Stewpot directly touches the lives of around 650 people each day through our various ministries. Our Children’s Program, possibly one of our most important ministries, does more than just touch the lives of our students, it changes the landscape of our community.

Since its early beginnings in an empty field across from the church with just a soccer ball and some popsicles, the Children’s Program has grown to provide afterschool and summer programs for some 250 elementary, middle school and high school students each year. The program offers a safe environment for students to receive help with homework and school projects, opportunities to engage in sports, art, music, cooking, dance, and other extracurricular activities, access to technology to enhance learning and the chance to go on field trips and engage with experts in various fields to extend learning beyond the classroom.

While education is a major part of this program, focus is also given to the physical, emotional and mental health of our students. We work closely with their parents and school system to make sure any issues a student may be having are being addressed. Our goal is to help produce educated, healthy students that have the ability to pursue whatever future they desire. Coming from families that are living at or even below the poverty line makes it difficult to imagine how the future could be much different. Obstacles are at every turn. Many of our students rarely leave their community because of a lack of money or transportation. Often people feel trapped in the cycle they are in. Field trips to museums or the reservoir, honor roll trips to Vicksburg or even day trips out of state open their eyes to new possibilities.

The Children’s Program does more than change the lives of individual children, it has the ability to change families. The Miller family has had 3 children come through our program. Ms. Miller is a single mother has struggled to keep her children clothed, sheltered and in school. Her two daughters, Latasha and Sherida had their share of struggles in school, but are both now attending Jackson State University as a Junior and Freshman. Latasha also works part time with the Children’s Program and her sister hopes to do the same next year. Their younger brother is in eighth grade and has a bright future ahead of him as well.

Perhaps what the students look forward to the most is Summer Camp. For seven weeks each summer Stewpot provides a nurturing, exciting, loving atmosphere for them to have fun and continue learning. With special programs, field trips and plenty of good, fun playtime, the highlight of every hot summer day is still, as in those early days, popsicle time. Even after our student’s graduate, summer camp still remains an important part of their lives with many returning as counselors and volunteers helping to shape the lives of the next generation of “Stewpot Kids”.

The importance of the Children’s Program to Stewpot and the community it serves is immeasurable. It allows students to dream big for themselves and know that anything is possible. It gives parents an outlet to let their children blossom. It helps produce great young people who have become physical therapists, sheriff deputies, military personnel, nurses, cosmetologists, entrepreneurs and teachers who have a strong sense of community and a desire to help the next generation. They are changing the landscape of our community.
SLUMBER PARTY

By: Heather Ivery

2015

Every year on the eve of Easter break, Stewpots Children’s program holds its annual All Girls Slumber Party. On the Thursday evening before Good Friday excited high school girls begin filling the Community Center loaded down with blankets, pillows, movies, hair products, games and makeup. Colored butcher paper is hung in the windows to keep out the prying eyes of jealous boys and the kitchen is stocked with snack foods and drinks.

Everything that happens on this night is sworn to secrecy by all who attend. I, myself have spent my share of nights participating in this very special night, (mostly in my younger, single, childless years) so I know firsthand the craziness a night full of teenage girls hyped up on sugar and lack of sleep can bring. But this year, I have been granted permission by the queen of the Slumber Party herself, Lala (Yolanda Kirkland) to divulge certain truths about this most sacred event so that those who may never get to experience it will understand just how important it is.

The girls who attend our afterschool program often have to grow up too fast. They are living in homes with income levels at or even below the poverty line. To make ends meet in the household they are often called on to be babysitters, tutors, and caretakers for their younger siblings. They live in neighborhoods that are unsafe for everyone, especially vulnerable, young girls. Their interests in sports, cheerleading and other extracurricular activities are often squashed because of the cost of these programs. College is often seen as a reality for other people, not for them. Finishing High school and getting a job that pays the rent is often all they think they can hope for.

