The Magazine of Back Bay Mission
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THE
CHANGING TIDES

The Magazine of Back Bay Mission  Winter 2019

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Reflections from the Executive Director

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Alice Graham, Ph.D.

When clients come to our campus, they are often distressed, frustrated, angry, discouraged and/or scared. Some are recently homeless or chronically homeless; some are worried about food for themselves or their families; others are seeking utility payment assistance, and for others the process of eviction has begun. We receive calls from homeowners with minimal resources who have a leaky roof, deteriorating walls and windows and/or floors. Whatever the request for help, they are having a hard time. They come fearful and hopeful that maybe we can help them survive their current catastrophe. We listen to the differing tragedies/truamas that have turned their lives upside down. We hear the result of decisions that had unexpected consequences as well as the devastating impact of poor decisions. We invite them to tell us their story, not because we are story collectors; but because we want to know our fellow human being who is seeking assistance. We listen to discern their strengths, their capacities, their hopes, the possibility that their life is. We seek to be in relationship with the participants in our programs as they take steps to resolve their current dilemma; and, then to consider what needs to happen to change their life’s direction.

For some the crisis is situational, meaning the need is short-term and with just a little bit of relational support they can get their lives back on track. Others who are frequent participants in BBM programs require a stronger relational connection in support of their movement toward long-term sustainability.

Relationship building requires time, patience and respect for each individuals’ journey. It would be so much easier to do our work, if each participant had the same issues, concerns, expectations, and history. Each program participant has a particular set of circumstances that has brought them to our campus. It would be great, if we could do a one size fits all ministry; that would minimize the many challenges that too often threaten to drain the staff emotionally and even spiritually.

With each new program participant, we learn that we human beings require patience, kindness, compassion, integrity, kindness, and respect in order to grow beyond our circumstances. Long-term sustainability is about valuing one’s life as having meaning and purpose. This means participants feeling empowered to do the work to find their purpose for themselves and their community. We recently had a former Micah Center guest who worked with his case manager to get employed and then housed who then returned to the Micah Center to bring snacks for current guests. What a wonderful transformation! In this issue, you will learn about other program participants who through patient kind support are effectively reclaiming their lives. Each one will reap a harvest, if we do not give up.

Executive Director,

Alice Graham

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OUTREACH
MAKING A DIFFERENCE

BY SARAH BOONE, HOME AT LAST CASE MANAGER

Outreach in and community is built by collaborating with other agencies so we can work together to create the best possible outcome for the individuals we serve. I am often called by many of our organizations when a homeless person, or individual in need has been identified so I can meet them where they are (both physically, emotionally) this can be the woods, shops, bridges, streets, and even bus stations. Building, fostering, and maintaining these community relationships is key to success not only for Back Bay Mission but the people we serve. Tensions between the local law enforcement and the homeless population is often high and riddled with mistrust, but not in Biloxi. One partnership is that of Back Bay Mission/me as the outreach person and our local Biloxi Police Department’s homeless task force. By working together often arrests can be avoided, information is given/received, and essentially, we can create a bridge that gaps the law and humanization. On this day it was well into the 100-degree temperatures that afternoon and 7 homeless individuals were “camped” out under the bridge on private casino property. Law enforcement had been told several times that day to remove them from the property to no avail. Law enforcement recognized that most of these individuals were causing no harm other than trespassing, they were all considered elderly, and jail would not be the best option. I received a call from Officer Smith and Officer Lewis from the local Biloxi Police Department’s homeless task force asking if I could come under the bridge and try to bridge that gap, offer some solutions, and provide them with information that would be beneficial to everyone’s unique situation.

Part of outreach is to go where we are needed, so I went. I met them under the bridge, I learned a little about each individual, connected them to Back Bay Mission, provided them with food and water, and helped them relocate so law enforcement was not forced have to intervene. Five of the seven that were there that day are now guests at the Micah Day Center, working with various programs we offer to assist them. Through that collaboration we can be the homeless advocates, voices, and comrades in the battle to end homelessness. Mother Theresa said, “I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things.”

IN MEMORY OF
MARY SUE WILSON FAIRCHILD

Mary Sue Wilson Fairchild was born in Graford, TX, in 1941. She passed away peacefully August 18, 2019, surrounded by her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She was deeply loved.

She was a graduate of Texas Christian University in Ft. Worth. For more than 50 years she was married to the love of her life, William R. Fairchild, who pre-deceased her.

