



RAILS & RUNGS Newsletter

CELEBRATING GOD

By Brian Beckman

Happy New Year! I trust you have had a great start to 2022. I am grateful to all of you for your generosity and compassion for the people of Shelby and beyond. We could not serve the number of people to the depth that we do without you investing your time, talent and treasure! With that in mind, I want to take time to praise God for His provisions, the people, and the accomplishments during 2021.

Psalm 32:11 (MSG)

Celebrate God.

Sing together—everyone!

All you honest hearts, raise the roof!

Singing Praises for God’s People

- ◆ **WE CELEBRATE OUR PRAYER TEAM**, which consists of more than 25 people who pray regularly for The Ladder. Any success or abundance The Ladder experiences is the result of the Lord and the people who have tirelessly committed to pray for The Ladder. This group is amazing! We are so grateful for their dedication. This is the A team!
- ◆ **WE CELEBRATE OUR MEMBERS**, who have caught the vision of knowing their neighbors and desiring to serve them. They are investing in themselves and in our community. Our members are amazing!
- ◆ **WE CELEBRATE OUR VOLUNTEERS**, who come to invest in themselves, The Ladder members, and the kingdom of God. Modeling servant leadership is necessary for the people of Shelby and Oceana County to experience growth. These volunteers are our essential workers—the best we could hope for!
- ◆ **WE CELEBRATE OUR INVESTORS**, who make donations to The Ladder so generously. We fall on our knees in humble adoration to a great God who has sent these dear people to give. We are grateful for their hard work and their desire to share their wealth with The Ladder. Thank you, Thank you! They are incredible!
- ◆ **WE CELEBRATE OUR STAFF** for their willingness to love God, love others and love life. They have embraced the idea of becoming a relational disciple, one who loves God and others, prays with and for others and shares Biblical truth with others. Our staff is second to none, totally dedicated to the vision and mission.

These people are what make The Ladder a refuge, a place of joy and hope!

Singing Praises for God’s Accomplishments for 2021

Below are our 2021 points of emphasis and how God is fulfilling each one.

BEGIN A WEEKLY WORSHIP NIGHT

We celebrate by singing praises to the Lord on Saturday nights at The Ladder, which began on June 19. Come and join us! As our friend George states, “What better activity could you do on a Saturday night than to praise the Lord?”

CREATE A VISION OF POWER FOR THE LADDER

We celebrate our vision of The Ladder team releasing the power of the Holy Spirit, creating a momentum of its own in Shelby and Oceana County that is beyond comprehension. In our vision, the team collaborates with God, and the Gospel comes to life in our community and beyond.

BE A PEOPLE WHO PURSUE AND SHARE TRUTH

We celebrate that the Ladder is moving forward by pursuing truth and proclaiming 100% truth and 100% love. We worked through many of the present-day ideologies (for example, Critical Race Theory and the social justice movement), to understand that they go against the Bible and distract us from loving God and people.

PRACTICE A SPIRIT OF URGENCY

We celebrate a spirit of urgency for people to love and surrender their lives to Jesus. Our staff has done a great job of loving our members. In 2021 we began praying daily for our members, adults and youth. In a weeks’ time, we cover every student we have been in contact with in the past two years. That is more than 90 youth!

TEACH BOYS TO BECOME GODLY MEN

We celebrate that we’ve begun the process of identifying what it means to be a man. A man loves, prays, coaches and models Biblical truth. We have started the process of teaching boys to be men during The Huddle after school at The Ladder and at a new program called Men of Honor, taught once a week after school at Shelby Middle School. In the future, we will start teaching girls to be Women of God.

ENCOURAGE OUR YOUTH TO LOVE OUR GREAT COUNTRY

We celebrate our great country, the United States of America, its Constitution and the Bill of Rights. We have started teaching a few lessons to help our youth grow to love our country. We desire all to have a genuine, spiritually rooted love for the United States.

