

ADVANCEMENT



Hope for Urban Community

Dear Friends!

Thanks for supporting Advance Memphis towards the purchase and renovation of our new facility. You're doing a GREAT job! We expect to be in and operational this fall. Please pray for the selection of a general contractor and the remaining \$63,000 needed to complete the building.

Thanks again for your continual support, both financial and in prayer!

Our Mission is to serve adults in the Cleaborn and Foote Community with knowledge, resources, and skills to be economically self-sufficient through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

ADVANCEMENT

Dear Friends,

Who is Rhoda? Rhoda is in the Bible (Acts 12:13). Why can Advance Memphis relate to Rhoda? Rhoda was in a prayer meeting with her church who was earnestly praying for Peter's release from prison. She discovered that he was released when Peter knocked at the door where they were praying. She was so overjoyed about her prayer being answered that she RAN back to the group, and left him at the door. OOPS, she forgot to let him in!

Friends, Advance Memphis can identify because your prayers and ours are being answered. The Holy Spirit is working through His people. Here are some indicators:

- A Jobs for Life (JFL) participant asked to open a savings account before graduation, and has since signed up for the June 29th Money Mgmt. class. While at the bank we said hello to a 2003 Money Mgmt. graduate who was there making an IDA deposit.
- The daughter of a 2005 JFL graduate asked her daddy, "How long are you going to be working?" (She asked this because she has never seen her daddy, who is in his late 30's work!) But praise God; he has now been gainfully employed full time for eight months!
- A May 2006 JFL graduate went with me to a job site, saw a man (JFL graduate employed full time) he knew from the street, and said to me, "Is that such & such?" I replied, "yes". My friend left hopeful that he too would find fulltime employment.
- In May 12-14 residents worked together to clean up in front of Mohammad's store, "The Yellow Store". Mohammad came out and gave our group free drinks!
- At the New Beginnings Community Church's annual Tingum (picnic) I visited with a volunteer who encouraged Advance to keep sending out our email prayer request.
- Class participants continue to ask for and take home copies of God's word, so we keep buying more & more Bibles!
- Our current JFL class was filled before the last one finished!
- Advance has prayed for our own home in the community and we now **OWN** 769 Vance Avenue. If you haven't heard, God graciously provided and allowed us to pay in cash!
- The most recent JFL class participants said "Let **US** bring some meat for the grill and contribute to the graduation feast!" Great to see participation, ownership, pride, and community forming!

God is answering your prayers and ours! Hearts are being pricked! Men and women are being introduced & reintroduced to God's truth! Change is occurring! I see it everyday and I'm filled with joy. It is overwhelming to see what God is doing through the body of Christ. Please have patience with us (the staff) if we happen to leave you standing at the door like Rhoda did Peter; we'll be right back to get you! Advance wants you on the team serving our King!

Thanks for keeping us out here with your prayers and donations.

To God be all the glory,

Steve Nash

Executive Director



The Newsletter for Advance Memphis - Summer 2006

The fallow ground of the poor would yield much food, but it is swept away through injustice.

- Proverbs 13:23

After our March class, 50% of our graduates are working full time and will be eligible for benefits in a few weeks. One who was only interested in the medical field just recently had an interview at Methodist East. The only graduate that isn't seeking employment at this time is waiting until after her baby is born to begin her job search.

Originally the Jobs for Life program only enrolled ten students per class. However, we found that through various circumstances, usually drugs, we had lost about 30% to 40% of our students by the completion of the class. After eight months and seven classes of seeing this pattern develop, we decided to increase our enrollment to fifteen students to compensate for our losses, in the hopes of graduating eight to ten students. On May 1, 2006 our Jobs for Life class kicked off with fifteen very energetic students. By the end of the class we graduated fourteen of those fifteen; praise be to our Heavenly Father! Out of those fourteen, four have had very promising interviews, one having been offered a part time job. Six more have received part time jobs; two are working full time.

Let's praise Him together and consider this: the Body of Christ has come together with teachers, lunch volunteers, prayer teams, resume-day volunteers, observers who sit in to visit the class while considering becoming a volunteer mentor (which we desperately need more of) and last but not least those who send in monetary donations. **Now look at it! Dream about it! Get excited about it! Be a part of it:**

THE WHOLE BODY OF CHRIST is coming together with HANDS that lift and gently touch, FEET that tread the highway transporting, EARS that listen, SOUND MINDS that give wisdom and guidance, ARMS that embrace, SHOULDERS that lend themselves to cry on. Churches of all kinds of denominations, from Downtown, Midtown, East Memphis, Germantown, friends and churches from Mississippi, the whole Body of Christ, are acting like the Body of Christ all together. There is an area in this Body that perfectly fits the gift God has given you, and we are waiting for you. I hope your heart is racing and tears are welling with joy as you consider getting involved.

"We believe that just finding a job for someone who needs a job without providing much more has never worked, no matter how many times it's been tried. We believe people in poverty, in confusion, who need a way out, who need a job, must first be willing to build a life around and within themselves" (excerpted from the JFL brochure).

Thanks for praying and serving

Rod Williams

Jobs For Life Coordinator



You shall give to Him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to Him, because for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor in your land.'

