

### Mission, Reflection, and Transition: Bethany's Path Forward

**Dr. Joseph Birli**  
President/CEO

As I sit here and write this, a beautiful winter wonderland has settled over our Bethany campus. The team and youth quickly adapt to the day's changes as school has been canceled and the fleet grounded, and excitement fills the air as our youth head outside to play in the snow.

It is moments like these that remind us why we cherish Bethany - witnessing youth experience the simple joy of just being a kid. This joy is a vital part of their healing from trauma, even during times when we face staffing shortages or increased needs.

This leads me to an important topic: purpose and transitions. At the Tribute dinner in October, I spoke about the necessity for organizations to regularly evaluate their purpose, especially in relation to services, programming and operations. One essential question guides this review: "Is what we do still relevant and needed in the child welfare system?"

I can confidently say yes! Providing a safe, supportive environment where children and youth can encounter healing from their experienced and unfortunate trauma will always matter. Though youth change through the decades, the pain, hurt and wounds they carry still affect them deeply. Our mission continues to be essential.

I am also honored to share that as the 15th President/CEO of Bethany, I have completed a personal and professional review of my purpose. With that reflection, my work as President/CEO has come to a natural close. It is time to pass the torch to the next generation of leadership.



Therefore, I have taken the steps in conjunction with the Board of Directors, who have unanimously appointed Mr. Nick Hill, Deputy CEO and Chief Human Resources Officer, as the next President/CEO effective July 1, 2026. It is a privilege to transition this role to Nick, who has been preparing throughout his 11 years of dedicated service to Bethany Children's Home.

I am incredibly proud of the work the entire Bethany Team has accomplished during my six-year tenure. Together we endured and overcame challenges such as Covid, audits, funding challenges, and workforce difficulties, just to name a few. I am grateful to have fulfilled the expectations set for me by the board of directors upon my hiring in 2019.

Now I leave Bethany in the capable hands of an experienced, committed team that understands our mission and holds a passionate heart for healing hurting youth! As I step into my own next chapter, I do so with gratitude and confidence for Bethany's future.

May the legacy of success, purpose, and healing continue for all who are part of and impacted by Bethany Children's Home. ■

“ As I step into this next chapter, I will be deeply honored to bring visionary leadership, stability, and bold growth that will deliver meaningful, measurable outcomes for youth, team members, and our community. Together, we will amplify Bethany's mission by shaping its future with purpose, accountability, and hope. ”

- Nick Hill, M.S., HS-B.C.P., C.N.E.  
Deputy CEO / CHRO





We are deeply grateful to our incredible volunteers and generous donors who gave their time, resources, and hearts to ensure that every youth on the Bethany campus received the Christmas gifts they wished for.

Because of their kindness and dedication, each gift was thoughtfully selected and carefully wrapped, creating moments of joy, comfort, and hope for the youth we serve. Your support truly made this season brighter and reminded our campus of the true spirit of giving.

This Christmas, more than **900 gifts** were wrapped, sorted, and delivered to the different cottages across campus to be opened on Christmas morning. None of this would have been possible without the generosity of the **114 donors** and the dedication of **31 volunteers** who made this special moment a reality.

- BCH Development Team





# Join the Bethany Auxiliary Committee

Since 1886 the Bethany Auxiliary Committee helps aid Bethany Children's Home to provide youth with their emotional, physical, and spiritual needs.

All are welcomed and encouraged to join!

## Duties consist of:

- ✓ Volunteer to wrap Christmas gifts for youth
- ✓ Helping with baked good sales
- ✓ Organizing employee appreciation breakfast
- ✓ Attend or volunteer at events
- ✓ Attend quarterly committee meeting

For more information  
contact:

Jocelynn Phillips

(610)589-6834

[jphillips@bethanyhome.org](mailto:jphillips@bethanyhome.org)



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## Jam on Spruce: A Night of Giving

BCH is joining forces with 3<sup>rd</sup> & Spruce Drafthouse on Friday, April 17! Stop by the restaurant anytime after 5:00pm on Friday, April 17 and 20% of drinks ordered off the specials menu will be donated back to Bethany!

