



RAILS & RUNGS Newsletter

BORN TO BE FREE

By Brian Beckman

Greetings from Shelby, MI! I am so glad to have had the opportunity to grow up in Shelby and Oceana County and live in this great country, with its roots solid in Judeo-Christian principles. I was reminded of this as our friends from Helsinki, Finland spent the Fourth of July weekend with us. Marja, the wife, said, “The creation of The Ladder would never happen in Finland, because nowhere in the world exists the spirit of giving for the greater purpose like it does in the United States.” The United States was born for giving back what was given to them by God and their forefathers.

Puritan John Winthrop, upon arriving in Boston in 1630, delivered a lay sermon upon the ship *Arbella* called *A Modell of Christian Charity*, proclaiming that “We shall be as a city upon a hill.”¹ The United States has been a great model of Christian charity over the years, sending countless missionaries out to spread the Gospel throughout the world.

That is exactly what the founders of the Ladder want the community center to be: a beacon of light (the light of Christ) and hope to our village and county. I am so thankful to the founders for their vision and generosity of The Ladder and for all of you who have joined in the effort to help make The Ladder run daily. Thank you for having the spirit of giving unto the Lord and not wanting credit and recognition for your gifts. The Ladder could not exist without your quiet, generous support. Stories like the one you’re about to read would not be told if not for your kindness. Lives would not be transformed, if not for your compassion.

Jerry’s Story

²Jerry, a fifth grade boy, started attending The Ladder for lunches and recreation in the summer of 2017. He has come to The Ladder 121 times during the past six years. We have grown to appreciate and respect him. It hasn’t been easy because of negative choices he makes while at The Ladder, but we continue to show that we respect and care about him. We are 100% love, but we also are 100% truth. Yes, we will care for him and love him, but we also will be truthful with him and hold him to rules he signed on to follow. Even when we suspended him for a time, we looked forward to his return. Lo and behold, he keeps coming back.

Jerry had been missing from The Ladder for a couple of months—not by suspension this time, but by choice—and he returned at the end of June. I spent time talking to him upon his return. He said to me, “If you knew what I do out there, [meaning outside The Ladder], why do you keep caring for me and encouraging me?”

I replied, “You are God’s child. He created you. He knows all your flaws, sins, and shame. Jesus loved you so much, He was willing to die on the cross for you, so you could be free from those flaws, sins, and shame. Here at The Ladder, we see you as the man you are to become—the man God created you to be—not as the boy you are presently.”

Jerry tilted his head, looked off into the distance and said, “Ohhhhh.”

Called to Love

At The Ladder, we are in the business of loving people for the long haul. It is what the Bible calls us to do.

Mark 12:31

“The second commandment is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.”

We call it relational discipleship. We have built caring relationships with our members, adults and youth, just like in the story of the young man on the left, but we want to grow in our ability to love our neighbor and have others join us in the journey of excelling in building caring relationships.

Truth in Action

We also speak the truth like we did with Jerry—the truth of one’s actions, the consequences of these actions, and Biblical truth.

We are connected in Christ, so we should speak the truth because we belong to each other. Mark Roberts states in *Daily Reflection by The High Calling*, “The more I experience our unity as members of Christ’s body, the more I will be committed to speaking the truth that is in Jesus, so that you might grow in your faith and so that we might grow up together in the body of Christ.”³

Ephesians 4:25

“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.”

Please join us in the journey of loving neighbors and receiving their love by speaking the truth to them so that they can in turn speak the truth to us. We can grow together, just like we are with Jerry. What an adventure!

¹ <https://www.neh.gov/article/how-america-became-city-upon-hill>

² This name has been changed to maintain privacy.

³ <https://www.theologyofwork.org/the-high-calling/daily-reflection/why-should-we-speak-truth>

YOUTH & FAMILY

Summer Breakout

By Troy Love

During the school year, The Ladder's youth program is called The Huddle. Our summer youth program is called Break Out for a number of reasons:

1. It occurs during summer break.
2. In sports, after you've been in a huddle for a while, you break out of it.
3. This summer we are breaking out of the walls of The Ladder and the usual routine.
4. Our weeks are broken up into **GROOVE**, **GO** and **GROW** days.