Deuteronomy 15:10-11

SOUCT - (STREETS OF UNION FOR COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION)

I have lived in the Cleaborn and Foote Home Community for a little over 20 years. During this time, I have seen a lot of drastic changes. When I was younger, there was a lot of pride in the neighborhood. We were surrounded by numerous, small, black-owned businesses. The people that resided in the community were family oriented; the neighborhood was well kept. The churches were hands on in the community on a regular basis. It felt good to be surrounded by people who cared about their community.

However, as I got older, the community started to deteriorate. The small, black owned businesses began to close down. "Two-parent" homes became single-parent and welfare-dependent homes. As for the churches, they mostly closed their doors and put their main focus on their church members, most of whom no longer live in the neighborhood. This made the children of the community reach out for love and attention from other groups of people, such as gang members and drug dealers. To make matters worse, we had no support from the political leaders because their only concern was our vote. The pride that my community once had, mainly in its appearance, had disappeared. Feeling lost and despairing I got caught up in this life-style. Like a lot of us, I just felt hopelessness.

Seeing these changes made me very frustrated and disgusted. Being only one person, I knew I couldn't make the change by myself. So, I prayed for help and guidance. It's funny how when you're in a jam, looking for answers, God makes a way out from a dead-end. After getting involved with Advance Memphis, around August 2005, the staff introduced me to a program called SOUCT (Streets of Union for Community Transformation). This group meets twice a month, every 2nd and 4th Tuesday, to discuss ways to improve my community. A number of things were discussed, such as speed bumps for main streets in the neighborhood, clean-ups for the community and neighborhood watches.



After attending several meetings, I still felt like much more could be done. God heard my cries and He provided a blessing for me that I could not have imagined: He opened a door for employment with Advance Memphis. Along with my employment came leadership over the SOUCT Group. What started off as a group the size of a quartet, has now evolved into a group of 30 or more and growing. With God as my leader, I have been able to recruit more members into the group and establish a monthly clean-up schedule.

Currently, SOUCT has begun to make preparations to do a fund-raiser for the community. We're looking at the possibility of a 5K Run to raise money to be put back into our community towards supplies for our schools, Booker T. Washington, Georgia Preparatory Elementary and Vance Middle Schools, some better equipment in the park for our children to play on or even more large garbage cans for the community. From August 2005 until now, SOUCT has restored some of the things that I sought to see restored to my community. Things like beautification of our community by doing monthly clean-ups, and doing more neighborhood watches, businesses are starting to relocate in our community and people are beginning to take pride and responsibility in becoming more independent and less welfare dependent. Yet even with all this progress, there is still much work to be done.

With all this said, we are always looking for volunteers in various areas. We always need help with the clean-ups, even fund-raiser suggestions and ways to beautify the community. We need help with economic development (bringing businesses to the community that offer jobs for the people in our community) to help get rid of welfare-dependency. We want to help parents become more independent. We are also looking for volunteers to bring Tuesday night dinner for our SOUCT meetings. Our mission statement is: **To unify as one to transform our community from a slumber to a healthy, beautiful and safe environment, making our (Cleaborn and Foote Home) Community First!!**

LaTonya Farmer
Group Coordinator

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Romans 8:28

Money Management and IDAs

I must say I am encouraged by the turnout from the last class that graduated on May 25th. Ten people completed the eight-week program from start to finish. My delight is not in the fact that they graduated but in their attentiveness during the class. Several class members asked questions, made up classes in a timely fashion, and consistently shared how much they were learning. It is when I see people apply what they have been taught that I gain the most joy from teaching.

During the last class, I also had two new guest speakers from different banks come and share their knowledge on the basics of banking and predatory lending. It has been amazing to see how the body of Christ has worked together to bring this, and more, about through multiple connections. Already, I have a guest from the Memphis Consumer Credit Bureau coming to the next class, thanks to a connection through my Predatory Lending speaker.

The next class is set for June 29th. We are currently recruiting class participants, snack providers, and guest speakers. Holding two classes on Thursdays has worked well, so we are going to keep up the tradition. Given that multiple people mentioned, in their evaluations, extending the class (not the first time this has been suggested), we will look into possible options for this. One person even suggested meeting twice a week! This, of course, is another reason why I'm thrilled about the recent turn out. Meeting more frequently? Adding another class or two? Pretty cool!

We recently have discovered an important role to be filled as a couple IDA savers search for a new car. The staff of Advance is somewhat mechanically challenged and desperately need someone that is well learned in the area of auto mechanics as well as trustworthy. We want to ensure our Savers are getting the best for their money, along with Advance making a wise investment with the match dollars. If you feel up to this task or know of someone who may be, please give me a call. We can use your services today.



Results to Date:

Out of our target population, we have had:

194 Interested Parties
109 Participants (53%)
74 Graduates (68%)
35 IDAs Open (52%)

Currently, we have:

15 Active IDAs
9 Successful IDAs
10 Unsuccessful IDAs
1 IDA on a 'Leave of Absence' (IDA account holders still have open accounts, but have temporarily suspended their monthly deposits)

One change you may find in the next newsletter is a new program name. We are currently holding a Title contest, which is open to all Money Management Graduates. The person with the best name will win a \$50 gift certificate. Stay tuned for the unveiling!

Ann Brainerd

Money Management/IDA Coordinator