3<sup>rd</sup> & Spruce Drafthaus  
238 S Third Ave Reading, PA 19611

# Finding Direction After Loss: The Story of Willy Hartranft



At just 12 years old, Willy Hartranft's life was flipped upside down. On a cool evening in late October 1948, Willy's mother and 3-year-old sibling were killed in a drunken hit and run. In that instant, Willy's family went from seven to five people. While still mourning the loss of his mother and younger sibling, Willy's aunts and uncles stepped in to support the family in the ways they could.

Willy and his siblings were split between extended family households while his father worked and searched for means to bring the family back together. During this time, Willy did not know what his weeks would look like – where he might be sleeping, who might be feeding him, or when he would get to spend time with his siblings or father.

For 3 years, Willy's life followed this uncertain path until an opportunity arose. Willy's Aunt had connections to Bethany Children's Home which allowed for Willy's father to get a job on the campus, also paving a path for Willy and his younger siblings to come to campus.

Life at Bethany Children's Home was busy, as the superintendent at the time, Rev. R. S. Vandevere, had designed it to be. Between school, homework, and work, there was not much free time.

"Back in the day, dealing with 180 kids, 200 kids, the way to do that was to have a regimen, a routine regimen," Will said.

What little free and recreational time you did have would be split between the girls' and the boys' cottages, he added.

Willy's life at Bethany Children's Home was not easy. He spent most of his days separated from his siblings, father, and extended family, growing up without the family bonds that he had once cherished so much. Due to the focus on work and keeping busy, he also didn't have the time or resources to plan for his future, relying heavily on his father's guidance. The basic needs of each youth at Bethany Children's Home were met, but the needs of the individual were often overlooked.

During Willy's sophomore year of high school at Conrad Weiser, his basketball coach asked him to try out for the team, a treat not usually offered to Bethany youth until their junior year. Willy

joined the team and continued to participate in sports throughout high school.

Due to his excellence in sports, Willy's father suggested that he go to school for Physical Education after graduation. Willy applied and got into the State Teachers College at East Stroudsburg, now known as East Stroudsburg University.

During Willy's junior year of college, he was given the opportunity to become the weekend recreation director for Bethany Children's Home. Every weekend, while still attending college, Willy would return to Bethany's campus and lead recreational programming for the youth. During the summer, Willy would work full-time as the summer recreation director at Bethany.

After graduating from East Stroudsburg, Willy became a science teacher and coach at Conrad Weiser High School while he continued to be the weekend and summer Recreation Director at Bethany Children's Home.

While Willy was at college, Rev. Vandevere retired, leading the way for a new superintendent, Rev. Garnet O. Adams, to guide Bethany Children's Home.

During this time "the whole environment [of childcare] was changing," Willy said. Focus began to shift to the individual needs of the youth.

"[F]rom regimen to a routine... we were allowed to expand more and participate outside the confines of Bethany, he said.

Willy was encouraged to change his recreational programming to better meet the needs of the youth.

Willy taught and coached at Conrad Weiser for 34 years and was the Recreation Director at Bethany Children's Home for 14 of those years. Willy's experiences, though challenging, helped defined how he showed up as a teacher, coach, and recreation director.

Growing up at Bethany was a "large part of my education," he said. "I learned as a kid going there and having chores, that you have obligations, responsibilities... [Bethany] taught me direction, and... those things ended up being very important in coaching, and in teaching."

Willy is now 89 years old. These days, he likes to stay busy – spending time with his family and friends, and helping his neighbors, or the people around him, whenever possible.

