

AT 125 AND COUNTING, CONNIE MAXWELL STILL SERVING NEEDY CHILDREN

BY JULIE MINER

“NEARLY A HUNDRED CHILDREN [ARE] PLEADING for admission.”

That statement by Dr. William P. Jacobs, who ran a South Carolina orphanage in the late 1800s, caught the attention of W.W. Keys, co-owner and publisher of *The Baptist Courier*. On Nov. 15, 1888, Keys wrote an editorial about the plight of orphans in his state. His words were met with almost instant response by South Carolina Baptists.

As state Baptist convention leaders began to pursue a ministry to orphans, Dr. and Mrs. J.C. Maxwell were mourning the loss of their daughter, Constance Pope. Connie had been the Maxwells' only child to survive infancy, but she died of scarlet fever at age 7. The Maxwells were thinking of ways to honor their daughter and heard about the South Carolina Baptist Convention's plans for an orphanage.

In 1891, the Maxwells offered the convention their 470-acre farm in Greenwood with the condition that the land always be used to help children in need and that the orphanage be named in honor of their daughter. On May 22, 1892, Susie Burton became the first child accepted into Connie Maxwell Children's Home, turning a family tragedy into a source of hope for thousands of children.

May 2017 marks 125 years of ministry for Connie Maxwell, which has impacted the lives of more than 17,000 children and families during its history. While Connie Maxwell students have changed over the years (most residents today aren't orphans, although they may require the nurturing ministry of Connie Maxwell because of traumatic family situations), one thing has remained constant: Connie Maxwell's mission to care for each child by developing and strengthening positive relationships in a Christian environment.

Bryant Sims, pastor of First Mt. Moriah Baptist Church in Greenwood and a former Connie Maxwell trustee,

said his church considers Connie Maxwell Children's Home to be a strategic mission partner, not just an institution of the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

“Connie Maxwell impacts generational lostness in our state, as many of the children who end up here come from families that have never known what it means to be redeemed by God's grace,” said Sims.

“These boys and girls come to Connie Maxwell and not only do they learn about the God of the Bible, many of them trust Christ and become part of God's family,” he said. “It's this understanding that drives our church members to volunteer at Connie Maxwell.”

Connie Maxwell is still headquartered in Greenwood but has satellite locations in Mauldin, Chesterfield, Florence and Orangeburg. Every year, about 200 children are ministered to in the residential care program, while others are served through crisis care, foster care and family care programs. Churches play a critical role in Connie Maxwell's

success, said Eric Taylor, vice president of development. “From prayers for our children and staff, to donations, volunteers, and countless other ways, each action is felt and appreciated,” he said.

Leslie Taylor, of West Columbia, who grew up at Connie Maxwell and today serves as a trustee, said God “always provided for our needs as ‘little people,’” adding that she and other Connie Maxwell alumni “love to return home to lend a helping hand for that next child in need and share with them how much God loves them.”

Interim Connie Maxwell president James Wright said he is “excited to see how God leads in the years ahead to continue to help children and families in the name of Jesus Christ.”

To learn more about Connie Maxwell, or to volunteer, call 864-942-1446 or email erictaylor@conniemaxwell.com. ■

Julie Miner is director of communications for Connie Maxwell Children's Home.

◀ *Left: Students walk to services at the Connie Maxwell Baptist Church building used from 1927-1965. Below: Many alumni fondly remember conversations and laughter as they shucked ears of corn in the 1950s and 1960s.*



◀ From left: Self Cottage is typical of the residences on the Greenwood campus; flowers blooming in springtime.



▲ Connie Maxwell residents from the late 1800s (top) and today.

