

# STEW POT

FAITH MEETING NEEDS IN OUR COMMUNITY



SPRING 2023 NEWSLETTER | ISSUE 1



## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says that *"the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in a field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."*

I was honored last week to speak at a luncheon honoring three of our sister ministries: REACH Jackson; Shower Power; and We Will Go. Compared to Stewpot, all three of these ministries are relatively young, even though their leaders have long histories of service among struggling peoples. It was good to be an affirming presence for their work.

Like Stewpot, each of these ministries was once a tiny mustard seed in someone's imagination, that was faithfully sowed into the world of need and nurtured into growth by many caring souls. Now, all four of us – and scores of other ministries besides – have become shelter (sometimes quite literally) for God's most precious creation, humans. I see us, together, as a "village of shrubs," with a connected root system, all drawing our nutrients from the soil of God's precious love for all.

Perhaps nowhere was this more apparent than the week of Christmas, when we all shifted into high gear

to help keep people safe during those dangerously low temperatures. (You can read more about that in this newsletter.)

And then again on Martin Luther King Day, as volunteers gathered across the city, as well as at Stewpot, to serve their neighbors and to care for creation. (MLK weekend happened to be the largest gathering of volunteers at Stewpot since before the pandemic – nearly 200 volunteers of all ages over two days!)

I believe, and I may have some Scripture to back me up on this, moments like these – moments of compassion and care and unity and service – are signs of the kingdom of heaven **here on earth with us right now**. Friends, we need to recognize this beauty when we see it, lest despair over our great challenges overtake our hope in God's great future.

Forty-two years ago, the Stewpot seed was planted, and it has become a tree for "every kind of bird...to find shelter in its branches" (Ezekiel 17:23). That includes you and me. For which one of us does not need shade...and daily?

Thank you for all you do to support and nurture this tree that shades and shelters us all.

We truly are in it together,

Rev. Jill Barnes Buckley, Executive Director



# PREPARING THE TABLE

## Stewpot provided 750 Holiday Food Baskets to neighbors in need

When Stewpot got word that one of our community partners was unable to donate turkeys for our annual Holiday Food Baskets, we stepped into high gear. For weeks, we made requests to local businesses and restaurants hoping that we could fill the gap.

As is so often the case, our donors stepped up and showed out. The Community Foundation for Mississippi helped us recruit an initial gift, which was matched quickly through an online giving campaign. In less than 24 hours, we met - and surpassed - our fundraising goal.

For over three decades now, you have helped us fill the holiday tables of your neighbors in need, in addition to all of the other help you offer all year long. Thank you for your commitment to helping stamp out hunger right here in our community!



# PASS THE WATER

A common sight around Stewpot these days is the “water assembly line.” In the absence of a pallet jack, many hands are required to unload and store donated cases of bottled water.

During our City’s ongoing water crisis, Stewpot has been offering cases of bottled water to our Food Pantry shoppers, giving bottled water to the families we serve through our Kids and Teens programs, delivering water to our Meals on Wheels recipients, serving bottled water at lunch and in our shelters, and delivering water to about 60 additional households whose need was brought to our attention by the City of Jackson.

All in all, we go through about 600 cases a month, and more during a boil water notice. Want to help? Donate water. Stewpot will continue to gladly accept bottled water donations until Jackson’s water becomes drinkable for all. Or sign up to deliver water to one of our seven routes when a boil water notice hits.



# RAMP



## RAMP WINDS DOWN

Over the past three years, Stewpot has received in excess of three million dollars of CARES Act funding to help address the critical needs of food and shelter exacerbated by the pandemic. Through this funding, we have helped thousands of people.

On February 28, one of the programs we have offered through CARES Act funding will end: **RAMP**, or Rental Assistance for Mississippians. As the name suggests, RAMP specifically helped people suffering through a housing crisis. But it also did much more: RAMP provided funding for temporary hotel stays (safer during a pandemic than a congregate shelter **and** a good way to quarantine people experiencing homelessness who tested positive for COVID); outreach to get information, supplies, and help to people living in encampments, in their cars, in abandoned buildings, etc.; and, lots of case management support.

