

# Executive Director's Message



Eggleston Youth Centers, Inc. was founded in 1974 by the John, Grace and Michael Graham Foundation. The Grahams were an African American family from Chickasha, Oklahoma. The original mission of the foundation was to provide caring home-like facilities for abused, neglected or homeless youth.

From its humble beginnings as a six-bed home for adolescent boys, Eggleston has expanded its program services through managed growth to include seven departments; Residential Treatment; Foster Care; Adoptions; Behavioral Health; Substance Use Disorder; Human Resources; and Accounting.

Eggleston is celebrating its sesquicentennial anniversary of providing compassionate, high quality program services to the most vulnerable children and families from underserved and marginalized communities.

It has been my honor and pleasure to have been allowed to serve as Director and Executive Director throughout Eggleston's fifty-year legacy. I began my stewardship with Eggleston upon my graduation from Howard University in 1974. Looking back over my fifty-year journey with Eggleston, I can honestly say without equivocation, I would do it all over again. However, the journey has not always been easy. There have been times when I was not sure where the journey would lead, but through faith, when one door would close, another door would open.

As we celebrate Eggleston's 50th Anniversary, there are so many special individuals who have through their work and dedication, made Eggleston a special place. Without their personal contributions and commitments to serve, there would be no Eggleston Youth Centers, Inc. From the housekeeping and cooking staff to the foster parents and adoptive parents, mental health and social workers, childcare staff, substance abuse counselors, administrators, board of directors' members, and stakeholders, all have played vital roles in achieving Eggleston's mission of being a place for healing, hope and resiliency.

Much has changed during Eggleston's fifty-year history, especially in the areas of technology. However, Eggleston has remained steadfast and never wavered from its founding principles that all children and youth deserve loving and caring homes free from abuse and neglect. Regardless of their race, gender or sexual orientation, it is Eggleston's fundamental belief that children, youth and families must be treated with dignity and respect.

At Eggleston, we do not judge our children, youth and families based on their life circumstances. Also, at Eggleston, we do not believe or accept the proposition that children are born evil or bad and destined to lead lives associated with the social ailments of drug addictions, homelessness, delinquency, and incarceration. Rather, Eggleston takes the position that the children and youth needing its services are the victims of psychological, physical or sexual abuse.

Whenever Eggleston's Executive team and its board of directors develop strategic plans for the agency, the needs and well being of the children, youth and families are of first priority. All Eggleston strategic plans are based on a core model centered on building upon the strengths of the children, youth and families. Also, Eggleston believes in and practices active participation of the children, youth and families. It has been my experience that better outcomes are achieved when family participation is encouraged and welcomed. It is Eggleston's motto "To teach our youth and families to fish for themselves and therefore, not be dependent on others." Give a person a fish and you feed him or her for a day, teach them to fish for themselves and they can feed themselves for a lifetime. The success of this philosophy is reflected in the five generations of former Eggleston foster youth who have emancipated from the program and are leading meaningful lives in the various occupations and professions of military service, law enforcement, entrepreneurs, healthcare, law, social work, ministry and the hospitality industries.

As part of Eggleston's 50th Anniversary Celebration, the agency will host a special banquet and program to honor previous foster youth for their outstanding achievements. Also, the agency will be honoring former and current adoptive parents, foster parents, board of director members, employees and stakeholders, for their outstanding contributions to Eggleston.

As Eggleston begins its next fifty-year mission and journey, I am pleased to report that the agency is at its strongest point since its original beginning. Through its excellent reputation for providing outstanding treatment programs, quality of its management team, the integrity of its financial management of its assets and revenues, and state of the art facilities, the agency is well positioned to continue its leadership in providing high quality, compassionate treatment programs to children, youth and families, to help them lead better lives.