

Charlottesville Abundant Life Ministries

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www.charlottesvilleabundantlife.org

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PROGRAMS

- Elevate
- Buford Tutoring
- Walker Tutoring
- CHS Tutoring
- Johnson Tutoring
- Ladies of Quality Jr
- Ladies of Quality Sr
- Intelligent Girls Club
- 5/8 Club
- Fri. Afternoon Bible Club (6-9 year olds)
- Individual Development Accounts (IDA)
- Senior Solutions
- Hispanic Outreach
- Summer Camp

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

I would like to help support &/or volunteer for Charlottesville Abundant Life Ministries (CALM).

Name:

Address:

Phone

Email:

Gift enclosed \$

Can we expect

regular gifts? (\$\$ / month or quarter)

I want to Volunteer; my preferred area of service is:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Mail this form & gift to: CALM

P.O. Box 3482

Charlottesville, VA 22903

Want to receive your Abundant Life Newsletter by e-mail?

We are now e-mailing the newsletter to all who ask to be on that distribution list instead of receiving it by snail mail. To request the change or make any other change to your contact information, send a note to: news@charlottesvilleabundantlife.org



Dr. Ed Botchwey speaks at MLK DAY 2011 community celebration

Charlottesville Abundant Life Ministries

NEWSIN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

March 2011

Exploring the Beloved Community

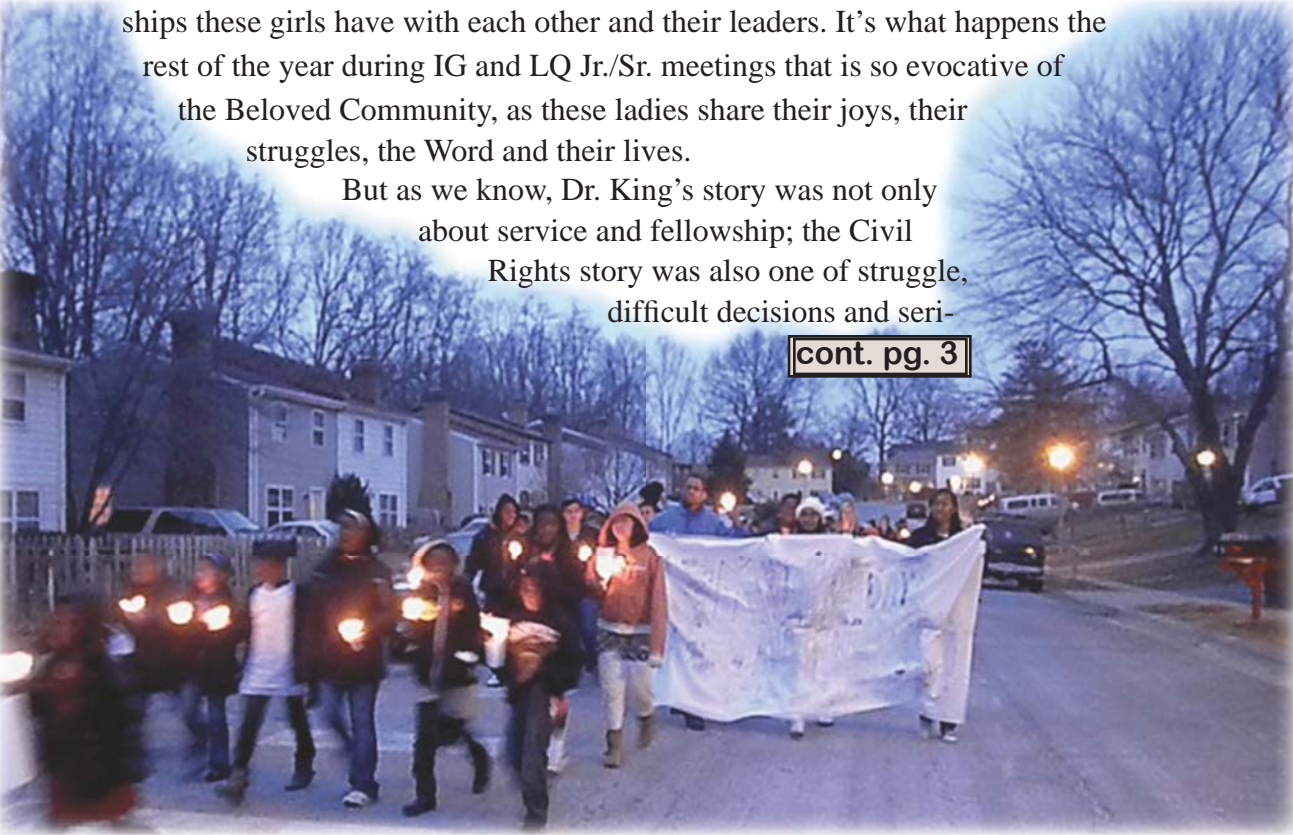
by Andrew Morrisett

This January 17th 2011 marked the 25th year that Martin Luther King Jr. Day has been celebrated as a national holiday, and it also marked the 9th annual Abundant Life MLK Day celebration. These mile markers beg us to take a minute to reflect more seriously on Dr. King’s vision and the progress made thus far in the Prospect Avenue community. King often discussed the struggle of being a part of the journey towards the ‘Beloved Community.’ This is a community characterized by nonviolence, love, reconciliation and ultimately by redemption. This year’s MLK Day celebration provides for us a window into exploring the ‘Beloved Community’ as it is being realized in Prospect.

Music drew participants into the day, as the pizza lunch at the Boys and Girls Club was accompanied by the smooth sounds of the New Stars of Central Virginia. This segued into the afternoon activities, in which the kids in the neighborhood had the chance to do a service project and discuss the impact of Dr. King. It was a source of joy for many to see 1st-4th graders picking up trash on their streets, to hear from older boys after a trip to a local nursing home and to see others serving dinner. However, when the lens of ‘Beloved Community’ is applied, it is not these few hours of service that excites, but rather the beauty of the relationships that extend well beyond the holiday. While it is seemingly inexplicable to see a dozen middle and high school girls get up early on their day off in order to serve at a homeless shelter, clarity is gained when we zoom out and look at the relationships these girls have with each other and their leaders. It’s what happens the rest of the year during IG and LQ Jr./Sr. meetings that is so evocative of the Beloved Community, as these ladies share their joys, their struggles, the Word and their lives.

