

RAILS & RUNGS Newsletter

GIVE A HELPING HAND

By Brian Beckman

Grace and peace to you as we enter this Thanksgiving and Christmas season. Time is fleeting. The world is in utter disorder and confusion. I am thankful that I can have peace in my LORD.

As I am bombarded with issues and situations, I must ask, what is truly important? How am I spending my time? How am I spending my money? People and the media try to get me to focus on things that are not true or right. I can't go there; I must stay focused on what God has called me to do. May I share my heart with you?

God has called me to Shelby. Many see this community as a dumpy, tired, old town. I see only amazing, brilliant, and capable people. Growing up, I was tremendously blessed by the people of this community. They poured life into me by providing opportunities and caring for me. Today, many in our community are depressed and without hope. I believe there is only one true hope. His name is Jesus. That is why I want to make Jesus famous in Shelby. I have been blessed and given the opportunity to bless others in our community. I trust that you feel the same way.

God has called me to three things in Shelby:

1. God wants me to love Him with my whole heart, soul, mind, and strength.
2. God wants me to love the beautiful people who walk through The Ladder's door (from Shelby and beyond) with an unconditional love—the love of Christ.
3. God has placed me at The Ladder to help Him gather a group of authentic, down-to-earth people to **PRAY**, to **LOVE** those who walk through The Ladder's doors, and to **INVEST** in the community and in God's Kingdom. Together, we can bring hope to those without hope. Together, we can make a difference. Consider the impact of Jesus's 12 disciples – 12 ordinary men willing to risk and trust God to do hard things.

Many of you are fully engaged in what God has called you to do at The Ladder or in the community. I am so grateful for your investment in God's work and the people of our community. Would you pray about how you can, in faith, become more involved in the work here? If you are not currently involved, would you join us? We need all hands on deck!

An eighth grade young man's family is in a difficult situation. His single mom is expecting another baby soon. He knows the gig. When Mom goes back to work, he will be expected to care for the baby. What would it look like to extend the love of God to his mom and his family? We want this young man to be focused on school, have opportunity to attend The Ladder, and to help his family with age-appropriate chores—not be a parent. We not only pour love and support into our youth, but their families as well. It takes prayer, volunteers, and money to embrace these families. We need your help.

We serve the youth five days a week, 52 weeks a year. We are boots on the ground from 3 to 5 pm, 260 days a year for this young man and other middle and high school youth. This takes volunteers. This takes money to pay our staff, who organize and lead The Huddle during the school year and the Summer Break Out program in the summer. We need your help.

The Ladder needs funding for Kids Hope, a mentoring partnership between The Ladder and Shelby Elementary. The school is crying out for additional mentors to help kindergarten through fifth grade students and their families. We need more adults to mentor one child, one hour a week. We need your help.

The Ladder provides meals for vulnerable adults in our community. We ask for meal participants to pay \$3.50 a meal or what they can, but this year the money taken in from the meal participants only covered about half the cost of the meals. We are short about \$500 a month just for the meals, not to mention the cost of staff to run the program. We need your help.

PRAY, LOVE, INVEST

People who are willing to risk and trust God to do hard things can change our community and our world. Would you join us? If you know someone who is not currently involved at The Ladder whom the LORD can use to bless our community, would you ask them to join us? Would you or a relative consider designating a gift to The Ladder in your will or trust?

May one more life be changed, just as mine was, because of the loving care and investment of people like you. An investment in The Ladder is an investment that has eternal significance.

Hebrews 6:10

God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.

I Want THIS!

By Troy Love

*Julie was a sixth grader last year when she started attending The Huddle. Like all the youth that show up, we have celebrated her, encouraged her, prayed for her and shared God's Word with her.

Occasionally I will do something with the youth called "Community Questions." I give each youth a list of questions and pair them up with another person. They sit across from each other in the cafe and take turns asking questions and listening to each other. First-timers are hesitant for about two questions, but soon they are all locked in and engaged as they get to know the person sitting across from them.

I paired Julie, who was a young, non-Christian Shelby middle-schooler, with an older, homeschooled, Jesus-loving girl named *Katie. These two couldn't be more different, yet they smiled, laughed and were serious at times during their conversation. After the first 16 questions, there is one last question that gives the students the option of praying for the other person. I watched as Katie prayed for Julie. It was awesome! Over the next couple of months, these two girls developed a friendship and often hugged each other before leaving The Ladder each day.

Fast forward one year to October 27, 2023. To conclude a lesson in which the Gospel was presented, the students were invited to receive Jesus' gift of salvation and make Him King of their life. After we prayed, I said, "If there is anyone who received Jesus for the first time today, then make sure you tell me before you leave." Two young people told me they received Jesus: one sixth grade boy and Julie!

I asked Julie to explain why she made that decision to receive Jesus. She said, "Well, I've been wondering who I am and which way to go. Today I just decided that I want THIS!" (She put her fingers together, then spread her arms apart as she said, "THIS!")

"What do you mean," I asked.

"This place [The Ladder] is amazing, and this is what I want."

