

LIVE WELL
Pursuing God's best in mind, body, & spirit
Introducing Kids Hope



Please Pray...

- ◆ That mentors, called by God, would rise up and say, "I'm in! I can give one hour to make a difference." Mentors aren't simply *wanted*, they are *needed*.
- ◆ That God would raise up prayer warriors to pray over these mentoring relationships. Imagine the impact of praying weekly over one child and their family.
- ◆ That God would provide the financial resources for training, background checks, and supplies. Your investment allows us to serve more kids!

If the Lord is nudging you to respond, please contact Sue Beckman:
sue@theladdercommunitycenter.com

or
call The Ladder:
(231) 259-0211

Scan the QR code
for more info!



By Sue Beckman

In 1995, Kids Hope began in Zeeland, Michigan as a way to engage the church to walk alongside kids in their community. It's being the hands and feet of Jesus in our schools. A school principal commented, "Many kids are just one adult away from being successful."

Consider this story from Kids Hope mentor, Sandy, who gives one hour of one-on-one attention each week to love a child, to speak her name often and with delight, and to believe in her.

"I can't read! You know that, Miss Sandy," my first grade friend shared with me. "I know you can do it—I believe in you. Let's do it together," I replied.

That was pretty typical for our conversations those first few weeks. Continually encouraging my new friend that I believed in her, and if we worked together, she could get better at reading! So, we started each mentoring hour with a story. At first, I read a word, then she read a word. As she got better, I read a line, and then she read a line. One day, I suggested that she read a whole page.

"You can do it! I know you can! I encouraged her. But again she said, "I can't read! You know that, Miss Sandy." I pushed back and reminded her of all the progress she'd made! "You can do it. I know you can!" I repeated.

So, she began. She read the first word, then the second and finished a sentence, then a second sentence, and then a third. She finished the whole page, completely on her own! She looked up, her face full of shock, and asked quietly, "Miss Sandy, can I read?" Teary-eyed, I looked back at her and gave her a resounding, "Yes! Yes, you can read!"

We've been together two years now, and I can't wait to see her thrive in third grade this year. Is reading now her favorite part of school? No, not yet. She loves recess, lunch, art, and music! But for the last two years, every time I ask her what her favorite part of the week is, her answer is always the same: "Wednesdays, because that's when you come to spend time with me. That's my favorite part of the week."

Wednesdays are my favorite part of the week, too.

Kids Hope is now in more than 40 states across the U.S. This past summer, we approached Kids Hope to ask whether they would consider The Ladder—although not a church—developing a Kids Hope partnership with our local elementary school. And guess what? Kids Hope had been praying about that very thing—expanding partnerships to include local Christian non-profits. After dialogue with Shelby superintendent, Mark Olmstead, and Thomas Read Elementary principal, Kara Vanderweele, a "pilot" partnership was born! We are privileged and excited that members from The Ladder have the opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus in our public schools: one adult partnered with one child, one hour, one day a week—to make a difference in the life of a child.





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God Sightings at the Harvest Festival

By Jodi Byers

This year's Shelby Harvest Festival started with a .5k & 5k Fun Run/Walk fundraiser for The Ladder. The heart-beat of this event was intergenerational engagement. The goal was to connect the generations in a fun environment, so we offered a discount to participants who had more than one generation on their team. For this first annual event, 67 participants brought enthusiasm, encouragement, and joy.

During the races, we witnessed inspiring moments. We saw a grandpa and grandson running together. We had participants over the age of 80 who not only completed the race, but had great energy to spare. We had five ladies do a chorus line at the end of the .5k. Players on the Shelby football team cheered for people in our community (and especially their coach). A Ladder young lady participated in the race with women from two different generations. We also had a Ladder young man participate with his dad. Entire families participated together (three generations), and we even witnessed our first-place male winner being cheered on by his dad and family. These are just a few examples of how these two race events brought generations together and created a beautiful picture of unity.

