

# At a Snail's Pace

By: Heather Ivery

Working at Stewpot for as long as I have, I know that there is truly a lot of people living in our community that need the assistance that we provide. There are hundreds that are quite literally homeless, but also thousands that live in poverty just barely keeping a roof over their heads. There are single parents that are delicately balancing have a minimum wage job or two with providing for their children, but a day or two of car trouble or sickness threatens to disrupt that balance permanently. There are elderly men and women who live with the idea that the home they own and have raised their families in is unsafe but they cannot afford to repair it. There are all sorts of people who for all sorts of reasons find themselves in need.

It seems that these people are the most visible during the holidays. Have you ever noticed that? The news media splashes stories of soup kitchens and empty pantry shelves. They run stories of homeless people suffering from the cold weather. Of course, the holidays is when people who are able, usually give the most too. Those empty pantry shelves are usually empty for long and at times, Stewpot has more volunteers serving lunch than actually eating lunch.

But, then there are also those who are critical of those in need. I hear statements like, "They don't look like they need that much help," or "I bet they got a turkey dinner from more than one organization this year," or "I saw them here last year. Why do they still need help?" I don't believe they are said with malice necessarily, but certainly by those who don't understand the complexity of moving out of a state of poverty. I used to get angry when I heard these things. I assumed the speaker was passing judgment and wanted a reason not to help. But maybe that isn't the case at all. Maybe these statements are more about the speaker being overwhelmed by the sheer number of people who truly are in need. These words are an attempt to weed out and reduce the number to those who "truly" need help through some arbitrary means we created in our heads. It's a way to lessen our guilt for only noticing people in need during the holidays. It's a way for us to not acknowledge the desperate situations our neighbors are living in.

Again, in all honesty, I must admit that I too get into this mindset every now and then. This past Christmas, I was feeling particularly overwhelmed with it all and found myself loathing the beginning of Christmas Basket sign up here at Stewpot. Even though we don't start sign up till 1:00pm each day, inevitably the line starts forming as early as 9am. By the time we get started the line is wrapped around the building. Hundreds of people were there and it was only the first day. I was praying Stephanie wouldn't ask me to help out and was relieved when I was called away from the office for a meeting. I did not want to hear everyone's stories and see that their bills exceed their income. I had heard it all at Thanksgiving.

As I returned to Stewpot an hour later and saw that the line had dwindled, but was still there, I was still wishing there weren't so many people who wanted our help. I was busy loathing the line of people still in front of the building when I had to come to a complete stop in the middle of Capitol St. An elderly woman was crossing the busy street at a snail's pace. She used a walker and still had someone holding on to her arm to help her walk. I don't know if she had driven here and had to park across the street or if she had walked from the neighborhood nearby. What I do know is that her presence in the middle of that street was just what I needed. I was jolted back into the reality that, someone so in need of our help to be able to put a Christmas dinner on the table, would brave busy Capitol St. on a walker in the cold. No one can tell me she would have been there if there wasn't a need. No one can tell me those who waited in line since 9am don't have a need. And, I am glad that we are here to provide that need.



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*Faith meeting needs in our community*

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Bea Gotthelf	Stacie Jones
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Mrs. W.M. Moore	
Gail Sweat	
Dwayne Brinkley	

*Have a HeART and Help by Hope Bynam*

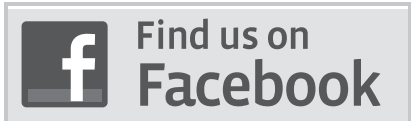
HeARTWorks is an art ministry for those in the Stewpot community. For over 5 years, a small band of energetic volunteers and I have been setting out art supplies every Tuesday for anyone who might be interested in a little artistic fellowship. The clients seem to really enjoy expressing themselves through art. It has been such a joy to watch over the years beautiful people develop into talented artists.

We meet almost every Tuesday in the cafeteria, and we would love your help! Projects and supplies are provided. Set-up is around 8:30 and clean-up starts about 11:00, but feel free to come and go as your schedule permits. It always amazes me what a little encouragement can do for the soul, but to be honest, it's usually MY soul that gets the needed lift!

Hope to see you soon!

**Your Stewpot family has a Facebook page!!**

When you are browsing the social network scene look up the Stewpot facebook page and become a fan!



