

A New Chapter in The Craddock Center Story

Did you know that there are, by some accounts, more than 300 (and some say 3,000) versions of the Cinderella story, some dating back more than 2,000 years? Though details vary across time and place, the theme of the story remains the same.

The details of the story of The Craddock Center, too, have changed across time and place. But the theme is constant: The Center's mission is to "deliver educational and cultural programs to children, families, and communities, primarily in southern Appalachia."

During the past two years, the Center's story has been significantly revised. The setting has moved to the lovely, now mortgage-free building that was the Center's original home. The roles of some main characters have shifted and changed. Our beloved founder is no longer physically present, though his wisdom and love are the constant foundation of the Center's work, and John Craddock and Nettie Craddock continue to play active roles on the Board. The Center stands firmly on the shoulders of the gifts of its four previous Executive Directors, as well as its many fine staff, volunteers, and Board members.

And now the Board is outlining the next chapter in the Center's story as it begins a search for the next Executive Director. My role, as Interim Executive Director, is to support the efforts of the dedicated Board to find just the right person.

And who better to contribute to the next chapter than you, who have been collaborators in the story for so long, and who know and love the work and vision? Perhaps you know the perfect person to join and add to the telling of the Center's story. We're listening.

-Beth Roberts

Interim Executive Director

From the North Pole to The Craddock Center

What's it like to be Santa to the children served by The Craddock Center? Simply the most wonderful thing in the world! When Santa comes into a classroom, ringing his sleigh bells and giving a hearty HO!HO!HO!, it's just awesome to see the excitement and wonder in those little faces. As Santa shows them his Magic Key and explains how this lets him into a house with no chimney, choruses of "Wow!" and "Cool!" ring out. Reminding them that the most important thing about Christmas is love, Santa asks them to promise that, on Christmas morning, they will tell whoever is with them that they love them and give them a big hug.

How rewarding it is to see a Hispanic child's eyes light up when Santa speaks to him in Spanish; or to see a huge smile come to the face of a nonverbal child when Santa signs to her! What could be better than to put a smile on the faces of children and to help them feel good about themselves? Priceless!!

But it is also a very sobering experience, and I'm often brought to tears. These are not children asking for the latest electronic device. "What do you want for Christmas?" asks Santa. "A Happy Meal;" "A box with food in it;" "Some warm clothes." We give each child a beautiful handcrafted wooden toy, made by church groups in Texas and Florida, and we know that this is the only gift many of these children will get for Christmas.

Bringing Christmas Happy and Hope to these children has been the highlight of this Santa's season for the last 10 years, as well as a yearly affirmation of Dr. Craddock's wisdom and vision that led him to start the Center. So Santa asks everyone to do all you can to support this work, and wishes everyone a Merry Christmas!

—Jack "Santa" Senterfitt





My only problem with Santa Claus was that dad-gum, good for nothing, plague take it (you can tell by my language I am still upset) list. Granted, Santa knows when you’ve been sleeping, and he knows when you’re awake, but his list is dead wrong. I don’t care if he’s checked it twice, he still does not know who’s naughty and who’s nice. I could have done a better job making the list. Let me be specific. I had a playmate who shot a red bird with a BB gun. What did he get for Christmas? A brand-new blue and white American Flyer bicycle. A neighbor boy never worked one day in the garden—not one day. What did he get? A real, live pony, dark brown with white stocking feet, that he named Stockings. Down the road lived a boy who plays marble for keeps, which everyone knows is the beginning of gambling. In spite of this criminal activity, he got a whole box of licorice that he didn’t share with anyone. And his younger brother, barely old enough to talk, said the four letter word for “the bad place.” Santa rewarded his cussing with a bright red wagon with rubber-tired wheels. And did I mention his sister? Like all girls, she got away with everything, and in return she received a big doll whose eyes closed and which wet its pants.

And me? I’ll tell you about me. I was faithful in Sunday school for two weeks before Christmas. I took my turn gathering eggs, feeding the hogs, and churning milk. I swept the porch before company arrived, and as Momma will tell you, I usually washed my hands before supper. I could go on. And what did it get me? An apple, an orange, some raisins still on the stem, a few walnuts, a stick of peppermint, a box of sparklers, and a little truck that you had to push across the floor. That’s it: Santa’s list was seriously flawed! Or the whole system was. Naughty kids get nothing; nice kids get loads of good stuff—that’s not the way life is. I know some beautiful children whose only sin is that they were born into poverty. And what will they get for Christmas? That’s up to you. —FBC

GIVING HOPE AND HAPPINESS

I knew but they didn’t. I had arranged with Jack Senterfitt to take my two granddaughters’ tickets as they boarded the tourist train in Blue Ridge. They were four and six at the time.

It was their first time in Blue Ridge and they were taking in all the sights and sounds--especially of the coughing and spitting of the train. As we approached the car to board, I gave them their tickets and told them to be sure to give the tickets to the conductor.

As they turned to hand their tickets to the conductor, they were greeted with a booming voice, “well...it’s Gretl and Tatum.” They were standing face to face with a tall man with full white beard and flowing, shoulder-length white hair. Their jaws dropped as they slowly handed their tickets to the conductor.

They boarded the train saying nothing and sat down, stunned with what had just happened. Was it or wasn’t it Santa Claus? Did they see what they just saw? How did he know their names?

As the train pulled out, Jack came over to talk to the girls. For the first and only time in their lives, they were tongue-tied. They were too shy to talk to this friendly stranger. Or was he really.....?

That same evening at the church they saw him sitting in the choir and excitedly came to me to tell me that Santa Claus was in the choir! How did he get to the church they asked? I took them to the front door and pointed out the red truck in the parking lot and told them that it was his truck.

I mean..... he looked like Santa, he knew their names and he even drove a red truck. Was he really Santa.....?

The Craddock Center doesn’t have a red truck but it does have the Story Express. The volunteers who drive the truck and hand out free books to the children may not have flowing white beards but they do have the twinkle and tear in their eyes when they invite the children to pick their own book.

It is the personal touch of meeting and interacting with the children that can and does make a difference in their lives. You may not be dressed in red, but you are of generous heart.

Sharing hope and happiness is what we do at The Craddock Center. —William “Bill” Crowl



Pursuant to GA Code Section 43-1-7-8 this charitable appeal is made on behalf of The Craddock Center, located in Cherry Log, Georgia. Full program and financial information is available upon request: PO Box 69, Cherry Log, GA 30522 | 706-632-1772 | craddockcenter@tds.net

Tell our story through Christmas cards!



Happy & Hope...We Deliver Songs & Stories for Children
The Craddock Center

P.O. Box 69
Cherry Log, Georgia 30522

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