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UA68/13/4 The Care Project

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THE CARE PROJECT

DECEMBER 6, 1998

Bowling Green, Kentucky
Across the street, down the block, there is a family. The family is hungry. Their few canned goods must be rationed.

The children are cold. The old space heater in their drafty rental house is dangerous: it spits sparks.

These children need clothes and shoes, for theirs are worn and tight. And coats and hats and gloves—warm ones, new ones—like those of the kids’ at school.

On the Christmas wish lists that follow you’ll also find dolls, toy soldiers and story books, computers for homework and electronic games. These are not necessities. But at Christmas, a special gift from a generous stranger is always welcomed, forever appreciated.

In some of the families featured on these pages, there is a father. More often, there is no father. In one, the family is a mother and her 5-month-old daughter. The mother is 17, still a child herself.

In others, the mother is Hispanic, or she is Bosnian. In a community that is foreign to her, in a country that is foreign to her, using a language that is foreign to her, she must find a way to provide food, clothing and shelter for the children.

Sometimes there is illness. It is chronic— or incurable.

The little boy or girl cannot breathe. Or walk. Or see. The family forms a mighty bond of love and hope and perseverance in the face of unimaginable medical bills so the child can live.

Who are these children, these families? What do they have to do with anyone, with us? These people work with us, sit beside us in class, live in the apartment across the hall, pray in the next pew.

These people are struggling to keep their humanity, their dignity intact. Federal, state and local governmental and social service agencies provide help, but some needs go unmet. This is where you can lend a hand.

Yes, your helping hand will require money. Yes, it will require your time during the busiest of seasons. More than that though, to help these children will require your kindness and perhaps a little sacrifice. Certainly a lot of love.

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**Our Mission**

**How You Can Help**

Coordinators of The Care Project request that only new clothing be donated. However, nearly new computers, electronic games, televisions and appliances are welcome. Smaller items should be gift-wrapped. Everything should be clearly labeled with the recipient’s name and a description of the gift if it is wrapped.

Any extra items will be donated to organizations for distribution to children in the Warren County area.

The Care Project accepts donations of all kinds. Cash or checks can be donated, but monetary gifts will be converted to certificates and vouchers for specific needs.

Make checks out to Care Project/Kiwani's of Bowling Green, and mail to: P.O. Box 13, Bowling Green, KY 42102.

Please deliver your gifts to Bowling Green Printing, 711 31-W Bypass, in Collet Cove Center (near Lehman Avenue). Delivery hours are from 2 to 6 p.m. Wednesday through Friday, Dec. 6-18, and from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, Dec. 12 and 19.

If you cannot deliver items during these times, or if you have any questions, please call Bob Canter at 781-7528 or James Kenney at 793-9721.
Katie Lea Mayhugh has found love and support to help her through her battle with a brain tumor. Katie draws strength and support from her brothers Jeffery, 9, and James, 3 (see photograph on cover). "I love them both," Katie said.

**Wish List**

**Katie**
- Bed N’ Bath Barbie
- Casey Cartwheel Doll
- Talking Bobbo Doll
- jeans, 14 kids

**Jeffery**
- Radio with CD player
- jeans, 36x30

**James**
- Teletubbies Plush Doll
- jeans, 5

"She’s just my world to me."

Katie Lea Mayhugh’s smile is joyful and innocent. Her glance, curious and strong.

She enjoys playing with her friends and dolls, watching cartoons and eating spaghetti. Her favorite colors are red and pink, and when she grows up she wants to be a teacher. And she has a malignant brain tumor.

The symptoms started almost four years ago when Katie began to get headaches and lose her balance. On Feb. 2, 1995, doctors found a tumor on her brain stem.

The tumor remained the same for more than a year. Then, in just two months, it grew from pea-sized to the width of a quarter. Katie became blind in her left eye because of the swelling.

"She couldn’t even sit up anymore," Roxanne recalled. "We had to feed her. Her motor skills were almost gone."

Chemotherapy began Feb. 2, 1997, at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville. It continued until Feb. 12, 1998, when the tumor stopped growing.

Katie dreaded the treatments, but found comfort in the hospital’s Chuckie and Molly dolls. They reveal what children look like inside and have removable hair to show that hair loss after chemotherapy is OK.

"I didn’t want to go to the hospital," Katie said. "I thought the doctor was going to poke me."

Since chemotherapy halted the tumor’s growth 10 months ago, doctors have been monitoring it quarterly with MRI examinations. Her next visit is Dec. 18.

"They can’t take it off. They can’t do any surgery." Roxanne said the tumor would have to go away on its own.

Katie’s parents, Jeff and Roxanne Mayhugh, graduated from Logan County High School. They live with Katie and her brothers, Jeffery, 9, and James, 3, in Rockfield.

Jeff is a bricklayer with Mid-South Masonry and Roxanne is a homemaker.

Cancer treatment is expensive, but family support, Medicaid, Jeff’s job, and donations have enabled the Mayhughs to get care for Katie.

"We think life is more precious. She’s just my world to me," Roxanne said. "We stayed together and helped each other."

**Care • 3**
Angela Miller, 3, has congenital myopathy, a debilitating muscle weakness that hinders her ability to walk and could affect her heart. Because her immune system is so weak, her parents try to keep Angela inside during cold weather.

**Wish List**
- Horse, saddle, bridle
- Talking Barney
- Clothing, 3T
- Baby doll
- Computer

"She's a miracle baby...a miracle from God."

Angela Miller, 3, climbs through the wet leaves from last night's rain. She is a tiny figure of 20 pounds. She should weigh 40. When Angela was two weeks old, Henry and Kathy Miller noticed something was wrong. "She didn't move like a normal baby," Kathy said.