After the races, our Ladder staff and volunteers headed to downtown Shelby for the Harvest Festival event. The two main Ladder activities were 9 Square in the Air (a fun game for kids and adults alike) and balloon animals for children. This intentional community event provided opportunities for us to talk with past Ladder youth, engage with new audiences that had never experienced The Ladder firsthand, and also promote HERO, a movement that will change men's lives and the trajectory of their families' future.

The day was filled with God sightings, and we were grateful to be able to bring the young and young-at-heart together, connecting the generations, and be a light for Jesus in the Shelby community.

Pictured right: Brandon DeRoo made the 5k look like a walk in the park as he carried his kids, Rudy and Brooklyn, across the finish line, while their friend Callie ran beside them.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT Paulette Zoulek

By Vicki Davey

Paulette Zoulek is a woman who leans in. Ready with a smile and eager to help, she doesn't shrink back if there's a chance that she can make a difference. In both large and small ways, her impact has had a ripple effect that is felt deeply by those around her.

Paulette was born in Muskegon to a young and inexperienced mom. Several other siblings followed in short succession. Her mother, feeling overwhelmed, had the wisdom to send Paulette to live with her grandparents in Hart at the age of six rather than for her to continue living in what was a fairly chaotic household. This is just one example of how God has guided and directed Paulette's life to produce the woman of God she is today.

During her day-to-day life with her grandparents, Paulette began learning about Jesus through the next-door neighbors. She began going to church with them, soon finding the hope and stability that God offered to be just the right fit. Active in the church from an early age, Paulette even became an ordained minister, traveling to several different states in order to take the necessary classes to achieve this goal. She uses these skills to bring Bible study classes to the young-at-heart at both The Ladder and the Oceana Council on Aging in Hart. One Saturday per month, she leads Celebrate (The Ladder's weekly worship gathering), combining scripture, prayer, and music into a praiseworthy offering to

the LORD.

Paulette's joy is found in fellowship with other people, particularly the youth of the community. One of the many hats she has worn is as an instructional aide at the Shelby Middle School. There she took on the challenge of teaching English to the Spanish-speaking youths. There was no ready-made curriculum for this class, so Paulette helped to develop one, using the Spanish language textbook in reverse translation! Another way she serves God and her community is by working with—and reinvigorating—the local Right to Life group. She cares deeply about the lives of young people from their very first days. You might think that this life is full enough for just one person, but Paulette went back to school at age 40 to become a nurse. Over the years, she has worked at Shelby Hospital, Muskegon General, and Mercy in Ludington.

Paulette is married to Tony Zoulek, and together they have four children in a blended family of his and hers. They are the happy grandparents of four and great-grandparents of two. They recently celebrated 40 years of marriage on September 11.

Knowing Paulette will enrich your life. She is always ready with a listening ear and wise counsel for those who choose to lean toward her in return.

"Youth & Family Life Coach" Continued from Page 3

A little over eight years ago, I moved to Michigan, a couple hours north of Shelby. Once again, I began to study. This time my concentration was on Pastoral Ministry and Biblical Studies. It was important to me to combine what I had previously studied with my strong Christian beliefs. I wasn't sure where this was going to lead me, yet I knew I needed to trust the Lord.

One day, as I was driving home from Jackson, I got lost. As I drove through the village of Shelby, I remember feeling a profound peace within my soul. I still don't know how I ended up on Oceana Drive; however, I know now that I wasn't lost at all. I was exactly where God wanted me to be. Shortly after this divine appointment, Shelby became my home.

My husband Phillip and I have five adult children and nine grandchildren between the both of us. A couple of our grand-blessings live close by, so we get to spend lots of time with them. We are blessed!

I love Jesus Christ, and I love people. In May of 2022, I began volunteering at The Ladder in the kitchen and with the youth. I am excited to be a part of the great things being done at The Ladder for God's kingdom. It is important to me to develop relationships with the youth and families. It has always been my hope to make a positive impact on young lives, communities, and society by coming alongside children, adolescents, parents, and families as they walk through the journey of life. I have no doubt that God has blessed me so that I may bless others—whether it's eagerly guiding people to know, love, and follow Jesus, or humbly standing in the gap for them as they figure things out.