November 20, 2020 was Proclaimed Dr. Alice Graham Day in the City of Biloxi and Gulfport

BOARD HONORS pg. 5
DR. GRAHAM

HOMELESS AND pg. 6
HURRICANE SEASON
Reflections from the Executive Director

As I write my final “Changing Tides” article, I am so in touch with the meaning of these words. This year, 2020, has been an exercise in change. Here at Back Bay Mission, we have had to learn how to use technology to continue to serve our guests and clients. Utility assistance is handled by phone and online. We have made a temporary change in allowable amounts for utility assistance given the impact of the pandemic on the ways that power companies are working with their clients. We have reduced the number of people that can be in the Micah Center and the Admin Building while waiting for services. Housing Recovery, with the loss of volunteers, had to use paid contractors to complete work on rehabs begun before the pandemic. Gulf Coast Housing Initiatives in the absence of volunteers has also had to use paid contractors to complete housing renovations and new construction. We are looking at other models for funding housing recovery that would be more empowering for the clients that we serve. Coat residents continue to use our food pantry which had to become less choice due to health safety issues. The Emergency Assistance manager and the volunteers have found new ways to determine what foods are wanted by clients, so that when a bag of food is handed to them, it contains what they want.

The changes necessitated by the pandemic have caused us as a staff to reassess our commitments and identify new ways to express our core values. For example, the annual Hunger Homeless Meal offered to the community provided by the Hard Rock had to be outdoors rather than folk sitting comfortably at tables decorated for the holiday. Hard Rock staff served 300 masked people waiting patiently socially distanced to pick up a sturdy to go box filled with a delicious traditional Thanksgiving meal. Yes, the event changed, but still let this, too often forgotten, community know that they are seen. The Board of Directors hosted a virtual retirement celebration for me that was very different from the one that had been planned. It was wonderful! A Zoom Retirement Party that acknowledged my work and leadership. WOW!

I have learned this year, over and over again, that the meaning and purpose of what we do is more important than the traditions/trappings that surround meaning and purpose. To continue Back Bay Mission’s mission to Strengthen Neighborhoods, to Seek Justice, to Transform Lives through this pandemic we have had to develop new forms, processes, create new options.

The young become the old, Mysteries do unfold. Cause that’s the way of time Nothing and no one goes unchanged.

(Lyrics from Everything Must Change by George Benson)

Back Bay Mission will have new leadership. Over the years, Back Bay Mission has shown resilience in adapting and growing itself anew to meet the needs of changing populations with the perspective of fresh eyes, fresh perspectives, expanded ideas. This tradition will continue.

Rain comes from the clouds And sun lights up the sky, And hummingbirds do fly.

(Lyrics from Everything Must Change by George Benson)

Executive Director,
Alice Graham

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Dr. Graham,

Although your time at Back Bay Mission has come to a close
We wanted you to know how we felt about your time with us, so here it goes
Started out as a young girl in Chicago, full of ambition & drive
Then off to Spelman in Atlanta, a decision that changed your life
Then you answered your faith’s calling cause of your love of people
Your passion is palpable to see everyone treated as equal
You still stayed the course, even making stops not planned
Continuing on your journey of becoming Dr. Graham
And though in your youth, you vowed to never visit Mississippi

After Katrina, you came with your students to witness the devastation in our little city
Something must’ve changed in that moment, to help alter your vision
Because 10 years after to Katrina, you came to Back Bay Mission
It became part of your plan, to give a voice to the voiceless
Empower those in need & help them make better choices
To help to sustain, to help build stability
Hand-ups, not hand-outs to give hope to families
That is our goal on campus, everyday we arrive
To strengthen neighborhoods, seek justice & transform lives
Thank you, Thank you, Thank you, Dr. Graham

For all of your hard work and for creating a warm, welcoming culture here at Back Bay Mission. May you enjoy your retirement for many years to come.

Good health & God bless.
Please join us in our celebration of Rev. Alice Graham, Ph.D. as she gets ready to retire on Wednesday, December 30, 2020. Time has flown since her first day at Back Bay Mission on January 1, 2015. She has made a mark on Back Bay Mission and the people we have served over the past six years.

Below is a list of some of the changes and programs that were implemented under her leadership.