A bone specialist put Angela in a brace to correct her dislocated hips, but as she neared her second birthday, the little girl still could not crawl or hold a bottle.

A biopsy revealed congenital myopathy, a debilitating muscle weakness with no known cure and no effective treatment.

The doctors predicted that Angela would never walk, but she began using a walker at 2. Last year, the myopathy caused her jaw muscles to quit and the little girl couldn't eat. But after six months on a feeding tube, she bounced back.

"She's determined to keep on," Henry said.

Her parents treat Angela as the strong, independent child she is.

"If Angela thinks she can do it, I let her do it. I am not going to try to hold her back in life," Kathy said. "She's a miracle baby...a miracle from God."

Apart from the difficulty of Angela's disability, her parents, both in their 20s and struggling financially, have had to face an expensive legal battle over medical benefits.

After applying and being refused six times, they hired a lawyer. A judge declared Angela 100 percent disabled and guaranteed her lifelong Social Security insurance and Medicaid coverage.

Angela has discovered her passion — horses. Her parents have the land and skills to own one, but can't afford to buy a horse.

"It seems like animals comfort her," said Henry. "When she's riding, she'll laugh the whole time. It amazes me."

They are hoping for assistance in making Angela's wish for a horse come true this Christmas.

Angela rests on her mom's lap, looking at the Christmas tree.

"We don't really know from one day to the next what's going to happen to us," Kathy said.

She pulled Angela closer.

"We just have to take life as one day at a time, don't we, baby?"

*Story and Photograph by Shayna Breslin*
**S**even-year-old Bionca Wilson sometimes has to watch the world from her living room window on Carpenter Court. Her asthma often keeps her from playing outside with her neighborhood friends.

"I feel real bad for her sometimes," said her mother, Faye.

Bionca spent six months in and out of the hospital at birth while her respiratory disorders were diagnosed and treated. She has allergy shots twice a week and, depending upon the weather, two to four times a day she may be on a machine that helps expand her lungs.

Faye can hardly remember a time when Bionca wasn't on some type of medicine to help her deal with her asthma and allergies.

Bionca, a second-grader at Parker-Bennett Elementary School, loves playing and learning on the classroom computers. An imaginative child, she spends a great deal of time setting her ideas on paper.

"I like to write stories for mom," she said.

"She loves school, she loves to read and write," Faye said.

The two make it a habit of sharing the events of each day with the other.

Faye and Bionca are trying to make a better life for themselves.

Faye was on welfare and didn't like where her life was going. The Reach Higher Welfare to Work Program, run by the Housing Authority, changed her direction.

After six months, Faye graduated from the program and is now off welfare and works at the day care center at Western Kentucky University.

Everything Faye does is for Bionca.

"It's just the two of us — we have to stick together," Faye said.

All Bionca really wants for Christmas is a computer for her room.

Having a word processor would enable Bionca to enjoy her time inside; she could be writing more stories to hang on her mother's refrigerator.
“She’s very special,” Virgie Beasley, 17, said as she held 5-month-old Shawntavia Bell. Mother and daughter now live on their own. Providing for Shawntavia has proven to be a challenge, but Virgie says she’s trying her best.

Wish List

Shawntavia

Diapers, baby wipes, baby shoes, baby clothes, 9-12, baby bicycle seat

Family

Kitchen chairs, dresser

“Raising her, I just do what I think is right.”

Virgie Beasley smiled and looked down as she hugged Shawntavia. “We’re best friends,” she said, sighing.

Shawntavia Bell gurgled and peered out the window, listening to the sounds outside. Life has been a whirlwind for Virgie. In the past 14 months she has had to do a lot of growing up. She’s gone from being a 17-year-old attending high school and hanging out with her boyfriend, to living on her own with her new baby daughter.

They moved in September from the home of Virgie’s mother to a state-subsidized apartment. Virgie said this change has been scary; her mother isn’t there to help, and Virgie is lonely. Yet she is comforted by Shawntavia.

“She’s my best friend, cause there’s no one else around,” Virgie said. “I talk to her and she listens.”

Shortly after Shawntavia’s birth, the baby’s father stepped out of the picture. Now Virgie must rely on herself for everything.

“All day long I just have flashbacks of the good times me and her daddy had, and I just cry and she laughs at me,” she said. “I’m gonna be a good mother with or without him. I don’t need his help if he doesn’t want to give it to me.”

Virgie hopes Shawntavia grows up to be independent and set goals – much like those she has for herself. She plans to finish her GED and become a nurse or a social worker.

But for now, Shawntavia is her life.

“Before, I had doubts about it, but I’m doing it by myself and I think I’m doing pretty good.”

Yet Virgie and Shawntavia can still use some extra help for Christmas. Other than the housing subsidy, they receive no aid because the state still considers Virgie to be in her mother’s care.

“For a while, I had to count out pennies to get diapers and stuff,” she recalled. “It’s hard just taking care of her by myself.”

Despite their problems, mother and daughter have each other.

“She always makes me smile when she smiles,” Virgie said.

Story and photograph by Carrie Pratt
Emily Massey, 7, cares for her dolls as patients with the same disease she has: diabetes. Emily hopes to become a doctor.

"Emily to me is very strong and happy."

She's only 7, but Emily Massey knows what she wants to be when she grows up.

"She told me one time she wanted to be a doctor or nurse because she wanted to help other people who had diabetes," said Emily's mother, Kelley.

Emily knows doctors all too well. Two years ago she was diagnosed as an insulin-dependent diabetic. Five times a day, she is stuck with a needle.

"Sometimes I cry," Emily said. "It burns and stings."