But as we know, Dr. King’s story was not only about service and fellowship; the Civil Rights story was also one of struggle, difficult decisions and seri-

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Light of Opportunity

by Tony Greene

For nearly five years now I have had the privilege to be a part of Abundant Life Ministries' outreach to the children and families of Prospect Avenue. Throughout this time I've been repeatedly blessed by the guidance offered and the foundation laid by those who have come before me. It was in fact my older brother that initially connected me with the ministry and it was often the influence of those older and wiser than I that kept drawing me back. Through that simple beginning I was connected with two students at Buford Middle School that have since then blessed me in ways beyond measure. For four years I spent a couple hours with them each week, mostly working through homework or preparing for upcoming tests, but all the while building a relationship of trust, confidence, and mutual respect. Following the example of many others, I took advantage of extra time here and there, treating the boys to bowling, ice cream, the movies. Even when they both moved on to high school I had chances to watch one of them play baseball at CHS. In a time of turmoil for one of them, I had the chance to take him to the gym with me where we burned off some steam working out against a punching bag and then shootin' some hoops. However, my experience is not particularly unique. There have been

many that have come before me that have blazed similar trails and there are many that will come after me that will have a deeper impact and harvest greater fruit than I could have imagined. This is the power of CALM here in Charlottesville. The heart of Abundant Life is one of perseverance and presence. It is here to stay. The example of so many others has been the inspiration that kept me in the race when I've been worn down and have come close to losing hope. Those that today sacrifice afternoons to pour into students' lives, those that live in and invest in the community itself, these are the ones that will continue to inspire the future hands and feet of Christ in Charlottesville. If not for those that came before me, I would not have had the opportunity to see the redemption that comes from not just months, but years of investment in the development of a young soul. It is my honor to share a story that hopefully will inspire some and encourage others to persevere. The faithful presence of CALM and the sometimes seemingly fruitless hours spent on an often thankless task have now become the bricks and mortar from which we are able to see the growth of new life, new community, and new hope. Here in the City of Charlottesville, out of the brokenness of our world shines the light of opportunity for so many that might otherwise be denied and with God's grace it will continue to restore the brokenness of God's glorious Creation until He comes to bring it to Himself.

