Signs for Hope

Prayer letter - May-June 2016

I will lift up my hands in Your name.
Psalm 63:4

SFH's first annual
ASL-Immersion Family Retreat is now history!
Our prayers were answered!
Let me share with you what our family's thoughts and pictures were during and after our fun-filled time together last weekend!

Family Scavenger

Graham family: *"Let the fun begin!"*

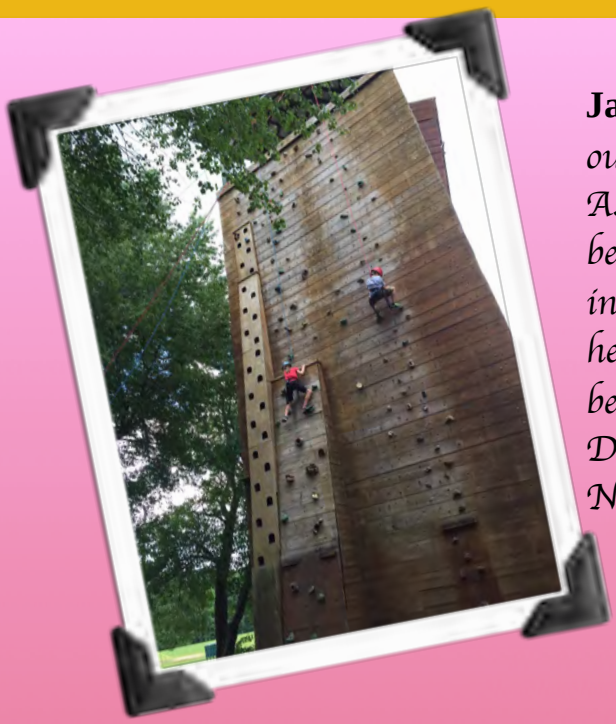
Travis Hill: *"Why we come to retreat … Connection!"*

Jamie Allen: *Thank you to the whole team of people who planned and prepared and served this weekend. Very refreshing and much needed- like water after wandering in the wilderness!! Thank you!!!! & to all the adoptive families we finally met in person- we are all doing great!!! We will persevere and God is pleased that we have taken part!!!*

Colleen Fink: *I would also like to thank everyone that helped out this weekend or in the planning of a fabulous weekend! It was amazing to see how God provided much needed time away and support for my weary soul! Whether it was time away from the kids to learn and network with other families or spending wonderful afternoons with my children! Thank you!*

Kara Bull: *Caleb Bull got a name sign this weekend (thanks to Tai Allen)! If any of your kids have given a name sign to either of our kids, please share. On the drive home, Em and Jon were looking through the directory and naming off all of their friends. I don't think either kid realizes yet that we won't be seeing everyone anytime soon.*

Note: A name sign in ASL is sort of like a nickname in English. Using a name sign takes far less time than fingerspelling an entire name.



Jamie Allen: *We are at a wonderful place where all of our family is making friends! We are learning more ASL. And the best part? I can sit back and relax, because everyone can talk to my kids and I don't have to interpret!!!! I cannot even tell you what that does for my heart...& to see friendships being made...ahhhhh!*
Do we HAVE to go home? None of us want to leave!!!

Mandy Hill: *I happened to walk by and see a conversation between RuthAnn and a staff at the camp tonight. Here is what was said:*

Staff - "Are you excited about going home tomorrow?"

RuthAnn - "No. I don't have any friends at home."
I asked her about some friends at home and she told me that she needed deaf friends and friends who know sign language and can communicate.

You guys, my heart is broken for her right now. I know she desires true friendship. I also know that true friendships can't be formed without true communication. Praying for God to open doors for my kids and in that area. This camp has been all that I expected and more. My heart is so full and I am so encouraged and inspired. Going back to our normal life will be a switch so I hope to bring some of this back with us. Get ready!

Mandy Hill: *Worship with a deaf church this morning was so amazing. My kids were so intrigued and paid attention, even participated!!*

Gina Bailey: *After this weekend I can't stop thinking in sign. Haha!*

Kara Bull: *Our family had a great time and learned so much. One of the highlights for me has been watching my family create their own sentences in sign language rather than using their voices. I also loved watching my kids learn how to interact with Deaf kids. Thank you all for welcoming us although we are at the very beginning of our adoption journey. I think Emily would love to keep in touch with some of her friends...maybe we can work out some FaceTime or Skype or IMO opportunities for virtual 'pen pals'?*

Tricia Noah: *I had a great weekend with Kristen, Max, and Miles at the Signs for Hope ASL Immersion weekend. It was a great opportunity for the boys and me to get to know each other better and to work on my ASL. I hope Bryan can go next year, but I sure hate to give up my spot!!!*

Kristen DeLauney: *The boys, my mom (Tricia Noah), and I spent Thursday-Sunday in NC at the Signs for Hope ASL Immersion Family Retreat! We had a wonderful time! It was great to be able to learn more and practice our ASL skills, and more importantly to be able to connect with other families of deaf adopted children that truly "get" and understand your life like no one else can. The boys did so much better than I anticipated and it was a blessing to share this time with them. I was also very proud of my mom for jumping in feet first even though she was nervous about her skill level compared to others. She did so amazing and I was very proud how many people came up and complimented me on how wonderful she was; because she is!!!!! We are glad to be back home to Daddy, but already can't wait for next year!!*

Kelli Graham: *Simon and I, along with each of our children, have experienced such an outpouring of love from every single person here. We are not prepared to re-enter the "real" world when we leave tomorrow. We wish you all safe travels home!*

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised!! Amen

To God, alone, be the glory!