Mary Sue had a generous spirit and was dedicated to supporting causes that improved the lives of others. Service was a deeply held and passionate part of her life. She served as a board member of Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, MS. She said that this was the place she felt most like she was being the hands and feet of Jesus. She chaired the Missions Board for the First Congregational Church of Houston for many years, working hand-in-hand with people in the community, helping provide opportunities.
“Eric” came to the Micah Day Center in June of 2019. I met with him and he stated that he has been homeless for the last two years. He has no income and cannot apply for food stamps. He stated that he just got released from a two-year house arrest even though he was homeless. He stated that he received assistance with getting a Social Security card and now he needs an ID for employment. I informed Eddie that he would need to provide proof of job application to receive assistance with fee. He stated that he has applied for several jobs. We tried to access his email account to get verification, but he forgot the password. He stated he will also be working on getting his old job back. Through our conversation he realized that his main need is to go to drug rehab and his goal is to get clean. We called Bethel Encounters Retreat Center because he wanted to go there in the past but was not allowed due to house arrest. We called and they did an intake over the phone and stated they would come to the day center that weekend to pick him up. I found out the next week that he did go to Bethel Encounters Retreat Center. In August of 2019, representatives from the retreat center came to the day center to see if any guests needed to go to the retreat center. Eric was with them and he came up to me and I did not recognize him until he stated his name. The difference between when I saw him that first day and again in August was like night and day. He stated that he wanted to thank me for helping him get clean. He said it was the best decision he has made. In October, Eric came to the day center and asked to speak with me. I met with Eric and found out that he had graduated the program and due to his parole was not able to leave the state to further his stay with Bethel Recovery Center. I assisted Eric with filling out an online application for food stamps and we started working on getting him a duplicate MS ID he will need for gaining employment. The next day Eric enthusiastically shared with me that he got his old job back and it required a work uniform of black pants and black polo shirt. They gave him the work shoes, but he would still need to get the clothing. I informed him that Back Bay Mission has funding set up specifically to help our guests with acquiring work items. Eric received a new pair of black pants and polo shirt for his first day back at work.
“Robert” came to the Micah Day Center in August of 2019. He stated that he has been homeless for two days over the past year and one episode of four months over the past three years. He lost his housing due to the apartment complex he was staying and working at was sold. He was working as the Building Super and was given only three days to vacate or pay $1400. He has been staying in his vehicle with his dog Bella. He receives SNAP but has no income. He has signed up with PrideStaff and is actively looking for employment. He has applied for housing at Biloxi Housing Authority and was referred to Open Doors Homeless Coalition. Robert’s goal is to have a secure home, roof over his head and secure job. During our conversation I mentioned that JoAnn, a representative from the Hard Rock Casino, will be facilitating a Hiring Workshop at the day center. He was very interested and stated that he would be attending. Robert attended the workshop and was fully engaged. He learned about preparing for the application, how to arrive at the business to enter application for follow up, application highlights, and how to present oneself during an interview. JoAnn from Hard Rock Casino emailed me a flier for On the Spot Interviews for Steward and Lead Steward positions. I handed out the fliers in the day center and Robert was eager to take one and stated that he would be going. Robert went to the Hard Rock Casino after taking a shower and getting a new pair of pants from the clothes closet. He came to the day center the next day and stated that he felt good about the interview. He saw JoAnn and spoke to her and she helped him navigate to where he needed to go for the interview process. He stated that he used all the interview tips she provided at the workshop. Robert was eager to find out if he got the job. At the end of the week, Robert came to the day center to let me know that he got the job. He was so excited but also nervous about starting a new job. He also found a place to stay that he could afford which made him feel better about being able to get ready for his job. Robert stated that he is thankful for Back Bay Mission and thanked me for helping him. I told him that he did all the work and that I was so happy for him. He stated that once he gets settled in his new place and job, he would like to volunteer at Back Bay Mission to show his gratitude. Robert was true to his word because he came for a visit in October and brought with him a gallon of milk, a big bag of cereal and mints for the guests at the Micah Day Center. He spoke about his job and how much he is enjoying going to work and hopes to soon be working full-time. He also stated that he found another place to live that is affordable and provides many amenities. He also stated that he will be volunteering with the Hard Rock when they provide the Hunger Homeless Meal at Back Bay Mission in November.
WORKING IN THE MICAH DAY CENTER

Working in the Micah Day Center allowed the staff to recognize an acute need amongst many of the guests, the necessary skills to gain and retain employment in preparation to enter the workforce.

Guests were seen with great potential to work hard, but lacked the knowledge and skill set that is required for procuring employment. Noticing this trend amongst our guests the idea for the Micah Day Center Apprenticeship Program came to fruition. This program was implemented on October 1st when its very first apprentice was hired. In order to be eligible for the program the applicant must be a Micah Day Center guest. First, they fill out an application for selection (this is the first training they receive as the potential apprentice), they must demonstrate a willingness to learn and grow, as well as committing to a one-year apprenticeship. In this program the apprentice will learn several skills including but not limited to job search techniques, money management, basic computer skills, Life Skills, how to interview, resume writing, and job retention skills.

