End of the Year Fundraising Campaign - A Huge Success!

Success is measured in many ways. Often success is measured in terms of what one has accomplished. We consider our End of the Year Fundraising Campaign a success. However, we measure success not in terms of what one has accomplished but by what many accomplished on our behalf for the fundraising campaign.

The number of volunteers who gave of their time to phone bank, create graphics, write thank you notes, provide food and snacks to everyone who pitched in was outstanding. Our major donors who offered matching grants to help boost giving, our members who contributed and encouraged others to give, our board members and staff who set their own personal fundraising goals to help reach the overall goal of $100,000 went above and beyond.

It took a lot of people who believe in GBM to make the End of the Year Fundraising Campaign a success. We celebrate the many people who worked, prayed, and donated leading to a successful campaign. Our success is measured by what we accomplished together. We could not have done it without YOU!

Rev. Carolyn Foster, Fundraising Campaign Coordinator
GBM Faith in Community Coordinator
Celebrating 50 Years of Compassion, Justice & Proximity

The place is Birmingham. The year is 1969. The peak of the Civil Rights Movement had passed. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had been assassinated in Memphis in April of the previous year and Robert F. Kennedy had been assassinated in June of that year. The Vietnam War raged on. It was the year the Supreme Court ordered immediate desegregation of school districts, fully 15 years after the Supreme Court’s unanimous ruling in “Brown v. Board” stating that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”

For some there was a sense of turmoil, for all there was a sense of turbulence.

Against this backdrop, rose an indigenous, intergenerational, inclusive, inspired, and ecumenical (later interfaith) organization, that sought to seek the shalom of the city. Those founders called themselves Greater Birmingham Ministries.

Since our beginning, GBM has worked in collaboration with others (and that’s what building community is about) to identify vital gaps in our shared community and fill them. A “midwife” to change for the better, GBM organized the Crisis Center in 1969 to deal with issues of mental health, launched Access Unlimited in 1970 to advocate for those with disabilities, brought the Meals on Wheels program to Jefferson County in 1974, created the Firehouse Shelter for Men in 1983 and started what became Pathways, a shelter for women in 1985. GBM and two other organizations birthed Alabama’s only multi-issue low-income grassroots lobbying organization, Alabama Arise, in 1988. It was Arise that won Alabama’s first Landlord Tenant Law, a law that for the first time codified the rights and the responsibilities of both renters and landlords in our state.

GBM’s early years reflected both its respect for the people and leadership of Birmingham’s lowest income communities and its felt call to all people of faith to hear the words of the prophet as expressed in Micah 6:8, “what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”.

In a state that has historically rewarded the rich for being rich and punished the poor for being poor (see the Alabama Constitution of 1901, or better still, the transcript of the Alabama Constitutional Convention of 1901), GBM’s early leaders wrestled with how many people seemed to treat Micah 6:8 as some sort of multiple-choice quiz as if we are to choose to 1) do justice, or 2) love mercy or 3) walk humbly with God. Some, today, would even add a fourth: none of the above.

Proximity has taught me some basic and humbling truths, including this vital lesson: Each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done. My work with the poor and the incarcerated has persuaded me that the opposite of poverty is not wealth; the opposite of poverty is justice.

Bryan Stevenson
“Just Mercy”
families and communities that we can fully know the impacts of systems like transportation, healthcare, housing, education and taxation of our neighbors.

Because people matter, systems matter. GBM is nonpartisan, but we can never become indifferent to systems, arrangements of power, that harm the poor directly – and the rest of us, indirectly. After 50 years, there remains relationships to be strengthened, conversations to be held, chasms to be bridged, love to be shared and justice to be won.

Over these 50 years, it is GBM’s intentional proximity to low-income families and communities that has served as a reality check on ourselves and a trust-building process with others in our community building actions.

We have come to know that true community building is working with the poor and the non-poor to, yes, salve the wounds of the poor, but also to change those systems that affect the poor unjustly. And it’s only through active listening to low-income families and communities that we can fully know the impacts of systems like transportation, healthcare, housing, education and taxation of our neighbors.

Scott Douglas, Executive Director

Throughout December, WBHM 90.3 FM, was a drop off site for non-perishable food items, cleaning supplies, and toiletries for our food pantry which serves 200+ families a month. These items help replenish empty shelves following food distribution during the busy holiday season. We are very thankful for WBHM’s support and partnership.
Best Wishes and a Happy New Year in 2019 from the GBM Staff!