Removing Barriers Through Partnerships

By: Heather Ivery

Reliable employment is one of the greatest barriers to being able to move permanently out of homelessness. Many of those we serve have limited education or skills training and therefore are only able to get low paying, hard labor jobs that aren’t necessarily available on a consistent basis. This means that one month, they may make enough money to pay the rent and put food on the table, but the next, they cannot.

Stewpot has recently entered into a partnership with Hinds Community College and Working Together Jackson to help those we serve receive training and education to help improve their employment options. The MI-BEST program at Hinds CC is a workforce development program that offers people with or without a GED to train in career tracks including plumbing, electrical, masonry, welding, construction management and labor, heavy equipment operation and more. The program is free to those who score at a certain level on intake tests and those who don’t score high enough are given the opportunity for tutoring and to retake the intake tests. Hinds CC is committed to making sure everyone who wants to take part in this program can.

Our part in this partnership is to make sure students from Stewpot have everything they need to be successful students. We have had 8 students in this program since August of 2015, all of whom are homeless or living in our shelters. As issues arise, we are there to help our students work through them and help meet their needs. Transportation to the Raymond campus was our first hurdle. WTJ provides that transportation to our students and others in the Jackson area with a partnership with New Horizon Church International. Clothing that is appropriate for school was an issue for a few students. We put the word out to our supporters and were able to get shoes and clothes for them. Our homeless students were struggling to find time and a place to study after school and a way to have access to computers to do their assignments. We worked with Hinds and they were able to get them qualified for dorm rooms on campus and access to the on campus computer labs. Stewpot networked with its supporters again to provided sheets, and towels and other items for their dorms. Stewpot also provides them with snacks and toiletries. One student needed to get to a monthly parole meeting, so we helped make those arrangements.

The most exciting part of this whole program is that when these students complete their career certification, jobs are waiting for them! In fact, some of them are already working in the field they are training for and still going to school. The City of Jackson has committed to hiring Jackson residents for the positions they will be filling related to the infrastructure and street renovations. They interview any student coming through Hinds MI-BEST. Hinds also has partnerships with several other companies in the area that are looking for the type of workers Hinds is training. These jobs start at $12-$13 an hour and some are as much as $21 an hour. This is a wage that someone can live a stable life on.

The most exciting part of this program is the end result as much as it is the partnerships that are making it possible. When we come together as a community and each offers the parts it can, something real and sustainable and wonderful happens. We change our community for the better and those we are trying to help become those who work alongside us.

DIRECTOR’S CORNER

One of the things I hear from people that do not want to support Stewpot is that Stewpot is just enabling the Poor and not really helping them. I want to ensure Stewpot supporters that such thoughts are very inaccurate. In fact, I feel that Stewpot staff is probably the most accurate group of people in the City of Jackson to determine whether someone is deserving of assistance or a “goldbricker.” We frequently ask ourselves, “Are we enabling or are we truly helping?”

Stewpot staff has been trained by their supervisors and/or their experience to assess individuals and determine what is really needed…. our assistance or our directions as to what the client needs to do. For this reason, I have volunteered our staff to area churches and other groups wanting to help those in economic distress but needing intake advice. I tell them to send the person to Stewpot for assessment because just handing out vouchers and
Dianne Brown and her two children Cedric and Kadarious came to Flower’s shelter during the early part of this year. Because Dianne’s husband was doing time in prison, the family was living from house to house. She soon decided that she had had enough of over-crowded residences and family members asking them to leave. Dianne made the decision to ask for help. She entered Flower’s shelter with her children hoping to get back on her feet. After her arrival and constant counseling sessions with Mrs. Carter, it seemed that Dianne had made the best decision for her and her boys. She had goals that she had set for herself and wanted to complete them while in this time of setback. She wanted to obtain her G.E.D., get a stable job, and secure permanent housing for her family. So the pressure was on. While she was applying for job and doing everything she could on her end, she was growing frustrated because job after job she was being turned down. Because she did not finish high school she was being told she was not qualified for many of the jobs. Even with these obstacles, she did not give up, her job search sheets were full every week.

