

## Neighborhood Christmas Store-y



In the beginning, there were tons of toys and hundreds of volunteers and parents and children.

By *The End*, they had all come together in a beautiful love story. Moms and dads loved their kids

and loved choosing just the right gifts that their kids would love. The Body of Christ – people from different denominations and organizations all over Lakeland – came to Parker Street to meet our beloved neighborhood. Even kids came in and shopped for their families, leaving Kids' Corner with treasure-filled secrets as they lugged out "heavy" bags full of presents they COULD NOT WAIT to give to their parents. (Some were so excited they gave the gifts to their parents when reunited after shopping.) This was our best toy year EVER, and we can't thank enough the hundreds of donors, volunteers, and the George W. Jenkins Fund. Together, they made the store happen. Thank you for your role in our Neighborhood Christmas Store-y. — Hannah Joy Ferguson



### 2013 Christmas Store

#### At a Glance...

- 1,840+ gifts sold
- 289+ children served
- 104+ families served
- 111+ children shopped for parents in Kids' Corner
- 298+ volunteers made it happen

*More Photos*

From executive Director  
*Tim Mitchell*



You have probably heard me say over the years that we are called to faithfulness, not success. Well, here is proof of this. . .

Over the last 16 years, I have had the privilege of calling D my friend. When we met, he was a homeless 20-year-old with no family and no real goal or ambition to do anything but live for the moment. He did stand out as one of the most loyal and hard-working men I had ever met.

Over the years he has found himself in all sorts of scary and even life-threatening situations but was not ever willing to surrender fully to God. All these years he has been in our prayers and has been someone I have longed to see come to Christ. Honestly, I just figured that someday when I was old and gray I would hear from someone of D's conversion.

Three weeks ago D showed up to Bible study as he has for the past two years. This particular day we were having a corporate prayer time, which D usually would not participate in. But this time he did pray, and right there in front of the small group, he gave up and asked Jesus into his heart.

Just so you know how awesome God is, this was not an evangelistic time. We were just praying through specific topics that had been preplanned. But God chose that particular time to pull on D's heart.

So, yes, most of our work looks like those 16 years of praying and waiting, but some days we get to see God do amazing things that give us hope to carry on. I am so glad that even on the days that I felt I would never see D know God, Jesus was never resting in his pursuit of D. We serve a mighty God who is profoundly more faithful than we will ever be.

May God bless you.

Tim (at) parkerstreetministries.org

## Calendar

Contact Info: 863.682.4544  
admin (at) parkerstreetministries.org

**After-school Academic Enrichment Program (AEP)** - For grades kindergarten through 8, registration required. Mon-Fri, 3-6p, most school days. Snack, homework help, math, and reading enrichment in a Christian environment. Call to register.

**High School Students** - Homework help, Mon-Fri, 3-4p, volunteer in AEP 4-6p. Call office.

**High School Nights** - Tues, 6:30-8:30p, through May, Family Life Center, various activities.

**Ladies' Fitness Nights** - Tues, 8:30-9:30p, ages high school and up, Community Center.

**Housing and Facility Workdays** - Tues-Fri, 9a-5p - Need volunteers with construction experience! Call office.

### PLAN AHEAD:

**FREE Tax Prep NOW** for families with incomes less than \$57,000. Call 2-1-1.

**Neighborhood Easter Egg Hunt** - Sat, April 12, 4p.

**Taking Victory to the Streets** - Benefiting Parker Street Ministries on May 5. Hold the date for Business Breakfast or Community Dinner to be held onsite. You choose the meal.

**Positive Parenting and Make [My] Money Last Seminars** - Sat, June 21, 12-2p and 3-5p. In Family Life Center.

Save money by using a FREE income tax preparer.  
AVOID TAX PREPARATION FEES AND REFUND LOAN CHARGES.



## AROUND THE 'HOOD



*The Tax Collector's office has moved from one end of the neighborhood to Massachusetts. The new building looks great. We welcome the people who work at "the other green building down the street."*

- In other neighborhood business happenings, the Lakeland Primary Care Clinic will soon be moving to Missouri Avenue, across from Bryant Stadium.
- Thirteen new students were added to the after-school program as a result of Christmas Store. We still have openings for neighborhood children in grades K-12. Call 863.682.4544.
- The Mu Zeta Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha presented Tim Mitchell with a Community Service Award at their annual banquet in December.
- Christina Allen was honored to pin two long-term AEP classroom leaders during ceremonies marking their graduation from Southeastern University. Christa Cochran and Katie Maurer are now teaching in the Polk County School System.



*Stranger than fiction—Tim Mitchell, Mitch Harvey, and Mitch Mitchell at Mitchells.*

- The first in a series of seminars called *Make [My] Money Last* was held in January. Neighborhood residents led discussions on stretching grocery budgets and on setting savings goals for income tax refunds. The next class is scheduled for Saturday, June 21 at 3pm. All Parker Street neighborhood residents are invited, and parents of AEP students receive participation hours for attending.

### Parker Street Ministries, Inc.

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## Serving students and parents

*by Christina Allen*

*Academic Enrichment Program (AEP) Director*



In December 2003, over 10 years ago, God opened doors for my husband, Greg, and me to move into the Parker Street neighborhood. Looking back, I had no idea how many blessings God had in store for us.

In the early days, I was drawn by PSM's desire to reach the whole family. Teaching in the public school classroom at the time, I often felt the limitations of my role as teacher. I wanted the time and freedom to get to know my students and their families, but it was not possible. When I came on staff at PSM, I was excited to have that opportunity. Then I realized I had no idea how to do that! I have always loved working with kids, but "grown-ups" scared me. I realized pretty quickly how young, awkward, and inadequate I was.



