

The thief comes only to kill and steal and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

The words of Jesus in John 10:10

December 2017



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Rebuilding Lives – A Year of Fruitful Service

This is the blessed season in which we get to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, Who came to bring **fullness of life** into a world where there is death and destruction. He was born to die for the sins of the world and to restore us to life, here and now, and throughout eternity. As a Christian organization, Voice of Calvary Ministries (VOCM) exists to proclaim this *life to the full*, in harmony with the model and mission of Christ. *God has truly blessed us this year by enabling us to be involved in life changing work in our community and across the State of Mississippi.*

STEAM – Impacting the Lives of Our Youth...

Reaching and saving the children and families in our community who are too often underserved by the educational system is an integral part of proclaiming *life to the full*. In March, we started a collaborative to bring educational opportunities in science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM) into our neighborhood schools in inner city Jackson. Building on our involvement in two of our elementary schools, God brought together an impressive group of partners including Jackson Public Schools, the Mississippi Department of Education, Jackson State University, Mississippi College, the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Hinds Community College training center, Jackson Medical Mall Foundation, Common Ground Church, Working Together Jackson and other vital community stakeholders. Our goal is to bring the best educational opportunities available anywhere into our schools in West Jackson. Dubbed as the STEAM Team, we sponsored a “Thinkers Fair” to introduce youth and family members to hands on, project-based learning attended by about three hundred people. The culminating event was a robotics contest between two fifth grade students. The next morning, we got this text from one of the STEAM trainers, also a former teacher:



I am all in for this! I keep thinking wouldn't it be awesome to take something like this to the kids in the schools that are the most at risk! I keep thinking about the young man at the end... You have never seen such an Angry Young Man as he was when he came to me in 3rd grade... Learning how to take ownership of something like coding and finding what he's good at has turned his life around even at this young age! What a difference we could make! How many kids can we reach and save?

Veterans – Stably Housed and Better Prepared for Life...

Five years ago, we were privileged to bring Soldier On, headquartered in Leeds, Massachusetts, to Mississippi. For the past three years, VOCM implemented a Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) initiative in partnership with Soldier On. As a result of our SSVF program, we touched the lives of more than 1500 homeless or at-risk of homelessness veterans and their families. We were able to help them locate quality, affordable housing; obtain employment, as well as provide life skills training to prayerfully assist them in remaining stable and self-sufficient. As part of the program, VOCM and Soldier On established a pilot program, in conjunction with the Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC), in May of 2016 to work with incarcerated veterans. Through the hard work of our staff, especially Barbara Thornton and Sheron Brown-Gorden, we worked with nearly one hundred veteran offenders to get them ready for release. (MDOC produced a widely distributed video which you can view at <https://youtu.be/qp2a8tnyq2A>.)

This year, Soldier On decided to set up a Mississippi office to bring more resources to our State, and to implement the SSVF program directly. Although we will not have the SSVF program operating through VOCM, we will still work together with Soldier On where possible to serve our homeless veterans.

2018 Initiatives In a Snapshot...

As we look forward to 2018, in addition to our ongoing involvement with the STEAM Team, our volunteer program, and our ministry to the homeless, we have partnered with several local and national leaders, and the City of Jackson, to develop a very ambitious housing initiative which we believe will *bring literally hundreds of quality, affordable housing units into our community* which has experienced decline for the past three decades.

This is all included in the *life to the full* for which God gave His most precious gift of His very own Son. None of this would have been possible without the support of our faithful donors. **Thank you so much for your support in our efforts to positively impact the lives of our neighbors!**

Phil Reed
President/CEO

Don't Take Little Things for Granted...

In the summer of 2017, Mr. Michael Ryan came into the office of Voice of Calvary Ministries asking for personal hygiene items and a cup of coffee. During our conversation, Mr. Ryan stated that he was a veteran and was living from place to place. His story is a common one for most who come in needing assistance; and because *our doors are always open, it is how we want it to continue.*



In life one thing that will never change is the support and assistance needed by people living in poverty. As Christians, we must give all we can to the poor and never close our eyes to their cries. Closing our eyes to the poor is like doing it to Jesus, who said, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me". As time has gone on, this veteran was assisted with securing housing and he recently began receiving housing payment assistance for his rent. I was in search of bedding for him to sleep on and when I asked him what items did he need for his apartment, all the veteran asked me for was a file cabinet and housewares. After he was stably housed, he was eager to go back to work, but his declining health prevented him from working. Over the years, I have learned that we should not jump to conclusions on how someone became poor.

Since 1975, Voice of Calvary Ministries has been meeting some of the simple needs of families experiencing poverty and hopelessness. Our work has sustained over the years because of the financial and other support of our valued and committed partners and donors. We give a heartfelt "thank you" for your continued support.



Barbara Thornton, Community Engagement Coordinator

Helping Those in Need...

During the month of July I had the opportunity to meet Kristie Betts, a previously hard working, dedicated mother of two teenage boys. Kristie had recently had a stroke and was advised by a medical professional to avoid any stress and not return to work. Prior to the stroke, Kristie had suffered two heart attacks.



Ms. Josephine (left) introducing Ms. Kristie to our volunteer group.

Kristie and her sons had also been forced to move from their home due to a devastating roof leak. When I heard about her I started to call people who might want to help return Kristie and her family to their home. One of the first agencies I called was the Voice of Calvary Ministries (VOCM). I spoke to Phil Reed who put me in touch with Mr. Carl Jones, VOCM's Facilities Manager. Mr. Jones has led several volunteer groups in preparing Kristie's home for renovation. He has assured us that he will make every effort to supervise the roof replacement and other needed repairs. Also, Senator Sallie Norwood has been able to find a donor to provide the roofing, underlayment and nails. Hopefully, we can all help to get Kristie resettled soon.

Josephine Byers
Retiree
11-2-2017

See our website for First Baptist Church of Ponchatoula LA volunteering to help Ms. Kristie:
[HTTP://VOCM.ORG](http://VOCM.ORG) > News & Events > Volunteers from Ponchatoula, LA

We Need Your Support...

I wanted to share with you a few of the stories of *hope and changed lives* that we have been able to accomplish this year *with your help*. **God has opened new and exciting avenues for us to serve that will have a dramatic positive impact in the lives of the youth and families in our community in the coming year. We need your help as you prayerfully consider your year-end giving.** May God richly bless you as we celebrate God's greatest gift in sending His Son!

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