You would never know it when you watch Emily — she is always smiling. She has olive skin, dark-brown hair and a glow that radiates childhood innocence.

Her grandmother, Barbara Flowers ("Nana" to Emily) says Emily has a good attitude about her diabetes.

"Emily to me is very strong and happy," Flowers said. "She'll be OK. She's a survivor."

Emily is a second-grader at Rockfield Elementary School.

The school nurse gives her two insulin shots daily, one in the arm and the other in her buttck.

Between Emily's favorite parts of the day, physical education and computer class, she must prick her finger 4 to 5 times to check her blood-sugar level, while curious classmates watch.

As for Emily's best friend at school, she doesn't have just one.  "I have a zillion best friends," she said.

Not long after Emily's illness was diagnosed, her parents got a divorce.

Kelley, Emily's mother, works at Chick-Fil-A to support Emily and her 9-year-old brother, Justin.

Kelley's mother, Barbara Flowers, said her daughter is determined.

"There's a lot of strength in that family," Barbara said. "I think Emily gets her strength from Kelley."

Besides the Sony PlayStation and games (NFL Blitz and Cool Boarders 3) that Justin wants, and the computer, Barbie dolls and miniature Doberman Pinscher puppy that Emily would like, their "Nana" wants Emily to have something extra special.

The one wish she has for the future is that Emily's diabetes be cured.

"I want her to live her life to the fullest," Barbara said.

"I want her to have a happy childhood and to make a lot of memories."

Wish List
Emily
Miniature Doberman Pinscher puppy, Barbie dolls, computer
Justin
Sony PlayStation, NFL Blitz and Cool Boarders 3 games

Story and Photograph by Kendra Stanley
Sean Ennis, 12, has been deaf since birth. He suffers from a disorder affecting muscle growth, bone structure and auditory nerve development. "He's a brilliant kid," said Susan Ennis, Sean's mother. "I just wish I could get inside his head to see what he's thinking."

"I don't think I appreciate life as much as he does."

For the fourth time in one day, the electricity is out. Connie Miller, the special education teacher at Moss Middle School, scurries between desks to gather the children.

"We have Matt, and we have Brent," Miller counted off each child as, one by one, they filed into the hallway where the entire school had congregated in the darkness.

"Where's Sean?" asked Jackie Ray, an instructional assistant for the class.

Sean Ennis, a 12-year-old boy with Coffin-Lowry Syndrome, sat in the darkness of the special-ed classroom, waiting for his teacher.

As rain played on the windows, teachers herded the 1,000 students into the cafeteria. Sean, holding Jackie's hand, led the way.

"You can't help — you just can't help but to get attached to this kid," Ray said.

The disorder has rendered Sean deaf and mute.

"He sees and he feels," said his mother, Susan Ennis. "He just loves people. He'll play with anyone — anywhere. "A lot of people see him as handicapped... True, he can't use his ears, and he can't speak. But he uses his eyes and his touch."

Because of the illness, Sean will never be touched by the beauty of music, never build a model car, never say "I love you" to his mother.

But Sean breathes and sees and feels. He lives in a world of fascination, closely examining anything new.

His mother said he loves heavy machinery videos, auto races, monster trucks, trains and motorcycles.

"I don't think I appreciate life as much as he does. He loves life," Susan Ennis said. "There is just a lot of happiness about this kid."

**Wish List**

Books about cars and trains, Tonka dump truck, Thinking Things computer program (can be ordered through Edmark Catalog, 1-800-362-2890)
Jessica Cole, 5, who has cystic fibrosis, must rest frequently during playtime. Medication and chronic lung problems drain her energy.

"She's really a good sister. I like to play with her."

Most Sundays after church, Stacey Cole takes her children, Jessica, 5, and Tyler, 6, to a cemetery in Richardville. Her daughter, Victoria, who died in 1993 when she was 5-months-old, is buried there. Jessica kisses Victoria's headstone every time she visits, and leaves flowers.

Next to her headstone stands one that is blank: Jessica's. She and Victoria were twins.

"We thought Jessica would die soon after," Stacey says. Jessica suffers with chronic asthma and cystic fibrosis, and knows that Victoria died of the same genetic disorder.

A recent check-up brought bad news for the Rockfield kindergartner. She has not gained weight, her mother said, and needs to have her lungs cleaned out – a painful procedure requiring a two-week hospital stay.

Their mobile home near Rockfield needs heat.
"The cold really bothers Jessica's asthma," Stacey said. "The two electric heaters we have just don't do." She says she can't afford the $180 required to fill the propane tank, which must be refilled every two months.

But Stacey tries not to be overburdened by pain and worry. Her focus is on trying to make her children's lives better.

Jessica's favorite subject is science, and she is on the cheerleading squad in school.

Both children like karate. Tyler said he's earning his white belt.

As a first-grader at Rockfield Elementary, he excels in math and loves spelling.

But there's something Tyler loves even more – his little sister.
"She's really a good sister," he said. "I like to play with her."

Story and Photographs by Paul Conrad
A few months ago, Robert Haynes’ life changed. He got partial custody of his daughters, Nicole, 9, and Stephanie, 8. Now he is trying to get full custody.

Haynes’ former wife got custody of the girls in 1995 when the couple divorced. But the father soon realized his daughters required better care.

He said they frequently had to fend for themselves. He added that his daughters often stayed at their grandparents’ home for long periods without knowing where their mother was.

“I’m sure a lot of nights, they went to bed without dinner,” Haynes said.

State social service workers investigated and had the girls move in with their father.

Their dad is excited about the reunion.

“I used to hate coming home,” Robert said. “Now that they’re here, I can’t wait.”

Haynes is excited to have his girls home.

People who know the girls say they are now getting along and act more like sisters.