The Ladder is a place where community happens. Meaningful peer friendships, caring mentors, your prayers and financial support are changing lives one "Julie" at a time. I look forward to the day when Julie is 15-years-old and sitting across from a sixth grade girl in the café asking her 16 questions and then praying for her. We all want THIS!

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

YOUTH &



Each day at The Huddle, youth are given opportunities to talk with friends and some of the energy they've stored up at school. Shouts, laughter, and the satisfying of the puck at the air hockey table can be heard across the building!



The Huddle youth shopped for and packed four Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes to be shipped to children all over the world.

If you would like to sponsor a future newsletter, please contact Anne at (231) 259-0211 or anne@theladdercommunitycenter.com

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



Volunteers Ann and Yvonne offered families a taste of Wesco (name brand) popcorn and Great Value (generic) popcorn.



Ladder staff, volunteers, and families had a blast playing line tag with pool noodles!



Even grown-up kids wanna have fun! All of our gaming tables were busy at Fam Fest—foosball, pool, air hockey, and ping pong!

Taste and See

By Mechele Martinez Gonzales

Amazing things happen at The Ladder! I often say, "If you come to The Ladder, you will encounter Holy Spirit, food, friends, family, lots of love, and fun." Four times a year, we gather with our youth and their families for "Fam Fest." Our Fall Fam Fest & Orientation on October 9 allowed families, youth, and the community to come together and experience firsthand the great things God is doing in and through The Ladder.

Our inspiration for this event was Psalm 34:8. David praises the LORD, saying, "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!" We wanted our guests to "taste and see" what The Ladder is all about and for them to experience the amazing things that come from God's goodness and faithfulness. Life with the LORD is good; all good things come from Him. Living in darkness and sin is our enemy, the devil's way; nothing good comes from him. It is crucial to recognize these differences. Most importantly, we must realize that good, spiritual food that lasts only comes from God through Jesus Christ.

We began the evening with prayer, followed by a taste test in which everyone participated. The taste test was made of 10 options, consisting of the name brand and generic brand foods. Participants were asked to choose which option was the name brand. Everyone had fun tasting the different foods and brands. One mom said, "This is so fun! I never thought of doing anything like this." There was just as much laughing as there was eating. All winners received candy bars as a prize.

Coach Love talked about the youth's daily experiences at The Huddle. Everyone had the opportunity to play pool, ping pong, air hockey, foosball, hear a devotion based on Psalm 34:8, and play a game in the gym. The competition was fierce. One youth's grandma said to her grandchildren, "I'm going to win, so don't expect me to take it easy on you." The children did not agree with her; however, in the end she did win the game of foosball.

Additionally, the large group game in the gym produced lots of fun and laughs. Families, volunteers, mentors, and staff played line tag: two people held pool noodles and chased the other participants in an effort to tag them out. It was great to see the generations playing this game together.

The night concluded with a dinner of pizza, coleslaw, and cake. As folks exited the building, they received a gift bag containing candy, a personal note, and an inspirational key chain or a necklace with scripture on it. One grandma said as she was leaving that she had never been around people who are so warm, friendly, and joy-filled.

God surely has done some amazing things at the Ladder. He blesses us with great people who love and serve Him and our beautiful community. He provides for the needs of The Ladder through generous donors. He strategically places volunteers, mentors, and staff to come alongside our youth and their families. God brings people together to grow in relationship and love—with each other and with Him. These are just a few examples of God's greatness at The Ladder.

We give thanks and praise to the LORD that we are able to taste, see and experience His goodness. We also thank all of you, our extended family. Each of you contribute to the amazing things that happen at The Ladder. We do indeed taste and see that the LORD is good!

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.



Fishing for Heroes

By Troy Love

Forty-eight men piled into The Ladder on September 30 for the largest HERO event to date. Men ages 12 to 78 enjoyed knot tying, speed reeling, target casting and distance casting competitions. Words can't explain another competition where men went fishing for other men. You need to go to theladdercommunitycenter.com and click the HERO tab to see this action!

The day wrapped up with a huge meal and loads of prizes, from fishing lures to poles and trips. As each man departed, they walked through a tunnel of honor and were celebrated as men! A first-time attender said, "Thank you for having this event. It gave me a great chance to bond with my stepson."

Throughout the day, we had "Pit Stops," where men would be given questions to discuss with other men. These connections have proven to be fruitful, as 23 men continue to meet on Tuesdays for our evening "Pit Stops." There is tremendous camaraderie amongst these men as we learn and encourage each other in doing manhood God's way. I want to thank you for your prayer and support of HERO and encourage every man reading this to join us at The Ladder on Tuesday evenings from 6:30 to 7:30 for "Pit Stops." You were built to be a HERO, and our communities need HEROES.



Above: Shelby Public Schools provided a delicious lunch for the competitors afterward: ribs, wings, pasta salad, coleslaw, rolls, and fish-shaped cookies for dessert!

Right: Meaningful camaraderie and conversation.



Above: God blessed us with a warm, sunny day to hold some of the competitions outside: speed reeling, target casting and distance casting.

Right: Adult men and youth teamed up for the knot tying competition.



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