

The LADDER COMMUNITY CENTER EVENTS

Countdown to Christmas

By Holly Baxter

From November 27 to December 23, The Ladder offered several activities for youth and adults, some of which were intergenerational. We hosted three Christmas-themed bingo gatherings, crafts, an ornament exchange, cookie decorating, a pajama contest, two Christmas worship gatherings, games, delicious holiday meals, and even a puppet show! Here are some highlights from the festive activities.



WRAPPED PACKAGE GAME
So many prizes all wrapped up in a bundle of plastic wrap. Sounds easy until you do it with mittens! L-R: Julie, Charles, Sandi, Debbi, Zella, Vonnie.



EATS & ARTS
Right: Adults and youth shared a delicious meal and worked on three different crafts. L-R: Zella, Kimmie, Landon, Gabe, Dare, Monica.



COOKIES & JAM
The adults and youth decorated cookies in their favorite cozy pajamas while listening to Christmas music. Above left: Gabe. Above right: Jean, Kham, Vonnie, Holly, Michelle, Dare, Julie.



CHRISTMAS CARD CRAFT
We created unique Christmas cards for loved ones. Left: Zella, Sue. Right: Josh, Grace, Jasper.



CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON
This intergenerational event for adults and youth included live music, carols, a puppet show, door prizes, and a buffet-style meal (provided by Shelby Public Schools). Above right: Anna Grace sings with her puppet, Joy. Above left: Pat T., Pat R., Josephine, Anne, Noreen.





HERO

MANHOOD GOD'S WAY

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2024
9:15AM - 11:15AM

The
POWER
of a
MAN'S
story

By Troy Love

HERO is honored to welcome "The Naked Farmer" to The Ladder on February 17. On a frigid December night in 2013, Tim VanderZwaag, a six-foot tall, 250-pound West Michigan farmer, was pulled backward into a spinning PTO (power take-off) shaft. He was forced through a 10-inch gap numerous times before being thrown out into a snow-covered field, stripped of his clothes and all alone.

Tim's story of survival and faith is gripping and inspiring. It will powerfully impact every man who hears it. All men 12 and older are welcome to join us on February 17. We encourage you to invite friends! There is no charge for the event, though donations will be accepted. We will provide donuts for all the hungry men who walk through the door – no pre-registration required. We look forward to packing out The Ladder for "The Naked Farmer" to kick off our next season of HERO: The Power of a Man's Story.



The Naked Farmer, Tim VanderZwaag

LIVE WELL

Pursuing God's best in mind, body & spirit

We Thank God!

By Sue Beckman

At the start of a New Year, many of us think about growth, improvement, and progress. How can I be healthier? How can I grow deeper in my relationship with Jesus? How can I be a better friend, a better spouse, a more intentional grandparent? How can I be used to make a difference? Those questions often give way to goals or New Year's resolutions. If you have failed to follow through with past resolutions as I have, you may have already considered a new approach. I have come to understand that success starts with a single step, and long-term success means we keep taking that step day after day after day. Growth isn't complicated; it is simply deciding what needs to be done and then doing it.

As the staff has prayerfully worked at developing discipleship tools for the youth and adults, we are considering adopting a simple approach to our Bible reading together. After the passage is read, we ask three questions:

1. "What does this passage say about God?"
2. "What does this passage say about us (mankind)?"

After discussing these two questions, we prayerfully read the passage again, seeking to answer the third question:

3. "How am I to respond?" or "How am I to obey?" (In other words, "What step is God asking me to take?")

The Bible makes it clear that we grow in our relationship with Jesus by reading and responding to the Word of God (James 1:25). Reading and responding. Hearing and obeying. Eugene Peterson describes discipleship as a "long obedience in the same direction." It is simply deciding to take a step of obedience and then, tomorrow, take that step again.

This past November, we were planning an evening of "Thanksgiving." As we planned, it became clear we were to keep it simple; simply obey what the Bible tells us about giving thanks. As youth, parents, and members of The Ladder family gathered together, we focused on two scripture passages. We began in the book of Psalms:

Psalm 107:1-2 (NLT)

¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever. ² Has the LORD redeemed you? Then speak out! Tell others he has redeemed you.

How do we obey? Clearly the passage tells us to give thanks to the Lord for His goodness,

His faithful love, His redeeming us. We spent the next five minutes listing the attributes of God: good, loving, compassionate, holy, forgiving, just, wise, powerful, and so forth. Our whiteboard was filled! We then spent time together thanking him for being all this and more. Oh, we didn't want to stop! God was thanked big time, and He was delighted in our obedience.

But the passage goes on. Don't stop at thanking God. If He has redeemed you, tell others! He wants us to tell others and bring glory to His name. And so we did. Many shared how they experienced His forgiveness, His power, His faithful love, His kindness. Our hearts were full!

After a few songs of thanksgiving, we turned to our second passage:

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NIV)

¹⁸ Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

ALL circumstances. Are we to give thanks in ALL circumstances - even the painful ones? One mom confessed, "I never thought of giving thanks in the hard stuff. I'm not sure I could do that."

We each filled out a card listing three things for which to give thanks, one of them being a struggle (a painful situation; a hard thing). Together, we pondered:

- ◆ Why it would be God's will for us to give thanks in ALL circumstances, even the most difficult situations.
- ◆ How we give thanks in the most difficult situations.

We were reminded that thanksgiving directs our eyes to Him and draws us to His presence, His goodness, His faithfulness, His power. So in the midst of sorrow and heartache and pain, we can see that:

- ◆ Jesus is holding me.
- ◆ Jesus is strengthening me.
- ◆ Jesus is interceding for me.
- ◆ Jesus is protecting me from the evil one.

So we took a step of obedience and gave thanks in ALL circumstances. Tears flowed, but the peace and joy of His presence settled upon us. God is always present when we respond to His Word together. And He delights in our response of giving thanks. We are so grateful for our Ladder family and for our God who guides us in walking out these steps of obedience together.