



common ground montgomery

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august

newsletter

2018



playground build

At the beginning of the summer, CGM received a new playground thanks to the efforts of KaBOOM!, Dr Pepper Snapple Group, Coca-Cola, Walmart, and over 300 volunteers that came out over a four-day build.

It was great to see so many people from the community come together and help build the playground. From partner groups such as Dr Pepper Snapple Group and Coca Cola; Walmart even had employees from three other cities show up.

News coverage about the event the day before the build caused the entire Alabama State University football team to come out, and several Montgomery organizations, like Emerge Montgomery, Serquest, and the River Region United Way, were able to help recruit volunteers.







summer camp

With the end of the summer we have another successful CGM Summer Camp accomplished. Thanks to donors and volunteers, our camp was able to have, among many things, ballet classes, hip hop dance classes, modeling classes, as well as fun outings to Rockin' Jump, The Capri Theater, AMC Theater, arcades, weekly swim time at Kershaw YMCA, one-on-one reading help, and more.

As part of the educational component to our camp, we had the "The Big Green Bus" stop by, and AUM student teachers and a few certified teachers supported math and reading time.

We must offer a HUGE THANK YOU to our volunteer groups. They brought loving spirits, laughter, and the light of Jesus with them. Special thanks to Willow Creek, Seven River, and Landmark churches, who helped with many things, including Bible study and craft and game times.

Summer Camp 2018 is in the books and we are now focused on the start of the fall program.



arts & crafts



group games





outdoor play



unified as a people

Growing up in Montgomery during the 80's, there was very little public talk of division and social separation of class or race. Our school textbooks told us about times past, but didn't speak about the modern expressions of the things that, not so long ago, were very formal and public fixtures of both law and society. And, although we weren't formally taught about them, we were informally taught about those boundaries every day.

Our neighborhoods were different. Our churches were different. Our sides of town, schools, and expectations for engagement with our world were all very different. No matter who we are, we lived, and in most cases still live, our lives behind walls that, unless purposefully and courageously traversed, leave those on either side of these walls void of an experiential blessing that can happen in no other way.

For years these self-reinforcing walls became increasingly real to me. I watched the changing social dynamics of my Normandale neighborhood, that was half white when I moved in as an 8 year old, become over 80% black by the time I went to college.

Attending magnet schools in the city made me aware of a clear delineation between the educational opportunities I had, versus the ones of my neighborhood peers. The walls didn't have to be spoken of in a textbook or by law, because they were evidenced in just about every daily experience. Depending on which side of the wall one's experiences fell, determined the way in which the wall was interpreted. Is it protective? Is it restrictive? Is it designed to keep you out, or keep you in?

As a youth, these walls seemed permanent to me. They had been a fixture in our southern culture for decades, and every attempt to break them down only seemed to lead to their strengthening. It seemed as if the walls never eroded but rather evolved and in many



justin hampton

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cases became invisible. Their height no less daunting, and their purpose no less evident. Until now.

Montgomery is seeing a transformation. Albeit slow and steady. We are seeing those who experienced these walls from both sides, ready to see them dismantled. From multicultural churches, mixed neighborhoods, and diversity in elections, to partnership in community revitalization. We are seeing once separate segments of society being drawn together out of a recognized necessity; an obligation to a shared love of our city. And, a realization that if we don't do it, no one will.

A microcosm of this was set before me a few weeks ago during our playground build. Over 300 volunteers converged on our campus one Saturday morning to sweat it out for a common cause. Every socioeconomic background, race, gender, and denomination was present to and unified to accomplish something grand in scale; a one day playground build.

That effort and that unity spoke to me. It showed me that a place once known for its division can now be known for its unity. A place known for its strife can be known for its connectivity and ability to execute on a singular vision toward something better. Our little city can come together and do the impossible. Neighborhoods long abandoned can be revitalized. Hope long lost can be restored.

On that playground build day it became clear that, in the mind of our Lord, "Common Ground" is more than the name of an organization. It is a necessary prerequisite to accomplishing that which has been deemed impossible. Although difficult at times, we are coming together and must continue to do so. Because, if we do, we will build things that formerly only resided in our imaginations.

In Genesis chapter 11, God looks upon the unity of humanity and the undertaking of a mutual goal and says, "nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible to them." He says this about a people rallied around an unrighteous goal.

Yet how much more can we then accomplish in the spirit, unified, with Him? Together we will build the impossible.

"Behold, they are one people... and nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible to them." Genesis 11:6