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The Changing Tides

The Magazine of **Back Bay Mission**

Fall 2017

MOVING FORWARD

COVER STORY ON PAGE 4

BACK BAY MISSION
United Church of Christ
"...do justice, love kindness, walk humbly"

STRENGTHENING NEIGHBORHOODS, SEEKING JUSTICE, TRANSFORMING LIVES

Executive Director Alice Graham, Ph.D.

Reflections from the Executive Director

We are making a difference!

Kenney, the Director of Client Services, often asks during our weekly meeting with Mission Campers whether they are providing a service or making a difference. This question usually leads into a discussion about how service at its best is a vehicle for making a difference. We see our clients/guests not as data to justify our existence, but as fellow human beings with skills, resources and aspirations. We partner with them to bring about lasting change. Housing Recovery recently completed a total renovation of a home that had been used in the community as a respite place for people in ill health who had no place to go or family to care for them as they recovered from illness. For many years Ms. Kitty was known for making space in her home to take in people in poor health who had no one to care for them. If there was not enough room in her existing space, she would ask someone who was handy with tools to add a room. Over the years, many people sick people found a space in her home and in her heart. She would save for repairs, but there was always someone who needed help, to be cared for and loved. She finally called Back Bay to ask for roof repairs. Ms. Kitty is an example of someone for whom we provided housing recovery services; and with whom we were able to make a difference by providing a warm, welcoming safe home for Ms. Kitty to continue taking in people in ill health who are without family or resources. This is making a difference!

The Hispanic clients who work in our community garden bring their children with them; and, as the adults learn from the Master Gardeners, their children are also learning to grow vegetables in the children's garden. Recently we were told that one woman who had been regularly working in the garden, had begun a garden in her own backyard using lessons learned working in the community garden with the Master Gardener. She no longer needed what was produced in the community garden because she was producing her own vegetables. This contributes to her long-term sustainability. This is making a difference!

The second sixteen week cycle of "Getting Ahead In Just Getting By World", the curriculum for Bridges Out of Poverty is engaging the participants in a process that they say encourages them to value their voices, plan for a future, feel empowered to change the direction of their lives. The participants from both cycles meet monthly to share experiences; and, this is creating a community of learners who can provide support and encouragement for one another in their journey forward. Changes in self-perception are critical factors in individual moving out of poverty. This is making a difference!

Each program at Back Bay Mission has intentional components that support the development of self-sustainability. Case Management not only wants to assist in resolving the immediate crisis, but is also seeking to build collaborative relationships that empower clients to move forward in realizing their hopes and dreams. We do this one person at a time. As you read through this issue of Changing Tides see how we are making a difference.

Alice Graham
Executive Director

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Pictured is the BBM Campus Peace Pole

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Moving Her Family Forward One Step At A Time

Walk In Her Shoes

Back Bay Mission's Emergency Caseworker came across a young woman with 4 children in need of assistance. After hearing Mrs. S's story Back Bay Mission had to help. Mrs. S was staying in a family shelter that Back Bay Mission partner's with. She had previously escaped an abusive marriage. She was determined to make it on her own with her children. She began applying for jobs, over 50 in one day alone. She worked each day applying for a job for to make a life for her and her children. All the hard work paid off, she had secured a job at mobile phone business as a Bilingual Sales Associate and a position at a local hospital. During this time, her vehicle was taken back by the husband's family after it broke down and had to be towed. She was without a vehicle but was determined to work both jobs. She walked, took the bus and accepted rides whenever offered to get herself to work each day. She also walked her kids to and from daycare. A schedule that had her up at 3:00am just to get her 4 children to the babysitter before leaving to get to her hospital job by 6:00am. There were many times when she would get out of work at 6:00pm but not make it back to the shelter until 8 or 9:00pm because she had to walk. This never deterred her. She would keep both jobs, working at the mobile phone business the days she was not working at the hospital. Eventually, it began to take a toll on her and the children. She began to feel like she rarely got to spend time with the kids, which they desperately needed. She finally made the difficult decision to quit her job at the hospital, after nearly 2 months of working there. She now works 40 hours at the mobile phone business and may be receiving a promotion very soon due to the work ethic she has demonstrated.

