

# ECHO

Spring 2022

News from Bethany Children's Home



## What lessons, if any, can suffering teach?

We are often told that suffering will make us stronger and build character. I am not sure how I feel about such a belief. We work with children and families day in and day out who are suffering and experience many different outcomes.

When I believe I have heard the most horrific experiences of our youth, I continue to be amazed at the wounds inflicted by humans on children. So often we search to understand the why of events that cause suffering, many times with no answer. Over the past several months, I have been exposed to some extensive suffering that just makes me scratch my head. I would like to share two real life stories that may bring perspective to how we perceive suffering and consider our interactions with others regardless of the degree of suffering in our lives or that of others.

An individual recently shared with me their journey of suffering and healing from their childhood experience of rejection, abandonment, and abuse.

From a young age, the young man shared how he came from a volatile home environment that involved episodes of human trafficking at the hands of a parent.

When discussing the suffering he encountered, the young man shared that he is determined to not be captive to his life circumstances. He has resolved to not allow such suffering to define his identity. He said his journey, like everyone's, will be a lifelong process of healing, personal discovery, and understanding.

I found myself struggling with the thought of how such suffering could build character or make him stronger. It is in these moments that we may not be able to explain or find purpose in these circumstances until some future moment of our lives when something provides a deeper understanding and purpose.

The second story has both a happy outcome for one

family and a sad outcome for another. A friend was informed that their young teen daughter was diagnosed with advanced kidney disease and would require a kidney transplant. This changed everything for this family and they found themselves suffering day in and day out, hoping for the call that a kidney donor would be providing the much-needed healthy organ.

While the family was on vacation, that call came and they had to race to the hospital for the much-anticipated surgery.

What mixed feelings they were having: elation that their daughter's life would be full with all the hopes and dreams within their grasp before news of the disease; contrasted by the feelings of sadness that a family was suffering who lost their young teenager who provided the healthy kidney. The purpose of one life being saved while another is lost can make sense, but does not diminish the level of suffering encountered.



*Dr. Joseph T. Birl*

Think about how you perceive and experience suffering as well as another's suffering that may appear to be more challenging. Also remember, as we work with children and families engrossed in suffering, we at Bethany are in the business of helping them on their journey of healing.

If anything, suffering is about being strong and courageous in the face of life challenges that may be beyond our control.

Thank you to our Bethany Friends for your continued thoughts, prayers, and support, particularly during times of suffering.



*Alumni gathered at the April breakfast on campus.*

## Bethany Alumni Corner

A few weeks ago, we welcomed the Homers, Bethany alumni, back on campus! We had an amazing breakfast, wonderful fellowship, and heard some great stories.

We watched a few of the “Women in Bethany’s History” videos done during the month of March in honor of Women’s History Month.

We made several announcements, including an update on work being done at the Gate House to create an Education Center which will house our Archives collection for guests to view.

We also announced that an Eagle Scout is going to create a Meditation Garden behind Bausman Memorial Chapel, including consecrated ground.

There are a few exciting opportunities for you to get back Home to Bethany!

**Homers Breakfast** – June 10, 9 a.m., on Bethany campus. The cost is \$5 per person.

**Alumni Day** – June 25, 11:30 a.m. Program begins at Bausman Memorial Chapel and ends at the Anniversary Grove for The Ringgold Band at 1 p.m. This year we will have activities for children. The cost for the day’s activities is \$10 per person.

For more information on the events or to register, contact Alumni Relations Coordinator and Archivist Jennifer Koch, [jkoch@bethanyhome.org](mailto:jkoch@bethanyhome.org) or 610-589-4501, ext. 305.

## Our stars shone brightly at Yocum Institute fundraiser!

Our two teams of dancers performed at the Dancing with the Reading Stars event Friday, April 22, to a crowd of several hundred people at the DoubleTree Hotel in Reading!

Dancing with the Reading Stars involved a dozen dance pairs who each performed a 90-second dance routine with a Yocum choreographer to the music of their choice. This annual event is a fundraiser for the Yocum Institute for Arts Education.

Youth Ammo and CJ performed to a hip-hop tune while team members Dawn and Pete danced to a salsa number. They were amazing!

Both teams together raised a total of \$5,090 for Yocum Institute for the Arts!

A HUGE thank you to all our supporters - those who voted for our dancers as well as Bethany team members who made delicious items (and bought them!) for our bake sale benefitting the event!



