

# Stewpot

*Faith meeting needs in our community*



A Newsletter of Stewpot Community Services

April 2011

## Opportunity Center *To Continue During Summer*

By: Rev. Frank Spencer

Thanks to the generosity of one of Jackson's most beloved families (who wish to remain anonymous) Stewpot's day shelter, The Opportunity Center, will remain open during the summer. A donation from the same family allowed the Center to open during the cold of the winter and now homeless individuals will also be able to escape the heat of the summer. Aside from protection from the elements, Opportunity Center assists capable individuals to find employment through the availability of showers, clothes washers and dryers, computers for accessing the WIN Job Center online job bank, telephones, and a mail drop. Also available are the services of numerous social agencies which send personnel to the fully equipped offices at the Center.

The Director of the Center is Heather Logan, who came to Stewpot 14 years ago as a sophomore in Biblical Studies at Belhaven and a Americorps employee to help in the Afterschool Program. After Heathers graduation, she became a fulltime employee and has worked here ever since except for a 2 year stint as Director of the City of Jackson's Homeless Program. Although Heather worked mainly with the children and the elderly and mentally challenged individuals in her previous work experience at Stewpot, she had to develop a knowledge of a clients' family needs in order to truly help them. As a result, Heather is widely respected throughout the West Jackson area.

With Heathers advice, the Center has changed from allowing everyone admission

to the Center to allowing just truly homeless individuals, most from local shelters. As a result, daily attendance has dropped from an average of 165 a day in early 2010 to about 90 a day. The change from what had become a "community center" to a facility for the homeless has allowed staff and volunteers to concentrate their efforts on those who need help and will benefit from the help. However, during periods of extreme heat and cold, the Center will allow local residents to use the Center if heating/cooling in their normal residence is inadequate.

The opening of the Center has led Stewpot staff to realize the need of additional services for the homeless. As a result, during last winter and in cooperation with the City of Jackson, Opportunity Center was opened to take in the overflow of homeless from the other homeless shelters in the area when the temperature dropped belows 35 degrees. Additionally, the Center has been used as a TB testing facility to assist in combating an unusually resistant strain of TB among the homeless and jailed inmates. Stewpot ultimately equipped all of its facilities with ultraviolet lights in the air conditioning systems to kill all airborne germs.

The Stewpot family is extremely grateful to the donor family for insuring that the Opportunity Center stays open at least until next winter and pray that additional funding becomes available for the time after that.

### Director's Corner

Taste of Mississippi 2011 was once again a grand success! The day started off cool and damp but the rain went north and the evening turned out very nice. The crowd was reduced probably by 10% due to the weather but the rest of us had a cool, sweat-free, and truly fun time.

Taste of Mississippi 2011 had a record number of restaurants and beverage distributors participating this year as 47 different ones came out to support Stewpot with their best entrees, desserts, appetizers and beverages. THANK YOU to all these businesses and to the site provider Highland Village and security provider, Sheriff Malcolm McMillin. These friends make the event possible and so much fun. Thank you also to

Continued inside on pg. 2



Rev. Frank Spencer, Executive Director

My name is Diann Clark Tillman, and I am the newest member of the Stewpot family as the receptionist. I have been here approximately eight weeks and have LOVED every minute of it.

The last few years of my life have been extremely difficult because of many bad choices that I have made. Stewpot has offered me a chance at a new beginning, and I am very thankful and appreciative.

I love working here with the other staff members. They have welcomed me with open arms and a loving spirit. I am blessed to be a part of such a wonderful group.

I have always loved working with people and this gives me the opportunity to help others in a way that I have never had before. I am also an avid football fan of both college and professional. I am a die-hard Ole Miss and Saints fan and cannot wait until the football season begins each year.

I look forward to a long working relationship with the staff and the clients at Stewpot for many years to come while serving the community to the best of my ability. Many thanks again to Stewpot for this opportunity.



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Bless each  
of you in all  
areas of  
your lives.

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*Diann Clark Tillman*

# CONGRATULATIONS ON A JOB WELL DONE!

*Taste of Mississippi 2011 Winning Restaurants*



- Best Entrée': **Julep Restaurant**  
Best Dressed: **Ameristar Casino**  
Best Dessert: **Crazy Cat Bakeries**  
Best Appetizer: **Babalu**

## Teen's in Action



### **Nikki's Giving Back**

Nicole Neyland graduated from Jim Hill High School in 2009 and is currently attending Hinds Community College. She is studying to become a nurse. She has been part of our program for 13 years. Nikki has worked with our younger children during high school and has continued into college. She has been a leader, a mentor, and a source of encouragement to all children and youth in our Program.



### **You Go Amber ...**

Amber Love is a 12th grader at Jim Hill High School. She has been in our programs for 15 years. Amber has worked hard in school and will be graduating in June of 2011. She is in the process of planning for college. In 2009 and 2010 Amber was accepted into the Science Junior National Honor Society, and hopes to be inducted into the Science National Honor Society in 2011. Amber wants to be a Pediatrician and help children receive adequate healthcare. Your Stewpot family is very proud of you, future Dr. Amber Love!