Willy strives to live life being present to "Take out would've, could've, should've, if only – and do more". ■



# Bethany Children's Home

## ***Now Hiring*** ***Cottage Support Staff***

### **About You**

At a minimum:

- Have at least a high school diploma or equivalent
- 21 years of age
- Must pass Child Abuse, State Police and FBI Fingerprinting Clearances
- Be able to comply with all physical training requirements
- Have a valid drivers' license

### **About Us**

Bethany Children's Home is a residential facility for youth between the ages of 10-21. The mission of Bethany Children's Home is to provide a safe place of nurture, protection, and supportive care to aid our residents in their self-understanding, growth, and healing toward a brighter, healthier future. Cottage Support Staff assist with the creation and facilitation of the daily plan of activities in a safe and nurturing environment. Cottage Support Staff are responsible for providing compassion, structure, care and guidance within a cottage setting.

### **Benefits**

- Life, medical, prescription, dental, vision, short-term disability and long-term disability insurances.
- Flexible spending and dependent care accounts
- Generous paid-time off plan beginning on the 1st day of employment
- 11 paid Holidays per year plus 1 floating Holiday
- 401 (k) retirement plan with employer match
- And More!

### **Join Our Team!**



[www.bethanyhome.org/employment/](http://www.bethanyhome.org/employment/)

### **Contact**

Lori Bracken: Talent Integration Specialist

[LBracken@bethanyhome.org](mailto:LBracken@bethanyhome.org)

610-589-6867

# Board Member Spotlight: Betsy Piazza

I grew up on a small farm in northern Chester County, near Historic Hopewell Village and French Creek State Park. I earned a BS in Nursing from Gwynedd Mercy College in Lansdale, PA.



I spent 10 years as a critical care nurse, most of it at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, NC. After that, I worked for 25 years in corporate healthcare. I was a VP of Operations for Optum, where I supported many nurses and other clinical professionals to help people with health challenges. I was lucky enough to retire last year.

I joined the Bethany Board of Directors one year ago. I became acquainted with Bethany through my friend Doug Yeakle, a fellow Board Member. I loved the idea of doing something that could support less fortunate youth in growing into productive and healthy adults.

My mother worked as a nurse for many years in a setting similar to Bethany. She always encouraged my siblings and I to participate where we could on campus. I was able to witness many success

stories during that time and it has always drawn me to wanting to help people at an individual level. We all have the potential to do great things and live fruitful lives. Giving back where we can helps us attain happiness in our lives.

Fun fact: I have a home decor store called Wooden Nickel. My husband was a woodworker and made many custom items, so we created a store and a small organic grocery store called the Red Dog Market in a 1960s gas station. I have lots of fun buying things for the store and interacting with people in my local community. ■



## Donor Funds

Donors choose to give in a variety of ways and designate their donation to be used in a specific manner. Some of the most popular funds include:

### **Unrestricted Funds**

*Brighter Futures Fund:* An unrestricted fund to be used for any need.

*\$5 Friday Fund:* An unrestricted fund to be used for any need.

*Memorials and Honorariums* – Supporters often contribute in honor or memory of an individual or individuals.

### **Restricted Funds**

*Faith Fund* – A fund to provide for special needs or activities of individual children in care at Bethany.

*Cottage Funds* – Donors can designate monies to be used by a particular cottage.

*Birthday Fund* – Begun by Elmer Seeling, this fund provides a card and a small monetary birthday gift to each youth.

*Art Studio, Music Therapy* – These funds are designated to address

needs in our educational programming department, specifically in the art studio and music education program.

### ***Additional ways to give include:***

*Planned giving:* Charitable Trusts, bequests and other beneficiary options.

*In-kind donations* – Clothing, toiletries, bedding, cottage supplies and holiday décor are just a few of the items our donors contribute throughout the year. Corporate donors contribute goods and services.

*Christmas* – White gifts or cottage adoptions are two ways donors can support Bethany youth during the holiday season. Donors can purchase items off the holiday wish list or request a specific cottage for which to purchase gifts.

