

THE ASCENT™

sponsored by



Jacob's Ladder™

Community Development Corporation

158 Marne St. Memphis, TN 38111 Ph. 901-327-3771

JacobsLadderCDC@aol.com



Newsletter Vol. 9 Number 12

December, 2009

Come Up Higher...



Have We Got It Right, Yet?

A landscape contractor tells a story about his first job. Of course, he didn't want to appear to be the rank amateur he knew he was, so he feigned a casual kind of nonchalance and expertise. One of the first tasks he had to tackle was blasting out some stumps with dynamite for a farmer. Since the farmer was watching he went to some length to measure out the fuses and set the dynamite — just as if he really knew what he was doing. But his problem was he really didn't know how much dynamite would be just right to do the job.

When he was all set up, he breathed a prayer that he had enough dynamite packed under the stump, and yet not too much to blow them all to kingdom come. The moment of truth came...He looked at the farmer with a knowing look of what he hoped came across as confidence and pushed down the plunger. The stump rose high in the air

with a resounding boom and arched magnificently over towards his pickup truck and landed right on the roof of the cab - demolishing it.

The farmer placed his hand on the shoulder of the much-dismayed contractor and exclaimed, "Son, *you aimed to get it right*. You didn't miss it by much - just a few feet. With a bit more practice you'll be able to land those suckers in the truck bed every time!"

A question those of us who have responsibility for the ministry of Jacob's Ladder™ ask ourselves from time to time is, "**Are we getting it right?**" The captioned image above is an illustration of a now famous experiment once known as the *Broken Window* theory. For Anywhere USA - you name the city - **a neighborhood with perpetual signs of neglect signals that no one is watching or even cares and thus becomes an incubator for crime.**

When Jacob's Ladder™ in partnership with United Housing, Inc. and St. John's Episcopal Church began its ministry efforts over five years ago in the Beltline, we wanted to address this *broken window phenomenon* and the crime it births by helping to eliminate vacant, boarded-up houses, blighted eyesore lots, weak community networks and city neglect, ie. no parks, school or community resources.

In this blessed season of hope and light, an answer to the question that has plagued the Board of Directors of Jacob's Ladder™ has now emerged in the form of hard statistics provided by the Memphis City Police Department. According to the MPD, crime in the Beltline has gone down 30% since Jacob's Ladder™ began its community development ministry in 2004.

T.K. Buchanan, a consultant with the urban research arm of the University of Memphis known as Community Building and Neighborhood Action or CBANA described crime reduction in the Beltline as the *Inverse Broken Window* phenomenon. She states, "If you begin removing the troublesome elements (cleaning blighted lots, restoring vacant homes, organizing churches, etc., you can safely predict a reduction in crime."

We thank God for this good news and also United Housing, St. John's Episcopal Church, & Jacob's Ladder™ donors and volunteers who have helped us to rebuild 10 boarded-up houses. Code Enforcement began demolishing buildings beyond restoration. The MPD has provided a vigilant and watchful presence. Shelby County Landbank entrusted Jacob's Ladder™ with 20 eyesore lots which we maintain for future home-building.

Jacob's Ladder™ opened the Beltline Youth and Community Resource Center in January, 2008. This Center has been an enormous success. The newly formed Beltline Ministerial Association has encouraged the involvement of their church members. Students from the University of Memphis and CBU help along with continued support from other Memphis churches and organizations outside the Beltline area. We want to thank all who have worked so diligently to make this reduction in crime a reality.

Gradually and quietly the perception of the community has begun to change...first in the hearts, minds and lives of its residents and now to the wider world in an unbiased statistical report about crime reduction. There is still a long way to go however, before crime, ignorance, and poverty are but distant memories for the residents of the Beltline. But it is evident this community likes to care and has begun to care for its own in various and meaningful ways.



There is hope and light in the Beltline...
"Are we getting it right?"

Please glimpse the Beltline through the *Unbroken Window* of love and care in the following pictures.



The Beltline Resource Center
 From our Heart to the Heart of the Beltline



Easy Smiles



The 'Playing Wall' at BYEC



Beltline Teen House Fix-Up



Friends Helping Friends



Beltline Thanksgiving Celebration