Back Bay Mission
Established in 1922

BACK BAY MISSION
strengthening neighborhoods, seeking justice, transforming lives

THE CHANGING TIDES

The Magazine of Back Bay Mission

Winter 2018

Bridges Being Built at Back Bay Mission

VOLUNTEER CORNER pg. 3

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Reflections from the Executive Director

Reflections STORY

"The way to develop the best that is in a person is by appreciation and encouragement."

— Charles Schwab

Executive Director
Alice Graham, Ph.D.

At Back Bay Mission, we work at meeting the individuals and families who seek our services whate3ver point they are on their individual journeys. We see each client as a unique individual with a particular history. This is true whether they are homeless due to a series devastating life events; are unable to pay their light bill due to an unanticipated job loss; are needing to use their rent money to pay the babysitter to care for a sick child; or, are struggling with serious medical issues while still trying to work a full-time job. And yes, some arrive at the Mission filled with guilt/shame/anger as a result making poor choices. Given the range of challenges that face families and individuals with minimal resources it is critical that we do not approach clients with a one size fits all mindset. Listening to client stories without judgement is a central component in our work. The Staff recognizes the importance of engaging clients with respect, kindness and encouragement. Grounding our work in love, our goal is that each person requesting service experiences Back Bay Mission as a place of compassion, warmth, acceptance and possibility. Attention to building a relationship with those we serve is critical to becoming effective partners in their work to become self-sustainable.

This approach is most notable in case management, permanent supportive housing, rental assistance Bridges Out of Poverty. Through these programs we work to lift the curtain of despair and move the clients through a process of self-discovery that allows clients to reclaim their life and begin discovering their purpose. This is not easy or fast work, walking with people who have lost a sense of their own possibility requires accepting their pace for movement forward, rather than setting rigid arbitrary goals. It often takes years for a life-long homeless alcoholic to decide not to die on the street and ask for help for his alcoholism and housing. It takes patience to hear beyond the stories of trauma, loss and cruelty and to listen for the hopes and dreams that can serve as a fuel for guiding forward movement. It takes clarity and kindness to hold people accountable for their planned steps to move to self-sustainability on a path filled with distractions and disruptions.

Bridges Out of Poverty provides an opportunity for clients in a small group setting (no more than 12) to learn about the structures of poverty, define their goals, and implement strategies for moving forward. You will learn about that program in this issue. Home at Last provides housing for individuals and families who have been chronically homeless and have some disability. The case manager works closely with the participants in developing their plans for long-term sustainability as they address and resolve the issues that contributed to their homelessness. The Micah Center case manager meets with each homeless client (we call them guests) to hear who they were before they were homeless and what resources are needed to support forward movement.

This work at Back Bay Mission teaches us everyday new ways to love and encourage those human beings who find themselves in despair and marginalized. We are grateful for everyone who supports our efforts to "Strengthen Neighborhoods, Seek Justice, Transform Lives"

Executive Director,

Alice Graham

find us online

BACK BAY MISSION
strengthening neighborhoods, seeking justice, transforming lives

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AMBUSH MAKEOVERS AT MICAH HOUSE

Before I spent time at Back Bay Mission, I wasn't comfortable with homeless people. Some of you may feel the same way. They looked different—even frightening. I wondered, "Why can't they clean themselves up? Get a haircut? Find a job"? When I first worked at Micah Center, I was extra thorough about scrubbing the showers, because it was easier than talking to those strange looking people. What could I possibly say to them? What did we have in common?

But over time, my experiences have changed me. This year was my fifth trip to BBM. I had a unique opportunity to work in the homeless programs, including the food pantry and Micah Day Center, most of the week. I saw many of the same people every day. I thought a lot about what their lives are like. I understand now that homeless people aren't different. They want the same things we all do but have more problems and challenges.

I want to share two big lessons from this year. First, it's really hard to be homeless.

