

## THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL

By Brian Beckman

I am thankful for all of you—for praying, for giving, and for volunteering. We do not take your hard work, past or present, for granted; you all are amazing. Thank you for joining The Ladder on this journey with God. Your investment is wanted and certainly needed. We cannot do this work without your help.

As we spend time with the youth and the young-at-heart of our community, we are confronted with needs: physical needs, the need for love and belonging, spiritual needs, the need to make a contribution, to have fun and to experience freedom. We deal with real problems that are often messy and difficult to solve. We must remind ourselves daily that God is in control; otherwise, we would become overwhelmed.

Several past Ladder members, whom are now in high school, are involved in drugs. Young men, (some being Ladder youth) are in desperate need of a mentor. Fathers of our youth are hungry for someone to walk alongside them, as they desire to be a good dad. A family of seven, three of whom attend the Ladder, had a house fire and have been displaced. A sixth grade girl's family didn't have money for her to play rec basketball. Elementary students at Thomas Read need mentors. Some of our adults do not have the money to cover the cost of daily meals. We have youth who bully and youth who get bullied. Boys need to learn how to be a man, and young girls need to learn how to be a lady.

As you can see, *the needs are great*. As members of this community (or past members of this community), we need everyone—including you—to roll up your sleeves, so we can proclaim *"but the workers are many!"* We pray believing that this will happen—that God will provide more prayer warriors, more volunteers and more money. We celebrate God, our Provider.

### The Prodigal Sons Return

This week, I saw two old friends—youth who have been missing in action at The Ladder since June 2019. Two brothers, \*Archie and \*Brantley, who are now in high school, found their way back to The Ladder. The staff who knew them three years ago felt a similar joy as did the father of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32. The staff who were present just barely restrained themselves from running up and

giving them a great big hug. The brothers were not only loved by the staff and volunteers in our afterschool program, but the staff invested in their family, too. As young middle school boys, they both were "wired." Archie had been more mischievous than Brantley, but both bounced from one end of the center to the other. To see these two young men respectful and polite is beyond comprehension.

Now their two younger brothers, \*Jason and \*Dan, have reached the age to attend. One thing we have noticed: Brantley is very attentive during the Bible lesson and has even given his younger brother Dan "the look" and a gesture to stop being squirrely.

Brantley told me that he went to church, so I asked him why he went to church. He replied, "I go to church because I think people who go to church are more respectful, and they go to heaven. When I have kids, I want to take them to church. My girlfriend and I read the Bible every day. Three days ago, she shared with me how to be saved, and I prayed to believe in Jesus. I want to go to heaven."

It is exciting to witness the transformation in Brantley, who has turned to God and His ways. And I can't help but believe that the 65 times Brantley attended The Ladder and heard the message of Christ helped him on his journey. God's word does not return void.

This story shows how the staff and volunteers' love, perseverance and commitment to coaching God's truth in the midst of the mess eventually pay dividends for families, our community and for God. It has taken many people involved to come alongside just this one family. We desire to multiply our efforts. This is why we need your involvement.

### A Community for Christ

I am asking for your help. The people of Shelby are near and dear to my heart and The Ladder's heart, and winning souls is near and dear to God's heart, that no one may perish. We have a vision of making Jesus famous in Shelby. We believe that Jesus is the answer for turning this community toward excellence and abundance. We have been praying for a revival in the hearts and minds of every citizen in this place!

I ask you to prayerfully consider joining us and helping us find others to join us in the following four areas:

#### Pray

God continues to show his faithfulness to The Ladder. Please consider joining our prayer team.

#### Volunteer

Please think about becoming a volunteer for The Ladder by investing in the lives of others.

#### Donate Money

The Ladder needs funds to sustain and advance. Would you consider giving money to the following Ladder programs:

- HERO (see article on Page 2 of this newsletter)
- Kids Hope (see article on Page 1b of the insert)
- Adult Meal Program

#### Give Supplies and Services

Would you consider giving goods and services from our wish list? You can view our current wish list on our website:

[www.theladdercommunitycenter.com/wish-list](http://www.theladdercommunitycenter.com/wish-list).