The girls are quite different. Stephanie, who plans to be a veterinarian, has two birds and a fish.

“I want to help animals,” she said.

Nicole likes boys. She wants to be a police officer when she grows up.

“I want to arrest people and give them a ticket,” she said.

This will be Haynes’ first Christmas with the girls since the divorce.

He works at Lowe’s and, after paying the rent, he doesn’t have enough money to give Stephanie and Nicole much, but he says he loves watching the girls grow up together.

Now he knows that they will be all right, and that he has some control over how they are raised.

“They’re my life,” he said, “They sure make a difference.”

Wish List

Nicole

Easybake Oven, Polaroid camera

Stephanie

Beanie babies, bean bag, chair, camera, drawing supplies, fishing pole

Family

Winter clothes: sizes 7/8, VCR, Television

Story and Photographs by Chris Hamilton
Maria Garcia is raising Bryan, 2, Yojan, 9, Michael, 13, and Cherry, 4, by herself. She has received no child support from the children's father since their divorce and has sustained her family with sporadic work, food stamps and her little girl's disability check.

**Wish List**

**Michael**
- Shoes, 8½, shirt, Xlarge, pants, 36 waist, belt with silver “M” buckle, tape recorder

**Yojan**
- Computer, shirt, medium boys, shoes, 4½, water gun

**Cherry**
- Shirt, 3T, shoes, 13 girls

**Bryan**
- Clothes, 3T, Hotwheels city

**Family**
- Beds, clothes dryer, canned food

On the northwest side of Bowling Green is a sparsely furnished two-bedroom apartment decorated with a beer poster and snapshots of family members.

Maria Garcia has lived here with her four children since following work to the city five years ago.

The oldest child, Michael, is the man of the house now. His dark eyes mirror despair as he helps his mother look after Yojan, Bryan, and Cherry. He is struggling with his new role, and it's showing.

"Michael is having problems in school," Maria said, noting his recent three-day suspension.

The family receives no child support. Maria pays for clothes, school supplies and rent from the $484 a month her daughter gets because of a birth defect.

A few canned goods sit on a small wooden shelf, testament to the family's meager food stamp allocation.

Since Maria can't afford childcare, she is waiting for a third-shift job to open up at Eagle Industries Inc., where she once worked.

"That is the only time I can work," she said. "During the day I must be here with the children."

Maria said her family needs many things, especially a dryer for their many loads of wash. She has a washer, but the children's few clothes must hang in the back yard to dry.

"We wait for the sun," Maria said. "And if it doesn't come, they don't dry, but it's too expensive to take to the Laundromat."

The boys' wishes are equally practical. They would like bunk beds. They now sleep on old, musty mattresses pushed together on the floor.

"They always slide apart and we end up in the crack," Yojan said.

His eyes twinkled as he said he would love a computer for homework and games. But with winter approaching, the family needs warm winter coats, hats, scarves and gloves.

*Story and Photograph by Janel Schroeder*
Arielle and Aaron Coleman are unaware of their father's job loss and the money problems that their parents deal with every day.

**arielle & aaron**

“It's like we are stuck in a rut, and we are trying to dig ourselves out.”

Stacy Coleman has the front door of their two-bedroom duplex open to let in the cool air that usually comes before a November rain.

Her husband, Kevin, holds their daughter, Arielle, in his lap as she plays with the talking box that goes in the back of a Tickle Me Elmo doll.

Their house is in a quiet neighborhood, and the interior appears pleasant enough for Kevin and Stacy Coleman to raise their children Aaron, 6, and Arielle, 9 months.

But the problems of this family, like many others in Bowling Green, are evident only beneath the surface.

“My son gets a Social Security check, but I have to use that to pay the rent,” Stacy said. Money has never been too plentiful for the Coleman family. They have had to make sacrifices for Aaron and Arielle. The parents sleep on the floor so that they can afford beds for their children.

Stacy is in desperate need of dental work on an ingrown tooth, but keeps putting off the surgery until the family can get back on its feet.

Putting food on the table was not much of a problem with Kevin's check from work – until just recently.

Kevin lost his job at Kentucky Apparel and doesn't think that he can find another until January that pays as much.

Having no college degree and little to no experience in any given field, he says it is hard to find a job that pays enough to support his family.

That means the ones who will feel the brunt of the family problems will be Aaron and Arielle.

Aaron has many wishes for Christmas and doesn't understand why he can't have everything that he wants.

Kevin and Stacy don't know how to tell him that any money they can make has to go to feeding the family.

Kevin had applied for welfare, but said he was told he had to endure six weeks of unemployment before he would qualify for assistance.

“It's like we are stuck in a rut, and we are trying to dig ourselves out,” Stacy said. To do this, Stacy is taking some positive steps. She attends a weekly life skills class where she is learning about household finances, meal planning on a budget and how to cook economically.

**Wish List**

**Aaron**

Clothes, 6, bike, WCW Wrestling Buddies

**Arielle**

Clothing, 18-24 months, educational toys, stuffed Mickey Mouse, Beanie Baby monkey, Hobby horse

**Family**

Computer, software, pots and pans, mixer, Polaroid camera

**Story and Photograph** by Josh Hobbie
Last February, the DeWalds lost everything in a house fire. Today, they still find themselves battling to get back to normal.

Mother Joyce DeWalt with children: Terrez 16, Tyson 13, Tyrant 1, Terry 9, Tevin 8, Tyrika 7, Tiasha 6, Tarelle 5, and cousin Antwan.

