Back Bay Mission
Established in 1922

THE
CHANGING TIDES
The Magazine of Back Bay Mission
Fall 2020

Back Bay Mission Staff- Masked and Ready for the Task (Left to Right)
First Row: Elizabeth Sandoval, Laura Payne Breeland, Rev. Alice Graham, Ph.D., Sandra Carter, Rev. Judy Cloyd
Second Row: Lucy Nettles, Keyonia Carter, Amanda Roberts Third Row: Kirsten Hebron, Loraine Serrano, Shawn Gauthreaux, Deborah Horn, Sarah Boone Fourth Row: Craig Steenkamp, Everett Lewis, Kevin Kotula, Kenney Washington
Gratitude

When 2020 began you, like me, had expectations of a normal year filled with ups and downs, successes, and disappointments, good stuff and not so good stuff. Some of us were looking for opportunities to grow and others hoping that they could just maintain the status quo. Many of us, also, had specific plans around family, travel, education, training, retiring, new house, marriage proposals, visits to Disneyland and/or family reunions.

The year thus far has not gone as expected. Plans have been discarded as we embrace a new reality. We are living through a pandemic. In caring for one another we wear masks, maintain social distance, stay out of large crowds, wash our hands frequently, and monitor our health. At this writing, the loss of life exceeds 200,000 individuals with the projection of 400,000 lives lost in the US by the end of the year. In the US we are also moving through a racial reckoning that has been 400 years in the making. The impact of generational poverty has revealed the failures in our healthcare system and the ineffectiveness our social safety net. Income inequality, the financial vulnerability of working Americans, and the deepening plight of homelessness and the working poor has been highlighted. Due to Covid-19, we are unable to visit elderly relatives, play with grandchildren, or gather to mourn the loss of loved ones. We are living through difficult times that challenge our “better angels”.

And yet, in the midst of it all, I am filled with gratitude. The Back Bay Mission staff worked collaboratively to insure the continuance of services for guests and clients. The Micah Day Center Team developed clear protocols to keep staff and clients safe. We have a “no service without mask policy” and have been able through the generosity of partnering agencies to make masks available to those clients and guests who need them. The Housing Recovery Team built plexiglass barriers for reception areas where guests and clients are welcomed. Case Managers continued to provide support and encouragement for their clients by phone. Some staff worked from home; and we all stayed connected through Zoom meetings. The Emergency Assistance Team created new protocols for folks to continue to secure food from the food pantry and they used technology to facilitate utility assistance requests.

I so appreciate the resiliency of the BBM staff who negotiated through the Covid-19 uncertainties, individual family concerns and their fears to continue providing services for our clients and guests. We continued to do this work as the nation struggles with the impact of a history of racial injustice. The staff has been encouraged and supported in having difficult conversations during staff meetings and in one on one conversations. Two staff members are involved in implicit bias training. As a nation, we are moving through difficult waters, however I am thankful for a staff that is committed to service and justice with compassion in these challenging times.

I must also acknowledge the many generous donors whose contributions have secured our work to serve the vulnerable and marginalized South Mississippi Gulf Coast residents. Thank you for your prayers and financial support for BBM’s mission to Strengthen Neighborhoods, Seek Justice, and Transform Lives. In gratitude, we move forward to do the work we have been called to do.

Executive Director,

Alice Graham
Kenney has over twenty years’ experience in the social services field. He currently oversees four direct service programs at Back Bay Mission. He served on several board of directors, both locally and nationally. Prior to his employment at Back Bay Mission, he served as the Client and Community Recovery Specialist Supervisor at the American Red Cross as he came to the area after Hurricane Katrina, disaster brought about opportunity. He provided supervision over a group of case managers and community outreach workers who provided services to individuals, families, and communities with diverse needs after Hurricane Katrina. He also worked for over ten years as a case manager. Education credentials -Bachelor degree in Human Services Management from the University of TN-Chattanooga and a Master degree in Education from the University of West Florida.

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.
– Helen Keller

IN MEMORY OF
MARY SUE WILSON FAIRCHILD
WALKWAY

Order Your Brick by October 30th!!
There is still time for you to get a brick to be a part of the Back Bay Mission Brick Walkway in memory of Mary Sue Wilson Fairchild, past Back Bay Mission board member. The bricks will be proudly displayed in a walkway starting in front of the Mission House and then continuing down the sidewalk. Help us pave a way to a stronger future and provide opportunities for those we serve. To place a brick order please go to our dedicated webpage at www.bricksrus.com/donorsite/backbaymission. Orders will be accepted through Friday, October 30, 2020. Please contact Kevin Kotula or Laura Payne with any questions or for help ordering at 228-432-0301.

