



FAMILIES CHANGE TOMORROWS



Winter 2022

## From Our Director

by Jacob Willis



This year has been a wonderful success for High Country Caregiver families, and we couldn't have made the progressions we have made without you!

Our "Night at Chetola" event raised \$65,000.00 to help our families in so many ways! We were overwhelmed by the number of sponsors for this event! Thank you to all who attended, sponsored, and donated!

In the month of December, we delivered hundreds of Christmas gifts to 81 of the families we support. Thank you to all our special Santa's who have made this year's Christmas drive a success. We placed an article in this newsletter about our Angel Tree and you can find many more Christmas photos on our website.

We were also blessed this year to be able to fill two new staff positions. Pana

Columbus is our new Director of Community Relations and Nathan Brown is working in homes with our families. These two individuals have helped tremendously in growing our organization – both quantitatively and qualitatively. We welcome them to our team and look forward to their help growing High Country Caregivers in 2022.

We appreciate your continued funding, volunteering, and prayers as we move forward in changing the lives of the families of our caregivers in the High Country. May you all have a blessed Holiday Season and a Happy New Year!

We are most thankful of all to you, our donors, who support our families – may God bless you all!

With kind regards,

Jacob Willis  
Executive Director  
High Country Caregivers



### 2021 HALLOWEEN PARTY!!!

*Candy, games and crafts filled the Grandfather Mountain Ballroom at Appalachian State University as some of our children celebrated the coming of fall at the college. The sorority sisters of Alpha Theta Phi teamed up with the fraternity brothers of Delta Sigma Phi to throw the party for HCC.*

*The party included games, such as Poke the Pumpkin, Ring Toss, and Count the Candy Corn, with prizes. They also supplied crafted goodie bags, temporary tattoos, and a pizza dinner. The kids left with tons of candy, good memories and whole bunch of new friends.*

*Special thanks to organizer, Riley Kiefer, Alpha Theta Phi and Delta Sigma Phi for their hard work organizing this event and for making a difference in the lives of our children!*

## FAST FACTS

As of 2018, there were an estimated 2,400,000 grandparents responsible for grandchildren. Here are their numbers.

55%

Over 55% of them are in the workforce.

19%

Over 19% of them live below the poverty line.

25%

Over 25% of them have a disability.

45%

Over 45% of them have provided care for 5 years or more.

46%

Over 46% of them are over age 60.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

You can learn more about the strengths and challenges of grandfamilies by visiting the Generations United website.

LINK  
<https://www.gu.org/>



*The High Country Caregivers mission is to provide advocacy, support, and education for kinship caregivers and their families.*

## Board Member Spotlight: Chairman Karyn Kennedy-Herterich

by Jacob Willis

Growing up as children of George and Ethel Kennedy, Karyn Kennedy-Herterich and her siblings were taught from an early age about generosity, integrity, kindness, and leaving a legacy. Karyn comes to High Country Caregivers Board of Directors with a lifelong passion for changing the lives of children and their families.

Karyn chaired the George and Ethel Kennedy Foundation for 30 years. She is the President of the Kennedy-Herterich Foundation which actively funds grants in the High Country of North Carolina and the Low Country of South Carolina. She has served on many non-profit boards including the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts' advisory board. As the Executive Director of High Country Caregivers, I have learned so much from Karyn about non-profit management, communication, marketing, and people.

Karyn makes time for people regardless of their circumstances or status. A colleague described Karyn by saying, "She is different. She really does not care about the credit for any of the amazing things she does. She funds

things from a heart of compassion and sincerity." I was told this before I really knew Karyn well. I can now say he was spot on.

Karyn's support extends far beyond her funding to High Country Caregivers. She loves our families and the children of HCC. She gives her time, energy, and support to High Country Caregivers. She says many times, "But for the grace of God go I." She feels the burden grandparents have when they are raising their grandchildren. She attends support group meetings, events, organizes fundraisers, and so much more with a heart of compassion.

Karyn is married to businessman Dieter Herterich. They have one son, Morgan Kennedy Herterich, a daughter-in-law Lauren, and one granddaughter, Baylor Kennedy Herterich. Baylor, along with her friend Lilly, spent all day one Saturday selling lemonade to benefit the children of High Country Caregivers. It is a "family thing".

The Herterichs' divide their time between their homes in Blowing Rock and Charleston, SC where their children reside.

