



Summer of Blessings

In April, Pastor Mike Mather had a vision to do something different and innovative that would expand upon the summer youth program. He wanted to reach not only the youth, but also families and adults, and his goal was to reach out to 4,000 people! To help him with the Summer of Blessings, Mike reached out to Terri Coleman and Martha Wright and brought them on as Abundance and Blessings Animators. Terri and Martha identified six youths who were interested in joining them for the summer as Roving Disciples.

The Summer of Blessings is a part of the Miracle on 29th Street initiative in that it connects individuals with others who share a common interest and/or talent. With a team in place, Terri and Martha organized the Summer of Blessings into three parts: Name, Bless and Connect. They began to reach out to people in their own neighborhoods and then expanded into the Mapleton Fall Creek neighborhood. Initially, they started by going door-to-door and then when conversations developed, they asked those individuals if they knew of anyone who would be interested in sharing their stories. The length of the conversations ranged from 15 minutes to a couple of hours.

Through the conversations, the three parts came into play. They first asked their neighbors to *Name* their gifts, talents and dreams. Secondly, they *Blessed* these individuals for their gifts and talents and for their willingness to share their gifts with others. Finally, they *Connected* those who share similar gifts/talents/dreams with each other, and they also connected people who could use these talents and gifts to expand upon their own dreams.

The Summer of Blessings has been successful in many ways: new relationships and friendships were developed; youth connected with other community members to form positive, supportive networks; a few youths were connected with the Edna Martin Center and received summer jobs, which could lead to after school jobs; a group of gardeners have gotten together and are establishing a garden center; individual artists are coming together to work on art projects around the Broadway community; and one general contractor in the neighborhood is teaching others how to do small home repairs, which may turn into jobs for them through the Mapleton Fall Creek Community Development Corporation.

The next steps for the Summer of Blessings team are to take the relationships and connections that were formed and expand this program into a year-round initiative. These connections are strengthening our community and helping our economy grow. If you are interested in being a part of this program, please contact Mark Kesling at 924-4207 x 27.