Receiving rental assistance from RAMP was no simple task. The program required a lot of paperwork to prevent double dipping and fraud. Apartments had to pass inspections to ensure habitability and safety. Our Housing Navigator had to nurture relationships with landlords so that we had options for our hard-to-house participants. We were not able to assist everyone who reached out for help. But we do have some success stories.

Ms. W applied for help after she quit her job to take care of her husband, who had had a stroke, and their granddaughter, who was badly burned in a house fire that killed her mother. RAMP paid her rent for five months, which gave Ms. W the time to secure another source of stable income.

Mr. and Mrs. D were asked to leave a family member's home due to overcrowding. With a toddler and a newborn, their limited income did not cover all of their housing and childcare costs. RAMP was able to give them temporary shelter in a hotel room while they looked for work and stable housing. Within 30 days, they had both found full-time employment and a two-bedroom townhouse, which RAMP helped them secure with a deposit and first month's rent.

Mr. E was a long-term resident of a hotel... until the owners asked him to move out. The initial assessment from our RAMP team discovered that he was eligible for Social Security and VA benefits, which he had not been receiving. We worked with him to complete those applications and secure those benefits, along with back pay, which helped him afford housing.

Over the past three years, RAMP has helped over 600 households find shelter, avoid eviction, and move from homelessness to stable housing. **Hundreds more** have received counseling, PPE, referrals, and other resources.

Stewpot knew that these funds were temporary, but it is bittersweet to see the program end. While we are grateful to see so many receive assistance, we also deeply empathize with the anxiety many people living through housing crises still feel about the future. We are also sad to see our RAMP staff go; they are a part of our Stewpot family and always will be.



# THE CHRISTMAS FREEZE

The freezing temperatures during Christmas week put area agencies on high alert. In the days leading up to the freeze, Stewpot worked with Shower Power, the City of Jackson, Gateway Rescue Mission, REACH Jackson, the Central Mississippi Continuum of Care, and the Salvation Army to create a shelter plan to help us all easily locate empty beds for unsheltered people. As a result, our combined efforts sheltered nearly 200 men, women, and children at eight locations.



Thanks to the larger community, donations of food, blankets, and clothing also poured in. At Stewpot, we gave away hundreds of pairs of gloves and socks, dozens of blankets and coats, as well as hats, scarves, long johns, sweaters, and sweatshirts. All of this helped those without adequate heat in their homes, as well as those who chose not to seek shelter, to survive those dangerous days.

We at Stewpot extend our deep gratitude to the media, who shared shelter information and our lists of needed items; our community, for responding with such generosity; and our staff, who sacrificed holiday time with friends and family to make sure all our shifts in the kitchen, shelters, and clothing closet were covered. Because of these efforts, hundreds of our neighbors received the help they needed to make it through the storm.



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# SAVE THE DATE

  MISSISSIPPI *Presents*

Taste of Mississippi 

A BENEFIT FOR STEWPOT

APRIL.03.2023



Join us on Monday, April 3, 2023 at The District at Eastover from 7-10pm for Taste of Mississippi! Taste of Mississippi is a tasting event that offers culinary delights from fabulous area restaurants and beverages from local distributors, with a competition among participating restaurants for Best Appetizer, Best Entrée, Best Dessert, Best Presentation, and People's Choice.

**For tickets and event details, please visit [tasteofms.org](https://tasteofms.org)**

**STEW****POT**  
FAITH MEETING NEEDS IN OUR COMMUNITY



## Annual Meeting

Join us for Stewpot's Annual Meeting as we reflect on last year's accomplishments and discuss our vision for the year ahead. The meeting includes election of new Board members and officers. Breakfast will be provided.

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2023 AT 8:30 AM**

SANCTUARY DINING HALL

1100 W CAPITOL ST

JACKSON, MS 39203

**RSVP ONLINE AT [STEW.POT.ORG](https://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**

Become a Monthly Partner Today! It's the easiest and most efficient way to make an impact right now – and for years to come.

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