This program benefits a Micah Day Center guest that is already doing the hard work of seeking employment who are experiencing no to low income as well as overcoming barriers to rewarding employment. Micah Day Center Apprenticeship Program allows Back Bay Mission to serve those individuals who society perceives as unemployable because of mental health concerns, drug/alcohol addictions, and physical limitations, that are often stigmatized because of past circumstances leading to either the loss of a job or the inability to obtain employment.

WHERE DO I FIT IN?

BY SARAH BOONE, HOME AT LAST CASE MANAGER

The old saying “you are a square peg in a round hole,” aptly fits my client. Often permanent supportive housing gathers at Back Bay Mission one time a month to have a monthly meeting and participate in one of the many services we offer here, Life Skills. However, once a quarter or as needed, I go and do home visits. This gives me insight and perspective on the participants lifestyles and any further issues we may not be able see in a group setting. During this visit I was accompanied by the homeless task force from Biloxi PD as well as an intern from the University of Southern Mississippi. This client wanted a chance for others to see that housing is only the first part of the story—its all the work that goes into remaining housed and finding the appropriate services to tap into. This participant has struggled with severe mental illness and on and off with drug addiction. He asked the officer and social worker if they had any questions they wanted answered and they asked, “what do you want people to know about being homeless to housed?” He sat for a few moments and he said something that astounded me. He said, “I don’t fit in anywhere!” I said, “I don’t understand, can you tell me what that means?” He states, “when you are homeless the rest of society just looks at you and you don’t really fit in with any housed individuals, however, I do not really fit in with the housed either. I don’t have a job, I don’t have any money, I have no social skills, and I can’t offer anything to anyone—don’t fit in anywhere.” When I sat back and processed what he told me, I thought we always say we are a square peg in a round hole, but have we ever really had to feel that way? Since, we are working on finding a way to help this participant belong. To understand that here at Back Bay Mission we don’t have square pegs or round holes, we have a group of guests being uniquely and individually themselves. I do not know the ending of his story, but I do know that now that this silent problem has been identified through case management and collaboration it will be a hurdle we will not step back from!
NEW BRIDGES OUT OF POVERTY FACILITATOR:
JONA BURTON

Back Bay Mission is excited to introduce the new Bridges Out of Poverty Facilitator, Jona Burton. Jona has worked in educational environments with a social work background for over 13 years. She is committed to leading with an anti-oppressive lens to fuel her investment in creating dialogue around systems of oppression, educational access, and youth empowerment. She currently serves as the Assistant Director of Career Services on the Gulf Park Campus of The University of Southern Mississippi, in Long Beach, MS. Serving in this role, she is invested in fostering personal and professional development in students of all ages, with an emphasis on deeper learning within one’s chosen field as it relates to our individual and collective identities. The application of a social work lens has served as a fundamental tool in bridging together empathy, decision making from a strengths perspective, and an emphasis on self-awareness and accountability. To build leadership that can guide us forward in creating that which does not yet exist in our society, she sees a multi-generational approach as being a core foundation.

Jona kicked off the Fourth Bridges Out of Poverty class this September. She has seven Investigators in this class. They are all single mothers working towards a brighter future. We welcome Jona and all she brings to help Strengthen Neighborhoods, Seek Justice, and Transform Lives!

“The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.”
— Albert Einstein, theoretical physicist

MEET OUR NEW STAFF MEMBERS

JUDY CLOYD, Rental Assistance Caseworker

Rev. Judy S. Cloyd is Vietnamese immigrant, who came to the USA in 1972. She was raised on the MS Gulf Coast, and now calls Ocean Springs, MS home. She and her husband, Chuck, have 4 children (ages 14-30) & 2 grandchildren (3wks – 2yrs). Judy has a B.S. in Psychology & Religious Studies from William Carey University, and a Masters in Marriage & Family Counseling from Liberty University. Prior to The Back Bay Missions, Judy served 8 years as the Recovery Minister at Mosaic Church in Ocean Springs. Judy believes her life experiences (more than her training) have equipped her to serve others with compassion, empathy, & respect. Her life’s motto is “people don’t care about what you know, until they know that you care”, and this helps her keep things in a realistic perspective. In her spare time, Judy likes to attend her children’s activities, work in her yard, and bake for family & friends. She dreams of doing stand-up comedy.

KEYONIA CARTER, Emergency Assistance Case Manager

Keyonia Carter is the Emergency Assistance Case Manager at Back Bay Mission. Carter graduated from the University of Southern Mississippi with a bachelor’s degree in Child and Family Studies and a minor in Child Development. Before joining Back Bay Mission, Carter served three years as a Child and Family Specialist with the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services. Carter likes singing, socializing, and customizing crafts and she is known for her love to give and serve others.

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