The Changing Tides
The Magazine of Back Bay Mission

Spring 2017

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 BACK BAY MISSION
WALKING ALONGSIDE INDIVIDUALS

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STRENGTHENING NEIGHBORHOODS, SEEKING JUSTICE, TRANSFORMING LIVES
Reflections from the Executive Director

Walking alongside individuals who are doing the hard work of moving out of poverty takes time, patience and respect. In walking alongside, we can learn who the individual has been and who they want to become, that is, their needs, aspirations and hopes. We can then discover the barriers that are impeding their movement to self-sufficiency. There are wide a range of barriers that must be overcome by low-income and marginalized families and individuals in the work of “pulling oneself up by one’s bootstraps”. These barriers can include, low literacy, physical health issues, mental health challenges, poor language and social skills and the lack of information about how welfare systems regulations often result in maintaining poverty. Many folk suffer with a range of health issues both emotional and physical that negatively impact their ability to move toward long-term sustainability. Some folk, particularly those whose families have been in poverty for generations, do not have an internal mental picture of long-term sustainability that can serve as a model for forward movement. At Back Bay Mission, we collaborate with clients and guests to identify the proverbial “boots and bootstraps” that can be used to move them forward on the path to long-term sustainability. Leveraging their own strengths and gifts we utilize focused cased management that incorporates an assessment of their gifts and talents for forward movement; Bridges Out of Poverty that provides mentoring and education that supports forward movement; Veterans Support Funds that addresses the needs of veterans whose long-term sustainability is threatened; A Community Health Partner who facilitates access to medical resources, teaches about nutrition, health meal preparation and healthy lifestyles. These programs provide the foundational framework for moving forward to financial sustainability. Through partnerships with workforce development programs as well as educational and training options at the local colleges doors are opened to job options that provide a living wage. These programs move us beyond a hand-out relationship with our clients and intentionally positions BBM as a hand-up as we walk with those readied to transform their lives. In our current targeted campaign, we want to insure funding for these programs that support long-term sustainability for families and individuals who are working to improve the quality of their lives.

Alice Graham
Executive Director

Strengthening Neighborhoods,
Seeking Justice, Transforming Lives

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Many of our guest at Back Bay Mission have spent a lot of their life struggling to get by. When you are not able to make ends meet on a regular basis the thought of getting ahead seems out of reach. Back Bay Mission has implemented an educational course to empower our clients to use what they know and newly learned skills to move themselves and their family out of poverty. Bridges Out of Poverty (Bridges) is focused on the class participants, referred to as Investigators, researching and exploring to gain a better understanding of their community as well as outside of it. The training is one night a week for sixteen weeks. Investigators receive a $25.00 stipend weekly for completing assignments, active participation in discussions and arriving on time. Investigators have scenarios they have to work through. Below are some of the scenarios they investigate:

- Money
- Language
- Time Management
- Job Service
- Social Skills
- Family Structures
- Voices (Parent/Child/Adult)
- Motivation
- Persistence

Investigators will not take this journey alone. They are teamed up with a Mentor, for two years, to help them navigate through the assignments and be support after graduation. The Mentor will assist the Investigator by sharing advice, information, and encouragement. No money or gifts are to be exchanged. Investigators also have a trained facilitator who handles all the sessions and monitors the Investigators and the Mentors. The class books and other materials for this program are supplied to the Investigators. Investigators are responsible for attending and participating in the sessions by completing tasks prior to training, discussing their findings and sharing this information with the group. Investigators are encouraged to contact their Mentors about any questions concerning the assignments or life issues that impact their participation in Bridges. Mentors are responsible for contacting the Investigators at least once a week.

Back Bay Mission had its first Bridges program kick off on September 17, 2016 with the first graduation on March 23, 2017. The next Bridges Out of Poverty class is scheduled to begin in July of 2017.

Bridges Out of Poverty Graduates!