God is working, transforming adults and youth at The Ladder. You all have a unique contribution to make in the Kingdom of God. Thank you for praying about your involvement. If you are called to make an impact in God's work here, we give all praise to God. It is about building the Kingdom.

May you and your family have a Blessed Thanksgiving and a Merry Christmas.

#### WHAT IS YOUR DESTINATION?

I have a question for you to ponder as we celebrate Brantley's decision to trust Christ. Do you have that assurance like Brantley of knowing that you will go to heaven? This is our top priority here at The Ladder. Heaven is a place of reunions for those who trust Jesus. We desire all our friends and neighbors to be reunited in Heaven and experience eternal rest and peace. If you want to talk with someone about this, please call The Ladder: (231) 259-0211.

*\*This name has been changed to maintain privacy.*



# YOUTH &

## HERO a Smashing Success

By Troy Love

HERO engines have officially started! On Saturday, October 8, men 12 years and older gathered at The Ladder for an event called "Gentlemen...Start Your Engines!" We had an electric atmosphere at our action-packed day, with a crowd of 42 men and 20 volunteers.

Throughout the day, the men enjoyed eating, competing, and creating. We offered 12 different activities, all revolving around the theme of car racing or building, such as remote-control racing, trivia, relays, and crash test cars. Each activity highlighted a particular aspect of manhood. To keep their engines revved all day, the men refueled with two amazing meals catered by Mac's Meats and Dave's Kountry Katering.

Interspersed throughout the activities were Pit Stops, where men spent time discussing questions such as, "How do you want to finish as a man?" and "What do you need to start doing in order to become the man you want to be?" It was powerful to see men relating to each other in meaningful conversations. In fact, most of the time, it was difficult to get the guys to move on to the next activity because they were so engaged in their discussions!

The 20 volunteers worked diligently, efficiently, and creatively to set up and execute the activities and meals, creating a setting that brought relaxation, fun, and honor to every man who attended. By the men's own words, I know the event was a smashing success! One father said, "The thing I enjoyed most today was seeing my son happy." Several men, young and old, commented on how much they enjoyed the Pit Stop discussions. One man stated, "This was a good way to meet new people and relate with other men from the community."

At the end of the day, after the second HERO feast, the men were given a HERO shirt, a backpack full of cool HERO accessories for their cars, and prizes. Finally, each man walked through a tunnel of volunteers, who waved race flags, cheered, and high-fived them as they left the building. Men were honored and celebrated in a way that moved several of them to the point of tears. They'll never forget their day!

The purpose of HERO is to intentionally connect men of all ages for journeying together in the ways of "manhood God's way." This kickoff event was designed to spark men to attend Tuesday night Pit Stops, where men meet to have fun, connect, discuss and encourage each other to be what men were designed to be: a HERO! We are praising God that men have been meeting and will continue to meet at The Ladder on Tuesday evenings through November from 6:30-7:30. Any man 12 years or older is welcome to join us.

Stay tuned for future HERO events!



Top photo: (L-R) Volunteers Don, Ryan, Brock, and Rich counted laps for the RC cars.

Middle photo: Team Brickyard took the checkered flag for the day. (L-R) Dylan, Ian, and José.

Bottom photo: There is a ton of influence in this picture. These 42 men are where the HERO culture in our community begins!

### 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.

# & FAMILY



## Fired Up for a New Season

By Troy Love

When a new sports season begins, coaches always have new faces appear in their huddle. The same is true with a new season at The Ladder. Two months into the new school year, we have a lot of returners, and we have many new faces in The Huddle. I am so excited about the chemistry, enthusiasm, and growth of our team.

In talking to the newcomers, all of them stated they enjoy the people at The Ladder. Here are three quotes from three first-year guys:

"I've made a new friend that is three grades older than me."

"The people here are nice."

"The staff here makes sure everybody's having a good time."

It does my heart good to see the older high school students welcome newcomers and make sure they feel included and important. While students like the people, games, and warm food, it's most rewarding to see how excited they get about the Bible lessons. When I say, "We're going to huddle up and get into the Word," one eighth grade boy always responds with a "Yesssss!" I pray that all of us would respond like that to God's Word.