BRICK FUNDRAISER

2020 DONATION TRIBUTES AS OF SEPTEMBER

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IN MEMORY OF

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Sam Schroeder
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The Retirement of Rev. Robert Goddard
Veterans
Volunteers Making a Difference

Richard Waldsmith
Rachael Rhybin
Rosa Lee Perry
Terry Tangeman
Tim O'Brien
Tom Bost
Tom Colins
Victims of the Corona Virus
Walter Holverson
Wanda and Waynade Beemer
Your Parents

THE CHANGING TIDES: FALL 2020
There are some people in this world that leave behind a permanent footprint on your heart and amongst the staff here at Back Bay Mission and especially me; Laz Lopez was that person. We, the living, owe it to the people who can no longer speak to tell their story for them—this is Laz’s.

Laz rode into Biloxi years ago and quickly became a magnetic guest here at the day center. There is no doubt that he had struggles he was enduring and would continue to endure. Early on in his life Laz was burnt on a significant amount of his body, he would live through skin grafts, surgeries, and the pain that is often coupled with this type of injury. As a result, he used alcohol to cope with the pain. Laz’s time on the streets were not kind to him as he often talked about it in his writings, “because of pride and pain were sitting on a bench drinking cooking wine while talking about pride...what the hell is there to be proud of welcome to the wayside where you fell in or were shoved...” His writings and stories often spoke to the struggles he faced day in and day out.

Three years ago, Laz was housed in Home at Last permanent supportive housing program. He went to treatment for his alcoholism and when he returned, we coupled him with an after-care specialist he would meet with weekly. Laz’s story turned around when he found hope he said, “I’m very fortunate that Jesus Christ threw his net and caught me. This misguided troubled fish and reeled me in. It could have turned out so much worse.”

In 2018 Laz approached me and said he wanted to pay it forward, when I asked him what that looked like he said he wanted start doing outreach with me into camps. Laz and I went to many camps, we spoke to many people who had similar struggles as himself. He would tell his story of success and having people that believed in him this transcended barriers and reached individuals I could not have reached without him. There is no telling how many lives Laz touched with his infectious spirit for helping others.

Part of life is reconciling the things in which we have no control of. I remember the day Laz and I were riding in my car and he said, I have lost weight, I can’t eat, and my tongue is killing me. I asked him to look at it and I immediately knew Laz needed to see a doctor. He made an appointment and immediately he was referred out to the cancer center in Pascagoula. The thing about most of my participants in the program is to the vast majority I or the staff here are the only people they have in their lives; we are their somebody. So, when Laz asked me to go with him, I jumped at the opportunity. We went back and forth to Pascagoula several times a week. We sat together when they told him he had a rare form of tongue cancer, we prayed together when they told him the horrors that awaited him for his treatment, we laughed where there was nothing else left to say. I treasure the moments in the car singing off key to Meatloaf while Laz laughed and told everyone who would listen that cancer wasn’t going to kill him my driving was. The last day I saw Laz he got out of my car I was carrying up his Ensure for him and he said, “I am tired Sarah” I told him “don’t give up, when you are tired I will fight for you” he chuckled, I said, “I love you and I am here. “I hugged Laz; and left told him I would call him tomorrow. I wish I knew it was the last time I would see him. Laz passed away in his apartment that he loved and valued so much. I found him several days later.

In the three years I have been Laz’s case worker here at BBM I came to know Laz as having a quiet sense of humor, a deep love of Christ, an appreciation for good rock and roll, and a man that loved a book over anything else. I miss him daily; we honor him and his memory here at BBM with sweet stories because “stories help us remember what we never want to forget” (Emory Frie). Laz will never be forgotten, we will use his story to not only live in our hearts, but to educate others, to inspire others, to do what Laz started projecting hope to the people he cared so much for.
Two small words grouped together can just be words or they could have the power to change mankind. Two small words such as BE KIND are those type of small words. When you read them, understand them, and put them into practice in your daily life you start making a change. A change not only in yourself but in others. Kindness can be contagious just as negativity can be. So, when you start off your day with the intentions of being kind to yourself and others you are making a difference! You are impacting your surroundings in a joyful way. Use the power of the words BE KIND and change the dynamic in the world.

Terry Tangeman was a valued member of the BBM community and will be missed.

Terry served as a long-term volunteer construction site supervisor at Back Bay Mission and New Orleans, following Katrina for 13 years constructing and rehabbing homes. He was also a long-term volunteer disaster relief coordinator of Northwest Ohio Association U.C.C. for 15 years and was on the road as soon as they called following a flood. He would help with clean up, handing out clean up kits and personal hygiene kits. He spent time on the board of The ROC in St. Mary’s and helped to build the House that God Built and the Victor House. Most of all, Terry loved his family and spending time with them. He treasured time spent traveling, RVing, cruising, camping, and wood working.

He was a great family man and especially loved any extra time with his grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Our hearts and prayers go out to Jeanette, his family, and friends.
My volunteer experience at Back Bay Mission has enlightened me on the resources available for the large population of the homeless in the Mississippi area. I was welcomed with open arms by the staff even during the pandemic, while taking COVID-19 precautions.

