

INSIDERS' SCOOP

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**Special
Edition:**

**Tribute to
Jim Mason**

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Farewell Friends

Thank you for your support these 42 years!



Well, folks, this is the last of the hundreds of these letters I've been blessed to write over 3 decades from this chair. My photo has changed, a few joints are creaky, but my heart remains strong for this compelling cause.

As we enter a new decade, we face many challenges that will test our resilience, including;

- *Greater numbers of children facing larger obstacles in their path toward normal development,*
- *A shrinking labor pool limiting the number of qualified professionals available to meet this challenge, and*
- *Greater competition for a dwindling philanthropic dollar.*

-Jim Mason, 1989 Beech Acres Annual Report

Yes, these words from my very first Annual Report letter as a new Executive Director could have been written in 2021... even more so! **Obstacles of the 1990s seem like a breeze compared to life today.**

Until 1989, Beech Acres had mostly been known as the General Protestant Orphan Home, a 140-year-old Cincinnati icon housing neglected children. There was quite a gap between who we were and what all children needed going forward.

Fortunately, we were blessed with an open-minded board and visionary staff, both deeply committed to understanding and mitigating the root causes of modern-day childhood trauma. We became a licensed mental health agency. We founded the Single Parent Center and introduced the Nurturing Parent Program for the growing number of parents overwhelmed with stress. We implemented Creative Connections, a cutting-edge initiative to

improve quality outcomes and reduce the cost of doing so, for Hamilton County's 300 most troubled children. By integrating managed care practices with wraparound services, children's mental health improved. Unfortunately, we were unable to reduce the cost of the services they received.

The most important lesson from Creative Connections was a deepened understanding and empathy for the parents and guardians of these very troubled children.

By truly accepting parents where they were and putting their wishes at the center of their child's care, we were able to counsel and connect them to the right community resources at the right time and achieved the greatest benefit possible for their kids.

On the occasion of Beech Acres 150th anniversary in 1999, For the Love of Kids® was launched. This annual conference just for parents drew 1500 attendees each November for 10 years. They celebrated the greatly rewarding and challenging job of parenting while learning from national and local experts... and each other.

We learned if Beech Acres was to mitigate the effects of the growing 'obstacles' children faced, it was to be through their parents. The transformation to becoming Beech Acres Parenting Center was underway!

We articulated our beliefs about parents: All parents love their kids and do the best they can with the knowledge and resources available at the time. We focus on building the innate strengths of parents and their children. We believe that vulnerable children can thrive in their less-than-perfect families if parents and kids are supported and guided by caring, competent professionals. And we created our proprietary Natural Strength Parenting™ (NSP) model as Beech Acres' unique approach to parenting, which combines a focus on character strengths with the brain science of mindfulness.

While children today are facing even more obstacles than we imagined back in 1989, we are not only adapting to the turbulence

of the 2020s, but we are also leading through it. **We now serve more than 14,000 children, parents, and teachers** where they work, learn and live. We reach them digitally through virtual service methods. And, we are implementing a **robust strategy of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)**, designed to improve how we work with each other at Beech Acres, the quality of services we provide to children and families of color, and the advocacy we do for changing the social systems affecting them.

None of this would be remotely possible without decades of commitment and support of our thousands of donors, volunteers and community partners. **I deeply appreciate the faith, confidence, and investment of your personal resources in Beech Acres Parenting Center.**

I am humbled by the passion, generosity and wisdom of the hundreds of board members who

have supported, guided, and challenged me. It has been a true partnership in the best way possible.

I have been blessed with a level of passion, integrity, professionalism and humanity among thousands of staff members who have contributed significant portions of their precious lives in service of our vital mission. Their commitment, effectiveness and teamwork are embodied in Beech Acres Parenting Center being named to the annual list of Top Workplaces by The Cincinnati Enquirer for 7 years in a row! Their bravery and perseverance will ensure the agency continues to thrive.

I share my legacy with all of you.

I owe my deepest gratitude to my life partner and wife of 48 years, Debby. She has supported, encouraged, coached, and corrected me throughout this journey together. And, she has been a fabulous parenting teammate and mother to our own

three great kids. They have taught me more about Natural Strength Parenting than any book I've ever read. I am very enthusiastic about life's next chapter with all of them, their super spouses, and our eight fabulous grandkids. I look forward to lots of fun with family and friends, while embracing new opportunities for meaning and contribution in this amazing community I call home.

