



# RAILS & RUNGS Newsletter

## SHELBY—WHERE THE FINE FRUIT GROWS

By Brian Beckman

Happy Spring! It is so great to see the daffodils in Katie's yard on Pine Street and the beautiful tulips blooming in Memorial Park. Shelby is such a beautiful place, especially in the spring. Many of you may remember the signs many years ago at both ends of the village of Shelby that read: "Shelby—Where the North Begins, and the Fine Fruit Grows." Well, The Ladder wants to grow fruit, as well. No, not cherries, peaches or apples—spiritual fruit. We not only want to grow fruit, but with faith we expect the Holy Spirit to produce fruit.

John 15:7-8

*If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you produce much fruit and prove to be My disciples.*

The Ladder's overall purpose is to make Jesus irresistible to individuals in our community, Oceana County, and especially to the youth. The Ladder expects a great harvest of spiritual fruit, disciples making disciples, and for God to do His work of transforming lives. But we must do our part in loving people by building caring relationships with individuals—especially youth—and sharing Truth from the Bible with our dear friends. Why do I keep saying "especially youth"? The future of our community depends on it!

### Carlos' Story

Let me introduce my friend \*Carlos, a 17-year-old Junior attending Shelby High School. Carlos attends The Ladder daily. He is fun-loving and has a sensitive heart. Jumping in to help others is what Carlos is all about. We have come to respect and appreciate this young man. Over the first few months of him coming to The Ladder, Carlos' story unfolded.

He and his dad moved here from Mexico a few years ago. He lives in an apartment in Shelby with his dad and step-mom. Last fall, Carlos hung out at Getty Park on weekends and days of no school because of his difficult living situation. Carlos misses his mom and says that it is hard to get along with his Dad and his step-mom at times.

This year The Ladder and Shelby Schools have worked together to help meet Carlos' medical and physical needs, as well as mentoring him in his teen day-to-day struggles. We are thankful for \*Juan, an ESL instructional assistant at the school, who has worked closely with The Ladder staff on several situations with Carlos. Juan loves Jesus and has relationships with many Spanish-speaking youth. In fact, in January, Carlos turned from his sin and now desires to follow Jesus, so much so that he wanted to be discipled. Once a week, Juan meets with Carlos and three other students at The Ladder. We are praising God that these discipleship sessions are already producing fruit!

### The fruit The Ladder aims to produce is identified as our Vital Statistics:

- Connecting youth to their families
- Connecting youth to members of the body of Christ
- Turning youth to God and His ways
- Turning men to God and His ways
- Turning women to God and His ways

The Lord is glorified and fruit is produced when The Ladder staff empowers Carlos'

family to be his primary support system. Yes, The Ladder wants to support Carlos, but ultimately, it is important that we assist his family to function Biblically.

### Carlos' Support System

The Lord desires for The Ladder to produce fruit by connecting Carlos to members of the body of Christ. Each family knows that raising a young man or woman is a difficult task and desires other people to assist in the process.

The Ladder staff is called to help turn Carlos to God and His ways, which is already happening. The Ladder will not allow Carlos and others to resign life and become hopeless. The Ladder will battle for our youths' hearts and minds, inspiring them to be the people God has called them to be.

The Ladder is mobilizing a group of men and women willing to walk alongside Carlos and others through the ups and downs of life. The Ladder staff cannot do this task alone. The number of youth in our community makes it impossible.

### The Ladder needs adults to:

- Pray with and for the youth;
- Coach the youth in life and in using the Bible as a textbook for living;
- Share their story and life with the youth;
- Model Christ to the youth.

The youth are our future. Let's roll up our sleeves and get to work. Whether we get on The Ladder or hold The Ladder, we need to help our youth! There is much fruit to be produced, and the future our community depends upon it!

\* This name has been changed to maintain privacy.

# YOUTH & FAMILY

## Coaching Love Takes More Than Coach Love

By Troy Love

Love is a commitment of the will to the true good of the other person. At our Good Friday service, I was reminded of Jesus' love for us. He chose to hang on a cross for the good of some difficult people like us. I'm amazed at the commitment of will that 15 volunteers have made to the true good of some occasionally difficult youth. Most of the time it's pure joy, but there are difficult moments. I know sometimes they don't feel like it, but nevertheless, these volunteers show up to love on kids in an extraordinary way.



*On the back of these T-shirts it says, "The Huddle: Where I Belong." That's not just a slogan, that's reality for our youth and volunteers. Pictured L-R: Isaac, Troy, Nancy, Charles, Charlotte, Mary.*

youth is an incredible expression of love. Some serve one day a week, while others serve two or more. They greet, serve food, write notes, play, and pray with kids. They smile, cheer, high five, and listen. They set up, clean up and speak up for kids. It takes time. T-I-M-E is love.