Back Bay Mission assist clients who are seeking a greater opportunity at life who may not have the resources needed for survival in the community. They allow clients to utilize the day center’s address to receive mail, use the phone services for local calls, and assist with receiving a state identification card along with uniforms if the client were to accept a job offer. There are many services that Back Bay Mission provides to those who are homeless in order for them to sustain basic needs and prepare themselves for a better life. Some of the services include a day center, food pantry, clothing closet, shower and laundry, and assistance with applications for housing, jobs, and food stamps. They also provide bus passes to doctor appointments, referrals for mental health, medical services, and legal services. Due to the pandemic, they have assisted clients with applications for stimulus payments as well.

I observed and assisted with staff during the interview process for new clients as they came into the day center to receive services provided by Back Bay Mission. The interview process included gathering information about the client and what services they feel are needed from the mission. Some clients had just been released from jail, lack support from family or friends, have a mental illness or just simply in a rough spot in life where help is needed.

The mission helps homeless citizens in allowing a safe environment in the day center; which allows clients to shower, have clean clothes, and hydrate and nourish themselves in the day. I assisted with cleaning showers and the laundry service provided by Back Bay Mission, which included a 15-minute shower and two complete outfits that can be washed and folded and picked up later in the day. The clothing closet in the day center allows clients to receive a new pair of socks, under garments, shirts, shoes, pants, and other items such as razors, deodorant, and more. The clients expressed much gratitude after showering and felt humbled and empowered.

The food pantry offers families different options and the power to select their food items they wish to have. Although families weren’t able to select their own items due to COVID-19 precautions, they were able to receive plenty of food, such as meat, milk, eggs, bread, canned goods and much more. The assistance with housing applications are for clients who are ready to venture on their own independently while maintaining a job due to the long process of housing placement.

Everything at Back Bay Mission was ran professionally and with structure, which was essential during this pandemic. Overall, I learned that Back Bay Mission is about allowing independence for the client with Back Bay’s contribution of guidance and resources needed to successfully complete task. It has been a pleasure to serve with Back Bay Mission and I hope to return soon.
Rev. Judy Clay
ESG Case Manager

Judy is a 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 & 2 grandchildren. 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 Back Bay Mission, 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.

Elizabeth Sandoval
Assistant to the ESG Case Manager

Ms. Elizabeth Sandoval is the assistant to our ESG Case Manager. Elizabeth graduated from Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College with an Associate’s Degree in Human Services and is currently seeking a Bachelor’s Degree in Family Relations at the University of Southern Mississippi. Elizabeth is a proud mother of 3 boys Kane, Sam, Aidyn and their dog Echo. She is a native of Gulfport, Mississippi.

Sarah Boone | Home At Last Caseworker

Sarah Boone is our Home At Last Caseworker. A native Floridian, Sarah has lived on the Gulf Coast twice. Sarah is a graduate of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College and the University of Southern Mississippi and has her Masters from Liberty University in Criminal Justice Public Administration. She worked in law enforcement before becoming a child support specialist at the Mississippi Department of Human Services. She is a member of Northwood Church of Gulfport, and lives in Biloxi with her two daughters. She loves living and serving in this community.

Lucy Nettles | Day Center Assistant

Lucy Nettles | Day Center Assistant. Ms. Lucy is a Gulfport native, retiree from Ingalls Shipbuilding after 19+ years, mother of two and grandmother of three and great-grandmother of one. Lucy graduated from Harrison Central High School and studied to be an Auto & Diesel Mechanic at Bailey Tech in St. Louis.

Sandra Carter | Micah Day Center Apprentice

Sandra grew up in Biloxi and moved to Mobile, Alabama as a teenager. As an adult she moved back home to Biloxi. She worked for Ocean Springs Seafood and Ocean Springs School District. Sandra has been working at Back Bay Mission since February 2020 as an apprentice at the Micah Day Center.

Deborah Horn | Micah Day Center Coordinator

Deborah Horn is our Micah Day Center Coordinator. Deborah recently retired from the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) Division of Family and Children Services after twenty-five years of faithful service. At MDHS, Deborah worked as an Intake Coordinator to ensure that all children and families received the best care possible by directing them to proper contacts and providing resources to help resolve immediate needs. With that said, family is very important. Deborah is the mother of 4 children and grandmother to 14 in addition to one great grand son. She attended Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College and University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Park. Deborah is also a proud active member of the Greater Mt. Olive Baptist Church where she serves as an usher.

Kirsten Hebron | Day Center Case Manager

Kirsten Hebron | Day Center Case Manager. Ms. Kirsten graduated from University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Park with a Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology and Master’s Degree in Social Work. She worked for Gulf Coast Mental Health Center for 4 years until she moved to California in 2005. In California, she worked for a non-profit agency as Director of Social Services. She also worked at a mental health agency as Clinician. Kirsten moved back to the Mississippi Gulf Coast in 2017 with her husband and two dogs to be with their families.