

Stewpot DAY CAMP/VIRTUAL LEARNING MEETING NEEDS

BY:
BROOKE FLOYD



Jackson Public Schools began virtual school in August. We asked our parents how we could help. The majority of our parents needed a safe space for their children to use the internet and get help with virtual learning. We opened our doors to the Stewpot Day Camp on September 14th. For the past months, 12 K-5th graders and 20 6th-10th graders have come to Stewpot from 8:45-2:30 to do their virtual learning. We provide breakfast and lunch through JPS's feeding program. Several organizations and individuals have brought snacks for our students who get hungry in between meals during the day. The students also receive a dinner bag each day provided through our feeding program at New Gethsemane Baptist Church. JPS has provided us with tutors (both in-person & virtual) and enrichment material and books for the students. Our three AmeriCorps Volunteers, Lauren, Tijaha, & Ariel, Ms. Karen (our Art Teacher), and our JSU Work-Study student, Cortni, help students stay focused, answering questions, explaining lessons further, and tackling any technology issues that may arise.

Starting October 13th, our K-6th graders began attending Launch into Learning Day Camp at the Mississippi Children's Museum. Funded through GEER (Governor's Emergency Education Response) Funds, the move has allowed more of our students to attend Day Camp (both at MCM and in the teen program), participate in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Math) activities, and of course PLAY! Launch into learning is from 7:30 am-2:30 pm, Monday-Friday. Our students also attend the Rocket After-School Club from 1:30-3:30 each Wednesday. Activities are focused on improving Reading skills and STEAM. We are so excited about our move to the Children's Museum!

Our students are happy to have some sense of normalcy back. Most came to Stewpot every day After-School and in the summer for Summer Camp. We missed them & they missed us! We have all been stressed, including our children. I answer lots of questions each day about the Coronavirus and assure frustrated students they are not alone in this. We all want things to return to normal. We will get through this. Things will get better. My job is to make sure our students are safe and have everything they need to be successful.

Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers. We have made accommodations for sixty children, K-10th grade, with virtual learning, and it has its challenges. We hope that our efforts will ensure that our Stewpot children will not fall behind but flourish during this time of uncertainty. We also ask that you pray for our protection & health. Thank You and God Bless!

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Faith meeting needs in our community

STEW POT SPEAKERS

There are so many Stewpot ministries where you can share your gifts. We promise it will be worth your while to come check us out or to let us come share with you. If you would like for us to speak at your church, civic, or school function, please call Michelle' Bingham at 601-353-2759. We will gladly share all of the exciting information about our ministries and how you can become a part of our Stewpot family.



RAISE MONEY FOR STEWPOT JUST BY SHOPPING AT KROGER

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A Newsletter of Stewpot Community Services

Winter 2020



2020 HOSTS OF STEWPOT'S BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL LEADERS LUNCHEON

We appreciate your continued support of this event especially during this current COVID climate. We look forward to resuming this important event in person in 2021. *Thank You!*

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DIRECTOR'S CORNER

As I write this, I sit at home with my 8-year old, whose school has gone virtual this week after Thanksgiving. I think of all the parents who, like me, have juggled home and work demands simultaneously this year, and of multiple other ways our lives have changed since March. I think of all who have lost loved ones to COVID, and those who are still suffering from it.

This year has unfolded in ways that we could not possibly have imagined, and while I'm grateful for a lot of things, I'm especially grateful to be a part of a community like Stewpot that has responded so compassionately and generously to the unprecedented challenges we are all facing.

Here at Stewpot, we increased our capacity for shelter space, daily meals and food service delivery all while adopting new protocols to keep our staff and community members safe. We reimagined our Summer Camp and After School Programs so we could stay connected to families and help support virtual learning. We limited the number of volunteers out of an abundance of caution. Because of this, on most days it feels like we are missing half of our heart.

The good news is that while we have incurred significant additional costs over the past 10 months, we were able to retain our regular operating support AND cover most of the increased costs through additional giving.

The bad news is that while the fiscal year may be ending, we will likely have these increased needs for another six months. To the extent you are able or are making year-end giving decisions, we continue to need your gifts so we can meet the needs of those who come to us for food, shelter and other support.

