

The Ascent™

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Jacob's Ladder™

Community Development Corporation

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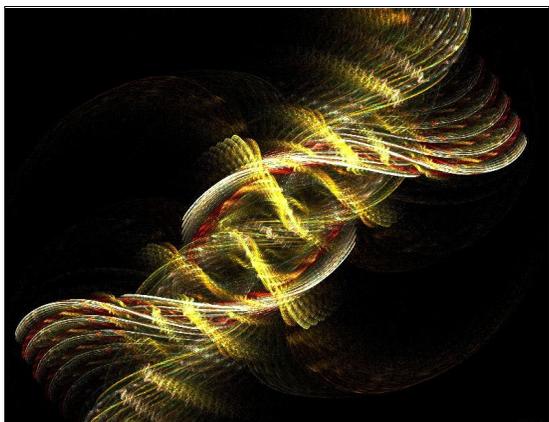
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Come Up Higher...



Picture of DNA
Molecular Biology Forum Aug. 28, 2008

"In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters." Gen. 1:1-2 (RSV)

Evolutionary biologist Henry Gee has written a book detailing our understanding of DNA, the ultimate organizer of biological life that begins with a formless void. The book's title is JACOB'S LADDER and in the preface the Genesis story of Jacob fleeing his angry brother is recounted. In this book, Gee may have created a new poetry between ancient faith and modern science. In the picture of human DNA (shown above), one can observe not only the likeness of a ladder within the double helix but the semblance of movement - stirrings and emanations - revealing the power of life. The rungs of the ladder contain coding that connects our past, present and future. This center of the biological universe contains our story from earliest humanity to modern times. The ancient prophet and poet, Saint Paul, would call DNA the "hidden wisdom of God." (1 Cor. 2:7) More recently another scientist has described DNA as "The Language of God" for two reasons: 1) This incredibly complicated vehicle is the power or **MEANS** God uses to give shape to all of life and, 2) It provides the potential for **MEANING**, the capacity that breathes hope into our lives, making them worth living and elevating us above a formless void. Beauty, truth, joy and even faith and love are birthed through the power of this matrix from God.

And yet, in the city and in communities like the Beltline, the resources are often not there for either MEANS OR MEANING. The contemporary prophet, Ruth Etchells cries out: "And yet such talent and energy, (is) dribbling away in unemployment and boredom and crime and hopelessness...and so many of the young, Lord, are disillusioned or cynical or angry."

In what follows, I would like to share with you our witness to the "hidden wisdom of God" as demonstrated by our triumphs and struggles with **MEANS AND MEANING** during the past six months in the Beltline.



The Beltline Teen Center (BTC) Opens

Late this past spring, Jacob's Ladder™, in partnership with Williams Temple COGIC, opened the Beltline Teen Center (BTC) at 487 Boston. As always, a core of skilled volunteers worked to ready the facility which features a small gymnasium, conference room with library, pool table, computer lab and kitchen. The Center functions as a safe gathering place for youth. Its presence doubles our previous capacity at the Children's Center. And what is the purpose of this facility? As one writer puts it - "**The young want to be valued. They want a chance to live; really to live, not simply to exist. Where is there MEANS AND MEANING for them?**" The BTC is here to help address that question.

More "Stirrings" in the Beltline -
MORE MEANS



Rev. Marise Tuttle,
Director BYEC/BTC

Rev. Marise Tuttle was hired as our new children/youth director on June 1st. Marise brings to the Beltline a wealth of wisdom, theological training and experience working with children and youth. She has conducted an excellent summer program with our volunteers and new Assistant Director, Raven Johnson. Just a few of the activities include: Gardening, swimming, classes in creative writing, computer literacy, sex education, art, financial fitness and job training. The volunteers who help make this happen have become the **MEANS** by which God is transforming the children of this community according to His own matrix depicted in the Jacob's Ladder connecting earth to heaven. Some of the volunteers are neighborhood-based and include honors students from CBU and U of M, Buntyn Presbyterian Church, and St. John's Episcopal Church. Others come from a wider geographical circle such as Volunteer Memphis and Emmanuel UMC. Together, they are laying the foundation for the Beltline Children's Zone, a neighborhood providing safe sanctuary, learning opportunities and **MEANING** for its youngest citizens.



