

# STEWPT

FAITH MEETING NEEDS IN OUR COMMUNITY



## SPRING 2024 NEWSLETTER · ISSUE 2



### DIRECTOR'S CORNER

I have a confession to make.

Often, when I am talking about Stewpot – or giving a presentation or writing a newsletter article – I say a lot about what we, together, are doing for our neighbors in

need. It's a laundry list because we do a lot: food, shelter, clothing, after-school programs, summer camp, outreach, housing.

But what I often fail to mention is that Stewpot has **two missions** (if we are staying true to our DNA). First and foremost, we provide resources to people in need. **But just as importantly, we also give people a place to live out their faith.**

Our Holy Scriptures are full of teachings on what faith looks like "on the ground":

"There will always be some in the land who are poor. That is why I am commanding you to share freely with the poor..." (Deuteronomy 15:11)

"Love your neighbor as yourself." (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:31)

"Is this not the fast I choose...to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked to cover them; and not to hide yourself from your own kin?" (Isaiah 58:7)

"What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love mercy, and walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

"You will know them by their fruits." (Matthew 7:20)

"If you know someone who doesn't have any clothes or food, you shouldn't just say, 'I hope all goes well for you.'" "What good is it to say this, unless you do something to help? Faith that doesn't lead us to do good deeds is all alone and dead!" (James 2:15-17)

**From Stewpot's beginnings, people have found such joy in serving here that I can only describe it as "finding their lives."** It brings to mind what Jesus says in the Gospel of Matthew: "Anyone who keeps his life for himself shall lose it; and anyone who loses his life for me shall find it again" (16:25, TLB)

Perhaps it is in our design: being made in the image of God, whose very existence is Love, we only feel fulfilled when we help ease the pains of others. Or, perhaps what we experience at Stewpot is a foretaste of heaven, where the distinctions are stripped away and we all stand as equals, finally, in God's presence.

Either way, Stewpot is a little corner of our troubled world where people find hope, and that includes you and me. It's also a place where people lose themselves, only to find themselves again, being made more whole through loving and serving others.

In it Together,

Rev. Jill Barnes Buckley, Executive Director

# “The Kids are Not All Right”

**Written by Yolanda Kirkland, Director of Teen Services**

Over the past three years, we have seen a marked increase in the anxiety of our kids and teens at Stewpot (we've written about it here before). We are encountering more anger, depression, and grief than ever before. But with the help of a recent grant from the Community Foundation for Mississippi, we have been able to hire a Pilates instructor and a licensed counselor to deliver weekly therapies that address these ongoing mental health issues.

We launched this new activity in September 2023, and from the start, we noticed that the teens were very hesitant about Pilates and that the boys were not into counseling at all. Week after week, they gave our counselor a hard time. The Stewpot staff thought it was not going well; nevertheless, Wendy, our Pilates instructor, and Josh, our licensed counselor, didn't want to give up. They powered through the teens' resistance to participating.

Now, with persistence and a lot of love,

our girls love Pilates with Wendy, and the boys actually ask when Josh is coming to talk to them. We are so thankful to be able to teach relaxation techniques that can be helpful in dealing with stress, and for the counseling that is giving our teens coping skills and somewhere to talk about their concerns.

The grant ends in May, but we'd love to continue these therapies next school year. Please let us know if you are interested in pitching in financially to help make it happen!



**Pictured: The Stewpot Teen Center**

## Looking Ahead to Stewpot Summer Camp



Summer Recreational Camp for Stewpot Kids & Teens will be here before we know it! This seven-week camp will be from June 3rd-July 18th and is made possible by the generous contributions of our Stewpot community. If you would like to sponsor a child or teen this summer (\$350 per camper), please visit [stewpot.org/summercamp](http://stewpot.org/summercamp).

**Donations can also be mailed to:**  
Attn: Stewpot Summer Camp  
P.O. Box 3691  
Jackson, MS 39207

# From Homelessness to Housing: One Man's Story

**Written by Chris Eason, Director of Special Events & Communications**

Joe McLaurin began staying at Billy Brumfield Men's Shelter back in 2017. Reggie Wiggins, who became the Director of Billy Brumfield in 2022, describes his relationship with Joe: "I knew Joe from when I was homeless, so he has been in the homeless community for a while. I heard from others that Joe may be experiencing dementia. After spending more time with him, I understood what they were saying. Having known him for several years, I started to work with him. I tried having conversations with him about what was going on with him personally."

Joe's demeanor and attitude could sometimes be unpredictable. It seemed that his health was deteriorating. Joe is diabetic, so he has several medications to balance his high blood pressure and insulin levels. "No one was monitoring him. Because of that, we were seeing certain attitudes. He seemed to be taking too much insulin. One morning, he was fine. Others, he would be ornery. His dementia was worsening because he wasn't taking his medication properly," Reggie said.

