

# A day of dazzle, razzle and awe

## Baptist Children's Homes' 'Hope in Style' a magnificent event

I need to invent a new word. The meaning would combine spectacular, dazzling and awe-inspiring. Well, perhaps those three words say it.

For the second year the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina sponsored an incredible fundraiser, Hope in Style featuring a children's fashion show, silent auction, brunch and entertainment. Let's go!

The parking lot was full at the Greensboro Country Club for the Hope in Style event on that warm Saturday morning. As I made the trek to the front entryway there were golfers teeing off, tennis players filling the courts and then there were the children, lots of smiling children of all ages. They gathered around the Fleet Feet Truck trying on shoes (for them to keep) for their debut as models in the Hope in Style fashion show.

Nearby I saw another very sweet scene and quietly approached. Catherine Blackwell was lovingly straightening the tie and nametag for her husband Michael, who has served as the president of the Thomasville-based Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) for 30 years. To

celebrate his 30-year tenure, his dedication and devotion to providing children throughout our state a safe and loving haven for children, the city of Thomasville renamed Watson Avenue, Blackwell Boulevard! Wow! Thomasville Mayor said of Michael at the unveiling the new street sign, "Dr. Blackwell has meant so much for this city, BCH and this campus. We're blessed to be celebrating 30 years of him being with us in Thomasville."



MARY BOGEST ABOUT TOWN

Last year I visited the Mills Home campus of

BCH with Karen Slate, regional director of development of BCH and Hope in Style coordinator with T.J. Slaughter. I was so impressed by the campus. Children who are temporarily separated from their families live in cottages with other children and compassionate house parents. I ate dinner at one of the cottages and was so impressed by the family-like atmosphere with the normal family chit-chat around the dining room table.

On this Saturday, hope abounded in style and in song. The major sponsor, Belk of High Point and Manager Jason

Scott donated \$200 for each BCH Mills campus "model" for a "shopping spree" selecting outfits to model in the fashion show. Belk of High Point and Scott do so much to help our community. Thank You. Scott told me that the new Belk in High Point is scheduled to open at the Palladium shopping complex in March.

Hair styling and makeup for the models were donated by Belk, Chevalrie Salon and Fifty Shades of Red Salon.

The doors opened at 9 a.m. for shopping of a different kind...the silent auction. Then I saw the blonde bombshell...no it's not what you think. The blond was "Doc", a beautiful cuddly golden retriever puppy carried by Stephanie Frazier, whose

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mother Monica Vaughan was the chairman of Hope in Style. Vaughan fostered the puppy for a week for the Hope in Style live auction. The puppy tugged at her heartstrings so much that she named him "Doc" for her late husband Dr. Edwin Vaughan who was a physician in Greensboro for over 50 years. Monica called her husband "Doc" or "Sir Doc" so named the new "Doc" in her life Sir Doctor Edwin of Ghent! It was no surprise when the winning bid for Doc was... Monica Vaughan!

I spotted many High Pointers among my mingling including Dr. Mark and Nancy Warburton, Dr. Frosty and Catharine Culp, Sandy and Elizabeth Finch and Roy and Dot Culler, whose family have been significant supporters of BCH for 75 years. For the second year, NASCAR's Bobby LaBonte (Slate's brother-in-law) served as honorary chairman. It was also nice to see Clifton Lambreth, former Mills campus resident who is the chief operating officer for Slane Jewelry founded by High Point home-towners Heath and Landon Slane.

As the doors to the ballroom opened, I saw Stella and Darryl Harris, owners of Furnitureland South, a major sponsor of Hope in Style. The Harris Family continues to be such wonderful benefactors in our community.

One of my tablemates was Katie Nordeen, evening anchor for WGHP Fox 8 news, who co-emceed the fashion show with Scott. They did a fabulous job. Being inquisitive (better word than nosy), I asked Nordeen about her fiancé. He is Reece Craven, a former associate producer at Fox 8. The couple is planning a June 2014 wedding.

Next came my amazement...the dazzle, the razzle, the awe. How could I have never heard the voice of Thomasville's "Dixie Diva" Victoria Livengood! The international opera star has performed her signature role of "Carmen" over 250 times. The mezzo-soprano was the featured artiste for Hope in Style.