YOUTH & FAMILY

Christmas Blessings

By Beth Pranger

We had the joy of welcoming our youth and their families for a Christmas party in December. We began with a delicious meal—prepared by Mary Rose Vanas of Shelby Public Schools—consisting of lasagna, garlic bread, salad and dessert.

Throughout the night, we decorated cookies, made Christmas ornaments, and played games. At the end of the evening, we were able to bless each person who came with a gift. Many thanks to all the volunteers and staff who came and helped with each of the activities, Mary Rose for preparing the great meal, and Steve and Marty Burchfield who applied for and received a grant to purchase all of the gifts that were given to the youth and each of their family members.

Here are a few comments from the families:

“I think this place is so wonderful, and I’m so glad my child has a place to come after school. She loves coming here.”

“This was a huge success.”

“This was fun, and the games made it even more fun!”

We were thankful for the opportunity to gather and get to know our youth and their families during the Christmas season. We look forward to future opportunities to share the love of Jesus with the youth and families of our community.



Steve and Marty, along with the gifts they purchased with the grant.



Paulette making Christmas ornaments with youth and their families.

God Sightings in The Huddle

By Troy Love

In 2 Corinthians 5:12 we are called to live by faith, not by sight. As parents we teach and train our children by faith, and pray that one day we may see the fruit of our labor. The same is true in The Huddle. By faith, seven volunteers and I pour into 10 to 22 middle and high school students on a daily basis. With intention and love, we pray for, celebrate, encourage, high-five, compliment, correct and teach Jesus to every student who walks through the door.

Thank you, Lord, that sometimes You let us see You working through the things we do by faith!

Prayer is important. For months, every day before we eat our snack, I’ve prayed the same prayer. I’ve been hoping that praying before a meal would become a habit of these kids. One day I started to pray, and suddenly an 11-year-old boy, who has a speech impediment, unexpectedly and boldly took over the prayer. “Thank you, Jesus, for this snacky snack. Thank you, Jesus, for having our back. Friends, food, fun – those are things that matter; and you’re servin’ them up here at The Ladder. Thank you in Jesus’ name, Amen!”

Thank you, Lord, for letting us see and hear that these students are listening and getting it!

Another day during our meal, I was sharing that our dear friend Nancy was really struggling with her health. A 12-year-old young man who avoided our daily devotionals at the beginning of the school year spoke up and said, “Why don’t we pray for her?” I stood corrected by this young man, apologized for not praying, and thanked him for reminding me. Then we all prayed for her. Nancy is now healthy and back with us.

Thank you, Lord, that you let us see that these young people are recognizing the importance of prayer!

Recently, during one of our devotion times, we (of course) were talking about Jesus. A young man who had just started attending The Huddle—but never gave any indication he listened to our devotionals—whispered out of the side of his mouth, “I never even knew who Jesus was until I started coming here.”

He didn’t intend for me to hear it, but I did, so I called him out. “We do talk about Jesus a lot at The Huddle,” I said. “What about Jesus has impressed you the most?”

The young man replied, “I’m impressed that Jesus would die for me.”

Wow! All the volunteers and I had to catch our breath when he said this aloud for all to hear.

Thank you, Lord, for letting us see that the Gospel is leaving an impression on kids who seem unimpressed!

Recently, the students in The Huddle enjoyed shopping for and packing shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child to bless four kids in other parts of the world. They are currently memorizing scripture verses to get their name in a drawing to win a great prize that was donated by a Ladder member. We’re praying by faith that the Word would be hidden in their hearts that they might not sin against God. (Psalm 119:11)

On December 23 (our last Huddle before Christmas), as each student walked into The Ladder, the volunteers and I greeted him or her with a song. Imagine your name is Bailey, and as you walk into The Ladder, you hear this: “Joy to Bailey, the Lord is come. Let Bailey receive her King!” Every kid was embarrassed, but oh, so blessed!

We are so thankful for every faith-filled volunteer and thankful to God that He’s allowing us to see Him working. By faith, we believe that all the young people who come to The Huddle will receive their King.

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.

