

THE ASCENT™



sponsored by

 **Jacob's Ladder™**

Community Development Corporation

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Newsletter Vol. 7 Number 10

October, 2007

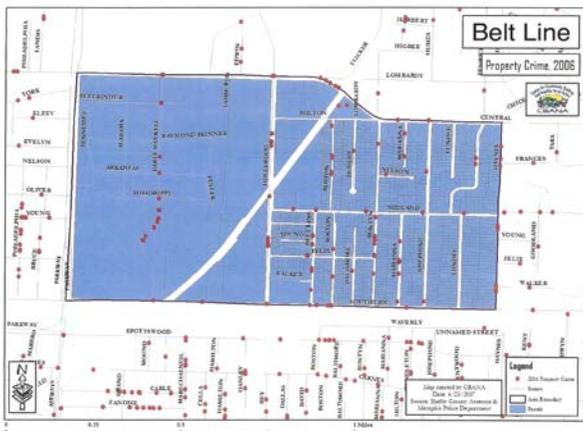
Come Up Higher...



*Begin with what is necessary,
then do the possible...
And suddenly, you are doing
the Impossible.*

St. Francis of Assisi

St. Francis' words seem to mirror Jacob's Ladder™ efforts in the Belt Line Community just east of the fairgrounds. Belt Line is an area long-forgotten and neglected, a community lacking in visible assets - no park, no school, no community center, and few safe gathering places for its children. Approximately one in twelve lots are vacant or boarded-up homes, and in one pocket 38% of its residents live below the poverty level.



Belt Line Property Crime Map

Many of its children are or will be considered at-risk...unlikely to graduate from high school making them unemployable and consequently unable to enter society's mainstream - drop outs in life. What a contrast with how they

begin - talented, eager to learn, friendly and trusting God that life will be good to them.

Three and one-half years ago we began, in St. Francis's words, with *what is necessary*, a small but significant alliance of neighborhood residents, businesses and churches began rehabilitating decaying homes. Our team of volunteers had a first-hand opportunity to meet and inter-act with the neighborhood children. We saw once or twice a week what they live with...it is tough when you have to walk to school making your way through vacant lots with waist-high grass strewn with trash and around decaying houses where vagrants stay and gangs meet. Perhaps because we were doing something different and hopeful for positive changes in the neighborhood, these kids became interested in being part of what we were doing. On Saturdays and during summer months the neighborhood youth helped lay sod, painted, learned light carpentry, built picnic tables, etc., all part of the rebirth of their community...one house and relationship at a time. It is clear that God plants the seeds of hope and possibility in little children and when given a little nurturing and attention these tiny beginnings will blossom into purpose, meaning and fulfillment. From our point of view Jacob's Ladder™ also had a fragile and small beginning, so we were limited in our beginning with what is necessary - listening, interacting and slowly changing the landscape in which these children are growing up.

Then do the possible. When ten homes had been reconstructed Jacob's Ladder™ felt the next house we renovated should become a Children's Enrichment Center, a sanctuary of learning and fun.

The move would be the beginning of a long-term investment in the Belt Line community's children. We found a strategically-located house next to one of our best supporters - Shelby Millwork - and decided this was the spot.



Beltline Enrichment Center

Together with a team of artists and children, we designed and painted a wall mural surrounding the Beltline Enrichment Center.

St. John's Episcopal Church offered us a 0% loan and Virginia and Byron Crain made a very sizeable gift towards the center making this opportunity a reality. Other churches and organizations quickly chipped-in as well. The goal of the center is multiple: to offer an after school safe haven, a learning center that teaches pragmatic life skills, and an opportunity to experience the love of God through caring and trained mentors. Some of the life skills we plan to offer are:

1. A course in how to cook that will offer certificates of accomplishment.
2. A class on gardening: Jacobs Ladder™ purchased a vacant lot across the street from the center we have converted into a community garden.



3. Wood shop working skills: one of our weekly volunteers, Mr. John Humphreys, a fine carpenter, former shop teacher and coach

at a local high school, has offered to instruct this class.

4. Arts, crafts
5. A computer and study center
6. A game room and after-school kitchen
7. A business start-up center.

More details on each of these will follow in upcoming issues of this newsletter.

We have had two festivals associated with the Enrichment Center and the fire department came out each time and turned on the hydrant to the delight of all.



The water's flow began as a trickle and soon became a powerful and irresistible current, a reminder of God's dream for all communities, "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). Jacob's Ladder™ invites you to be part of this modern day miracle. Your prayers and financial support are needed to help the waters continue to flow.

And suddenly you will be doing the impossible. If you are drawn to inner-city ministry and want to be a part of transforming a community with many challenges, please consider a gift to Jacob's Ladder™.

A gift of \$50-\$500 will support our staff's operating budget.

A gift of \$2000.00 will help us purchase vacant lots next to the Center for our next community garden.

A gift of \$5000.00 will cover our cost of a new Air Conditioning system for our center.

A gift of \$5000.00 plus will help begin our funding for a Charter School and Community Center.

Grace and Peace,
Rev. Bill Marler, Exec. Director

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