



common ground montgomery

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   @cgmlife

september
newsletter

2017

the new leadership development program

We recently changed the name and curriculum of the After School Program to the Leadership Development Program.

Why?

New executive director Justin Hampton answers with this: *"It's more than just a name change. 'After School Program' kind of sounds like daycare or childcare. Leadership Development is transforming the perspective of young minds to believe in themselves and believe in the possibilities of what they can accomplish. We believe that every young leader that comes through our doors is made in the image of God and that they are created with unlimited potential that can be maximized and shown to the world. And if they don't have that opportunity, everyone around them misses out."*





school year start





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john mark allen

When I participated in the 2014 CGM Summer Resident Mission, I fell in love with the neighborhood of Washington Park. I couldn't describe why—in fact, I still can't.

During that summer I made every effort I could to move to Montgomery. I had found a place to stay, been accepted at Alabama State University. Everything seemed to be coming together. Until the last week of the summer, when most of my plans seemed to fall through.

I left the internship frustrated and discouraged.

the new guy

Back in Georgia I began attending a local college. But I always made a point to come back and visit as often as I could, and to teach all that I had learned while I was there. I took the simple hashtag **#CGMLife** to heart. After about two years, I began struggling with severe depression. Several of my close friends pulled me aside and told me that they could see the difference in my eyes. I wasn't the joyful person I usually was. I knew that, but more than that, I began to feel that my life didn't have purpose any longer.

At some time during this period I sat down and began to dive through what my passions had previously been. Again and again I would think back to CGM and West Montgomery. That is when I decided to again attend the Summer Resident Mission, joining the 2016 team. At the end of the summer I called my dad and told him, "I don't know how I'm going to manage it, but I have to move here."

And so I did.

In the year since I have moved here, my life has changed completely. I will not say that working with CGM is my purpose or sense of worth. But God has definitely used the people here to remind me of who He created me to be. I have been continuously challenged not only in my faith, but also as a man of God, to take responsibility and grow up in many areas. I have seen God move and

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work in so many ways more than I ever thought were possible. It is by that same grace that God has allowed me to come on staff with the very organization that I fell in love with.

Truly, this is what I have always understood **#CGMLife** to be about. This place serves two purposes: (1) to teach people about God—who He is and who He created us to be, not just individually, but with each other in community, and (2) to introduce people to the beauty that lies within this neighborhood.

To all reading this newsletter, I hope that you too have experienced West Montgomery. But, if you haven't yet, we would love to have you join in sometime!

get involved
with cgm

#cgmlife

www.cgm.life/volunteer

2014 summer
resident mission
team

john mark



jesus talked about “life”

The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy, but I have come that you might have life and have it abundantly.... For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, yet loses or forfeits his very self? (John 10:10, Luke 9:24,25)

I have dealt a lot with theft in the last 11 years. My house was broken into and plundered twice, our ministry buildings and vehicles have had multiple break-ins where windows were busted or shot out, copper was stripped from

air conditioning units, and a bus was even stolen from our property. A few years ago, while at a restaurant with a friend, someone snatched a phone off the table that I was sitting at, and I took off after him.

After a long chase and some spectacular falls in the process, and with some help from a bystander, the stolen property was back in my hands. But I had broken my arm in several places. To this day, with a plate and multiple screws in it, my arm is not right and probably never will be. My efforts at taking back what was stolen didn't end well. At one point, I remember running and thinking to myself, “When I do catch this guy, how can I get the stuff back with one arm shattered?”

That seems to be the case for many in my community. The deficits and psychological effects created by both systemic injustices and a difficult mix of personal and cultural dysfunctions have many trying to run with shattered bodies, minds, and spirits.

There is a mix of great potential and great brokenness in our community. Leaders, amazing gifts, visions, and incredible people co-exist with lack of opportunity, failing education systems, systemic injustices, absent fathers, high crime rates, and opportunists preying on the neighborhood from within (gangs, drug dealers, child molesters, thieves, etc) and from without (payday loan places, slum lords, exploitative employers, etc). People with the same foundations and social safety nets that I had growing up with don't realize what it's like to run with the wind in our faces at the intensity that others face. Many of us, in this lack of experience, even tend to deny it is the



bryan kelly

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experience of others, or frankly just ignore it since it doesn't affect "us" or "our" children. However, we believe the potential of "Common Ground" provides a possibility for change.

Often when I talk with people about race, injustice, poverty, violence, fatherless households, children having babies, and failing education systems, people tend to have strong opinions on why things are the way they are. Most of these tend to highlight one or two contributors to what I believe to be a tangled web of cyclical hopelessness that perpetually feeds on itself. The dynamics of poverty and destruction are complex and involve systemic AND personal/cultural influences.

What we continue to see and hope for is that when new structures, networks, and relationships are established across racial, economic, political, and community lines, the layers begin to be peeled back and blind spots are revealed for all of us in the process. For example, when a mentor from the east side of Montgomery has more and more interactions with our diverse staff and with the family of a young middle school boy from our community, there is potential for many transformative things to happen. Two families begin to interact with one another with growing levels of intimacy, empathy, and varying world and experiential views. As trust is built, real conversations can happen that expose flaws, prejudices, and simplistic conclusions.

Sometimes, entire networks are enlisted on behalf of the mentee and his family that they had no access to, and their God-given ability and potential begins to be matched with opportunity.

Conversely, I have had many conversations where volunteers, board members, mentors, and donors have told me: **"Our lives will never be the same since we connected with the ministry and those that live and interact here. The way we use our resources, how we think about church, politics, justice, family, race, and many other things have been forever changed for the better."**

I think what has happened and continues to happen is that people are *"losing their lives and (really) finding it."* And, in turn, many in our community are finding their lives as well. They are seeing what the ultimate thief stripped and stole is now being restored personally, in the community, and, hopefully, generationally.

Thank you for partnering with us. It is our sincere hope that you, through us and through our community, are "finding" your life in the work of the Kingdom of God here. There are so many great things happening here at CGM, from our leadership programs, mentor relationships, an all day Pre-K program, through our Mercy House community service and more; please come by and take a tour, consider volunteering, and get involved!