**Wish List**

**Kids**
- Bikes, ages 5 to 16
- Clothing, girls’ sizes 6 and 7, boys’ sizes 5, 9, 10, large and Xlarge

**Family**
- Dinette set

The plastic mat over the carpet in the DeWalds’ home is rumpled. Without missing a beat, Tyrant, 11, jumps up and quickly straightens it.

And so it goes with this family of 10. Team DeWalt.

Everybody contributes. Especially since the fire.

In February, the DeWalds’ world burned to the ground. A devastating fire left them with nothing. No clothes. No toys. No place to live.

“It was real hard, nothing pleasant at all,” Joyce said. But she wanted to set an example.

“They (her children) are going to respond the way I respond,” the mother said.

Her children responded. They’re mannerly. They help. Tyrant watches the young ones.

Tyson keeps them laughing. Terrez cuts everybody’s hair.

“I raised them like I was raised: to respect your parents,” Joyce said.

“Most of the things I didn’t experience, I want them to have and experience...family-oriented things.”

Joyce works in a factory 60 hours a week. She recently took a second job because she wants telephone service installed. She needs a dinette set for her kitchen.

The DeWalds’ primary goal is to get out of the woods.


“That would make my life a whole lot easier,” Joyce said.

**Story and Photographs by Rick Scibelli**
Amber Nicole Cline and Reuben Rawlings have joined about 38 other children on a waiting list for a Big Sister or Big Brother. Because of a shortage of African-American Big Brothers and Sisters, they could wait a long time to be assigned volunteer mentors.

WISH LIST
Big Sister,
Big Brother

Amber Nicole Cline and Reuben Rawlings have a simple wish during this holiday season – to have a Big Sister and a Big Brother – to play with, to go to the movies with, to have fun with, to be a kid with.

Nikki and Reuben are among about 40 children on the waiting list at Big Brothers and Sisters in Bowling Green for the volunteer mentors.

Nikki, 8, has been on the waiting list for more than six months. One reason for the wait is that out of 57 volunteers, only three are African-Americans.

Nikki is a bi-racial child who lives with her grandmother, Faye Lancaster, and who would like an African-American Big Sister.

Along with enjoying her “Barbie Dolls,” Nikki likes going to the movies and the mall and playing “Twister.”

Since her grandmother works, Nikki said she doesn’t get to do these things very often. If you name a sport, Reuben plays it. He enjoys football, basketball, baseball, soccer, swimming and roller blading.

Reuben, 7, a first-grader at Natcher Elementary, is the son of Linda Rawlings and little brother to Ashley Rawlings.

Linda says Reuben needs a male influence to help guide him.

Reuben said he enjoys Disney movies and math classes, and flashes a smile as he talks about becoming a policeman when he grows up.

Nikki and Reuben live with smiles on their faces and big dreams. The presence of a Big Sister and a Big Brother can help shape their lives and those of the other children on the waiting list.

Bill Hatter, director of Big Brothers and Sisters, said finding a match for the children on the waiting list is very important.

“The children are helped in many areas,” Hatter said. “It helps their self-esteem, can keep them from making poor choices and can help them achieve their dreams.”

STORY BY MARK MITCHELL PHOTOGRAPH BY SHAWN POYNTER
For the past three years, Summer Gregory and her mother have shared a bed. During 7 or 8 moves around Bowling Green, the two slept side by side on a hide-a-bed, but they left it behind when they moved into a house a few weeks ago. They now sleep on the floor, in a loft above the kitchen.

"Me and her slept on the brown couch, but we left it there because it was falling apart," Alice explained.

Now Summer wants a bunk bed.

"Mom will sleep on the top," she said, "and I'll sleep on the bottom."

When Summer, 15, and her mother, Alice, are together, they're more like best friends than teen-age and parent. There's no combat zone here.

"Sure, we get along good....She tells me things and I tell her things," Alice said. "We've got the same personality. We like cutting up and telling secrets. She knows secrets that I don't tell her daddy."

Summer's father, James Thorne, and brothers, Jason, 18, and Jeremy, 13, also live at the house. Thorne runs a BobCat and does clearing work and cleans up yards.

"Usually when my mom and dad get into an argument, my two brothers take up for my dad and I'm the only one who takes up for my mom," Summer said.

"Girls usually win," she added.

Summer and Alice like to sit and talk about anything.

"We usually mostly goof off," Alice said. "She's a lot like me when I was her age."

Both collect stuffed animals. Summer prefers bears and, at one time, had quite a collection. But it was lost between moves when the family couldn't make payments on a storage unit. When time allows, Alice sews lace collars for the remaining bears.

Summer, an eighth-grader at Henry Moss Middle School, does not make school a high priority, although her mother wants her to graduate.

After high school, Summer plans on working in housekeeping at a motel like her mother.

"I want to get away from Jason, Jeremy, Daddy and take Momma with me," she said.
For Debra Schrimsher and her children, Dennis, 13, and Ashley, 7, the greatest wish for Christmas is to move out of the housing projects where they have lived for 14 years.

They say the projects are too confining, the quarters too close. Debra worries that the environment is not providing her with a safe place to raise her children properly.

Raised by her single mom, Debra said her own childhood in Bowling Green was good, but the family never had much, especially after her father left when she was 3.

"I wouldn't know my father if I ran into him," she said.

Debra earned her high school diploma in 1986, not long after her son was born.

This is one mark of success in a life that she says often has been a struggle.

She's also had another recent success. In the spring, Debra completed a welfare-to-work program that trains people in a skill, and is employed in the Bowling Green Housing Authority upholstery shop.

She hopes to buy a car.

She also hopes her training as an upholsterer will help her to get a higher-paying job that will allow her to move her family, enabling her to bring up the children in a different environment.

Meanwhile, Debra has created a tidy, cozy home for her children in the projects, complete with the needlepoint pictures of bears and ducks that she collects.