Of course, I can't really imagine it—but I can tell you that it's a tough life. Taking care of basic physical needs is a full-time job.

One challenge is finding a safe place to sleep. There are no overnight shelters in Biloxi—they are prohibited by law. Some people sleep in alleys; others sleep in an encampment in the woods behind Back Bay Mission. I've heard it's a pretty rough place. It must be really difficult to sleep well when you don't feel safe. Also, you have no place where you can keep your things safe. You have to take everything you own with you. That's why a backpack is one of your most valuable possessions.

Your day begins with setting out to find food. If you walk over to Loaves and Fishes Soup Kitchen for breakfast, it's about a mile and a half. If you come back to Micah Day Center, that's another mile and a half, with your backpack. Then it's another walk back to Loaves and Fishes for lunch. You are on your own for the rest of the day, and for dinner. None of these programs are open on the weekends. What do you do for meals? Where do you hang out? How do you get dried off after a night of heavy rain?

Being homeless is no easy gig. And it's often compounded by depression, mental disease, substance abuse—all of which are worse when you don't even have a safe place to sleep at night.

For me, understanding this is a big step to empathy.

My second lesson: little things, offered with respect and compassion, can make a big difference.

Micah Day Center is open 9am - noon four days a week and then from 1:30pm - 4pm three days a week. Guests can get help with job searches, access social services, pick up mail. They can take a shower, have their laundry done, get some new clothes from the Clothing Closet, ruled with an iron hand and lots of love by Miss Lucy. An ironing board is available—and surprisingly, it gets used a lot. But Micah Day Center is far more than a resource center. It's a safe place to hang out with friends and staff, a refuge from sun, or wind, or rain.

It's a place where hope is served up along with coffee and snacks.

Hope comes from small things—things most of us take for granted—like a haircut. One Friday a month, students from the local cosmetology school give haircuts. The sign-up sheet always fills quickly.

I was amazed by how good these (mostly) men looked after a haircut. In fact, it was more like those ambush makeovers you see on TV. My favorite transformation was a young Asian man, H–. I'd helped him choose snacks at the Food Pantry, and he came to Micah Day Center for a shower every day. He had a thick head of black hair that stuck out in all directions. Much as I tried to talk to him, he didn't make eye contact.

He was on the shower sign-up that day, but every time I went out to get him, he was still in the barber's chair. Almost an hour later, his wild thick black hair was buzz-cut on the sides and back, longer on the top—very stylish. He looked like a different person.

I told him he looked great and asked if I could take his picture. He looked at me and said yes. In the picture he was smiling for the first time—in fact, grinning from ear to ear.

So that's what hope looks like.

Just before we left, we had our traditional team picture in front of Back Bay Mission by one of the men who'd had a haircut on Friday. After he took it, he thanked us and said, "God bless you. Back Bay can't do what they do without you volunteers."

That's why we keep going back.

Susan Walters,
South Church UCC Maine Team

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YOU CAN SEE BRIDGES BEING BUILT AT BBM

It was my pleasure recently to visit a gathering of a group staff member Loretta Smith calls the "investigators" in Back Bay Mission's *Bridges out of Poverty* program. Although only one of the important components of our expanding emphasis on "sustainability," *Bridges* is our approach to helping our clients develop the greatly needed life skills that so many of the rest of us simply "grew into" in our early years.

While Loretta's guidance is guaranteed just by her presence, the women in this particular class "run the show" for themselves. They meet each week for sixteen weeks, complete with mentors who share varied skills, workbooks, and homework assignments—all handled while they work, care for their families, and see that dinner is on the table and homework gets done.

Because BBM is careful to be sure that privacy is maintained in all our groups, my admission to learn about their work came only after the permission of the group—and they welcomed me warmly. In their informal beginning they were discussing plans for their (then upcoming) graduation, with special attention to the menu and volunteering to bring their favorite foods. *[Note: I really hated to miss that!]*

One highlight of the evening was meeting Daniel, the sixteen-year-old son of one member. The whole group was making sure that he was in the other room working on his homework as they shared with me the stories of the backgrounds that brought them to BBM and made them want to improve their and their families' lives through the *Bridges* program.

