

PARKER STREET BEAT

A quarterly publication of Parker Street Ministries, Inc.

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Spring 2011

Parker Street Ministries, Inc. is a Christ-centered, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization committed to individual, family and community restoration, reconciliation and revitalization in Lakeland's Parker Street community.

FAMILY LIFE CENTER OPENS FINALLY IN!

It was a dark and stormy night... but that didn't dampen anyone's enthusiasm as Trinity Presbyterian Pastor Tim Rice charged Family Life Center ribbon cutting attendees from Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me,...the Lord has anointed me...to bring good news to the poor, ...to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, to comfort all who mourn...And this is what the WORD becoming flesh and moving into our



Ribbon cutting guests were amazed by the transformation.

Neighborhood is about.

Despite raging storms, **more than 150 turned out for the ribbon cutting for phase one of a three-phase, \$1.95 million renovation and expansion.**

Those who attended were privy to a *show and tell* like none other, as a historical

but run-down building at the gateway to downtown Lakeland had been transformed by Rodda Construction.

The newly named George W. Jenkins Gymnasium and surrounding classrooms, along with a completely outfitted service kitchen, make up the Family Life Center (FLC), forming a first-class venue in the eyes of many that evening. After the adults cut the ribbon, students had mini-ribbon cuttings at each classroom door. Tours, refreshments, and activities followed.

The other phases are due for completion in September 2011.



Community art at ribbon cutting

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Ongoing Events

Wednesday Evenings—Neighborhood Bible Studies—**volunteers needed for meal preparation**—contact admin@parkerstreetministries.org

Weekday Summer Bridge Camp—Academic Enrichment Program—Jun 13-Aug 12 **volunteers needed**—contact christina@parkerstreetministries.org

Various Saturdays—Neighborhood or Facility Work Projects—**volunteers needed**—contact admin@parkerstreetministries.org

Scheduled Events

August 2—National Night Out activities in Family Life Center and GWJ Gym

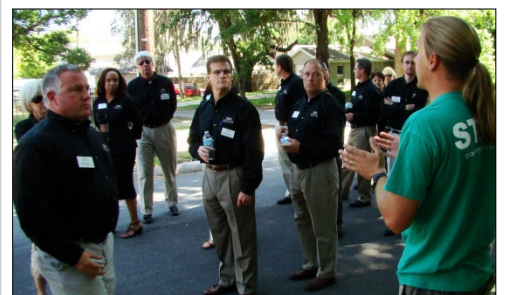
Date TBD—Summer Splash Back to School Party—**groups needed to sponsor and organize this event to take place between late August and mid-September**—contact admin@parkerstreetministries.org

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We have had many dark and stormy nights over the past few months. One of those dark nights came the Monday before our ribbon cutting. Five years ago Christy and I adopted James, a kid from the neighborhood. He has been an amazing blessing to our family. James turned 18 on March 25 and, without a word, moved out of our house the following Monday. Needless to say, we were shocked and deeply hurt, but as an 18-year-old, he can legally move out. We still have not been able to talk to him and are now hearing that he may be moving to New York.

As is natural in these types of situations, we have started to question everything, but God has been so faithful in reminding us that **we are not called to success but to faithfulness.** Success is the job of the Holy Spirit. This truth is what makes it possible to weather the dark and stormy nights that are all too common in this type of work.

The good news is there are still many bright spots in the journey, one of them being the privilege of seeing the joy on the faces of the families as we celebrated the opening of our beautifully renovated Family Life Center. Many of our dear friends were on hand to participate in our ribbon cutting on March 31. If you missed it, please call me. I'd be delighted to show you this amazing blessing.



Leadership Lakeland Class XXVIII toured the neighborhood in March.

Yes, the work is hard and sometimes tears at your soul, but the truth of God's love for us and his love for our neighborhood remains the rock we can hold onto. Please keep us in your prayers. God bless you,

Tim Mitchell
tim@parkerstreetministries.org

WILL YOU HELP US? FUNDS NEEDED FOR OPERATIONS

By Kim Schell, Director of Development

Many of you made commitments to the building renovation that continue through 2012. Many others continue to give regularly to Parker Street Ministries. We are thankful for your amazing, sacrificial generosity. **We ask you to renew your commitment to fund our day-to-day operations.** Our budget is \$500,000 in 2011 and \$550,000 in 2012, reflecting new costs of ownership and program expansion. Praise the Lord for the new Family Life Center!