*From left: Ammo, Pete, CJ and Dawn celebrate after their performances.*

## Keep up with Bethany!

Website: <https://bethanyhome.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bethanyhome1863/>

Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/bch\\_1863/](https://www.instagram.com/bch_1863/)



**We are excited to see you this summer for our 7th concert series!**

## IS IT SUMMER YET?

**June 17 7 p.m. Elvis Tribute: Jeff Krick Jr.**

**June 25 1 p.m. The Ringgold Band**

**July 15 7 p.m. The New Individuals**

**August 5 7 p.m. The Uptown Band**

**August 12 7 p.m. Sloth Love Chunk**

Visit [bethanyhome.org/summer-concert-series/](http://bethanyhome.org/summer-concert-series/) for updates to the schedule, food and other activities during our series!

**Sponsorship opportunities are still available!**  
 Contact Dana Hoffman at [dhoffman@bethanyhome.org](mailto:dhoffman@bethanyhome.org) or 610.589.6826

## TEAM MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

**Congratulations to our amazing team on their anniversaries here at Bethany!**

### February 2021

Peyton Endy	1 year
Harold Hicks	3 years
Adam Wagner	4 years
Betty Walsh	7 years

Dennis Quick	2 years
Crystal Rivera	2 years
Amy Salyers	4 years
Bill Salyers	4 years
Elizabeth Santana Jimenez	1 year
Stacie Stauffer	19 years
Alexzandra Valdez-Valdez	1 year
Kate Warren	3 years

### March 2021

Ana Barranco	1 year
Dana Graf	1 year
Lori Harvey	17 years
Aariel Kantrow	1 year
Deb Schaefer	1 year

### May 2022

Zachary Blystone	8 years
Cristian Castillo Arias	2 years
Jordan Corley	1 year
Jose Pantoja Cortes	3 years
Ingrid De Pena Concepcion	1 year
Jasmin Gomez	1 year
Tim Henning	30 years
Felipe Perez Flores	3 years
Bill Rakow	8 years
Amber Ramsey	1 year
Taina Woomer	3 years

### April 2022

Tony Brochu	4 years
Cynthia Butler	1 year
Austin Costenbader	1 year
Stephanie Faehling	6 years
Pat Miske	4 years

# Introducing Art Instructor Michelle Kissinger

Hello! I am Michelle Kissinger, Bethany's new Art Instructor. My path to Bethany started in 1973 when I entered foster care. After three placements, I was admitted to Milton Hershey School in Hershey, Pa., where I lived from 5th through 12th grades. Experiencing 10 years of out-of-home care fuels my passion for youth who need an alternative place to live, heal, and grow.

My professional background is in business management and organizational development. In 2011, I started a doctoral program wondering how to better support the development of organizational leaders. My questioning led me to the field of arts-based management education and leader development.

My goal with Bethany's art program is to create a welcoming and supportive environment in which youth try new things, express themselves, and self-reflect through a variety of artistic mediums and experiences. (Fresh baked bread, hot cocoa, and teas contribute to the hospitable studio vibe!)

During February and March, we played with collage, hand formed pottery, sand art, mosaic tiles, torn paper mosaics, painting, and tie dye, among other things.

We also had our first "Movie, Munchies & Making" event. Youth gathered to watch a movie about the life

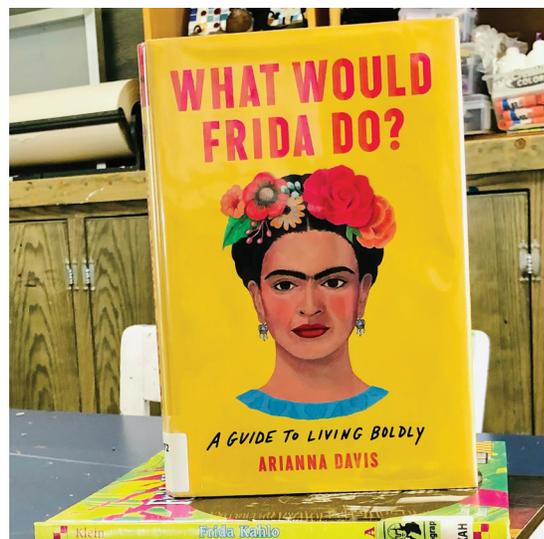
and art of Frida Kahlo, Mexican painter and wife of Diego Rivera. Afterward we hung out in the art studio discussing Frida and making art.



I am constantly on the lookout for opportunities to support two key elements of creativity – flexibility and persistence – which are essential for imagining, solving problems, learning from failure, receiving help, and following through on complex tasks. These abilities are useful far beyond the art studio.

