

Home for the holidays

This time of year we often gather together with our friends and families to celebrate the season. Many in our community do not have this simple luxury. They may be in a financial crisis with no place to call home, or they may not have a family to call their own.

As the mom of three children, one of the stories that has touched my heart the most this year is the story of the Dill family. Over the years, they've opened their home to countless children in foster care. Along the way, they've expanded their family.

The Dill family felt the desire to open their home to foster children when their son was young. Ashley and Jackie have fostered many children throughout the years,

providing a safe and stable home during difficult times. In 2015, Peyton and Josiah, with the help of their Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), were placed in the care of Ashley and Jackie Dill. The next year, Charleigh, Lincoln and Lenna, with help from their CASA, were also placed in the care of Ashley and Jackie.



**AMANDA
BURT**

Through United Way community partner Family Support Council's CASA program, the Dills were provided emotional support and advocacy for each child. The volunteers worked tirelessly to ensure the best interest of the children. Thanks to the CASA's efforts, the Dills were able to adopt Peyton, Josiah, Charleigh, Lincoln and Lenna.

Today, all five children are legally what they have been to each other all along: family.

I am so thankful for the programs that United Way supports that help stabilize families. We are in the business of building better futures. I can't think of a better future than one where children are in a stable and loving home with their families.

United Way's mission is simple: Improving lives. Inspiring donors. Uniting community. Last year, United Way touched the lives of more than 55,000 of our friends and neighbors right here at home. United Way's strategic guidelines in our focus areas of education, basic needs and health serve as a compass for our investments. These are the building blocks of a good life.

■ Education: Get kids ready for kindergarten, reading at grade level by third grade and graduating on time with the skills to

be career and life-ready.

■ Basic needs: Reduce the long-term need for food, housing and utility assistance through life skills education and financial counseling.

■ Health: Support prevention services so youth and adults are healthy and avoid risky behaviors.

'Tis the season of giving. Helping those in need in our community by partnering with United Way is the best place to start!

We have reached 85 percent of our campaign goal of \$4.1 million. Please join us so the Dill family and others may receive life changing programs and services throughout the year. Give online at ourunitedway.org/give or mail a donation to United Way of Northwest Georgia, P.O. Box 566, Dalton, GA 30722.

Amanda Burt is the president of United Way of Northwest Georgia.