

## BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

Dear Friends of The Ladder,

Isn't it a great time of the year? The late arrival of fall, with its slow-turning leaves and mild temperatures, has been beautiful. It is such a pleasure to see God's creation in full bloom daily in Oceana County. I am so thankful for the opportunity to live here—yes, even with the snow and all that comes with winter.

One of The Ladder's Core values is "we give thanks." We felt it appropriate to offer a 30-day Gratitude Challenge through Revive Our Hearts ministry. It has opened many people's eyes (including mine) to see how God has truly blessed us in so many ways.

As this year is ending, I ask you to ponder day nine's challenge, titled "Grateful People are Generous People," which focused on 2 Corinthians 9:11.

*"Yes, God will give you much so that you can give away much, and when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will break out into thanksgiving and praise to God for your help." (TLB)*

Why does God give us much?

1. so we can give away much;
2. because giving results in thanksgiving and praise to God.

The Ladder could not exist without people who give away much. Our volunteers and investors give their time, talent, and treasure so we can serve not only the youth but our adults too. Daily we serve meals to about 20 seniors. We have another 25 adults/seniors who attend The Ladder for a variety of activities. All this happens because many have decided to give much because God has given them much. Recently our bilingual staff member has spent hours helping a Spanish-speaking gentleman get his retirement savings money from the now closed Oceana Foods. Our donors have helped fund the salary of this staff member. The list could go on and on.

Time, talent, and treasure should always be given to produce thanksgiving and gratitude to our Father. When we give to others, our expectation should always be that the receiver should be more grateful to God than to us. The true benefactor is God! During our daily prayer time at The Ladder, we give thanks to our wonderful Provider for each one who gives of their time, talent, and treasure. Another way we thank God for all the generous givers is through our weekly Saturday night gathering called "Celebrate—Raising the Roof for our God."

God gives us much so boys, girls, men, and women would benefit, which results in thanksgiving—not to one another, but to God. We are excited to report that more than 50 youth have registered for our youth program, The Huddle; 15-20 youth attend daily. These students have a place to belong and hear the word of God daily. May we point these students' hearts and minds in such a way as to cause thanksgiving to God.

Specifically, The Ladder has been a blessing to a young man who finds himself sitting in the Getty Park dugout when school is not in session. He speaks little English, has a hearing and vision problem and leaves

his home early in the morning all days of the week because of the yelling at his home. He has doubts whether Jesus exists, but he is always thanking the people who serve him at The Ladder. We are hopeful that his gratitude turns to God. This is merely one of the many youths who are encouraged by The Ladder and will eventually see the Lord through those who give generously.

### Would you please do two things for me?

1. Would you prayerfully consider giving much, out of the abundance God has given you? Consider giving your time, talent, and treasure ultimately to the Lord and specifically to The Ladder.
  - Would you help by giving of your **TIME** in a volunteer capacity? Servers, greeters, youth workers, meal deliverers, prayer warriors, and more.
  - Would you use your **TALENT** to help provide fun for our youth and adults? Artists, crafters, holiday decorators, party planners, event coordinators, and people willing to share their hobby with others.
  - Would you help support the center financially by giving of your **TREASURE**? Here are some options to consider:
    - Donate one time, monthly, wish list items, in-kind, or sponsor a newsletter.
    - Ask your friends and family to give a gift to the Ladder for your birthday, Christmas and other special days.
    - You can designate The Ladder in your will/trust or make The Ladder your memorial gift when you or a loved one passes away.
2. Would you please forgive me for being untimely with thank you notes? I personally like to write notes to generous givers both initially and periodically. I fell behind during my stint with Covid and returned dealing with the tyranny of the urgent. As I said earlier in this letter, one of our core values is "We give thanks." I understand my talk and walk are not matching on this, and I am sorry. I am working to catch up and will do better in the future.

Thank you for your love for the Lord and The Ladder. May you and your family have a most blessed Christmas and a very happy New Year. I count it a privilege to call you my friend!

Sincerely,



Brian Beckman, Director

# YOUTH & FAMILY

## Preparing for the Harvest

By Beth Pranger

This is fun! You did it! You're next! You won! If you were near Shelby Pharmacy during the Shelby Harvest Festival Saturday, October 23, you may have heard these phrases. People of all ages enjoyed playing 9-Square-in-the-Air, a game similar to volleyball that is played with nine players each in their own square.

There was no shortage of players. At times we had a line of more than 10 people waiting to join in the fun, from the time the game started until the close of the festival. All day long, God brought to the game and to The Ladder's information table students and adults who had very little knowledge of The Ladder.

Staff and volunteers had so much fun with the young and old. They shared stress balls, brochures, and pencils with information about our after-school youth program, The Huddle. Ladder champions Steve and Marty Burchfield created balloon animals for younger children. We are thankful for their willingness to serve The Ladder and show God's love to our community.

We are excited to see the harvest that God will bring to The Ladder from the Shelby Harvest Festival!



