Reflections
From the Executive Director
pg. 2

BRIDGES OUT OF POVERTY
pg. 6

A Note on End of Year
pg. 7

The Changing Tides

The Magazine of Back Bay Mission

Winter 2017

Rejoice...

**IN THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS WHICH IS PEACE,
THE MIRACLE OF CHRISTMAS WHICH IS HOPE,
AND THE HEART OF CHRISTMAS WHICH IS LOVE**

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!

The year seems to have flown by so quickly. As we are approaching the end of the year, I want to thank all the people who have supported Back Bay Mission in realizing our mission of strengthening neighborhoods, seeking justice, and transforming lives. You have blessed us with your prayers, your energy, your skills and your financial resources. Maybe during your mission trip, you walked with someone as they selected food from the food pantry and you were able to put a human face on poverty. Maybe you sat with one of our homeless guests in the Micah Center and as you listened you experienced your shared humanity. Perhaps you answered phones in our reception area, sorted through clothing donations or cleaned out a refrigerator. You may have done some painting, pounded nails, or worked on a roof to renovate a home. Maybe you prepared a special lunch for BBM clients. We are profoundly grateful to those of you who regularly have Back Bay Mission on your prayer list and pray for this mission, the staff and our clients. Your financial contributions, your shrimp boils, silent auctions and church appeals to your congregations have sustained Back Bay Mission's work in realizing its mission over the last 95 years. We come to rely on your generous support as we build our capacity to move clients to long-term sustainability.

On behalf of the Back Bay Mission staff, thank you. As result of your prayers, your mission trips, and your financial contributions we have provided a range of services to over 1000 homeless guests, over 6,000 low-income individuals and families have received emergency assistance, 100 individuals and families have been housed, and 7 individuals completed the Bridges Out of Poverty training. In collaboration with Gulf Coast Housing Initiative we began our second new build even as we completed renovations on 14 homes. As you read this issue of Changing Tides, you will learn about some specific individuals whose lives have been impacted by Back Bay Mission.

Thank you for supporting this work of making a difference for individuals and families on the South Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Executive Director

Alice Graham

Back Bay Mission
1012 Division St. Biloxi, MS 39530
P.O. Box 288 Biloxi, MS 39533
Phone (228) 432-0301
Fax (228) 374-2922
www.thebackbaymission.org
Email: backbaymission@thebackbaymission.org

Pictured is the BBM Campus Peace Pole

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Reflections From The Executive Director 2
Volunteer Corner 3
95th Year of Helping 4
A Story of Blessings from the Micah Day Center 5
11th Annual Hunger Homeless Meal 5
Bridges Out of Poverty 6
Health Fair at Back Bay Mission 7
A Package Full of Love 7

Pleasant Hill Community Church Sends Work Team to Back Bay Mission

by Char Burch

Could nine "older adults" really make a difference while working at Back Bay Mission?" some of us thought as we piled into cars for Biloxi, MS. " Yes, we can" was our discovery! It also resulted in a difference in our own lives. For 6 days in November, our group from Pleasant Hill Community Church (Pleasant Hill, TN) put up siding and painted the outside of two houses; cleaned showers, washed laundry, made coffee at the Micah Day Center that provides services for the homeless; assisted those who literally "shopped" in the food pantry; and prepared and served meals for the local "Loaves and Fishes" program that feeds those who need it.

Working side-by-side with a group of 11 adults from St. Matthew's UCC, Wheaton, IL, we found ourselves learning new skills and meeting people that would remain in our hearts. Back Bay Mission is an amazing place focused on treating all people with dignity and supporting those who seek to work themselves out of poverty. We were particularly impressed with the "Bridges Out of Poverty" program in which applicants enter a two-year program of mentoring and classes learning how to overcome the cycle of poverty and find employment.

In addition, the rent assistance program is not just a handout, but Back Bay Mission's caseworker works with the clients to learn how to maintain the apartment, manage money, etc. These are programs that change people's lives.

Although we came home tired with some sore muscles, we came home with great admiration for the amazing work and dedication of the Back Bay Mission staff; appreciation for the effectiveness of the mission; and deeply touched by the stories of the people who are the guests/clients of Back Bay Mission.

We encourage you to consider gathering a team to volunteer at Back Bay Mission. If that is not possible, please support them financially. Contributions from donors have dropped drastically, as money seems to have been diverted to natural disaster relief. For more information, please go to the Back Bay Mission site at thebackbaymission.org.