Christian Alliance For Orphans Summit 2016

Report by: Mandy Hill

Every tribe, every tongue, every nation. This is something I have read and heard about most of my life, as I am sure you have as well. It somehow became a sort of cliché phrase over the years, but this year, I saw it come to life in a new way right before my eyes. The idea of unity is something I think a lot of us hope for, but it can also be overwhelming when you try and figure out a way to achieve it. This year at Summit, I met a truly diversified group of people, but in the end, we all had the same goal; to see the needs of orphans all over the world taken care of. While the goal was the same, the way to meet that goal differed depending on whom you spoke with. Some thought it was our job to go into every country and help care for orphans. Some believed that when others came into their country, it was actually setting them back, handicapping them in a way, by not allowing that country to take care of its own. Some believed more orphanages needed to be set up. Some thought orphanages were not the answer. Even though there were many different views, one thing they all had in common was an open mind to hear the other out. I never witnessed any arguing or defensiveness. It was truly a beautiful, refreshing sight to behold.

With so many countries and cultures represented, it could have been easy to get lost in the masses, but that isn't what happened. Each country and culture was respected, even honored. One of the most beautiful things that I witnessed at Summit was the unified worship of all who came. Worship and prayer was presented in many different languages, but it was all to the One, true God. It didn't matter if everyone's brains understood the words, it mattered everyone's hearts were touched by a loving Father. Many languages were poured out of people seeking the heart of the Father. The heart of the Father is what gives us a heart for the orphan. Without our own adoption as sons and daughters through Christ,

Mandy and her husband Travis live in Pensacola, FL with their two adopted Deaf daughters (11 & 10) and their two biological children, one son (3) and one daughter 16 mos. God provided all the funds so they could join us for family retreat last weekend, too!

I don't think we could even comprehend the love we have been given and that we can freely give to others. Regardless of race, language, or nationality, the call to care for the orphan is clear and He has equipped us to answer that call.

(l. to r.); Mike Papadopoulos, Travis Hill, Scott Crawford)

We had three CAFO Orphan Sunday coordinators with us at family retreat last weekend. All of these hearing dads have adopted Deaf children and are learning to sign with them.

Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed.
Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.
Isaiah 1:17

Becky's Calendar

June 23–26 – Virginia Baptist Conference of the Deaf; Richmond,
Presenting on the topic of "Adoption"

September 23–25 – Georgia Baptist Conference of the Deaf, Toccoa (presenting)

No scheduled trips out of the country for a while.

From my heart to yours…

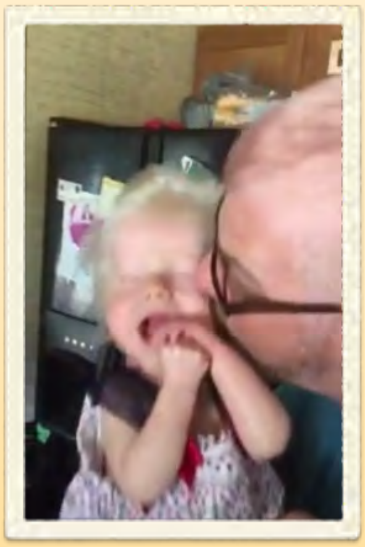
Three years ago at Christian Alliance for Orphans (CAFO) Summit 2013 in Nashville out of nowhere He impressed on me that Signs for Hope would begin advocating for Deafblind orphans, too. I had not intentionally not been advocating for them, but I was not intentionally advocating for them either.

There have been many God-connections over these three years to various folks with various backgrounds relating to Deafblindness. The supports He has us developing, still in their earliest of stages will also include Deafblindness aspects, as well.

Last Wednesday, just before our family retreat began on Thursday, a mom from TX was connected to me early in the morning. Our initial phone call ended in our agreement to open a Facebook group specifically for parents of Deafblind children. Her daughter is 33, she has a master's in Social Work from Gallaudet University and she is a precious believer in Christ. I have no doubt God has some special plans for her. I had looked for other groups on FB, but could not find anything that really satisfied my search for this mom. I invited a few folks into the new group and have watched as others have requested to join. We will evaluate this group after 3 months to see if it is satisfying the need or not.

The week before this, May 19,one of our SFH families shared their adopted deaf son XJ has been diagnosed with Usher's Syndrome, the most common condition that causes deafness and blindness. There are others within the SFH family, too.

Since I was so focused on family retreat I was not able to do much with this new group until yesterday and today (Wednesday and Thursday). Now, I have spoken twice to another woman, a grandmother, also in TX about her 10-year-old granddaughter who has multiple challenges including deafness and is losing her sight, rapidly. This grandmother's faith, she is younger than I am, is strong and His Spirit within us has bonded us quickly.



There is a little Deafblind girl who's life is unfolding for thousands to see on Facebook. She is 10 and a-half months old. Her parents and siblings are all Deaf and they are video-journaling Clarisa's life for all to celebrate. The things they are doing to connect with their daughter, especially dad, and connect her to her world despite her Deafblindness are absolutely amazing! You can follow their journey here. Undoubtedly, this family will become leaders for others with Deafblind children and those who serve them.

The rest of the story…in February 2014, Clarissa's dad, Justin Vollmar, announced to the world through CNN he was now an atheist. At the time, Justin was a pastor to the Deaf. You can read the article here. As you can imagine, it turned the Deaf world upside down, for a time. Will you join me in praying this dad who has developed such an intimate relationship with this special gift from God, his daughter, will lead him into an intimate relationship with his Creator? Relationship with Jesus is what Justin needs, as do you and I…and everyone else.

His love for you and me will take our breath away, if we let it!

Becky

PS. Please join us as we ask God to touch hearts to support Signs for Hope financially. Gifts are needed!

Stay in Touch with

Signs for Hope

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