New jobs, new ways to deal with opportunities (and overcome setbacks), and most important of all new feelings of SELF-WORTH were the indicators to me that for these women this experience and the mutual support enabled through BBM was truly being a life-changing period in their lives and futures.

This is why we are here. This is what we AND YOU DO to make a difference!

Paul Longstreth,
Church Relations Associate

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BRIDGES OUT OF POVERTY - IMPACT

The Third Annual Class for Bridges Out of Poverty graduated on September 5, 2018! Back Bay Mission would like to congratulate the four Investigators that have stuck with it to make a difference in their lives and the lives they touch. Congratulations to *Michaela* (Miki), *Charlotte*, *Jennifer*, and *Loraine*. While in Bridges, the four ladies have found more gainful employment, all are housed, one lady has become a United States Citizen, one is giving back with a few hours of volunteerism a week, and they are all moving forward towards their long-term goals. Please see the words each Investigator wrote about how Bridges has impacted them.

My name is Michaela. Bridges is a great program and it has taught me a lot. I have learned a lot through this program. When I first started in the Bridges program, my self-esteem was really low, and I was always down and depressed. Ms. Loretta has helped me bring all that up in myself. I really believe that this program has also got me to open up more about myself as well. Even though its only one night a week, since the beginning we all, including myself, have all come a long way. I would love to see how far Bridges will go if it goes full time for Ms. Loretta. She is wonderful and awesome facilitator and she puts it to us as a "mom".

I feel so much better about myself and my family since I started Bridges. I am in the progress of getting a house with my section 8 voucher and with all the help that Bridges has done for me and my family. It's all coming together finally. I really enjoy the Bridges class, and I hope that it goes very far in the future.

Investigator Michaela

Mr. Kenney came to my WIN C program while I was in attendance there and did an awesome presentation. When I heard everything that this program had to offer, it thought it was the opportunity of a lifetime and I began measuring the long term possible value of attendance. You see, I put a price on it and, from that moment on, was hoping and praying to get in. I literally made a nuisance of myself inquiring about the process and why I had not been contacted. I didn't realize at the time my value system was off. I was selling Bridges way too short. After attending this program for the months that I have, I must apologize for this. Mr. Kenney could not have possibly put into words what I've received here, though he did his very best to convey the value. Describing the true benefits of Bridges goes way beyond a mere grasp of precise vocabulary. Bridges has given be an awareness that could not happen on its own. There is nothing in my finite world that would have brought me to root, the cause of my problems. Now mind you, I am by no means victim minded, at least I don't think I am. However I truly believe that Bridges has irrevocably altered my awareness and perception in a way that I never have dreamed possible. Not only am i more conscious of my mental financial world, I can also go into that world and change what I se. I have the power to change what I find there. For me, empowerment is intoxicating! Bridges has also taught me about my interactions with others and this has affected my interactions with my son in an immeasurable manner. If that was the only thing I received it would be priceless, but I am one hundred percent convinced that I have not yet begun to realize the benefits and the positivity powerful impact that it has had and will now continue to have on my future. I may not know you all, but I am now connected to everyone that has had anything to do with this program and I do love and thank you all. Continue being blessed, I know you all already are because you are all a blessing to others.

