Rachael Smith

LB story

Most Americans associate Patrick Henry, one of the nation's Founding Fathers with one line: “Give me liberty or give me death!” But Virginians may know him best for his Red Hill Plantation in Brookneal. The man who lived over 200 years ago still upholds his popular namesake through another organization: the ministry of the Patrick Henry Family Services.

Due to the expansion of its services, this fall the ministry is proud to announce its name change from Patrick Henry Boys and Girls Homes to Patrick Henry Family Services.

Since 1961, Patrick Henry Boys and Girls Homes have gone from having just one home on the Brookneal campus to having two more homes there and additional homes in Bedford, Rustburg and Wylliesburg. Each home can accommodate up to 8 children and each home is under the direction of Christian house parents.

Children living in the homes are anywhere between the ages of 6 and 17. The goal is to earn the trust of these children and to show examples of unconditional love and stability.

“We may not be perfect, and we aren't, Harriet Whitten, Patrick Henry administrator in the Lynchburg office, says. “ But we never pull out on our kids. The kids can always trust us.”

Part of the mission is to give the children normal experiences that a family would have. In addition to school and church activities, they take vacations and work for spending money.

“We encourage our older kids to work hard on getting a part time job for experience.” Whitten said.

However, jobs are scarce for high school students in Brookneal. To help the children find part time jobs, the older girls are placed in the Rustburg home and the older boys in the Bedford home.

Once the kids turn 18, they have the option of living in the Patrick Henry transitional living apartments in Wyndhurst with Residential Assistants. Here they are assisted in learning how to budget their money, learn the bus schedule, open a bank account and even just respecting their new neighbors.

“When we become family to these kids, we don't stop being a family when they turn 18” Whitten says.

Patrick Henry Family Services might be best known for their Residential Services to boys and girls but they also offer Outreach Ministries and Counseling Ministries.

Recently, Hat Creek Camp approached Patrick Henry Family Services with a proposition: work together to run the camp. It seemed perfect, it had once been a dream for the Patrick Henry ministry to add a camping aspect and with Hat Creek being a mere 6 miles from the Brookneal Campus it would be easy to transport their kids back and forth.

“It's not that far away in time” Whitten says. “But you feel like you're in this nice, rural environment. It takes you back.”

Under the new name of Hat Creek Camps and Conferences, this year the camp is being cleaned up and refurbished and will be ready for campers next summer. Hat Creek can also be rented for church or civic group retreats accommodating anywhere from 40-100 people.

Patrick Henry’s counseling ministry, “Hope For Tomorrow” began five years ago with Lynchburg as its main location. Now, there are Hope For Tomorrow services in South Boston and even more recently in Farmville.

Jason Captain, the director of counseling services and licensed counselor, says the offices get extremely busy in September with kids going back to school which usually affects the entire family.

“Back to school is when a lot of families come in and realize the problems that they had in summer didn't go away” Captain said.

Captain and seven other counselors help families who have children with behavioral issues, have an academic problem like Attention Deficit Disorder. In these cases, the counselors can work with the child's school to implement behavioral modifications and create organization within the home.

Sometimes, kids just have a hard time adjusting to a new schedule, teacher or applications for college. Captain says some teenagers don't like the traditional office approach in counseling so they and their counselor may go outside for a walk and talk while getting fresh air.

Captain hopes parents who have a child struggling in school will get an opinion from a professional so they have someone who can offer recommendations.

“Sometimes having a professional who is outside of the school system helping the parent deal with some challenges in their faith is what they most need” Captain says.

Hope For Tomorrow uniquely offers a sliding scale for those who have no insurance and they also accept Virginia Medicaid.

“We try not to turn anyone away based on financial needs” Captain said. “We also don't impose beliefs on anyone, we give [families] the freedom to ask that their faith be actively incorporated into their counseling.”

Over 50 years of serving the region as a highly respected organization, helping children and bringing families together, Patrick Henry Family Services is proud to say that they accept no government grants. They operate on the generosity of individuals, churches, organizations, businesses, and foundations.