Back Bay Mission is pleased to announce the graduation of our first Bridges Out of Poverty class! From September 17 to March 23, these three women spent 16 weeks working on plans to realize their life goals and make their way out of poverty.

Jasmine is a young mother of two. During this course, she learned what poverty means and that she is living in poverty. She has graduated from Job Corps – a no-cost education and vocational training program – and now attends Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College.

Akeshia is an outgoing mother of three. She worked diligently on her life plan and would like to be an entrepreneur and begin saving for a home. She is valuing her life and looking at her future in a different way after taking the class.

Jennifer has a daughter and has also taken responsibility for three of her nieces. She is already a manager for a well-known fast food chain. This class has empowered her to keep working to get where she wants to be in life. She is working towards going to college, getting a nursing license, and becoming a nurse practitioner.

Each of these three women has an assigned mentor who will work with them for the next two years, helping them navigate emergencies and pitfalls. A Back Bay Mission facilitator will also check in with them and help them make progress.

The next Bridges Out of Poverty class is scheduled to begin in July of 2017.

Congratulations to Jasmine, Akeshia, and Jennifer!
Jasmine moving forward with Back Bay Mission and your support!

Jasmine is a young lady you have been reading about who completed the Bridges Out of Poverty Program. Jasmine was homeless when she was introduced to Back Bay Mission by a caseworker doing outreach. This is the story of how Jasmine became homeless and then made her way to Back Bay Mission:

Hi my name is Jasmine and I am currently a client at Back Bay Mission Home at Last program. Before I entered the program in 2013 I was homeless living from house to house and shelter to shelter. When I first became homeless I was 17 going on 18 in 2 weeks, there was a situation going on at the Harrison county Juvenile Detention Center and I had to be removed to another county and once I got released from the facility I have to go spend the remainder of my time in a shelter in Warren County. I stayed there until my 18th birthday. Once my 18th birthday I was released from the shelter, I had come back to the coast and tried to go live with my dad and he said no. So from that day forward that’s when reality had set in, I had nowhere to go, so I had met some lawyers and counselors during the investigation at the detention center and they agreed to help me with a place to stay and try to get on my feet. Well that lasted for about 3 to 6 months. While staying with them I had come in contact with my biological family. Once I came into contact with my biological family I had went and stayed with my older sister. That lasted a couple of months on and off. While staying with my sister I found out that I was pregnant with my son. While I was pregnant with my son my sister kept putting me out. I was going from pillow to post. That lasted until I was 7 months pregnant, I had ended up going to Jackson, MS. to a shelter for people my age. I stayed there until after my son was born. On the day I had my son my doctor ended up calling DHS because he had felt like I couldn’t take care of my done because I was living in a shelter. When it was time for us to go home my son had to leave with my adopted mom and I returned to the shelter. My son was gone for a couple of weeks and after that he came back to Jackson with me. We stayed for a couple of weeks until my biological family came and got us and we come back to the coast. When we came back we went to my sisters and off for a couple of months. After a couple of months we ended up going to a shelter and that’s when I found out I was pregnant with my daughter. Me and my son bounced around until my daughter was born and then us 3 bounced around from pillow to post. So eventually while staying in a shelter I ended up giving them to their godmother. I continued bouncing around and working at my job. I continued to be homeless until I was 21. At age 21 I came into contact with Back Bay Mission and that’s when they put me into an apartment, after that I got my kids back. I continued looking for a job while my kids was in school. At age 24 I ended up going to Gulfport Job Corps while there I received my high school diploma, my driver’s license and a trade in Medical Admin Assistant. I am also starting Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College where I will be studying Early childhood Education. I am proud of my accomplishments and I hope to complete many more.
What participating in Bridges Out of Poverty meant to me:

Investigator Akeisha

My life before I started this course was alright with me. I was comfortable with my situation, meaning I was just satisfied with being in the circumstances that I am in. Since taking this course my life has changed and opened my eyes and my thoughts. I am starting to understand what it takes to get out of poverty.