I have taken this special mission as far as I can with my time and talent. **With deep gratitude and a joyful heart, I look forward to passing the leadership baton to a new CEO later this spring.** With fresh perspectives, stellar management skills, passion for the mission, and a longer career runway, the new leader can take the Beech to its next level of even greater impact.

Be well,



Leading With ZEST



As an organization that imagines a world where all children are nurtured to discover, cultivate and apply their natural gifts we intentionally focus on character strengths throughout all we do. These character strengths are core to our programs, our employees, our partners, our donors and those that we serve. These strengths are also core to our leadership. When I reflect on the

impact that our CEO Jim Mason has had on so many individuals, I instantly gravitate to Jim's character strength of ZEST.

According to VIA Character Strengths if ZEST is your top strength, you approach all experiences with excitement and energy. You never do anything halfway or halfheartedly. In summary for you, life is an adventure.

Throughout the last 8 years on the Board I have asked numerous individuals why they are involved with Beech Acres. The answer usually starts with well I met Jim Mason... It never ceases to amaze me how one interaction can connect so many individuals to how important the mission of the Beech is and how contagious Jim's passion for that mission is. Each conversation usually concludes with the individual saying I

am involved, because I wanted to be a part of this exciting adventure. Jim has taken his character strength of ZEST and poured every ounce of it into his life's work at Beech Acres. From the last Orphan Feast in 1986 to the For the Love of Kids conference in 1999 to a modern day forward thinking, innovative Parenting Center.

Jim Mason's ZEST has been propelling us along the journey. Jim, on behalf of the almost 15,000 lives each year that Beech Acres serves and those you have personally inspired, thank you for allowing each of us to be the beneficiary of your ZEST.



Jenny Franta
Board Chair

Connector. Risk Taker. Change Agent.

Jim's Remarkable Journey and Impact

Over his remarkable 42-year career at Beech Acres Parenting Center, James R. Mason has led our 172-year-old organization through an incredible evolution of purpose and programs focused on strengthening families so children could achieve their unique potential.

Anticipating modern society's complex and rapid changes, Jim has purposefully led the former General Protestant Orphan Home through its evolution from a 19th-century orphanage to the 21st-century parenting center it is today. Jim's singular vision led to helping thousands of parents meet the challenges of raising children today AND the creation, development, and implementation of Natural Strength Parenting™, our unique approach to parenting, upon which all of our family-focused programs are based.

Jim joined Beech Acres as Assistant Director, Child Care in 1978. At that time, Jim was responsible for the planning and administration of daily operations in what was then a residential treatment center. In this scenario, Jim looked, as he always has, at the adults in a child's life, the caretakers at Beech Acres, and how they could positively impact a child's growth and development. To develop these caretakers to provide the best possible care for the children living here, **Jim developed and implemented Beech Acres' Training Program shortly after his arrival and became Director, Training in 1980.**

As divorce rates soared in the 1980s, the profound impact of the changing structure of the family unit dominated headlines. Jim sensed the changing needs of parents, families, and kids in the community and provided inspired leadership in founding The Aring Institute, which offered essential services to divorcing and remarried families and

their children. **Under Jim's leadership as Director, The Aring Institute grew to a staff of 12, serving over 5,000 children, families, and professionals.** By 1986, The Aring Institute was **recognized as one of the country's most comprehensive service centers for children and families experiencing the stress of divorce and remarriage.**

organization's history, as we transitioned from serving kids on-site to serving the wider community through a range of ever-evolving services designed to meet the needs of modern parents.

By 1989 Beech Acres shuttered its final residential cottage and James R. Mason was named President & CEO.

On the day I met Jim, I remember him saying, "I'm Jim Mason and I'm here because I love kids and I want them to grow up in a loving, nurturing family environment".

I had just joined the Beech Acres board and Jim was the staff liaison to the Aring Institute Board committee. He made that statement with such passion and commitment that I said to myself, "This guy's got it. Count me in on his team!"