CELEBRATING LIFE

Prayer Warrior Marilyn Brown

March 4, 1929 – December 12, 2021

By Charles Jensen

Marilyn lived in Shelby most of her life. She and her husband Stanley raised five children on a farm west of Shelby. She worked as a registered nurse at the Lakeshore Community Hospital in Shelby, the Oceana County Medical Care Facility in Hart, and later at Dr. Willis Hasty's office in Shelby. She was a longtime member of the Shelby Wesleyan Church, where she taught Sunday School, sang in the choir, and was active in the Women's Missionary Society. Marilyn's son James said, "She made it to church on time every Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night."



James, his sister Linda, and brother Phillip all shared that Marilyn was a wonderful mother. "She was my very best friend," said Linda. Phillip said he had fond memories of his mother helping out on the farm during the cherry harvest.

In her later years, Marilyn always made time for her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

"Grandma prayed for us all," recalled Marilyn's

granddaughter Amy. "She made popcorn balls for all her grandchildren for Christmas." From loving hugs to sitting and talking with them on the front porch swing, Marilyn knew the importance of spending quality time with family.

Marilyn was known to friends and family alike as an encourager and prayer warrior. She was a prayer warrior and regular financial supporter of The Ladder since its inception in 2016. I believe that her prayers for her family and our community will continue to be answered. She left behind a legacy that I pray will be carried on by those who knew her.

OUR FRIENDS

John Fanberg

By Michelle Deuling

John Fanberg has been coming to The Ladder since his wife Patricia died about 4 years ago. His kind smile, gentle voice, and positive attitude are a blessing to us whenever he walks through our doors. John, who will turn 93 this year, is gifted at relating exciting life events, like the time a car ended up on the rooftop while he was teaching in Whitehall. He became a Christian as a child, explaining that from his earliest memories, he recalls his mom reading a book after supper, and then the Bible.

John's family lived in a coal camp in the mountains of West Virginia, until they purchased a home up the mountain three miles from town. Five-year-old John helped put

in the road leading to their home. His job was to light the dynamite fuse and then run fast before it exploded. He had a love for horses and learned to ride backward at age three. He remembered one horse that loved to "look for a steep slope to dump the rider!" He would offer grass to the horse and then

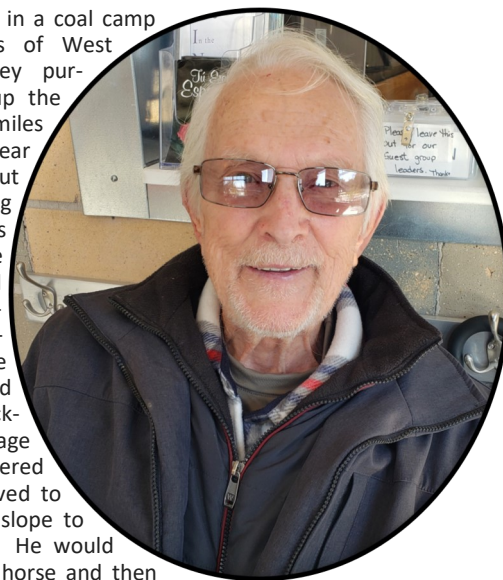
drop it on the ground in front of the animal. When the horse bent down to eat the grass, John would quickly mount it. He also enjoyed hiking through the woods and regularly walked two miles up the mountain for school. John received his first rifle for his sixth birthday and was taught to be responsible for it. That was also when he began saddling up the horse any time his mom needed to go to town.

John still has an old table from his childhood. He said he was about four years old when he missed the piece of wood he was cutting and gashed his toe. His mom bandaged it up but then decided to call the doctor. When the doctor showed up, John was afraid that the man was going to cut off his toe, so he hid under the table.