As we increase our cognitive flexibility by tackling artistic ambiguities and challenges, we improve our ability to modify our thinking and responses to frustrations and setbacks. As we develop tolerance for tedious art-making tasks, we improve our ability to sustain the effort needed for difficult work.

If you have questions about Bethany's art programming or would like to contribute to our resources for youth art experiences on and off campus, please don't hesitate to contact me at [mkissinger@bethanyhome.org](mailto:mkissinger@bethanyhome.org).



# Legacy Brick Campaign

*There is still time to purchase a brick!*

Our Legacy Brick Campaign is a campus beautification project featuring personalized bricks by alumni, team and board members, and our community supporters. The bricks will form a walkway around the fountain in More Memorial Park. Be a lasting part of Bethany's campus for years to come!

There are several ways to order!

Go online to [www.fundraisingbrick.com/bethanychildrenshome/](http://www.fundraisingbrick.com/bethanychildrenshome/)  
Or complete the order form below and send along with payment to:

Bethany Children's Home, Attn: Jennifer M. Koch,  
1863 Bethany Road, Womelsdorf, PA 19567

Make Checks Payable To: Bethany Children's Home

If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Koch at 610-589-4501 ext. 305 or [jkoch@bethanyhome.org](mailto:jkoch@bethanyhome.org)

- 4x8 Brick No Clipart \$100 (3 lines of text, 20 char. per line)
- 4x8 Brick With Clipart \$120 (3 lines of text, 15 char. per line)
- 8x8 Brick No Clipart \$200 (6 lines of text, 20 char. per line)
- 8x8 Brick With Clipart \$220 (4 lines of text, 20 char. per line)

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Bethany Children's  
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# Chaplain Update: Seeking Spirituality

Many of the youth at Bethany are what I call spiritual seekers. These young folx come to us from diverse backgrounds. While some might identify with the faith tradition of their family of origin or a foster family, most of our youth are “unchurched.” This simply means they have very limited or no experience in a faith community. These young folx are now seeking a spirituality that can see them and welcome them where they are while also stretching them to learn and grow. They are seeking human connections and spiritual belonging.

With this in mind, we spent Epiphany watching *Just Mercy* and discussing the theme of community and the sacrament of baptism. We viewed the film in small sections over the course of three weeks and a strange thing happened. Each week, more youth showed up.

They came to view a film after missing the beginning and to join a conversation that made sense to them. They asked questions about what it means to make promises to a chosen community.

We looked at scripture to find out what community looked like to Jesus and his followers and reflected on how these ancient people can have anything to say to us today. Some of the youth appreciate this style of gathering where we can learn together and deepen our spirituality at the same time.

Others prefer a structured praise and worship gathering. For these youth, we shifted our attention in

Lent to a simple worship series that is educational and hopes to share a Word for those youth seeking one. In these gatherings we practice intercessory prayers, engage a Taize-style prayer in song, and study the human Jesus as he travels to Jerusalem through Mark’s gospel.

Two youth asked for Bibles to access these stories themselves and have already posed some deep theological questions.

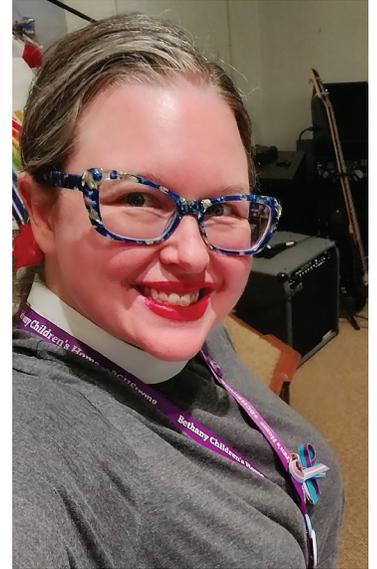
Some are learning that Jesus was a real human being from a real community and their questions around this are some of my favorites.

This one made me giggle a little as I thought Jesus might have wondered the same thing. One youth asked, “How do these people always know where Jesus is?”

Finding our friends without social media can be difficult, we learned.

Peace be with you all.

- Rev. Rose Shepley, MDiv, Chaplain



## What’s Cookin’ at Bethany: Apeas Cake

Food Services Director Tony Brochu shared this recipe, found in a Bethany cookbook.

### Apeas Cake (breakfast cake)

4 c. flour	1 egg
2 c. brown sugar, packed	1 c. milk
1/4 tsp salt	1 tsp. baking soda
1 c. shortening	1 tsp. vinegar
1 tsp. vanilla	

### Cinnamon sugar

1/3 c. sugar	1 tsp. cinnamon
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Mix flour, brown sugar, salt & shortening until a pie dough consistency.

