joy House.



## Stay Connected!



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## "Second Home for Second Chances" Matching Campaign

We've been given a tremendous opportunity to move forward on our "2nd Home for 2nd Chances" campaign to build our next girl's home. Partners of the ministry have put up a \$50,000 matching challenge between now and the end of the year. Any gift to our capital campaign will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$50,000 allowing us to move forward \$100,000. Please prayerfully consider making an investment.

If you would like to give by check, simply make the check payable to The Joy House and mark in the memo line: "Capital Campaign." Mail your check to: The Joy House – PO Box 247 – Jasper, GA 30143. Or you can give online at <http://thejoyhouse.org/2ndchances/>



A Second Home  
for Second Chances



## Counselor's Corner - Hallmark Movies - Darren Lane, Director of Residential Therapy

Hello, my name is Darren, and I have Hallmark-Christmas-movie-induced Diabetes. I watched one of those things. My goodness. It was so sugary-romantic I got dizzy. Beautiful Christmas decorations and perfect-looking people falling headlong into serendipitous love. You know, where five different "fate-driven" encounters "surprisingly" throw two people together in front of a blazing fire. BUT, do you wonder why those shows end just after the quintessential kiss under the mistletoe? Is it because the stuff that sometimes comes after the embers have cooled can get tough and sometimes ugly? I get it, people don't want to watch two hours of tough and ugly, but we have to eventually turn off the TV and get back into the real world, right?

Someone asked a famous musician his secret for staying married, he quickly replied, "Don't get a divorce." Of course, a good marriage is more than not doing something. It takes hard work to keep relationships alive. We have to commit to loving. This is what Scripture says about love: it is patient, kind, satisfied with what it has, is humble, and is thoughtful and considerate (1 Corinthians 13, NIV). Love doesn't let anger destroy people and relationships; it doesn't hold grudges or seek to retaliate. And listen to this last part: Love protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres. Hallmark shows the easy, fun part of falling in love, but God has the keys to people staying in love. You want to keep the fire burning? Stoke the dang thing! Keep adding humility and consideration to your relationship. Don't let bitterness dampen the wood – forgive. Men, start PROTECTING the emotions and relationship of your wife and kids. Lead them into the direction of our Lord and Father, not away from Him. I encourage you husbands to make this Christmas and the New Year, the "warmest" you've had in a while, and may God bless your efforts.



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## Newsletters

## Holidays 2017

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The enclosed gift of:  \$1000  \$500  
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 Is in memory of  
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Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Please send memorial/honor card to:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Gifts may also be made online at [thejoyhouse.org](http://thejoyhouse.org)

## Memorial and Honor Gifts

### In Memory Of:

Robert Wise  
Johann S. Petty  
Sue Helen Hermel  
Mia Prather  
Gene Landers  
Steve & Sydney Smith  
Tommy Moss  
Lamar Nichols  
Wendell Cagle

### In Honor Of:

Patsy Stanfield  
Loralie Arnold  
Brad McNatt  
Bill Durrett  
Garry Barber

### Given By:

Barbara Burson  
The Petty Foundation  
Patsy Stanfield  
Adam & Kelly Prather  
Patsy Stanfield  
Mr. & Mrs. William McKoy  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Anonymous

### Given By:

Tucker & Luke Burch  
Rosalie Castleberry  
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