



common ground montgomery

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2016

September

newsletter

cgm preschool



CGM qualified for the Office of School Readiness (OSR) First Class Preschool Grant in early June and began work to open one preschool classroom in the Annex building.



Since the grant was awarded, the Annex has undergone a complete transformation, now housing a classroom for 16-18 children, a large bathroom space, and will have a play area outside. The play area will include a tricycle track, playground equipment, and a stage area for the children.

Two teachers, Stella McCall and Mona Phillips, have been hired for this classroom and staff member Leslie Cowell will serve as the preschool director. We look forward to seeing the classroom and playground completed and what the Lord will do in the neighborhood as we offer this preschool service.

If you would like to donate directly to the preschool, they are currently accepting donations of Kleenex, soap, Chlorox wipes, and paper towels.



kevin king

mentoring

Partnering with parents through mentoring is essential for the long-term spiritual and personal progress of every child. This is why we infuse so much energy recruiting, training, and matching mentors with children who are in our After School Program as well as the scholars at Valiant Cross Academy.

An executive summary commissioned by National Mentoring Partnerships states that the longer the mentoring relationship lasts, the greater the value for youth. We've definitely witnessed this over the last ten years being in this community. Unfortunately the need for long-term mentors is a bit intimidating for most, especially men. One in three young people do not have a mentor whether formal or informal. These rates are much higher for high-risk youth, likely the results of multiple risk factors including poverty, limited networks, and under-resourced communities with large volumes of students with overwhelming tangible needs. The reality is these young people need mentors just as much as those who seemingly do not possess these risk factors.

We have countless children (especially boys) approaching me daily asking the question: "Mr. Kevin, when do I get a mentor?" Multiple parents text or inbox me on Facebook asking, "Have you found a mentor for my son yet?" These questions continue to highlight the reality that it's tougher to find male mentors for our male students. Thankfully this really isn't an issue with our female students. They have

plenty of Godly women signing up to mentor them.

Despite the difficulties in recruiting male mentors, this past year has been encouraging to say the least. We were able to hire Shalisa Magee, an extremely gifted administrator who is originally from our community. She has quickly taken ownership of the mentoring ministry. We've had several events this year organized by Shalisa designed to foster healthy competition and fellowship amongst our current mentors and mentees all together. I'm always amazed when neither the adults nor the students are ready to leave these Mentor Fun Day events when we've surpass our allotted time.

We are thankful for your prayers and support as we continue to seek to equip our mentors to disciple, develop, and deploy young leaders through mutually transforming relationships.



2016 summer camp



interns



This year our Summer Resident Mission Program had 15 college students come from their respective college or university ministries to come and serve in the neighborhood of Washington Park. Campus Outreach also sent a staff member to help with the development and spiritual growth of our interns.

In the first, week the interns were taken on tours related to the Civil Rights Movement as well as visiting places like the Equal Justice Initiative.

The next eight weeks were spent running the Summer Camp; a feat that proved once again to be both a challenging and sweet experience. The interns were up by 7 AM and were with their campers from 9 AM to 4 PM every week day. But the day would not be over for them for several more hours as throughout the week there were various teaching times with CGM founder and executive director Bryan Kelly, as well as a summer book study on Smith and Emerson's "Divided by Faith".

As always, thanks to all who supported them, hosted them for Friday evening socials, brought them a meal, and/ or prayed for their summer experience.



**fall after school program
has started!**





staffers tori garnes and ken austin

Ken Austin, our Director of Community Relations, is now going into the homes of the students enrolled in our programs and building a deeper relationship with the parents. His work of supporting, praying for, and acting on behalf of the families is very important. It serves both to help fill in some tough gaps the families are facing and helps advocate for the parents. He provides transportation and connection to networks to help with things like job searches, medical care, social services, and other organizations that can help these families.

