

Interfaith Ministries, Inc.

CALHOUN COUNTY, ALABAMA

"Bringing God's People Together To Serve God's People in Need"

Summer 2010

Who are the homeless?

THE OPEN DOOR is a program which was initiated by Interfaith when we moved into the Stewart Outreach Center, In The Bridge of the First United Methodist Church of Anniston. We saw we had sufficient space for homeless people to come and use the phone and take a shower. They use our address for their mail, and they have access to a computer. We often help them obtain a birth certificate and picture identification. They are faces we see almost everyday and we share their ups and downs. When they are hungry, we find food. When they are sick, we have Tylenol.

Some live in shelters, some live in their cars, some are temporarily staying with a friend, some sleep in abandoned buildings or in the woods on the fringe of town. One man stays under a semi-truck. Most walk to Interfaith.

"The poor will always be among you" and so will the homeless. They are the people we pretend not to see. They are all over our town. Often addictions and mental illness have turned family away from them. They have been abandoned. They have fallen between the cracks. Who are they?

Mike is a 24 year old male recently released from prison with no identification, no job skills and no money. He reads poorly and still has the addiction problems that got him incarcerated. He refuses to enter rehab. When he asked for a rent deposit, I had to tell him that he is a bad investment... and he is.

Angela walked to Anniston from Cedartown, GA. Her children turned on her when she married a younger man who was an alcoholic after her first husband left her. She has known abuse all of her life. We helped her find a place to live and she found a job in a grocery store. She is attractive other than

stories *from* **THE OPEN DOOR**

By Martha Vandervoort

her missing teeth. She was waiting to go to our dental clinic when she disappeared.

Ginny lives in her car. She had a house near Alexandria, but she left because the utilities were turned off. Since then the house burned. She talks about family, but they are not here. We know that she is mentally ill because we pay for her prescriptions. She is pleasant and upbeat and

no one suspects she is homeless when she visits area churches. She fits right in. Gas is her most frequent request. She also takes showers and we give her stationary so she can write to her family.

There are many others who come and go. We are home base for a period of time. If there is a job or place to live in another town, Interfaith will buy a bus ticket. One of our regulars got a job in Attala so we paid for his transportation. He called in a week and asked if I could come get him; the job did not work out.

Recently John came in to thank us. He has been coming in to use the phone. We helped him do the paperwork to get his identification. His job search was hindered by the felony on his record; but, he finally got a job and reconciled with his wife. He brought her in to meet us... his other family.

There are happy endings for some, but too many will never be able to make it. We cannot solve all of the problems of our clients in The Open Door; we can listen, be a friend, try to make a difference.

Steven came in on a Friday threatening to kill himself. He was cold, sick and living in an old house. None of the shelters would take him; they knew him. We called every local resource we could think of. Finally, we sent him out with a blanket and venna sausages and invited him back. He came back

continues on next page

Who are the homeless?

Monday and everyday for several months. This is what we know. His mother loved him, but knew something was wrong. He is schizophrenic. He has been institutionalized in hospitals and prison. He "just wants to live on his own." His disability check comes to our office. He now lives in a small run down house with no power. (We turned the power on, but he cannot pay the bill.) He likes to sit in our waiting room and nap. Steven is very smart and kindhearted. We love him and we know how much we mean to him.

It costs very little to serve people in The Open Door. We give them snacks and toiletries; but mostly we encourage them. Many of the homeless are around our offices for a period of time and then they disappear. For some, we provide a bus ticket if they have a job or place to stay at the other end. It is a privilege to know these people and to hear their stories. We know that as we have shown hospitality to these strangers, we may have "entertained angels."



New look for website

The website for Interfaith Ministries was updated and redesigned in May by Stacy Booth. While much is still the same, the new website offers clients a quick and easy guide to all our programs and informs others on ways to give and volunteer.

www.interfaithcalhoun.com

www.interfaithcalhoun.org

- How Interfaith Ministries makes a difference
- How to be a Volunteer
- How to make a Donation
- Past Newsletters
- Upcoming events
- Staff and Board of Directors



Angela McLaughlin Haynes, MOW's Director and Patsy Young, Volunteer coordinator worked with Dave Pausat MOW's chairperson to raise funds through ad sales for The Noble Street Festival Bike Races.

Meals on Wheels has been serving disabled and homebound residents of our county for the past 25 years. Approximately one hundred hot wholesome meals are delivered five days a week. The meals are prepared by Stringfellow Hospital Food Service, with each client's specific dietary needs considered.

