

fw

Every One of Us Has a Story™

Fayette Woman

Giving

- To Foster Children
- To Women in Ghana
- And To All The Causes You Love

Becky Davenport

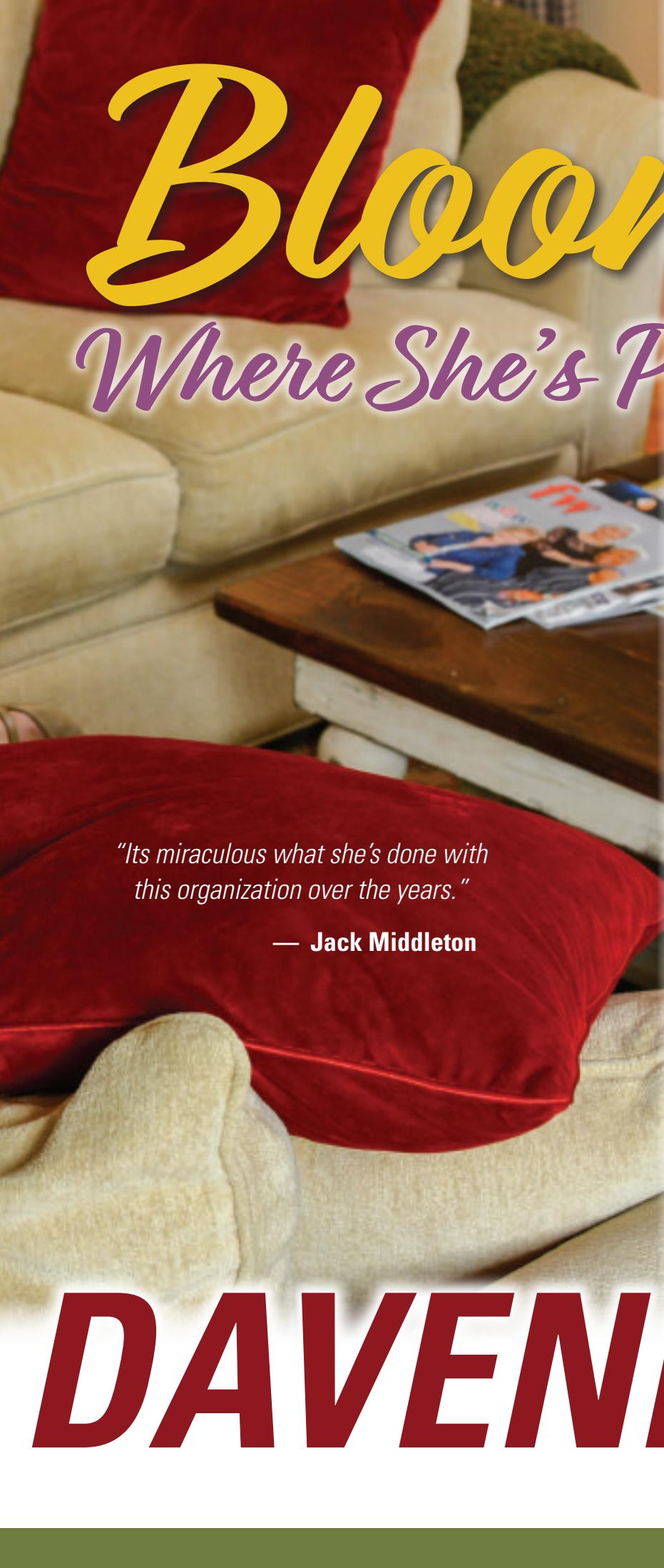
She Blooms Where She's Planted

DECEMBER 2017 | FREE
Issue 191



••••• **BECKY**

Blooming Where She's Planted



By LAKEISHA FLEMING

PHOTOS BY MARIE THOMAS

MAKEUP BY BRIDGIT CRIDER

She raced down back roads in Brooks, teaching a foster child to drive. She opened her home to host a graduation party for another foster child. Her organization clothed over 2,000 foster children last year. And she was beside her daughter every step of the way, as her child fought cancer.