We recently presented a sixth grade girl with her very own Bible. She read it for a while, and then at our mealtime she asked if she could read it aloud. She stood up and read Mark 14:37-38 in front of 15 others in the café. After she read it, I was able to turn it into a lesson

about how Jesus is still wanting his disciples to watch and pray. It was awesome!

Another seventh grade young man was inspired by the lesson of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who were thrown into a fiery furnace because they refused to bow to the idol that Nebuchadnezzar had built. He said, "It showed me that I can trust God to save me when things get hot."

Thank you, LORD, for putting a desire for Your Word into the next generation. In the season ahead, may they be a generation that watches, prays, and trusts you when they face their own fiery trials.

## EMBARKING ON A NEW JOURNEY



Mechele (left) and Beth (right)

It is with mixed emotions that I resign my position at The Ladder as the Youth & Family Coach. This summer I stepped back from my Ladder responsibilities to help my family with the care of my granddaughter. During the course of the summer, I heard repeated reports from young families about how difficult it is to find quality affordable care for their little ones in this community. It has been a privilege and joy to have been able to provide this care for our precious granddaughter. We are excitedly awaiting the birth of two additional grandchildren this spring, one here and one in Grand Rapids.

In addition to caring for our granddaughter, I have continued to work part time for Shelby Public Schools in a variety of roles. It is a blessing to serve as a support to the administrative team and staff at Shelby! One of my major responsibilities at Shelby is to coordinate State and Federal funding. The tasks associated with this role have increased greatly in the past few years.

Even though I am stepping out of my position at The Ladder, I intend to fill in when needed. I am grateful and blessed to have worked with the staff at The Ladder and will continue to cheerlead The Ladder and pray for our community. God is doing great things through each of them and through The Ladder!

Thank you for being a blessing to me and my family!

*Beth Pranger*

## MEET OUR NEW YOUTH & FAMILY LIFE COACH

Hello! My name is Mechele Martinez Gonzales. I am originally from the southside of Chicago, near Comiskey Park (now called Guaranteed Rate Field). I grew up in a close-knit Chicano family. My neighborhood friends were also considered family. Growing up in such a large city prepared me well for many things I could encounter later in life. In my early adulthood, I moved to Minnesota, where I achieved a Bachelor of Business Administration and Leadership degree.

In early 2007, I received Jesus Christ into my heart as my Lord and Savior. I halfheartedly began walking with Jesus. Deep within me, I knew God was up to something bigger than I could imagine. He was constantly pursuing all of me, not just the pieces I was willing to surrender. The following year, I became seriously ill due to a car accident and was left with no other option but to call out to Christ Jesus. I fully surrendered to Him, and I am so grateful for His gift of grace.

After working in business and human resources for 14 years, I pursued and acquired a Master's Degree of Psychology, Juvenile Justice. I had not yet fully recovered from my brain injury; however, I knew God was working toward healing me completely.

*Continued on Insert Page 2*

### 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

## Ilene Schmieding

By Vicki Davey

With a soft-spoken manner and a mischievous smile, Ilene Schmieding is proof that good things come in small packages. A regular visitor and friend of The Ladder, Ilene often edges out the competition in games of Bingo or Pedro. Spending time with other people is one of the things that makes her happy, as does the women's Bible study The Ladder offers.

Born in Mishawaka, IN, Ilene came with her family to Oceana County when she was about 10 years old. Her father had been injured on the job, so the family came to a place where they knew no one, seeking a life that would give him more ease. It wasn't so easy, though, for 10-year-old Ilene to leave her friends behind and start over in a new school in a new place. However, she soon became involved in church activities. In fact, it was at a church Halloween party that she met her future husband, Richard Schmieding. Although she was just a teenager at the time, it wasn't long before she knew that he was the right one for her. They married in 1959 in a small church wedding when she was 18.

