



RAILS & RUNGS Newsletter

WHAT IS YOUR ONE THING?

By Brian Beckman

Thank you for being on this journey with God and the staff at The Ladder. We fall on our knees in humble adoration to a great God who sent you to join us on mission with Jesus to advance His Kingdom here in Oceana County! It is often messy (but always rewarding) to see movement in individuals toward God and His ways. We do not take your gift to God and The Ladder for granted. We know that your gift comes to us by way of hard work and sacrifice on your part. We are grateful for your faithfulness.

Revealing God's Glory

One night in December, my wife Sue asked if I would read her rough draft of the January Challenge for The Ladder's Wellness Program and give her feedback. As I read "The ONE THING Challenge," I thought it was timely and clearly presented, which I communicated to Sue. But then I asked myself, *would this be a challenge for me?* I put it down and didn't think of it again until I was sitting in Christ Church near Pittsburgh with my son Andrew and daughter-in-law Julia on New Year's Day.

Gideon Manges, the youth pastor at Christ Church, was giving his first sermon. He began, "The ONE THING that God has put on my heart over and over again is this simple prayer: "God, make us a people full of zeal for Your glory." He paused, then said, "I want to help you raise your eyes and gaze at the glory of God, so we would be full of a love for Him and full of a joy in Him."

Connecting the Dots

The connection came as Gideon read Exodus 34:29:

Exodus 34:29

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD.

After that Sunday, I could not get the picture of Moses' face out of my head. Moses was touched by the glory of God. What one thing can I do this year to experience the Glory of God in my life?

I went on a search for ways to experience His glory. I read and I listened. Finally, I came across my ONE THING in an article written by Emily Saxe, titled "3 Tips for Experiencing the Glory of God in your Life." Her first tip is going to be my ONE THING: "Pray for eyes to see and ears to hear."¹ Moses did this in Exodus 33:18, when he spoke with God before climbing Mount Sinai: "Then Moses said, 'Now, show me your Glory.'"

Prayer in Action

Much of my day is just a blur. In all the situations I go through in a day, never had I asked the LORD to reveal Himself to me. I pray for wisdom and discernment in the more difficult situations, but certainly not in the most routine or mundane tasks. Throughout each day this year, in all the small and big moments, my prayer will go something like this:

"God, I invite your glory into this moment. Give me eyes to see and ears to hear You."

I am going to consistently pray to experience God's Glory throughout 2023. Since I will focus on this ONE THING, I will make three cards with my prayer on it, which I will stick in my pocket, in my car, and on the mirror in the bathroom.

Join me in "The ONE THING Challenge."
I would love to know what your ONE THING is!

Email me:
brian@theladdercommunitycenter.com

To read more about "The ONE THING Challenge," see the article "We Can Do Hard Things" on Page 3 of this newsletter. May your year be filled with a celebration of praises to our Great God!

¹ Source: www.tounearth.com/articles/3-tips-for-discoverin-god-in-your-everyday

YOUTH & FAMILY

Parents Welcome!

By Mechele Martinez Gonzales

The first Parent Time Gathering was held on December 8. It was great for parents, Troy, and I to come together as we talked about life events, their children, their families, interests, and plans for their children's future. We also shared with parents what their children spend time doing while at The Ladder. Our time together was enlightening, fun, and refreshing. One parent said "This was great! I'll be here for the next meeting."

We will continue hosting the Parent Time Gathering every third Thursday of each month from 6-7PM at The Ladder. Making connections is necessary, and every parent is important. Please consider joining us in the near future for a time to chat, laugh, support one another, eat, and be in fellowship with others. It takes a community of intentional people to bring up our children according to God's plan and will. We at The Ladder are ready to come alongside parents and families, as well as our youth. We are better together!

Christmas Fam Fest

By Mechele Martinez Gonzales

The Ladder's annual Christmas Fam Fest took place on December 13. "Wow! It was a smashing success!" said one attendee. It truly was a blessing for all 65 people who took part. Youth, parents, grandparents, family friends, siblings of youth, volunteers, relational disciples, staff (and a spouse of staff) were present. Furthermore, 10 families attended with one, two, or three parents. Staff, volunteers, and relational disciples came alongside four Ladder youth who attended without parents. It was a team effort, and everything came together very well.

