

Bates Chronicles



BATES PLACE MINISTRIES

NOVEMBER 2013

Mission Statement

Compelled by God's amazing love, Bates Place Ministries seeks to bring hope to our neighbors by reconnecting them to society and family, and empowering them toward a sustainable future.

-Adopted July 2012

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From Preacher's Kid to Prison Number to Professor A story of faith, grace and giving back



Cliff Washington— New Bates Place Board Member— WELCOME!

Six years after his release from prison, Cliff Washington learned that Aaron Westrick, the police officer directly involved in his incarceration wanted to speak with him. So with real trepidation and perhaps, spurred by the fact that it was Easter morning, Washington dialed the number and spoke to Aaron.

"The first thing I asked him was if he could forgive me. He told me he already had," Washington recalled as tears quickly formed in his eyes and began to make their way down his face. "Who but a God in heaven could be

behind that?" Washington says of the incredible grace he experienced that day.

Having grown up as a pastor's kid in Port Huron, Michigan, Washington had known about that God in heaven for a long time.

"[Bates Place] is a hub. Everyone who walks through their door has some type of need. I wish we had a Bates Place on every corner."

However, referring to the rebellious reputation of pastor's children, he admits: "Everything they say about pastor's kids is true. I took my parents through hell and back."

Washington says it was just drugs at first, but he soon became involved in a gang. Then, still just 17 years old, one fateful day, he found himself in a shootout with

Officer Westrick.

"We shot each other with 357s," Washington recalled the moment. "We could have killed each other."

While Washington didn't lose his life in the shootout, the event did change the course of it. Washington would spend the next fifteen years—from age 17 to 32—in prison for his crime. It was during that time in prison that Washington found his way back to his faith.

"I had strayed from the church, but I found God again in that prison chapel. It couldn't be my parole officers or counselors. It had to be me making a real change. Now I know [going to prison] was part of God's plan for my life, though I wish he'd found another way to bring me back to the church," Washington reflected.

Faith wasn't the only thing Washington found in that prison. He also met his wife.

(Washington cont. on page 4)

Calvin Meets C.L.E.A.R



I saw what redemptive restoration looks like....



Introductions

This August, Bates Place hosted 12 Calvin College students through Calvin's Streetfest Program which is part of a three day freshmen orientation. The goal of Streetfest is to familiarize most of these freshman with their new city. Bates Place was selected for it's unique location and presence in this neighborhood. The theme for this year's Streetfest was *Stepping Out: loving the city, learning from neighbors, living the call*. The students with their two mentors came on August 28 and were visitors to the CLEAR program held at Bates every **Thursday**. CLEAR (Coalition, Leadership, Education, Advice, Rehabilitation) supports men seeking a successful re-entry into society after leaving prison or jail. Also in attendance were the warden, assistant warden of Bellamy Creek Prison, two officers from Grand Rapids Police Department, Bryan Blakely, Executive Director of Bates Place and Cliff Washington, Executive Director of Pine Rest Re-entry Village.

The topic of that week's CLEAR meeting was conflict resolution. One of the officers talked about a particular incident where

one thing led to another, heated words were exchanged and a huge conflict resulted. CLEAR members were encouraged to come up with alternative ways to have handled this incident. Students also witnessed a young man's struggle as he worked through being in the same car when his 21 year old friend was shot and killed. There had been an altercation earlier that same night that had been unfortunately "resolved" through gun fire; what a powerful experience to be a part of! All non-CLEAR members were asked to leave the building so that these men could support and give advice to this struggling young man; these men are committed to helping each other.

After a tour of First Church, the food pantry, and looking at historical pictures in First's hallways, the students had a mentor led time of reflection. They returned to Bates Place for Bryan to describe the mission, vision and programs that make up Bates as we seek to "love the city, learn from neighbors, and live the call." There was an opportunity for questions, sharing insights and written reflections from the students.

Here are their reflections:

"I liked that they had made a loving community

together and offered support and tough love."

"I learned that some ex-convicts regret what they've seen and done."

"I learned that the things we heard and the people we met are similar to situations all around the world."

"I met new people and saw a little piece of their life."

"I liked that they all came together with people they didn't like in the past."

"I saw what redemptive restoration looks like in a community that wants to be real and face uncomfortable issues, including all members and shareholders of the community."

"I was thrown into a realistic world that I've never experienced before."

"I was impressed by the fact that the older men who had gone through the whole cycle before were there to help and advise the younger men who wanted to make a change in their lives and that they were all there to help each other through as a community."

"I enjoyed how much respect was shown between all of the men no matter what age they were."

~ Marlene Cook
Communications Director

Profiles in Walking Alongside

Jamie Floyd

There are scores of neighbors that come through our doors at Bates Place Ministries. We live out our mission statement (*Compelled by God's amazing love, Bates Place Ministries seeks to bring hope to our neighbors by reconnecting them to society and family, and empowering them toward a sustainable future*) each day as we sit, talk and build relationships. Some folks we see for a short time as we help them with utility bill assistance, others for a longer time as we work out landlord issues or as they search for jobs. Others "pop in and out" over the months to use the services at Bates Place Ministries. For whatever season of time we have together, we focus on helping neighbors in this community as they take a step forward.