Schmieding Sawmill was the family's life-work, Richard being the owner/operator. Ilene didn't sit idly by. In addition to raising five children, she worked just as hard as the men, pulling milled boards down the line to be stacked for use; skidding the logs for milling; and keeping the books of the business. Wintertime offered no break, since that's when the farmers needed their orders for fruit boxes fulfilled. The family home, which sat adjacent to the sawmill, was where Ilene lived from 1962 until recently, when she moved next door. This new place was the former home of her in-laws, and now her grandchildren live in the home she vacated. It truly is a family compound, with almost all the children and their families living nearby. Her son now owns and runs the mill in place of Richard, who passed in 2013.

Ilene's hard work ethic only slowed down after 2020, when Covid-19 sent her to the hospital for three weeks. Since that time, she has redirected her efforts to attending church gatherings throughout the week. She lived with just her little Pomeranian, Missy, for company until three weeks ago, when she was joined by a roommate, Lori. Ilene recently met Lori at a church function and offered her an opportunity to move in and be a helper. Ten hens have since moved onto the property, as well. Life may be slowing down, but it never lacks for interest (or eggs) in the life of this sweet, friendly lady.



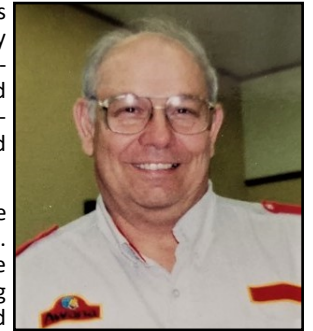
# CELEBRATING LIFE

## Bob Crosby July 23, 1942—September 17, 2022

By Michelle Deuling

Bob came to The Ladder shortly after the passing of his precious wife, Marcia, in 2016. The Ladder had recently opened and Bob became a daily attender. He participated in different activities every day. His favorite card game was Pinochle. Bob truly enjoyed coloring and doing puzzles with the special needs adults, and they loved him.

We appreciated Bob's warm smile and the way he reached out to everyone that came through the doors. He was willing to give rides and share his life with all. He ate many meals at The Ladder and helped with making visitors feel welcomed and comfortable. We thank God for the life of Bob Crosby. He will be greatly missed.

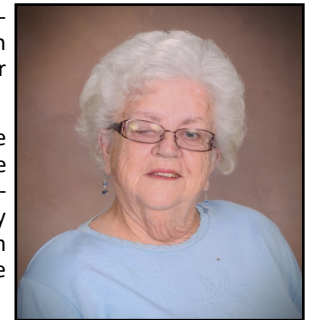


## Lois Bush April 27, 1940—September 17, 2022

By Michelle Deuling

The Monday Bible Study at The Ladder will have an empty seat, as heaven has gained another soul. Lois Bush passed away Monday, October 17, surrounded by her loving family.

Most people knew Lois—often lovingly called the Apple Lady—for the Bush's Apple farm on M-20. Here at The Ladder, she was a regular for Monday lunch and women's Bible study. We will miss her smile and the friendly twinkle in her eye as she visited with her friends from the Bible study that she loved. We thank God that the power of past prayers lives on outside of time.



## Janice Sobers August 25, 1938—September 26, 2022

By Brian Beckman

Janice was a local heroine. Doctors told her parents that she wouldn't live past two years old because she was born with a debilitating disease. Though she spent her life in a wheelchair, Janice persevered, living a fulfilling life as secretary for the Shelby United Methodist Church for 55 years and as an active citizen of the Shelby community.

Janice enjoyed attending special events at The Ladder, especially Celebrate on Saturday nights (a time to come and sing songs of praise to Jesus). The Ladder staff enjoyed frequent visits to her home to deliver her lunch. It was during those times that we discovered her daily struggles and the escapades of her bird, Bailey. Janice was always ready for a good laugh.

The Ladder was saddened to learn of Janice's passing. Pastor Fox, Janice's former boss and pastor, sums it up well: "Surely, Janice's Mom, Lillian, and those who've already passed on, into Glory, will be first to notice a new but familiar face in their heavenly choir. Her wheelchair and transfer board were left behind—they will no longer be missed—but that new member of God's heavenly choir sure stands out. Many will be thrilled to see her running and leaping and dancing before the Lord. Well done, good and faithful servant!"