Dennis is in the seventh grade at Moss Middle School and has decorated his bedroom with posters of his idol, Michael Jordan.

Ashley, a technology whiz kid at Warren Elementary School, would like a computer in her room more than anything else.

"Any kind that has a mouse attached," she said.

Ashley also wants "anything Barbie."

However, while her children dreamed of Christmas, Debra added a note of reality.

"I don't know if you are going to have a Christmas this year," Debra cautioned her son and daughter.

In her effort to buy a car, she said that she may not be able to afford presents, a tree and the other yuletide traditions children enjoy.

"These children don't know what it would be like not to have a Christmas," Debra said, adding that both Thanksgiving and Christmas have become an important time of the year for the their family.

"I don't know if you are going to have a Christmas this year."
Marietta McDermott balances school and work with the responsibilities of single parenthood as she raises Shaina, 2, and Harry, 5. Marletta said she moved her family from Lexington, Ky., to Bowling Green to escape bad influences and to seek a better life.

WISH LIST

Shaina
Blues Clues items, Sesame Street books, coloring books, crayons, socks, underwear and clothing, 4T

Harry
Toy trucks and cars, socks, underwear and clothing, boys’ small

shaina & harry

“When I get frustrated or have a bad day, I stop and pray.”

When she was in high school, Marletta McDermott said she “never dreamed” her life would turn out the way it has.

As she sat on the couch in her apartment on Graham Avenue, Marletta shared some of her struggles and joys.

“I came to Bowling Green on a Greyhound with my children and suitcase with some clothes and a few toys,” the 27-year-old single mother said. She arrived in July. “We didn’t have anything.”

Marletta’s journey began in 1991 when she attended Western Kentucky University as a freshman from Lexington, Ky.

Then she became pregnant with Harry, now 5, and returned to her parents’ home. She gave birth to her daughter, Shaina, 2, in 1996.

Marletta spent six years with her parents, but said she decided to get away from bad influences. She returned to Bowling Green to find work and finish her education.

“I already have an associate’s degree in computer information systems,” Marletta said. “If it deals with computers or electronic information, I love it.”

She ordered a Bowling Green telephone directory to find work, day care and living quarters for herself and the children.

“I wanted a place close to Western, but Bowling Green has changed so much since I was here last, I ended up in a hotel near the interstate,” she recalled. “I had a job and day care two days after I got here, but the cab fare to work and day care was so expensive, it ate up all our money.”

The family packed up and went to the Salvation Army, where they received assistance before being sent on to the Housing Authority.

Soon, they were in an apartment. Marletta was enrolled in the REACH Higher Program, and the Salvation Army had given the family beds, some other furniture, and a few toys.

She said it helps to talk with folks like Housing Authority Director Abraham Williams when things get rough.

Marletta also turns to prayer as she balances work with single parenthood.

“That seems to help,” she said.

She added that the toughest thing is telling her kids “no” when they want something that isn’t a necessity.

“I pay the bills first and then buy groceries,” McDermott said, thinking of Christmas. “That doesn’t leave much for anything else.”

Story and Photograph by Joe Imel
As a single mother, Sheri Lively draws upon her faith in God to give love and support to her daughters, Taylor and Desiree Carver.

**WISH LIST**

**Desiree**
- Church coat, everyday clothes, 4T, shoes, 8½
- Picture books, anything Barney

**Taylor**
- Church coat, everyday clothes, 24 months, shoes, 6½, educational toys

Sheri Lively is strong. There is strength in her voice. It is a voice firm in the faith of God. Firm in the faith that God was with her when she summoned the courage to walk out of an abusive marriage a year ago to save herself, and to give her daughters a better life.

“He didn’t care if they ate or slept,” she said of the husband she left. “He took away from me and them and I didn’t want to deal with it anymore. I have no shame in anything I’ve done, but there are two sides to every story. I can only tell mine.”

She, Desiree, 3, and Taylor, 18 months, moved in with Sheri’s mother, Jackie Lively, a year ago. It is a tiny house for the four of them, but it’s safe.

Jackie sat and thoughtfully watched her grandchildren. Desiree’s almond-shaped eyes widened as she counted on her fingers. She likes to name colors, and she’s learning the alphabet. Taylor loves picture books and Barney.

The girls keep their working mother busy.

Sherita, 27, is employed full-time as a housekeeper in a nursing home. She finished high school for the diploma.

“I figured I was going to need it if I was going to get any kind of a job,” she explained.

As the sole supporter of her children, she is finding out firsthand how hard things can be. One day when things get better, she would like to go back to school, and later work with computers or children.

As Jackie watched her grandchildren, she explained why she understands Sheri’s life as a single mother. It’s hard, Jackie agrees – and it’s a carbon copy of her own life.

“Things run in a cycle. I was divorced. Sheri’s father didn’t take interest in her and her brother until they were teens,” Jackie recalled. “God helped me to do it, and if he did it for me, he’s going to do it for her and her children.”

Sheri’s voice turns steady and strong.

“We’re all trying to overcome something. We all have mountains to climb, and we all need help for that strength to climb them.”

**Story and Photograph by Liz Siwinski**
Wish List
Khadejah
Winter clothes, coat with a hood, 5-6 regular, Barbie items, Barbie Jeep, Rugrats items

Xavier
Winter clothes, coat with a hood, 5-6 regular, Batman items, Hotwheels, Sega

Xavier, 4, and Khadejah, 5, have reacted differently to the absence of their father.

"You can't get for them what they really need. They need their father."

Xavier is shy. He starts to cry when his picture is taken. Michelle Bradley, the 5-year-old's mother, takes him in her arms.

