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# Because Children are the Future



## Steve Tuck

Children's Home Society of West Virginia

Steve Tuck has nearly 40 years of experience in child welfare services. He is the Chief Executive Officer of the Children's Home Society of West Virginia, a private, non-profit child welfare organization with 13 facilities located throughout the state. Tuck's service with the agency spans nearly 30 years and includes a variety of administrative roles.

The Children's Home Society of West Virginia is a non-profit child welfare organization with 13 primary service locations throughout the state. It has served West Virginia's most vulnerable children and families for 123 years.

The Reverend D.W. Comstock, a retired minister and a longtime representative of the National Children's Home Association, founded the West Virginia affiliate with the help of four Charleston-based ministers and the director of the local YMCA. On May 4, 1896, the State of West Virginia issued a Certificate of Incorporation in the name of The Children's Home Society of West Virginia for "the purpose of finding homes for homeless and dependent children."

The Society's first facility, the Davis Child Shelter, was located on Washington Street in Charleston. Named after U.S. Senator Henry

Gassaway Davis, whose estate continues to provide operating funds, it was an orphanage-type setting that often cared for as many as 110 children daily. Since that time, the Society has grown into a statewide organization with 10 emergency child shelters, statewide foster care and adoption programs, and many community-based family strengthening programs.

The mission of the Children's Home Society of West Virginia is to promote the well-being of all children. Our current efforts are directed at helping children find lifetime families, protecting and nurturing children, and helping preserve and strengthen families. The Society's vision of working in concert with other organizations and institutions is to assure that each child in West Virginia grows up in a safe and nurturing family and has his or her current and future needs met.

Children's  
Home Society  
of West Virginia

Caring for Children Since 1896



**Photo Caption 1** The Children's Home Society of West Virginia's main office located in Charleston, West Virginia.

The Society's Board of Directors, staff, foster/adoptive families, volunteers, supporters, donors, benefactors and friends all embrace the future we see for our children, guided by strong basic principles built from a sense of purpose. During the late 1800s, children most often came into our care due to extreme poverty and the inability of families to meet the basic needs of their children. Although that remains a systemic problem in today's society, it is less the reason children need care and protection. Today, there are over 7,000 children in out-of-home care in West Virginia with a high percentage directly related to the opioid epidemic.

We envision a future where fewer kids come into the Children's Home Society's care; a future where families are not only equipped with the tools necessary to provide for their children but also have access to a support





**Photo Caption 2** The Society has 10 emergency child shelters located throughout West Virginia.

system that helps them thrive. To realize this future, it will require the availability of strong economic, educational and social opportunities in communities throughout West Virginia.

For those who do come into our care, whether due to abuse, neglect, family drug problems or other unfortunate situations, we want to establish an effective assessment of needs that allows for a viable and realistic plan for either re-unification or movement toward permanency through adoption, guardianship or kinship care.

It is important for all involved – biological families, affected children, and foster, adoptive and kinship families – that a solid range of accessible services exist statewide to assist with trauma, behavioral health, parenting support, physical requirements and material needs. Services should be across an age continuum from birth to early childhood and include youth who might “age out” of care. All of those involved in the court processes for families in the child welfare system should be effectively trained, supported and have clear communication across disciplines.

West Virginia faces a continually evolving set of trends, social pressures, legislation, regulations and organizational challenges regarding child welfare. Agencies like the Children’s Home Society of West Virginia, along with state governmental partners, concerned citizens, faith-based groups and other advocates, will need to remain vigilant and committed to the needs of our state’s most vulnerable children to create an environment where they can thrive and contribute to a bright future for West Virginia. **W**