Combine baking soda & vinegar in a cup. Beat egg, add milk, vinegar & baking soda mixture, and vanilla.

Mix well, add flour, shortening, sugar and salt dough ball. Put into 4 greased pie plates.

Sprinkle with cinnamon sugar topping.

Bake at 350 for 25-30 minutes.

**Program Director Nick Hill recently shared this poem with the Bethany team. It serves as a reminder of the trauma and challenges of youth.**

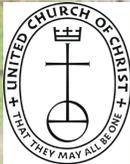
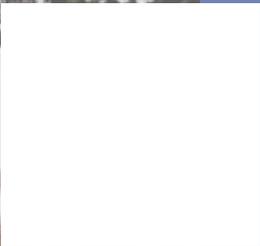
## **Things I Need You to Know . . .**

*by Mitch Abblett, Ph.D*

I need lots of attention.  
Even when I swear at you, I still need your attention.  
I will talk endlessly about stuff like video games because that's all I'm really good at.  
I will do odd, quirky things that always seem to get weird looks from people.  
And when I tell you I don't care, it really means I just don't know how to let myself care."  
I don't want to be here because it means I failed in order to get here.  
I've never belonged to things much in the past.  
I learned a long time ago to reject you before you can reject me.  
Did I mention that I want your attention?  
I'll be looking for ways to get control by hitting your buttons,  
And by "splitting" you against one another,  
And against my family as well,  
And by sparking other kids to get in trouble,  
Because control is something I've been without for quite a while.  
My file says I'm not retarded but I think I am.  
My diagnosis crawls through my file like some sort of bug I want to squash.  
You WILL misunderstand me.  
You WILL assume I'm being "lazy" or "manipulative" or "nasty" on purpose.  
I really just don't know what else to do to not have to feel the way I feel.  
Every day, my medication is a reminder of how I'm sick but you can't see how.  
Bald kids with cancer get cards and warm smiles.  
I get blamed and punished because I'm bad.  
And even if you tell me I'm not bad, I won't believe you.  
It's your job to say nice things to me, so again, I won't believe you.  
But did I already say (because it's hard for me to focus on things and I forget) . . .  
I really want your attention?  
I just want a chance to fit in; to do something right once in a while.  
I just want to feel okay for a day.  
I just want my family to be proud of me for once.  
I just don't want to have to remember all the bad stuff from before all the time.  
I just want you to follow through on your promises to me (because others haven't).  
I just don't want you to confuse my actions with who I really want to be in the future.  
And yes, before I forget, the future means almost nothing to me.  
I will try to embarrass you.  
I will try to make you angry.  
I will try to make you nervous.  
I will try to make you hate me.  
Because then I will know I'm not crazy for feeling these things myself.  
Because then I will know who I can begin to trust.  
And trust is five letters because it's better even though it's hard.  
Four-letter words are just easy but if I can get to five letters then . . .  
Maybe I can make it to six, and then . . .  
Maybe I can start CARING. . .  
And then maybe, just maybe, I'll let myself believe I deserve your attention.



1863 Bethany Road  
Womelsdorf, PA 19567  
bethanyhome.org  
610-589-4501  
RETURN SERVICES REQUESTED



## ABOUT BETHANY CHILDREN'S HOME

FOUNDED IN 1863, Bethany Children's Home has provided a safe place of nurture, protection and supportive care to aid youth in their own self awareness, growth and healing for a brighter, healthier future.

Every day, youth who have been abused, neglected or abandoned are taking back their lives with the help of Bethany.

**Services:** Spiritual services, educational programming, recreation, social services and more are provided to every youth at Bethany.

**Programs:** Bethany offers individualized programs for youth who for whatever reason cannot live with their family or a substitute family. From emergency services to longer term Residential Treatment programs, Bethany supports youth while they heal and prepare for the next steps of their journey.



***A Simple Gift***  
through your will or estate will help us with what we do today and far into the future. It's a simple gift that costs nothing during your lifetime. To learn more about Bethany's planned giving program, please call 610-589-6828 or visit [bethanyhome.org](http://bethanyhome.org).

## EITC

### Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program

Bethany Children's Home is an approved EITC organization. Education Improvement Tax Credit funds are used to enhance the academic support and enrichment programs provided at Bethany. Funds from EITC benefit education remediation for youth served at Bethany. The program focuses on a balance of individualized services and group learning based on academic and educational needs. To find out how to support Bethany through the EITC program, go to [bethanyhome.org/get-involved/eitc](http://bethanyhome.org/get-involved/eitc) or call 610-589-6828.