

# RAILS & RUNGS Newsletter

## PUT ON YOUR BELT

By Brian Beckman

Greetings from The Ladder!

The past couple of months have been both exciting and sad. Nic Jagnow, one of our first youth attending the Ladder five years ago, graduated from high school. As the Ladder staff joined together to plan a graduation celebration, we soon realized that our celebration was also going to be a going-away party.

Nic was set to join the Army National Guard the first week of September, but his start date was moved up to the first week of July. So, our celebration was also a goodbye – or as Nic says, a “See ya later.”

It has been a privilege to walk with Nic on his journey through middle school and high school. The staff and volunteers have encouraged, loved, embraced and adopted Nic and his family into The Ladder family. Nic has been such a great help to The Ladder by assisting in different projects and helping the center look presentable. Besides making the decision to join the military, Nic made a commitment early this spring to believe and follow Jesus.

We wanted to help Nic grow his faith deeper – growing in “knowledge of” and “obedience to” the Word of God. Growth is a priority. Disciples making disciples is a priority. So, I started meeting with Nic a couple times a week. In our first meeting, I asked him this question: “What characteristics or habits will you need in order to come out of the military a stronger, Godly man?”

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L-R: Charles, Brian, Beth, Nic, Ann, Nancy, Holly, Brenda, and Noreen at Nic's going-away party in July.

## WHAT'S NEW CELEBRATE Saturday Worship

By Cathy Zoulek

On June 19, founders David and Kim Beckman's dream to fill The Ladder with songs of worship became a reality. Over the past year, the staff at The Ladder prayed for a way to provide a weekly worship gathering and to get enough volunteers to keep it going. God answered those prayers. With Jared Griffis at the piano and hymnals in people's hands, CELEBRATE began. CELEBRATE, which is derived from one of the Ladder's core values, “We Celebrate,” is an opportunity for people to gather on a regular basis to raise the roof with songs, prayer and scripture to celebrate our great God.

On Saturday, July 17, more than 50 people gathered in Memorial Park as CELEBRATE kicked off with an appreciation picnic to thank Shelby and Oceana County for their support of The Ladder over the past five years. The celebration began with a free hot dog dinner at 5:30, followed by live music from John and Kate Denner. The park was filled with people worshipping God, as John and Kate sang and led hymns and patriotic songs.

We invite everyone to help raise the roof at CELEBRATE on Saturday evenings from 6:30-8pm at The Ladder. Most Saturdays, pre-recorded music is projected with lyrics on the big screen for folks to sing along. Each week features a different style of worship music:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday: Contemporary Music**
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday: Contemporary Music and Hymns (Blended)**
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday: Hymns**
- 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday: Contemporary Music and Hymns (Blended)**
- 5<sup>th</sup> Saturday: No Gathering – Rest in God's goodness**



John and Kate Denner performing in Memorial Park July 17

# YOUTH & FAMILY

## Summer Youth Programs

By Phil Santellan & Beth Pranger

It has been an awesome summer at The Ladder! We have been able to engage about 50 different students during our weekly summer youth program, a character values class, and field trips through Shelby Public Schools.

### ANTI-VIRUS

On Mondays we host Anti-Virus, a character values program focused on ambition, responsibility, hard work, emotions, restraint, common sense and generosity. By teaching these values, we help students stand up against the virus: people behaving in negative ways. Each morning we engage students in learning, and each afternoon we participate in fun activities while reinforcing the character values they have learned. So far, we have ridden horses at Stony Lake Stables, completed the ropes course and zip lining at Grace Adventures, canoed at Happy Mohawk, and visited Silver Lake for a beach day. This program is made possible in partnership with Staircase Youth Services.

### SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAM

It has been a joy to meet several new students during our summer youth program on Thursdays. We offer a fun activity and a favorite youth food each week. Our summer theme comes from I Corinthians 9:24-27. Each week we focus on a different passage of scripture that shares how we are called to run the race to get the prize – the good news of Jesus Christ.

