

# The Ascent™



sponsored by

 **Jacob's Ladder™**

**Community Development Corporation**

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Newsletter Vol. 7 Number 12

December, 2007

## Come Up Higher...



### Enrichment Center to open in January

The Belt Line Child and Youth Enrichment Center, located at the corner of Boston and Midland is scheduled to open in late January with Hester J. Moore as the new director, according to Jacob's Ladder Executive Director, Rev. Bill Marler. Ms. Moore was recently hired to begin making preparations for the opening, and Grace Perry has been named assistant director of the center.

"This new center is the result of the work of a lot of volunteers and the gifts of a number of generous donors," Rev. Marler said. "It is a \$165,000 project, and we are delighted that we just received a one-time grant of \$20,000 from the United Way's Avron V. Fogelman Venture fund for use in a variety of ways with the center. We've raised \$137,000 so far. We'll be in good shape. I'm amazed."

Rev. Marler said that Byron and Virginia Crain personally donated \$33,000 to go towards building the center earlier this year. Mr. Crain is a Jacob's Ladder board member. Other major gifts include a donation of \$30,000 from Allen Morgan through United Way and grants of \$20,000 from the Brad Martin Family Foundation; \$10,000 from the Will Dupree Family Foundation; \$5,000 from the Hope Christian Community Foundation in honor of John Humphreys; \$3,500 from Grace St. Luke's Episcopal Church and \$3,000 from St. John's Episcopal Church. Volunteer work and gifts in kind totaled \$25,000 in value. St. John's has made an interest-free

loan of \$28,000 for the center and Rev. Marler said he will challenge the Jacob's Ladder board of directors to raise the money to repay the loan during 2008.

As the center's new director, Ms. Moore comes to Jacob's Ladder with a degree in education and communications and theater. She has been working hard to decorate and equip the center in preparation for the upcoming opening and has a particular interest in recruiting storytellers who can tell the stories of their own people and make Bible stories come to life for children and youth. She also wants to give youngsters the opportunity to act out these stories and create stories of their own.

As assistant director, Ms. Perry will be working on improving the new Belt Line Community Garden which was opened across from the center last summer. She will also be working with youngsters on beautifying their community through planting and clean-up.

The participants in the center are expected to number about 30 children and youth ages 6-17 when the facility opens and perhaps grow over time to 50 or 60, Rev. Marler said.

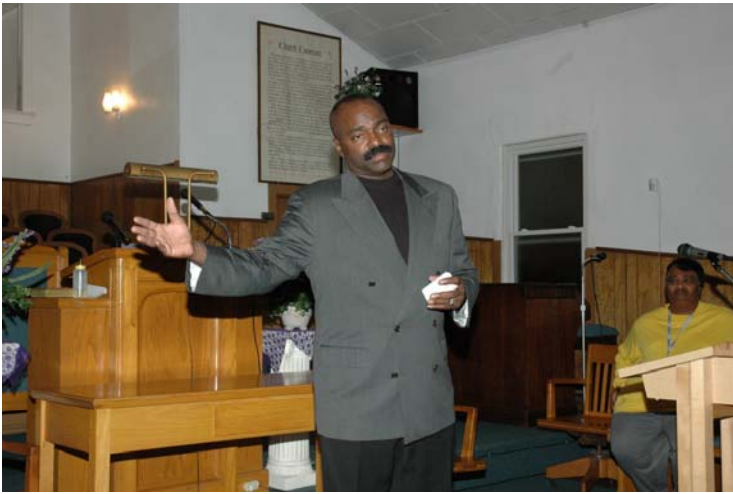
In addition to storytelling, theater and gardening, the center will offer opportunities for youth to learn computer skills, woodworking and music and visual arts. Older youth will learn business skills and entrepreneurship, beginning by learning to care for neighborhood yards and performing other tasks in the Belt Line community. The center will also feature a reading room in which youngsters can read on their own and get help with improving reading skills.

Rev. Marler said that a playground behind the center will be completed by spring and a woodworking shop should be ready by early May.

### Belt Line town hall meeting a big success

In mid-November, Jacob's Ladder representatives were involved in a town hall meeting hosted by State Representative G.A. Hardaway Sr. and held at Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church, 434 Boston Ave. across the street from the new Child and Youth Enrichment Center. Rep. Hardaway asked for Jacob's Ladder's cooperation in holding the meeting to discuss issues concerning the community, including crime, substandard housing and drugs in addition to the impact the community of the changing usage of the old fairgrounds property and the future of Liberty Bowl Stadium.

Robert Lipscomb, Director of Housing and Community Development for the City of Memphis was also



**Representative G.A. Hardaway Sr. addresses the town hall meeting at Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church.**

involved in the town hall gathering, which drew about 40 community members. “Rep. Hardaway and Jacob’s Ladder want to move ahead from the meeting to a series of monthly meetings to reach consensus and have a united voice in the community regarding the fairgrounds,” said Rev. Marler. “We want to move from discussion to consensus and from there to planning and action,” he said.

Three Belt Line churches participated in the event – Mt. Pleasant Baptist, Williams Temple Church of God in Christ and First Corinthians Missionary Baptist.



**Residents pose with Representative Hardaway following the meeting.**



**City of Memphis Housing and Community Development Director Robert Lipscomb listens to residents concerns.**

## Changes in JLCDC board of directors

The new year will bring several changes in the Jacob’s Ladder board of directors. Rev. Emily Matheny, pastor of Highland Heights United Methodist Church and a charter member of the board, will rotate off in accord with the organization’s bylaws. Rev. Noland Pipes, an Anglican priest a former board chairman, and Jeff Lightfoot, plant manager of Coca-Cola and Jacob’s Ladder’s treasurer, have asked to remain on the board though they were scheduled to rotate off and have been reelected. Frank Jones, co-owner of Best Pallet Corporation; Carl Shields, vice president for community relations of Memphis Area Teachers Credit Union; John Speck, owner of Shelby Millwork; Steven Brown, lay worker at St. John’s Episcopal Church and independent businessman; and Nathan Pera, owner of Environmental Testing & Consulting Services of the Americas, are joining the board for the first time.

## Third annual gala mixes play and purpose

Jacob’s Ladder’s third annual gala, held December 8 at St. John’s Episcopal Church, drew about 90 staff, volunteers, financial supporters and friends for an evening of fun, fellowship and focus on the mission and success of JLCDC. There was music and dancing a chance to mix and converse about the achievements of the past year and a time for honoring those who have given of themselves toward the mission of the organization.

Rev. Ken Burnette, Jacob’s Ladder’s board chairman and a retired United Methodist minister, was presented with the Volunteer of the Year Award, both for his work on the board and his faithfulness as a hands-on hammer and nails volunteer week in and week out. St. John’s Episcopal Church was presented with an award for its ongoing support both financially and through the volunteer hours of many members, both in the community and on Jacob’s Ladder’s board and committees.

Rev. Marler expressed gratitude to Fred Griffith and his six committee members for his work on the delicious food and on the décor. He also thanked Lana Marler and her team of volunteers for decorating the gym where the event was held and helping in various other ways and Rick Morgan for putting the finishing touches on the décor.

Among Jacob’s Ladder’s guests at the annual party were 10 residents of Aphesus (forgiveness) House, a halfway house which helps people move from correctional institutions into the mainstream of society. Residents of the program, which was begun by Bob Sauter and others, volunteered with Jacob’s Ladder last summer and fall, working on the community garden and the enrichment center.



**They didn’t exactly dance the night away, but many who attended the annual gala did enjoy a turn or two on the dance floor.**

**Next Issue of The Ascent™: February, 2008**