Gradually, Joe started trusting Reggie, allowing him to help with small tasks such as giving him a haircut and cleaning up his area at Brumfield. One day, Reggie said to Joe, "Joe, you need something to do." So, Joe started helping do the laundry at Brumfield. He then moved onto answering the telephone.

Stewpot staff members Laronda Davis and Mary Thompson also started



**Pictured: Mr. Joe McLaurin**

working one-on-one with Joe and offered to help him find permanent housing. Come to find out, Joe had already tried to find housing on his own, but his finances weren't in order. With support from Reggie, Laronda, and Mary, Joe got control over his finances and started taking his medicine. The dementia didn't go away, but his memory and general demeanor improved.

On January 30th of this year, Joe moved into his own apartment. Each morning, either Reggie or Laronda picks him up and takes him to Brumfield to volunteer. For people like Joe who don't have family to call and check on them, Stewpot becomes their family. "When you've been in the homeless community for so long, that becomes your family. And you want to come back. He wants to see the guys at Brumfield each day, and they want to see him. But at the end of the day, Joe will say 'I'm ready to go,' so we take him home," says Reggie.

Joe's story tells us that this is what has to happen for people to stay housed: one-on-one engagement, paying attention to what the needs are, and walking alongside them as they take the steps towards exiting homelessness. "I felt that when we allow someone to come into shelter and stay as long as he did, we owe him that special attention," says Reggie.

# Kindred Churches: Spotlighting Volunteers from Local Congregations

**Written by Contyna McNealy, Director of Volunteer Programs**

Anthony Thomas is the coordinator of volunteers for St. Richards. He has the best energy. He is ALWAYS happy to volunteer and is really intentional about recruiting volunteers for their week of service. Across the five days, I'd say there are about five different groups or organizations within the church represented - maybe more. I love that the St. Richard's crew is social - they like to walk about the dining hall and engage. When we are working the line, we laugh a lot about life, our children, our family and work. The volunteers from St. Richards all get along and work well with each other.



**Pictured: St. Richard Catholic Church & Koinonia Baptist Church volunteering in the Community Kitchen**

Linda Jones is the volunteer coordinator for Koinonia Church. Mrs. Jones recruits about 6-7 ladies. Each one of those ladies reminds me of someone in my family that I love or someone that I miss because they have passed on. I see them as my aunties!

Like St. Richards, we laugh a lot and we talk about life, food and Stewpot. I love that the ladies love Stewpot, and they love to volunteer. Koinonia volunteers once a month.

Last week, I mistakenly scheduled Koinonia during St. Richards' service week. The Koinonia crew jokingly gave me a hard time about it, saying things like "I guess we should just go home" and "you don't want us here, huh?" I smoothed it over with them before the St. Richard's crew arrived. Once St. Richard's volunteers arrived, I explained my mistake, and they decided to work together. The two groups shared stories about their kids, work, and how special Stewpot is to them. It really wasn't a mistake after all because they worked so well together - they now want to volunteer with each other more often.

I'd say Koinonia and St. Richards show up for Stewpot in such a genuine way. I believe our lunch guests can feel that genuineness in the atmosphere when they dine with us.

## Volunteer with Us at Stewpot!

Email [cmcnealy@stewpot.org](mailto:cmcnealy@stewpot.org) or give us a call at (601) 353-2759 to schedule



**Volunteers from West Point serve lunch in the Community Kitchen**

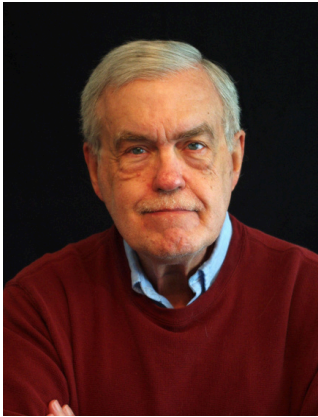


**Volunteers from University of Iowa stock the Food Pantry**



**Volunteers from FedEx throw a Valentine's Day Party for Stewpot Kids**

## “Why I Give”



### Dr. James Sclater

Dr. James Sclater is a longtime resident of Clinton, where he taught music at Mississippi College for 40 years. Dr. James Sclater has been giving regularly to Stewpot since 2017, often using his gifts to honor or remember someone. He says that it’s always seemed like a win-win for all, since the beneficiaries

are the ones who are grieving and the ones whose needs are being met.

