



CGM Life

common ground montgomery

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newsletter



middle school students

Justin Hampton

school. It's the age where disrespectful attitudes develop, apathy toward school begins to show, and peer pressure becomes the dominant force in decision making. But even with all these trends around them, our middle school students are showing amazing success by God's grace.

This year they're learning how to grow and maintain their own urban garden through a partnership with the non-profit group, EatSouth. Our students have worked hard to get planting beds ready for seeding. They've built their own underground irrigation system and recently they harvested their first radish crops in early October.

All of this hard work after school would be great if it stood alone, but these students have been working equally as hard in their classrooms at school as well. They collectively hold a 3.13 grade point average in a community where the graduation rate of their older peers is less than 65%. In a time where they are expected to lose, the middle school students at Common Ground Montgomery are not just surviving, they are thriving. We couldn't be more proud of them.

In the coming months they will take up their second harvest, build new planting beds, and dig additional irrigation systems before the start of the spring season.

In our After School Program, the age group that many people think is the hardest to deal with falls within middle



urban gardening



city alive block party

In partnership with Strongtower at Washington Park church, and with the help of several sponsors and many volunteers, Common Ground Montgomery helped host our first City Alive Block Party!

Many, many thanks to all who helped, participated, and attended.

It was a blessing even to those not normally drawn to hip hop. The presence of the Holy Spirit was indeed very sweet, not only during the concert, but also during the bi-annual Fam Fest with the families in the After School Program. The audience listened to hip hop artists, J'son and Thi'sl, speak about their own trials coming from similar backgrounds, as well as hear about the encouragements they have received from the gospel itself and the community of the body of Christ.

It was especially sweet to see, during a question and answer time, artist, J'son, walk over and hug a grandmother in our community who had begun weeping as she talked about the struggle of wondering if she was doing enough while trying to raise her grandchildren.



#cgm life



pictures from City Alive Block Party



christmas store

December 2013 marks Common Ground Montgomery's 7th Annual Christmas Store! The Christmas Store has collectively provided thousands of toys for youth in our neighborhood!

WE HAVE 2 VERY IMPORTANT GOALS:

1. We want to provide the kids in our programs the joy of receiving some toys for Christmas that they might not otherwise get.
2. We want to offer the parents and guardians of these kids the gift of dignity as they are provided an opportunity to purchase toys at an affordable rate.

Donations:

Drop-off days are limited to November 4, 2013 – December 13, 2013. Office hours are 10 A.M. – 6 P.M. Monday through Thursday, and 10 A.M. - 3 P.M on Friday.

Purchase any new toy(s) for children up to age 16.

Leave price tag intact or leave receipt in bag. DON'T WRAP ITEMS.

Donate gift cards from: Target, Toys-R-Us, or Wal-Mart

Donate by Cash or Check (please be sure to note "Christmas Store" in the check memo line).

Drop off at our office at 1516 Mobile Road, in Montgomery.

Consider becoming a volunteer in our Christmas Store.

Volunteer: We would love for you to come out prior to the store opening to help us shop for toys, to price items and set up the store. We also need folks to help us wrap gifts during the store hours, and to carry the toys out to cars. If you are interested in volunteering, please sign up using the instructions on our website: cgmlife.org/christmas-store

If you prefer not to use your email address to sign up, please contact Kevin King at 334.593.5803, and he will sign you up manually.



Bryan Kelly
CGM Founder and
Executive Director

- "Before Abraham was, I AM." -Jesus
- A young child opens up about her mom running away, with the latest man in her life, and leaving her behind.
 - A second grade boy tries to make sense of his 8-year old cousin who was shot and killed.
 - After School Program teachers are overwhelmed with journal entries and verbal testimony of 6 to 10-year olds discussing and acting out sexual experiences and acts of violence they have witnessed and are feeling.
 - A 6-year old boy explains to me, in words and concepts that fade in and out from the innocence of a child, in the darkness of misplaced adult profanity, how he has been exposed to all kinds of pornography by male family members and has no idea how to process what he has seen and what he feels.

"Before Abraham was, I AM." -Jesus

How are children supposed to bear the weight of the pain and trauma of these things? What in the world can we possibly offer in these deep places of hopelessness?

"We have this treasure in jars of clay." -Paul Of Tarsus

Most Wednesday nights I get the privilege of spending time with a group of boys I have known since they were 5th graders. They are now 17-years old and high school juniors.

We have been meeting together for years about the implications of the Gospel for their lives. A couple of weeks ago we talked about the constant battle they face to find their true identity in Christ and not in being a "park boy" or a "gwap boy" - neighborhood gang affiliations. None of them have fathers in their lives, and they speak openly about the pain and deficit of growing up never seeing an example of what it means to be a man. All they know is the perceived acceptance and masculinity of the adult males on the

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streets.

One of their home boys, a boy I have had spend the night in my home, a boy we have shared Christ with on many occasions, a boy we have had in summer camp and on basketball teams, is now in jail for the murder of another young man that was attending our church.

What hope is there for these young men? Jesus says He was here long before any other identity, long before any other family, long before any other place of security, and long before any deficit and traumatic event or circumstance they currently find themselves in. Either He is sufficient, by His grace, to meet these boys right where they are, in all their confusion, emptiness, abandonment, anger, and pain, or their ticket has been punched.

I really believe He is, through the gospel, His Spirit, His body, meeting them exactly where they are to do miracles. He is here to meet every one of the children we are walking with and that he is here with ALL that they truly need. It will take nothing less. There is no program, ministry, or person that can "fix" any of them, or us. The power lies in God alone.

My hope is fully placed in a Redeemer that can handle every one of these burdens. He simply is. He is enough. These are the places and the people that He longs to fill, to heal, to make them, and us, utterly whole. It is to this end that we look to live together on common ground.

Thank you for walking with, and investing in the kingdom of God in our neighborhood.

Psalm 34:3,

Bryan Kelly

common ground montgomery