As she stood on stage



The "Dixie Diva" Victoria Livengood with her husband Scott Hester and parents Gerry and Carolyn Livengood. Victoria performed for the Hope in Style fundraiser.

she recalled her memories of BCH "The Mills Home gave me a home for a couple of years as their

minister of music when I was taking a break from my studies at UNC. They thought I was there to inspire them but they inspired me. I went back to UNC because of them."

That fateful decision would

be a steppingstone to international fame.

Accompanying her to Hope in Style was her "strength and support," husband Scott Hester and her very proud parents Gerry and Carolyn Livengood. Looking at Gerry and his robustness, it was hard to imagine that just last November he was near death in a coma for five days with blood clots. His wife was so distraught that she too, was hospitalized with a very real "broken heart" syndrome. Victoria would hold his hand and sing to him in hopes that he might wake up. His condition was critical. On the fifth day his eyes began to flutter as Brahms's Lullaby played over the loudspeakers at High Point Regional as a baby was born. Then suddenly, almost miraculously Gerry awoke from his coma. He looked at his daughter and said one word, "Brahms." Family and friends consider Gerry a walking miracle. He told me that his thanks go out to the staff and doctors for the loving care he received at High Point Regional.

Victoria stood on stage with tears in her eyes as she sang her parents' favorite song from Samson et Dalila. Guests listened in amazement to

her wondrous voice and presence. As she returned to the table her mother wiped the tears from her eyes and her father gave her a heartwarming fatherly hug of pride. It was incredible.

Victoria spoke emotionally, "You all have gifts, special gifts." She closed her eyes and sang, "Walk on, walk on with hope in your heart and you'll never walk alone ... you'll never walk alone!" Not a dry eye in the room.

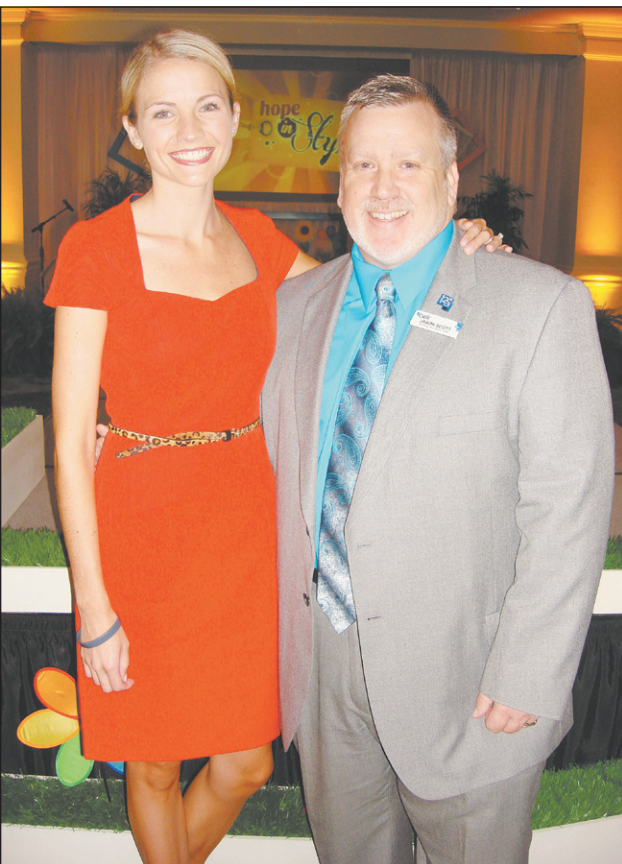
For more information, go to [www.bchfamily.org](http://www.bchfamily.org) or call 1-800-476-3669.

**The voice of Victoria Livengood resonated throughout the ballroom at the Greensboro Country Club.**

MARY BOGEST | HPE



Hope in Style coordinators Karen Slate, whose friendship with Victoria Livengood enticed her to perform for the Baptist Children's Homes fundraiser, and T.J. Slaughter.



Hope in Style emcees Katie Nordeen and Belk of High Point General Manager and community advocate Jason Scott. Together they put the "style" into the Hope in Style fundraiser.

MARY BOGEST | HPE



Catherine Blackwell straightens the name tag of her husband Michael, president of Baptist Children's Homes of NC, for the Hope in Style fundraiser. Recently a street in Thomasville, Blackwell Boulevard, was named in his honor.

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Stephanie Frazier holding Doc, Hope in Style chairwoman Monica Vaughan (Stephanie's mother), Deb Saintsing and Earla Clark with event coordinator Karen Slate peeking through.

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