

## Angels in Adoption Award

Sue and Chris Cherney were honored in Washington, D.C., in October for their work to improve the lives of adoptive and foster children throughout Mississippi. U.S. Senator Thad Cochran nominated the Cherneys as Mississippi's 2010 Angels in Adoption as part of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute's 12th annual "Angels in Adoption" program. The couple traveled to Washington to receive their award and honor along with more than 140 Angels in Adoption from around the country.

"Sue and Chris Cherney have for more than 20 years devoted their lives to helping children in need and finding nurturing homes for them. Their dedication and hands-on efforts have touched the lives of many children who might otherwise have fallen victim to neglect or worse," Cochran said. "I am pleased that their mission will be recognized as part of the Angels in Adoption celebration."

Sue Cherney is executive director of Southern Christian Services for Children and Youth and Chris Cherney is the chief executive officer of Mississippi Children's Home Services in Jackson. Both organizations are focused on offering adoption, foster care, shelter and educational services to children, youth and families.

The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI) is a non-profit, nonpartisan organization focused on increasing awareness about children in need of permanent, safe and loving homes, and on eliminating barriers to adoption. CCAI was established in 2001 as an outgrowth of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption. The Angels in Adoption program was established in 1999 by CCAI as a Congressional press conference to honor outstanding individuals. Since then, the program has developed into a year-long public awareness campaign culminating in an extraordinary awards gala and celebration in Washington, D.C., where prominent individuals are honored as National Angels.



While in Washington, Sue and Chris were honored at a "pinning" ceremony during which they were presented with an angel pin and certificate by Senator Mary Landrieu, Chair of the Congressional Committee on Adoption. Later that day, they were recognized at a reception at the White House. According to Sue and Chris, their time in Washington was not only a time of celebration but also an opportunity to share with congressional staff members some of the needs that foster and adoptive families have and the challenges they must overcome in adopting children.

We congratulate Sue and Chris for an extraordinary honor for their lifelong dedication to serving the vulnerable children, youth and families of Mississippi.

## Annual Agency Training at Lake Tiak-O'Khata

The staff of Southern Christian Services for Children and Youth participated in the Agency's annual training event on September 22-24, 2010. The event supported by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health (MDMH) brought together staff from all over the state at Lake Tiak-O'Khata in Lewisville, Miss., for a time of team and relationship building and renewal.

On the first day of the retreat, Marc Fomby of Jackson, Miss., presented sessions on "Cultural Sensitivity in the Workplace, with Clients and in the Community." That evening, the P.R.E.P.A.R.E. staff led energetic team-building activities such as "crossing an alligator-infested river to get fresh water" to lowering a rod to the ground with all team members' index fingers touching the rod at all times. Things got a little frenetic, but everyone had fun!

On day two, Janie Walters of Madison, Miss., led interactive sessions on "Teamwork/Relationships," "Communication/Negativity," "Dealing with Difficult People/Conflict Resolution" and "Optimism, Praise and Humor." Her unique presentation style both encouraged and entertained everyone while accomplishing the training goals.

That evening, two movie options were made available, each with subject matter relating to the children and families served by the Agency. *To Save a Life* focused on the difficult subjects of cutting and teen suicide and *The Last Song* dealt with divorce, teens' relationships with each other and family members and dealing with loss. Following the viewings, everyone participated in a discussion time exchanging ideas and impressions from the film they watched.

After two jam-packed days of workshops, fun and lots of great food, the event ended on Friday morning with an inspiring challenge from Sandra Parks, Division Director for Children and Youth Services, MDMH. Thank you to MDMH for a wonderful training event!



## Wishes, Wants and Needs....

*Southern Christian Services for Children and Youth is blessed by the generosity of donors who help meet the needs on our wish lists each year.*

This year's list includes:

- New bedding and linens for twin beds
- Personal toiletry items
- Christian reading material, DVDs and educational games
- Special event tickets, prepaid phone cards, movie passes and gift cards
- School supplies, backpacks, art supplies
- Birthday cards, gifts and cakes for our youth

Our Group Homes offer a home-like atmosphere for the youth we serve.