### SHELBY PUBLIC SCHOOLS' SUMMER PROGRAM

We have also had two groups of students from Shelby Public Schools' summer programming visit The Ladder this summer. Students have participated in a variety of fun activities, including card games, Lego building, pool, air hockey, ping pong and foosball. Many of these students had never been in The Ladder. They all had a great time, and we hope to see many of them return for our Thursday afternoon activities.

We celebrate the opportunity to serve students in our community during the summer months and are excited about the work the Lord is doing in their lives.



A few of our Anti-Virus youth enjoying the zip-line and ropes course at Grace Adventures June 28. (L-R: Mackenzie, Ben, Shayden)



Phil building Lego sets with Shelby Public Schools students July 21.



Volunteers and youth played cards and board games and made their own ice cream sundaes on July 1. (L-R: Joe, Brenda, Noreen, Ann, Charles, and Philip)

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### 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.

# CHAMPION SPOTLIGHT

## Ann Campagna

By Anne Byl

Ann grew up in Shelby. After graduating from Shelby High School, Ann worked at Gale's IGA in Hart for 30 years. She later transferred to Shelby Hometown Pharmacy, where she worked for seven years prior to retiring last July. In addition to spending time at The Ladder, Ann enjoys quality time with her family and reading Christian romance and murder mystery novels.

### ANN LOVES THE LADDER AND ALL IT HAS TO OFFER:

#### I LOVE SERVING OTHERS!

Ann has volunteered at The Ladder for more than five years. She has been such a blessing to the youth and staff. Ann loves working with the youth each week. "The Ladder is such a safe and fun place to be," she said. "I love playing games with the kids. I am also very impressed that The Ladder does a Bible devotional and allows the kids to ask questions. I think they are really getting it."

#### I GET TO EXERCISE!

Ann enjoys our walking track. She faithfully walks one mile three times a week. "For five dollars a month, I can use the exercise equipment, track, games and do other activities, so it is well worth the investment in myself to take advantage of all that is available here," said Ann. Ann admitted she isn't sure what she would do without The Ladder. "I probably would be sitting in front of the television doing nothing. I have met some very nice people here. [Ladder member] Julius has been a huge inspiration to keep exercising. If he can do it at his age and limited capabilities, so can I!"

#### I EAT ECONOMICAL AND BALANCED MEALS!

Ann admits her cooking skills have not progressed much over the years. "Even after moving out of my parents' home, they still provided meals for me," she said. When they passed away, Ann's sister Noreen helped her with meals. "I am very thankful for the meals I receive at The Ladder through AgeWell," said Ann. "For a small fee, I get a balanced meal, and I get veggies! At home, I don't usually include many vegetables in my diet."

#### I PARTICIPATE IN THE LADDER'S ACTIVITIES!

Ann's favorite activity is Share Our Stories because she learns new things about our community. "As a child, I was not interested in our community's history," she said. "However, now I find all these topics about our area so interesting, and I am learning a lot."

#### I ENJOY GIVING OF MY FINANCES!

"I decided early on that this place was a Godsend," said Ann. "Because I believe in The Ladder and I want it to succeed, I determined long ago to make a monthly financial commitment."

Thank you, Ann, for your Labors of Love! The Ladder is honored to have you as a mentor, participant, and friend.



# OUR FRIENDS

## Dan & Jean Swindell

By Michelle Deuling

Serving in the medical field much of their lives, Dan and Jean Swindell met while they were both working at Brook Haven Medical Care Facility in Muskegon, Michigan. Dan served in the United States Airforce for 14 years before his 20 years of service at Brook Haven. Jean was an LPN for 23 years before working at Brook Haven.

While their home is located in Hart now, they have lived in several other places, including Fountain, Hesperia, and most recently Ludington. They will celebrate their 20<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on August 4.

Children are very precious to this couple, who have been blessed to have 11 children, 26 grandchildren, 18 great grandchildren, and 6 great-great grandchildren. Jean's desire is that "all of them would be Christians," she said with her beautiful smile.

