

THE ASCENT™

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 **Jacob's Ladder™**
Community Development Corporation

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Come Up Higher...



“It is the small things that matter the most”

by William Marler,
Executive Director

One of the Board members of Jacob's Ladder™ grew up in rural western Kentucky during WWII. His brother, a born carpenter, built an endless inventory of clubhouses, chicken coups and small projects. He had a problem getting a ready supply of nails because of war-time rationing for materials, like steel. His solution involved pulling “extra” nails out of the family car garage. This was a well-made wooden structure with vertical planks for siding. These planks were attached at top, middle and bottom with a seeming abundance of nails. The “technique” involved prying a board loose, pulling out all but a minimum of nails and re-attaching the board to the garage as if nothing had happened.

Their father, who was a preacher, came home one evening at dinner time and parked his car beside the house instead of inside the garage, because he had to leave after dinner to make a hospital call. The stormy weather predicted for that day continued throughout the family meal. All of a sudden there came an enormous crash from the back yard...*the garage had caved in!* The dad, followed by his family, rushed out into the back yard to see what had happened. He came back inside muttering something off the record under his breath; “I just don't understand why that garage caved in...it has survived storms far worse than this over the years.” My friend often wondered after that, if pulling all those nails out of the garage had any thing to do with its collapse.

“It is the small things that often matter the most.” A poet once mused: “For lack of a nail, a horse could not be shod; for lack of a horse, a general could not ride into battle; for lack of a general, an army lost a battle and ultimately a war - for lack of a nail, a war was lost.”

In our organization, we liken the plight of a neighborhood going into distress to that of the collapsed garage. Using the notion of “nail attrition,” a house becoming vacant and boarded-up is the same as a nail being pulled from the structure of a neighborhood. Every time a lot becomes vacant, overgrown, and in general, a health hazard and an eyesore, another nail comes out of the structure. To undervalue the significance of education in a community is to waste the minds of its children and a whole bunch of nails are pulled out of the structure of a community. The pulling of individual nails by themselves often goes unnoticed, but eventually a critical point is reached and then, **C R A S H...** to everyone's surprise the whole structure has collapsed.



Roger DeShaies, a regular volunteer from St. John's Episcopal Church, spends the day on a ladder offering his expertise as a painter.

Jacob's Ladder™, with lots of help from churches, local businesses, neighborhood volunteers and other groups, is putting some new nails back into the structure of the Belt Line community west of the University of Memphis to the Fairgrounds. We are completing our sixth renovated house in our own backyard. All of these homes were either vacant, boarded-up or in deterioration, signaling to criminals, vagrants and all other passers-by, that no one cares. Jacob's Ladder's™ presence in the neighborhood is a statement to the community that...**We care**, and our latest house is already sold to a deserving family of three displaced by the Katrina storm last year.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

In May, and again in July, volunteers met early in the morning on festival day in the "shadow of the cross" for communion.



Our sixth house, located at 574 Josephine, was the festival site. Volunteers from the neighborhood, St. John's Episcopal Church, St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, Covenant United Methodist Church, New Tyler A.M.E., and Highland Heights United Methodist were present for the kickoff.



The first task was to take down a decayed awning over the front porch of 574 Josephine



Shouldering the load was Richard Lake, John Peeples, The Rev. Andy Andrews, Charles King, Joe Scott, Todd Moody and Rev. Ken Burnette.



The volunteers were enlivened by the gospel music of **The Anointed Cowans Singers from New Tyler A.M.E. Church**. Their music beckoned to the neighborhood and soon between 80 and 100 people gathered to enjoy the fun of Festival Day at 574 Josephine.



Inside, painting and repair crews included several children of the future home owner as well as neighborhood, church and business volunteers. Pictured: (Left) Ted Townsend from St. John's Episcopal Church

D'Angelo Jones, (Rt) a junior high school neighborhood volunteer, Jason Sandusky, from Coca-Cola and Greg Wright, of St. John's Episcopal Church.



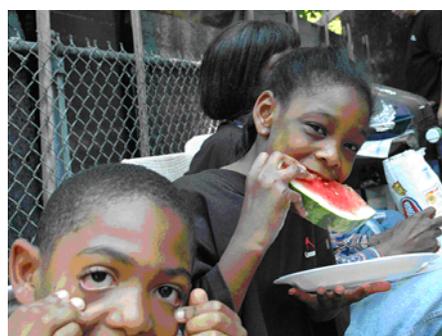
The Parker Harness Family from Highland Heights United Methodist Church organized and taught the crafts lessons for the children.



Kids of all ages enjoyed taking their turn sinking a putt or being pushed on the tire swing.



Fred Griffith and Roger Tisdale of Highland Heights U.M.C. prepared a cook-out for the neighborhood.



A good time was had by all...