"Don't you cry, Bubba," she says. "The man just wants to talk to you about Christmas."

Khadejah, his 4-year-old sister, is more curious than afraid. She knows exactly what she wants from Santa. "A big, pink Barbie jeep," she says with a grin full of perfect, even teeth.

"She means the kind that runs on a battery, that you ride around in," her mother explained.


Khadejah is like her mother. They smile and laugh at every opportunity. It's easy to get them to talk.

Xavier is more like his father, according to Michelle. "He's quiet and gentle," Michelle said. "He was always such a shy one, until his father was gone."

Michelle Bradley and her husband owned B&B Auto Detailing and were on their way to a middle-class existence when her husband was convicted on drug charges and sent to prison.

"He was sentenced to six years," Michelle says, her voice sad and embarrassed. "But maybe they'll let him out sooner."

When his father left, the behavior of the 5-year-old changed. Michelle started getting calls from school. Xavier was acting up, being aggressive, hitting other children.

"I had to do something," Michelle said. "I was working as a telemarketer, and I only saw my babies when I picked them up after school to take them to the sitters.

"By the time I got off work, there was only time for sugars, hugs and prayers. Then they were in bed. I had to make a living. I didn't know what to do."

She got help from her children's Head Start instructor, Jackie Blair.

"Ms. Jackie helped me get work here at the day care so I could make a living and help with Xavier," Michelle said.

The little boy had to be cajoled and eventually bribed before he'd say what he wanted for Christmas.

Finally, he whispered one word: "Sega."

"What they need is winter clothes," their mother says. "But you can't get for them what they really need.... They need their father."

Story and Photograph by Jake Howard
just over a month ago, 7-year-old Fejzulah Avdic’s life changed for the worse. The Avdic family had been in the United States for only three months when Fejzulah’s father, Mujo, began to worry about family members left behind in Bosnia. Without acquiring the proper documents to return to the United States, Mujo went back to Bosnia, leaving his wife, Razija, daughter Fatima, 19, eldest son, Furuk, 17, and young Fejzulah. “It is doubtful that he will ever return,” Razija said through her translator. Forced from their home in Zvornik, Bosnia, the refugee family lived in Tusla, Bosnia, for six years. But life held no promise for the Avdics. “We had no more money and no chance for jobs,” Razija recalled. They lost everything and wanted to start anew in the United States. Razija was worried that Furuk would be drafted into the army and she didn’t want him killed. After the family waited for four months, they were granted permission to come to the United States. Adjusting to life in Bowling Green has not been easy; they are struggling to make it. Fejzulah doesn’t miss Bosnia, but Razija says that she longs for the house she left behind. The family also misses having a mosque for worship. They are working with several other Bowling Green Muslim families to locate a place so they can worship together. Razija wants her children to get a good education. Fejzulah is a second-grader at T.C. Cherry Elementary School and Furuk is a junior at Bowling Green High School. Now, as the head of the family, one of her greatest concerns is to make certain that her family is well cared for. “The most important thing right now is to pay the rent,” Razija said. She has begun working at Eagle Industries; her two older children are also employed. Any wages they earn go to help support the family. Fatima works part-time at Desa and Furuk works part-time as a dishwasher at the Bowling Green Country Club. With Mujo gone, Razija is frightened and unsure what will happen to their children. Fejzulah misses his dad and wishes he would come back home to America.
The McPeaks

"Our future is still uncertain, but I think we'll be all right."

There is finally a full house at Country Living Mobile Home Park in Rockfield. Mary McPeak has all of her children home again. Separated for months by jail time and foster care, Mary's five children now have a place to call their own.

"We're barely making it," Mary said. "I just do what I can.

Things are different than they used to be. Anthony McPeak, father of two of her children, is still serving jail time for trafficking in drugs. Her eldest son, Anthony McPeak, lives on his own in Edmonson County. Mary is trying to keep the rest of her family together any way she can.

The single-wide mobile home is strewn with the few toys, clothes and games of her youngest son, Tony McPeak, 7, and her three daughters: Anna McPeak, 11, Alicia Gregory, 15, and Tiffany Gregory, 9.

By late September, Mary had regained custody of all the children.

"Pile ups! Pile ups!" Tony shouted, as the McPeak kids and a friend of Anna's formed a human heap, then chased each other, screaming, through the house.

Meanwhile, Mary was busy baking a carrot cake and answering the incessant telephone.

"You're lucky if I can do one thing at a time. It's like this every night," Mary said with an exhausted sigh.

Mary began work at the University Plaza Hotel as a housekeeper in November but still worries.

"Our future is still uncertain, but I think we'll be all right."

She wants the best for her children, and hopes that they will stay out of jail and in school.

Tiffany aspires to be a kindergarten teacher; Tony is not sure yet; Alicia wants to be a physical therapist; and Anna has not decided, but says that school is not in her future.

"I don't want to go to college," said Anna, a sixth-grader at Rockfield Elementary School.

"School is dumb. I just want to hang out."

The mother sat thoughtfully with her chin in her hand.

"I'm hoping she'll grow out of that," Mary said.

Story and Photograph by Clinton Lewis
Although times are tough, Anna Owens and her children, Quantez, 6, and Kiosha, 13, live in love and hope for the future.

**Wish List**

**Quantez**
- Race car bed
- CD player

**Kiosha**
- Mountain bike
- CD player

**Family**
- Blankets
- Space heaters

"I want a better life for my kids."

"We talk about everything," Owens said, smiling about her relationship with her daughter. "Many people say we are like sisters." She also shares a special bond with Quantez, a first-grader at L.C. Curry Elementary School.

"He is so smart and he does so well in school," Owens said. "We are all so close."

