Back Bay Mission
Established in 1922

BACK BAY MISSION
strengthening neighborhoods, seeking justice, transforming lives

THE CHANGING TIDES

TheMagazineofBackBayMission
Summer 2021

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Reflections from the Executive Director

Reflections STORY

Executive Director
Pastor James Pennington

Martin Luther King Jr. said: *"You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step."*

MLK Jr. was encouraging people to take the first figurative step towards something, even if they did not know what that looked like or where the rest of the steps might be, and to have faith or confidence that the rest of the steps would come.

This quote certainly defines 2020 as we lived through the Pandemic. It seems as if the whole human race was walking an invisible staircase together, not knowing what the next step would bring. Along with a health crisis, the murder of George Floyd reignited increased activism and frustration over longstanding social and economic inequalities between the country's white and black communities. The Coronavirus only heightened the inequalities in health care between the haves and have nots.

This past year has been one filled with fear, anger, frustration, polarization, and loss. And yet, the powerful gift of human resilience has stood out in many powerful and transformative ways. We are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel because in a very short amount of time health professionals were able to design a vaccine and move our nation, and hopefully our world toward herd immunity. We know that we are still climbing those stairs into the unknown!

Mahatma Gandhi was clear: *"You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty."*

The amazing beauty of humanity is that in the most challenging of times there will be those who stand up and stand out. They are the drops in the ocean of humanity that cause ripples of mercy and love.

During the past year, the creative resiliency of the amazing staff of Back Bay Mission and the marginalized populations we serve has stood out. We have been creating ripples in the ocean of humanity, serving, and caring for those most marginalized who could have clearly fallen "between the cracks" during this past season of the pandemic.

During the Pandemic, Back Bay Mission staff masked up and social distanced, often missed working with our guests face to face. Our contact with our unsheltered (homeless) friends was more limited and it felt less personal. People seeking utility assistance, participating in the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and Home at Last (HAL) programs were moved online or via phone. Masks and electronic connections meant that the usual warm smiles could not be exchanged. There were many barriers to our unsheltered friends or those living in poverty seeking help from national programs because no one was "manning" the phones and internet connections were overloaded. Our unsheltered friends and those living in poverty were feeling even more isolated, vulnerable, and uncared for as many agencies shut their doors.

Back Bay Mission's hearts and doors remained open during the pandemic because it was clear that we offered essential services for those most vulnerable among us. Together we learned some great lessons this past year. We discovered how to be even more flexible and creative to make sure we were able to meet our unsheltered friends where they were. Many of our unsheltered friends did not have computers or internet access, so we had to mask-up and meet face to face or take the extra time to walk with our friends through the process of Zoom or on-line access to resources.

We were also given opportunities to work with individuals who lost their employment during the

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pandemic, helping connect them to resources and reinforcing that there was no shame in seeking services for the first time in their lives. For the staff of Back Bay Mission, it is always about helping those we serve feel that someone cares about their physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare.

Now as we are slowly taking off our masks, vaccinations are moving us toward herd immunity, and things are "going back to normal," I am reminded that there is so much we missed over these past months. The pleasantry of a handshake, the warm embrace of a friend, a meal out at our favorite local restaurant, or the sound of the hammer hitting nails by one of our volunteers at one of our many mission low-income housing work sites. So many simple pleasures that were gone these last few months caused us to appreciate these gifts of life that can go unnoticed.

Contemporary author Jaeda DeWalt said this of her love of unraveling the mysteries of the human spirit: *"When we learn how to become more resilient, we learn how to embrace the beautifully broad spectrum of the human experience."*

At Back Bay Mission we embrace the beautiful and broad spectrum of the human spirit and experience in those we serve. Daily we note the resilience of our guests and friends served by the Micah Day Center and the myriad of assistance we offer at Back Bay Mission. Our resilient guests take one step at a time, in faith and hope, continuing to ascend and eventually move out of just surviving to thriving.

Take the step of faith with Back Bay Mission by supporting us by volunteering or sharing your resources of prayer and financial support.

"You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step." MLK, Jr.

Executive Director
Pastor James Pennington

find us online

BACK BAY MISSION EARNED A PLATINUM SEAL WITH GUIDESTAR

Our organization earned a 2021 Platinum Seal of Transparency! Now, everyone can see our strategy, metrics, and achievements.