In reflecting on why he gives to Stewpot, he writes that “there is so much need that should be addressed. By contributing regularly, I can assure that food, shelter, clothing, and counseling gets to those who need it. Too many children go to bed hungry at night. Too many people endure abusive situations thinking they have nowhere to turn. Regular financial contributions can help ensure that Stewpot’s beacon of hope and love continues to shine brightly for all those in need. The dedicated folks at Stewpot need our help. I encourage all my friends to support them as much as possible.”

Thank you, Dr. Sclater, for your giving spirit and kind words. Because of donors like you, we can faithfully serve our neighbors in need.



Support HeARTWorks, Stewpot’s art ministry, by purchasing art online! Visit [stewpot.org/heartworks](http://stewpot.org/heartworks) or scan the QR code for more information.



**Pictured: HeARTWorks artist, Ira Hannah**



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## STAFF

Rev. Jill Buckley, Executive Director  
[jbuckley@stewpot.org](mailto:jbuckley@stewpot.org)

Jackie Brown, Chief Operating Officer  
[jbrown@stewpot.org](mailto:jbrown@stewpot.org)

Amy Moremen, Matt’s House  
[amoremen@stewpot.org](mailto:amoremen@stewpot.org)

Chris Eason, Events & Communications  
[ceason@stewpot.org](mailto:ceason@stewpot.org)

Michael Harvey, Maintenance & Vehicles  
[mharvey@stewpot.org](mailto:mharvey@stewpot.org)

Stephanie Kelly, Housing Assistance  
[skelly@stewpot.org](mailto:skelly@stewpot.org)

Yolanda Kirkland, Teen Services  
[ykirkland@stewpot.org](mailto:ykirkland@stewpot.org)

Contyna McNealy, Volunteer Programs  
[cmcnealy@stewpot.org](mailto:cmcnealy@stewpot.org)

Javonda Stanton, Opportunity Center  
[jstanton@stewpot.org](mailto:jstanton@stewpot.org)

Mary Thompson, Case Management  
[mthompson@stewpot.org](mailto:mthompson@stewpot.org)

LaQuita White, Children's Services  
[lwhite916@stewpot.org](mailto:lwhite916@stewpot.org)

Reggie Wiggins, Billy Brumfield  
[rwiggins@stewpot.org](mailto:rwiggins@stewpot.org)

Taste of Mississippi was another wonderful success this year thanks to our planning committee, sponsors, participating restaurants, and volunteers. Although it rained and we had to make some last minute contingency plans (thank you to the District at Eastover for allowing us to use their indoor space!), that didn't stop our community from showing up to support Stewpot. Taste of Mississippi had over 1,300 guests from our community attend the event, and we were able to raise over \$112,000 for Stewpot again this year!

### **CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2024 TASTE OF MISSISSIPPI WINNERS!**

**Best Appetizer:** Jerk City Grille

**Best Entree:** Eddie Wright BBQ

**Best Dessert:** Mo' Betta Dessert Bar

**Best Presentation:** Library Lounge

**People's Choice Award:** Jerk City Grille

**Best Beverage:** Cathead Vodka

### **MANY THANKS TO THE 2024 TASTE OF MISSISSIPPI SPONSORS:**

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi

The Fountain Family Foundation

Nissan

St. Dominic Hospital

Southern Beverage

Cathead Vodka

The District at Eastover

iHeart Media

Regions Bank

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Trio Community Meals

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***For a complete list of 2024 sponsors and participating restaurants,  
please visit [stewpot.org/tasteofms](http://stewpot.org/tasteofms)***



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P.O. Box 3610  
Jackson, MS 39207  
Phone: 601-353-2759  
Fax: 601-353-7071  
[www.stewpot.org](http://www.stewpot.org)  
[info@stewpot.org](mailto:info@stewpot.org)



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## **RAISE MONEY FOR STEWPOT JUST BY SHOPPING AT KROGER**

Don't forget that you can support Stewpot just by shopping at Kroger. It's easy when you enroll in Kroger Community Rewards®! To get started, go to [www.kroger.com](http://www.kroger.com) and click on the Community link. That will bring you to the Kroger Community Rewards page.

Sign up with your Plus Card and select a local organization you wish to support (Stewpot). Once you're enrolled, you'll earn rewards for your chosen organization every time you shop and use your Kroger Plus Card!

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## **BECOME A MONTHLY PARTNER TODAY!**

By signing up to be a monthly donor at [www.stewpot.org](http://www.stewpot.org), your contribution will immediately be used to help some of the most vulnerable people in and around the Metro area. When you subscribe as a Monthly Partner, you become part of helping us to guarantee:

**A hot meal or groceries for people who are hungry**

**Safe shelter for those who are homeless and vulnerable**

**A safe and nurturing environment for over 100 at-risk children and teenagers each year**

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