It was such a joy for me to watch Jim utilize his passion for nurturing children's environments and his incredible people skills to lead the staff, board and clients to open this new community resource. I was with him on that journey and, as chair of the Board, was also present when it was time to select a new Executive Director for Beech Acres. After conducting our national search, I couldn't have been more thrilled to offer Jim the position in the fall of 1989.

Linda J. Smith, BAPC Board member 1983-1992; Board Chair 1989-90

In the late 1980s Jim's uncanny ability to anticipate the ever-changing needs of parents, families, and kids led him to advocate fiercely among Beech Acres' staff and the Board of Directors about the benefits of creating preventive services for families. **Jim believed that prevention rather than reaction was the best way to build stronger families.** This belief and this advocacy became the first seeds of Intentional, Strength-based, Mindful Practice, which would eventually grow into Natural Strength Parenting™.

As a result of Jim's vision of the future, changes in the community around social services, and a new approach to fundraising, Beech Acres held its final Orphan Feast in 1986, ending a 137-year fundraising tradition in the community. This signaled **the biggest evolution in the**

During the 1990s, Jim's leadership as President & CEO grew Beech Acres' reputation in the community by establishing partnerships and creating coalitions designed to support families in the community. These included:

- The Emergency Therapeutic Foster Care program, which provided a safe, short-term environment for children to heal from an immediate crisis
- Care Management, a component of Hamilton County's new managed care initiative with Family & Children First Management, Inc.
- Creative Connections, a collaboration with Lighthouse Youth Services to manage the care of the most troubled children in the county

1978
Jim Mason begins his career at Beech Acres as the Assistant Director, Child Care (Residential Treatment Program)

1982
With Jim Mason as Director, The Aring Institute was established to provide services to assist families in coping with divorce

1989
Jim Mason appointed Executive Director of Beech Acres

1998
Every Child Succeeds®, a partnership of Beech Acres, United Way, Community Action Agency and Children's Hospital, was established

1980
Jim Mason becomes Director, Training

1986
Final "Orphan Feast" was held

Jim Mason becomes Director, Agency Services

1995
The Ujima program, a partnership of Beech Acres, Talbert House and Children's Hospital, was established

1999
First annual For the Love of Kids® conference was held

By 1998 Jim Mason's Beech Acres had become a driving force in preventive and restorative services for families in the community. Jim provided collaborative leadership that led to the co-creation of **Every Child Succeeds®** with Children's Hospital Medical Center, Community Action Agency, and the United Way. The following year saw the debut of **For the Love of Kids®**, a *Beech Acres Conference for Practical Parenting*.

In 2001 Beech Acres was reaccredited by the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services (COA), having met the highest national standards and delivered the best quality services to the Greater Cincinnati area **under Jim Mason's leadership.**

The 2000's saw further partnership development, evolution, transition and recognition for Beech Acres, including:

- Receiving the Better Business Bureau Torch Award for Marketplace Ethics
- Establishment of MyParentSource.com to provide parents with one-on-one help from professional parent coaches
- Expansion of mental health services into the westside at our new Glenmore location and into Warren and Clinton Counties
- Creation of Parent Education Program (PEP) with Hamilton County Job and Family Services
- Establishing our first school-based mental health services, a precursor to Beyond the Classroom™

In 2010 to better reflect Jim Mason's belief that the best way to serve children is through their parents, the organization changed its name to Beech Acres Parenting Center.

In 2017, after decades of test and learn, Jim's vision of parenting became embedded in Beech Acres' DNA and all program areas with the establishment of

The open ended, growth-inspiring aspect of **For the Love of Kids®** bears all the hallmarks of Jim's best work: recognizing and emphasizing parents' inherent strengths to enable them to be and do their best. Jim's inclusive, compassionate nature made him a natural in helping create the vision for the ambitious **Every Child Succeeds®** program. It's goal of assuring that every new mom in greater Cincinnati would have the necessary support on hand promised to remove the stigma associated with needing help.

Margy Richards, BAPC Board member 1989-2000; Board Chair 1996-1998

Natural Strength Parenting™. Natural Strength Parenting™ encourages parents to be intentional in their approach to parenting, to be mindful and "in the moment" when spending time with their children, and to identify and cultivate their children's unique strengths in order to unlock their potential, build resiliency and become capable, caring, and contributing citizens.