## THANK YOU

*for sponsoring*

## TASTE OF MISSISSIPPI 2011!

## Director's Corner ...Continued from front

the many volunteers (over 100) without whom we could not run the event. As with all Stewpot functions and ministry, the volunteers make it all possible so, Thank You!

Pryor Graeber was the main singing attraction again this year along with her band the talented Tombstones. The band members have been wonderful Stewpot volunteers for as long as I have been associated with Stewpot and Pryor even contributes her happy and valuable artwork to the Taste of Mississippi auction.

A wonderful addition this year was another faithful Stewpot volunteer, Hunter Gibson, along with his band, the Gators. Pryor held the crowd attention with her jazzy blues style in the atrium and Hunter and the Gators had the rest of the folks rockin' from the gazebo in the courtyard. Hunter blew the crowd away when he magically transformed into a tattooed, wild haired, leather clad (and maybe bat-eating) Ozzy Osborn look-alike. The show had to be shut down 15 minutes after closing time in fear that Highland Village would not invite us back next year.

Finally, a huge THANK YOU to the Taste of Mississippi Committee and this year's co-chairs Doris Scott and Michelle Bingham for their investment of personal time, problem solving talents, patience and love in putting this event together. Their work helped raise over \$100,000 which goes a long way to make the ministry of Stewpot possible. May God bless you all!

# Check Us Out!

By: Heather Ivery

After a rather harsh winter, with many days of being open both day and night because of the cold, Opportunity Center was in need of some freshening up. Staff and clients both agreed that what was really needed was a fresh coat of paint on the walls, especially in the day room. A volunteer group was scheduled to come during spring break to help out, but they cancelled at the last minute. It looked like we would have to wait a while to get the room painted, but the clients of Opportunity Center had a different idea. Several of them suggested I let them paint the room. Now, I knew many of them had painting skills much better than mine, but I was concerned that this easily distracted group may begin the job, but would not see it through. However, I was encouraged that they even offered; after all, one thing we try to foster is a sense of ownership in the Center and therefore an interest in keeping it clean and in good repair.

So we chose a day that was sunny and dry and announced that for a few hours that day we would be painting. If you were going to be in the building during that time, you would be expected to help out. It was not required that you help. Showers, bathrooms, laundry and phones were still available for anyone who needed them.



Getting started was a little slow. The guys who had first suggested we do the work ourselves were experienced painters who at one time had made a pretty good living at their trade before drugs and bad decisions led them to life on the streets. They had issue with the inexpensive (in their words “cheap”) rollers and brushes we had. A little discussion about budgets vs. doing a top quality job ensued. They finally decided to work with the materials we had, but if the job did not show off their best work, I would not be allowed to tell anyone they were involved. I had no problem agreeing and was sure they would do an excellent job anyway.

In all, eleven people volunteered to help that day with varying degrees of painting experience. My limited skills were mediocre at best compared to some and almost professional compared to others. But none of mattered to me that day. What impressed me was their willingness to help out and their genuine excitement to be involved. Add to that some good music and a few pizzas and we had a paint party! It only took about 3 hours to finish the room and it made a huge difference in the look of the Center.

Next, we are tackling the hall and the computer lab. Come by and check out our new look.

# Who Needs You? THE OC NEEDS YOU YOU, YOU, & YES YOU!

By: *Heather Ivery Director, Opportunity Center*

Since Opportunity Center reopened (lovingly dubbed ‘The OC’ by its clients) I have been blessed and amazed at how many people want to know how they can help out. Those of us who work day in and day out with the poor and homeless can sometime feel like we are in this alone. We are working with a group of people many of whom society does not want to deal with and could care less about. But, when we get in that same rut, the Lord has a way of shaking us a bit and showing us we are not working in a vacuum. There are many people who may want to help but just don’t know how. There are many ways to get involved in what’s happening at the ‘OC.’

I can’t tell you how many times someone has told me they feel bad for the homeless. They would like to help, but they can’t afford to give money, or they don’t know anything about homeless people so they don’t think they have anything to offer. This could not be farther from the truth. If you have a desire to serve, you are already on the right track. It doesn’t take any special knowledge, just a willingness to use your talents to help others.

The homeless need the same things you and I do. They need to get clean every day. They need to eat. They need to sleep. They need clothes and haircuts and entertainment. Some need more education, computer skills, jobs, medical services. They are just people with limited access to the things we often take for granted. Simply volunteering to share the talents we already have will meet these needs. It all starts with a willingness and desire to serve.

## *volunteer opportunities* → **AT THE OC**

- Assist with resume writing
- One on One or group computer classes
- Provide haircuts (men and women)
- Answer phones/check in
- Teach a life skills class on topics ranging from (hygiene to parenting, to interview skills, etc)
- Lead a Bible Study
- Wash laundry on weekends at the center
- Collect hygiene items, towels, washcloths, detergent, socks, and underwear for clients
- Provide bus passes for transportation (\$3 round trip)

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Your Stewpot family now has a Facebook page!!



**When you are browsing the social network scene look up the Stewpot facebook page and become a fan!**

**Summer Camp is Just Around the Corner!**

We're looking for groups to make lunches for our campers. Or if you have a special talent to share with our campers for enrichment, we need you! Contact Enjoli Ealey or Tara Lindsey at 601.353.2759 to sign up today.

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