Check out our updated #NonprofitProfile on Candid:
www.guidestar.org/profile/64-0431066

GUIDESTAR PLATINUM TRANSPARENCY 2021

2021 DONATION TRIBUTES AS OF MAY

IN HONOR OF

1990's Back Bay Mission Staff
Albert and Patricia Salter
Betty Guhl
Dan and Kathy Wackman
David Ward
Donald Morgan
Hank and Martha Seward
Holly Green
Jeanette Tangeman
John and Pam Small
Peggy Butera
Rev. Dr. P.B. Kiewit
Rev. James Pennington
Rev. Shari Prestemon
Ronda Feller
Terry White
UCC Volunteers
United Church of Christ of New Brighton

IN MEMORY OF

A. Vinton Lewis
Butch Knight
Casey
Carol Brown
Carol Pinckney
Casey A. Vari
Charles Dick
David Condit
Doris Small
Dorothy Andrew
Eleanore Troxel
Elizabeth Adams
Jane Nordwall
Kathy Hornbaker
Kyle Higginbotham
Mars
Mary Elizabeth Bass Bryant
Mary Elizabeth Bass Bryant
Rev. Douglas Anders
Rev. George Hurter
Rev. J. Richard Coyle
Rev. Jack Aregood
Rev. Roger P. Felson
Richard T. Weikel
Ron Glenn
Sparky Sonderegger
Sylvia Mentel
Terry Tangeman

IN LOVING MEMORY
OF CAROL PINCKNEY

PICTURED ARE MEMBERS OF HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH, IN MUNCIE, INDIANA, PRESENTING A $2000 GIFT TO BACK BAY MISSION STAFF IN MEMORY OF CAROL PINCKNEY, A FAITHFUL AND MUCH-LOVED BACK BAY MISSION VOLUNTEER.

MICAH DAY CENTER APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM CELEBRATES THE FIRST GRADUATE

The Micah Day Center Apprenticeship Program was created to guide the individual to develop the necessary skills and tools to gain and retain employment. The program serves those individuals who society perceives as unemployable, stigmatized because of past circumstance, and overlooked by other potential employers. This past year Back Bay Mission welcomed the first apprentice to complete the year-long commitment.

The apprentice developed many tools during her time here at Back Bay Mission such as: social skills, how to cope in difficult situations, and conflict resolution. She also worked through barriers that arose working with guests and staff such as the importance of communication, timeliness, and punctuality. One stipulation of becoming an apprentice was opening a bank account, this apprentice had never had a bank account and for the first time in her life she had income and a bank account. There was an initial opposition to opening an account but through much dialogue the staff worked with the apprentice and partners at Peoples Bank. In preparation for her graduation, she also developed the skills to write a resume, fill out a time sheet, apply for jobs, and interview skills.

This program is set up to meet the apprentice where they are and work in conjunction with them to reach their desired goals and potential. We helped her with this process by making a goals poster that she would check off when she would accomplish the goals a visual confirmation of success. The first apprentice achieved many milestones that would profoundly affect her future. She was referred to housing, is in the process of starting her own business, and is now receiving monthly income. During the pandemic she was vital to the success of the mission. She showed up every day ready to work hard and helped us open our doors in the midst of trying times. We thank her for her hard work and dedication to the mission of strengthening neighborhoods, seeking justice, and transforming lives. Back Bay Mission will continue to guide and mentor her. The program is ready to start this journey again with a new apprentice. We look forward to what the new apprentice will bring to Back Bay Mission's guest and staff.

TWO NEW VIDEO SERIES "FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR" & "CANDID CONVERSATIONS"

We hope you have tuned in to watch the latest videos "From the Desk of the Executive Director" and "Candid Conversations" weekly. If you are not familiar with the series, keep reading to see the short description and the viewing times. "From the Desk of the Executive Director" features Rev. Pennington talking about different issues, topics and much more! Hear what Back Bay Mission is doing and what is happening on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. "Candid Conversations" is a video series that focuses on what our guests and clients face and some of the success and struggles from those working with the homeless and impoverished. This series will tackle joys, hardships, and injustices as Back Bay Mission staff continue to seek justice for those we serve. Thank you to Kevin Kotula for all his hard work on these two series and thank you to the team members that participate.

Tune in Mondays at 10:00 a.m. (CST) to watch "From the Desk of the Executive Director" and Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. (CST) to watch "Candid Conversations" every week. Both series are shared on our social media platforms, website, You Tube, and the BBM APP. To view go to our You Tube page to watch already aired episodes.

"HOME IS HOME"

Giving back has always been a big part of Sam Nichols' life; first as the recipient of an outpouring of giving and support and now, as Retired Brigadier General Samuel Nichols, he loves to give back as much, and in as many ways as possible.

"Giving back is important to me because it was given to me..."