**Added Programs Under Bridges Out of Poverty**
- God’s Green Acres Garden
- Creative Expressions Class
- Nine Months to A Healthier Life

**Added Positions**
- Chief Financial Officer
- Day Center Assistant
- Construction Supervisor
- Assistant Construction Manager
- Day Center Case Manager
- Development Assistant
- Rental Assistance Caseworker
- Emergency Solutions Grant Assistant
- Bookkeeper
- Community Health Worker

**Added Leadership**
- Lead Team Council

**Hired Many Staff Members**
- Deborah Horn
- Elizabeth Sandoval
- Judy Cloyd
- Kevin Kotula
- Kayonia Carter
- Kirsten Hebron
- Laura Payne Breeland
- Loraine Serrano
- Lucy Nettles
- Sarah Boone
- Shawn Sullivan Gauthreaux
- Mary Tell (Retired)
- Matt Cole (Former Staff Member)

**New Branding**
- New Logo
- New Mission Statement
- BBM APP
- Message of Self-Sustainability & Education

Dr. Graham we thank you for your leadership, guidance, vision, and commitment to helping people moving forward, including guest, staff, and volunteers. Working with you has been a privilege and you will greatly be missed. Embrace the new opportunities that retirement will bring.
The Resolution from the Back Bay Mission Board of Directors reads:

In Recognition of Extraordinary Service and Leadership, the Back Bay Mission Board of Directors Presents this Resolution in Honor of Rev. Alice Graham, Ph.D.

Whereas, Rev. Alice Graham, Ph.D. joined Back Bay Mission on January 1, 2015 as the Executive Director to oversee the daily operations;

Whereas, Rev. Graham worked relentlessly on social and economic injustices across the Mississippi Gulf Coast by being a voice for those who needed it most by serving on numerous committees and voicing her concerns for the low-income and homeless guests that are served by Back Bay Mission;

Whereas, Rev. Graham continued to evaluate the needs of our guests and ensured that the programs and services offered by Back Bay Mission were in support of those needs by adding educational programs such as Bridges Out of Poverty and adding much needed positions such as the Chief Financial Officer and the Day Center Case Manager;

Whereas, Rev. Graham developed and maintained enduring partnerships with numerous non-profit and scale-level organizations to ensure the relevance of the work being done including Boat People SOS, Gulf Coast Community Exchange, Coastal Family Health Center, Mississippi Center for Justice, East Biloxi Community Collaborative, Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Steps Coalition, Tulane University, and Believe a Ministry of Bethel Baptist Church;

Whereas, Rev. Graham’s contributions as a dedicated, hard-working, generous, caring, and thoughtful person are incomparable and will be greatly missed by the Back Bay Mission Board members and staff;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Board of Directors expresses its deepest appreciation for the extraordinary service and leadership of Rev. Alice Graham during her 6-year tenure as the Executive Director and extends best wishes in her well-deserved retirement; and

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be entered permanently into the minutes of the Board of Directors.

Signed on this Twentieth day of November, Two-Thousand and Twenty

Raymos McMillon
Board President

South Central Conference of the United Church of Christ

A Resolution

In Appreciation of the Ministry of Rev. Alice Graham, Ph.D., Executive Director, Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi on the Occasion of Her Retirement

Whereas, Rev. Dr. Alice Graham was called to serve as Director of Back Bay Mission in 2015, and;

Whereas, Dr. Graham has served with distinction at Back Bay Mission in helping to fulfill the mission of strengthening neighborhoods, seeking justice and transforming lives,

Whereas, Dr. Graham has fostered the connection of Back Bay Mission to the Council for Health and Human Services Ministries and Local Churches of the United Church of Christ, and;

Whereas, Alice has welcomed United Church of Christ volunteer groups to Back Bay Mission from the South Central Conference and Conferences from around the United States, and;

Whereas, Dr. Graham has led Back Bay Mission staff to minister to guests during the current global pandemic with compassion, creativity and care.

Therefore, be it Resolved that the Board of Directors of the South Central Conference of the United Church of Christ recognizes with deep appreciation the many achievements of Rev. Dr. Alice Graham as Executive Director of Back Bay Mission, and wishes her well in her upcoming retirement. May God’s blessings be upon her in this time of transition.

Voted this the 14th day of November, 2020.