Your prayers and gifts and donations brought the spirit of Christmas to Stewpot very early this year. As the late J.I. Packer once wrote: "The Christmas spirit is the spirit of those who, like their Master, live their whole lives on the principle of making themselves poor - spending and being spent - to enrich their fellow [travelers], giving time, trouble, care and concern to do good to others - and not just their own friends - in whatever way there seems need."

I'm glad to be on this journey together with you, my friends. Happy Holidays to all and a Blessed New Year.

A NEW Laundry Room FOR THE OC!

BY: CHRISTIE BURNETT

The Opportunity Center wears a lot of hats. Not only do we provide a safe place for people to be and to do life together; we also offer showers, mail service, computer lab, toiletry products and laundry (just to name a few). Laundry can be a beast, sometimes doing upwards of 30 loads a day, and one of our biggest struggles has always been laundry and how we can serve our friends by getting as much laundry done as we can. It has always been my dream, as Director, to one day have commercial laundry equipment to be able to cut down time given to doing laundry and for us to maximize the amount that we can do.

Just this month we were able to see that dream finally come to life when with the generous donations of many faithful givers- we partnered with Laundry South and purchased a washer and dryer capable of doing SIXTY POUNDS of laundry at a time! Up to now, we have had 4 washing machines and 4 dryers (which would have to be frequently replaced because of the sheer amount of laundry we do) doing single loads of either clothes or winter blankets for our emergency shelter. That required HOURS of time and constant motion to unload, reload, take out and fold up. We can now wash 7 color coded loads, in specified laundry bags, at a time. The high heat from the dryer allows those 7 loads to be done in much shorter times than before. Not many of us like doing laundry, but this is truly a dream come true for us. There is now a secure laundry room away from the public so clothes can be safely stored without the threat of theft and washing our winter blankets is going to be a breeze.

Thanks to Lorie Ramsey for stepping in and taking the bull by the horns, making connection after connection to make this work, Chaz from Laundry South, JL Roberts and Junior and his crew for doing the heavy lifting and work, Chris and Christina Broussette, Vertical Church, the family and friends of our much loved and dearly departed Ann Jackson, and the many other donors who have made these things possible, and to my clients and staff who worked to paint and get the room looking wonderful- we have this because of you.

Every time I walk into the “new” laundry area it makes me smile. I think about how people and churches have stepped up ANY time we have lost a washer and dryer or needed something beyond a easily asked for item. St. Paul’s, Northminster and

Meadowbrook Church of Christ- all willing to jump in anytime to help us meet needs- and we are so grateful! We made the decision to keep one of our newest donated single washer and dryer from these kind places so that we have something to do both single emergency loads in but more importantly, to remember how far we have come and the kindness of others that have brought us to where we are today- able to give more to those who need it.



WHEN TRUCKS, TRUNKBEDS, TREAT, AND BANKPLUS RED BEANS AND RICE FESTIVALS PARTNER

By: Michelle Bingham

This year has dealt us all a hand of cards that we would choose to give back to the dealer. Our new normal isn't quite how we want to live; and, people are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet. However, through it all, what we are seeing is the very reason Mississippi is labeled the hospitality state. Even in times such as these, our donors continue to show their love and support for Stewpot.

We've had to make some disadvantageous decisions regarding our annual special events this year; but, the unwavering support to ensure that Stewpot stays ahead in our revenues has been AMAZING! No, we did not want to cancel all of our major events; but, due to the current climate in our communities surrounding COVID-19/Coronavirus, our primary concern is always the health, safety, and well-being of all who help make these events successful.

Our most recent fundraiser, the BankPlus Red Beans & Rice Festival, scheduled for October, had to be canceled due to these unprecedented times we are experiencing. Fortunately, our title sponsor, BankPlus Mississippi, knew that even though we could not safely and responsibly host this highly anticipated fall fundraiser, we still needed their financial support to keep the lights on and the doors open. So, they donated above their standard sponsorship, ensuring that the clients who come to us every day for help could still depend on this place, this “Beacon of Hope” they've come to for so long for guidance and

genuine support. Thank you, BankPlus Mississippi, for being more than a name and committing financially to everyday partnerships in the community that builds and changes communities!

