

People

Local Mother Writes Books From The Heart

By Jackie Seabolt
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Sarah and Chuck Ledford's home in Mocksville is filled with love. Inside their living room pictures of their children hang on the walls and line the fireplace mantel. They have three daughters: Chelsea, 13; Hope, 5; and Chloe, 2.

Chelsea is their biological child and Hope and Chloe have made the Ledfords their 'forever family' after being adopted from China.

Sarah said that she had an unexplainable burden for the Chinese people that deepened when Chelsea was around 3-years-old. "I didn't know anyone from China at the time." Sarah says that after several years of praying about the matter she felt led towards adoption. "It was never a thing about should we do domestic adoption or international adoption. It was always Chinese adoption."

After bringing Hope back to the states the Ledfords began a support group for other adoptive parents. Sarah has a background in social work and people began asking her for advice about how to tell their adopted children their story or how to explain adoption to their biological children. What began as a small group with about three families is now a support system of over 90 families. "Though it started out Chinese, it now includes people who have adopted from Guatemala, Russia, and domestic adoptions."

Soon, Sarah had another idea. One evening while she and Chuck were traveling to Asheboro to meet some friends in the adoption support group Sarah shared a thought with her husband, "There aren't enough books about adoption out there." So, Chuck asked her why she didn't write one. "Sarah's nature is not to wait on anything, so she pulls out some paper and just starts right there in the car," he recalls.

The result was a collection of three books that tell the story of a little Chinese girl's adoption by an American family. "It was a way to give back to China," Sarah says.

At the time Sarah was working part-time at Davidson Community College and asked one of the teachers in the high school diploma program to read the books and give her opinion. She loved the stories and recommended a 70-year-old friend of hers from Oregon to do the books' artwork. Her name is Trude McClane and she agreed to illustrate all three of Sarah's books at no cost. "We've never met Trude, just talked on the phone. But, she was great."

The first illustrated page of each of *The Brown-Eyed Girl* books is in loving memory of Ruth, 'whose short life gave us Hope'. "That is the first child we were to adopt and eight days before we were to leave for China she died of heart failure," Sarah says, while looking at Ruth's framed baby picture on the mantel. "Hence, the name Hope," she says as she gives Hope a gentle hug.

The Ledfords returned to China three years after Hope's adoption and brought home Chloe.

"We have really tried to instill in both of our girls to embrace the heritage and culture of where they came from," Sarah says.

Both Hope and Chloe have a copy of *The Brown-Eyed Girl* books which their parents have read to them.

The Ledfords are giving 100% of the sales from the books to Love Without Boundaries, an organization that supports orphans and abandoned children. "With what happened to Ruth we



The Ledford sisters share some sibling time together in front of the panda mural their dad, Chuck, painted in their bedroom.



Sarah Ledford holds *The Brown-Eyed Girl* series of books she's written. A project she calls her labor of love.



Chloe, Chelsea, and Hope are all smiles.

