



# RAILS & RUNGS Newsletter

## CHANGING LIVES ONE DAY AT A TIME

By Brian Beckman

Thank you so much for investing in the lives of the youth of this community and our older friends, the young at heart. These are the two most common age groups that utilize The Ladder. However, significant things are happening with all age groups, both at The Ladder and through The Ladder community. On June 5, I had the great pleasure to be a part of three exciting events I would like to share with you.

### Intervention

At 8:00 a.m. I attended an intervention for my friend Ron. An intervention is a gathering in which a person with a problem (such as a drug addiction) is confronted by a group of friends or family, whose purpose is to compel the person to acknowledge and deal with the problem. Usually this meeting is called by family or friends, but this one was called by Ron<sup>1</sup> himself.

Three years ago, Ron walked into The Ladder wanting help. He wanted to start meeting regularly. He and I met two times, and then he didn't return for several months. Then one day Ron showed up at The Ladder for the second time, again asking for help. On that occasion I met with him, and Sue (my wife) met with his girlfriend. We met a couple of times, but Ron and his girlfriend didn't follow through with next steps. At this point, over a year has passed. This is Ron's third time returning to The Ladder asking for help. It is clear the Lord hasn't given up on him, and we can't either. Though the road has been rocky, we are committed to loving him unconditionally.

Ron asked his employer for an intervention, who then reached out for help from a pastor trained in addiction recovery. Ron invited me and other coworkers to attend this intervention. We spoke words of affirmation and hard truths with love. We left the meeting hopeful. The pastor will continue to provide support and Ron will participate in a Freedom Appointment<sup>2</sup>. I am hopeful that Ron

will decide to battle his addictions with the Lord by his side and a support group to hold him accountable.

### Celebration

At 10:40 a.m. I had the privilege to attend the Kids Hope Year-End Celebration at Getty Park. What a joy to see 11 mentors, 12 children, and two prayer partners having fun. Together they made giant bubbles, had sack races, and played games with a large parachute. After the games, they enjoyed a pizza lunch provided by Shelby Schools. We celebrated the relationships formed between trained mentors from The Ladder and the children at Thomas Read Elementary. These relationships will continue next school year.

Kids Hope USA is a national program that traditionally partners mentors from local churches with students from neighborhood elementary schools. This year Kid's Hope USA allowed two Christian community organizations to pilot this mentoring program. The Ladder is one of the organizations and the other is in Texas. We are grateful for the opportunity to be one of only two pilot organizations in the United States.

At the end of the school year we met with the teaching staff to evaluate the program. One teacher said, "We could use 300 more mentors." As you can imagine, when other students see a fellow student leave the classroom with their Kids Hope mentor, they ask, "Can I have a special friend like Johnny has?" We are looking for 12 more mentors for this coming fall.

A favorite quote from one young boy regarding his mentor was, "You will be my mentor all the way through college, right?"

The Ladder is having a "Party at the Playground" in July for the Kids Hope children, their parents, and the mentors. The school called each parent, asking permission to provide their contact information to The Ladder, and they all agreed. One parent responded,

"Of course! We love The Ladder." We are thankful The Ladder has found favor with the parents. We are looking forward to this opportunity to connect with the parents. Our desire is to make the parents the heroes and heroines in their children's lives.

### Graduation

At 3:30 p.m. I attended The Huddle's (The Ladder's after-school youth program) graduation party for a charter member of the after-school program. More than seven years ago, Tim Dukes, a lean sixth grader, walked into The Ladder as our first youth. On June 5, we celebrated Tim for a great accomplishment: high school graduation! Tim is a great example of the transformation God can make in a person's life. It has been a rocky road—messy at times—but God never gave up, we never gave up, and he didn't either. The staff and volunteers loved on him in so many ways. I am so proud of their loyalty and perseverance through the difficulties. I am so proud of Tim for his grit in dealing with many adverse experiences.

The Huddle youth listened in on Coach Love's interview with Tim. Many volunteers attended, along with his family, including his dear grandma Nancy. My hat is off to his dad Jeff, grandma Nancy and his extended family, for being there for Tim in some very difficult times. This is a great example of what God, parents, and a supportive community working together can accomplish.

The Ladder is committed to being loyal and dependable to our friends through life's ups and downs. The Ladder is also committed to love people unconditionally and to speak the truth in love. Thank you for your desire to be loyal to our friends by volunteering, praying and giving. We cannot do this work without your help. If you would like to experience the joy in attending events like I did on June 5, please call or visit The Ladder to get involved. It is an exciting journey!

<sup>1</sup>This name has been changed to maintain privacy.

<sup>2</sup>Check out Set Free Ministries online at [setfreemin.org](http://setfreemin.org) to learn more about Freedom Appointments.

# YOUTH & FAMILY

## Seven Years Goes Fast

By Troy Love

*Luke 2:40*

*“And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.”*

While this verse is describing Jesus, it is our desire at The Ladder that this will be the description of every young person that attends The Huddle. Parents in our community are not raising kids; they're raising adults. We want to come alongside parents and encourage young people to grow, become strong, be filled with wisdom, and have the grace of God upon them.