As we look at the neighborhood around our awesome facility, the staff has an increasing sense of urgency. We are ready to get to work. We have spent much time forming long-range and short-range goals for these transition years. When funded at the above levels, we can grow from serving 135 neighbors each week to 255 by 2012, and our direct programming hours can grow from an average of 33 hours to 50 hours per week! Even without program growth, our budget continues to require \$471,000.

2011 Projected Operations



Starting Balance \$32,692
Deposits thru 15 APR 11 \$151,813
Remaining Need \$315,495

Will you help us? Please donate online at www.parkerstreetministries.org or mail to PSM, PO Box 433, Lakeland, FL 33802 **Your donation to Parker Street Ministries will make a positive change in the future of these residents and in the future of our community.**

Thank you for loving your neighbors as yourselves.

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ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT PROGRAM UPDATE

by Christina Allen, Director of Education



Glory to God for the new classrooms for our kids. We had a busy fall and winter. While the staff and site committee members were schooled in patience, compromise, project management, and change orders, my students were displaced into every available nook and cranny that also came without heat—such that academic enrichment had to be cancelled a few days in January and February. You cannot imagine the excitement of our kids to be in the FLC, where everything is clean, the air conditioning actually works, the doors lock behind us, and there are adequate bathroom facilities. One young student told her teacher at school, “You’ve got to come see our new building! It’s green!”



Second and third graders enter classroom for first time as Commissioner Don Selvage and parent Larry DeShazor look on.

Despite all the change-ups of the past quarter, we plugged away every afternoon at homework and prescribed reading and math practice. I say prescribed because we now have—through software purchased with a grant from the city—the ability to test the students’ reading and math levels. This testing has confirmed that the majority of students come into AEP a grade level behind in reading and math. They also fit the typical category of students whose math skills plateau in their elementary years and who struggle with more advanced math concepts in middle school. Based on our experience, **we need almost two years of AEP attendance for a primary child to catch up to their grade level, and we need two to three years to help a middle school student catch up to grade level.**

For the first time in three years, we have several students who may fail to meet grade level requirements, a reasonable expectation with nearly 20 new students in the past year. Please pray for these students, that working with their parents and schools, we can find the best learning environment for every student and help them resolve behavioral problems.

Art partnerships continue to be strong. Polk Museum of Art (PMoA) works with our students once each week. We look forward to PMoA coming to our art room every day for four weeks of summer camp. PSM also partnered with Platform Art and two schools to produce an art mural project on bike safety that is currently displayed at City Hall. It will be exchanged with a similar project produced by students in our sister city in Japan. What a great opportunity for students to learn about art, safety, and Japan and to work with other children in Lakeland!



Urban art by Rocky Bridges was commissioned for PSM and hangs outside new art room.

A recent survey of the neighborhood revealed 67 new prospects for AEP this summer. Please pray for wisdom, funding, and volunteers as we plan to expand by 20 students beginning June 13, growing from serving 58 to 78 children. **Volunteers in classrooms make the difference as we work with these kids. Please let me know you can help,** at christina@parkerstreetministries.org.

CHRISTMAS STORE

LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING AHEAD

In February *The Economist*, an international magazine, cited Lakeland for its increasing poverty rates. Since 2007 Lakeland has seen jumps of at least four percentage points of people living below the poverty line—one of the biggest increases in the United States. Our staff who live in the neighborhood know you don't have to look far to find people living in poverty, and we were delighted to serve the community through Christmas Store (CS) 2010.

One-stop, drive-by gifts do not address root issues of poverty. That is the reason we stopped handing out Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners two years ago. However, *Christmas Store Parker Street Style* does not fall into that telescopic philanthropy category but rather seeks to help donors, volunteers, and especially residents in a rehabilitative way that builds dignity and reconciles.

Here are the differences:

- Parents select their own child's gifts. We do not work around the parents.
- Parents purchase the gifts, playing a part in Christmas for their family.
- Parents save 75% on their purchases.
- CS is restricted to registered residents, fostering ownership and responsibility.

