

Children at Heart president announces retirement date

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ROUND ROCK—Jerry Bradley, president of [Children at Heart Ministries](#), has announced his retirement effective Dec. 31, capping a 40-year career in Baptist child care.

Bradley, who came to Round Rock in 1990 to become executive director of the Texas Baptist Children's Home, today heads a ministry that also includes Gracewood in Houston, Miracle Farm in Brenham and STARRY in Round Rock.



Jerry Bradley

"Over half of my career has been spent serving in our ministries," he said in a statement to employees. "Those have been wonderful years, and it is now time for a leader with new vision and greater vigor."

The Children at Heart Ministries board of trustees will appoint a search committee to find a successor. Succession planning has been under way for several years.

Bradley began at Texas Baptist Children's Home on June 1, 1990, moving from a position as director of child care for Oklahoma Baptists. He

previously worked at institutional ministries in Kentucky and Florida.

A graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University with a degree in social work, he also holds master's degrees in religious education from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and in social work from Florida State University. He is an ordained minister.

In 1990, the entity that would become Children at Heart Ministries included Texas Baptist Children's Home and Miracle Farm, with assets of just over \$9 million, an endowment of about \$6.7 million, an annual budget of \$2 million and about 2,400 clients.

Today, with a \$10 million budget, assets of more than \$100 million and an endowment of nearly \$80 million, the ministries serve more than 6,000 children, mothers and families each year.

New ministries added under Bradley's leadership included Gracewood's ministry to single mothers and children in Houston and STARRY, which provides an emergency shelter and foster care in Williamson County and counseling in Round Rock, Waco and Temple. In addition, existing programs, such as family care at Texas Baptist Children's Home for single mothers and their children, expanded greatly.

He also oversaw a restructuring in 2006 in which all four ministries became part of the family of Children at Heart Ministries.

"Critical decisions led to the creation of new corporations and the structure of a family of ministries that exist to honor God and build a better world by serving children and strengthening families," he said.

"It has not always been easy, but it has been done with a sense of stewardship and forward thinking. It leaves a structure that can continue to grow and meet the needs of Texas families."

Bradley determined the time had come for new leadership at Children at Heart Ministries.

“All organizations have a life cycle, and the only way to keep them viable is through vitality and vision under God’s direction. I have come to the point in life when I know that it is time for new leadership to be at the helm of this great ministry,” he said.

“My successor will find a dedicated staff, supportive trustees, beneficial resources, new challenges and a firm foundation upon which to build a new administration.”