In 2019, Jim navigated the organization through a major reorganization which saw Beech Acres move from 18 to 8 programs. This reorganization shifted the focus of the organization to meet parents and children where they were; in schools, pediatric offices, and the community.

With this streamlined service delivery, Beech Acres is achieving greater impact on the lives of parents and children, which has led to solid investments in schools, pediatric practices, and child welfare. The highly committed and talented team of Beech Acres staff now makes a positive impact on **more than 14,000 children, caregivers, teachers, health care providers and children in Southwest Ohio each year.** For 8 years running, Beech Acres has been selected by The Cincinnati Enquirer as one of Cincinnati's Top Places to Work, including a 2020 #1 ranking in the Meaningful Work category.

Jim has also worked with other community leaders to create numerous local, state and national coalitions designed to improve service quality for vulnerable children and their families. **His leadership in the community and state of Ohio has been recognized by several groups, including the Ohio Children's Alliance, PreventionFIRST,**

NAMI Southwest Ohio, and Vistage International's CEO Lifetime Achievement Award.

One of Jim's final contributions to the legacy of Beech Acres Parenting Center is the **establishment of the agency's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion strategic priority.** This initiative will be a major agency focus for the next several years. The overarching goal is to develop and execute an anti-racism strategy for those Beech Acres serves, the systems affecting them, and within Beech Acres itself.

Jim Mason committed his professional life to a simple, but challenging purpose – strengthening families so children can achieve their unique potential. Thank you, Jim for recognizing the individual strengths in every parent and every child and for your relentless pursuit of pushing the community and the world forward toward a brighter and more hopeful future.

Jim, a serial social services entrepreneur, was comfortable with the risk of launching new programs and services and had the full support of the board. Several of the new programs and services were not economically sustainable, but Jim learned from those experiences and pivoted with confidence and grace. Today's Beech Acres Parenting Center and the portfolio of valued services, including Beyond the Classroom™, Parent Connex™, Kinship Connections and Parent Enrichment Program, are built upon the successful aspects of many programs that came before.

Tim Stautberg, BAPC Board member 2004-2016; Board Chair 2013-2015

2001
Beech Acres reaccredited by the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services for meeting the highest national standards and delivering the best quality services to the Greater Cincinnati area

2010
Changed name to Beech Acres Parenting Center

Final For the Love of Kids® conference held

2017
The Character Effect™ pilot launched in schools

2020
Jim Mason announces his retirement effective July 1, 2021

2021
Jim Mason leads the establishment of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Priority Initiative and Plan, in response to the ongoing racial injustices in the U.S.

2004
First School-Based Mental Health Services offered at Heberle and Hays Elementary Schools

2016
Parent Connex™ pilot launched in pediatric offices

2018
Intentional, Strength-based, Mindful Parenting Practice becomes Natural Strength Parenting™, our unique approach to parenting.

Beyond the Classroom™ pilot launched and expands school-based mental health services for kids and support for parents

Thank you, Jim!

Applause from Board and Staff



My earliest memory of Jim is from 1986, seeing him sitting tall on the GPOH John Deere tractor, adroitly steering the old girl around the campus setting up the booths and infrastructure for the Orphan's Feast. For 42 years Jim has emanated that same zest, enthusiasm, charisma, wisdom and vision as that young man, whether steering a tractor or inspiring and leading our amazing organization to literally change our world for the betterment of kids and families. Jim you have always been a mentor and role model for me. I want to be like you when I grow up.

Dave Brewer, Senior Parenting Specialist



Jim's leadership, passion and unconditional commitment to the community and the families we serve has been inspiring to so many of us. His ability to leverage the strengths of employees, donors, and the Board has led BAPC on a path of success, creating innovative programs in response to the growing systemic needs.

Ruthann Zins, Chief Financial Officer



Jim has taught me countless lessons about leadership and parenting. One of the most important was to slow down and spend quiet moments reflecting. Not to solve a problem or to rush on fixing the next thing, but to approach with appreciation and curiosity.