Investigator Loraine

My name is Jennifer, I am a current class attendant of the Getting Ahead Chapter of the Bridges out of Poverty Class. I first heard about this program through two ladies that lives in my apartment complex. After speaking with them time and time again and hearing about how it started changing their lives, I decided to look into it. I was accepted into the class and I could not be any more happy. When I first started the program, I can honestly say I wondered how it was going to help me. I was barely working, trying to figure out bills, emotionally stressed out because I am a single mother of three, and was going through a lot of legal issues. I didn't know if I was coming or going. I felt like a complete and utter failure to my family, friends, children, and to myself. I have gone so long living negatively that I didn't realize how much damage I had cause to the people I love. I used my situation as a crutch, as my safe zone. Getting ahead has opened my eyes...It's my "amazing grace"...I have learned that with hard work, you can get ahead. I had to start believing in me. I had a horrible job, well the job wasn't horrible but the people that worked there made me miserable, but I stayed because I have a family to support. I couldn't take it anymore, I was turning into a monster. I had to quit. A part of me felt bad, but I knew something better was waiting. I took a deep breath and started my journey. I now have a job that I enjoy going to. I was living in an apartment complex that is low income and not in a good area. I finally have received my section 8 and being able to move, will be a great opportunity to for me and my family. I cannot wait!!! I have met plenty of people that were meant to come into my life at the right time. I have a wonderful support team and believe I have made some lifelong friends. Hearing each of their stories gave me strength to keep going, because I know I am not alone. The information provided to us in our book allows us to take the time and actually think about the past and how to think into the future while living in the present. I am learning to communicate with my family better and it has made a huge difference. I am thankful for the opportunity to be a part of it all.

Investigator Jennifer

The Bridges out of poverty class for me is coming out to be so much more for me that I ever imagined. The studies we have been through have taught me so much that I never thought twice about. The things I'm referring to are social skills, first, impressions, being prompt, and very specific about life. I've learned so much, that it's too much to take in all at once. I am doing the things that mean the most to me first. I will continue to work on all the skills I've come to understand. It's almost as if life in general had one big concept. And Bridges teaches the concepts of Life.

Investigator Charlotte

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THE BLESSING OF SUSTAINABILITY

BY SARAH NIGL AND HULEN BROWN

(Left to Right) Sarah Nigl, Litzia Baugh, and Hulen Brown

As a long-term volunteer, I get to welcome the work camps on Sunday evening that come to serve for one week at Back Bay Mission. It was September one year ago, that the group from Peace Lutheran Church in Oshkosh, Wisconsin was here. I remembered one of the faces. It was Sarah Nigl. She and I had collaborated and wrote an article that was published in the 2017 Winter issue of Changing Tides. It was about the experience I had with the well dressed, articulate woman that came to Back Bay Mission when it was closed that day last year. She was driving a very nice car, and from the questions she was asking, I thought she wanted information so that she could donate to the Mission.

During our conversation about the services provided by Back Bay Mission she told me that she had been sleeping in her car on the beach for the past month. I explained that the Micah Day Center was always closed on Thursday, but if she would come back the next day she could see the caseworker.

She came back, saw the caseworker, and was sent to interview for a job. She was well qualified for the position and was hired on the spot. The position came with a place to stay and an upfront stipend.

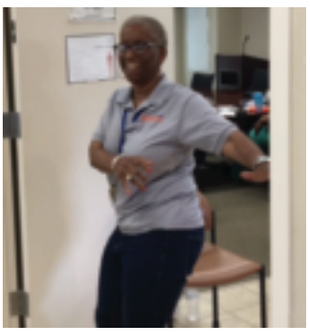
She has been in the position for one year. She has provided shelter for 15 families with children and helped them to transition from homelessness just as she did.

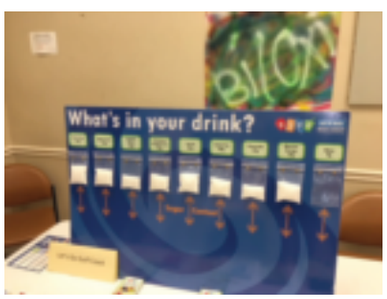
It was great for the three of us to get together again here at Back Bay Mission. We listened to her tell us how scary it was for her to sleep in her car for one month. She talked about how she used the last of her money to purchase what she needed to make fruit baskets that she sold to construction workers to have money for gas for her car. She paid $10.00 and joined Planet Fitness so that she could get out of the heat and take a bath. She saw the Back Bay Mission sign and drove in to see what it was all about, and the rest is history.