Seven years pass quickly. On June 5 at The Huddle, we had a celebration for a young man named Tim Dukes, who had just graduated from Shelby High school and from our youth program. The reason we recognized this graduate is because he was the first youth to join us seven years ago when The Ladder first opened. He is the all-time attendance leader, with well over 1,000 visits. When he arrived as a sixth grader, he was just a little guy, filled with anger over recently losing his mother. Now, seven years later, he is a tall, sturdy young man with facial hair and a deep voice.

At the celebration, Tim talked about how impactful The Ladder has been in his life. “The people at The Ladder were always there for me, and they really helped me with my anger issues,” he said. “I don't know if I could have made it without The Ladder. I probably would have gotten in a lot more trouble.” Tears streamed down Tim's grandmother's face as she sat next to him, listening with pride. The café was filled with his family, Ladder staff, and youth volunteers who had poured into Tim over the years, as well as many of our current youth. It was a captive audience.

After the meal, we opened the floor to anyone who wanted to share stories or words of encouragement for Tim. Several youth and adults shared. Tim couldn't hold back the smiles. We closed the afternoon with a prayer of blessing over Tim from Colossians 1:9-14. Our plan was to express our appreciation and admiration for his participation and contribution to The Ladder. He and his family left knowing that they are loved and valued members of our community.

What I didn't plan on was an eighth-grade boy coming up to me after the celebration and asking, “Coach, when I graduate, can you do this for me?” Without realizing it, we had just given younger kids a vision and created an appetite to grow, graduate, and be celebrated members of our community.

Seven years seems like a long time, but it is not. As a good number of new sixth graders have recently joined us for Summer Break Out, we at The Ladder remain on the mission to raise adults in our community who are strong and wise, with the grace of God upon them. A child is one caring adult away from being a success story. How can you be that one caring adult that pours into our youth at The Ladder? Seven years goes fast, and eternities are at stake.



*Celebrating a success of The Ladder mission: Congratulations, Tim!*



*Ladder volunteer Charles (left) was taller than Tim (right) when Tim first started coming to The Ladder seven years ago!*

## After School Bash

By Mechele Martinez Gonzales

School is out for summer! June 9 was the last day of school, and for the second year in a row The Ladder held its After School Bash. This year it was moved to Getty Park's soccer field due to reconstruction at Getty Park. We had a great time celebrating with Ladder youth and their families, along with new faces and families. It was especially heartwarming to have school staff participate.

More than 100 people took part in the festivities. We played with a large parachute, had a limbo contest, battled in 9 Square in the Air, and made giant bubbles. Many talked with friends, ate hotdogs and popcorn, and scarfed down LOTS of ice cream! It was a blessing to see different generations come together for a time of laughter, fun and excitement. Two little boys from different ethnic backgrounds noticed each other across the park, and with expressions of pure joy, they raced toward each other and embraced in a hug. Two single mothers met at the event and have since become friends, caring for each other's family and providing support during this busy season of their lives.

The Ladder staff, three volunteers, three homeschooled Ladder youth, parents, and area businesses joined together to organize this event. However, it was God who provided all we needed to make it a success. We thank the House of Flavors of Ludington for donating four four-gallon tubs of ice cream. At the end of the event, only a few scoops remained! We also thank the Shelby Wesco for donating bottled water, popcorn coupons for

*...Continued on Page 4*

### 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.*

# We Celebrate: The Power of ONE Caring Adult

By Sue Beckman

*Every child is ONE caring adult from being a success story.*

Every child that winds up doing well has had at least ONE stable and committed relationship with a supportive adult.

ONE committed adult could be the difference between a statistic and a success story.

Who has time for our kids?

Teachers tells us they just aren't able to give focused ONE-on-ONE attention. Parents struggle balancing work and family. Eli (a second grade boy in our community) shared that he has five siblings, and his mom simply doesn't have ONE-on-ONE time for him. The challenges our kids and parents face today are greater than ever.

*Every child is ONE caring adult from being a success story.*

tor was supported by a prayer partner who committed to praying for the child and the mentoring relationship.

\*Johnny, a downcast, quiet kindergartner, was matched with Miss Jen. Johnny was unwilling to speak at their first meeting. By week four, when he caught a glimpse of Miss Jen in the parking lot just outside his classroom window, he was sprinting to the classroom door. The principal remarked that Johnny's countenance had changed from downcast to joy-filled.

year-end celebration. Oh, what fun! We made BIG bubbles, played games, and had pizza and ice cream. What could be better? We celebrated all that God was doing in us,



*Lots of smiles as we played through us, games together!*

and in the heart of each child. It was hard to say goodbye, but thankfully, all 12 mentors have committed to being with their child again next year.

The school has asked us for more mentors—many more.

As we pause to celebrate the gift of Kids Hope, we also wonder, are you the next Kids Hope Mentor?