We shared a delicious meal of chicken parmesan, roasted potatoes, broccoli, coleslaw, dinner rolls and pie. Many individuals complimented the food, which was provided by Shelby Public Schools. We lost count of how many people said, "This food is so delicious!"

Attendees decorated cookies and made ornaments. Some line danced for the very first time, and others had line dancing skills from way back. The youth broke a piñata and collected the candy that was inside. Then, we lit the candle on a cake and sang "Happy Birthday" to Jesus Christ. The candle was even blown out with a wave of the Bible! We served birthday cake for all to take home. Celebrating our Lord and Savior was a huge hit!

Lots of laughs and good conversation were had by all. Every family and each youth left that night with a gift, candy, cookies, an ornament, and cake. Our intention was to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, and to share His good news. Additionally, we wanted our community and everyone who attended the Christmas Fam Fest to feel like they were a part of The Ladder family. I'd say we accomplished what the Lord expected us to do.

Celebrating Tomato Stakes

By Troy Love

When tomatoes grow and get heavy, they drag the whole plant down into the dirt. If you pound a stake into the ground and tie the plant onto it, then the plant will be able to stay upright when the tomatoes get heavy. Life gets heavy and can drag us down. Don't we all at some time need someone to come alongside us and help us carry the heavy burdens of life? The Bible tells us to be tomato stakes for each other:

Galatians 6:2

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Jesus told us to love God and love others. One way to do this is to lift each other up in prayer, which is what the youth and adults are doing at The Ladder. They are being tomato stakes for each other!

For the last month, the youth who attend The Huddle in the afternoon have been writing short prayers for adults who attend The Ladder in the morning. The prayers are hung on a line in a window at The Ladder (see photo below). When the adults come in and they see their name on a card, they can grab it and be encouraged. The prayers from the youth are precious and written from their hearts. What would it mean to you if you received this prayer from one of our youth?

"Dear Jesus, I pray that (name) will be closer to you. Give (name) joy and peace, and help (name) to be strong. If (name) is struggling, help (name) through the struggle. In Jesus' Name, Amen."

I'll bet that would lift you up!

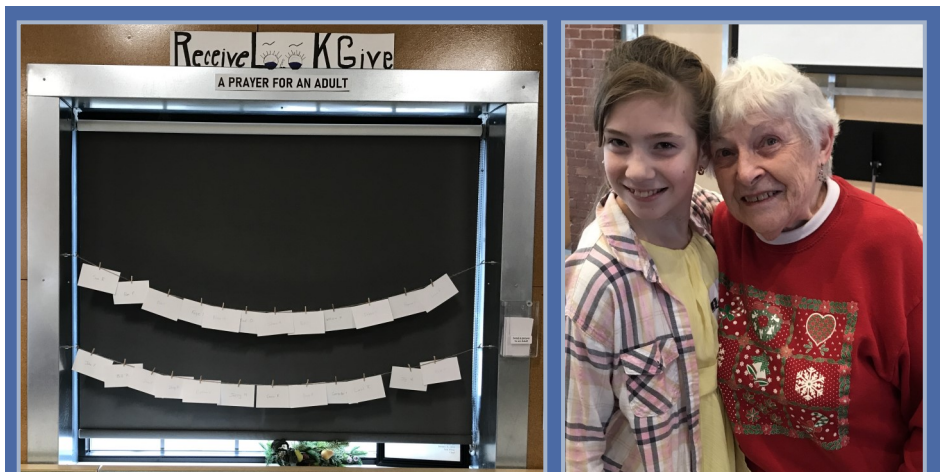
We made note cards available to the adults, and in return, they write prayers to the youth. One youth enthusiastically showed me a prayer he received from an adult:

"Lord, bless (name) for his loving kindness. Guide him every day to keep him humble and kind. Bless him and his family with good health and many great friends."

