



Inside this Issue

- 1 GBM Seeks To Help 350 Families
- 2 A Day at GBM
- 3 Metropolitan Gardens Residents Receive Notices to Vacate
- 5 Latest Poverty Numbers and the Good Economic Times
- 5 Local Youth Get it Right
- 6 GBM Direct Services Report
- 6 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Unity Breakfast set for January 15, 2001
- 7 Holiday Gifts with a Difference
- 8 *Holiday Greetings and Happy New Year!*

Greater Birmingham Ministries
 2304 12th Avenue North
 Birmingham, Alabama
 35234-3111

Phone: (205) 326-6821
 www.gbm.org



GBM Seeks to Help 350 Families, 1000 Children

Once again, Greater Birmingham Ministries is coordinating efforts by area faith communities to make food and toys available to families in need during the upcoming holiday season. GBM's Direct Services work group has committed to help 350 families this year, which include approximately 1,000 children. This may well be all that these families have at Christmas. To fulfill this commitment, we will again need generous donations from the community, and we will need to receive these items **by December 12th, if at all possible, and by December 20th at the very latest.** The items that will be needed are listed below:

- **Food:** canned vegetables, meats and fruits; peanut butter, macaroni and cheese, spaghetti, oatmeal, sugar, flour, rice, dried beans, pastas, cake mixes and packaged cookies. **We can also accept fresh meats this year, thanks to the generous donation of a commercial refrigerator. Chickens and turkeys are especially needed.**
- **New gifts for children of all ages:** toys for both girls and boys, ages infant through 16 years. Books, footballs, basketballs, Nerf toys, soccer balls, dolls, toy cars and trucks, games, radios, wrist-watches for teenagers, clothing for teenage girls and boys, coloring books, crayons, paint sets, stuffed animals, toddler pull toys. **NO TOY GUNS, Please.**
- **New Clothes:** Play clothes and clothes for children suitable for school (white shirts, dark blue pants and skirts).
- **Money:** If you cannot get out to shop for food or toys, you can provide funds by sending a check to GBM, 2304 12th Avenue North, 35234 and marked "Holiday Needs." We also use funds to buy Bibles and blankets.
- **Volunteer Time:** We need additional volunteers during November and December, so please contact Sarah Price, Ernestine Davis or Wanda Long at 326-6821 to volunteer or schedule a group.

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Friends, Please Note:

Due to limited storage space, GBM will **not** be able to accept donations of used clothing from

November 15, 2000 until January 4, 2001.

Please hold your donations for us until then. Thank you for your patience.

A Day At Greater Birmingham Ministries

A day at Greater Birmingham Ministries is like meeting a city, a real city, made up of real human beings.

Not a city where the poor, the disabled, the abandoned, the homeless and the frightened are kept—or swept—out of sight, lest our vision be offended or lest we worry that our image in the eyes of the world be damaged.

Here need appears. Pain is heard. Hope struggles to be more than words.

Who are these people? These real, flesh and blood human beings, these people in need. What's wrong that they find themselves at GBM? That's a question we ask ourselves. But, there is another question that lurks just outside the door of GBM which we also hear in the broader community: What's wrong with these people that they find themselves at GBM?

It's early in the morning, and there is already a long line of people waiting at our front door. Some have been here since 4 AM hoping for a place in line. We can only see 40 people on any given day. When the doors are opened, a line of tired, burdened people file in. Now the waiting room is packed.

Over there sits a grandmother on Social Security, but whose rent takes more than half her monthly income. There's little money for groceries and utilities, especially when cold weather gets here and her heating bill goes up.

Beside her sits another grandmother, a different color of skin, but who has no Social Security because her dead husband never had a job that reported his income or paid his taxes. And when she worked as a maid, her employers always paid her under the table to keep from paying her Social Security. Now she has nothing to live on, to speak of, except a small dis-

ability check that she gets because she's old she's considered disabled.

In one corner sits a man whose water bill is higher than his rent because his landlord won't fix the leak under the apartment he rents. He's worked for 26 years at the same job, raised a family of four, but now he has diabetes and his doctor has told him that if he keeps on working, he'll lose his feet. He's already had gangrene in two toes, which were amputated last week. He is late with his rent this month, and he already owes last month's.

And over there sit two women, one in her nineties with her daughter next to her in her sixties. Her daughter never married, and now the older woman is so weak, disoriented and frail that her daughter dare not leave her alone during the day or night. So, she can't go to work any more. They live together in an old house that they own, but which is falling in around them. Water pours in during rain. The heat barely works. They have no money for repairs. You see, they have no family left at all. They don't know what is going to happen to them. They're terrified. It's just the two of them alone—here in the midst of all the rest of us.

