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SPECIAL NORTH TEXAS EDITION
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Today

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Chat with the Executive Director

New!

When you think of women who inspire you, they often share a common characteristic – resilience.



Candace Gray
Executive Director of
Buckner in North Texas

The year 2020 kicks off a new decade and there are many new things happening in Dallas! You may have heard that Buckner was building a new Family Hope Center in the Bachman Lake community of Dallas. It was a long journey from vision to reality with plans for the new facility beginning in 2014. In 2016, we kicked off the Shining Hope Dallas capital campaign. In 2017, Buckner hired staff and began offering services in the community by partnering with area schools, nonprofits and churches. Like Buckner's other Family Hope Centers around the state and in other parts of the world, we offer services such as financial literacy, parenting and ESL. Through one-on-one coaching, we work with families to help them

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ALSO INSIDE:

- How God transformed one volunteer's life
- Volunteer opportunities

The safety and security one single mom needed to succeed

College was never considered an option for Rhonda Lee. She aged out of foster care and had to fend for herself. College, she thought, was only for those with families to support them.

For Rhonda, growing up in the foster care system and moving around, she never felt safe, secure or like she could get ahead. She compares her life to a never-ending hamster wheel – to make more money she knew she had to go to school. But to go to school meant giving up the job that covered her bills and fed her family. Life looked dismal with a minimum wage job and barely getting by.

But her life transformed when she decided to come to Buckner Family Pathways in Dallas.

"I came in saying I was going to be a success story – that's what my goal was. And now I just graduated and passed my National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) to become a licensed nurse," shared Rhonda. "It was one of the hardest things I ever did in my life. I'm just still



in shock that I did it because it was extremely hard."

Rhonda and her two children, Amaya and Tristian, came to the program in November 2017 to a safety and comfort they had never known before. Growing up, the family rarely left the confines of a small apartment. Now, Rhonda smiles as her children can experience playing outside without fear.

Her dedication and perseverance in education has made a mark on her

(Continued on inside cover)

New! (continued)

develop goals and plans to strengthen their family. We also offer services to youth such as Bible studies, career/college readiness and summer sports camps. In 2019, we served nearly 7,000 children and adults in the Bachman Lake community. Moving into the new facility will allow us to expand our services. We will offer after-school programming to elementary school students, mentoring to middle and high school youth and opportunities for adults to learn ways to increase income for their families. We are excited to see the great things that will take place in the brand-new facility!

Another new thing this year was the Goals Are Important Workshop in February. This was the first in a series of Strengthening Women workshops for 2020. Developed by our counseling team, Buckner hosted this workshop to strengthen families by encouraging, equipping and strengthening women. Attendees included women from various Buckner programs across the state such as Family Pathways, NextStep and Family Hope Centers. Community partners also attended. Attendees participated at no cost, and the day featured topics such as healthy relationships, career development, spiritual renewal and self-care.

Jesus continues to fulfill His promise through Buckner, "Behold I make all things new." ■



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CoverStoryContinued

children. "My son is in fifth grade and my daughter's in seventh grade. They experienced this journey with me and I feel like I really motivated them to now want to go to college," she said.

Amaya, now 12, dreams of entering the computer engineering field and is currently studying Spanish. Tristian, 10, has created goals for himself too – to pass the STAAR test and to read for 10 minutes a day. Watching their mother set her own goals encouraged them to chase after their own.

For Rhonda, as she completes one goal, her eyes are already set on the next big challenge. Now that she has completed a bachelor's degree in nursing, she is determined to complete a master's degree as well.

"I hope one day I'm able to talk to people who maybe didn't think they could do it and show them that you can do anything you want to do. I used to hear that growing up and think people just said that stuff," Rhonda said. "But now, with hard work and

perseverance, I know you can really do whatever you set your mind to. Next, I want my doctorate in nursing."

Throughout this journey, her faith has grown tremendously. She smiles when she shares that she used to have her friend pray to God for her.

"I would ask her, 'please pray for me because God knows you' because I always saw her praying. Watching her, I thought well maybe I'll talk to God. And now I'm like I know my God – I had to lean on him through this," she said.

Family Pathways has instilled confidence in Rhonda that she can do whatever she puts her mind to. "I'm so glad to have had this experience and I feel like God is doing it because he wants my situation to help someone else."

Rhonda and her children came to this city with no family, no friends and no support system. But today, she knows God has provided her the second chance she needed to get ahead through Family Pathways. ■



'I had never even thought of going to Peru'

How God transformed one volunteer's life

By Emily Keller

Lanie Williams had no idea volunteering would change her and her family's life.

In 2009, Lanie went to her church to see if they could collect Christmas gifts for the orphanages of Peru and the Buckner Family Hope Center in Pamplona.

"Our church didn't have a lot of international missions at this time. So we began collecting 300 to 400 Christmas gifts and started to then take trips to Peru to deliver them," explained Lanie.

She had never felt drawn to Peru before, but knew God was calling her there in this time of her life.

"This process has really made me feel like God has been leading me. Before Peru was never anywhere that I had ever thought of going," she said.

Volunteering for Lanie evolved into much more than her annual international trips to Peru.

"After I retired, I wanted to spend more time volunteering and that's how I started looking for more local opportunities. There's a lot of need and especially here," Lanie shared.

"With Bachman Lake, I didn't even know about that area and how under-served it is. Seeing how the new Buckner Family Hope



In 2011, she met Mary Romero, a young woman living at the Buckner Transitional Home in Lima, Peru, and became friends over the years. Mary shared her dream with Lanie of coming to the U.S. to study.

"I remember thinking there's got to be a way, but I don't know anything about this process. With visas, anything – so God, you're going to have to just lead me and show me," said Lanie.

By 2014, Williams and Mary had worked together to find a school for her to attend in the north Texas area, as well as apply for her visa, and she moved in with the Williamses.

Center is going to help them is encouraging. I'm looking forward to getting involved with it more and more," she said.

"The world is smaller than you sometimes think it is. And God can do anything that he wants to do, and we get to be a part of it," she said.

Today, Lanie continues to visit Peru, support Mary in her new adventures as a college graduate, serves with the Bachman Lake community and has encouraged her church to host their first Buckner Shoes for Orphan Souls® drive. ■

Buckner Volunteer Opportunities

During this season of uncertainty, many of our volunteer events and opportunities are on hold or have been canceled to maintain healthy social distance to stop the spread of the coronavirus. However, there are still ways you can support Buckner safely from your home, and more coming soon!

Here are a few examples of ways you can support Buckner in this new season:

- Write an encouraging note to a senior adult or a foster family. We are accepting letters both digitally and through email. For information on where to send your note, check out our volunteer page on the Buckner website.
- Pray for the vulnerable children, families and seniors in your community. Pray for health, safety and protection.
- If you are passionate about helping families struggling due to implications of COVID-19, we are accepting financial gifts to support them in this season.

As the situation progresses, we are continuing to update our website with ways you can volunteer and serve throughout this time. To check out the most up-to-date ways we are continuing to serve our Buckner families (and how you can help), [visit buckner.org/volunteer](https://www.buckner.org/volunteer).