We also would like to thank Skyzone Trampoline Park for its partnership with Red Bean Beans & Rice this year. Out of our desire to keep the engagement of the sponsors, participants, and attendees, we decided to put together a virtual dance-a-thon. In a chance conversation with Pastor Daniels, the new owner of Skyzone Trampoline Park in Ridgeland, he was looking to partner with Stewpot for his Trucks, Trunkbeds, and Treats, a haunted walkthrough of the park; we decided to merge the two events. This opportunity was a win, win for us both. So, on Halloween Eve, we went live with our festivities, and a great time was had by all who joined us. Again, a huge thank you to Pastor Daniels and the Skyzone crew for your generosity!

Although we are anxious for the time when we can all come back together and eat delicious red beans and rice, listen to fantastic live music, and raise much-needed funds for Stewpot Community Services, we know that time is not right for now. So, in the meantime, we encourage everyone to enjoy time with family and friends and eat plenty of red beans and rice until that time comes.

Keep us in your prayers, and we will do the same for you.

Peace and Happy Holidays

RED BEANS & RICE RECIPE

INGREDIENTS

1-pound dry kidney beans
4 cups water
¼ cup olive oil
1 large onion, chopped
1 green bell pepper, chopped

2 tablespoons minced garlic
2 stalks celery, chopped
2 bay leaves
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 teaspoon dried thyme
¼ teaspoon dried sage

1 tablespoon dried parsley
1 teaspoon Cajun seasoning
1-pound andouille sausage, sliced
4 cups water
2 cups long grain white rice

DIRECTIONS

- Rinse beans, and then soak in a large pot of water overnight.
- In a skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Cook onion, bell pepper, garlic, and celery in olive oil for 3 to 4 minutes.
- Rinse beans, and transfer to a large pot with 6 cups water. Stir cooked vegetables into beans. Season with bay leaves, cayenne pepper, thyme, sage, parsley, and Cajun seasoning. Bring to a boil, and then reduce heat to low. Simmer for 4 1/2 hours.
- Pan fry sausage and stir sausage into beans, and continue to simmer for another 30 minutes.
- Meanwhile, prepare the rice. In a saucepan, bring water and rice to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 20 minutes. Rinse starch off rice.
- Serve beans over steamed white rice.

Stewpot's New York Times Feature

By: Jill Buckley

September was a big month for our Stewpot community.

That was the month Stewpot appeared in the New York Times Magazine as part of a Times cover story on food insecurity during the COVID pandemic.

I received a call from the New York Times sometime in June. Stewpot had been recommended as a resource in Mississippi for an upcoming photo essay they wanted to do on Americans who struggle to feed themselves and their families. In July, we connected NYT photojournalist Brenda Ann Kenneally to our Food Pantry and Summer Camp efforts, where she visited one-on-one with pantry clients and joined Stewpot Summer Camp staff on their daily meal delivery to families.

The NYT feature tells the story of some of the people we serve every day of the year – individuals who walk thirty minutes in oppressive heat to get groceries; grandmothers who stretch their meager resources to feed extended family; and children and teens who rely on delivered meals for daily sustenance.

The happy surprise is that the NYT story has generated thousands of dollars in contributions from across the country. A librarian in Philadelphia, PA, emailed me, saying: “I’ve been haunted by the pictures and text that have been appearing in the Times this week. As someone who has been blessed with a Union card and a government protected job, I can do something to help.” Other donors have left messages on our website: “Heard about Stewpot in the NY Times magazine. Sending love from Oregon,” and from Washington, DC, “Read about you in the NYT magazine - I want to support the great work you’re doing.”

These new gifts have helped us meet the higher costs we are incurring each month in additional food, supplies, shelter beds and staff as part of Stewpot's response to the COVID crisis. Please join us – and donors from all over the country who have been inspired by our clients and by our work on their behalf - by providing COVID support through the envelope in this newsletter.

Working together, we can extend help and hope to our neighbors who are weighed down by extraordinary need during this extraordinary season. Even during a pandemic, we continue to be:

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Meeting needs
In our community

In it together!



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