Dan is an avid ping-pong player and Jean loves to sing. They both have a passion for pinochle and reading and attend Elbridge Community Church. The couple have been part of the Ladder since it opened and often would stop in to see the progress. They were excited for the center to open and really looked forward to having a place to go, especially a Christian organization. Along with ping-pong and pinochle, they help assemble puzzles and attend the Saturday night CELEBRATE worship gatherings. They enjoy country music, but their favorite Christian songs are *How Great Thou Art* and *It is Well with My Soul*.

Frank Jackson State Park in Alabama not only provides a home for them in the winter, but they love to walk in the woods there. They also enjoy Michigan with her beautiful sunsets and the view from their new home the rest of the year.

Jean has collected stamps since she was nine years old and more recently switched from foreign stamps to U.S. stamps only. She also loves sewing quilts, gardening, and playing Scrabble. She has taught Dan to enjoy Scrabble too. She laughed as she told how they play two games every day, and Dan can beat her now.

"We are Blessed," said Dan. Jean quickly followed with, "Oh, yes, the Lord helps us all the time!"



#### 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.

“Put on Your Belt” - Continued from Page 1

Nic said, “I need to read the Bible every day.”

His response launched us into a study of the armor of God. Nic will not only be a soldier for our great country, but most importantly, a warrior for Christ. Therefore, as part of his daily routine, he will need to put on God’s armor.

**Ephesians 6:10-14a (Holman Christian Standard Bible)**

<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by His vast strength. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the tactics<sup>[a]</sup> of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens. <sup>13</sup> This is why you must take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist...

The Roman soldier, in Jesus’ day, understood the importance of his belt. He was only ready for action when he was fitted with his belt, for it held all the pieces of his armor together.

What is the belt that holds a Christian’s armor together? As it states in Ephesians 6, it is the belt of truth. The Word of God and the person of Jesus Christ is truth. John 14:6 states, “Jesus told him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” It is important for us to know the truth so we protect ourselves from our flesh, the new gospels of our culture, and from Satan, the father of lies. Truth grounds us and reminds us of our identity in Christ.

When was the last time you put on the belt of truth? The Bible tells us that we are to put it on daily. Nic’s daily routine of putting on the belt of truth is to be our routine, as well. Here are four steps we can take together with Nic every day:

**PRAY**

Let’s pray this daily prayer:

I put on the belt of truth!

May I stand firm in the truth of Your Word,

so I will not be a victim of my own flesh, the new gospels of our culture or Satan’s lies.

**READ THE BIBLE**

To stand firm in the truth we must read God’s word daily, as Nic said. May we stretch ourselves by reading the Bible for 15 minutes twice a day: when we get up in the morning and before we go to bed. You choose a time and increase it until you are outside your comfort level.

Before you read, pray, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal truth (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit is how Jesus communicates with us. At the end of your reading time, ask the question,

“How will I obey or share my learning with others (John 14:23)?” We obey Jesus by obeying His Spirit.

**MEMORIZE THE BIBLE**

Memorize Bible verses that strengthen your mind and your heart. This will help you stand against the lies of our culture and the lies of the devil. Do an internet search to find verses that help you in areas of need or struggle. Memorize them and speak them aloud when you are tempted. We read in Matthew 4 that Jesus did this very thing. When Satan tempted him in the wilderness, he spoke aloud the Word of God.

I am memorizing a new verse weekly using scripture from a program developed by the Navigators, an international, interdenominational Christian ministry. May I suggest you join me in using the *Topical Memory System—Hide God’s Word in Your Heart* by NavPress. It is a thorough memory system.

**REMINDE YOURSELF OF YOUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST**

I am a person in whom Christ dwells and delights, and I live in the unshakeable kingdom of God!

It is important that we develop new routines to tighten our belt of truth. Jesus’ death on the cross and resurrection defeated the enemy. Jesus has already won the war, making it possible for each one of us to stand firm on the Word of God in our daily battles. May we live victoriously for our God with the belt of truth buckled.



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