Sharidon Wolz, VP, School Based Services and Behavioral Health



I am grateful for Jim's leadership in recognizing the importance of parenting in the lives of children and families. When we became Beech Acres Parenting Center, the transition was disruptive and challenging in many ways. Thanks to Jim's passion, perseverance and commitment to parents, our agency is now known as a "21st century parenting center" within the social services sector.

Jill Huynh, VP, New Business Development and Parent Connex™

I have had the pleasure of knowing and working with Jim as a past board member and board chair. Jim has the gift of inspiring people through his enthusiasm, compassion and dedication to the Beech Acres Parenting Center's mission. He treated ALL parents and their children with the same kindness, love and respect as he did his own family. It is because of Jim's strong leadership that the organization is strong and relevant to today's parents and their needs in raising children.

**Priscilla Ungers,
Board Chair 2011-2013
Board Member 2004-2015**





Congrats Jim! To inspire hope in others is truly living! Everything else is a missed opportunity. You've made it your life's mission to help families find uncommon beauty in common places. Well done!!
Ric Powell, Board Chair 2017-2019
Board Member 2011-Present

I am grateful for the opportunity to have been able to work and learn from Jim over the past 13 years, while at Beech Acres Parenting Center. Through his visionary leadership and encouragement I have grown myself as a leader. He has been a key champion for the development of The Character Effect™ program. His vision, where all children are nurtured to discover, cultivate and apply their natural gifts has laid the foundation for the incredible work Beech Acres is doing to improve the lives of children, families and communities across the Greater Cincinnati area and beyond.
Jaimi Cabrera, Director,
The Character Effect™



Each quarter, I have the honor of listening to Jim welcome our new employees during Mission Morning. He has an incredible ability to connect immediately with each person, demonstrating how much he cares about them and what it means to be intentional, strength-based and mindful through actions rather than just words. Jim is truly a leader who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way.

Anne Wallace, PhD
VP, Applied Science



Jim recognized the importance of parenting in raising thriving children and dedicated his life to working through Beech Acres to educate, equip and support parents and dedicated adults in the most important job a person can have. From hosting the annual *For the Love of Kids®* parenting conference to working with and celebrating foster parents, Jim has made a difference in the lives of thousands and thousands of families. And his impact will continue to be felt with each new generation in our community.
Tim Stautberg, Board Chair 2013-2015
Board Member 2004-2016



Jim Mason has transformed Beech Acres into the community leading advocate for children in our area. By selflessly working collaboratively he has brought many organizations together to help parents be better for their children. No one better personifies the altruistic caring for people better than Jim. He is a joy to work with, and an inspiration to observe.

Tom Cassady,
Board Chair 2007-2009
Board Member 2003-2012

Jim's zest is contagious. His vision for parents and children has inspired many of us, and members of the community to bring our strengths in the service of others.
Rická Berry, VP, Child Welfare



Jim's ability to promote thriving families has turned into a remarkable career. His leadership, ideas and infectious spirit has inspired others to join him to improve our community. And, he is a great guy and fun to be with!
Woody Uible, Board Chair 1999-2001
Board Member 1992-2002



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Please join us for Jim Mason's Launch Party!



Help us celebrate
the milestones
and the man

Sunday, June 13, 5 – 7 PM
Cocktails and Dinner Under the Tent
Taft Museum of Art Garden

\$50 per person
Outdoor venue; Covid protocols in place
Virtual attendance option also available

RSVP by June 1 to Tracy Nath
513.233.4739 tnath@beechacres.org
Online at beechacres.org/attend-an-event/

CONNECTOR. TRUTH SEEKER. BELIEVER.
VISIONARY. RISK TAKER. CHANGE AGENT.

For 42 years, Jim's passion for children and
visionary leadership have improved and saved
the lives of thousands of children and families
in our community.

The Jim Mason Champion for Children Fund

The Jim Mason Champion for Children Fund
is being established to **honor the leadership
and extraordinary impact Jim has made**
at Beech Acres AND to provide a strong
foundation for the next CEO.

Your donation can be made online at
beechacres.org/donate-now/; **by calling**
Kaitlyn Walter at 513.233.4745; **or by check**
payable to Beech Acres Parenting Center.

THANK YOU!