There is another woman who works at Wal-Mart to keep her children fed while her husband tries to recover from back surgery, which they couldn't afford and will probably be paying for the rest of their lives. You see, neither one of them had health insurance at their jobs when his back went out on him. So, by the time they pay the monthly payment on the debt to the hospital and the doctor, there's just not enough for all the kids need for school or even clothes. It's a good month when they have the groceries they need and gas for the car. Right now she has a tooth with an abscess.

She doesn't know what to do about that.

And then there's the woman recovering from the murder of her son, but who has been fired as a school teacher because she had an emotional breakdown. In fact, the school system is suing her because they claim they overpaid her for a month's salary, and she didn't have the money to pay them back. She just got out of the hospital, and her house is in foreclosure.

And over in the corner is a young man dying of AIDS, and who hasn't been able to work in several months. No one in his family will even talk to him. He wonders whether we will, if he tells us everything.

There's also the older woman with worn out shoes and calluses on her hands who struggles to keep food on her own table. But she's not here for herself. She's brought the wife from a young family whose just had a baby, so she's been off work and the husband's job doesn't pay enough to cover all their bills.

There's a mentally ill man pacing in the back hall near the coffee pot. He lives in a boarding home which manages all his money and gives him room and board. But he just needs a place to come and be with people because he gets scared with no one to talk to and many of the other people at the group home are too sick to carry on a conversation.

The room is packed. Forty people in chairs, others standing, all waiting, hoping and amazingly enough, trying to keep on finding the courage and prayers to stave off panic and hopelessness. They come with their stories, and the people often try to help and comfort each other while they wait for us to hear what they have to say and do what we can to help them patch up their lives.

Meanwhile, the phone at the

(Continued on page 4)

Metropolitan Gardens Residents Receive Notice to Vacate



HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE BIRMINGHAM DISTRICT

Leased Housing and Section 8

Housing Management

**NINETY (90) DAY NOTICE TO VACATE
NOTICE OF DISPLACEMENT**

Date: 10/12/00

Dear Metropolitan Gardens Resident:

On September 1, 1999, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) approved Metropolitan Gardens for demolition and revitalization under the HOPE VI program. You were previously notified of these plans.

It has been determined that you will be displaced from your home at Metropolitan Gardens by permanent relocation to another housing site, Section 8 housing, or other public housing; or you will relocate temporarily followed by permanent relocation. This is **YOUR NINETY (90) DAY NOTICE TO VACATE**. It will be necessary for you to relocate for HABD to carry out the project.

You do not need to move now; but you must move by the date shown on this letter. When you do move, you are entitled to relocation payments and other assistance in accordance with federal regulations implementing the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended (URA). You are eligible for relocation assistance that may include:

COUNSELING, ADVISORY, AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

PAYMENT FOR MOVING EXPENSES

REPLACEMENT HOUSING PAYMENTS

Your 90-days will start on 10/13/00 and end 01/13/01

We want to again make it clear that you are eligible for assistance to help you relocate. In addition to moving assistance, housing referrals, counseling and other services are available to you. An HABD representative is available to further explain your rights and help you obtain the moving assistance for which you are eligible. If you have any questions, please contact

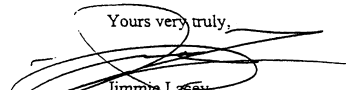
Brown Marx Tower, 20

Relocation Specialists: Tallulah Nelson at 521-0648; Jethro Woodson at 521-0694; Terrence Hunter at 521-7711; or Cemal Ulgen at 521-7710. The Housing Authority will provide assistance as needed for the visually impaired, hearing impaired, those unable to understand English, those unable to read or for other circumstances that make it difficult for a person to read and understand this notice. The TDD numbers for the housing authority for the hearing impaired are (205) 521-0637 and (205) 521-0667. The TTY number for the state for the hearing impaired is 1-800-548-2546.

If you disagree with this action or believe that this action is adverse, you have the right to a formal grievance hearing and/or an appeal under the URA. You have ten (10) days from the date of this letter to request a grievance hearing and/or an appeal. You may make your request in person through the office of the Director of Housing Management. The procedures governing HABD's grievances/appeals are set forth in the HABD Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy and in the community Relocation Plan.

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT LETTER THAT YOU SHOULD KEEP!

Yours very truly,


Jimmie Lasey
Director of Housing Management

Residents of Metropolitan Gardens Public Housing Community have begun receiving notices to vacate their homes to make way for the HOPE VI project downtown. It will be a stressful Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday time for families, and any children will likely have to change schools in the middle of the school year.