Dianne registered with the WINN Job Center and was able to be matched for jobs according to her qualifications. She applied for housekeeping at the Quality Inn & Suites in Clinton, MS and was hired for employment on the spot. Shortly after that she was awarded two DHS child care vouchers. These vouchers was just what she needed in order for her to be able to work at least 5 to 6 days a week. Dianne opened a bank account so that she would be able to save her money and seek permanent housing. After about three pay checks, she has been able to pay her deposit for a two bedroom apartment. She will be moving in her apartment July 1st.

Determination and being willing to do what is necessary, has been a successful process for this mother of two. The staff and our shelter counselor made sure that all that was needed for her to move forward was put in place and her goals are being accomplished each day. Congratulations to Dianne Brown for thinking more of herself and her two boys, not giving up and all of her efforts at becoming self-sufficient. The staff at Flower’s Shelter watched her grow and make a difference, even when she thought that it would never happen.
“A TEAM THAT DREAMS”

BY: COREY GRIFFITH

At the beginning of the school year, “The Dream Team,” a group of 7th grade students at Byram Middle School, began a canned food drive with the intention of donating them to a very worthy individual, family, or organization. This idea was totally student-led and fully supported by their Nation Builder, Mr. Corey Lynn Griffith. The storage place was an old, large cabinet located at the back of the room, which students cleared out and reserved specifically for cans. Can after can, the students continued to blindly fill the cabinet until it reached its capacity.

On March 28, 2016, Jackson, Mississippi kicked off its National Community Development Week by educating the citizens and members of neighboring communities about homelessness in the city and the many resources available. Mr. Griffith not only saw this as a wonderful opportunity to expose his students to a real-life situation, which adversely affects our society, but this also would allow his students the opportunity to brainstorm ideas that would allow them to positively affect the situation. The idea of donating the canned goods to help feed the homeless and contribute to their well-being became the unanimous suggestion.

While watching WJTV’s coverage of the homelessness bus tour, Ms. Heather Ivery of Stewpot Community Services caught Mr. Griffith’s attention when she spoke specifically to connecting needy citizens with the services and providing the necessary resources. After discussing The Dream Team’s desire to aid the situation, Heather provided a timetable for the delivery and students began to decorate their boxes, write inspirational poems, and pack them with canned foods and dry goods. With the help of the strong men and women on the grounds of 1100 West Capitol Street, the goods were unloaded and placed inside of the food pantry. What an awesome exchange it was for both parties!

In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers yet as one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.

–Dr. Booker Taliaferro Washington

STEWPOT BY THE NUMBERS

Everyone in Jackson seems to know that Stewpot feeds people. But what many people don’t know is just how many people we feed. Here is a glimpse into how much food is needed for ONE average month at Stewpot.

The Food Pantry serves at least 600 people a month. This number includes all the members of the family from grand-parent to parents and children. Each family is given a four day supply of groceries to cover the entire household.

The Community Kitchen serves an average of 6,700 meals a month to any member of the community-no questions asked.

Matt’s House Emergency Shelter for Women & Children provides around 1,500 meals a month to the homeless women and children residing at the shelter.

Sims House Transitional Shelter for Women & Children provides approximately 1,200 meals to the women and children residing at the shelter.

If you are interested in helping any of the above feeding ministries, please contact us at 601-353-2759 or at www.stewpot.org.

The Billy Brumfield House for Men serves the homeless men of Jackson nearly 3,600 meals a month.

The Opportunity Center, provides a place for the homeless and low-income of the area to wash clothes, shower, and meet with local service agencies. The Opportunity Center also provides a morning and after-noon snack and in an average month serves 3,240 snacks.

As you can see, we go through a lot of food each month at Stewpot. There is no way any of this could be possible without the support of you- our community, our family! So, from everyone at Stewpot, Thank You!

Many of you have not only assisted in this mass feeding effort through your donations and monetary support, but also through taking the time to cook food and bring it to the shelter. Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!
SUMMER CAMP
IS IN ACTION!!!!