GROOVE

ESCAPE TRIPS
TUESDAYS 6/21 - 8/23

We give the youth, along with the adult volunteers, opportunities to experience fun adventures in our community and beyond, which we call Escape Trips: Golfing, horseback riding, canoeing, dune rides, Michigan's Adventure, and more! These are activities our kids may not otherwise experience, and they mark our youth with great memories of growing up in this community, which has so much to offer. These Escape Trips also serve as a tremendous reward for participating in our GO days.



Fun for all ages at Michigan's Adventure: Volunteers Charles and Ann held on tight, while youths Alden and Jaden raised their hands to heaven!

GO

SERVE IN OUR COMMUNITY
THURSDAYS 3-5PM 6/23 - 8/25

In John 13:15, after Jesus had washed His disciples' feet, Jesus said, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." So every Thursday we follow Jesus' example and **GO** out to serve our community in unique ways. It's impressive to see the young people roll up their sleeves and bless our community doing free car washes, sweeping porches and walkways, pulling every weed in downtown Shelby, and even making and serving an appreciation dinner for their parents. Break Out is showing our community God's love in very practical ways.



Our youth washed 22 cars in just one hour... for free. That's a lot of blessed people!

GROW

IN RELATIONSHIP
WITH JESUS & OTHERS
MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY

We are encouraging the youth to live cleaner lives by using **SOAP**.

Scripture
Observation
Application
Prayer

We give students a Bible and have them read a selected passage of scripture. They write down what they learned or observed from the passage and how they will apply that passage to their life. Then they pray and ask God to help them apply it. We emphasize that SOAP only works if it is applied. Young people are developing the habit of reading, listening to, and applying the Word of God on a regular basis. That's a recipe for clean livin'!



Teamwork: Elijah and Max worked together in a competition to build the highest tower.

Picture what our future looks like when our youth fall in love with our community, have a heart to serve our community, and are growing by applying God's Word to their life. It's a beautiful picture, isn't it?

Please pray that the Summer Break Out becomes a break-through for 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.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Meal Program Update

By Michelle Deuling

As you may know from our last newsletter, The Ladder is now providing meals made by the Shelby Public School's Kitchen. The change happened May 1, 2022 and will continue throughout the summer.

"Such great food" and "It's a real meal with real food" are a couple of the comments that we have been hearing a lot since it began. Many expressed their pleasure with the quality of the meals, and it appears the chicken wraps are a big hit with everyone who tasted them! Volunteers serving the food commented on how good the food smelled and often felt compelled to go home and make the meal for their family.

We are thanking God for His blessing on our food program here and for Mary Rose Vanas and her team at Shelby Public Schools.

Number of meals served (May—June)	1,068
Cost of meals (not including cost of supplies or staffing)	\$3,204.00
Amount collected from participants	\$2,962.34
Amount still needed to cover meal cost	\$241.66



Ilene enjoys her lunch at The Ladder: taco salad with carrots, fruit, and juice.

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PRINT

WEB

DESIGN

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Sandy Dean

By Vicki Davey

If the philosophy of "contentment despite the situation" was made visible for all to see, it would look like Sandra Wyns Dean. Jovial and self-deprecating, Sandy takes life as it comes and doesn't get too ruffled.

Born and raised in Shelby, she was in the middle of a family of nine siblings and learned early to work out any struggles so that the fun could continue. Perhaps it was this large family that trained Sandy to be a good listener. Perhaps that's what won the heart of her spouse, Lee.



Married just out of high school, Sandy and Lee have marked 65 years together. When asked about him, she smiles and says, "He does everything well." When I asked what he might say about her, she didn't hesitate to reply, "Oh, something nice." Their union is one of mutual respect and friendship, beyond the enduring love that binds them together.

Sandy's easy-going nature is one of the traits that draws friends to her. It was through her friendship with Bev Riggs that Sandy came to The Ladder to serve as a substitute for another volunteer. This single occasion of stepping up to fill the need led to others, and now Sandy is on the roster as a regular sub whenever the need arises. Her involvement with The Ladder doesn't end there, however. She enjoys participating in the exercise classes and takes great pleasure in the live music Friday mornings by the Jammers. Don't be surprised if you see her dancing to whatever music may be playing at the time. Her zest for life even flows through her feet.