To learn more please contact Dana Hoffman, FCEP at 610-589-6810 or [Dhoffman@bethanyhome.org](mailto:Dhoffman@bethanyhome.org) ■



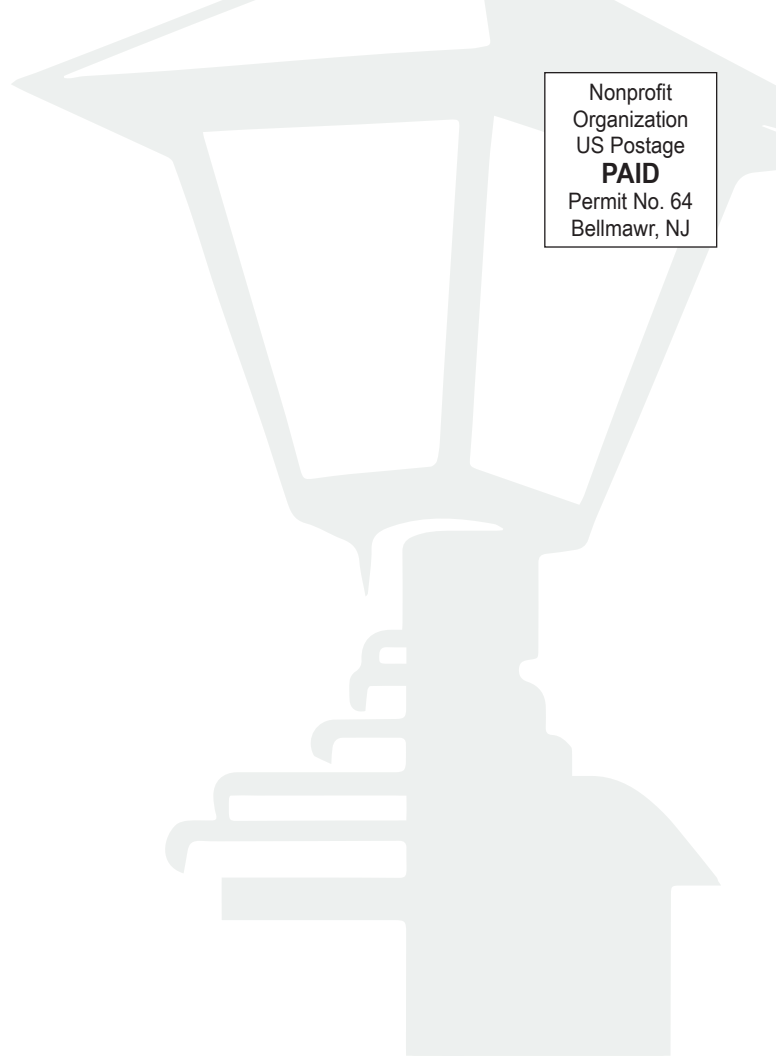


1863 Bethany Road  
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bethanyhome.org  
(610) 589-4501

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 Bethany Children's Home

**Mission Moment**

Would you like to learn more about the work we do at Bethany?  
Our team would be happy to speak to your business, organization or church!

**Contact:**

Dana Hoffman  
Director of Development  
Dhoffman@bethanyhome.org  
(610)589-6810

## About Bethany Children's Home

Founded in 1863, Bethany Children's Home has provided a safe place of nurture, protection and supportive care to aid youth in their own self awareness, growth and healing for a brighter, healthier future. Every day, youth who have been abused, neglected or abandoned are taking their lives back with the help of Bethany.

**SERVICES:** Spiritual services, educational programming, recreation, social services, and more are provided to every youth at Bethany.

**PROGRAMS:** Bethany offers individualized programs for youth who for whatever reason cannot live with their family or a substitute family. From emergency services to longer term Residential Group Home programs, Bethany supports youth while they heal and prepare for the next steps of their journey.

*Thank you for your continued support  
in the healing of our youth.*