The Group Homes need:

- New living room furniture and patio furniture
- Lamps and end tables
- New dishes and flatware for 12
- Kitchen cookware and utensils
- New washer/dryer and refrigerator
- Paint and skilled volunteers to paint the rooms
- A new roof and guttering

### DONATING IS SIMPLE!

Just contact Karen Davis or Debbie Townsend at 601-354-0983, scscyken@bellsouth.net or scscydebbie@bellsouth.net for assistance.

*Thank you for being involved and caring.*

## Southern Christian Services for Children and Youth, Inc.

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Jackson, MS 39202

Phone: 601.354.0983  
Fax: 601.352.8638  
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## Our Mission

In response to the love of Christ, Southern Christian Services for Children and Youth, Inc. serves and equips vulnerable children and youth, assisting them in the process of becoming self-sufficient and contributing members of society.

## Our Vision

To be an organization that has a positive, recognizable, long-term impact on ALL children and youth in our care by providing professional, cost-effective and timely services.

**P.A.L.S.**  
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## SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN SERVICES FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH, INC.

Fall 2010

# THE HEART OF THE MATTER

## Bottom Line for Kids Benefit Dinner

The Annual Bottom Line for Kids Benefit Dinner was held on September 16, 2010, at the Country Club of Jackson. The evening included silent and live auctions. "Altruistic Xenia," a painting by Sanders McNeal, graced the cover of the invitation and was auctioned later in the evening. Jeff Good was master of ceremonies with Jim Wilkerson serving as auctioneer.

The highlight of the evening was a presentation from youth and families whose lives have been touched by the ministries of Southern Christian Services for Children and Youth. Advisory Committee Member Maggie Wade assisted the question and answer format that included an adoption family and a young lady from the P.A.L.S. transitional living home for homeless teens in Jackson.

Dr. Heber Simmons, Jr. and Hank Holman presented the Hands of Providence Awards. This year's deserving recipients are Cathy Haynie, Rubye Jane Smith Harden and Reverend Dr. Danny Hollins.

Cathy is the Head of School at Christ Covenant School, a Christ-centered elementary school in Ridgeland, Mississippi. During her tenure, the Promise Kids Program was founded for children with Down Syndrome. Serving a small number of students, the goal is to partner with parents to enable these

"Promise Kids" to reach their potential.

Miss Rubye, a schoolteacher and librarian in Itawamba County, Mississippi, was instrumental in mobilizing the community leadership of the county to help fulfill the pressing need for assisting vulnerable girls in North Mississippi. Thus, the Harden House Group Home for Girls was established. Her daughter Rubye Del Harden accepted the award posthumously for her mother.

Reverend Hollins is the pastor of Greater Fairview Baptist Church in Jackson, Mississippi. He founded an initiative called Boys to Kings Ministry that mentors young men in the community. Recently his church has partnered with Southern Christian Services in providing abstinence and healthy relationship education to the young members of the congregation.

Thank you to all Board Members, Advisory Committee Members, volunteers, guests and staff who contributed their time and energies to making this event a success. A special thank you goes to Jana and George Nicols, our Co-Chairs, for giving their time, energy and support. All proceeds go directly to support the programs and services of Southern Christian Services for Children and Youth, Inc.



Bob England, George Vining, Jeff Good, Barbara England



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# EXECUTIVE NOTES

I recently returned from Washington, D.C., where I participated in a three day event put on by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute.

The mission of CCAI is to:

- Eliminate the legal and policy barriers that prevent children from realizing their basic right to a family
- Connect policy makers with real people affected by adoption and foster care
- Unite orphaned children with families through casework and support programs.