# A Night at Chetola

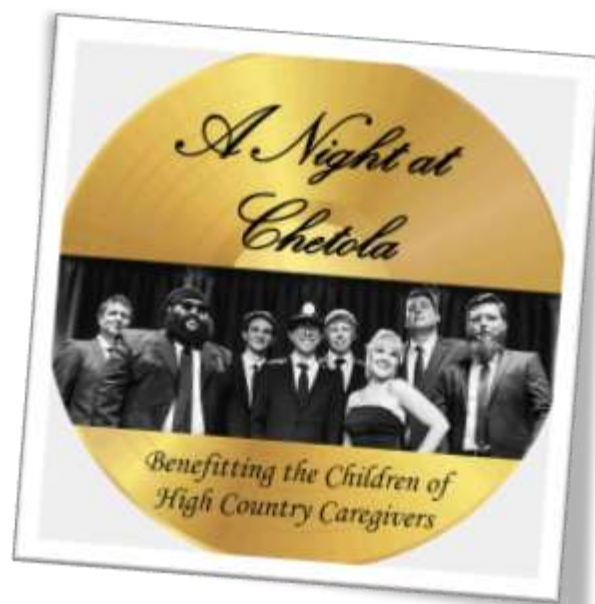
by Nathan Brown

On September 14th, we gathered at Chetola Resort for our annual "Night at Chetola" fundraiser. More than 150 supporters joined us to break bread, dance the night away to the Motown band "The Business," and to raise money for High Country Caregivers. The dinner was a great success and was topped off by beautiful and delicious cakes donated by bakeries and restaurants from all over the High Country.

The live auction included;;;:

- Signed books by Dexter author Jeff Lindsey (with a chance for the winner to be killed off in his next book).
- An autographed book and Hemingway collection basket by the niece of Earnest Hemingway, Hilary Hemingway.
- Game tickets in the Walker College of Business suite with photos of the Michigan game signed by coach Jerry Moore.
- Two 75" digital televisions.

We are very grateful to The Kennedy-Herterich Foundation and Chetola Resort for sponsoring the event and to our donors and volunteers like you, all of whom contributed various levels of time, money, and support. With your help, we raised more than \$75,000 to fund our programs for another year.



The funds raised will be used to send kids to summer camps, sponsor several families for one year, pay legal and counseling fees for a family, pay for emergency expenses for multiple families, and many other services that will help our families over this next year.

## We'd Like to Recognize...

### Our Platinum Sponsors

*The Business, The Baird Foundation, Albert and Joannie Benbasat, Blowing Rock Brewery, Jefferson Landing Golf Club, Life Store Bank, Tim Kearns, Dr. Angela Mead and Mr. Nathan Brown, Linda and Bob Styles, Rachel Renar, WHJ Design Inc.—Kate and Hutch Johnson*

### Our Gold Sponsors

*Buzz Mills, Delmonico Group, Mt. Mitchell Gold Club, Serves You Right*

### Our Silver Sponsors

*Footsloggers, Boone Docks MMA, Mt. Mitchell Dentistry, Mystery Hill, Point Six, Hound Ears Golf Course, Harding's Nursery Landscaping.*

### And Extend a Heartfelt Thanks To:

*High Country Caregivers Board of Directors. Their deep level of engagement expertise, vision, generosity, and enormous hearts make the work HCC does possible: Paul DelMonico, Karyn Kennedy-Herterich, Shelly Tarburton, Jerry Moore, Margaret Moore, Rebecca Scialpi, Joan Hearn*

# Wishes Fulfilled

by Jacob Willis



## Tubing Trip

This past June, volunteers took our families tubing down the New River and the Toe River respectively. It was an exciting and joyful experience for all!

## A Day at the Orchard

Fourteen of our families met up at the Orchard at Altapass for a day of picking apples, playing games, and learning about and releasing butterflies on October 1st. Fall is the best time for apple picking on the farm!



# Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

by Megan L. Dolbin-MacNab, PhD, LMFT and Bradford D. Stucki, MMFT

Globally, grandparents often serve as surrogate parents for their grandchildren, usually in response to family crises and other sociopolitical issues (e.g., poverty, war, disease epidemics, and urban migration). Grandparents raising grandchildren are primarily responsible for all aspects of their grandchildren's care. While some grandparents have a legal relationship to the grandchildren they are raising, many are caring for their grandchildren informally.