A Day at GBM (Continued from page 2)

receptionist's desk is ringing constantly with calls from yet other people with their own stories.

There is the man calling from the hospital who needs help with his rent, because his landlord is about to evict. There is the young woman who's husband left her to raise her daughter alone. Her gas is off, and her part-time job cleaning a local church has come to an end. She's looking for work, but her car needs tires and she's behind in the rent. And it's so very cold.

And, the man who got fired from his job because the bus service is so lousy in Jefferson County that he was always late. He's not mad at his employer. He understands. But he's out of groceries, and the power is already off. He wishes they'd just get the buses out to where the jobs are in the southern part of the county.

There is a call from a woman trying to stay in a rehab program to beat her drug addiction, but she has a hard time coming up with the rent at the rehab home. She's terrified that if she leaves, her old friends will find her and she won't have the strength to resist.

And a woman calls who is trying to escape an abusive husband. She's afraid to leave, and afraid to stay with him. She's not sure what to do, but she knows she doesn't have the money to move out. Where can she go? And could we help with school uniforms?

And the woman who has her elderly aunt living with them, and she's on some really expensive medicines and some home health equipment to keep her breathing. They're behind on all their bills, but they've got to keep the electricity for the equipment

The receptionist tells the line of people at the door that we can't see any more people. That we already have more than we can help. She goes back and forth be-

tween the phone and the door to tell the people the same thing. Does she know another place? Well, have you tried these places? They sent you to us? I see. Well, no. I don't know anywhere else to try. I'm sorry.

"I'm sorry." We say those words every day. They're honest, but they stick in our throats like a giant dusty lump. They sicken our hearts, to know about need and not be able to meet it. Every story we can make the time to hear touches us inside, those of us who sit on the side of the desk with the phone and the notepad. Some of the people we see used to be sitting behind desks just like us. At banks and insurance companies.

Meanwhile upstairs, people who had been escaping homelessness by living at Metropolitan Gardens Public Housing community are talking with each other about the fact they've been told they've got to move out of their homes to make way for houses for people with more money. They're not sure what to do, and they're nervous about saying too much for fear that the Housing Authority might make it rough on them.

Why are all these people here? Did they commit some horrible sin in the eyes of God—or at least in the eyes of all the rest of us? Well, they are not perfect, that's true. At GBM, we're still looking for perfect people. Maybe you are, too. But these people's main problem is that they were born human, with flesh and blood, and not made of stone. If only they were made of stone, then they wouldn't feel the power of fear, pain and abandonment. If only they were made of stone, then they could stay outside in the cold and the rain and the wind and the heat. And their children wouldn't get hungry and their elderly wouldn't cry out in the night.

Yes, if only they were made of stone, and not flesh and blood. Then they would not be here at GBM or need the rest of us. Then

their need would not remind us that they are human and, in doing so remind all the rest of us that we are, too. That's the real problem. They're human, and they remind us that we are supposed to be, too.

Maybe what's really wrong is the fact that they are flesh and blood, while all too often those of us with money, cars and houses have hearts that somehow turn to stone so as not to be bothered with these flesh and blood creatures, with needs and hurts and hopes. Are we shocked that people have needs? Shocked that none of us make it on our own? Shocked that people need people?

The main problem may very well be that we expect people in trouble to have a magic wand that can turn the rest of us back into human beings with blood and compassion flowing through *our* veins and our souls instead of walking around heavy with possessions but even heavier in heart because hearts are not meant to be made of stone.

The poor and the weak are God's reminders, that we were created to care about one another, not just ourselves.

We were born to be human. We are here to be together. We are each other's business.

It is true that stone feels no pain and no compassion. Stone does not breathe. It cannot love.

It cannot live.

Never wish that others were made of stone.

Never wish that your heart were, either.

Even In the Best of Economic Times, the Need for Justice and Compassion Remains

The latest US Census report on poverty (based on 1999 statistics) was released recently. The end of 1999 and the beginning of 2000 marked one of the high water marks for the American economy. In Alabama, it represented perhaps the economic year in our state's history. And it has been a sustained period of growth and economic expansion stretching well over five years.

The good economic times are a welcome development, of course. For those who had enough money to invest in the stock market, either directly or through mutual funds and pension plans, it has been a remarkable period of time.

But even in the best of times, not only has the rising tide not lifted all boats, some are miles away from the nearest body of water. That is a

result of sickness, lack of transportation, family trauma, age, or the isolation of living in areas where jobs are simply extremely scarce, such as in many rural and urban areas where jobs are 15 to 50 miles away.