Back Bay Mission is making a real difference and we were honored to be part of it – and so can you!

BACK BAY MISSION CELEBRATED ITS

95th Year of Helping

THOSE IN NEED ON THE MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST

On November 7th Back Bay Mission celebrated its 95th year of helping those in need on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. We celebrated with an anniversary ribbon cutting and open house. Back Bay Mission welcomed local supporters to view our campus, meet our staff and hear about our programs and the people we serve.

Back Bay Mission thanks everyone who has supported Back Bay Mission over the last 95 years. Because of your support, Back Bay Mission has served many roles in this community and started several non profits that have changed the lives of those in need. Our time line on our website shows our history, thebackbaymission.org.

Today, we are focused on meeting the emergency needs of the homeless and impoverished. Back Bay Mission has a three-tiered approach to addressing poverty:

1. Provide emergency assistance

2. Offer one-to-one case management

3. Facilitate the development of peer support networks.

The goal of the three -tiered approach is to identify and resolve the immediate crisis, create and implement a plan for moving out of poverty, and develop a community of learners who provide encouragement and support for one another.

Originally founded by the United Church of Christ, Back Bay Mission has been a source of hope and help on the South Mississippi Coast since 1922.

We continue the journey by providing innovative and compassionate engagement with individuals caught in the web of poverty. Today Back Bay Mission is poised to accelerate services to those in need of homes, stability and opportunity. We are blessed to be helping our friends and neighbors for 95 years and we look forward to continuing to serve.

A Story of Blessings from the Micah Day Center!

Rachel came to Back Bay Mission dressed in business attire and driving a very nice vehicle. She asked our long-term volunteer if this was the place where they help the homeless. The volunteer asked Rachel if she had come to make a donation. Rachel then told her she was looking for help because she was the one in need, she was homeless. Most people's thoughts are, "How can this be? You are dressed so nice, you have a Mercedes and you are very articulate." This is not how most people think of the homeless. The face of homelessness might very well be the person working next to you, the family who comes to church and the nice butcher at the supermarket.

Homelessness can happen to anybody at any time. It is a scary thought but true. Rachel became homeless after leaving an abusive marriage. She had to leave everything she knew behind to save herself. She had no one to turn to. She slept in her car and joined a gym to shower and get dressed. She found a means to make some income. Rachel put together bagged lunches/snacks for groups of construction workers. She wanted a better life, a life without being abused. She was also very proud and found it hard to ask for help. She finally took those steps to Back Bay Mission.

The Day Center Coordinator helped Rachel with her emergency needs right away. Within the Micah Day Center, Rachel found solutions to several pressing concerns. She participated in activities of taking a shower, doing laundry, and received new personal hygiene items. She was able to choose food from the Food Choice Pantry. The Case Manager sat with her to hear her full story and see how we could help. Rachel had a master's degree and she was ready and anxious to get back to work. The case manager used her networks to help this person in need. Rachel secured an interview for a job (she was hired on the spot). Her new job had the advantage of included housing.

Rachel was touched by many of our services here at Back Bay Mission. She is now able to give back to those in need. She is no longer homeless and without means to support herself. She now assists others through difficult times. She will always be a friend of Back Bay Mission.

11th Annual Hunger Homeless Meal

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Biloxi came to Back Bay Mission to provide a Thanksgiving meal to homeless and poverty-stricken individuals and families here in our community. Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Biloxi has been providing the Hunger – Homeless Meal for 11 years. Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Biloxi, under the leadership of Twin River Management Group, started providing a Thanksgiving meal for the homeless and hungry in 2007.

This has turned what is usually a day of hardship, into a day of happiness for many of the participants.

The Hunger Homeless Meal was served and enjoyed by over 178 individuals. The meal consisted of all the traditional thanksgiving favorites; turkey, dressing, yams, cranberry, pecan pie, apple pie and more. The meal was served in Back Bay Mission's Micah Day Center. This meal could not take place without the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Biloxi. Hard Rock handles it all, from providing the food, to serving the many that attend. Back Bay Mission is grateful for Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Biloxi's commitment to their community.

BRIDGES OUT OF POVERTY

The second class of Bridges Out of Poverty graduated from the program on Tuesday, November 14, 2017. These Investigators (class members) worked hard to make it to this day. The Investigators talked about learning many valuable lessons and creating strong friendships to help them navigate the hard journey ahead. They may have graduated but they are not done yet; their mentors will still be working with them for the next two years and the Bridges Facilitator will be checking in and offering additional learning experiences.