At the top of the mother's Christmas wish list is a bigger, warmer house, thick new blankets for Kiosha and Quantez, and an asthma-free holiday.

"I hope this will be the first Christmas when Quantez is not in the hospital," she said. "I want a better life for my kids. I want my kids to have the best Christmas that they ever had."

Quantez, who likes to watch television and play in the yard, would like a CD player and a race car bed for Christmas. "Make sure it has wheels!" he said, grinning at the thought.

Kiosha wants wheels too, but hers would be on the new mountain bike she'd like to receive for Christmas. She also would like a brand new CD player.

**Story and Photograph by Bradford S. Lupino**
This project is the result of a joint effort involving three Western Kentucky University journalism classes. Students in Photojournalist-in-residence Dave LaBelle's Advanced Photojournalism class took the photographs and wrote the stories with help from Dr. Paula Quinn and students in her Editorial and Feature Writing class. Photojournalist-in-residence James Kenney's Advanced Photo Editing/Design class designed this special section.

Thank You
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A special thanks also to the staff of Bowling Green's numerous social service agencies, who helped select the subjects for these stories. Among them are Debbie Harwood, Department of Social Services; Amy Klein, Housing Authority; Joel Stoner, Cumberland Trace Legal Services; Terri Perkins, Family Enrichment Center; Chiquita Sparks, War Memorial Boys Club; Joyce Lance and Ann Herrington, Salvation Army; Arie Hamblin, Early Start Children's Center; Vicki Weaver, Dream Factory; Heather Rogers, United Way; Dr. Don Butler and Cheryl Allen, Community Action; Marty Deput, Refugee Assistance; Laura Caswell, Henry Moss Middle/Rockfield Elementary Family Resource and Youth Services Center; Bill Hatter and Marcie Mulwitz, Big Brother/Big Sister; and language translators Sera McDaniel, Shayna Breslin and Tatjana Sahanic.

Finally, thanks to the families and individuals in Bowling Green and Warren County who opened their lives to our cameras and notebooks.

Additional Needs
Bowling Green social workers say hundreds of families in this area need:

**Clothing, personal items**
- Sweatshirts in all sizes
- Blankets
- Socks and underwear, all sizes
- Babys' sleepers, toddlers' pajamas
- Mittens, gloves, hats and scarves
- Purses
- Towels, wash clothes, etc.
- Diapers, all sizes
- Wet Ones, Pull Ups
- Makeup
- Hair ribbons, barrettes

**Toys for all ages**
- Books of all kinds
- Board games, cards
- Stuffed animals
- Barbie dolls
- Basketball, footballs, soccer balls
- Dolls (black and white)
- Music cassettes

**Miscellaneous**
- Canned food
- New electric skillets, crockpots
- Small TV sets, radio/cassette players

**Assistance**
These are a few of the dozens of service and assistance programs available in Bowling Green and Warren County. For a complete listing, see the Community Resource Guide published by the Bowling Green-Warren County Chamber of Commerce.

- **American Red Cross**
  - Provides emergency relief/781-7377
- **Big Brothers and Sisters**
  - Matches children from single-parent homes with supportive adults/781-1180
- **Boy's Club**
  - Open to boys 6-18/843-6466
- **Community Action of Southern Kentucky**
  - Provides a variety of services such as emergency assistance with food, utilities, rent payments, and housing assistance/782-3162
- **Compassionate Friends**
  - Support for families who have lost a child/539-6815
- **Cumberland Trace Legal Service**
  - Free legal advice for the poor in civil cases/782-1924
- **Department for Community Based Services**
  - Services aimed at strengthening families/746-7447
- **Dream Factory**
  - Grants wishes to critically ill patients/745-0366
- **Early Start Children's Center**
  - Daycare for children 6 weeks to 4 years and head start program for children 3 to 5/393-0300
- **Family Care Home Health Agency**
  - Health and social services for the disabled or critically ill individual in the home environment/781-5498
- **Family Enrichment Center**
  - Offers parenting classes and daycare/781-6714
- **Family Resource and Youth Services Center**
  - Food, clothing, utility assistance, parenting classes, child care, sponsor families for Christmas/843-2172
- **Girls Inc.**
  - Open to girls 5-18/781-3549
- **Habitat for Humanity**
  - Builds houses for low-income families using local volunteers/745-0397
- **Head Start**
  - Low-income and handicapped preschoolers/783-4484
- **Henry Moss Middle/Rockfield Elementary Family Resource and Youth Services Center**
  - Food, clothing, utility assistance, parenting classes, child care sponsor families for Christmas/843-2172
- **Hospice of Bowling Green, Inc.**
  - Support for the terminally ill/782-3402
- **H.O.T.E.L. Inc.**
  - Job assistance, food center, clothing store, other services/782-1263
- **Housing Authority of Bowling Green**
  - Public housing for low-income families/843-6071
- **Lifeskills, Inc.**
  - A variety of mental health, substance abuse and disability programs/842-0161
- **Refugee Mutual Assistance Society**
  - Services for refugees, immigrants, native Americans, and limited English proficient internationals/781-8336
- **Salvation Army**
  - Emergency food, clothing, and shelter/843-3485
- **St. Vincent De Paul**
  - Thrift Store, small pantry/781-0432
- **United Way of Southern Kentucky, Inc.**
  - Information and referral services/843-3205
- **Urgent Care**
  - Immediate medical care from 9a.m.-9p.m./781-3910
- **Volunteer Center of Bowling Green/Warren County**
  - Information about volunteering/842-4281
- **Welfare Center**
  - Temporary emergency assistance/843-5340

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**Daily News**

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**The Care Project**
If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Onto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.

- Emily Dickinson