*9-Square-In-the-Air was a blast for both youth and adults at the Shelby Harvest Festival.*

## The Huddle Matters

By Troy Love

Teens today have more options for social entertainment than ever before. When it comes to "fun," the world has a lot more resources than The Ladder does. If students compare The Huddle against dozens of other options, we will lose. We definitely want to have an element of fun in The Huddle, but that's not what will get students to show up. Why has the number of kids grown from two per day in September to 15-19 per day in October? I believe it is because young people want to be a part of something that *matters*. They want to be a part of something that is *real*. They want to be a part of something *eternal*. While the world provides fun, The Huddle provides fulfillment. As the world offers temporary, The Huddle offers eternal. While the world promotes sensual, The Huddle promotes significance. The Huddle may not be the most fun, but it will be a place where teens discover who they are and whose they are.

A huddle is the action of a team gathering together—usually in a tight circle—to strategize, motivate and celebrate. That is basically what we do each day after school from 3 to 5pm.

Here are five reasons The Huddle is important:

### THE HUDDLE IS A SAFE PLACE TO BE

The Huddle fosters trust and accountability. We are all vulnerable to attacks when separated, isolated and disconnected from others. The Huddle volunteer staff, through smiles, words of affirmation, high-fives and prayer, have done an amazing job of building trusting relationships with the students.

### THE HUDDLE PROVIDES A SENSE OF BELONGING

People are honored, celebrated, and respected for the unique gift they bring to the team. We have 6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade boys and girls attending. Some speak fluid English; others don't. Some are athletic; others aren't. But there is a climate of respect and appreciation in The Huddle that almost seems heavenly.

### THE HUDDLE IS PERSONAL

You're not *watching* others huddle... you're *in* The Huddle! It's eye-to-eye and shoulder-to-shoulder, not virtual or digital. The conversations around the tables during our mealtime are rich and entertaining—no phones. It pleases my heart to see highly competitive high school boys passing the basketball to the unskilled younger kids to make sure they are included and a part of the game.

### THE HUDDLE IS WHERE THE PLAY IS CALLED

A practical Bible lesson is taught every day. In other words, we call plays from God's playbook so that students can defeat their opponents (the world, the flesh and the devil) with the truth that leads to victory now and forever.

### THE HUDDLE IS A PLACE OF ENCOURAGEMENT & GROWTH

When we make mistakes or life hits us hard, we regroup, refocus, and then re-fire. A student recently shared with me that there was a lot of fighting and difficult things happening in his home. I said, "Just know that here at The Huddle you are loved and celebrated." He looked at me and said, "I know. That's why I come here!"

The Huddle is growing because it matters. Students are inviting their friends because The Huddle matters. We had 12 kids show up on a day Shelby didn't even have school. Why? Because The Huddle matters. Praise God for how He is working in and through The Huddle to draw young people to Himself!



*Ladder Champion Charles (see article on page 3), along with youths Tim and Jaden, modeling their new haircuts!*

#### 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

## Charles Jensen

By Anne Byl

Charles Jensen is the 10<sup>th</sup> child out of 11 siblings. Charles grew up on a farm in Elbridge Township and graduated from Hart High School in 1971. One of the qualities we admire about Charles is his incredible memory. He frequently tells detailed stories about his childhood. As an adult, Charles had many work opportunities, including a laborer at Michigan Crate and Basket, co-owner of a store in Custer, and a warehouse worker at New Era Canning Company. He retired from NECC in 2007.

In 2016, Charles began volunteering at The Ladder. He is a huge blessing to the staff for many reasons.

He has spent countless hours folding and stuffing envelopes for our prayer team and newsletter (as seen in the photo below). This job can be very time consuming, and the staff is so grateful for his dedication and willingness to take on this responsibility.

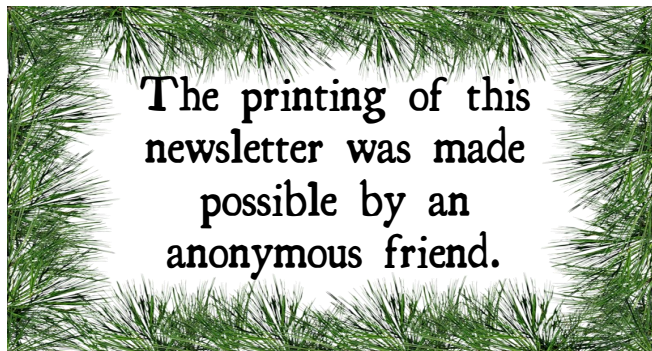
Charles also loves the youth in our community. He has devoted many hours to serving meals and mentoring students. He was even introduced by one of our youth as, "This is Charles. He is like everybody's Grandpa." Charles goes above and beyond the duties confined within The Ladder's youth hours. He writes letters to past youth members serving in our military, attends graduation parties, and prays for our youth.



The Ladder offers snacks and drinks for purchase to both the young at heart and youth. Charles stocks, inventories, and aides in the shopping of supplies and snacks.

Recently he has also added the responsibility of being the supervisor for facility use events. A Ladder staff or volunteer must attend all events held at the Ladder during its off-hours. Charles has supervised many Christmas parties, quinceañeras, graduation open houses, and birthday parties held at the Ladder.