Currently we have a waiting list for persons who are in need of these meals, but we do not have enough volunteers to add routes to cover these people. **There is a real need in the Saks, Weaver, and Alexandria area.**

Please contact Patsy Young, Assistant Director, and volunteer to drive a route. If twenty people would volunteer, we could start a route in the above mentioned areas. You would only have to drive every other week. We do prefer two people to drive a route in order to cover the area quicker and safer.

We are also in need of substitute drives that are called when we have drivers who cannot make their route for various reasons.



Please contact:

Patsy Young: 256-454-4136



Pastor Eugene Boger,
Angel Tree Camp Director

Angel Tree Camp

We are excited to introduce **Pastor Eugene Boger**, our new director of the Angel Tree Camp. Eugene is new to Anniston. Because he grew up in a disadvantaged area of Los Angeles, he can truly empathize with our Angel Tree campers who also have grown up with hardships.

Eugene has had previous experience with camp and youth activities as he was brought up in the church. He has served as an interim pastor at Haven United Methodist Church and looks forward to his new appointment at Rising Star United Methodist Church. It is no exaggeration to say that Eugene is a "God-send" to The Angel Tree Camp. We are blessed to have him in a leadership role with Interfaith. He is basing the camp on three principles: Motivation, Education, and Recreation.

The Angel Tree Camp will be held July 26-30th at Camp Lee. Campers who have a parent in prison are being sent applications.

Now we are looking for young people over the age of 16 with leadership qualities and motivational skills to work as counselors from 8:30 until 3:30 PM. Applications are available on line at www.interfaith-calhoun.org or by calling Interfaith at 237-1472 Monday thru Friday of that week.

*"I tell you,
whenever you did this
for on of the least
of these, you did it
for me."
Matthew 25:40*



School Supplies

School supplies are being collected for distribution by the Community Enabler. Bring items or send your check to:
Interfaith Ministries
School Supplies
P.O. Box 1444
Anniston, Al. 36201

Congratulations

Dot Thomas recently received the Dill Award at the annual meeting of Interfaith Ministries. Thomas has served Interfaith in many capacities including Meals on Wheels, Christmas Clearing House, and as a member of the board. Most recently, she served as the executive committee secretary.

Dot is a tireless volunteer who frequently assists clients at Interfaith Ministries by giving of her time. She is a member of Trinity Lutheran Church where she is church secretary. She is also active in the Golden K Kiwanis Club, which has helped establish a Builder's Club at Oxford Middle School.



Web Design / Newsletters

Brochures / Logos

graphic designer

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Helping the Poor

A MULTI-FACETED APPROACH

People of faith have always been compassionate. It is a premise of the great religions that for those who have been given much, much is required—see Deuteronomy 15:11 *“Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.”* and Luke 12:48 *“From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required”*.

We have seen pictures of people around the world devastated by poverty and disease, and our hearts break when we are made aware of their plight. However, we have people in our area who have lived in poverty generation after generation and simply cannot seem to find their way out of that condition. They are not as visible to many in the community as those in other lands may be.

As individuals, we often feel helpless to change the trajectory of their existence. At Interfaith Ministries (IM), we have little power to change the system that seems to ensure that most born into poverty remain that way. And so, we have to do what we can do. And that is to provide immediate help to the extent that our resources allow. Almost every day, we assist someone created in the image of God with food, assistance with rent, utilities, dental care, or medicine to tide them over a crisis. Although occasionally this assistance enables them to get on their feet, we know that in most cases, it is not likely to change radically their predicament.

The problem is much bigger than IM can address. There are cultural, economic, and political systems in place that seem to perpetuate this continual poverty, making it more difficult than it has to be to rise out of this cycle of poverty.

We urge all our constituents and supporters to pray for our leaders that their hearts may be warmed to recognize the condition of those seemingly destined for poverty throughout their lives. Let’s pray that these leaders at all levels will approach the problem of poverty systematically. We need to pray for comprehensive changes in the way we pursue a more just society. Our very social and economic structures should give opportunity to everyone to become all that God created them to be. It is only then that the problem of poverty can be addressed with real success.

Many associated with IM, including the Reverend David Rice whose comments appear next, are convinced that a new constitution for the State of Alabama is required. IM is not a political organization, and at the risk of being perceived to cross that line, it will accept any

changes that move the structures toward economic justice. In the meantime, IM intends to do what we can to bring the resources of God’s people together to serve God people in need.

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM by David Rice

The time is now for the citizens of Alabama to be able to vote to call a Citizen’s Constitutional Convention to write a new constitution for this great, but wounded state. Sadly and unjustly, another legislative session has ended without such an opportunity being offered.