It is so rewarding to see the love of our volunteers rubbing off onto the Huddle kids. The youth are developing friendships with kids from different grades and neighborhoods, which may not have happened outside of The Ladder. They are developing into a community that enjoys each other, laughs with each other, respects one another, supports each other, and grows together. I believe we're getting a glimpse of the future of our community that is based on love.

First John 3:16 says, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers." The most powerful part of the Huddle is that, every day, we get to share love by sharing Jesus with them. We read God's love letter to us (the Bible) every day. These young people are learning about the One who laid down His life for them. We pray that they will receive that love. The kids also get to see loving adults who choose to lay down their lives to invest in them. They see models of Jesus!

Every child is one loving adult away from being a success story. Would you be willing to be that one? It's going to take a lot more than Coach Love. Please connect with me if you are being led to serve our youth. The future of our community is depending on your love.

On behalf of the young people of The Huddle, thank you!

1 Corinthians 13:4-9 tells us that love is patient, kind, not self-seeking, not easily angered, protects, hopes and perseveres. This is a beautiful description of the volunteers who work with the youth at The Huddle. They create an atmosphere of celebration, respect, and encouragement for every young person who walks through the door of The Ladder—whether it's their first time or 81<sup>st</sup> time attending. Kids like to go where they are celebrated. No wonder we've had more than 100 kids attend throughout the year!

Sometimes we don't realize the relational impact we are having on kids. One young man, who is generally quiet and reserved, has been attending consistently for several months. I asked him, "Which one of the old people here [volunteers] do you feel like you have a good connection with?" He thought for a moment and then replied, "All of them!" None of us would have expected a response like that from him. What a testimony that is to the love and care our volunteers show to the kids. The kids feel connected. That sounds like community!

It's been said that love is spelled T-I-M-E. The fact that our Huddle volunteers are willing to spend their valuable time with



*Ladder volunteers Ann (top) and Paulette teach Hiroshi a new game.*

## After School Bash for Kids & Parents

By Jodi Byers

Summer is just around the bend, and what better way to kick it off than to have a picnic and outdoor activities? The Ladder will be hosting an After School Bash for elementary, middle and high school students and their families on the last day of school, Friday, June 10. When school is dismissed at 11:30am, The Ladder staff will be at Getty Park (across from the high school soccer field) serving FREE hot dog lunches. We will also offer yard games, some organized activities, and crafts for all the families to enjoy.

It is our mission at the Ladder to serve and love people like Jesus, and we are blessed to have the opportunity to do so on the last day of school.

### 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.



# LIVE WELL

## Words of Life

By Sue Beckman

Once upon a time, five frogs were traveling through the woods. Two of the frogs fell into a deep pit. The other frogs saw how deep the pit was and told the two frogs at the bottom that they would never get out. At first, the two frogs at the bottom ignored the other frogs and tried as hard as they could to get out of the pit. But the others kept telling them they were as good as dead.

One of the frogs decided they were right, it was hopeless, and he gave up. He fell down and died. But the frog that was left kept jumping as hard as he could. Finally, the little frog jumped out. The group of frogs went over to him and asked, "Why didn't you listen to us and stop jumping?" The little frog told him he was hard of hearing, and he thought they were cheering for him.

**What kind of encouragement are you giving to others?** Are you cheering them on—giving life and hope—or speaking words of hopelessness and defeat?

**What kind of encouragement are you giving yourself?** Are you listening to naysayers? Is your mindset one of defeat and hopelessness? I call that stinkin' thinkin'. Turn a deaf ear to those thoughts of defeat!

I recently overheard a comment from Ladder member, \*Diane, who participates in our chair exercise classes. It went something like this: "I can't do as much as you. In fact, I am pretty limited. I kept telling myself I couldn't do it. Why even try? But no more! I'm not going to use that as an excuse to do nothing. I am going to figure out what I can do and do that."

Diane is getting stronger day by day! Not only has she chosen to refuse to listen to stinkin' thinkin', but she is also encouraging others to pursue God's best for them. We have all decided that we are better together, so we stick with it and don't give up.

Deuteronomy 30:19

*I have set before you this day blessings and curses, life and death. Choose life so that you may (abundantly) live.*

Choose your thoughts.  
Choose your words.  
Choose life.  
It's a daily choice.

At The Ladder, we desire to walk with one another to pursue God's best for our lives. We really are cheering you on just as you cheer us on. We are better together. We want to encourage you to pursue the abundant life God has for you. Speak words of life and hope to yourself and to one another each day. Blessings await!

\* This name has been changed to maintain privacy.

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# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## Ann Rood

By Cathy Zoulek

Ann started coming to The Ladder three-and-a-half years ago. She said, "I was curious what The Ladder was about, so I popped in one day to check things out." Ann loves to play cards, and it didn't take long for her to join a group of others that also love to play cards. She admits that she likes to play different card games, but Pedro is her favorite. She also enjoys coming on Thursdays to play bingo. Ann said, "The Ladder is a very peaceful place."

