

1211 Weatherford Lane
Florence, S.C. 29506
January 8, 2015

The Honorable Nikki R. Haley
Office of the Governor
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, S.C. 29201

Dear Governor Haley:

I had written a letter like this before, to Mark Sanford, when he was in the governor's office, and never dreamed I'd have to write it again. I don't know how much you know about William S. Hall Institute and John de la Howe School. I was told that William S. Hall has closed and John de la Howe is in danger of closing.

William S. Hall was the starting point for kids who could not live at home - for whatever reason. They were not bad kids. The "bad" kids were sent to John G. Richards. These were kids who had broken the law. The others were sent to William S. Hall, where they were evaluated, tested, and seen by a psychiatrist. Then, it was determined what would be the best place for the child. One of those places was John de la Howe School. To understand why this is so important to me - I need to tell you a little about me and my son.

I quit school at sixteen and got

married August 8, 1960. My son, Phillip, was born ten months later, on June 8, 1961. I was divorced at eighteen. I went one Saturday, took the GED - before you could prepare for it and take part of it at the time - paid my ten-dollar fee - and passed it - something they said one-third of that year's white high-school graduates could not pass. My son and I lived with my mother - I worked, paid taxes, day care, took out every insurance they offered, with no help from the state or child-support. We were divorced for twelve years - during which he got the daughter of a man he worked with, pregnant and married her and they had three children. I made the mistake of telling him I was going to get married again. He said I wouldn't ever marry anybody but him. He left her and slept on my mother's couch, until we rented a mobile home. This was in 1972. I should have seen how he was toward Phillip - I think he was jealous of Phillip, because he had a real family who loved and cared for him. My ex-husband, Paul, was left with an abusive grandmother by his mother. A grandmother who tried to cut

off his penis, with a butcher knife, and hit him in the head with a hatchet. Whose own brother told her, if she ever laid another hand on Paul, he'd see her spend the rest of her life behind bars. This came from his elderly sons and uncles and his first cousin who was a Florence County Deputy Sheriff - not Paul.

By the time I started thinking about how Paul was treating Phillip - I had my daughter and went back to work when she was three weeks old - during which, Paul was not working.

We had recently learned my oldest sister had Cancer. She had given my daughter, Maria, a gold locket - so, Maria would always know how much my sister loved her. I know Phillip was jealous of the attention Paul gave Maria, when Paul had never touched Phillip except in anger. One day while we were out, Phillip broke the chain on Maria's locket and Paul grabbed Phillip by the throat and I was afraid Paul would hurt him. A few days later, Paul went to a Washington County Judge, while I was at work and knew nothing about it, and had my son declared incorrigible. He was

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sent to John M. Richards, because there was
no room at William S. Hall. Three guys who
were at Richards, tried to molest
Phillip and were stopped by a guard. My
son has never discussed it with me.
Dr. Bolocka (I'm not sure of spelling) from Hall
called me and told me about it and I
was going to pick Phillip up. He sure to
me that Phillip would be moved to Hall
that night and protected. He said they were
going to have a Christmas party and he
wanted to be there, if Phillip needed
him. Phillip was tested and the doctor
said he was very smart. He was reading
on the fourth and fifth grade level, when
he had started kindergarten. A few days
later, the doctor called and told me
Phillip was going to John de la Houle
School, and I needed to be there to
take him. We talked, at length, about
the kind of place it was.

John de la Houle was a very well-
to-do man, who left his large estate
to the State of South Carolina to be used
for children, who weren't bad, they just
couldn't live at home. It was huge
and green, with brick homes and
a few large buildings, and cattle and

buildings for them. Each "house" had a house mother and a few had house parents. The younger kids were schooled on the grounds. The kids all had counselors. The older kids went to McCormick High School, worked on the dairy farm and got paid for it. The house where Phillip lived had private and semi-private rooms. Phillip had a private room - he was bigger than some of the boys - at almost 54 years old, he is 6'4" and weighs about 250 lbs. He had a wonderful house mother. He earned enough on the dairy to pay for everything for high school - his ring, invitations, cap and gown, prom, a lot of his clothes, his school animals and pictures. He was one of the sports editors at McCormick High School and he didn't have to worry about being abused by his father. We would go to see him - my mother, my daughter, and I - about every two to three weeks and take him out to lunch. He would come home for a week during the summer, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Spring Break. My ex-husband and I had separated by this time and he was no better to my daughter than he had been

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to my son. He was living with a girl three years older than our son. Phillip graduated, when my mother was in the hospital and died less than two weeks later. On May 29, 1980, my nephew - my daughter - and I went in my nephew's car, and my other sister and her husband went in their car, to Phillip's graduation and then brought him home. With all he had been through - I was never more proud of my son, than that night. My mother died on June 10, 1980.

Phillip has not always had my approval in everything he did - when younger; but, he has come to understand that I didn't send him away because I did not love him - it was because I did. He went to John de la Howe when he was entering the ninth grade. I know he or Paul would have been hurt seriously, if they had lived together during those years.

I am 71 years old and worked for over 40 years, until September 7, 2000, when Dr. Bill Edwards told me I had to have back surgery and would not work again. I had surgery on November 8, 2000, and it took 23 months for

me to get Social Security Disability. I had hip-replacement in August of 2003. I had pneumonia in December of 2002 and was diagnosed with COPD and have been using breathing medicine in a nebulizer for 12 years and Medicare is screwing me over about what I have to pay. South Carolina Medicaid has paid my Medicare premium the whole time. This issue is not why I am writing.

I wanted you to understand why I am so much behind remaking John de la Howe School into what it was, instead of closing it the way William S. Hall Institute was closed. You have no idea how important de la Howe was to the hundreds of children who were sent there. Go back and look up the records and how many children have passed through its doors. Stop and think where those children would be, now, if not for John de la Howe School.

Thanks for listening.

Sincerely,
 Florence Gayle Gates