Charles, we are so grateful for all you do for your community at The Ladder! Your enthusiasm, smile, and servant heart bless us. Thank you - you are a true servant!



# OUR FRIENDS

## Katie Theeuwes

By Michelle Deuling

Katie Theeuwes was born in the Netherlands on April 6, 1927. She was number four out of 12 children and, at 94 years old, is currently the eldest living in her family.

With a twinkle in her eye, Katie explained that her dad had sent her to boarding school when she was 15 years old, where there were 80 nuns to help keep her out of trouble. She said her father didn't want her riding the bus to college because she would have gotten into way too much trouble. "He was right!" she laughed.



*Katie made her own wedding gown, even sewing lily of the valley flowers onto the train.*

Katie married Frank Theeuwes in 1952 after knowing him most of her life. They had attended kindergarten together before they were separated. "In the Netherlands, boys and girls don't attend the same school after kindergarten," Katie explained. They were together on and off over the years until they decided in their mid-twenties that "if we were going to get married, we better do it," added Katie.

A few months after their wedding, they ventured to the United States. When asked what brought her to America, Katie replied, "Frank was a mechanic, and he had aunts and uncles that lived in Hart."

One thing that stood out to the young Katie when she arrived in Shelby was the number of different churches. In the Netherlands there was basically just the Catholic church, which is where everyone went. She was also surprised to find that everyone here owned their own car. In the Netherlands, few people had a car. "You can't ride a bike here like in the Netherlands." She laughed as she continued, "Imagine riding a bike from Shelby to Hart."

Soon after arriving in America, Katie and Frank were blessed with a son, Albert, born at Shelby Hospital. Their daughter, Rita, was born two years later. After their children were grown, Katie worked for Powers Clothing Store in Hart as a seamstress for 12 years, putting her boarding school education to good use.

Katie has been coming to The Ladder for a long time. Mayme Wyns shared that she met Katie here at The Ladder. "She walked in with an ad for The Ladder in her hand. She said, 'I want to know what this is all about,'" recalled Mayme with a smile.



"Mayme is my best friend," said Katie, adding that Mayme sometimes helps clean and do laundry, but most importantly, that she makes it possible for Katie to remain in her own home.

Katie enjoys playing Mexican train dominoes at The Ladder twice a week and orders meals from our lunch program. "Brian [Beckman] is a nice person," said Katie, as she told stories of the nice things The Ladder's director has done for her. She laughed as she told how he bought The Ladder a bottle of white vinegar and wrote her name on it, after someone offered her apple cider vinegar for her spinach during lunch at The Ladder. "I don't use brown vinegar!" she spat.

While Katie doesn't hesitate to let you know that she doesn't like rice or bingo, she is grateful for The Ladder and the people she sees here. And in case you wondered, her favorite food is pizza with everything on it! No wonder she stays so young at heart!

### 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.

## Walk This Way!

By Cathy Zoulek

Summer is over and there's a chill in the air! It's time to turn on your furnace, dust off your coats, and bring your walking shoes indoors. Whether you're an advanced walker or a beginner, there is a walking program at The Ladder that will fit your needs.

Walking is one of the easiest ways to stay fit - not only physically, but also mentally. Something as simple as a daily brisk walk can help you live a healthier life. Some of the benefits of walking noted by the Mayo Clinic include:

- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Losing body fat
- Preventing /managing heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, cancer and type 2 diabetes
- Improving cardiovascular fitness
- Strengthening bones and muscles
- Improving muscle endurance
- Increasing energy levels
- Enhancing mood, cognition, memory and sleep
- Improving balance and coordination
- Strengthening immune system
- Reducing stress and tension.

What better reasons do you need to join one of our walking programs? Come every day or just one or two days a week. Our programs are based on a "come when you can" basis. We look forward to seeing you and walking with you!

### OPEN WALKING PROGRAM

#### Indoor walking track:

Walk on your own at your own pace.

Monday - Friday 8-9am and 11am-12pm.

#### Treadmill, stationary bike or elliptical:

Workout while watching your favorite TV program.

Monday - Friday 8am-3pm

### ORGANIZED WALKING PROGRAM

Fitness walking with a group of people using videos featuring Leslie Sansone. All videos are adaptable to each person's physical level. Each video starts with a warmup and ends with a cool down and is based on 4 simple steps: Walking in place, side step, knee lifts, kicks.

Monday, Wednesday, & Thursday 8-8:45am

Monday's video includes a three-mile walk and toning using bands (45 min.)

Wednesday's video includes a two-mile walk and strengthening using weights (30 min.)

Thursday's video is a combination of brisk walking and boosted walking for two miles. (30min.)

## 2022 ADULT (18+) PERSONAL INVESTMENT PRICING OPTIONS

Annual	\$60	<b>Register by 12/30/21, pay only \$50!</b>
Monthly	\$5	<b>Buy anytime during the month</b>
Daily	\$2	<b>Pay in person each time you come</b>
Volunteer	\$0	<b>Actively Committed to Volunteer</b>