- CS holistically serves families already served by our other programs.
- CS allows for outreach deeper into the neighborhood where we find prospects for AEP and other programs.
- Kids learn about generosity by shopping for parents at Kids Corner.
- CS is an entry point for volunteers to meet our neighbors and come back to serve in other areas.

Each year we evaluate the store and make suggestions for the following year. One goal for the 2010 Christmas Store was to make sure residents were working side-by-side with the community volunteers to reduce the temptation for feelings of economic division between volunteers and residents. This change served residents and volunteers well.

To our family at PSM...

Thank you for being a part of our community and making a difference in the lives of our futures (kids). Please don't hesitate to ask if there is anything I can do to help you as much as you help me.
Love, K. (a mother of five)

Christmas Store 2011 will be in the Family Life Center. **Please let us know now that you and your organization will partner with us. The dates are December 10, 16, and 17. Donations are needed by December 9.** Contact admin@parkerstreetministries.org.



Residents and volunteers worked side-by-side.

FAMILIAR FACES RETURN

*by Ben Turner,
Director of Spiritual Development*

Over the last month God has been encouraging me by slowly bringing people who had been gone from our neighborhood back into my life.

One of these relationships is with a man who lived across from my old apartment before I got married. We started spending time together when we grilled out together at his house. I heard that he was picked up in November and went to jail. I was sad to hear that but excited when I got a call from him because he had been released and wanted to talk with me. He said he thought a lot while in jail about his relationship with God and he wanted to talk to me about it! It was God answering my specific prayer that He would cause this man to remember our conversations. I'm excited to see what God will do next in his life.

Another one of these old relationships is with a guy who played basketball with me and who lived with me over a year ago. We quickly became friends. After being roommates for almost a year, he moved out and we haven't really been around each other since. God seems to be bringing him back into my life now as well. We have been playing basketball together again on the weekends and having a good time. I invited him to come with the Parker Street Ministries staff to a fundraising dinner. I was hoping it would be another opportunity to spend time with him, and it turned out to be tons of fun.

God is continuing to build new relationships in our lives and also bringing back the old relationships. Please continue to pray that He would transform the hearts of the people in the Parker Street neighborhood through these relationships.

ben@parkerstreetministries.org



Wednesday evening Bible study

Christmas Store 2010 At a Glance...

- 1,562 gifts
- 204 children
- 84 families
- 210 volunteers



PARKER STREET MINISTRIES

P.O. Box 433
Lakeland, FL 33802-0433

PH 863.682.4544

FAX 863.603.7779

E-mail:

news@parkerstreetministries.org

Visit our Web site:

www.parkerstreetministries.org

Check out our new
Family Life Center!
Scan with smart phone.



Or click for YouTube

video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNLJ8aPUSnc>
Parker Street Ministries Ribbon Cutting

SPRING THING—EASTER EGG HUNT



NEIGHBORHOOD PARTY

More than 200 people attended the annual Easter Egg Hunt on April 16. More than 100 children registered for the hunt, and students from St. Paul Lutheran School provided eggs filled with treasures. Host churches—Highlands Park Church of the Nazarene and St. Paul Lutheran Church—brought games, food, and volunteers. Would you like to be part of our Back to School event or another neighborhood event? Select an event that fits your organization's schedule. Contact Hannah at admin@parkerstreetministries.org.

MICHIGAN GROUP VOLUNTEERS

In March a group of college students from His House Christian Fellowship in Michigan spent their spring break in Lakeland with PSM and Lighthouse. They worked in AEP every afternoon and conducted door-to-door surveys of the neighborhood. **This work enables us to create an “asset map” that helps us understand the neighborhood in terms of its assets rather than its problems...**(x welders, x mechanics, x teens rather than x prostitutes, x drug dealers, etc.).



Spring Break Lakeland—His House Christian Fellowship—Mount Pleasant, MI

SAVE \$ GO GREEN! Receive PSM updates via email. Send address to news@parkerstreetministries.org.



*Staff at Barnyard BBQ Bash
Christina Rotary Fundraiser*