

# THE ASCENT™

sponsored by



## Jacob's Ladder™

### Community Development Corporation™

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## Come Up Higher...



### Dear Friends of Urban Faith-Based Ministry:

Thanks to your support, Jacob's Ladder Community Development Corporation has been able to provide decent housing, community organizing and after-school education over the past ten years in the Belt Line area of Memphis, TN. We have repaired or re-built some 40 homes and achieved significant blight mitigation (acquired, cleared and maintained 35 lots), which has contributed to the overall enhancement of this community. In addition, Jacob's Ladder has operated both a Children and Teen Center, providing safe sanctuary and a place of study for the most vulnerable in an often violent neighborhood of the city.

Despite all of the good accomplished, the profound presence of unemployed and under-educated young adults (and the poverty and crime associated with this group) threatens to undermine any lasting progress. It is all too easy to associate with the wrong group/gang at this age. The local high school suffers from a 30% drop-out rate, a statistic that translates into older kids and young adults roaming the streets day and night, without hope of employment, except in the underground economy. One of the many ironies of this situation is that the Belt Line sits square in the geographic middle of an area in Memphis known for its fine homes and culture as well as some of the finest universities in the city.

Approximately two years ago Jacob's Ladder made a decision to begin the process of addressing these needs by building a small but comprehensive Belt Line Community Resource Center which would offer opportunities for GED Certification and Work Force Development. We set about purchasing contiguous parcels, cleaning overgrown thickets, and demolishing abandoned and burned-out housing, all the while ignoring the presence of a well-established and often menacing drug and crime network.



Jacob's Ladder Volunteer Construction Work Crews cleared the land in preparation for the new Belt Line Community Resource Center. Pictured (L to R): Richard Barnhart, Rev. Ken Burnette, Wendell McAlexander, Byron C. Crain and Doc Britt. Wood from the felled tree was saw-cut and used in the construction of a new fence bordering this new campus.

City planners, architects and engineers, the police, two charitable foundations and many volunteer hours later, we turned our first spade of dirt this past week at a small but momentous Ground-Breaking Ceremony at 427 Boston in the Belt Line, site of the New Community Resource Center.



Historic Ground-Breaking for Belt Line Community Resource Center located at 427 Boston. Shovel Handlers: Rev. Robert Williams of Williams Temple COGIC & Byron C. Crain of Emmanuel United Methodist Church.



**What Hope Looks Like** is pictured on the smiling faces of members of our ministry and construction teams and Belt Line Community children, teens and residents at the 427 Boston site for the Belt Line Community Resource Center

This summer our Youth Program offered 20 minority children in the Belt Line an opportunity to learn to swim. (Death by drowning is a leading cause of death for inner-city children.) Sponsored by the organizations SPLASH, Memphis Jewish Community Center and Christian Brothers University, Jacob's Ladder volunteers for this summer program provided transportation, encouragement, and well-deserved snacks to every child in our program. Most of the kids had to *begin at the beginning* with their swimming lessons but found that the small classes and personalized instruction helped them overcome any apprehensions.



Building confidence in the water is a major goal in elementary swim classes

Pictured here is a snapshot of a class in the indoor pool at the Memphis Jewish Community Center. The smaller children learned to trust themselves in the water with the aid of floating devices which allowed a more natural freedom of movement. At the conclusion of the program classmates enjoyed putting the finishing touches on their newly acquired swimming skills in the outdoor water park at the MJCC and the indoor facility at Christians Brothers.

Our fifth Annual Spring Festival was held on April 8, 2013 sponsored by Jacob's Ladder and neighborhood friends: Coca-Cola and the Belt Line Civic Association. Over 14 different groups pitched-in to help with a variety of clean-up, fix-up and literacy projects.



Coca-Cola employees provided touch-up to the Belt Line Community Mural on the exterior of the local market sponsored by JLCDC and Coca-Cola in 2011

Every year since 2007, Catholic Heart and other volunteer mission groups have sent collage-age and high school seniors to assist us with much-needed community projects. They paint, garden, landscape and demolish and fix-up - whatever is needed. The group pictured below was a combination of Lutherans and Catholics working together to redo our playground and garden areas at the Jacob's Ladder Belt Line Youth Enrichment Center at 2646 Midland.



A Good Time in the Sunshine in the Belt Line

To learn more about Jacob's Ladder Community Development Corporation, a 501(c)3 charity organization, go to our website [jacobs laddercdc.org](http://jacobs laddercdc.org). We rely heavily on prayers, volunteers, and outside financial support. Please prayerfully consider becoming a regular contributor to this worthy inner-city ministry. All donations are tax deductible.