Ann learned at a young age about working hard and serving others. She grew up on a farm in New Era. At the age of 7, she began helping out on the farm by picking asparagus. Ann attended Cranston school—a one-room schoolhouse in New Era—until 8<sup>th</sup> grade, New Era High School for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade, and graduated from Muskegon West Michigan Christian High School in 1954. She married Leonard Rood on January 2, 1957, while he was home on leave from the military. After Leonard got out of the military, they settled on a farm in Benona, where they raised two sons. Ann and Leonard were married for 61 years before Leonard died. In the fall of 2018, Ann sold the farm and moved into the Rosewood apartments in Shelby, where she currently resides.

Ann started volunteering at The Ladder about two years ago. It was such a blessing to the staff when Ann volunteered to deliver meals to the residents at Rosewood apartments. Recently Ann has taken on the responsibility of covering the greeter's desk on Mondays during adult hours. She also graciously volunteered to come in at 8am when she heard that we didn't have anyone to cover the early shift. She also offers to step in and cover the desk whenever she sees we don't have someone there.



Whenever Ann sees or hears of a need, she gives selflessly to help fulfill that need. The Ladder is grateful that she takes the opportunity to serve God by serving others and use her gifts, talents, and time to make a difference. Her generous spirit has blessed many, both monetarily and with gifts in kind.

Thank you, Ann, for your generous spirit and labors of love. The Ladder is blessed to have you as a member and volunteer!

### 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.

# WHAT'S NEW AT The LADDER COMMUNITY CENTER

## New Adult Meal Program

By Brian Beckman

The Ladder's desire is to bless the community with a quality food program, so we recently asked our meal participants and Ladder members to complete a survey detailing their individual needs. April 29 was our last day of serving government-funded meals through AgeWell Services of Muskegon. As of May 2, we began working with the Shelby Public Schools to provide meals to the adults in our community. The Ladder purchases each meal from Shelby Public Schools for \$3 and figures an additional \$.50 for packaging and kitchen supplies. This amount does not cover the cost of The Ladder staff.

### 2 Corinthians 9:7

*Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

The Ladder would appreciate all participants to contribute for each meal. We are especially grateful to those who give above and beyond to bless those who cannot pay the full amount.

### Suggested Blessing

**\$5.00 blessing per meal for adults who want to bless others**

**\$3.50 blessing per meal for disabled adults under 59 or seniors over 60 living on a fixed income**

**\$1.00 blessing per meal for people who need more assistance**

Lunch is served at The Ladder every weekday from 11:30am to 12:30pm. Drive-thru pick-up is also available. Meal participants may choose up to two meals per day from the menu, which offers a hot meal, salad, sandwich, or parfait option. To order, please call The Ladder at (231) 259-0211 between 8am and 3pm Monday thru Friday.

## Praise the LORD!

	2-week average of previous food program	1st 2 weeks of new food program (5/2-5/13)
Meals served	323	286
Cost of meals (not including cost of supplies)	NA	\$858
Amount collected	\$214	\$989.25

## OUR FRIENDS Zella Simmons

By Michelle Deuling

If someone were to mention the doilies used as bingo prizes here at The Ladder, you probably know that the special creator of those beautiful prizes is our very own Zella (Jarvias) Simmons.

Zella married her recently deceased husband, John, on January 29, 1956. Together they had four children. John was a retired sheriff from Oceana County. Zella recalled fond memories of the many cats and dogs they had over the years. Toby and Peanut were favorites as was John's tracking dog "Grumpy Jimmy Carter."

Ladder volunteer Ann Rood has been Zella's long-time friend. The two met just a few months after Ann moved back into the area. Their husbands had been friends from childhood, and unbeknownst to each other, their sons were born one week apart—the Simmons here in Michigan and the Roods out in Washington. Both couples named their son Larry.

On March 17, Zella celebrated her 85<sup>th</sup> birthday. She has 4 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren that live from Muskegon to Pentwater.

What a blessing to have family nearby! Growing up on a farm with five siblings, Zella said she did chores like throwing silage down from the silo, but she never milked the cows.



In grade school she enjoyed sports (especially softball), but they didn't offer sports to girls in high school back then, so she chose to spend a lot of her free time roller skating. She also recalled playing Pedro at Grange Hall at the Pedro parties that were held there. It's no wonder she likes to play Pedro here at The Ladder! She also joins in on other Ladder games, such as euchre, pinochle, set back and bingo. She really likes The Ladder for its variety of things to do and the people to do them with.

Zella said when The Ladder first opened, John liked to stop in to chat. Like Zella, John loved to play cards at The Ladder. Sometimes, while John was socializing or playing games, Zella enjoyed working on jigsaw puzzles or walking on The Ladder's walking track. When asked if she had a favorite food, her reply was, "Anything edible!"

We are grateful for the welcoming presence that Zella brings each day to The Ladder. She is cherished by members and staff alike.