A special thanks goes to Jean Ramsey, our Volunteer Coordinator, who brings all of the helping and mentoring resources together. A member of Buntyn Presbyterian Church and Jacob's Ladder™ Board Member, Jean recently won an award through Volunteer Memphis for her efforts with the Beltline children and youth. **Thank you Jean for your God-given talents and spirit.**

Ms. Jean Ramsey

MEANS AND MEANING through employment is a rung of the "Jacob's Ladder™" ministry which we are seeking to provide for the Beltline residents. Dr. Ed Perry, University of Memphis Professor of Mechanical Engineering, has helped us design a **Solar Collector** whereby previously untapped solar energy is harnessed for residential heating power. The solar collector prototype (built for us by Christian Lopes for his Eagle Scout project) is capable of heating a small home during daylight hours. Modifications may extend its use - including serving as a water heater. Jacob's Ladder™ has written a Workforce Development Grant to the Federal Government to build these solar collectors and establish a "Green" Industry in the Beltline. Local businesses - Coca Cola, Shelby Millwork and Binswanger have agreed to be primary contributors of materials and manufacturing space. If selected for award money (we expect to hear by this September), first hire will go to Beltline youth and young adults providing meaningful skills and employment.



"Taking It to the Streets in the Beltline"

WAYS AND MEANS

The path of demonstrating sacrificial love leads to empowerment and fulfillment - **MEANS AND MEANING.**

Our March 27th Spring Festival entitled, "Taking It to the Streets in the Beltline," witnessed Coca Cola, Clean Memphis, City of Memphis Department of Code Enforcement and Jacob's Ladder™ partnering for neighborhood clean-up and improvement. Approximately 250 employees, neighbors and church volunteers worked hand-in-hand on 25 different lots, housing and our community garden. Thank you, Friends!

Volunteer groups have come from around the country to work with us in the Beltline. This summer approximately 140 youth and adults came from as far away as Wisconsin and Florida and have done invaluable work assisting our mission. These volunteer organizations include: Catholic Heart Mission (3 consecutive years), Sycamore View Church of Christ (Memphis), Arlington First UMC Texas, Lenexa UMC (Kansas) and Corpus Christi Catholic Church, Carol Stream, IL (2 consecutive years).

The Shelby County Government gave Jacob's Ladder™ one house on Marianna which is currently undergoing a complete renovation. A very dedicated volunteer crew meets every Wednesday to accomplish this task. Several mission groups have added a big helping hand, making possible its complete restoration by late September. A special thanks goes to Black Construction Company & Associates for completely re-wiring this home.



U.S. Congressman Steve Cohen Visits the B.Y.E.C.

"Breathing hope" into the Beltline - A HIGHER MEANS

U. S. Congressman Steve Cohen came to the Beltline for breakfast and toured our Centers and a housing project this past July 7th. A good time was had by all as we discussed the needs and long-term vision of the community. The Congressman has already provided a strong letter of support to the Federal Government for our Solar Collector Project.



Thank you Congressman Cohen!

UPCOMING

FALL FESTIVAL & SERVICE OPPORTUNITY

WHEN: Saturday, September 25th, 8a-4p

WHAT: Wells Fargo National bank has given us three houses which we will be rehabilitating for needy families and children. We are linking different churches to each project and would love for you to sign-up as an individual or as a group. Helpers are needed for painting, landscaping, and miscellaneous carpentry projects. For more information, please contact Rev. William Marler, Ph. 327-3771 or email to JacobsLadderCDC@aol.com.

Jacob's Ladder™ is a non-profit public charity whose goal is the revitalization of the Beltline, Memphis, TN. To date we have repaired or renovated 30 homes, opened two children/youth learning centers and have plans for workforce development. Overall crime statistics have dropped 30% since our beginning and children and teen report card grades have gone up. We are heavily dependent on contributions from individuals, churches and corporations. Your gift will help sustain our mission.