*Pizza, ice cream, and sunshine... an awesome day!*

Rick showed up each week to meet with \*Dillon, a local third grader. Dillon shared that he was signed up for rec baseball, and he was a little nervous about it. So Rick and Dillon, for the next few weeks, began their mentoring time by throwing the baseball back and forth. By the time Dillon's first game approached, his throwing had noticeably improved. Rick told Dillon that he would come to the game. That day, Rick arrived and setup his chair. Dillon, catching a glimpse of Rick, came running out of the dugout and said, "I knew you would come!" Rick also had the blessing of meeting Dillon's mom that day.

During the last week of school, the mentors, prayer partners, and Kids Hope kids gathered for a

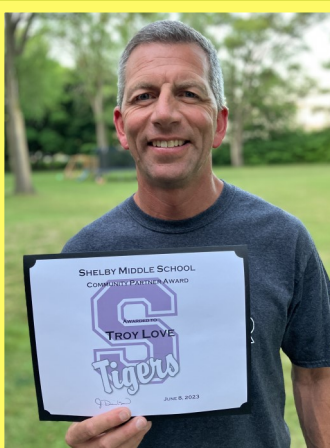


*Working together, we raised the parachute!*

In January, The Ladder forged a partnership with Thomas Read Elementary in Shelby. Joining hands with a national mentoring program called Kids Hope USA, The Ladder matched 12 mentors with 12 elementary school children. Each mentor committed ONE hour a week at the school to listen, care, and pour courage into one child. Each men-

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

## And the Award Goes to...



Coach Love was asked to be the keynote speaker at the Shelby Middle School Awards assembly on June 8. He spoke about Men of Honor and Ladies of Honor programs that take place at the middle school during the school year, as well as the upcoming After School Bash that The Ladder was hosting for families on the last day of school (June 9).

Following his speech, he was recognized by Principal Danielson as the Shelby Middle School Community Partner of the Year for his role in leading the Men of Honor program and consistent support of the students and teachers at the school.

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**SERVICE TIMES:**

**Sundays  
11am  
&  
5:30pm**

**Preaching & Teaching a Life of Holiness**

<sup>12</sup> And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, <sup>13</sup> so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.  
— 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

### 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

# Julie Medacco

By Vicki Davey

In a journey of faith, God alone knows the way-points where we will pause and collect ourselves for the next step forward. He creates the path; our job is to follow. This is the journey of Julie Hartman Medacco.

The starting point is Muskegon, where Julie was born and raised. There she married Gene Medacco, and together they bought a fixer-upper in downtown Muskegon and set about starting a family. Over the years, two children (Rick and Samantha) filled their happy home. Eventually however, desiring a more rural lifestyle for themselves and their children, Julie and Gene moved to Holton, where they lived for the next 18 years.

Life was good in Holton. Julie and her husband gave their energy to their children, their jobs, and their church, embracing God in their lives and letting Him light their path. When the kids were grown and they felt it was time to downsize a bit, the route took them to New Era. Asking God to make their path smooth, Julie said that He opened the flood gates and poured out so many blessings that it was like a river.

Although their home is now in New Era, Julie and Gene felt so connected to their church family in Holton that they continue to go there for worship.

It was there, through these relationships, that their faith really took hold and grew deep roots. She serves her church in many ways, such as doing gift collections and presentations for pastors, heading up crafts with a purpose, distributing snowmen packets, as well as leading and working at the church's nursery. Julie also organizes Bread for Life, where she delivers bread and gift bags to church visitors.

Julie worked at Meijer for fourteen years. Since retiring in 2010, she spends much of her time serving her community in various ways. Julie's love for children (especially newborns to age five) compelled her to serve as a caretaker to families with small children. She is currently serving her fourth family. She was also instrumental in restarting the Right to Life of Oceana County with fellow Ladder volunteer Paulette Zoulek. Julie has also organized tea parties at several area churches. She even worked for a cleaning company, doing many side jobs where she ministered to the people.

At The Ladder, Julie assists in organizing events, such as our volunteer appreciation open house and holiday parties. She regularly helps prepare meals for adults. It gives her joy to feed people and give them hugs. She has a heart for elderly who don't have close family. She finds the grati-



tude she witnesses and the positivity of the people to be uplifting. Ladder guests may think they're the ones receiving the bounty of Julie's efforts, but Julie feels that the Lord has blessed her to know and serve the community around her, a welcome purpose on this journey of faith.

## "After School Bash" Continued from Page 2

free ICEEs. Wesco manager Christy Vanderstelt also donated her time at the Bash, serving popcorn and talking with the people in our community.

The Ladder is grateful for our beautiful community. Together we are making Shelby stronger, bringing people together with events like the After School Bash. If you or your organization would like to partner with The Ladder at future events, please reach out to us by emailing [info@theladdercommunitycenter.com](mailto:info@theladdercommunitycenter.com) or calling (231) 259-0211.



Elementary-aged kids enjoyed ice cream together during a break from the fun activities at the Bash.



We went through almost 16 gallons of ice cream at the After School Bash!

**COMING SEP. 30**

**HERO**  
MANHOOD GOD'S WAY

**MEN, MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

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Address: 67 N. State Street, Shelby, MI 49455 PH: 231-259-0211  
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