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A Newsletter of Stewpot Community Services

2014

# New Kitchen/Dining Area Finished LET'S PARTY

By Rev. Frank Spencer

The Stewpot Family began to dream of a new Kitchen and Dining area in 2006. Today the dream is a reality. Harrell Construction Company has turned the construction area back over to Stewpot. By the time this article is read, the new table and chairs may have been delivered and Stewpot feeding its lunch clients in the new area. The kitchen staff has been trained to use the all new kitchen appliances and they are anxious to begin using the new space.

The new kitchen/ dining area is located in the sanctuary of the former Central Presbyterian Church which was donated to Stewpot by the Mississippi Presbytery in 2004. To be suitable for its new use, the interior floor had to be demolished, the pieces removed, and a new flat floor poured. Additionally, asbestos had to be removed, a new roof installed, drains and water, electric, phone and cable lines installed. The kitchen/ dining area as well as other renovations to be constructed later were designed by CDF (Cook, Douglas Farr Architects.)

For our clients, the renovation will allow Stewpot to be more wheelchair friendly, easier to clean, have adequate restrooms and lavatories for washing hands and be assured that their food is cooked under the most sanitary conditions available. For our volunteers, they will be assured of close fenced parking area with quick entrance, lockers for the valuables while at Stewpot, and a lot of kitchen counter space to place food brought on the weekend to feed clients. For everybody, the area is far more attractive, has better lighting and a modern heating/cooling system.

Future plans also call for the area to be used as a community meeting area and a classroom for budding young musicians, actors and artists from the local neighborhoods. Funds did not allow for the construction of the new food pantry and chapel. It is hoped that one or two local church or businesses will volunteer to finish that construction.

So please come and view the new kitchen/ dining area that God has blessed Stewpot with. Stewpot's staff will hold an open house in the renovated area on February 27th, 2014 from 4:30 until 6 PM. Staff is anxious to show the space off to our many friends and supporters who have made improvements in Stewpot's ministry possible.



Stewpot will host an Open House for our new Kitchen/Dining Area on February 27, from 4:30pm-6:30pm.

## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

By: Rev. Frank Spencer



I love opening the mail at Stewpot and it's not just because the mail is how Stewpot gets a lot of the contributions that support us.

Rather, it's because

I feel that I am visiting with friends for a short period of time. I see contributions from many people who obviously feel they been blessed and want to assist others. The checks range from few checks in the thousands that come in mostly at the end of the year and many monthly checks that range from \$10 to \$1,000. There may be a cheerful note attached or only the name but I reflect on the name and I think what a faithful supporter of this ministry. There are a few I am certain contain the widow's mite.

We continue to get questions about monthly drafts so people can have a monthly amount automatically taken from their account and electronically sent to Stewpot. It kind of makes me sad that I will not have their hand written checks and notes to open but that method is definitely a big time and cost saver for the contributor. After all there is the cost of the envelope and check but even more is the cost of a stamp that has risen to almost 50 cents; and, then there is the time involved to write the check. We try to make it as easy as possible by enclosing an envelope with the newsletter. But the convenience of going on-line with your bank or calling them to direct such a regular contribution is definitely the easiest on a donor.

I personally pay all my bills this way and I pay nothing for stamps or an envelope. Plus, I enter the name and address once on line for the payee and whether I making a onetime payment or monthly, I save a lot of time in the course of a year. Whichever method you use to support Stewpot, any and all help is celebrated.

*I am Dorothy*

I am Dorothy. I have been using Stewpot services for years. In the summer of 2013, I was facing a difficult situation. I had lost my job, I could not afford to pay the rent, and was losing my place to live. I didn't know who to or where to turn. I decided to call Matt's House and they allowed me to come to the shelter. While at the shelter, I knew I had to find a job. I went out every day searching for employment. As my time started to come to an end, I found myself back in the same situation. I didn't have anywhere to live. I prayed every night for a job and a place to live. A couple of days before I was to leave Matt's House, an opening became available at Sims House Transitional Shelter. I was thankful and I had more time to focus on the goals I set for myself. After a week of being at Sims, I was offered a job to work for Stewpot clothing closet. Finally, a breakthrough. I was very hopeful and I knew God heard my prayers. The staff at Sims referred me to a senior citizens apartment. I didn't want to get too excited because I didn't want to be disappointed. I went and applied for the apartment and by the end of the month I was approved. I had a new job and a new home. When I lost my job, I thought that was the end, but now I realized that was the beginning of a new life.