Another sixth-grade boy was so excited about a prayer he received that he said, "Coach Love, can I read this out loud to everybody?" Of course! After he read it, the whole kid-filled café broke out in applause! That prayer from a caring adult ended up blessing all the youth in attendance that day.

One of my favorite moments was when I had the opportunity to introduce a young lady to the adult with whom she had been exchanging prayer cards (see photo below). It was a precious moment to see them look at each other as if they were just meeting their new best friend. Prayer is powerful. It lightens burdens and fosters relationships.

Generational tomato stakes: one generation lifting another. That sounds like a community I want to be a part of! It's the reward we are celebrating at The Ladder for doing what God's Word says in Galatians 6:2.



Left Photo: Prayers from youth to adults are hung on a line in a window at The Ladder. Right Photo: Coach Love introduced prayer partners Audrea (left) and Zella (right).

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

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

We Can Do Hard Things

By Sue Beckman

Each month, Ladder friends can participate in a 30-day Wellness Challenge. To end 2022, we offered a Thanksgiving Challenge - a challenge to each person to grow a more grateful heart and to express gratitude to God and to one another. We noticed greater expressions of "Thank you" happening at The Ladder. At the end of the Challenge, one participant noted, "This challenge helped me to see that I must be grateful in all things that come into my life, not just the good things God gives to me. I am to be grateful for any pain, suffering, etc. that comes my way, for God can use it all to glorify Him."

Here are two important reasons to do these 30-day Wellness Challenges:

- 1. The Bible makes it clear that growth is part of a Christian's life.** It makes sense. We expect any life to grow—whether they are babies, grass, or plants. If they didn't grow, we would wonder what is wrong. The fact is, anything that is not growing is declining. Have you settled for life as it is, or are you growing? We need to be challenged to keep growing; to keep pursuing the abundant life God has for us. Yes, growing is hard work, but the good news is...
- 2. We are better together.** While Jesus has given us His Spirit to enable us to grow, He has also given us one another to support, encourage, and guide. Years ago I was trying to change some things in my diet. "This is hard," I commented to a friend. "Yes!" she said, "but you can do hard things."

We kicked off the New Year with "The ONE THING Challenge." What if growing meant committing to ONE THING this month?

MARK UDALL

You don't climb mountains without a team, you don't climb mountains without being prepared, and you never climb a mountain on accident—it has to be intentional.

Maybe your ONE THING is a single step. A word never spoken is now spoken; forgiveness never given is now given; a call, a letter, a visit, or a conversation with God... happens.

Maybe your ONE THING is completing a project. One participant in our Challenge told me her ONE THING was UFO's. Huh? I had her repeat that one. UFO's - UnFinished Objects. A gifted sewist, she has a quilt that sits uncompleted, calling for her attention! This month, she has made a plan to complete her UFO and has shared her plan with another for encouragement and accountability.

Maybe your ONE THING is a small change to your daily routine. It's intentionally giving five minutes each morning turning your worries to prayer or giving five minutes each evening telling God thank you. It's closing the kitchen at 7 p.m. or eating a fresh vegetable

with dinner. Maybe it's reading a chapter a day from the Bible or memorizing a scripture verse. One small change is no small change.

One step, one decision, one change. The wonder of God is that He gives us all the wisdom and strength that we need to experience growth and life. The pleasure of God is to give us one another to support and encourage. We are better together. And because God is for us, together we can do hard things!

Famous ONE THINGS in the Bible:

- *One thing I ask*
- *One thing I know*
- *One thing you lack*
- *Only one thing is necessary*
- *One thing I do*

Every month we have a new Challenge posted on our website. Scan this QR code or go to www.theladdercommunitycenter.com/30-day-challenge.html. Stay tuned for our "Scripture Challenge" coming in February!



