

## **Reflections in the Word: Making the Impossible Possible**

**By Brian Beckman**

Greetings from The Ladder!

Our hearts are full of gratitude for the many ways each one of you has blessed our community, Oceana and God's Kingdom with your kindness to The Ladder. This February, The Ladder will celebrate its five-year anniversary – such a great milestone! In the upcoming year, the prayers of our heart are:

- to have 12 youth learning to be disciples.
- to raise pledges for one-third of our budget (approximately \$64,000). If our present donors maintain their giving and we meet our pledge goal of \$64,000, that means The Ladder will have raised about two-thirds of its budget.

**As we move forward, here are two bold prayers we ask you to pray with us:**

Lord, bring 12 youth to The Ladder whom you desire to be multipliers of the Gospel of Christ.

Lord, bring the donors that you desire to be multipliers of the Gospel of Christ.

We are praying these big, bold, audacious prayers to the God who makes the impossible possible.

Charles, a Ladder staff member, challenged me with this: "Brian, you pray and pray, but then you talk with doubting words, like it will never happen." I was convicted of his claim. I know throughout the New Testament, Jesus makes the impossible possible. My wife and I have personally experienced a miracle: our son Jeffrey's life. When he was born, the doctors did not expect him to live, but he did. The only explanation the doctors gave us was, "He's a miracle!" God did the impossible in my son's life. Do I pray that way and talk that way? I pray that way, but many days I have doubts.

**In Mark 9:14-29, Jesus makes the impossible possible by healing the demon-possessed boy:**

22b The father of the boy asked, "If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

23 "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes."

24 Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

The father did not ask Jesus boldly (notice the word "if"). I usually ask for my requests boldly, but then doubt creeps in. Like the father of the demon-possessed boy, I need to confess that I also suffer from unbelief. Lord, help me overcome my unbelief!

Then I began to think, "What does God require of us so that He can answer our prayers?" This took me on a quest to look up God's requirement for answered prayer. I was cautioned about applying a formula to God – if I do this, then God will do that. What the Word of God says about our part in answered prayer is instructive and powerful. I encourage you to read these related Bible passages on prayer: 2 Chronicles 7:14, James 5:16b, 1 John 3:22, Hebrews 11:6, Mark 11:25. We play a part in preparing our hearts. The most important aspect about our part in prayer is that we align our hearts with God's heart so that "thy Kingdom come, thy will be done."

I plan to pray for the two Ladder prayer requests listed above, using Bible passages as my guide, making the impossible possible. Jesus says in John 14:14, "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." The Ladder sincerely follows God and seeks to do His will; therefore, I believe our requests are aligned with what He wants, and I believe He will grant these requests. In 1 Corinthians 10:31, Paul says, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." Whatever you do (I believe that includes our prayers) must be for the fruitfulness of God's Kingdom, if we desire The Lord to answer. The two Ladder prayers listed above are for the good of God's kingdom. The Ladder exists to give God all the glory in everything we do at this center. Remember, today's impossible situation may become tomorrow's glorious testimony of making Jesus famous in Shelby and beyond. 🙏

# Champion Spotlight:

## Steve & Marty Burchfield

By Anne Byl

In the Bible, God tells us that children are a blessing and a gift! Their spirits are filled with innocence, joy, and laughter. Jesus actually tells us to be like children and to come to Him full of faith and trust.

Steve and Marty Burchfield love children! They have blessed children in our community for several years by dressing in clown costumes, making balloon animals, and providing candy and Bible story books. This year they have requested a grant from Thrivent, their financial company, on behalf of The Ladder, which will give children and volunteers enrolled at The Ladder a birthday bag that contains a box cake mix, frosting, and other goodies.

Thank you, Steve and Marty, for showering your community with love and birthday blessings!

### **Matthew 18:2-5 NIV**

***<sup>2</sup>He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. <sup>3</sup>And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup>Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>5</sup>And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.***



From left to right: Marty, Anne Byl, Steve, & Cathy Zoulek

## Meet the Family Ministry Coordinator

My name is Beth Pranger. My story began right here in Shelby, as I was born at Shelby Lakeshore Hospital to LeRoy and Shirley Wybenga. I lived in New Era until I married my husband, Tim Pranger, and we moved to Muskegon. In 2000 both Tim and I felt a strong calling from God to move back home to New Era. We built a home just south of New Era and moved back home in 2001 with our two children.

