

East Cobb Empty Nesters Find Way To Serve at The Center for Children & Young Adults

By Tim & Christine Schneller

One Saturday in April, I was walking Oliver, our cocker spaniel mix, and saw this nest in a bush near the front door. Sure enough, a mama cardinal had built her home and was raising her family ten feet from our front door. We checked on the eggs every time we walked by, and one morning, we were rewarded with the sight of the first baby chick hatching.

In a couple hours, all three babies had hatched, and we named them Alvin, Calvin, and Lisa. We watched them grow, adding feathers, chirping for food and wondered when they would take their next step. Then one day, rather suddenly and unexpectedly, the baby birds were gone. No mother, no babies, no feathers – just an empty nest.

This caused us to reflect; for the past 20 years, our lives have revolved primarily around our two daughters. However, this year we will embark on a new journey. This year, our younger daughter Rachel heads to college, and, in a sense, our home will resemble the cardinal's nest (although Oliver will be happy to pretend he is the only child). Other parents will understand our admission that we look forward to our daughters going back to school each fall. But now we started to wonder, what will it be like not having them come home each night, not having to feed, clothe, and care for our little chicks every day?

This was something we didn't think too much about when we moved to East Cobb County in the fall of 2011 from Charlottesville, Virginia. In Virginia, not only were we responsible for our two daughters, but we hosted a high school foreign exchange student and fostered several young children. We loved having children around. This year, seemingly all of a sudden, we will have NONE. Given our love for children, we began to look around to find what our pastor refers to as a "vineyard" in which to work. We wanted to get involved with an organization that promoted and helped kids – but which one? There are so many! Then one day, we learned about The Center for Children & Young Adults (CCYA) in Cobb County.

We remembered that one of the biggest challenges that older foster children face is when they "age-out" of the foster care system. At age 18, the state is no longer legally obligated to provide any assistance to foster children; apparently, this magical birthday is expected to confer self-sufficiency to

these kids. After living with several young adults, we have no doubt that when kids turn 18, they are not really ready for the real world.

Children blessed with great parents, mentors, and teachers may possess some of the skills and knowledge needed to survive in the adult world; however, how many of them could do this independently, without help? How many children know everything they need to know on their 18th birthday? Now imagine how much more difficult this undertaking would be for a foster child who did not have the advantages of a safe and stable family/school life. We have always believed that they were at a significant disadvantage from their peers – that society was setting them up for hardships and maybe even failure.

That is why when we learned about CCYA's mission, which is: "Dedicated to providing a safe and nurturing environment with comprehensive services for homeless youth and young adults who have been abused, abandoned, neglected, or are at risk," we wanted to support their mission of addressing this need.


CCYA is a private, nonprofit 501(c)3 organization that has been serving children of the community for over 30 years. The Center for Children & Young Adults operates three specialized homes on its campus in Marietta and can house and provide for up to 39 boys and girls, ages 12-21. Every young person served by CCYA has a different story – some were abandoned and living on the streets, others were taken from their families by the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) due to abuse and/or mistreatment, while others became homeless when their parents died, were incarcerated, or failed to seek treatment for mental illness or addiction. CCYA is there to help.

As a privately-funded, nonprofit organization, CCYA is constantly looking for additional resources – specifically, funding and volunteers who are willing to share their time, expertise, and love. This is where East Cobbers can help. CCYA needs to purchase clothes and shoes for the upcoming school year. Monetary donations are needed to purchase gift cards to stores like Target, Walmart, Kohl's, TJ Maxx, Old Navy, H&M, Foot Locker, etc because just like other kids, CCYA kids love to have one or two sets

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of new clothes to start the school year. In addition, basic school supplies such as backpacks and a seemingly never-ending list of Back-to-School needs must be addressed.

You can help by writing a check or making a secure, online donation with any major credit card. Donation information can be found at the CCYA website, www.ccyakids.org. CCYA also accepts donations of new/unused toiletries (shampoo, toothpaste, soap, lotion, etc.) and household items (twin sheet and bedding sets, towels, pillows, etc.).

Finally, CCYA offers many volunteer opportunities for individuals and groups including tutoring, mentoring, serving meals, and campus projects like painting, yard cleanup and small repairs. More information about all of these opportunities can be found in the HOW YOU CAN HELP section of the CCYA website. 



Tim and Christine Schneller are proud parents of Carolyn and Rachel and have provided care for a number of other children who have blessed their family throughout the past 5 years. Tim works for GE Energy Management while Christine's company, Learn With Intent, provides customized workforce training services. They are

members and volunteers with the local chapter of the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD), the Chattahoochee Road Runners and attend Mt. Zion United Methodist Church. They can be contacted at goteamschneller@gmail.com.



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Mother's Morning Out Register Today

Mother's Morning Out registration is now open for the 2013-2014 school year. The program is for children ages 1 through 5 weekly on Tuesday and Thursday, 9am-12pm. A loving and nurturing Christian environment is provided along with age appropriate activities: story time, snack, crafts, Bible fun, indoor/outdoor play, letter, number and color lessons. Lunch bunch is available for an additional hour.

For more information, please visit our website, eastcobbccoc.org or call 770-587-5999, ext.203.

East Cobb Church of Christ
5240 Roswell Road Marietta, GA 30062.



East Cobb Mother's Morning Out

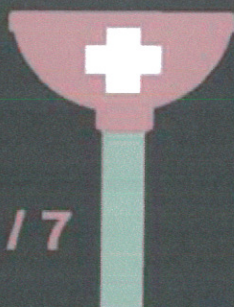
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