

THE ASCENT™

sponsored by



Jacob's Ladder™

Community Development Corporation

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Come Up Higher...



James, JL CDC Volunteer

“There is Room in My Heart for Thee”

A REFLECTION BY REV. KEN BURNETTE
BOARD MEMBER OF JACOB'S LADDER™

There is a little town in the Midwest where they still remember one Christmas pageant over all others. When Miss Lumbard, the elementary school teacher, began preparing the pageant, she wondered what to do with Wallace Purling. Wally was 9 years-old and already two years behind in school. It was unfortunate that he was big for his age and clumsy, but even worse, he was slow of mind. He had a learning challenge and could not keep up with the others. The children all liked him because he was pleasant and helpful and so loveable and kind. But they usually shut him out of their games because of his awkwardness and because he was so slow to catch on. When he heard about the pageant, he was overjoyed. He wanted to be in it and Miss Lumbard was determined to give him a part...but where? Wally wanted to be a shepherd, playing a flute, but that was beyond him. He wanted to be a wise man, but he just didn't fit that part. He couldn't be Joseph - that part called for a lot of conversation and he just couldn't memorize that much. Finally, after much thought, Miss Lumbard decided to make him the inn keeper. The lines were simple and Wally's size fit him for the role. So Wally learned his part slowly and painfully.

The night of the performance Wally was fascinated. It was the first time they had dressed in their costumes with lights and music, and all the props. So fascinated was he, that Miss Lumbard was afraid he might enter the stage prematurely, or even forget his lines. Finally the moment came: a knock at the innkeeper's door. Wally opened the door, and was right on cue: "What do you want?" he asked in a loud and memorized tone. "We seek lodging" said the lad playing the part of Joseph. Wally replied with practiced briskness, refusing them entrance. Again, Joseph pleaded, his voice taking on the tone of urgent desperation, "Please, good

innkeeper, this is my wife, Mary. She is heavy with child and needs a place to rest. Surely, you must have some small corner for her. She is so tired." Miss Lumbard was now worried, the lad was making such a good case for Mary, and Wally looked a bit confused as he focused on Mary. He paused too long...the pause was so long the audience became tense with embarrassment. The prompter, hiding behind the props, had to say his line the third time before Wally realized where he was. "No, begone," whispered the prompter, this time so loud those in the front few rows could hear. Wally suddenly realized where he was, and repeated automatically, "No, begone." Joseph placed his arm around Mary and started to move away slowly. Wally was to turn and go back in to the inn and close the door, but instead of re-entering the inn, he stood there, lost in the plot. As he stood watching Mary and Joseph sadly walking away, his eyes began to fill with tears. And as they reached the edge of the stage, he blurted out, "Don't go Joseph! Bring Mary back." And then Wally's face broke into a big grin, as he said, "You can have my room tonight." Some of the townspeople said the pageant was ruined, but many, many more thought it was the *most Christmas* of all Christmas pageants they had ever seen.

During this holy season of wonder and want I am reminded of this story and especially so, whenever I see the smiling face of Jacob's Ladder volunteer, James Brodanax. He has been a faithful volunteer ever since Jacob's Ladder began working in his neighborhood. Like Wally in the pageant story, James is physically challenged but it is no challenge for the volunteer work crews at Jacob's Ladder to make room in their hearts for James' kind of compassion and love. It is the very kind of caring love God sent to us in the form of the Baby at Christmas. And where you see that love you see God again sending the Son to the earth.

***“O come to my heart, Lord Jesus.
There is room in my heart for Thee!”***

(from *Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne* by Emily E. S. Elliott)

FESTIVAL NEWS

December, 2006

This has been a very blessed year for the ministry of Jacob's Ladder Community Development. We acquired houses #7 and #8 in early November and began rehabilitation work on these homes immediately. On November 18th Jacob's Ladder gave its first Neighborhood Festival for the property located at 540 Josephine in the Beltline community. Approximately 80 - 100 were present to work and play, fellowship and sing together at this inspiring gathering of the neighborhood. The day began with volunteers from St. John's Episcopal Church and Highland Heights UMC pitching in very early to get a jump on the work.



Roger DeShaies and John Peebles of St. John's Episcopal scrape and prepare the siding of this garage for painting.



Scott & Sarah Trammel work on the north side - no moss under their feet!



Brien Luck, college student & JLCDC Donor came from Moscow, TN to help out.



Parker Harness & Rev. Emily Matheny of Highland Heights reflect on rehab progress.



The wonderful talents of Haden Carpenter and Nathan Raab have graced every Jacob's Ladder Festival since we began working in the Beltline area

We were also very pleased to welcome guest musicians,



The Wright Brothers, who offered great soulful gospel stylings for the participants at the Festival.



The highlight of the November 18th Festival at 540 Josephine was the musical presentation of the Children's Choir from the school at The Cathedral of The Immaculate Conception on Central Ave. Under the direction of Ms. Olusola Tribble, professional musician and teacher at the Cathedral School, this



gifted group of elementary kids gave an impressive performance, touching hearts and serving as ambassadors of hope to this struggling community. They were joined by their parents and friends at the Festival where they performed several songs accompanied only by tambourine or drum.



Smiles were warm and applause heartfelt for these children who are learning early in life what it means to give of themselves to others.

Other children in the neighborhood were plying their talents in a different way through the crafts lessons offered by Dottie and Parker Harness of Highland Heights UMC. The wooden boxes pictured were crafted by JLCDC volunteers to be artfully decorated by each child with his/her own unique design. The boxes will then become part of a larger



design depicting a theme of Jacob's LadderTM. The new collective work of art is to be a gift to one of the sponsoring organizations of Jacob's LadderTM.

(Just in case you were wondering James Brodanax was also at the Festival, smiling and giving himself)
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