

# FIRST PERSON: Nettie is safe now

*By Sean A. Milner*  
*Correspondent*



Milner

The children that come to your Baptist Children's Village (BCV) have all experienced trauma. **Rachel** was four years old when she was slapped in the face by her mother's boyfriend. **Mark**, age 14, was homeless for an extended period of time. **Nettie** was just five years old when she was often abandoned along with her sisters when their mother would go out at night.

All are safe now in one of your BCV cottages, but they continue to face many hurdles. School is often one of them. Children that have been abused and neglected have a more difficult school experience than those who have not. Trauma – no matter how severe – can impact every aspect of their lives.

Nettie and her sisters came to one of your BCV campuses earlier this year. Because of their life experiences they had difficulty concentrating, making basic math and reading comprehension more of a challenge. They were in danger of having to repeat a grade if they didn't get help.

"Consistent education for their children often gets overlooked by parents who are in crisis," said Shane Ashley, one of your BCV case managers. "Two little girls on our campus were just

so far behind. They needed a lot of special attention.”

God was at work in their lives. Thanks to a small group of education majors at a local university, these sisters were tutored and encouraged. Slowly and calmly, they helped the girls sound out the words on the page and carefully showed them how numbers are added and subtracted.



“Sometimes the words on the page were big and they [tutors] helped me sound them out,” said Nettie, brushing her hair behind her ear. “Sometimes I have small words and they are easier. Now I am reading chapter books; I love chapter books. I like Biscuit books and Pete the Cat.”

When final report cards came out earlier this year, Shane said they could see much improvement. The one-on-one time with the tutors made such a difference not only in their reading skills but also in their confidence.

“I walked into the cottage one day and Nettie told me to come sit on the couch with her and listen to her read. She had a Bible in her lap,” Shane said. “She began with Genesis 1:1. She was grinning from ear to ear.”

“Back-to-school is right around the corner, and we need your help,” Shane said. “With the new school year approaching, please consider a gift of any amount to help us continue telling the good news of the Gospel and providing the everyday needs on your residential campuses across Mississippi. This can be new school clothes, needed school supplies, and many other necessities your children need.”

Nettie's and her sisters' lives have been changed forever. Not only are they safe, sleep on clean sheets in their own beds, and have hot meals every day, but your houseparents and case managers are telling them of the saving love of Jesus Christ.

They are going to church for the first time. "I have four Bibles," Nettie said proudly. "That's the only book I read, and will be the only book I will read... except maybe Pete the Cat."

*Milner, a BCV resident for 18 years, is BCV executive director and a member of Morrison Heights Church, Clinton. He holds both undergraduate and law degrees from Baptist-affiliated Mississippi College in Clinton. Names in this commentary were changed to protect the privacy of the children.*