

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

By Brian Beckman

Refocus, recalibrate, and restructure are words that come to mind as we move onward from the past year-and-a-half. This process provides an exciting opportunity for all associated with The Ladder. During the past year in praying, reading the Bible, paying attention to God's nudging's, talking with the board and advisors, listening to other spirit-led leaders, and witnessing the Fighting Diamond's movement starting in Oceana County, we feel led to work towards expanding our goals and objectives.

As we face the degradation of American values and pride in our nation's heritage, it is imperative that The Ladder teach people how to be Biblical men and women, warriors for Christ, and American patriots. Over the next year, we will begin with the end in mind, as we develop lessons for our assessment that are 100% truth and 100% love. We are striving to make Jesus famous in Shelby and Oceana County through relational discipleship, so that individuals and families are transformed.

The following three bible passages have given me hope, to get up every morning with excitement to battle for the hearts and minds of our youth and their families.

John 8:31-32 (NKJV)

³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

I share it with today?" It is essential that we coach and model to all—especially our youth—the process of obeying and sharing God's Word daily.

The principles in the Bible give true freedom. Before Jesus entered the world, people were slaves to the Law. Now, all can experience this liberty through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The world says freedom is doing what you want when you want, which is a lie. Freedom is living in a grace-filled relationship with the Father who directs a path of joy and abundance and hope, freeing us from the power of sin and despair and eternal death. We believe the Bible is the inerrant Word of God and is crucial for such a time as this.

Deuteronomy 9:3 (NKJV)

³ Therefore understand today that the LORD your God is He who goes over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has said to you.

Used frequently by pastors and theologians, "abide" means a combination of believing, trusting and obeying. As you read the Word in the morning and evening, ask the Holy Spirit, "How shall I obey Your Word or who shall I

The evil going on right now in our country for all to see will be dealt with severely by His consuming fire. Intercessors throughout the United States pray for these evil individuals to be exposed and given a chance to repent. However, if they do not turn from their wickedness, there will be severe consequences.

God does his part in dealing with evil. The second part of the verse indicates that Christians have a part to play, too. Once the evil is exposed and dealt with in our country, warriors for Christ and American patriots must step forward, so prevailing evil does not plague our nation again. We are to speak truth to counter the lies of the evil one. We are to love those who are struggling—even our enemies—so they may know the truth and freedom found in Christ.

For such a time as this, The Ladder is committed to speaking 100% truth and walking in 100% love. Our staff works with urgency to help our youth grow in becoming men and women of God, so they can step forth to become leaders in the family, church and community.

Psalm 27:13-14 (NIV)

¹³ I remain confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.
¹⁴ Wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the LORD.

The definition of "take heart" is to take control of your mind. We desire Christ to control our minds, not the world. The first verse of the 1925 song written by Katie Wil-

kinson, *May the Mind of Christ My Savior*, reads, "May the mind of Christ our Savior live in me from day to day, by His love and power controlling, all I do and say. May we all "take heart" in such a way."

Every day at The Ladder, the staff and champions have the honor to bring enthusiasm, hope, love and truth to our youth. The leaders want the young men and women who walk through our doors to understand they are wonderfully created for God's purpose. Also, we want to remind them that our little corner of the world is a beautiful picture of God's creation. Our celebration includes seeing the goodness of the Lord in Shelby and Oceana County. Four Saturday nights a month, we gather to sing praises to God for all the ways He is good. Our dream is that the youth would desire to worship with us on Saturday nights.

The freedom in Christ that we all need can and will happen in our little corner of the world with much prayer, obedience and hard work. Our staff is witnessing the Lord move as we roll up our sleeves and battle with Him to help bring revival to Shelby and beyond. Will you join The Ladder staff to battle for the hearts and minds of our youth and their families for such a time as this?

YOUTH & FAMILY

Welcome to The Huddle!

By Beth Pranger

A huddle is defined as the action of a team gathering together—usually in a tight circle—to strategize, motivate or celebrate. Monday through Friday from 3 to 5pm, middle and high school youth “huddle” at The Ladder.

When students enter The Ladder after school, they are welcomed with the love of Jesus and enjoy some downtime playing games and forming positive relationships. At 3:45 p.m., we huddle up and pray before eating a hot snack provided by Shelby Public Schools.

While students are finishing their snack, Coach Love shares the truth from God’s word. After time in God’s Word, students are invited to join in an organized activity. We have seen several new faces this year and continue to trust God to bring even more youth to The Huddle at The Ladder in the months to come.



Top photo: Youths Tim and Jaden listen while Coach Love talks about the power of God’s Word.