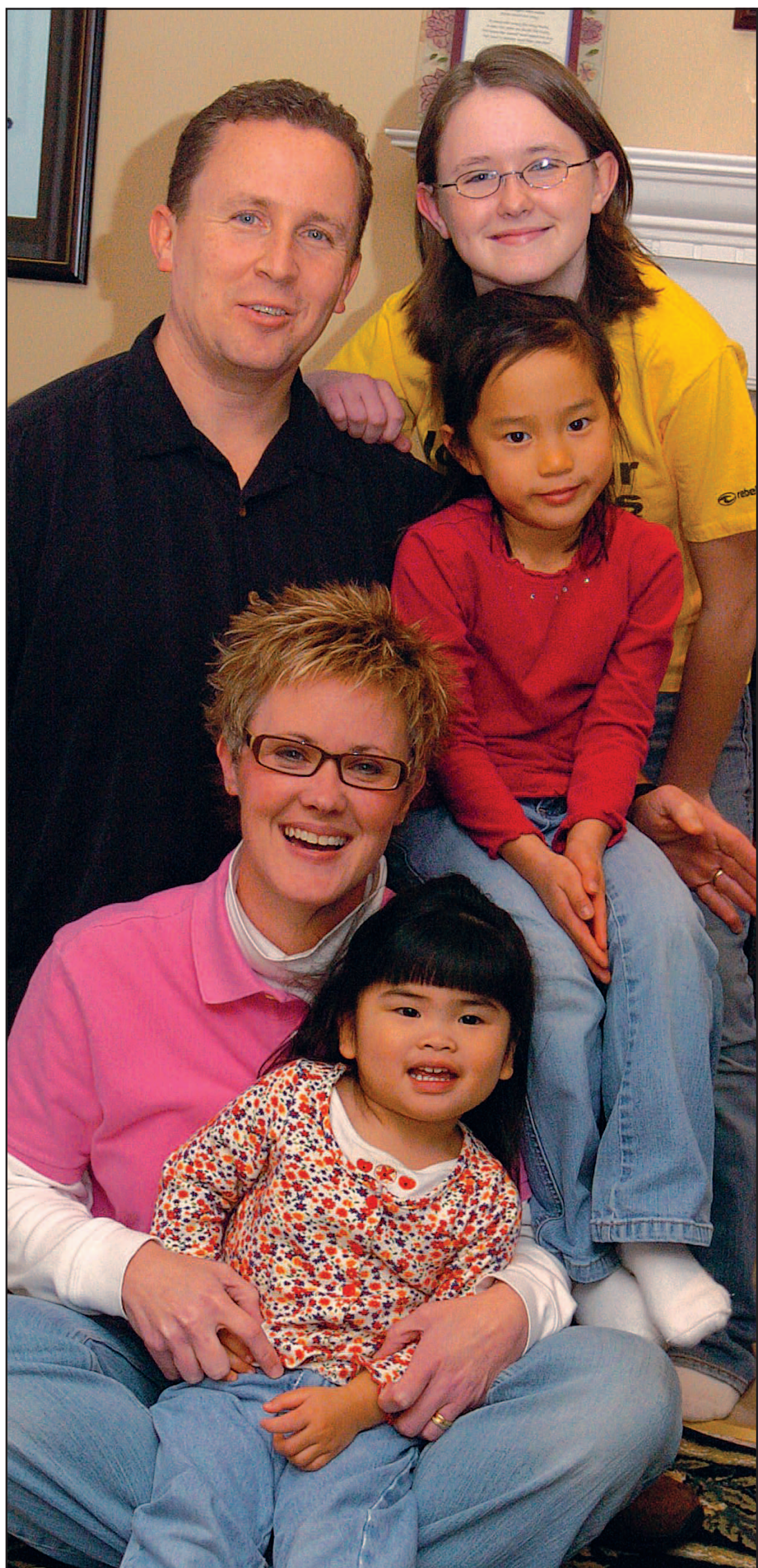
just felt led to help the orphanages," Chuck says. "We have requested the money go back to the medical side of it for surgeries, that's especially close to us."

Sarah says many people think adoption is an impossible task. "I would have never ever believed we would have been able to do it." A family who found out the Ledfords were adopting helped them out financially and even gave them a mini-van. "If you're willing to take them into your home there's always a way."

Sarah says she would like to write more books in the future. But for now she's enjoying being a stay at home mom raising the girls and spending as much time

as she can with her 'forever family.'

Sarah will be on hand for the first Sunday at the Brock on March 4. Area residents are invited to visit the performing arts center between 2 and 4 p.m. and meet Sarah; along with artist, Garnett Goldman; columnist and author, Kim Underwood; and musicians Jim Taddeucci, Garrett Taddeucci, Chris Sizemore and Joe Phillips. There is no charge. The Brock is located on North Main Street. For more information on Sarah's books visit her website www.browneyedgirlbooks.com



The Ledford family poses in the living room of their home. They are donating all the profits from the sale of Sarah's books to help children in orphanages. It's their way of 'giving back to China'.

- Photos by Robin Snow