After graduating from Shelby High School, John earned a degree in Industrial Science and taught Chemistry and Physics in the U.S., England, Mexico and Puerto Rico. In London, John had the opportunity to teach a young lady that was the girlfriend to the son of the Prime Minister. John also told me the story of "almost" meeting John Herbert Dillinger (June 22, 1903 – July 22, 1934). As a young boy, he woke up one night and saw a man with his father. His Dad told him to go back to sleep, which he did. The next day he found out that the man that spent the night was the gangster himself. His dad instructed the children to tell no one about the man being in their home, and he obeyed his father's wishes until he heard his sister tell the tale on a Chicago radio station more than 50 years later.

John's wife of 20 years, Helen Louise, died in 1970. He was married to his second wife, Patricia, for 47 years until 2018, when she too passed away. John and his wives had five children.

When John visits The Ladder on Fridays to listen to the live music from the jam session, he always makes time to talk to me. I look forward to his anecdotes and life lessons. He is such an interesting character, and I love to see his smiling face.



The printing of this newsletter
(Jan. 2022) was made possible by



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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.

YEAR IN REVIEW

2021 Statistics

PARTICIPATION

- 26** Average visits per month by different registered members
- 603** Average total visits per month
- 21** Different groups used The Ladder for community events, with a total of **1,715 people**
- 20** Different groups used The Ladder for private parties, with a total of **683 people**
- 254** Total documented visits by guests
- 6,977** Total visits by registered members

MEALS SERVED

- 6,759** Adult meals (AgeWell/School/Ladder)
- 669** Adult holiday meals (AgeWell/School)
- 941** Youth meals (School/Ladder)
- 1,454** Total USDA food boxes distributed (School)
- 8,369** Total meals served

VOLUNTEER HOURS

- 2,186** Community Volunteer Hours (from 35 volunteers)
- 920** Staff Volunteer Hours (from 2 staff members who donate their time)
- 3,106** Total Volunteer Hours

COMMUNITY CORNER

Christmas Food Giveaway

By Cathy Zoulek

New Hope Church of Shelby hosted the annual Christmas Food Giveaway on Dec. 9 from 11am to 2pm to help community members this holiday season. Food boxes were assembled and packed by members of the New Hope Church, the Shelby High School Boys' Basketball Team, and volunteers from The Ladder. Each box contained canned vegetables, canned fruit, jello, potatoes, gravy, stuffing, brownie mix, biscuits, and a ham. The hams, furnished by the Salvation Army, came from Sanders Meats. Local churches collected and paid for the other food items, and David Beckman donated the boxes.

The Christmas Food Giveaway ministry was started by the Good Samaritans in Hart, who sustained the ministry for many years. In 2012, the Good Samaritans reached out to Love INC because they couldn't continue to sustain the ministry. Love INC organized the event that year, which took place in Hart at the Good Samaritans building. From 2013 to 2018, the New Era Reformed Church led the ministry, using the Shelby Congregational Church (2013-2015) and the New Hope Church (2016-present) as distribution sites. New Hope provided more room for fellowship, prayer, refreshments, packing boxes, and pickup.

The ministry changed leadership to Sharita Prowant of New Hope in 2019, when it looked like the ministry might be in danger of dissolving. Because of COVID restrictions, the 2021 distribution was again done as a drive-thru pickup. Leftover boxes were distributed at the New Hope Food Pantry on Dec. 13.

Please contact a local church for information about donating to the 2022 Christmas Food Giveaway ministry.

WHAT'S NEW

Support Groups Add Fun & Games Night

By Greg McDonald

Family Support Group has moved to Wednesday nights from 6:30 to 8:00pm. Celebrate Recovery remains on Thursday nights from 6:30 to 8:00pm.

We have had one person rededicate his life to the Lord and one person accept Christ as Savior. Groups remain small, allowing participants to share and receive help from each other. The last meeting of the month, for each group, will now be a Fun & Games Night. We will play pool, air hockey, ping pong, board games, etc. This is the perfect night to check us out and meet other group participants in a casual atmosphere.



Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

DONATION OPTIONS:

- One time gift \$ _____
- I/We want to invest monthly:
 - \$100 \$50 \$25 \$10 \$5 \$ _____

Please make checks payable to:
The Ladder Community Center or TLCC