Bottom photo: Youths Reid , Tim, Jaden, and Christian participate in a team-building activity.

Meet Coach Love

By Troy Love

A couple of weeks before school started, I was excited about beginning my 31st year as a public school teacher. I believe the saying goes, "We plan and God laughs"! I had never heard of a place called The Ladder, but when I became aware of the opening here I was curious. As I talked with Brian and actually visited The Ladder, God made it abundantly clear that this is where He wanted me! So four days before the first day of school, I retired from my job as an 8th grade U.S. History teacher...and "re-fired" at The Ladder as the Youth and Men's Coach. I am inspired by the Spirit’s leading at The Ladder, and have quickly fallen in love with its staff, volunteers, champions and members. I hope I can bless The Ladder as much as it has already blessed me.

I love Jesus! I made Him my Savior and King when I was 12 years old. He has proven to be so faithful and so good to me. He has blessed me with a wife who is off the charts - Amy and I have been married for 30 years, and we're just getting warmed up! We have two sons, Travis (28) and Isaac (26). They are both strong men of God and are both married to women named Alison. Both of their wives are nurses, they are both beautiful singers, and they both love Jesus like crazy! They've blessed us with three grandchildren, with more on the way.

I believe there is an eagle and a turkey on the inside of every young person. The eagle represents a strong, inspiring bird that soars to greater heights in life. Conversely, the turkey is a near-sighted bird that meanders aimlessly along the ground living a low life. I also believe that the bird that is spoken to in each person will rise to ascendancy. In a world that most often speaks to the turkey, I want to set up after-school activities and summer events that will call out the eagle and provide middle and high schoolers the opportunity to have fun, be challenged, and grow in their relationship with Jesus.

I am also looking forward to coaching men to become men of honor, just as God designed them to be. I have a desire to see God bless the Shelby community, as the hearts of fathers are turned to their children and the hearts of children are turned to their fathers, according to Malachi 4:6.

On September 8, students began to attend our after-school program called The Huddle. If you watch sports, you know that huddles are very important. People who are on the same team gather for a quick meeting, call a play, encourage each other, and then leave the huddle to go run the play. The Huddle is a safe place for young people and our champions (volunteers) to gather from 3 to 5pm every weekday. We have fun, eat, and encourage each other. Most importantly, every day we call a play by sharing truth from the greatest playbook in history—the Bible. These practical lessons equip the kids to break out of The Huddle and be winners in the game of life. These young people are going to be game-changers in their school, their families, and in our community!

Our Mission

The Ladder helps people pursue God by building caring relationships and sharing God’s Truth. The coaches enthusiastically guide adults and youth to love God by following Jesus, living in step with the Holy Spirit, reading God’s Word, loving people, and making disciples.

CHAMPION SPOTLIGHT

3 Easy Ways to Make a Difference by Volunteering

By Anne Byl

PUT A WARM MEAL ON SOMEONE'S TABLE

Many Senior citizens in Oceana County face the threat of hunger, and many live alone facing feelings of loneliness and isolation. By volunteering at The Ladder (even on your lunch break!), you can help seniors in our neighborhood and bring them an extra source of joy.

USE YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

Dedicate some time to organizing office or storage spaces at The Ladder.

PUT ME IN, COACH

If you have a passion for making a difference in the lives of our youth, become a mentor to help kids nurture their skills, build confidence, and find a relationship with God.

Need a Little More Flexibility?

Not everyone has a ton of free time to spare, and that's OK! Here are some other ways to get involved!

FINANCIAL DONATION

Do you feel led to help individuals in our community? The staff at The Ladder is invested in making a difference in our community through creating a safe and inviting place for our youth and young at heart. You can make a difference, too! Consider setting up a monthly donation to support The Ladder over the course of a year.

DONATING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Donations don't have to be strictly financial. You can donate items from our wish list, which is available on our web site: theladdercommunitycenter.com/give, as well as on the insert page of this newsletter.



The Ladder staff, along with champion and financial supporter Sandy Sherwood, thank you for all you do to make The Ladder Community Center a vibrant light in our community!

Celebrating the Life of a Champion: Mary Byl-Rivera May 25, 1946 - August 19, 2021

By Charles Jensen

When The Ladder opened in the spring of 2016, Mary was one of its charter champions. She helped out in the kitchen and worked with the youth. "Mary was so excited when The Ladder opened," said Ladder Director Brian Beckman. She gave above and beyond with her time, treasure, and prayers for The Ladder. "Mary was able to love the most unlovable people who came," Brian said. "It was her mission to love the neighbors who didn't fit."