Since accepting Mrs. S as a Case Managed client, Back Bay Mission has been both amazed and inspired at the level of devotion she has shown to her children and her desire to once again be independent and housed. She moved into her own apartment. With the help of many Back Bay Mission donors, she received all the household items she needed to get her apartment ready for herself and her children. She has expressed her gratitude so many times that we have lost count. Mrs. S is now on that road to independence that she has been working so hard for. She still catches the bus to and from work. She worries about the children having to walk with her to and from the babysitter's each day. Having a vehicle would prevent that and mean a greater independence for her, something we strive to encourage in our clients. This is her next milestone she is working towards. She will make it happen.

You Can Help Someone Move Towards Self-Sustainability

This summer, a generous donor agreed to match up to $10,000 in donations to the Mission's Client Sustainability Campaign. The Client Sustainability Campaign is supporting three vital Mission ministries: our Bridges Out of Poverty program, our community health initiatives, and our Veterans Support Fund.

Thanks to people just like you, we raised more than $38,500 this summer! That brings the total amount raised to more than $60,000!

But that doesn't mean we're done. This year, we're hoping to raise $150,000 for these important ministries; ministries that help people begin making their journeys out of poverty and towards self-sustainability.

BRIDGES OUT OF POVERTY helps people move out of poverty through an evidence-based curriculum that includes mentoring. A 16-week class helps participants create plans and strategies what will help them achieve their goals. During and after that class, participants receive mentoring from community members as well as ongoing support from Mission staff.

OUR COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVES help people be good stewards of their health. Through classes and activities, participants learn about common health problems and how to prevent them. Through case management, people with health problems are supported through their illness. Together, these initiatives address the barriers caused by poor health, make our community healthier, and position our neighbors for sustainability.

THE VETERANS SUPPORT FUND gives immediate help to veterans who hit a bump on the road to self-sustainability. This fund helps veterans fix their cars, buy clothes for job interviews, and overcome other obstacles on the way to a better life.

You can be a part of this important campaign! Go to our website to make your gift today, or mail your gift (with a note that it's to the Client Sustainability Campaign) to Back Bay Mission, PO Box 288, Biloxi, MS 39533.

A Helping Hand in Need

Ms. Johnson

Ms. Johnson has been a helping hand to many in Gulfport, MS. She has taken in more than 18 elderly people and cared for them. People that had no families or their families abounded them. Ms. Johnson made sure they were cared for until their last day. Ms. Johnson was a giver. She gave of her love, time and money to help those she could. Ms. Johnson is a blessing to many who would be lost without her. She raised her children and grandchildren to care for others as well.

Now that Ms. Johnson was the one in need of help she did not know where to turn. She needed her roof fixed. Every time she saved up money towards a roof she encountered someone who she believed needed it more. Then tragedy struck and Ms. Johnson became a widow and that left her on a fixed income. She turned to Back Bay Mission for help. She called requesting help getting her roof replaced. After her case went up for review the assistant to housing rehabilitation went out to access her roof. He confirmed that she indeed needed a new roof and noticed that she had an issue with an addition that was added. The more he went through the home he realized that Ms. Johnson was in an unsafe home. She needed work done to the structure of the home and electrical work. Ms. Johnson was accepted on the spot as a new client of Back Bay Mission.

Once accepted as a client, Ms. Johnson was asked if she could find a place to live while her home was being made safe. She moved in with her daughter and son-in-law. That is when the work began. Additions to the home had to be torn down, a structural beam had to be replaced, the roof had to be replaced and shingled, the kitchen and bathrooms had to be redone, the house had to be rewired to make the electrical component safe. This was a mandatory over hall that was happening just in time.

Ms. Johnson, who has helped so many, was now receiving the help she needed because of the supporters of Back Bay Mission. It was a long road before Ms. Johnson could move back in. When she could get back home she was elated and felt so blessed. She had tears of joy running down her face. Not just her but the children and grandchildren she raised to be blessings to the community as well. Yes, she called about a roof but Back Bay Mission would not leave Ms. Johnson until she was in a safe and sustainable home.