With all these restrictions and weights on them, it is obvious why a night of pure fun and freedom in a safe, welcoming place is one of the highlights of their year. But the fun is just part of it all. The All Girls Slumber Party is truly a rite of passage for these young girls. For the Seniors who have been listening to Lala drill in their heads all year “Graduate, Graduate, Graduate” it is a time to take a bit of a break and have some fun before the big push to finish out the year strong. For the younger ones it’s a time to hang with the “big girls” and learn the ropes, so to speak. Conversations between younger and older girls happen while they fix each other’s hair or paint nails. It’s simpler for them to converse in this setting without the social constructs of daily school life. Though it is not planned, it always happens. There is something about spending a night with 20 other girls, filled with impromptu dance parties, staying up till 3am and never knowing when Lala will decide to wake you up by banging pots and pans together that truly bonds young girls.

When I showed up on Friday morning to cook my traditional Good Friday breakfast for the girls, Lala was doing just that; banging pots and pans together to begin waking everyone up. It quickly turned into a pillow fight with all the girls against her. There were people sleeping on the floor, on the couches, on the pool table, most anywhere really. As the smell of bacon and pancakes beckoned them to the kitchen I could see nothing by joy on each one of their tired little faces.

By: Heather Ivery

DIRECTORS CORNER continued

I have to thank separately the volunteer musicians that help us out for free. Hunter Gibson with his Gators is a longtime friend who also annually schedules Stewpot’s weekend meal schedules. The Gators seem to get more energy as the night progresses and we have a tough time convincing the crowd that we really have to shut down at 10 PM. Pryor (Graeber) and the Tombstones have also been coming as long as I can remember. What an amazing voice from such a petite person. The Tombstones not only have a loyal following but create new friends from the event. Pryor also always contributes her happy and beautiful artwork for Stewpot to sell. This year, her art work was featured on the event’s poster art.

Not all of the restaurants that come are local. We had 3 restaurants from Vicksburg, Riverwalk who comes every year and first timers Nogales and Walnut Hill who also made the trip. Nogales even earned the first place trophy for their presentation of the food they served. Thanks folks for making the trip.

Finally, thanks to the TOM committee members who made it all possible with their excellent planning. This year first time Co-Chair Alan Burrow teamed with Stewpot’s Michelle Bingham to assemble the committee members. With all of the volunteers’ hard work Stewpot netted over $117,000, a new TOM record to finance its ministry efforts.

Elsewhere in this newsletter, there is a listing of the various business sponsors who also make the event possible. If you see a business and know someone associated with it, please tell them thanks for giving their time to support such a fun and important event to support Stewpot.
Taste of Mississippi
Sponsor Preview Party Host

Anne & Bob Shearer
Louisa Dixon & Wilton Johnson, III
Reverend Mary M McWade
Becky & Don Potts
E. B. Robinson, Jr.

William F. Blair - Blair & Bondurant
Beth & Steven Orlansky
Ross & Yerger
Butler Snow
Rev. Carol Spencer

Taste of Mississippi
Sponsor Preview Party
Restaurant Host

Kitchen Elite Catering
The Holy Smokers of Saint Andrews
Jackson Convention Complex
That Special Touch
The Cake Diva

We would like to “Thank You” for your Support of this year’s Sponsor Preview Party. Know that your Help is helping us to serve 650 clients each and everyday.
Meet our most improved student for the school year of 2014-2015. This young man made a great effort to bring all of his failing grades to B’s. Here in the afterschool program we challenge our students because we want the best for them and their future. We aim to soar high and be the best we know how to be.

All About Me!
My name is MonAnthony Brown
I am 11 years old
I attend Isable Elementary School as a 5th grade student
My favorite color is blue
My favorite food is chicken
I have one sister and one brother. I am the oldest of the two.
When I grow up I would like to be a lawyer.
I am excited about school because I go to learn and to get an education.

This year was the first year the Stewpot Children’s Program was over the Easter egg hunt and I must say it was a great success! The students dyed around 700 eggs and we had about 70 participants for the Easter egg hunt. We had about 20 volunteers and staff that helped with hiding the eggs, giving out snacks, toys, and Easter baskets. Although previous years we have had about 100 participants this year the weather left people undecided on whether they should come out or not because of the rain. Luckily for us we did not encounter any rain during the hunt although it did rain later that night. We would like to thank all who made our Easter egg hunt a success we could not have done it without them. Thank YOU and Happy Spring!

