

JULY 2020

MINISTRY UPDATE

431 Ministries, Inc



THE LYONS FAMILY

*Our new board members,
Alex and Betsy, and their
sweet family*

Dear friends and family,

When we sent out our last update, we were certainly not expecting everything that has happened this year! But how grateful we are that the last couple months did not surprise our God. He alone knows our tomorrows and prepares us for them as needed. And prepare us He has! One of the blessings we received during this time of uncertainty was our 501(c)3 determination letter. This means we have gotten official nonprofit status on all levels, including federal. This opens up many opportunities that were previously closed, and it means that all donations are now tax-deductible! We are thrilled to have this answer to prayer.

Another answered prayer was the addition of Alex and Betsy Lyons to our board of directors. Alex spent 12 years in foster care and aged out of the system. Betsy is a middle school teacher turned stay-at-home mom and prayer warrior. Together, they make a powerful addition to our team, and we are grateful for their wisdom and guidance as we grow.

As far as our work went, it faltered very little. We had a bit of a slow down at the beginning of March as the whole world took a breath, and then jumped right back in. We had three referrals during the COVID-19 crises alone and took the opportunity to step more into resources within the digital space.

The resources included an interview with John Thurman, a crisis mental health specialist, as well as conversations on *Poverty*, *Education*, and *Child Vulnerability* as part of Brentwood Baptist's Virtual Engage Middle Tennessee program. It was great to be able to share what we're seeing in our everyday work.



All of these conversations will be published on our website at some point, so if you didn't catch them live, we hope you'll check them out later.

One of the stories Rachel shared during the Education conversation was about Avalon* and Evie*, and we wanted to include it as an insert as an example of what some of our work can look like and how something as simple as folding laundry can serve as a ministry opportunity.

As we look at the rest of the year, we are excited to see what God will do next. We are still preparing for a building, as that continues to be the obvious next step for growth. We are limited so much by the lack of space/availability by only working in homes. To date, we have received \$8,500 of the \$90,000 we need for our 2020 budget. The budget covers operating expenses as well as a building fund.

As always, we ask for your prayers during this next stage. **Will you pray with us for the following items specifically?**

- For 49 individuals/families to commit to monthly donations of \$100
- For 37 individuals/families to commit to monthly donations of \$50
- For God's perfect timing for a building
- For a ministry-use vehicle that we can offer as needed
- For 7 additional host families for either single ladies or mothers/children

Please take a moment to fill out the attached bookmark with what your support may look like during the rest of the year. We received feedback after the last one that many of our supporters didn't want to give them up, so we are including two this time—one for you to keep and one to send back!

We are so grateful for each and every one of you and thank God for your support. We can't wait to see what He does during the rest of 2020!

In Him,

The team at 431 Ministries



The Story of Avalon* and Evie*

Written from the perspective of Rachel and Justin

Avalon came to us completely out of the blue, which is usually how we know God was involved.

She'd found our website online and was looking for help with her beautiful baby girl, Evie. Avalon had aged out of foster care and had never had to take care of a newborn. And while her foster parents still cared and were very much in her life, they'd also never had any experience with an infant.

Avalon initially asked for advice on helping Evie sleep, but other crucial gaps of knowledge, like feeding and soothing, became apparent. Like so many of the ladies we work with, the more we worked with Avalon, the more she revealed and the more she allowed us to speak into her life.

In her case, we learned very early on that we had to be careful not to simply tell her "this is the right way to do it," or she'd respond negatively and double down on the way she did things. This is very normal for someone coming out of a foster care situation, no matter how positive. There is an inherent lack of stability, so foster children feel like they have to take care of and rely on themselves. So instead of trying to teach the "right way," we focused on simply living out good parenting and setting an example instead of telling her what to do.

Avalon got to not only watch us with our own daughter, Ellie, but also how we interacted with hers. Everything we did was prayerfully intentional, from our conversations with each other, to the way we reacted to normal infant screaming, especially with Ellie's reflux. As Avalon got more comfortable, she began asking about our marriage, how we seemed to make it look so easy (by the grace of God is the answer to that!), and how she might improve her own. Avalon is also a person who didn't like sitting still, nor was she the type of woman to want to sit and chat. So we channeled that energy into something productive – Justin would watch both young babies while we went outside to pick vegetables out of the garden. The benefits of Justin watching the babies were two-fold. It provided Evie with the experience of a doting father, and it demonstrated to Avalon what a healthy father relationship should look like, pointing both Avalon and Evie towards a Heavenly Father who loves them more than an earthly man ever could.

Avalon is much more secure in her identity as a mother these days, and Evie is a happy young toddler. The "lessons" she learned side by side as we cooked, fed our babies, and folded mountains of laundry gave her confidence in her parenting. With her earthly worries and woes addressed, her questions were able to turn to heavenly things, and that's the relationship we continue to maintain.

*Names and details have been changed to protect the identities of those involved

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