I am starting to focus more on my priorities and goals than I ever did before. All because of giving me the opportunity to take this course. All things are possible, you just have to apply yourself to this world. I finally see the potential in me.

This is a very rewarding course and I don’t think I would change anything about it. I would love to take this course over but next time I will be a mentor. To show them that it is possible coming from my past. Smiling at my future.

Finally, if it made an impact on me it should be no problem affecting others. I know the value and understand what I have to do in this life I have been given. I see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Investigator Jasmine

My life was a wreck before attending this class. I never knew what living in poverty was before I got in this class. The bad part about it is I’m living in poverty right now. My life hasn’t taken that many changes since taking this course. I am still trying to find a job, but by me taking this course it has given me a better understanding of living in poverty and also getting out of poverty.

This course is very helpful to me because it gives me information on situations in everyday life. Although I have a hard time understanding certain assignments I enjoy reading and trying to complete the assignments. I’m fine with the way the program is going so therefore I no changes should be implemented in the course. If I had the time I would take this course again because I would like to make sure I fully understand everything in the investigations before the program is over. I feel like that if a person is willing to take the sacrifices to change their lives around then maybe this program will be for them only if they can also be committed to doing the assignments. Thank you for allowing me to attend this class.
Governor’s Initiative for Volunteer Excellence (GIVE) Awards

Citizens who serve in their communities as volunteers contribute to the strength and vitality of every Mississippi town and city. These volunteers keep our neighborhoods safe, mentor our children, feed hungry families, comfort the elderly, and respond in times of disaster. The Governor’s Initiative for Volunteer Excellence (GIVE) Awards celebrate the exemplary work of Mississippi’s most dedicated citizens. This award program, presented by Volunteer Mississippi in partnership with the Governor’s Office, recognizes and honors the valuable contributions of Mississippi’s extraordinary citizens while inspiring others to follow their example.

Back Bay Mission’s long-term volunteer, Ethel Curry, won a Humanitarian Award. The award was presented at a special luncheon ceremony on Monday, April 10, 2017, kicking off celebrations for National Volunteer Week. Ms. Ethel Curry’s nomination letter:

**Ethel Curry**

**A Volunteer Who Makes a Difference**

Ethel Curry is called Ms. Ethel by clients and staff alike. She has been a volunteer at Back Bay Mission working in the Micah Center Day Center for the Homeless for about 7 years where she volunteers 4 days a week.

Ms. Ethel raised 5 children and loved caring for her family. When her kids were grown and out of the house, she felt an empty space inside. She filled that emptiness with the work she does at Back Bay Mission as she loves and takes care of the homeless guests she serves.

Ms. Ethel sorts donations of clothing, socks, etc. She keeps an inventory of donated items, and assists the homeless guests by distributing clothes out of the clothing closet. She distributes towels for showers and toiletries for personal care. She washes, dries and folds clothing for the guests. She provides fresh coffee and snacks for the guests.

She assists the homeless clients not only with their daily personal needs, but is an eager and willing listener as they share the challenges that they face each day living on the streets. She will greet the clients on a Monday morning after many have spent the weekend without a shower or basic hygiene assistance. Her warm and welcoming smile tells them that they have found a safe place, a place where they are not only welcome but where respect and understanding are ever present.

She is loved by clients and staff as well as other volunteers. An elderly gentleman who is homeless and sleeps under the bridge enjoys telling many of his life stories to Ms. Ethel. One day he found a turtle near his camp and named it “Ethel” in honor of her.

Ms. Ethel started volunteering to fill the empty spot in her life, not knowing how much of a void she was fulfilling in others’ hearts by devoting her time.

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**DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR MATCH**

**2017 Sustainability Campaign**
- Bridges Out of Poverty
- Community Health Partner
- Veterans Support Fund

At Back Bay Mission, we do more than help people in crisis. We help the poor and marginalized of the Mississippi Gulf Coast begin their journeys out of poverty.