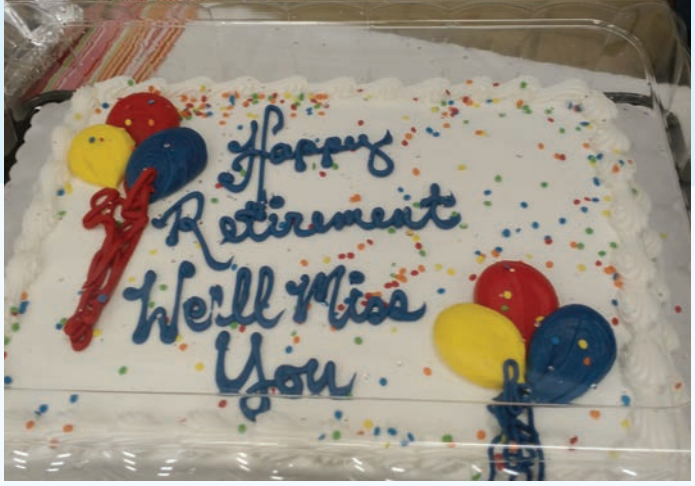
NINE YEARS OF SERVICE

EMERGENCY CASEWORKER, JILL CARTLEDGE, recently retired from Back Bay Mission after 9 years of service. She has been a great support to many clients as they walked their journey towards sustainability. Jill was described as an angel by her clients. During her many years, she has help implement many changes. A few of those include the food choice pantry, summer feeding program and the Christmas Baskets & Backpacks. We at Back Bay Mission would like to say, THANK YOU Jill for all you have done for Back Bay Mission and the guests it serves. Jill left a letter about what Back Bay Mission means to her. Below is that letter.

I would say, BLESSED!

Looking back over the past 9 years, many memories come rushing back to me. My first at Back Bay Mission, the first hurricane I experienced as a staff member, the BP Oil Spill and its horrific effects on the Gulf Coast etc. There have been so many…but though the aforementioned are certainly close to the top of the list, the ones that will remain with me for my lifetime, are the ones I share with our clients, guest, work campers and my co-workers (past and present).

On you man I will never forget visited Back Bay Mission in January 2011. It was a particularly cold month and I arrived early to work to bag food for the pantry, answer email and phone messages, etc. When I walked into the lobby area I noticed someone stretched out on the bench outside the front door. When I went to the door I saw that it was a young man wrapped up in a jacket asleep on the bench. I opened the door and asked, "Are you okay, is there anything I can help you with?" He sat up and responded, "yes, ma'am". I had him come inside to get him out of the cold. I gave him a cup of coffee and something to eat. He told me that he has come to Mississippi with his girlfriend from Ohio. Several months later, she met a man and kicked him out of their apartment. He has no other resources and now he was homeless. He then asked if I could help him get a bus ticket so that he could go home to Ohio. His name was Jeremy and he gave me his mother's phone number. He said that she didn't want me to leave home but that his girlfriend insisted that he come with her against his better judgement. He had tears in his eyes when he said, "I should have listened to my mom, turns out she was right about everything. She never liked my girlfriend. I think she just never trusted her." Jeremy was pretty sure that his mother would be happy to hear he was coming home. When I called his mother, and explained the situation she started to cry. She had not heard from Jeremy since he left their home over 5 months ago. She was worried about him and was so grateful to hear that he had found his way to Back Bay Mission where he would be cared for. When I told her that we would be assisting him to take the Greyhound Bus back to Ohio that morning she broke down in tears again. She called us "Angeles" and several times thanked me for returning her son back to them. We delivered Jeremy to the bus station that morning equipped with a clean set of



clothes, food and water for the trip. He gave me a huge hug and said that he would never forget Back Bay Mission. The following afternoon I received a phone call from his mother in Ohio. She called to let us know that she had just picked up Jeremy from the bus stations and they were, "going home". Among the many "thank you's she ended the call by saying, "God Bess all of you at Back Bay Mission."

Over the years, I have heart the words, "God Bless Back Bay Mission" countless times. I can still hear those soft voices expressing their sincere gratitude for the assistance they had received. The tears, the handshakes, the hugs and the looks of hope and peace on the faces of so many! That is what has kept me her for 9 years. God works through our hands and our hearts each and every day. I came here one person and I am leaving a very different one! The word, Homeless, will never mean the same thing to me as it did before I came to Back Bay Mission. I will never look at another "homeless person" the same way nor be tempted to judge the circumstances surrounding their reason for the homeless. Having observed poverty, "up close and personal". I will never be quick to offer easy explanations or remedies. I know now that there is no easy explanation nor remedy for abolishing poverty. It will take a village, just as Hillary Clinton encouraged us so many years ago. One thing I have learned and observed every day in my work here is that, faith and hope can carry you through the darkest of times and being surrounded by compassionate, caring and loving people can enable miracles to happen every day. I have had the opportunity to see some of those very same miracles happen, including the aforementioned one at the beginning of this reflection.