Born Samuel T. Nichols, Jr., Gen. Nichols is a Biloxi, Miss native and attributes much of his professional success to his time growing up on the Coast and the wonderful, giving people in the community that helped nurture his spirit and growth into the man of faith he is today. Ruby Thompson Green, the first African-American teacher at Biloxi High School, was an influential force on a young Elementary-aged Sam, next was principal TJ Smith, then Junior High football coach turned city councilman Tom Ferrill, his high school football coach Joe Sabbatini and teachers Effie Clark & Charles Davis all had a profound influence on a growing Sam Nichols by being so giving of themselves.

As he grew into General Nichols, he met the love of his life, the "most unselfish person" and whom he calls "the backbone of the Nichols family" his wife Linda Nichols. Alongside Linda, Gen. Nichols has made it a priority in his life to do as much good for as many as possible.

"I'm very humbled to have lived this life to this point knowing all the people that gave of themselves to me."

Growing up in Biloxi, Gen. Nichols knew he always wanted to give back to the community that had given him so much; even though he doesn't still live on the Miss Gulf Coast, he still has deep ties and connections. His love for the area runs deep and as he put it, "Home is home." Although the Coast can be a beautiful, scenic area, Gen. Nichols also knows the area's history with hurricanes. Two of the worst in the history of the USA has made landfall on the shores of the Miss Gulf Coast. First Hurricane Camille ravaged the Coast in 1969 and then completely devastated again by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. It is because of Hurricane Katrina that General Nichols first became familiar with Back Bay Mission. It was Back Bay Mission that helped pick up the mantel and accept the challenge of helping as many people in need as possible. Long after FEMA and the news trucks departed the Coast, Back Bay Mission dutifully carried on with the work that needed to be done. Work that, otherwise would not have been completed. Work for those in the most need of help. It is this spirit of community, giving and selflessness that caught Gen. Nichols eye. He saw a video about Back Bay Mission and it's rich history of helping those in most need on the Miss Gulf Coast. The same Gulf Coast that helped mold and guide Gen. Nichols into the man he is today. He knew right then he had to act and reach out to Back Bay Mission. Today, we would like to thank Linda & Gen. Nichols for their generous gift and we are proud to say Gen. Nichols has decided to team up & work with Back Bay Mission to continue our ever-evolving mission of "strengthening neighborhoods, seeking justice and transforming lives."

JUST AS THEY ARE

Twenty-five. HomePort I, permanent supportive housing for unsheltered veterans, was opened in January 2013 and accepted the first two Veterans. With the success of HomePort I the decision was made to add additional permanent housing, in February 2015 HomePort II a six-plex was opened. Since the opening of HomePort I & II they have been full. For the first time since 2013 we had three vacancies at one time in 2020. The vacancies did not take long to fill.

As I prepared the file for placement of our newest tenant my eyes could not help but glean the closed files of veterans previously housed at HomePort and for a moment a pause for reflection on the veterans that for a time called HomePort home. Homeport has been home to 17 veterans and now 8 veterans call HomePort home. Twenty-five that found shelter at Back Bay Mission's HomePort. They come to us from different places, different backgrounds, different experiences that put them all on a common, shared path to homelessness and ultimately to our door. There is a common saying often attributed to the calling of Christ to come as you are. HomePort is a place where that saying is truly practiced and the units at HomePort are designed for a homeless veteran to literally move from living on the streets into affordable, safe and dignified housing, just as they are. Twenty-five veterans have come to Back Bay Mission just as they are to find shelter and move forward in their lives.

HOME AGAIN AT BBM

BY JOHN SMALL, LONG-TERM VOLUNTEER

It was a long cold winter here in Indiana, we were tired of being isolated and ready to do something. Our Covid shots were finally scheduled and we had two weeks to wait before they were fully effective. We needed to celebrate and do something. A year had passed since we were at Back Bay Mission and that seemed to be an easy decision, GO! I called Craig and asked if he needed help, he contacted Kenny and we had an immediate response. "Come on down!"
Traveling was different this year, no fast-food places open and wearing masks every time we got out of the car. We drove straight through to avoid motels, it was a long 666-mile, one day trip. It was so good to see the masked faces of all our old friends, the new executive director, James and assistant construction manager, Chase. It was great to be back home where we have volunteered for 15 years. It was our first home as a married couple when I was stationed at Keesler AFB 60 years ago.

There was lots to do since only a few volunteers had come down in the last year. Pam went to work in the office catching up on emails and worked with the staff updating the new computers. I started cleaning up the tool trailers and doing trailer repairs. Our first volunteer crew came in and we went to work on a repo house in Gulfport. Our next crew hit the ground running on the two new homes we started in January 2020. By the end of March, we had made significant progress and a steady group of volunteers will soon be arriving.