Becky Davenport has never sought the spotlight. She prefers instead to support others. While life has taken her down some unpredictable paths, she has faced each situation with the same resolve: to bloom right where she is planted.

Becky was born in Cape Canaveral, Florida. She recalls selling coconuts on the sidewalk at age 4 with her brothers, Bobby and Jimmy.

"There were palm trees and coconuts on every corner at the time, so I don't know why we were going to sell them," she laughs. "We made a little bit of money." At a young age, Becky learned to make the most of her surroundings.

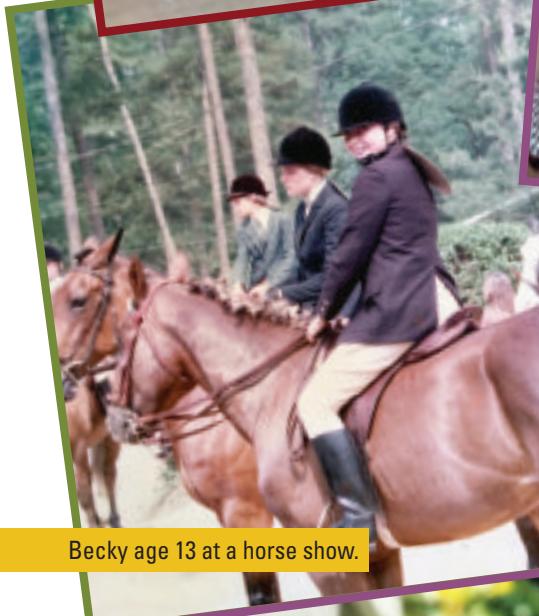
At age 6, Becky's family relocated to Atlanta. They settled in Sandy Springs initially, and three years later moved to Buckhead. She took to the area, meeting new people, and exploring her passions. "I loved horses and those are some of my favorite childhood memories. One of them was riding my horse to McDonald's with a friend," Becky says.

It was a carefree time in her life, but not one without change.

DAVENPORT



LEFT: Becky as a baby.
BELLOW: Becky as a fifth grader.



Becky age 13 at a horse show.



ABOVE: Becky with her brothers
Bobby and Jimmy

LEFT: Becky and Dennis on
their wedding day,
May 17, 1987.



Her parents divorced when she was 12-years-old. Her mother remarried a couple of years later. It was a time of adjustment, but also a time of intrigue, and even enjoyment. Her stepfather had two daughters, and along with her brothers and her younger sister Melanie, they were a happy brood of six.

"There was never a dull moment," Becky exclaims.

Her teenage years were a time of discovery.

"I read 'Mere Christianity' by CS Lewis when I was 17, and that really changed my perspective on the way that I looked at the world," she says. The book helped her shape beliefs that she holds dear today.

"(I knew) that God had a plan for my life. I think that was a defining moment."

"My personal relationship with Jesus Christ has been the single greatest influence on my life, learning to trust His will and to lean on Him in times of struggle," she continues.

"Trying to comprehend the depth of His love and letting it sink in that He really does forgive my many sins – this has been the story of my life."

And that story was enhanced by Becky's time at The Westminster Schools, where she graduated high school.

"(Westminster) just instilled in the students that you're going to be somebody, you're going to do something, you're going to contribute back. Everybody there was just going to contribute in a unique, positive way to the community."

After high school, Becky enrolled in The University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. She graduated cum laude in May, 1983, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish and Fine Arts.

After graduation, she returned to Atlanta and worked odd jobs until she entered the Portfolio Center in Atlanta, where she was trained to be a commercial illustrator.

While in school, she went to work as a driver for Dependable Courier where she interacted with Dispatch Manager, Dennis Davenport, over the radio. The two finally met face-to-face over a paycheck discrepancy and soon began dating. Becky left the courier position after her car was totaled in an

accident, but she continued to see Dennis.

She made another big decision on May 17, 1987, when she said "I do" to her former boss, Dennis. Becky completed her schooling in 1988 and began focusing on her career. She soon discovered a call to bloom in another way.