"The Ladder has been really good for Shelby and for me," Sandy says. "It seems particularly good for the youth of the town. They need a place to come where they can feel accepted."

There aren't many things that escape her notice. Sandy's gifts of observation and listening function as a conduit for God's love to be made visible. God's message of love is so big, yet so gentle, that it can flow through us like a breeze. Sandy is decidedly that breath of fresh air.

Although content in almost every situation, there is one thing she cannot live without: chocolate! And who can argue with that?

Our Vision

The Ladder is a friendly, intergenerational, and ethnically unified 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.

OUR FRIENDS

Ron Liebhaber

By Vicki Davey

In the days when life felt free and the ticket to the next town rested wholly on your thumb in the air, Ron Liebhaber tasted adventure and gained wisdom during one amazing cross-country trip. That experience, along with many others, have helped to shape the character of the man we see today.

Raised in rural Wisconsin near a railroad bridge that crosses a mile-wide river, Ron grew up in a time when country kids made their own fun and your best pals were often your own brothers and sisters. Chance took him to Muskegon as a young adult, and chance led him down a path that would introduce him to his future wife, the friend of a friend, during an impromptu stop-over in Cleveland. Sometimes these things can't be planned or predicted. I like to believe that God presents the opportunity, and then waits to see what we will make of it.

A flexible and hardworking fellow, Ron followed various job opportunities as they presented themselves over the years. These decisions would place him in 50 different houses or apartments within 16 different cities or towns. He took pride in his painting business, where he was able to team up with his brother. Together they breathed fresh life into many tired-looking buildings.

Like the buildings he painted, life's journeys have created a sense of renewal in Ron. Having lost both his son and wife in recent years, he doesn't dwell on the difficult or unhappy things, but looks to what he can do now to keep busy or serve others. His keen mind finds pleasure in strategy games like Scrabble or Bridge. In fact, it was seeking the company of other card players that brought him to The Ladder several years ago on the advice of a friend. Since then, he has made friends of Ladder regulars and keeps his venerable pool skills sharp by playing against The Ladder's Youth and Men's Coach, Troy, whom he considers a worthy opponent.

Ron Liebhaber is a gentle soul and a real pleasure to know. You'll be giving yourself a gift when you meet and get to know him better.



LIVE WELL

Pursuing God's best in mind, body, & spirit

Functional Fitness

By Sue Beckman

Rising from a chair or toilet, climbing stairs, and better balance all require hip and leg strength. Pulling items off a shelf, carrying a grandchild, and hauling groceries require upper body strength and flexibility.

Don't let growing older keep you from daily activities or enjoying activities with family and friends. The Ladder's senior exercise classes focus on FUNCTIONAL FITNESS—exercises that keep us fit for daily functions.

Unsteadiness, weakness, and disease do not need to be an accepted part of aging. Movement not only strengthens the body, it strengthens the mind and spirit. When we gather and exercise together, we receive great benefits to our soul. We are better together. God designed us that way!

It doesn't matter where you've been. What matters is what you choose to do with TODAY.

Deuteronomy 30:19

"TODAY, I have set before you blessings and curses, life and death. Now, CHOOSE LIFE."

TODAY, CHOOSE LIFE! Past attempts don't need to limit your choices for today. Failure isn't falling down, it's staying down. Today is a new day. CHOOSE LIFE.

At the Ladder, we are committed to helping you live the abundant life God has for you. We offer the following classes so that we may grow stronger physically, mentally, and spiritually... together.

COME ALIVE @ 9:45

Thursdays

9:45-10:30am

This three-part routine (warm-up, strength, and stretch) is great for any fitness level & can be done standing or sitting.

MIDDAY MOVEMENT

Tuesdays

1-1:45pm

This gentle chair video workout strengthens muscles, improves balance, and increases range of motion. It is great for seniors and those just beginning to exercise. It can be done standing or sitting.

FITNESS WALKING

Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays

8-8:45am

This video workout is based on 4 simple steps: walk in place, side step, knee lifts, & kicks. This workout is adaptable to each person's physical level.