I have always cared deeply for children and families. While in college I studied music and education. When I graduated from college, I took a teaching position with Ravenna Public Schools. I taught in Ravenna for 22 years before God opened up an opportunity to be a principal with Shelby Public Schools in 2011.

After serving as an educator for 30 years, I made the difficult decision to retire at the end of the 2018-2019 school year. Prior to my retirement, I asked God to show me where He would want me to serve next. I had been a prayer partner with The Ladder and had a deep desire to continue to serve the children and families in the area, so I was thrilled when I learned of an opportunity to become a youth mentor at The Ladder.

In the fall of 2019, I began to volunteer on Tuesdays and Thursdays at The Ladder with students that gathered there after school. As the year unfolded, it became apparent there was a great need to not only minister to students but their families as well.

I was humbled this summer when I was asked to join the amazing team at The Ladder. In addition to teaching and mentoring students at The Ladder, I will be intentionally connecting with their families. I am excited to join The Ladder family in striving to fulfill our mission of impacting families by guiding youth to love and follow Jesus: read God's word, live in step with the Holy Spirit, and make disciples. 🙏



### **Our Mission**

The Ladder is dedicated to impacting families by guiding people to love and follow Jesus: read God's word, live in step with the Holy Spirit, and make disciples.

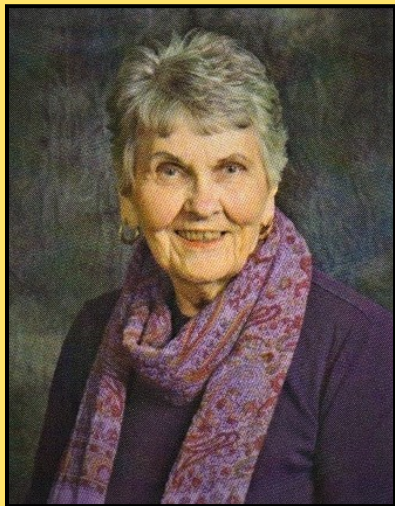
# Celebrating the Life of a Champion:

## Laura Beyer

*April 14, 1937 - October 13, 2020*

By Brian Beckman

We are saddened to report the passing of our dear friend and Ladder champion (volunteer), Laura Beyer. Her friendly smile, cheery hello, and encouraging words that greeted many at The Ladder also served as her trademark at Shelby State Bank for over 30 years. Laura was a steady community member who influenced so many different aspects of Shelby – a true gem.



As one of the first champions at The Ladder when we opened in February 2016, Laura often said she did it for her husband, Bob, because he wanted to spend time here. Bob would arrive halfway through her shift whenever she volunteered. He would ride the exercise bike, walk, drink coffee, and talk with everyone. He was excited that this old, dilapidated building in Shelby had been renovated and turned into a community asset. Over the next couple of months, his health deteriorated, but he would still come to exercise. Before long, Bob went through a difficult stretch with Laura by his side, and he passed away on July 12, 2016.

Even though she had only been volunteering for a few months at the time of Bob's death, Laura just could not bring herself to return to The Ladder. She said she wanted to in her heart, but the grief was too much. The Ladder was a

place that Bob and Laura had enjoyed together.

Several months later, in 2017, Laura started attending a Bible study at The Ladder, led by Pastor Paulette Zoulek. "Laura always came prepared with her scriptures read and notes made," recalls Paulette. "She did not hesitate to share from her life experiences, and her outgoing ways made her a joyful addition to our group."

After a two-year hiatus, Laura returned to volunteer again. In March of 2019, she began to share Jesus' love with everyone who came to The Ladder. She went above and beyond, even with our most difficult friends. She loved them all! With her contagious smile, she reached out to people to make them feel special.