Dennis was accepted into law school. The couple moved to Athens in 1990, and Dennis attended the University of Georgia Law School. Becky decided it was more important to support the family than pursue commercial illustration, so she took the first job she found in Athens which was a secretarial position. A short time later, the Davenports received joyous news that would put Becky's ambitions on hold a while longer: they were expecting their first child. Jack was born in 1992.



Becky and Jack at 4 months old enjoying a laugh.

In 1993, Dennis graduated from law school. He received a job offer to work with a private law firm in Fayetteville. Becky had some trepidation about forging into unknown territory.

"It was a lonely experience, not knowing one person," she says. However, true to her nature, Becky lent her support to the endeavor, and the family made the move.

"I think, as women, we do what's best for our family," Becky says. "You have different times in your life where you have different priorities."

Those priorities included supporting her husband through law school and then his burgeoning career. "You just do what you have to do in order to make that happen. And so, if that meant giving up my dreams for a while, that was fine with me."

Her family responsibilities grew with the birth of daughter Garland in 1995. Becky remained at home until the children were school-aged. Then it was time for a transition.

"I prayed that God would point my feet in the right direction," she recalls. "I was at the point that my kids were older, and I wanted to do something fulfilling but I wasn't sure what that was."

While she was seeking her new endeavor, she says, "I didn't find it. It found me."

The family attended Fayetteville First United Methodist Church, where Becky actively volunteered. The church was seeking a full-time children's ministries director, and Becky filled the position in 1999. She



ORTHOATLANTA

Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Specialists

EXCEPTIONAL ORTHOPAEDIC CARE... NOW CLOSER TO HOME.



Michael McHenry, MD
Physiatrist /
Non Operative Spine



Virginia Jones, MD
Hand / Upper Extremity



David Brcka, MD
General Orthopaedics / Hip
Arthroscopy / Sports Medicine



Susan Jordan, MD
Shoulder / Knee
Sports Medicine



Sharrona Williams, MD
Ankle / Foot



Kevin Park, MD
Operative Neck / Spine



Alan Davis, MD
Total Joint Replacements



Jeremy Statton, MD
Total Joint Replacements

1265 Hwy 54 West
Suite 102
Fayetteville, GA 30214
Located in Piedmont Fayette Hospital
770-460-1900

354 Newnan Crossing Bypass
Suite 200
Newnan, GA 30263
Located within Ashley Park

2785 West Hwy 54
Peachtree City, GA 30269
Located in the MacDuff Shopping Center
770-460-4747

770-460-0094



ORTHOATLANTA.COM

Becky's most precious role is a dedicated wife to Dennis and devoted mother to Jack and Garland.



loved working with children, and loved sharing the job with Kim Cate.

"I did the education portion of the job, and she did the children's activities portion," says Kim. "She was one of those people that you would work with, and she just always set the bar high. Whatever you were doing with her, she made you look good."

"It was very important to her to not just be one of those churches that has programs with activities, but to be a meaningful ministry," Kim continues. She watched Becky incorporate fun activities for the children, and have them reach out to the community, while making sure Jesus was the primary focus.

Other duties included planning events like Vacation Bible School, and managing hundreds of volunteers. After four years, Becky had the opportunity to become the program director for the entire church. Her job as director prepared her to work in this new capacity, with duties ranging from overseeing the senior adult ministry to implementing a comprehensive Christian education program for adults and children. She responded to the needs of the 2,000-member congregation and found it was a continual learning experience.

"When you're in the church business, it's like the nonprofit business," Becky says. "You have to be a pied piper of sorts. You have to inspire people to join your bandwagon."

Becky relished this new challenge, yet was being equipped for her next role, which was presented to her just a year later.



The Davenport family in 1998.



Becky and Garland, age 4. Garland is the apple of her mother's eye.

Many of the original founders of Fayette Youth Protection Homes (FYPH), including Jim Friday and Asden Johnson, were also members of Fayetteville First United Methodist Church. Becky learned of an opening with FYPH for an Executive Director and jumped at the chance to fill it in 2004.

"I felt like God put me in the job at the church to train me for my current job, which is where I'm supposed to be."

Becky says she inherited a well-run organization and had a lot of community support. Yet there was still a lot of work to be done.

"When I came on board there was just one staff person – that was me," she says.