June 6th was our first day of summer camp. Every week we have different themes for the week, this will keep the staff and campers interested in what to expect in the weeks to come. The first week started off with the theme: Connect 4 or More. This was a teambuilding week that the campers got a chance to know the counselors and the counselors got a chance to know their campers. Each morning we start out on the steps singing songs, praying, and saying some of our favorite chants. We are now ending our 2nd week heading into the 3rd week of the 7 weeks that we have for summer camp. Briarwood for the 2nd week showed our campers a good time with VBS. This is a time where we all get a chance to do fun activities and learn new songs. As the summer is rolling we are expecting to have great safe fun. Although Chuck E Cheese logo is, “The place where a kid can be a kid”, I would like to say the same for Stewpot. Better yet I like to call this place, Our Happy Place!

Shamberi Horton
Director of Children’s Services

WHAT’S UP WITH THE TEENS AT STEWPOT

It has been very in the Stewpot Teen’s program. We are in the beginning weeks of our seven weeks of recreational activities for our middle and high schoolers. We are excited to have our campers back; some new and some returning. Our teens are keeping up the vegetable garden, making healthy snacks, and going deeper in depth in learning about the Underground Railroad. Mrs. Derrick, our volunteer retired Science teacher, is helping the teen create and research Biomes this summer. There is so much going on this summer to keep our teens busy: they’re acting, singing, drawing, dancing, and as always developing lifelong bonds. Before the end of summer camp our camper will also begin job training and preparation, resume writing, and some of the teens will even get to begin visiting college campus’s to help them make the best decisions of which college to attend.

So that it! With so much happening in just these first few weeks, we can’t wait for our end of summer presentation.
Emotions or feeling are not given only to adults. Children have Emotions too. Adults do not have the monopoly on emotions. Some adults have said that children do not have reasons to feel sad; and that there should not be any depressed children. Adults like to justify their belief in children not having emotions due to children having limited responsibilities based on their youth. When sad, children have the tendency to act differently from adults. Young children may find it difficult to voice their feelings. Therefore, children tend to become physically active when they are depressed. In other words, these children act out. Sometimes children observe, imitate, and model a depressed parent, family member, or friend close to them. Children care about those close to them and may tend to empathize with that sad family member or friend. Children can become anxious or embarrassed. Many children have fears about such real facts of life, as death, being bullied, poverty, dying, and even fears about their futures.

Adolescents find belonging to a group, of the utmost importance. They do not want to be different. When they are teased, bullied, or left out of the circle of popular people; these children may become depressed. Most adolescents and teens are striving to find their true identities. Sometimes youth that have been bullied may stay victims throughout their adulthood if they do not get the proper help. They tend to not only become sad but suffer from anxiety. These symptoms may become chronic and become mental illnesses.

Mental illness has become a family, or a state of denial in many families. Mental illness should not become a stigma. The mind should be taken care of the same way the physical body is cared for. If help is not sought for the child, the mental problem can escalate. The child will not have a quality life and may end up seeking relief through self-medicating with drugs/alcohol.

Children as young as age fourteen and under can exhibit mental illnesses. If the child's behavior changes abruptly, parents please see help for your child or teen. Below are signs and behavior changes to look for:

- Often feeling angry or very worried
- Can’t sleep or eat
- Isolates self
- Feels grief for too long
- Smokes, drinks, or uses drugs
- Thinks his or her mind is controlled or out of control
- Hears voices
- Has thoughts of suicide

The National Institute of Mental Health states mental health problems can be treated. Mississippi has healthcare providers who are strictly focused on helping young people. You may find your son or daughter may have biological, chemical imbalance, or neurological symptoms. This too can be treated. This is not time for the blaming game or having too great of pride. This is the time to get the help needed for the child. There is hope. Your child can grow into a productive adult by getting the help needed now and have a quality life.
Faith meeting needs in our community

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!

Stewpot Speakers If you need a speaker for your church, civic, or school function, please call Michelle’ Bingham at 601-353-2759 for someone to gladly share information about the ministries of Stewpot.

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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