Rebuilding Broken Lives

Not only was it meaningful for me to be honored as an “Angel in Adoption,” it was also a wonderful opportunity to meet adoptive families whose stories were so inspiring and to meet with congressional staffers and hear from members of Congress about the things they are trying to do to make it easier for families to adopt.

For a number of years, we have through our Adoption program at Southern Christian Services for

Children and Youth, worked diligently to find homes for children with special needs—children who are at risk of growing up in the foster care system and then leaving foster care with no permanent connections. We have also advocated for adoptive families to help them through bureaucratic and financial challenges as well as finding resources for their adopted children. We have been part of helping build some beautiful families.

November is National Adoption Month, and we will be holding a big celebration at the Jackson Convention Center to honor adoptive families. It is difficult to think of a higher calling than to provide a loving permanent family for a child in need.

Help us promote adoption by praying for the children who are waiting, for the families who are considering adoption and for the families that have been brought together by adoption.

For the children,

*Sue*

Susannah K. Cherney  
Executive Director

## Volunteer Spotlight



God’s spirit.

Reverend Keith Tonkel has been a member of the Advisory Committee of Southern Christian Services for Children and Youth for many years. He has devoted his life to service through grace, love, commitment, vision, integrity and openness to the movement of God’s spirit. Graduating from Millsaps College with a BA in Philosophy and from Emory University School of Theology, Reverend Tonkel became pastor in 1969 at Wells Memorial United Methodist Church in Jackson. During his tenure at Wells, the congregation has maintained an active witness in the inner city and reaches out in mission locally and beyond. Wells’ philosophy is one of welcoming all people of differing ethnicities and religions, people addicted to drugs and alcohol, the homeless and youth seeking direction. The intention of the church is to be open to all of God’s children.

One of the gifts the church has given to Jackson, under Reverend Tonkel’s leadership, is Wellsfest. Each year monies are raised to benefit a particular community organization with a focus on children and youth. The P.A.L.S. (Preparing Adolescents for Living Successfully) Program has been a beneficiary of this support. Reverend Tonkel’s spiritual guidance is always there for the residents of this transitional living home for homeless teens and teen mothers and their children.

Not only has Reverend Tonkel been a presenter and workshop facilitator at the Lookin’ to the Future Conference, this past summer he received the Lookin’ to the Future Award. This prestigious

award is presented to an individual who has made a significant impact on the lives of children and youth throughout the State of Mississippi.

Before coming to Jackson, Reverend Tonkel served at Guinn Memorial in Gulfport where he became a single foster parent for children under the jurisdiction of the Harrison County Youth Court. In 1968, prior to coming to Jackson, he acquired a partner in that effort and in his larger ministry, by marrying Patsy Joyce Myrick. He and Pat are the parents of three children and three grandchildren. Several foster children are still active in their family life.

Reverend Keith Tonkel’s life can be summed up by these words: “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can.”—John Wesley



## Joe Rowland Group Home for Boys Benefit Dinner

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Chris Lamb, SCSCY Board President and Sandy Taylor, SCSCY Board Member and Co Chairperson

## Adoption Month Reminder

November is National Adoption Month

Foster and adoptive families from Mississippi are invited to a Day of Celebration!

Saturday, November 13, 2010

Jackson Convention Complex

Downtown Jackson, Mississippi

11:00 A.M.—2:00 P.M.

For more information on the Celebration or becoming a foster or adoptive parent, contact Lynda Robinson 601-960-2655 or scscylinda@bellsouth.net

## Lookin’ to the Future Conference

This year’s Lookin’ to the Future Conference found itself in Natchez, MS, July 14–16, 2010. The theme, “Riding the Winds of Change,” was a reflection of our times, social changes such as our economy, the lack of essential resources for children, youth and families, the increase in teen pregnancy, substance abuse and the needs of seriously emotionally-disturbed children and youth, all of which challenge us on a daily basis.

Nearly 600 participants were offered fifty-nine workshops with the most up-to-date information in the areas of foster/adoptive parenting, systems of care, clinical issues, transitional living, personal, professional and spiritual growth, health and wellness, legal issues and adoption.