Grandparents raise their grandchildren for a variety of reasons. Most of these reasons reflect difficulties experienced by the grandchild's parents, which prevent the parents from caring for their children. Specifically, grandparents often raise their grandchildren due to a combination of parental substance abuse, abuse and neglect, unemployment, incarceration, HIV/AIDS, mental or physical illness, teenage pregnancy, child disability, divorce, military deployment, abandonment, and death.

Family therapists are specially trained to understand the complicated feelings and relationships experienced by grandparents and their grandchildren.

## What are the challenges?

### For Grandparents

Raising a grandchild impacts every aspect of a grandparent's life. As a result, these grandparents face many challenges:

- **Legal.** Grandparents often experience legal difficulties related to obtaining custody or guardianship, enrolling their grandchildren in school, and accessing medical care for their grandchildren. They may also have concerns related to custody disputes with other grandparents or with their grandchildren's parents.
- **Financial.** Due to limited financial resources, grandparents raising grandchildren often have trouble supporting themselves and providing adequate housing, food, and clothing for their grandchildren. If they are not employed, grandparents may have limited or no sources of income.
- **Parenting.** Parenting can be challenging, especially when grandchildren have emotional, behavioral, or physical difficulties. To be effective parents, grandparents need current information about effective discipline strategies, child development, and childhood problems. Research suggests that an authoritative parenting style is the most effective.
- **Physical and Mental Health.** Grandparents may have limited energy and physical health problems that make

raising their grandchildren more challenging. Some grandparents also neglect their health due to a lack of financial resources or because of the demands associated with caring for their grandchildren. Other grandparents experience significant anxiety and depression.

- **Social.** Grandparents raising grandchildren often have less time for themselves and less time to spend with their partners and friends. This loss of social connections can be stressful and can contribute to depression and feelings of anger, loss, and grief.
- **Family Relationships.** Family relationships can be a source of stress. Grandparents may experience ambivalence about their grandchild's parents – they may feel compelled to protect their grandchildren from the parents' issues, while also feeling concerned about the parents' well-being. Grandparents may also find it difficult to set limits with their grandchildren's parents. Other adult children and grandchildren sometimes dislike the amount of attention being given to one part of the family, or may be concerned about the impact of raising grandchildren on the grandparent's physical and mental health. Some grandparents even find it difficult to relate to their grandchildren, because of the generation gap.
- **Accessing Services.** Grandparents often need a variety of support services to manage the demands of raising their grandchildren. However, grandparents may be unaware of the range of services available to their family. Some grandparents also have difficulty accessing available services due to a number of other barriers (e.g., health problems, lack of transportation). Finally, grandparents can experience problems with service providers who are judgmental or treat them disrespectfully.

***This is the first part of a featured article on our website. We encourage you to continue reading it online – simply visit: <https://www.highcountrycaregivers.com/latest-updates/grg/>***

*Note: the complete article was originally published on the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy's (AAMFT) website and the research and writing is attributed to the authors, Megan L. Dolbin-MacNab, PhD, LMFT and Bradford D. Stucki, MMFT. AAMFT has granted High Country Caregivers the right to place this article in our print newsletter and this website. Thank you all.*



# Santa Brought Christmas to HCC Families

by Nathan Brown

Santa Claus and his elves visited High Country Caregivers this year to provide Christmas gifts to nearly 150 children who are being raised by grandparents and other family members. This was made possible with help from individuals, community partners and private industries.

Jacob Willis, Executive Director of HCC, was thrilled with the results of the gift drive. "I cannot believe how much we received from the community," he said. "Without their support, we simply could not have provided the gifts to our kids."

The annual Angel Tree drive was supported by countless private individuals, as well as community and corporate sponsors including:

- Echota Realty,
- The Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce,
- Jill Preyer,
- Planet Tan,
- Munday Electric,
- Quality Electric, and
- Spangler Restoration

Thanks to their generosity, HCC provided toys, clothing, games and so much more to 148 children in Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancy Counties.

Watauga Opportunities provided 150 gift baskets. The Watauga County Bar Association in partnership with Carolina Mountain Title held a toy drive for HCC, bringing in more than 100 toys.

Filled stockings were provided by Disabled American Veterans Chapter 90 and Motherboard. The Kennedy-Herterich Foundation and the Hunger and Health Coalition provided turkeys for HCC families.