ANOTHER  
**GREAT**  
SUCCESS  
STORY!!

Matt's House is ecstatic about the success of one of our former clients, Ms. Vivian Brack. Sixty-eight year old Vivian Brack came to Mississippi from Missouri after losing her husband and family in a fatal accident. As time passed, Ms. Brack's home, burned down. Upon her arrival to Mississippi Vivian found herself sleeping on the steps at Stewpot Community. A staff person noticed her sleeping there and called Matt's House to get her placed. When she got to Matts House, Ms. Brack immediately showed gratitude, and sincere thankfulness. Despite the loss of family, or health issues, Ms. Brack never stopped trying. She always had a smile on her face and showed determination in getting her own place. She eventually had to travel back by bus to Missouri, in order to obtain her identification, and other documents needed to obtain the things that she would soon need to relocate to Mississippi. Vivian held onto her hopes in starting her new life. With the assistance and help of staff, in less than two months, Ms. Brack had acquired stable housing, furniture and all the linens that she needed!

Today, Ms. Brack is still a part of the Stewpot family, she is one of those smiling faces who often appear, with hopes of helping someone else. She is happy and maintaining well in her new home. We are very proud of her and pray that she stays in touch and that she continues to strive for success!!

Great job and Congratulations Ms. Vivian Brack!!!!

# What is Gratitude?

By: Rhonda Tomlin

We all look at what we don't have, but do we really look at what we do have? I bet if you are like myself, and you look at what you have, you will realize you have everything you need. I never looked at it like that before. I use to say, I need this or that when in all actuality I didn't need it, but wanted it. Working here at Stewpot shows me that on a regular basis.

While I was working the screenings for the Holiday Baskets I got a reality check. I had to see the income of the applicants in order to qualify them. I was shocked at the amount of disability our senior citizens have to live on. It burdened my heart for many days. The meager amount they receive is barely enough to pay their utilities and rent. Now, food stamps have been cut so these are the people who are going to go hungry due to the decrease.

I use to think I need more money for this and that, but really I have more than enough to give me all the things I need to survive and then some. Those senior citizens must worry every month how they are going to eat or if there is an emergency, where are they going to get the money. We need to thank our God every day for providing all our needs instead of asking for things we want. There are so many who don't even have what they need. I am so grateful and I thank God for allowing me to work at Stewpot to show me these things.

PLEASE JOIN US FOR

## STEWSPOT'S ANNUAL MEETING

Stewspot's Annual Budget Report to the Community

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2014

At noon

1008 West Capitol Street  
(In the Community Center)

**SEE YOU THERE!**

# After-school in Action

## New Year = New Challenges

Hear ye hear ye a new year is here! Stewpot Children's Program is doing new things for the new year. We are starting Saturday tutoring this January. We made this decision to better assist our students whom may still be struggling. Our one on one sessions will last about 3 hours and will be twice a month.

We are excited about the kids and the accomplishment they made last year and the ones that we know will happen within this year.

While asking about New Year's resolution these are some responses we received:

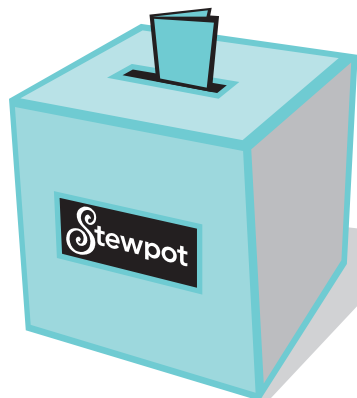
*Ashiya age 9:* My New Year's resolution is to make good grades.

*Ermani age 10:* My New Year's resolution is to get promoted to the 6th grade.

*Pierre age 4:* My New Year's resolution is to learn all of my abc's.

*The Staff:* We want to see all of our kids succeed and to have a good year.

Here at Stewpot we only wish good things upon our kids with a lot of love and encouragement.



## Just a Shout Out of Our Sincere Gratitude!

Because of you, our friends and faithful supporters, Stewpot Community Services was named Best Non-Profit 2014 by Jackson Free Press. Thanks for taking out the time to vote for us.

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