At that time, the organization operated two residential group homes for foster children, the Jim Friday Home on the northern end of Fayette County and the Asden Johnson Home located in Brooks.

Becky noted that over time there was a shift in Georgia to move away from group home care for foster children to the more individualized care that children receive in private foster homes. She and the FYPH Board of Directors made the tough decision to phase out the programs at the group homes and instead focus on the development of a new foster care program. FYPH's office at the time had unused space in an unfinished basement. Becky led the effort to finish and design the space and start up a new program called Gracie's Closet, which provided free clothing and supplies for foster children. As the organization grew, Becky oversaw the management of a growing staff, moving to and renovating a new and much larger location, and even changing their name.

"If we are going to try to have a statewide impact on foster kids, we needed to come up with another name," Becky states. She and the Board voted to become Bloom Our Youth, Inc. ("Bloom") in 2014. Their motto is, "Changing the face of foster children."

Using an innovative business model, Bloom took over its own foster care program in 2015, instead of contracting out the services.

"We took over the licensure of our foster care program to include therapeutic foster children, medically fragile foster children, and

MDVIP

24 Hour Physician Availability by Cell Phone or Pager!

We understand your personal healthcare needs are not one-size-fits-all.

MDVIP delivers a custom plan with Dr. Harper giving you longer appointment times - lasting as long as you need.

Same day or next day appointments can be scheduled at our office.



MDVIP started as an idea — an idea that was sparked in the minds of a few visionary doctors who were seeking to rekindle their passion for medicine once again, who knew there had to be a better way to fully care for — not merely treat — the patients who flooded their waiting rooms and who believed the healthcare system had lost its way.

TOP DOCTORS: Selected from among the best in the nation, MDVIP affiliated doctors hold accomplishments and honors such as Best Doctor mentions and Castle Connolly Top Doctor Awards.



SAME-DAY APPOINTMENTS: MDVIP affiliated doctors are dedicated to providing convenient same-day or next-day appointments.

TAILORED CARE: Whether you have a chronic condition or a clean bill of health, MDVIP's Wellness Program provides tailored wellness plans with guidance in weight management, sleep, exercise and much more.

SPECIALIST CARE: For advanced care needs, MDVIP helps manage direct referrals to top medical centers, including Cleveland Clinic, Mayo Clinic, Johns Hopkins and more.



Byron F. Harper III, M.D.

Board Certified Internal Medicine
106 Governors Square Parkway
Suite B
Peachtree City, GA 30269

770-892-1777

pregnant or parenting foster teens," says Becky. Now utilizing the skills of 15 employees and over 150 volunteers, Bloom has experienced explosive growth. Currently, at The Bloom Closet (formerly Gracie's Closet), Bloom is on track to serve 2,500 foster children from 80 Georgia counties by the end of the year. In its foster care program, Bloom recruits, trains and oversees 32 foster families who provide shelter and healing to over 100 foster children each year. The organization also operates Bloom University, a training program which equips foster families to deal with the complex issues that traumatized children face.

"It's miraculous what she's done with that organization over the years," states Jack Middleton, a former president of the



From left: Former Board President Don Philips, Fayette Thrift Shop President, Jennifer Barnes, and Becky in 2009



*Becky is such an incredible visionary!
Her positive and upbeat attitude is an
inspiration to everyone that works at Bloom.*

*She encourages us to achieve great things
and not to sweat the small stuff. Above all,
her passion for Bloom is a daily reminder that
we aren't just employees — we are a team,
on a mission to change the lives
of foster children.*

— Kristin Melton

ABOVE LEFT: In 2006, in front of the Fayette Youth Protection Home from left: Andy Carden, Jeff Giglio, Becky, and Brent Scarbrough **ABOVE RIGHT:** Friend and colleague Kim Cate during Becky's tenure as Children's Minister at Fayette United Methodist Church. **BELow:** Bloom Grand Opening Ribbon Cutting: 2014 in their current location.