Mary was a champion at our first DTE Holiday Dinner in December 2016. The night before the dinner, we had some bad weather, resulting in several people staying home. Her attitude was that everyone was there who was supposed to be there.

Mary was also one of The Ladder's prayer partners. After moving to Grand Haven in 2018, she continued receiving our prayer letter. She told us that she really missed her friends here, and she frequently asked how folks were doing.

Mary's generosity touched many lives at The Ladder. One evening, she learned that one of our teen boys had not had supper. She went home and made some sandwiches, which she brought back to The Ladder for him to eat. She would occasionally bring a pan of her delicious sticky buns to The Ladder to share with everyone.

Mary had a way of making everyone feel welcome, both at The Ladder and in her home. Her sparkling eyes and big smile were a welcome embrace. One of my most cherished memories of Mary is the time she invited me to have Thanksgiving dinner with her family. She made me feel like I was part of the Rivera family that day.

About three years ago, Mary was diagnosed with cancer. Through it all, she kept a positive attitude. One of her favorite Bible verses was "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Jeremiah 29:11 (KJV)

In Matthew 18:3, Jesus said, "...unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven," and that's what Mary did, recalls Mary's longtime friend, Roxanne Tabor. "She wasn't childish; she was childlike, and that made her so beautiful," said Roxanne. "One time when I was confused about making a decision, Mary told me, 'Just make a decision and trust.' It was so simple and yet seemed so hard for me, but not for Mary. She was one of the best women I have ever known."



Our Vision

The Ladder is a friendly, intergenerational, and ethnically diverse community center aimed at loving God and knowing and serving neighbors, so that individuals and families are transformed. Together we will make Jesus famous in our community.

COMMUNITY CORNER

2021 Harvest Festival

By Cathy Zoulek

The kids are back to school, the weather is getting cooler, and the days are getting shorter. Fall brings not only change, but also fun events to enjoy with your family and friends. The 2021 Farm to Table Harvest Festival will take place in downtown Shelby on Saturday, October 23 from 12 to 7p.m. Admission is free. The event features a pig roast dinner from 4 to 6p.m. for

only \$5 per person or \$25 per family.

The Harvest Festival will kick off at noon with a performance by the Shelby High School marching band. It will feature a pig roast, music by a local DJ, kids' games, an antique car show, contests, and carnival rides. The Ladder staff will be there offering games for children and teens. The Shelby Area Chamber of Commerce's annual pie auction kicks off at 12:30p.m. Make sure to check out the local art booths and farm market vendors, too.

Tickets for the pig roast can be purchased at the Shelby Township Hall or www.shelbyharvestfestival.com. We hope to see you there!

WHAT'S NEW

Growing in Gratitude Prayer Challenge & Gathering

By Holly Baxter

Do you want to learn how to recognize and express appreciation for all you have in life? The Ladder is offering a 30-day prayer challenge starting Sunday, October 24.

Each day, you will be challenged to grow in gratitude through these 30 devotionals offered by ReviveOurHearts.com. The Ladder will provide a prayer guide and journal so you can record your thoughts or prayers, or simply jot down the things in your life you are thankful for each day.

Call The Ladder (231) 259-0211 or visit our web site (theladdercommunitycenter.com/Devotionals) to register for your free prayer guide. When you register, you will also be given the opportunity to receive a recorded message that offers weekly encouragement during the prayer challenge. Registration deadline is Monday, October 18.

On Monday, November 22 (the last day of the 30-day prayer challenge), The Ladder will host a Gratitude Gathering to show our thankfulness to God for his many blessings. Please join us that evening from 6:30 to 7:30p.m., while we share stories of thanksgiving and sing songs of gratitude!

Mental Health Ministry

By Greg McDonald

Did you know The Ladder offers three mental health support groups? The Family Support Group is for people who have a friend or family member with a mental illness. The Depression and Bipolar Support Group is for people dealing with these disorders. Celebrate Recovery is a 12-step program designed for people who are seeking recovery from any hurt, hang-up, or habit. We are happy to report that God is truly blessing the participants in these groups.

Our numbers have grown since the ministry started. Groups are big enough to facilitate conversation, yet small enough that everyone gets to share in a comfortable atmosphere. Groups will spin off as participant numbers grow. Our goal is to keep the groups small enough to ensure that everyone who wants to share will have the opportunity.

We are seeking facilitators to assist as the ministry grows. All necessary training will be provided. If you are interested, please pray for God's guidance and contact Greg for more information at (231) 259-0211 or greg@theladdercommunitycenter.com.

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The printing of this newsletter was made possible by

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