The **veterans support fund** gives immediate help to veterans who have hit a bump on the road to sustainability.

Our **community health partner** helps people learn to be good stewards of their health. A healthy life helps people be better prepared for work and school, and better able to care for themselves and their families.

**Bridges Out of Poverty** is a 16-week class that helps people create strategies to help them in workplaces, schools, and social service settings. During and after that class, participants receive support from community mentors and Mission staff.

This year, we’re raising $150,000 for these vital programs. And right now, your gift to our sustainability programs could be worth twice as much with a dollar-for-dollar match. Mail your gift – or go to our website – by August 31 and help people begin their journeys out of poverty.
Income Management Classes

Budgeting money is never easy. Especially when you are stretching every dollar. The thought of looking ahead to a budget and savings seems unrealistic. You seem to look at it as something you just cannot do when you do not have enough to get all you need now. That is specifically why Back Bay Mission offers Income Management to a lot of their clients; Home at Last clients are required to participate and the Home Port clients are invited to attend. Back Bay Mission utilizes Income Management to teach people how to manage money. It not only addresses the immediate needs but looks towards the future of savings and emergency funds. This will help them build a foundation of how to manage the money they have and will earn in the future. Mr. Everett Lewis typically teaches these classes once a month from March to September. He uses the FDIC’s Money Smart Curriculum. Mr. Lewis also partners with several banks in the area who send experts that talk about certain banking topics and issues. The six modules used in the classes are listed below.

1. Money Matters: Budgeting the money you have.
2. Pay Yourself First: How to build savings and create an emergency fund.
3. Bank on It: Banking services and relationships.
4. Check It Out: All aspects of a checking account.
5. To Your Credit: All about Payday Loans, Title Loans, Bank Loans and different loan pitfalls.
6. Keep it Safe: Identity theft and how to keep your personal information safe.

Money and the management of it is a key role to being able to move to the next step towards self-sustainability. This is just another tool Back Bay Mission offers to educate and empower our neighbors.

Educating the Community to be Health Conscious

Mary, Back Bay Mission’s Community Health Partner, is doing invaluable work here on the Gulf Coast. Mississippi is the unhealthiest state in America according to the United Health Foundation 2016 Annual Study. Mississippi and Louisiana swapped places in 2016, with Mississippi residents having the most health challenges. Mississippi and Louisiana scored far lower than the other three states in the bottom five including Arkansas, Alabama and Oklahoma. Mississippi has ranked in the bottom three states since United Health started ranking the states in 1999. Mississippi’s ranking is reflective of its high levels of obesity, physical inactivity, diabetes, childhood poverty, infectious disease and low birth weight, plus scant access to doctors and low high school graduation rates.

Around 40 % of life threatening diseases can be avoided by lifestyle choices. Back Bay Mission has acted to help educate our neighbors on ways to improve their health. Simple changes like eating the right foods, adding exercise and seeing your doctor annually can make a huge difference in your health. Mary executes a series of talks and cooking classes around healthy choices and lifestyles. These include:

- Cancer Prevention
- Heart Disease
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Breast Cancer
- Colorectal Cancer
- STD’s, HIV and AIDS
- Lung Cancer
- Healthy Meals
- Women’s Reproductive Health

Mary also works on a one and one basis with guests of Back Bay Mission. She not only educates them on better health choices she also advocates for them. She connects guests with health care providers to get regular checkups, medical care and tests they need. Mary also host a cancer survivor support group.

Gods Green Acres is one of Mary’s passions at Back Bay Mission. Gods Green Acres is a series of raised bed gardens ran by Back Bay Mission guest. These gardens provide fresh fruits and vegetables for the gardeners. Mississippi ranks 50th in vegetables and 45th in fruits consumption, access to these nutritional items is imperative to improving the health of guest.

Mary hard work is improving Back Bay Mission guests, neighbors and Mississippians health one person at a time. Having a Community Health Partner is one way Back Bay Mission is fighting to change our health statistics and advocating for change.
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