

# The United Methodist Children's Home

## Mission and History

***The mission of the United Methodist Children's Home is to provide redemptive, healing services that bring meaningful change to the lives of children and families. Grounded by scripture and the tradition of the church, we seek to bring the wholeness of God's love to persons through Christ.***

The United Methodist Children's Home was established in 1871 to care for children orphaned during the Civil War. Originally called the Methodist Orphans' Home and located in Norcross, the Home moved in 1873 to its present location in Decatur. The two primary services provided by the Orphans' Home from its inception were the orphanage care and higher education assistance. Many children came to the Home at an early age and stayed until they went away to college or out on their own. By the early 1930s, the institution was serving large numbers of children who could not be termed orphans; therefore, in 1934 the trustees approved changing the name to Methodist Children's Home. Capacity was 150 by the late 1960s.

In the early 1970s the Children's Home began to develop other service options for children and their families to add to the two services established long ago. Foster family homes,

counseling, consultation and referral were offered as the Children's Home began to emphasize services for the family as well as for the child. In 1977 UMCH opened its first district office in Augusta to better serve children and families throughout north Georgia.

UMCH now offers 10 services to children and families: campus residential care for children 12 and older, independent and transitional living programs for youth ages 17-21, foster family care for any age, adoption, short-term family housing on the campus, emergency financial assistance, higher education aid, counseling, and parenting skills classes. In addition to the main campus in Decatur, UMCH offers services from district offices in Augusta, Dalton, Gainesville and Rome.

An agency of the United Methodist Church's North Georgia

Conference, the Children's Home is dedicated to meeting needs with love, concern and a high level of professional and administrative competence. Services are family-centered, reality-based and goal-oriented. The Children's Home is committed to the continued improvement of services offered and the development of new approaches to meeting needs. In the spirit of Christian concern, the United Methodist Children's Home offers services without regard to race, gender, creed or national origin.



**Moore Chapel, est. 1906**

# Services at the United Methodist Children's Home

## On-campus Residential Services

### Campus Group Care

Most of our youth are referred to us through DFCS (Division of Family and Children Services); however, private referrals are also accepted. Newly renovated Whitehead Hall allows us to receive all children 24/7 on our Decatur campus and provide a safe place to stay while evaluating the needs of the youth — many of whom will move into our group care program. In addition to Whitehead, campus group care on our 99-acre campus consists of four home-like cottages, each of which can house up to nine youth. While in our program, each young person has a personal plan of care, which includes meeting their physical, educational, spiritual, medical and social needs. Staff provide clinical services, such as recreational therapy and individual and group counseling. In 2007 this program served 108 children from 90 families. There are currently about 45 children here. The average stay is 18 months.



### Independent Living Program (ILP)

The purpose of ILP is to both empower and emotionally support older adolescents ages 17-21. These young adults are responsible, goal-oriented and self-motivated. Each youth lives in an on-campus studio apartment and receives daily supervision and assistance by our staff while learning how to take care of their own needs, such as grocery shopping, budgeting, caring for their health, developing marketable job skills and continuing their education. Full casework services are provided. ILP served 30 young people in 2007, and we expect this number to grow, as we recently added an additional building with five apartments to the program and the burned Leigh cottage will serve as an ILP residence when it is rebuilt in 2009. There are about 20 young people currently in ILP

### Short-term Family Housing

Eight furnished apartments on the campus provide short-term residences for families in need of a place to live while they work on a more stable home life. Casework services provide help with job search, family budgeting, child care and other needs. Usual residency is 30 to 90 days. 23 families with 66 children lived in short-term family housing in 2007.



## Off-campus Residential Services

### Family Foster Care

Babies, young children and more stable older youth can receive care in homes of families approved and supervised by the Children's Home. Families are paid a per-diem and receive extensive support and training from our staff. Some foster parents are trained to care for medically fragile children. In 2007 family foster care served 101 children from 63 families. There are currently about 35 children in foster care.



### Transitional Living Program (TLP)

The purpose of TLP is to allow young adults to live in their own homes off-campus while continuing to learn essential life skills and receiving structured support. Our staff assist our youth in establishing a single-occupancy apartment near work or school and provide weekly home visits. Young adults must have completed their high school diploma or GED to qualify for TLP, and they are strongly encouraged to continue their education. One important goal of TLP is to teach career development skills. As the premier provider of TLP in Georgia, UMCH strives to give our youth a sense of pride as they grow into adulthood. In 2007 UMCH served 26 young people in TLP. There are currently about 20 TLP youth.

*UMCH... Offering healing and hope  
to children and families*

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## *Non-residential Services*

### **Financial Assistance**

Limited funds are available at the beginning of each month to help households when a crisis occurs due to lack of rent or utility payment or other need that impacts quality of life. A family may receive this assistance of up to \$75.00 only one time, and the payment is made directly to the vendor. This service is provided at our Decatur campus and all district offices. In 2007, 467 families with 1053 children were aided by this program.

### **Family Counseling**

Individual and/or group sessions are available to deal with communication, anger management, step-parenting/step-children, marital problems and other issues. This service is currently offered through our district offices, where 39 families with 66 children were counseled in 2007.



### **Parenting Skills Classes**

Parents and other caregivers can find help to supplement their own expertise as they encounter the difficult stages of child rearing or as they work to regain custody of their children. UMCH utilizes the "Active Parenting" curriculum and currently offers this service at our Decatur campus and at the Augusta and Rome district offices. Thirteen families with 21 children attended classes in 2007.

### **Foster-to-Adopt Program**



If the biological parents of a child in UMCH foster care relinquish their parental rights, the foster family may permanently adopt their foster child. Adoption services are provided at UMCH to facilitate the adoption process for our foster families and children. Twelve adoptions were finalized in 2007.

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### **Higher Education**

Financial assistance for higher education is one of the two original services offered by UMCH. Any youth that has lived at UMCH at any time in their young lives can receive assistance. UMCH provides funds to supplement educational and living expenses. We also provide a place for the student

to live during school breaks so he or she has somewhere to "come home to." Seven young people received higher education assistance in 2007.

## *Locations*

### **Administrative Offices & Campus**

500 S. Columbia Dr., Decatur GA 30030  
Phone 404.327.5820; Fax 404.327.5835

### **Augusta District Office**

P. O. Box 2544, Augusta GA 30903  
Phone 706.722.8669; Fax 706.724.7921

### **Gainesville District Office**

P.O. Box 1746, Gainesville GA 30503  
Phone 770.531.3063; Fax 770.531.5526

### **Northwest District Office**

P. O. Box 2222, Dalton GA 30720  
Phone 706.278.4010; Fax 706.275.6796

### **Rome-Carrollton District Office**

P. O. Box 5006, Rome GA 30162  
Phone 706.295.3911; Fax 706.295.9252

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