

The Ascent™

sponsored by



Jacob's Ladder™

Community Development Corporation

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Come Up Higher...

Dear Friends:

The message of Advent comes in many ways, but none more familiar and unmistakably clear than the words of John the Baptist - "A voice crying aloud in the wilderness, *Prepare a way for the Lord, clear a straight path for Him...*" There are valleys to be filled-in, rugged ways to be made smooth and corners which need to be straightened.

Jacob's Ladder, along with donors, volunteers and partners have been doing just that this past year. As we have pursued a neighborhood improvement strategy for the Beltline through Education and Housing, our methodology of building coalitions of trust between neighbors, churches, local businesses and schools has proved successful.



Filling-In the Valleys Through Education

Most of the Beltline children enter the first grade public system already 2-3 years behind. If these young children are going to have a chance to succeed and accomplish dreams with broader horizons, they have to cross a deep cravasse posed by this educational gap. In partnership with Emmanuel and other friends, we are filling-in this education gap and raising the valley floor so that the way is not so steep for our young children. Jacob's Ladder has begun to transform an older house in the Beltline into a first class early childhood learning facility which will house a new pre-school, operated by the staff of Emmanuel United Methodist Church's Kindergarten (in existence continuously for 40 years). Emmanuel UMC's Pre-K program has already begun serving the Beltline and will occupy this newly-renovated facility in June, 2012. Eventually, this facility will serve a growing population of very young Beltline children in a serious effort to level the educational challenges they face.

Despite a poor economy, this new initiative marks a continuous expansion of better education in the Beltline for the past four years. In 2008 Jacob's Ladder opened the first Youth Center in the Beltline, serving over 60 children. In 2010, a Teen Center, serving 20 youth, was started offering positive alternatives to the street corners and sanctuary from neighborhood violence. Friends giving vital support to this endeavor include Buntyn Presbyterian Church, the Beltline Civic Association, Williams Temple COGIC, Grace-St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Emmanuel UMC, CBU honors students, the Kroger Foundation and Rotary Club Central. And now, we are fortunate to add an early childhood component thanks to a partnership with Emmanuel United Methodist Church.



Community Building and "Preparing the Way for the Lord" is every bit about an all hands on deck, every oar in the water kind of undertaking.

We are pleased to report that our coalition has attracted ten churches, 20+ businesses, several mission groups, a civic association and a university. *Where does the attraction come from?* It is a little like "iron at a distance being drawn by the Loadstone, there being some Invisible Communications between them." (Thomas Traverne) The Loadstone, of course is God, and our hearts are the iron drawn by some invisible communication into "preparing the way for the Lord."



Making the Rugged Ways Smooth through Family Health and Community Stability

Four medical missionary doctors and their families from out-of-state chose to relocate into the Beltline Orange Mound area in 2011. One of the least medically-served areas in Memphis, residents had to travel a long way and at great expense to get basic care for their families. Having a clinic right in their epicenter was like “making the rugged ways smooth” as it relates to family health and well-being. Of course, clinics require qualified doctors who have a heart to serve in distressed areas. Hearing a call sounded through Christ Community Clinic, four of them picked-up lock, stock and barrel and moved to Memphis in service to the medical needs of our community. Because they wanted to live in the community they would be serving, the houses they chose as residences summoned another act of faith - they were all previously abandoned and required complete rehabs and transformations. Jacob’s Ladder was able to make possible the relocation of these doctors and their families into this depressed area because we could offer them renovations at a price they could afford and which the lending institutions could honor (Banks only lend a very limited amount for real estate in our area.) Our regular team of volunteers - Rev. Ken Burnette, John Humphreys, Dick Barnhart, Wendell McAlexander, Nigel Bowen, Chris McGoldrick, and Peter Law - graciously committed themselves to re-building these houses, sometimes meeting twice weekly over the past year. Other businesses, contractors and mission groups pitched-in mightily to make the doctors’ purchases of these residences feasible. Together we have been able to help doctors begin their career of healing right here in the Beltline Orange Mound area. Our new friends and additions to the community are: Dr. Joey Patrick and wife, Tia and their three very young children, Dr. John David Williamson and wife, Jessica and their two-month-old son, Dr. Jeremy Crider and wife, Dr. Robin Crider and Dr. Danny Pike. The rugged paths were made smooth not only for the relocation and vision of these medical missionaries but also for the lives of the families they serve - *all in preparation for the coming of the Lord and His favor to the community.*



Newly Renovated Home of The Patrick Family

Four medical missionary doctors and their families from out-of-state chose to relocate into the Beltline Orange Mound area in 2011. One of the least medically-served areas in Memphis, residents had to travel a long way and at great expense to get basic care for their families. Having a clinic right in their epicenter was like “making the rugged ways smooth” as it relates to family health and well-being. Of course, clinics require qualified doctors who have a heart to serve in distressed areas. Hearing a call sounded through Christ Community Clinic, four of them picked-up lock, stock and barrel and moved to Memphis in service to the medical needs of our community. Because they wanted to live in the community they would be serving, the houses they chose as residences summoned another act of faith - they were all previously abandoned and required complete rehabs and transformations. Jacob’s Ladder was able to make possible the relocation of these doctors and their families into this depressed area because we could offer them renovations at a price they could afford and which the lending institutions could honor (Banks only lend a very limited amount for real estate in our area.) Our regular team of volunteers - Rev. Ken Burnette, John Humphreys, Dick Barnhart, Wendell McAlexander, Nigel Bowen, Chris McGoldrick, and Peter Law - graciously committed themselves to re-building these houses, sometimes meeting twice weekly over the past year. Other businesses, contractors and mission groups pitched-in mightily to make the doctors’ purchases of these residences feasible. Together we have been able to help doctors begin their career of healing right here in the Beltline Orange Mound area. Our new friends and additions to the community are: Dr. Joey Patrick and wife, Tia and their three very young children, Dr. John David Williamson and wife, Jessica and their two-month-old son, Dr. Jeremy Crider and wife, Dr. Robin Crider and Dr. Danny Pike. The rugged paths were made smooth not only for the relocation and vision of these medical missionaries but also for the lives of the families they serve - *all in preparation for the coming of the Lord and His favor to the community.*



Straightening Corners Through Mural Art

Jacob’s Ladder, the Beltline Civic Association and Coca-Cola Refreshments sponsored an historical mural this past summer. Artist Jason Hunt and two associates met regularly with community residents for input and then labored for three months crafting a huge and exquisite drawing on the bare block walls of the local corner grocery store. The Beltline railway for which the area is named, the history of the neighborhood and its heroes, some fallen, are captured unforgettably in vivid imagery. One young resident described the painting as “the best thing that has ever happened in the neighborhood. It gives us something to look at.” As a gathering site for much of the neighborhood, this corner grocery now displays a mural which stands in stark contrast to the bleakness, decay, and despair which in recent years has plagued the area while also serving as a beacon of hope to all passers-by. Urban planners are increasingly recognizing the truth in the aforementioned comment by one of the Beltline’s youth. That is, “Art Gives Value and Identity to a Community,” thus making the seeming crooked patterns of residents’ lives become straightened and make sense once more.



Historical Mural at Corner of Midland & Buntyn

You can learn more about Jacob’s Ladder on our website jacobs laddercdc.org. We rely heavily on prayers, volunteers, and financial support. We are a 501(c)(3) charity organization and all monies given are tax deductible. Help us continue the Advent theme by “preparing the way for the Lord.”

Rev. William D. Marler, Exec. Director