She was not looking for a hand out but a hand up out of her situation and she found it. She now has stability and a new compassion for people who are homeless. She understands what it feels like to desperately need a way out of a terrible situation. She knows from her own personal experience that there are people at Back Bay Mission that will help find a way to get back on solid ground.

BACK BAY MISSION'S 2ND ANNUAL COMMUNITY HEALTH FAIR

Back Bay Mission hosted their 2nd Annual Health Fair at the Micah Day Center on Saturday, September 22nd. There were over 50 attendees that were able to take advantage of **FREE HEALTH SCREENINGS, HEALTH EDUCATION, FLU SHOTS** (over 34 flu shots were given) **AND MORE!** There were 10 booths for the attendees to receive valuable information along with a delicious healthy lunch being served for all to enjoy.





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INTRODUCING OUR NEW MOBILE APP!

It is easy to load and operate. You can use it to read The Changing Tides, check out the Annual Re
Donate, check out upcoming events, look through pictures, see our latest video, and so much more
download the app please follow these easy steps:

- Go to the Apple Store or Google Play
- Search for the free Tithe.ly Church App
  (the icon will appear with a phone and leaf on a blue background)
- Download App
- Open and Search for Back Bay Mission
- Select Back Bay Mission
- Explore and Enjoy the New App!

2020 MISSION TRIP CALENDAR OPENS ON JANUARY 1

It's time to start thinking about your church's 2020 mission trip! Mission trips to Back Bay Mission are great opportunities for learning, service, and fellowship. These week-long immersive mission experiences teach participants about poverty on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and prepare groups to serve in their own communities. Our 2020 mission trip calendar opens at midnight, central time, on January 1, 2019! That's just a month away!

Popular dates, especially during the summer and spring break season, fill up fast.

A NOTE ON END OF YEAR GIFTS

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 your taxes for this year—about the end of year gifts to the Mission.

If you're mailing your gift to Back Bay Mission, it must be postmarked by December 31, 2018. Gifts postmarked after that date will be counted for 2019. Please mail your gifts to Back Bay Mission, P.O. Box 288, Biloxi, MS 39533.

If you're making your gift on our website or APP, you must make the gift by 11:59 pm central time on December 31, 2018. 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!

MORE THAN ONE MAILING?

If you receive multiple mailings of the same piece from Back Bay Mission, please contact our Community Relations Associate, Laura, so we can get it corrected! You can send an email to lpayne@thebackbaymission.org or call 228-432-0301 ext. 302. Thank you for your cooperation.

BACK BAY MISSION IS HIRING A CONSTRUCTION SUPERVISOR

Back Bay Mission has seen a steady increase in demand for our housing rehabilitation services and this has led to a need for an additional team member. Being we are the only organization in our community doing this much-needed work Back Bay Mission will be expanding this program, so we can serve more clients. To see the job description and needed skills please go to our website, https://thebackbaymission.org/2018/10/back-bay-mission-is-hiring-a-construction-supervisor/. If you are interested in applying for the Construction Supervisor position please email your resume or send any questions to Rev. Alice Graham, Ph.D., agraham@thebackbaymission.org.

A NOTE OF THANKS!

Twila Holloway is a blessing to those who come in for help with food or utilities. She makes your bad day fell like a better day. When she greets you, it is always with a smile and a hello how may I help you. If you're a regular client she always makes you laugh coming in, and again when you leave. Never is there a that coming to Back Bay and entering these doors, coming up to the desk seeing her smiling face do you feel like a failure.

Ms. Holloway makes things look up for you. And, if she can't help with something, she finds other places that can help you. Never does she go without listening to your problem. She's very sympathetic and you know she truly understands.

BBM Guest

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STRENGTHENING NEIGHBORHOODS, SEEKING JUSTICE, TRANSFORMING LIVES

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