At the end of 1999, at the high water mark of the economy, 33 million people were still in poverty in the United States, and 671,000 people in Alabama remained in poverty. Over 15% of all children under were in poverty, and nearly one-third of all children under 5 were in poverty. For people over 65, nearly 10% still remained in poverty. Alabama had the 11th highest poverty rate in the country and remained among the worst 5 states for overall child well-being.

During 1999, people in Alabama still lacked adequate and accessible public transportation, and thousands of people still lacked health care. Housing, for those who could find it, absorbed 50% of many families' income, leaving little money for all other necessary expenses. Estimates are that perhaps as many as 30% of all Alabama families remained economically vulnerable to being unable to meet basic, essential needs for shelter, clothing, health care and food.

These are good economic times for many. But, even at this high water mark economically, human need still remains. Even in good economic times, economics cannot replace a moral and faithful commitment to compassion and justice for all people, especially for children, the sick, for those without homes and transportation, the disabled, and the aged.

Local Youth Think Beyond Themselves to Help Others

When three local 7th grade girls recently made plans for their birthday party, they thought about more than themselves. **Rebekah Weinberger, Emily Sherrod** and **Bade Scruggs** sent out invitations asking, "In place of a gift, please bring a non-perishable food item to be donated to Greater Birmingham Ministries." Their birthdays became a way of sharing hope and community with many people. It's hard to do better than that!

And a special thanks to all the students at **Pizitz Middle School** who donated 3 full van loads of food (over 9,000 cans) to GBM for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. May their own holiday dinners be all the more joyful and blessed because of the food they have provided to others.

GBM honors all these young people and their families for thinking of hungry families throughout the community.

Do You Have a Car You Can Donate?

Many people need transportation. If you have a car in good working condition which you can donate, please call GBM.

Living it Out

Fall 2000 • Volume 10, Number 3

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Greater Birmingham Ministries
2304 12th Avenue North
Birmingham, AL 35234-3111
(205) 326-6821
Fax: (205) 252-8458
www.gbm.org

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Sixteenth Street Baptist Church
Temple Emanu-El
Unitarian Church of Birmingham
United Church of Christ
United Methodist Church

Living It Out is produced by the Faith in Community Work Group, Dot Baker and Patricia Ross, Co-Chairs



GBM encouraged the community to get out and vote in a variety of ways, including voter registration and this 20-foot banner placed on the front of the building.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Unity Breakfast January 15, 2001

The annual celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday will include a week-long series of events sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. On the federal holiday itself, five local groups will also host the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Unity Breakfast at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex at 7:30 AM. Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth is this year's speaker. The five coordinating groups are the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the National Confer-

ence for Community and Justice, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Community Affairs Committee, and Greater Birmingham Ministries.

Individual tickets for the breakfast (\$12) may be purchased at the Convention Complex, and tables of 8 may be obtained by calling 324-8797.

For a full schedule of all the week-long celebration events, contact Rev. Abraham Woods of SCLC at St. Joseph's Baptist Church: 326-2113.

GBM Direct Services Report January -October, 2000	
Total Number of Families Assisted	2,694
Total Number of People Assisted	7,407
Number of Children	3,219
Number of Food Bags Distributed	4,235
Value of Food Given	\$135,520
Requests for Financial Assistance	\$212,736
Financial Assistance Given	\$112,600
Value of Total Assistance Given (Food and Financial)	\$248,120

Holiday Gifts with A Difference

Here's a thought that can count for many people this holiday season. For a donation of \$5 each, send a friend or family member a greeting card or a Christmas Tree ornament that will help people in need at the same time.

Call Gracie at GBM to make the arrangements. 326-6821



In this season of Grace, a gift has been given in your name to Greater Birmingham Ministries. This gift, which will be used to benefit the poorest of our neighbors was given by *(your name here)*

Open a Door

By making a contribution to Greater Birmingham Ministries, you open a door of opportunity and hope for people in need. Your contribution of money provides help with rent, utilities, and medicine for individuals throughout the Birmingham/Jefferson County area. Your contributions of food and clothing make it possible for others to conserve their meager financial resources to pay other bills. Your contribution of time and effort lets you work with and get to know people from all parts of the community.

Name: _____

Address _____

Please make checks payable to Greater Birmingham Ministries. GBM is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization as defined by Internal Revenue Service codes. Contributions are tax-deductible.

***Warmest Wishes
for Peace, Hope and Justice
to the entire Greater Birmingham
community***

from
Greater Birmingham Ministries

Thank you for your generosity during the past year.

Living It Out

Greater Birmingham Ministries
2304 12th Avenue North
Birmingham, AL 35234-3111

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Remember that Food Donations Help Pay Other Bills.

When families can save money on groceries, they have more left to pay rent and utilities.