Ken also leads the CGM Community Ministries house in our neighborhood that is now providing a clothes closet, a food bank, hot meals, and soon a place to shower and do laundry for struggling families. What is really beautiful is that Ken has recruited volunteers from the neighborhood to spearhead this CGM community effort. Mothers of kids in the program, grandmothers who have served in this neighborhood for many years, and even the high school kids in our program all volunteer in the house. This effort has served to make up the gap for approximately 20-25 families a week to come in and secure enough food for a week. When renovations are completed this month, families who are practically homeless and without running water will be able to come and shower and do laundry, as well as have access to clothes and hot meals.

This ministry helps make up many gaps and brings a measure of security and stability to the lives of some of our students while we focus on developmental and preventative efforts through programs and the network of relationships created at Common Ground Montgomery. Please pray for the last phase of interior renovations as drywall, floor leveling and surfacing, and the new bathrooms are installed this month.



community ministries house



@cgmlife



bryan kelly

Numbers are important and can help shed light on things. Statistics, for example, can put things into perspective when dealing with the realities of our community.

For instance, our neighborhood has more single parent households than 97.6% of the neighborhoods in the U.S. Additionally, our community stands out for having an average per capita income that is lower than 98.5% of the neighborhoods in the United States. 82.4% of the children in this area live in poverty. Staggering drop-out rates, high crime and community violence,

cgm, numbers, and the economy of God

and the absence of fathers in the homes and in the community have devastating and traumatic effects on children and youth.

This is the context that we get to live and work within. However, here are some other numbers that I am very hopeful and excited about:

150 - the amount of kids that we have in our programs this fall each day. This is approximately a 50% increase from last year.

16 - the number of 4 year-olds that make up our brand new preschool class! We are getting to invest into 4 years-olds, spiritually, academically, and socially!

100% - the percentage of our kids paired with mentors that did not fail a grade last year.

100% - the percentage of kids paired with mentors that had no juvenile delinquent activity last year.

0 - the number of our kids involved in our mentor program that were suspended from school or designated as truant last year.

0 - the number of kids that were killed this year that are enrolled in our program.

100% - the high school seniors in our program that graduated this year.

60 - the number of 6th and 7th grade boys from the west side of the city that are attending Valiant Cross Academy, an all boys Christian leadership academy led by Godly men and women who are educating and mentoring the very boys that the

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statistics are stacked against.

These numbers and statistics point to the fruit of the relationships and programs that are happening every day at CGM and our partners this fall.

As I have quoted my mentor before, Dr. Anthony Gordon: "We are not trying to beat the odds. We are trying to change the odds." We are continuing to take a long term approach to personal, family, and community wholeness that truly changes the trajectory of the lives of the kids and families we live and walk with. Numbers do matter. But, they are not the only thing that matters.

One of the things that gives me great hope is that God is not bound by numbers and statistics. His work and blessing are not controlled by natural trajectories. He loves to make us whole and to fill in the gaps. He looks at the absence of fathers, the neighborhood traumas and deficiencies, and the injustices that abound, and He is able to "do exceedingly abundantly more than we every ask or imagine according to His power that is at work within us." God gives grace and mercy. I spent many years believing that my faith had nothing to do with the realities of the isolation, injustices, and hopelessness that existed in communities like ours.

I was also unaware of how my disconnectedness was feeding my own poverty; how it kept me from understanding how long-term and systemic factors also joined in with poor choices and generational sin in perpetuating the brokenness of our neighborhood. God has been opening my eyes to how we got here, and, just as importantly, how He desires to lead us into relationships that change us all in the process. These are the relationships that He is willing to meet us in.

I now believe that my faith has everything to do with seeking to connect different types of people together in Montgomery in transformative ways that will expose all of our poverty, and potentially, through love and grace, see us pursue wholeness and healing together. It is a merger of people taking personal responsibility to break cycles and make the right choices to pursue change. It's seeing those of us with relative success and resources pursue collective justice and seek to change the structural and systemic injustices that also add to hopeless odds and lack of opportunity. Both must happen. Both can happen in the context of healthy relationships being built with God, with one another, across all lines and barriers.

Thank you for seeking to participate in seeing this happen on common ground together, through prayer, through sacrificial giving of your time and resources, and through connecting with others.