Pictured: John and Pam Small
being interviewed for the WXXV news.

To read the story you can go to this website: https://www.wxxv25.com/2021/03/19/back-bay-mission-gives-back-local-community/

2021 LONG-TERM VOLUNTEERS THROUGH JULY

Jeanette Tangeman (Wapakoneta, OH)
Month of February

Bob and Nancy Bock (Evansville, IN)
Months of May, June, & July

Pam and John Small (Newburgh, IN)
Month of March Pictured in Above Article

THANK YOU LONG -TERM VOLUNTEERS

Back Bay Mission would like to thank our long-term volunteers who have been to BBM so far in 2021. We look forward to having even more on campus.
If you have any questions about being a long-term volunteer, please contact Kenney Washington at kwash@thebackbaymission.org or call 228-432-0301.

HITTING THE GROUND RUNNING

Back Bay Mission welcomed two new employees on Monday, February 22, 2021, Rev. James Pennington (Executive Director) and Chance Williams (Housing Recovery Assistant). Both came with a driving passion to dive right in and get things done. James has spent a lot of his time getting to know the programs, clients/guests, employees, looking for the gaps in service, and meeting leaders here on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Chance has been working on the construction job sites, getting to know his new co-workers, and interacting with our clients and mission trip volunteers. Chance and James, thanks to Sig Baake & Land O' Lakes Ambulance, have even been CPR certified during this short time at Back Bay Mission. It is hard to believe we welcomed these two just a short time ago! With these new additions to the BBM staff, we are looking forward to the future as we continue the work of strengthening neighborhoods, seeking justice, and transforming lives.

BBM's Housing Recovery Assistant: Chance Williams

Chance joined the Back Bay Mission team as the Construction Supervisor. Chance lives in D'Iberville, MS and has a background in construction & appliance installation. He has been married to his beautiful wife, Anna Williams, since December of 2020. He is looking forward to changing lives for the better, one project at a time.

BBM's Executive Director: Rev. James Pennington

Rev. James joined the Back Bay Mission as the Executive Director. Rev. Pennington, a Mississippian, has most recently served as Senior Pastor at UCC churches in Phoenix, Arizona, and Minneapolis, Minnesota. His accomplishments in these two ministries included providing extensive services for feeding people experiencing homelessness; being an advocate for migrants at the border; and conducting recovery groups, transgender support groups, and racial reconciliation groups. He was recognized by the Minnesota Conference Office for exemplary leadership. Particularly notable in his body of work is merging Spirit of the Lakes, a predominantly LGBT congregation with a historic church of mostly older members, and Minnehaha UCC to create a new church, Living Table, which became wildly successful and provided ministry to a diverse congregation.

ADDING A EMAIL APPEAL
WHAT THIS MEANS TO YOU

We would like to thank all our donors who mail in or electronically send in donations to support Back Bay Mission. Back Bay Mission depends on the funds we receive from our appeal letters in order to include all types of donors we will be adding an email appeal along with our standard mail pieces. For those who prefer to get the appeal by email please let Laura Payne Breeland know that you wish to opt out of receiving your appeal by mail. You can email her at lpayne@thebackbaymission.org and let her know you wish to be removed off the mailing list for appeals. If you prefer to continue receiving your appeal by mail no action is needed. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact her by email or call 228-432-0301.

MOVING FORWARD TAKES SUPPORT

Back Bay Mission is working with a 47-year-old client who has been in the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Preventive Program for a year and three months. She came into the program waiting to start training for a new job that would allow her to maintain her monthly bills. On the surface it seemed this client would only need assistance for a few months. Then COVID- 19 began to start shutting down the state and the training for her new job was pushed back indefinitely. Since the client had not started working, she did not qualify for unemployment benefits. This client also has a compromised immune system and is sheltering in place to try to prevent from getting the virus. Once things began to open back up; she was afraid to work outside of the home. She was already struggling with depression due to the loss of her husband, mother, and best friend all within a very short time of each other. Her son became her main support system while she tried to deal with all her grief. However, he decided to join the Airforce and was in basic training during the beginning of the pandemic. The son was unable to come home, the base he was stationed at was on lock down. Since she had very little contact with him her depression started getting worse and her physical health was starting to decline. She did not think she could see a doctor because she did not have any income and she did not have health insurance. After providing resources and talking/working with this client, she is now seeing a therapist and medical doctor regularly. She is working hard to move forward with the support of her caseworker at Back Bay Mission.

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