If I were asked to provide one what that would "sum up" my feelings about my 9 years as the Emergency Assistance Caseworker, I would say, BLESSED! I have been blessed to work for an organization that truly seeks to do the work of God. Not just in word but in practice! I have been blessed to work with some of the most gifted, caring and intelligent co-workers (past and present) a person could ever hope for. I have been blessed to have the help and support of the best volunteers and work-campers you could ever dream of! I have been blessed to have had the opportunity to work with and for some of the most courageous, creative and inspirational clients a caseworker could ever wish for! I have learned and received so much more from you than I could ever give back!

I pray that Back Bay Mission will continue to endure and grow. I will remain a faithful fan and ambassador of all that we have accomplished and all that you will strive to do as you move forward.

With much Love,

Jill Cartledge

Back Bay Mission Community Garden Update

God's Green Acre, Back Bay Mission's community garden, was started in the spring of 2016. The garden has been producing great crops for Back Bay Mission's client gardeners. This past season they have enjoyed watermelons, cantaloupe, eggplant, several variety of peppers and much more. All who help with the garden get to reap the benefits of fresh grown vegetables and fruits. The garden brings all walks of life working together for a common good. These gardeners are proud of what they are able to accomplish.

There have been several upgrades to God's Green Acre. A composite site has been created to help with fertilizing the garden. The gardeners and Back Bay Mission staff contribute to the compost. Composting teaches how to recycle and not waste many products to make full use of what is given. An arrogation system has been set up to help keep the garden watered during the heat of the day. Six additional raised beds have been added to allow for more planting and rotation of crops.

Back Bay Mission's Community Health Worker has been able to work in the garden with the client gardeners. This is a great partnership, she has been able to talk to them about the health benefits of the fruits and vegetables they grow. Soon to be added is a cooking class to use the vegetables that come out of the garden in several healthy and affordable ways. God's Green Acre is helping move people forward in many ways; emotionally, economically, and more health conscious.

A NOTE ON END OF YEAR

As the end of the year approaches, you're probably thinking about your next gift to Back Bay Mission. We want to share some important information—especially important if you want to claim your gift on you taxes for this year—about end of year gifts to the Mission.

IF YOU'RE MAILING YOUR GIFT TO BACK BAY MISSION, it must be postmarked by December 31, 2017. Gifts postmarked after that date will be counted for 2018. Please mail your gifts to Back Bay Mission, PO Box 288, Biloxi, MS 39533.

IF YOU'RE MAKING YOUR GIFT ON OUR WEBSITE, you must make the gift by 11:59pm central time on December 31, 2017. You can make your gift at thebackbaymission.org/give.

Thank you for strengthening neighborhoods, seeking justice, and transforming lives through your gifts to Back Bay Mission!

Intern

Intern from Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College Minister Kindall L. Scott is studying Human Services with Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College and is completing his internship with Back Bay Mission. Kindall is working in the Micah Day Center for the homeless assisting and interacting with our guest. He does this by working in the clothing closet and at the front desk greeting and inputting intake forms of the guest. He is a positive thinker and full of life. He makes a positive impact each day he is serving Back Bay Mission guests. Below is a letter from Kendall stating why he chose Back Bay Mission to complete his internship.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Kindall L. Scott and I am currently in an internship with the Back Bay Mission. The reason for choosing the Back Bay Mission was to offer my service of compassion and empathy for the guests they serve within the surrounding community. I am studying Human Services with the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, a Youth Minister with Little Rock Missionary Baptist Church and a Deputy Sheriff with Harrison County.

The Bible teaches us today in St. Matthew 25:35 KJV:

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in."

To love one another is one of the greatest commandments that God instructed us all to do and I know that Back Bay Mission is following the wishes of our Heavenly Father.

Sincerely,
Min. Kindall L. Scott

STRENGTHENING NEIGHBORHOODS, SEEKING JUSTICE, TRANSFORMING LIVES

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