Becky's welcoming and infectious attitude is what first attracted me to her. She brings that to bear with everyone she meets. It's who she is. She especially blossomed with the birth of our two children. Seeing her working with and caring for Jack and Garland truly exemplifies motherly love. She immerses herself in her family. One memory which has stuck with me is the excitement with which she planned birthday parties. One particular party was the "Candyland" party for Garland's fourth birthday. She converted our entire two-story house into a Candyland board game. Seriously. Spin the wheel, move forward a certain number of spaces, and you'll be rewarded with some sort of candy. And there were a lot of spins. Looking around, Becky was having as much fun, if not more, than all the children. That was just one birthday party. We've gone through Hawaiian themes to Power Rangers and then some. Her imagination and creativity know no bounds. I can think of no one more deserving to be recognized by Fayette Woman than Becky. Congratulations, Becky.

– Dennis, Becky's husband

In Becky's spare time, you'll find her putting her talents on canvas. Either on her back patio or in her studio, she brings paint to life; seen here are just a few of her masterpieces.



Bloom Board of Directors. "I've never been a subscriber of the cliche, 'she was born to be this.' But when it comes to Becky Davenport," Jack continues, "she had to be born with this in God's mind to lead this organization. Becky's love and passion for advancing the cause of Bloom is just unparalleled."

While Becky fought valiantly for the needs of foster children all over Georgia, she was fighting a more personal battle for her own child. Her daughter, Garland, had just graduated from Texas Christian University in May, 2017. Garland looked forward to beginning her new job as an IT Associate with Chick-fil-A's corporate office. It was then that she was jolted with unexpected news: Garland was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma mere weeks after graduation. Becky's world was rocked.

"I think every mom finds the strength to get through something like that," Becky explains. "You don't have any choice. Whatever your child is going through, you're going

to pull yourself together. Doing whatever you have to do to get your child through it becomes the most important thing in your life."

Becky stayed by Garland's side, through diagnosis, treatment, and now thankfully, remission.

"She is probably the most supportive mom I could ever ask for," says Garland. She notes that her mother has always been a giving person, committed to her family and her community, and her actions reflect that.

"The nature of her job is giving," Garland states. "For her, it's not just her job, it's her passion."

Becky says she's grateful for these experiences in Fayette.

"I could not imagine living and raising my kids (anywhere) but Fayette County. It has been just a huge blessing to me personally and to my kids. It's been

Struggling with Back & Neck Pain? Want to Avoid Surgery?

FREE MRI Review



*IDD Therapy of the Spine

The treatment of disc injuries of the spine utilizing non-surgical protocol to actually allow the injured disc to heal itself over a series of 20-30 treatments. We utilize High Powered Laser Therapy which dramatically speeds up the healing of soft tissue and nerve damaged areas.

*Call to Schedule an appointment with Dr. Kurt Miller of Disc & Spine Center of Fayetteville
(770) 719-1917*



www.discandspinecenter.com



a great place to raise kids." She also enjoyed seeing Dennis thrive in his current position as the Fayette County Attorney and also representing other government municipalities in the area.

Becky is hopeful about what the future holds. Now that she and Dennis are empty nesters, she has time to reacquaint herself with her hobbies of old. She has started painting again, would love to travel more, and writing a novel is on her bucket list. Professionally, more expansion at Bloom is on the horizon.

"I am focused on taking this organization to a statewide level and reaching more foster children than we ever dreamed possible," Becky says. "We're taking the culture and the business model that we've created here in Fayette County, and we're changing the way that foster care is done in Georgia."

And that includes the Zoom Truck.

"It's like a food truck, but it's a fashion truck," Becky explains, "It's basically a store on wheels. And we would go take it to foster children in underserved areas of the state. That's our dream right now."

What kid wouldn't love that?

Perhaps that is why Together Georgia, a state alliance of family and children service providers, named Bloom the 2017 Outstanding Foster Care Agency in Georgia. And for Bloom and Becky, there's nowhere to go but up.

Becky's favorite quote, by Mahatma Gandhi, sums up the way she continues to live her life.

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in service to others."



LaKeisha Fleming is the founder and president of Vision 2:2 Productions, LLC, a multimedia production company creating television, film and digital content. She is also a prolific writer. Her company provides magazine article, blog, script and press release writing services, among others.