Jamie Floyd was born in Youngstown, Ohio where he attended school and grew up with his family. As a young teenager Jamie enrolled in The Job Corp Center located in Dayton, Ohio. During this time, Jamie entered a certificate program in electronics and after graduating, he sought work in that particular field. While in Dayton, Jamie met and married his wife. In 1999 jobs in Youngstown were not plentiful, and the economy was not doing so well. Jamie and his wife decided to move to the state of Michigan to seek better employment opportunities. They moved to Saginaw, Michigan and experienced unstable jobs, which lead to unemployment and

eventually homelessness. Jamie came to Grand Rapids, Michigan and signed in a homeless shelter, Mel Trotter Mission. During his 90 day stay at Mel Trotter, he continued to search for employment and for a stable living arrangement.

One day while sorting through resources that were posted at Mel Trotter he discovered some information about Bates Place Ministries. Jamie said that it was very pleasant to enter into a drop-in-center that made him feel at home. At BPM he enjoyed having conversation with all of the staff; he liked the fact that everyone was willing to help look for work and housing



opportunities. Jamie has found steady employment and a stable living situation. Jamie believes in God Almighty, and gives thanks to the Lord for sending him to Bates Place Ministries.

~ Paul Larthridge
Drop-in Center Manager

Carmillia Lee

A presence in the Bates neighborhood for nearly her whole life, Carmillia actually grew up with her brothers across the street at the Blakely residence before Bryan and Toresa moved in. Carmillia recalls attending First CRC's Wednesday night programming as a seven year old during that time with her siblings and grandmother.

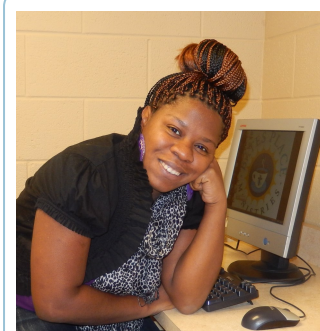
Fast-forward to the present day; Carmillia lives a few blocks from her childhood home raising a family of her own. She smiles as she tells me her four daughters are a joy but also a handful, ranging in age from 1 to 9 years old. In fact, one of her daughters is celebrating a 6th birthday this week. Two years ago in 2011, Carmillia met Bryan Blakely during the Wednesday night programming and through some of the resources at Bates Place began volunteering with the Inner City Christian Federation

(ICCF) and working part time at the Habitat for Humanity Store through a 6-month employment program. After this ended, she found work at the Van Andel Arena. Once she found a wallet with \$200 inside and against the advice of some colleagues to take the money, she turned it in. The wallet's owner insisted on meeting Carmillia and rewarded her the money as an act of gratitude.

After her job with Van Andel ended, Carmillia returned to Bates Place Ministries and pressed on, spending much time using the computers to fill out applications and contact potential employers and temp agencies. As it turns out, her most recent job was attained through Bates Place, but not through the typical employment acquisition assistance avenues offered. One day at Bates, Carmillia chatted with another woman there and was encouraged to apply through Workforce Strategies Inc., a

temp agency in Grand Rapids. The following Monday she went out for an interview and was offered a job that night. Not only does Bates Place offer services of assistance for those seeking employment, it also functions as a center of communication and networking. This networking, talking and brainstorming with others also seeking employment, turns out to be a very valuable aspect of Bates Place Ministries.

~ Ben Stark
Bates Place Volunteer





BATES PLACE MINISTRIES NOVEMBER 2013

Physical Address:
Bates Place
636 Bates Street SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Director:
Bryan R. Blakely, Sr.

Phone: (616) 241-BATES (2283)
Fax: (616) 452-6649
Email: batesplacegr@gmail.com
Web: www.batesplacegr.org

Ministry Center Hours:

- Monday: 9:00 - 4:00
- Tuesday: 9:00 - 4:00
- Wednesday: 9:00 - 4:00
- Thursday: CLOSED
(C.L.E.A.R.)
- Friday: 9:00 - 4:00

Your Tax-Deductible Gift to Bates Place is Appreciated!

Bates Place Ministries receives a generous grant from First Christian Reformed Church but we still need to raise funds to support our annual operating budget. The Bates Place Board has set a fund raising goal of \$15,750 for 2013.

Your gift to Bates Place supports its important ministry and outreach to challenging part of the city. Gifts to Bates Place are tax-deductible.

Mail to:

Bates Place Ministries
650 Bates Street SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

You can also make a gift on-line through our website at:

www.batesplacegr.org

Bates Place Board

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Dave Jacobs

Klasien Vaalburg

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Mark Zietse



The Bates Place neighborhood or service area is bounded by:

- Division Avenue (west)
- Fuller Avenue (east)
- Wealthy Street (north)
- Hall Street (south)

Visitors who reside outside this area are still offered advice and direction, but to be considered for financial assistance, a visitor must live within our defined neighborhood.

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