Rev. Nikki Stahl, President

South Central Conference of the United Church of Christ

Board of Directors
Summer on the Mississippi Gulf Coast brings the start of hurricane season. We start to see stories on the local news and social media on how to prepare for a storm. It is time to get together safety kits, flashlights, and stock up on water and nonperishable foods, to name a few. While getting the needed supplies we tend to forget about the homeless and how they will prepare for the storm. It is inevitable that they will lose some or all of their belongings. There is also the decision on whether or not they will go to an emergency storm shelter. The case managers at Back Bay Mission provide the information regarding bus services and location of shelters that will open for the storm. When the storm approaches and Back Bay Mission has closed, we worry for our guests and clients. Once the storm has passed and Back Bay Mission is open for services, it is time to assess the needs of the people we serve. As the guests came into the day center, I checked in with them to find out how they weathered the storm. Half of the guests I spoke with decided to go to the shelter. Before going to the shelter, they had to decide what to take with them and what to leave behind. Regardless of where they stayed, some of the items they lost included clothing, hygiene products, food, sleeping bags, and tents. One guest also lost his job due to the damage from the storm. You may ask yourself why the homeless do not go to the shelter. There are reasons we cannot truly understand but each individual has to make the best decision for themselves. I listened to their stories and marveled at their courage and relentlessness. Back Bay Mission continues to work on finding the resources to help our guests and clients with replacing the items they lost. With the help of one of our partner agencies, Catholic Charities, we will be able to provide 100 tents and sleeping bags. Other items we hope to provide for the homeless in the coming months include clothing, backpacks, shoes, blankets, tarps, flashlights/lanterns, and small propane tanks and burners.

Yesterday was the 14th annual Hard Rock Casino “Hunger Homeless Meal” here at Back Bay Mission and over 300 Thanksgiving meals were served to those in need. 2020 has been a difficult year for many with the lingering pandemic and hurricane activity so this year was especially important. Even though we could not have our normal sit-down lunch, we were still able to serve hundreds, some of whom may be experiencing homelessness for the first time. The Hunger Homeless Meal is a very special tradition for both the Hard Rock and Back Bay Mission; one that we hope to continue for years to come. We just wanted to take a minute to thank the Hard Rock, their wonderful staff that cooked, packed, loaded and delivered the food and all the wonderful Hard Rock volunteers that came to Back Bay Mission to serve. We cannot thank each and every one of you enough for all of your hard work and dedication. It means a lot to all of us, guests and staff, here at Back Bay Mission.
MEET THE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Shawn Gauthreaux
Chief Financial Officer

Shawn is a graduate from The University of Mississippi with a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Management. Before joining Back Bay Mission, Shawn was the Chief Financial Officer and Office Manager at Premier Craneworks in Biloxi, Mississippi. Shawn is the proud mother of her son and two stepchildren. She was born and raised on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in Ocean Springs, where she currently lives with her husband.

Amanda Roberts
Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper

Before joining our Back Bay Mission staff, she was a Customer Service Representative at Cable One and Administrative Assistant at the IP Casino. She is currently attending Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College and plans to transfer to USM to obtain her Bachelor’s Degree in Business Management and Marketing. She was raised on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. She currently resides in D’Iberville with her husband Chris and their two sons, Hunter, and London. Chris is a Police Detective, Hunter attends Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College and will transfer to USM to obtain his degree in Construction Engineering, London is a sophomore at D’Iberville High School where he is the running back for the football team and is pitcher and plays 3rd base for the baseball team. Amanda attends church at CenterPoint Church in Ocean Springs. She loves spending time with her family and friends, singing, boating, fishing, going on cruises, and traveling.

MEET THE DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Laura Payne Breeland
Community Relations Associate

Laura is a native of Biloxi, Mississippi, and started her career in retail working for companies like Disney, Nike, and The Limited Brands. After 20 years in retail management, Laura entered the nonprofit sector with the Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce. She graduated from Leadership Gulf Coast in 2013 and came to Back Bay Mission in 2015. She lives in D’Iberville with her husband and is a proud mother and grandmother.

Kevin Kotula
Development Associate

Kevin assists with branding, content creation, and community outreach for Back Bay Mission. He has an associate’s degree in graphic design and obtained a bachelor’s degree in film with a minor in marketing from the University of Southern Mississippi. A lifelong resident of Biloxi, Kevin is excited to help build the community from within. He also has a dog & a cat and in his spare time he enjoys cooking, traveling and sports.

MEET THE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE STAFF

Keyonia Carter
Emergency Assistance Case Manager

Keyonia 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.

Julie Guagliardo

Meredith Monforton

Watson Carl Brock (Carl)

Keyonia stated, “Each volunteer brings their own uniqueness to BBM, which is what makes these three volunteers so special. There is not a day that goes by that their gifts do not shine as they are helping and serving others. Not only do they put forth a lot of effort towards their work, but they also have the heart to help assist those who are in need.”

Volunteers do not necessarily have the time, they just have the heart.
- Elizabeth Andrew
1012 Division Street
Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

THE CHANGING TIDES
Winter 2020