Thank You for Your Gifts and Prayers!

In December's newsletter and by letter to many of our friends, we asked for prayer and gifts to meet our year-end financial need. We want to report that our Lord blessed the prayers of many, using giving by old and new friends to cover our year-end bills and gave us a small cushion to start 2011. Of course, we always need financial supporters, especially those who can give on a regular quarterly or monthly basis. And we always covet more prayer supporters. Thank you for playing either or both of these roles as you feel led in the ongoing support of our work.



Giving Back by Martell Washington

My name is Martell Washington. I am from Charlottesville, VA. I graduated from Charlottesville High School in 2009. I am currently attending classes at Piedmont Virginia Community College and working part-time at Gold's Gym. After attending PVCC, I intend to transfer to Old Dominion University and major in Exercise Science. This past January I joined the Staff at Abundant Life as an AmeriCorps member. I work with the 5th-8th grade boys program, the K-4th grade tutoring program, and coach the 6th-8th grade boys basketball team.

I moved to Prospect Avenue when I was 9 years old. Growing up in Prospect had its ups and downs. I can remember times when there were fights and gun shots heard all over Char-

lottesville and the first place the news media would mention was Prospect. But I do remember some good times also. My friends and I would play games such as baseball, basketball, kickball, and we even made our own little football league. Depending on which side you lived on in Blue Ridge Commons, that's the team you played with. It was a lot of fun and I made a lot of friends in the neighborhood.

I would have to say overall that growing up in Prospect had its advantages. As an alternative to hanging out in the streets doing negative things, I had a place to go to lead me in a positive direction. That's where Abundant Life came into the picture. I started going to Abundant Life when I was about 9 or 10 years old. Going to Gentlemen of Quality club, or GQ as we called it, led me in the right direction. At GQ we had Bible study, games, and cool leaders that volunteered their time to help us out. They gave us the right guidance to Christ, showing us a better way of life.

As time went on I kept up with Abundant Life. When I was in the 5th grade there was a new program I attended through Abundant Life called 5/8. 5/8 is a program for 5th through 8th grade boys to learn life skills and the Bible. 5/8 was the main program that really led me to a right direction with all its leaders giving me advice, supporting me in every event I did, whether it was a school event or a local event. I played on the 5/8 basketball team through Abundant Life and the YMCA and for two years running, my teammates and I went to the championships and won.

Abundant Life gave me so much support in my life, giving me wisdom to where I now want to help out youth that live in situations I did or worse. Giving back to my community is an ultimate goal of mine. I want to see my community joined together and able to stand up to anything. I also want the people that live in Prospect to be able to live together in peace and harmony. I'm trying to do my part.

Exploring the Beloved Community cont.

ous challenges to individuals and to a nation. This spirit was seen throughout the day as many sought to grapple with past injustices as well as challenges that still confront us. This year's theme was focused on race and education, and how the interplay of these two will impact the future of our community and nation. While our middle and high school boys watched a film about racial tensions in schools, Professor Renee Shackelford led an engaging adult discussion on the role of race in the creation and present day function of our educational system. As the day progressed into night, our evening ceremony found over a hundred children and adults in the Buford School auditorium, listening to Dr. Ed Botchwey, Professor of Bio-medical Engineering at the University of Virginia. Dr. Botchwey shared about the challenges still facing African Americans today, and the need for people to rise above fear to achieve their dreams.

In light of this continual struggle towards the Beloved Community, it is still appropriate to take a moment to celebrate how far we've come. After the traditional candlelit march through the neighborhood, we had an opportunity to honor some community members who represent those glimpses of the Beloved Community. Seventh grader Alison Johnson was given an award for her impressive academic work, while Martell Washington was recognized for his continued commitment to the Prospect community. Hope Payne was given the Beloved Community Award as she has continuously and tirelessly given of herself to this community in many different capacities over the years. The 9th annual MLK Day celebration ended in a way that was almost a microcosm of the hoped-for community, as hundreds of Prospect area residents, friends and volunteers joined together around the table and enjoyed a meal. This unity and fellowship represents a small piece of what we hope to find at the end of this journey... reconciliation, redemption and the Beloved Community.