*Laura Putnam, from Polk Museum of Art, helps AEP student create art portfolio.*

All along, God knew what he was doing and exactly what I needed. I needed a friend to take me in, help me grow up, and show me what God had to offer through me. I met one in the laundry room of our old apartment building. I was wearing my school shirt from work that day, and she mistook me for a student. So there it was, my awkwardness, front and center! With that first meeting out of the way, and through God's kindness, we became great friends. We ran errands together, tutored

together, and just "did life." She took the scariness away.

I have the privilege of working with lots of kids, getting to teach them about God's word, encouraging them to achieve, and equipping classroom leaders and volunteers to help students grow in all areas. If that isn't enough, God has given me relationships with many of my students' moms. Together we fight for the success of our students, advocating with and for our families. I can't imagine living, working, or raising my kids in any other place.



*UthMpac came in October and created language arts activities to last all year.*

[More Photos](#)

In January, we identified students at-risk of failing language arts or math. In addition to our regular academic program emphasizing math, reading, and homework help, these students will receive individual tutoring in their problem subject areas. Report cards, observations, and our own software, help us identify these students. Last year, we helped 26 of these struggling students make adequate progress. Please pray we can be as effective this year!

Thank you for your support!

christina (at) parkerstreetministries.org



*What a group of students and parents!*

# Revitalizing the Neighborhood

by Thomas Gaige

Neighborhood Stabilization Director



Peachtree renovation project with new Milwaukee Sawzall.

Life around the Parker Street neighborhood is always interesting and brings new challenges. The trick is to be able to grow and learn from the experiences that we face so that we are better equipped for the next time something happens. Over Labor Day weekend, someone decided that it would be a good idea to break into our job site trailer and steal all of our tools and small supplies. It was as if they connected a vacuum to it and sucked it clean! The trailer was parked across the street from my home, next to one of the houses we are renovating, and it was well secured. Initially, I felt angry, frustrated, and violated. How could this have happened to us? Later in the evening, a dear friend reminded me of Matthew 5:43-47:

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. . . . For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?”*

Once I turned my response to one of loving my enemy, my heart began to change. The next day I was not angry. Rather I decided that I would simply pick up used tools at a pawn shop as we needed them and keep on working. Aside from a few friends, I did not really tell folks about the mishap. I decided I was going to trust in the Lord to take care of things.

In releasing my attitude and our belongings to the Lord, He has proven faithful to provide what we need right when we need it. Right away I received gifts of money toward new tools. We had friends dropping off tools at our house and offers to lend me anything I needed. Through a connection with an online tool magazine called *Pro Tool Reviews*, we were able to replace nearly everything with newer and better models than what was lost. Looking back, it gives me goose bumps to think of how the God of the universe cared so amazingly well for us in what was perceived as such a loss. I am humbled by the generosity of the community and the wonderful friends and neighbors we have here.



March Madness came early with installation of retractable basketball backstops, courtesy of the Kivwanis Cares for Kids Auction.



Check out the new generator.

Needless to say, things have not slowed down around our projects or facility. We have been able to make great progress on the houses and also helped some residents with their housing projects. If you have construction skills to share, please let us know! Contact Hannah at admin (at) parkerstreetministries.org

Tom (at) parkerstreetministries.org

Bridge Learning Gaps  
Volunteer at AEP



Assist classroom leaders  
or teach a Friday extracurricular class!  
Contact volunteer (at) parkerstreetministries.org

Taking  
**Victory**  
To The Streets

... Benefiting Parker Street Ministries

Eat Good. Do Good.

Monday | May 5

Business Breakfast OR  
Community Dinner

Family Life Center @  
Parker Street Ministries

\$400 reserved table of eight  
\$25 pp breakfast | \$40 pp dinner

Sponsorships available. Contact Kim at 863.682.4544 or  
Development (at) parkerstreetministries.org

Hold the Date!



# PARKER STREET MINISTRIES

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

Phone 863.682.4544  
Fax 863.603.7779

E-mail [news@parkerstreetministries.org](mailto:news@parkerstreetministries.org)  
[www.parkerstreetministries.org](http://www.parkerstreetministries.org)  
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Extra news for our eNews subscribers:

- Parker Street Ministries is governed by a Board of Trustees. They elected a new Executive Board in December. The new Chair is **Brian Hurley, M. Div.**, new Chair-elect is **Kyle Davis, MBA**, and new Treasurer is **Lance Schmidt, CPA**. **Clint Gordon** is Immediate Past Chair and a new member of the Advisory Committee. **Teresa Bray-Paul** continues as Secretary.
- Click on the “More Photos” links to find Facebook albums for Fall Festival, UthMpact Day, and Christmas Store.
- Looking for a special project for your small group or family to do for Parker Street Ministries? You can get ideas and instructions on our *Pinterest* boards.
- Golfers: plan now to tee it up for Parker Street on Saturday, July 26, when Woodmen of the World will be sponsoring an annual golf tournament benefiting Parker Street Ministries at Cleveland Heights Golf Course.



Woo-hoo. This is reason to celebrate! We received top-level recognition for financial transparency.



Cotton Candy



Family Photo Booth



Candy Heaven!



Volunteers from FSC

**Fall Festival** [More Photos](#)

Even though we moved inside because of the weather, we had a great time with the first ever family photo booth, new games (thanks to Florida Southern College’s Sigma Chi fraternity), and snacks. It was the BEST CANDY YEAR EVER. Thank you to everyone who brought in your leftover candy from October!! And thank you to the volunteers who pulled together to make Fall Festival happen!



Fun Games



Thankful Board



Potty Toss

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