Laura was such a blessing to our staff, other champions, and our members. Ladder staff member Cathy Zoulek considered Laura a good friend. "I miss her, but I feel so blessed to have so many good memories of the times we spent together," said Cathy.

When not at The Ladder volunteering or just coming to spend time, Laura modeled The Ladder's vision and God's command: loving her neighbor. She took people to appointments and served her church, the local hospital, and other organizations. For recreation, she danced, bowled, and played softball. Laura had a passion for antiquing, as well. She had vendor booths at antique malls in Pentwater and Muskegon. She would also gather weekly to play cards with friends. Spending time with her grandchildren and great grandchildren gave her great joy.

Laura's memories will be cherished by her family, neighbors, and friends. The Ladder family is so thankful to have had the opportunity to know and serve with her. She was a blessing to all. 🙏

## Our Friends

By Michelle Deuling

Leon Pickett is one of our newest friends to join us here at The Ladder. Arriving in Oceana County about three months ago, Leon quickly made his way to us for some fun, playing games on the Wii and computer. When asked what he thought about The Ladder so far, he said, "It's awesome!"

Leon is the youngest of three children. He loves country music, bike riding, soccer, skateboarding, basketball, and bowling. He also has a great passion for arts and crafts, especially drawing.

Leon has pitched in to help out at The Ladder and in the community during the pandemic. On Fridays he has helped distribute the seven-day pack-out meals to families at Shelby Middle School.

"I love cleaning!" Leon said, when asked if there was anything he could see himself doing to help at The Ladder. And he is good at it too! He is quick to pick up a cloth and sanitize to make sure the items he has used are ready for the next person who might need them.

Dependable and hard-working are only two of the many great character traits we see in this young man. We can't wait to see what God has next for him in our community! 🙏



### Our Vision

The Ladder is a friendly, intergenerational and ethnically diverse community center aimed at knowing and serving our neighbors and uniting our community around Jesus, so that lives are transformed.

# What's New at

## A Fun, New Way to Play Games

By Cathy Zoulek

As you may know, playing cards and games at The Ladder is not new, but COVID-19 has caused us to rethink how we play them here at The Ladder. Because of the safety concerns we had about sharing items and social distancing during COVID-19, we are now using iPads (and other electronic devices such as smart phones, tablets, and laptops) to play games.

We are so thankful for the kind donation of six iPads from an anonymous donor, two iPads from the Community Foundation for Oceana County's Urgent Needs Fund, and four iPads from Women Who Care. It's wonderful to be able to offer this new, safer way for our members to come together and play the games they've been playing at The Ladder for the last five years.

If you enjoy playing games, you will love this new way to play. Becky Smith, who plays cribbage at The Ladder, said, "If you have played games on your phone, playing cribbage on an iPad will be a piece of cake."



We've had several people who said they weren't comfortable using electronic devices, but once we showed them how easy it was, they quickly changed their minds! "Learning to play [games] on an iPad is not difficult," said Ladder member Paulette Zoulek. "For those who might hesitate, I would encourage you to come and try it. The staff will be glad to help you get started."

If you have your own device and would feel more comfortable using it, bring it in and we will help you get it set up to play games. Please see the chart below for our current game schedule. 📅

### Game Schedule

Pinochle	Tuesdays	9:30am
Cribbage	Wednesdays	10am
*Setback	Weekdays	9am-1pm
**Bingo	Thursdays	10:30am
Euchre	Fridays	9:30am

\*Setback is not yet scheduled, but folks can play Monday thru Friday 9 - 1 if devices are available.

\*\*Bingo is played the old-fashioned way – not on an electronic device.

### Schedule Changes

At the time this newsletter was printed, we have temporarily suspended our game schedule. We are open for take-out meals and exercise. We hope to resume regular activities soon. Please check our website, Facebook page, or call us for schedule updates.

The Gratitude Gathering scheduled for 7pm Tue, Nov. 24 has been canceled.

### 30-Day Prayer Challenge

Call 231-259-0211 or  
email [info@theladdercommunitycenter.com](mailto:info@theladdercommunitycenter.com)  
to register for the  
30 Days of Gratitude Prayer Guide!

- Registration Deadline: Nov. 22 -

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