**STEWPOT NEEDS LIST**

**Hygiene**
1. Razors & Shaving Cream (Men)
2. Laundry Detergent
3. Bath Soap
4. Lotion
5. Deodorant
6. Shampoo & Conditioner
7. Cleaning Supplies (Bleach, Comet, Pine Sol, Lysol, Etc.)

**Household**
1. Bath & Face Towels
2. Comforters or Bedspreads (Twin)
3. Mattress Covers (All Sizes)

**Food & Snack**
1. Snack Cakes
2. Chips
3. Juice
4. Coffee, Creamer, & Sugar
5. Hot Dogs & Buns (For when Opportunity Center is open overnight)
6. Fresh Fruit & Veggies
7. Weekly & Monthly Dinners (Shelters)

**Miscellaneous**
1. Daily Bus Passes

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Fax: 601-353-7071
E-mail: www.stewpot.org

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Summer Camp Reminder 2015

Summer Camp is almost HERE! We are expecting to host approximately 250 campers this who will get the opportunity to experience a vacation filled with recreation, academics and creative activities.

Please consider giving a camper a summer vacation that will make a lifetime impression. Sponsor a camper's summer camp experience for only $250 per camper.

Mail all Summer Camp contributions to:
Stewpot Summer Camp
Attention: Michelle’ Bingham
P. O. Box 3691
Jackson, MS 39207

WHERE ARE YOU NOW MY FRIEND?
By: Mary Thompson

Since coming to Stewpot, I've met a lot of people along the way. My focus has never been on how they looked, talked or carried themselves. My purpose and stance has been one of just to reach out and let them know I am here to serve them. I've always felt that this is the place where God wants me to be. So I work each day with purpose and gratitude that His will for my life is being accomplished.

One of the first people I met was a little old man with bright eyes and a big smile. He called himself “Cajun Red”. Cajun Red always had a backpack, and sometimes would carry a walking stick. He walked up to me one particular day and said “Lady, what's your name? Can you help me?” my response to him was I would try. We applied for his birth certificate and were able to schedule him an appointment to see an attorney for legal help. He was so thankful. To show his gratitude, whenever would come to Stewpot for lunch he'd always bring me a coke.

Cajun Red was a train hopper. He would leave and ride the train all over the United States and come back and tell me all kinds of story about his adventures. Traveling was something he really loved. When he turned 62, I helped him apply for his social security benefits for which he was approved. Once again I got a coke and a “Thank you Ms. Mary”. After he got his first check, he mentioned to me he was ready to settle down and get an apartment. And he did. I would often receive a call to tell me he was leaving home to visit his mom in Memphis. I guess he wanted someone to know where he was going to be. When he got out of pocket and even his mom didn't know where he was she would call me and say, “Have you seem my son? Is he doing all right?” She knew all too well Cajun Red’s love for being lost in the world of traveling (train hopping). She would tell me to tell him, when I heard from him, to stay prayed up and that she loved him.

A few years his mom passed away. The family called looking for Cajun Red, and I hadn’t heard from him. Then, one day last year, a lady called from Beaumont, Texas saying that they were looking for his family because he was very sick. I passed on to her the information I had concerning him and after that, nothing.

Where are you my friend? I have often wondered if my friend went on to meet his maker in Heaven or if he is still somewhere out there hopping trains and traveling around the United States.
Your Stewpot family now has a Facebook page and is on Twitter!!
When you are browsing the social network scene look up the Stewpot facebook page and become a fan!

IN MEMORY OF
Mr & Mrs Howard Nichols
Mrs. Molly M Lowery
Mr. Jimmy Hutto
William Lynch, Jr.
Ernest “Rusty” Turner
Charles Parrish

Raise Money for Stewpot just by shopping at Kroger
Did you know 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 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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