While resource parents were attending workshops, a Youth Track was conducted for the resource family youth. SCSCY staff educated the youth on the importance of abstinence and healthy relationships using a variety of activities. Mr. Charles Lee-Johnson, featured presenter from Los Angeles, California, conducted a workshop for the youth encouraging them through his personal life experiences in foster care. Mr. Lee-Johnson has created a curriculum for the Ten Step Rites of Passage Program of interactive life-changing workshops for youth and families at risk. At closing luncheon he inspired all present to transform messes into messages.

Presenters included Mr. Delbert Boone, nationally recognized author, president of a consulting, training firm based in New York City, who spoke about substance abuse and Janie Walters, an award-winning human communications specialist with more than 25 years experience teaching interpersonal communications, public speaking and debate.

This year’s Lookin’ to the Future Award winner was the Reverend Keith Tonkel of Wells Methodist Church in Jackson, Mississippi. The



Left to right: Reverend Keith Tonkel, Advisory Committee Member SCSCY & Honoree; Charles Lee-Johnson, Presenter; Judge John Hudson, Adams County Youth Court; Sue Cherney, Executive Director SCSCY; Mario Johnson, MS Department of Human Services and Chris Cherney, Chief Executive Officer MS Children’s Home Services

Honorable John Hudson, Adams County Youth Court Judge, presented the award to him. This prestigious award is given to an individual who has had an impact on the lives of children and youth in the State of Mississippi.

During the past 22 years, the Lookin’ to the Future Conference has evolved into a multi-faceted training event that is sponsored by 22 public agencies as well as private youth serving agencies. We thank all of those who partnered with us this year as we were “Riding the Winds of Change.”

## Summer Youth Conference

The Summer Youth Conference, sponsored by the P.R.E.P.A.R.E. Independent Living Program of Southern Christian Services for Children and Youth, took place at the University of Mississippi on June 23–25, 2010. Over 100 youth participated. The P.R.E.P.A.R.E. (Providing Resources, Education and Preparation to Adolescents Reaching Emancipation) program is designed to assist youth who will be exiting the foster care system in developing the skills they need to live productive and happy lives. This year’s theme was “iCan...If I Believe, I Will Achieve.”

The youth enjoyed three days of speakers, workshops, exercise, fun and games. Each speaker had a special message: A young dancer who was critically injured and told she would never walk again much less



An old-fashioned wheelbarrow race was just one of the many activities the youth participated in during the Conference.

dance now walks and is learning to dance once more; her message being “never give up on your dream.” A married father of three told his life story of growing up in the foster care system for 13 years. He discussed coping with hardship and overcoming adversity, and even against unbelievable odds, he never gave up, using music, laughter, willpower and positive decision-making to triumph over adversity. A former foster youth spoke with the teens about growing up in the foster care system. He related his achievements and message of “It’s not where you start; it’s where you end up.”

After each speaker, there were questions, tears, photographs and many realizations that they are not alone in their situations and they can achieve success in their lives. Hearing directly from the individuals and being able to ask questions made a huge impact on the youth.

A career workshop was provided with speakers from the University of Mississippi, the armed forces, the Marines, Job Corps, law enforcement and education. After listening to the presentations, the youth mingled with each representative, allowing time for one on one questions about their career thoughts.

A youth drama team from Batesville, Mississippi, Risqué Business and the MADDRAMA Performance Troupe of Jackson State University entertained our youth with a variety of skits, which included resisting peer pressure, maintaining healthy relationships, teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol awareness and the negative outcomes of being under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

This Youth Conference provided opportunities and experiences that these youth in the foster care system had not previously encountered: such as being on the campus of a major university, staying in the dormitories, eating all meals out, group recreation and competition, performances by drama and singing groups and developing life long friendships. For most of the youth this is Summer Camp...but always with the message of “iCan...If I Believe, I Will Achieve.”