SCAN ME

MEET OUR NEW CELEBRATE RECOVERY COACH

Todd Jensen

I am excited to serve at The Ladder by leading our Celebrate Recovery support group! I was born in Ludington while my parents were on vacation, but grew up in suburban Detroit. I met my wife Jennifer while at college in Chicago. We married after graduation, then spent the next 20 years raising our three kids: Cole, Emma, and Annie.

I worked as a commodity trader for many years, then in 2014, bought an asparagus and apple farm in New Era. Though it is quite a change, we are excited about and renewed by God's faithfulness in this mighty adventure we are on. I'm so grateful for the many new people God has brought into my family's lives.

I'm excited to lead The Ladder's Celebrate Recovery group and be a part of ultimate recovery—a renewed life in Christ—and walking alongside people made in God's image.



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.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Carmine Osborne

By Vicki Davey

God favors The Ladder visitors who arrive on a Friday, because they will be greeted by Carmine Osborne. Her sparkle and smile will make you feel as if you're coming home again and receiving a warm family hug. A self-described "people person," Carmine has found the perfect niche to represent the love and welcome that The Ladder offers to all who choose to come.

The first of six children born in Shelby to Eugene and Betty Campagna, Carmine has the threads of our community woven into the fabric of her life. The family home was on Michigan Avenue in the early days, and you can't get more in the middle of things than if you lived across the street from the township hall (which is exactly where that was). She attended the old Shelby High School, which was part school and part aerobic workout. Strenuous exercise wasn't relegated to the school day, however, because on Saturdays the youth would pack the Shelby Pavilion to dance the night away. It was during these easy-breezy days that Carmine met Larry Osborne and fell in love. They married when she was just 18 and he 23. It's a love story that continues through to this day.

Carmine and Larry do many things together, such as manage Larry's coin collector's booth in Ludington, participate in the activities of the Oceana Historical Society, and regularly attend Our Savior Lutheran Church in Hart. Together they have one son, Christopher, who is a career naval officer residing in Virginia.

In addition to serving as a greeter, Carmine also enjoys playing bingo and cards at The Ladder. Carmine's heart for service and love for people also manifested itself in the jobs she held through the years before retirement. She worked at Brown's Grocery in Shelby for 16 years, then at Thomas Read Elementary School as an instructional aide for nearly 13 more. She shared her love of reading with the children in her reading groups, although when on her own, she prefers historical fiction to Dick and Jane. You might find her at the library on any given day.

It's no surprise that with ancestral roots founded in Italy, Carmine will welcome you like family, make you feel uniquely special, and then send you off with tomatoes grown in her own garden. She brings warmth and light and love to all she does. We're so blessed to have her.



CELEBRATING LIFE

Carla Sue Richards

September 8, 1948—November 11, 2022

By Michelle Deuling

Sue Richards was a faithful walker here at The Ladder for many years, and her beautiful smile and kind spirit will be missed.

Sue logged two to four miles every time she came, inspiring many older adults to follow in her footsteps – and even alongside her. "I loved walking with Sue," commented Ladder volunteer Bev Riggs. "It tickled me to no end when I would ask if she would like me to walk with her and she would respond with, 'If you can keep up with me.'"

Ladder volunteer Sandy Dean also enjoyed walking with Sue. "It was great visiting with her as she talked proudly of all her siblings," said Sandy. "There was always music playing, and what a beautiful voice she had! She was a joy!"

Sue and her husband Dave were married 54 years. Dave drove her to The Ladder nearly every weekday, so she could use the walking track. Sandy recalled, "She adored Dave, and always spoke of how good he was to her."

Volunteer Jan Sexson said she was blessed to walk with Sue a few times. "I was touched by Dave's love for Sue—his dedication to her," remarked Jan. "He was so good and so patient with her. I'll miss her sweet smile and gentle voice."

Dave and Sue's daughter, Leanne, shared, "Her faith in Christ influenced every area of her life. If you knew Sue, you heard about her Jesus. She set an example of a good and faithful servant to all who knew her."



Sue (right) paused in her walk around the track to get a photo with Ladder staff member Holly (left).

The printing of this newsletter
(Nov-Dec 2022) was made possible by