The current constitution of Alabama, originally dating from 1901, concentrates power in the hands of the few in the state legislature in Montgomery. As it now stands, local counties and municipalities that wish to enact ordinances and revenue-generating measures to improve the lives of their citizens must have these proposals vetted through the state legislative committee process, voted by a majority of the legislature, and then put to vote before the electorate of the entire state. This slow, politically ineffective system restricts civic innovation, modernization, and governmental response to the needs of communities.

At this year’s Interfaith Ministries Annual Meeting, Harvey Jackson, Professor of History at Jacksonville State University, gave an historical overview of why Alabama “does so poorly for the poor.” At the close of his presentation, looking into the faces of those assembled religious and civic leaders, he told us to keep doing the benevolent work; keep praying; but if the situation in Alabama is ever really going to change, it will have to change in Montgomery — it will be political action that makes the ultimate difference.

The time is now. People of faith must engage the political process to bring about a new and just constitution. To do so is a matter of loving our neighbor as we love ourselves and taking compassionate care of “the least of these,” the disenfranchised. In the words of the prophet Micah, we know what is required: *to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.*

ALABAMA CITIZENS FOR CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

www.constitutionalreform.org

DOWNLOAD THE 1901 CONSTITUTION

www.legislature.state.al.us

2 VIDEOS TO WATCH:

“It’s a Thick Book” by Lewis Lehe

“Open Secret” by Melanie Jeffcoat



Volunteers Are Needed at Interfaith

For the past several months, volunteers have staffed the reception desk at Interfaith Ministries. I am privileged to serve as a volunteer and as a coordinator of volunteers as well, assuring there is always someone at the reception desk.

No two days are alike at Interfaith Ministries, We get some poignant stories, see heartbreak in a parent's eyes, see how difficult it is for some people just to ask for help. We do see some who want to take advantage, and we see some entertainingly weird stuff.

My first reward is helping those folks who call and come in, many of whom are desperate. The next reward is knowing I am helping the paid staff and making their jobs easier. It's not a big job, but I know I'm needed and appreciated. Our volunteers have been complimented for giving our clients a warm, compassionate welcome to the office.

We need volunteers and substitutes to help coordinate the schedule. Shifts last for 3 to 3 ½ hours Monday through Friday. Come join us. You are needed!

Esta Spector
 Volunteer Co- coordinator
 espector@cableone.net



Goodbye to an Interfaith Partner, Sister Mary Roy

Sister Mary served in her capacity as Director of the All Saints Interfaith Center of Concern for 26 years. She retired from the Center in June of this year after having in an accident that required her to be off her feet for extended periods. The staff of Interfaith says a heartfelt "goodbye" to a friend and partner in serving God's people in need.

During her tenure at the Center of Concern, Sister Mary and her staff served more than 158,000 individuals including many who were referred by Interfaith. Assistance included medication, food, clothing, utilities and other essentials.

Sister Mary has moved to Putnam, Connecticut to an assisted living center that is operated by the sisters of the Order of The Holy Spirit. She is undergoing a rehabilitation regimen at the Health Care Center there. She is in great spirits, but misses the South and "her people".

Sandra "San" Hall, who was with Sister Mary for 22 of the 26 years she directed the Center of Concern, says she really misses Sister. She reports, however, that she spoke to Sister Mary on the telephone recently and that she was her usual, bright self.

The Center of Concern will continue to serve the community under new leadership. We look forward to working with Sister Jane O'Conner.

- Neil Anderson



Blessed to Be a Blessing

INTERFAITH PARTNERS WITH DENTIST


Dr. Bruce Cunningham and other area dentists staff the Interfaith Adult Dental Clinic. Patients are screened by Kelly Champion at Interfaith Ministries on Wednesday mornings before they can be seen.

“ *When I recently went to see my mother at a long term care facility, I noticed that one of her attendants was a familiar looking, well groomed young lady with an attractive smile. After seeing her a few times, I realized that I knew her as one of the first patients seen through the Interfaith Adult Dental Clinic.*

Several years ago when I first met her at the Interfaith Clinic, she literally had a mouth full of rotten teeth that were impacting her self esteem and her employability. It required multiple visits to remove all of this grateful woman’s teeth.

Since then she has found the resources to have dentures made before entering the work force. Now, employed in a health care occupation, her kind attention was a blessing to my mother. Only God knows how many others Interfaith Ministries has also blessed to become a blessing to others. ”

*Blessed by being a partner,
Bruce Cunningham, DMD*

A United Way Agency 

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