"We are simply in awe of what our community partners and donors have provided," said Willis. "Thank you so much for helping our families this Christmas."

This season of giving was topped off with a festive Christmas party and meal on December 17th. Every family in attendance received a gift certificate to a local restaurant thanks to the generous support of HCC Donors. Holiday photos were taken by Ashley Warren.

Find even more photos of our Christmas drive on our website. <https://www.highcountrycaregivers.com/latest-updates/christmas-2022/>



*Ben Kaufman, left, volunteered to help pass out turkeys and Angel tree gifts on Dec. 9. Here he is seen giving gifts to HCC grandmother, Barbara Millsaps.*



*Addison Greer, seen here, excitedly holds the gifts she received from the Angel Tree donors.*



*Austin Clarke, opens his Angel Tree gifts on Christmas.*

*Volunteers spent hours at the High Country Caregivers' office sorting and packaging gifts for each angel beginning at the end of November. From left, Caroline Johnson works on sorting bags into county piles while on right, Pana Columbus speaks with another volunteer about what to do*

*next*



# January Spotlight: Julia Call

by Nathan Brown

Like so many things in life, Julia Call's life changed with a phone call. Nearly 10 years ago, Social Services called her to ask if she wanted to take her four grandchildren. "They were going to put them in foster care if we didn't take them." She was stunned, but immediately agreed. She had no idea what was to come.



"My oldest grandson had broken his arm in some sort of tussle, I'm not sure what exactly happened, but Social Services took all four kids while they completed an investigation."

Once the children were in her home, Julia said she immediately noticed how dysfunctional the kids were. "My son and his wife (sic) were in denial as they what the

children needed. When we saw that they were going to be reunited with their parents, we hired an attorney to obtain custody." Her son signed over his parental rights and their mother did later once they realized he couldn't provide the care his children would need.

"Jeremiel is the oldest, we got him tested first because we could see something wasn't right," said Julia. "He was diagnosed with autism and several other developmental delays. We later found out he also has a genetic disorder that causes headaches, which affects his behaviors. By 2014, three of our four grandkids were diagnosed with autism."

Julia got involved with HCC in 2019 after the children's Crisis Therapist told her about the agency. She said when she started going, they met at the Wilkes County Library. She said at the time, they really needed help and the program allows them to do things that they couldn't afford otherwise.

It been a struggle financially, emotionally and physically for Julia and her husband. "Our financial means have improved, most of what they've gotten to do as far as activities and Christmas gifts has been made by HCC. They have supported the kids. We have gotten Mother's Day gifts and stuff like that. Ya'll make us feel important too, like we are not alone. There are people that really care what families like ours are going through."



She said that putting the kids on the Angel Tree this year was a great decision. "HCC makes sure they have a great Christmas every year. What y'all did for Jeremiel this year was really special."

Jeremiel was given two first class tickets to The Polar Express as part of his Angel Tree wish list. He got to spend the day at the Spencer Train Museum beforehand with Julia.

"Ya'll meet the needs of the parents and relatives with children and provide activities that we couldn't afford to do without your assistance," Julia said. "You all made their Christmas this year."

When asked what he thought of his trip to Spencer and a ride on The Polar Express, Jeremiel was frank. "It was great." Julia said he had a wonderful time and when he got the tickets, he got very excited. "He flapped his hands, which he only does when he's excited and very happy."



## Thank You, Our Donors

- AMY Wellness Foundation
- Kennedy-Herterich Foundation
- Arthur Family Foundation
- High Country Charitable Foundation
- Women's Fund of the Blue Ridge
- St. Mary's of the Hills
- Valle Country Fair
- Rumple Memorial Presbyterian
- High Country ABC
- Spruce Pine ABC
- Preyer Family Foundation
- Bethelview Methodist Church
- Kathleen Kennedy Foundation
- Women for Women Fund (CFWNC)

## About Us

*High Country Caregivers is a stand-alone not for profit organization dedicated to relatives, respite, and resources for kinship caregivers, and relatives caring for loved ones with life limiting illnesses and debility. Through a variety of programs HCC comes alongside grandparents to help them improve the lives of these children.*

*To find out how you can partner with us to change a child's life or to make a donation, contact us at:*

*HighCountryCaregivers.com*

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