Graduation was held at the Micah Day Center at Back Bay Mission. There were many family members, mentors and now friends in attendance. Each Investigator was given a certificate of completion, letter of reference, a plant to nurture and the book The Rules of the Red Rubber Ball. These Investigators will now walk on their journey towards a better life for them and their families. Dr. Alice Graham commended them for taking the steps to break the cycle of poverty for not only themselves but also for their children.

Changing habits, your way of thinking and outlooks takes time and repetition. This is where Back Bay Mission will truly make the difference in giving these investigators the encouragement needed to make it out of poverty.

Notes from Investigators

Before I started Bridges I was very closed minded, judgmental, straight-out didn't have a clue as to where I was going in life. Just living without direction hoping to accomplish something. Now I'm attending Bridges faithfully and I love it. I learn one secession eagerly looking forward to the next. I absolutely love Bridges and I'll forever try to enlighten people everywhere I go.

My overall aspect of how I perceive life and my living situation has changed drastically! The information and resources has changed my life abundantly.

Before starting Bridges my life was very different. Myself esteem was extremely lower than now. I went threw a lot of depression moments. At the point where I blocked my husband and kids out. Now while being in Bridges I've regained that old me back. Motivated to look for work. I just wish someone will hire me. My goal is to take care of my family with having no worries about where the nest meal will come from. My husband works, by the time all the bills get paid we don't have enough for savings. My girls talk to me now. I'm so glad we have a better relationship. My husband and I also communicate more. These is still a little stress but not as much so therefore I unblocked myself from my family. We are working getting our credit straight to get this new house that I claim in the name of Jesus. I'm working on my do's and don'ts. Started a daily schedule so I won't spend too much time watching T.V. and eating. My dreams are to be able to supply for my babies and get them in the best colleges out there. Last but not least get out of poverty.

Heath Fair at Back Bay Mission

Health is a rising issue, whether it be a person's general health concerns, figuring out a healthier lifestyle, finding healthcare or health coverage. Some people believe the less they know the better but when it comes to healthcare that could not be further from the truth. Prevention and knowledge are two important keys to a healthier you.

Mississippi is one of the worst states for health care and one of the unhealthiest states. The homeless and impoverished are even at more risk of falling victim to these statistics. Without access to health care and the knowledge of how to live a healthier lifestyle those in need will not be able to get past this huge hurdle to self-sustainability. Back Bay Mission is helping our clients and our neighbors get the knowledge they need regarding their health.

Back Bay Mission's Community Health Worker headed up a Health Fair to address these issues and help answer many questions. The Health Fair was held at the Micah Day Center at Back Bay Mission on Saturday, October 14, 2017. The fair had many booths that informed people of how to take better care of themselves, how to obtain access to better health care, and how to do their own wellness checks. They also had access to flu shots, a range of health tests and one on one meetings with a physician. The topic of better care of oneself included healthy eating. To drive the point home a hot healthy lunch was provided to all attendees. Over 60 people were in attendance. That is over 60 people that now have better knowledge of where their health is to date and how to live a healthier lifestyle. Back Bay Mission's Community Health Worker is dedicated to improving the lives and health of all those who she encounters.

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!

A Package Full of Love

Today, Back Bay Mission received a package. A package full of socks and a letter. It joyed our hearts as we read this letter. We would like to share the letter with you.

"Hello,

My name is XXXXX and I am a grateful former recipient of your services over five years ago, a homeless, hopeless, lost soul. I found the Back Bay Mission with the help of a few folks who were in the same situation. I appreciated not only the resources you provided for daily life, but more importantly, the encouragement and guidance and strength to find myself a way out of dependence on your support. Today, I can report to you, I celebrate almost four years of sobriety leading a simple, successful life with family and friends surrounding a joyful life. My thanks and prayers are sent to you all and those whose life you touch, that you know peace and hope.

I understand, a few of my friends have been lost in the past years, especially, my love - XXXX.

He kept me safe in a not so kind world of homelessness. I miss him.

I hope this small gift provides warmth and comfort to those who find so little of it elsewhere. God bless you all—the Guardians of the Gulf.

Forever gratefully yours,

XXXXX

STRENGTHENING NEIGHBORHOODS, SEEKING JUSTICE, TRANSFORMING LIVES

Back Bay Mission
1012 Division St.
Biloxi, MS 39530

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT 268
GULFPORT, MS