

Thank You for Stewpot

By: Devin Bingham



Stewpot children's and teen's programs have affected my life and how I do my job professionally for the better. My name is Devin Bingham and I attended the Stewpot after-school and summer camp programs. While I was in these programs I met so many people; great counselors, mentors, and co-campers who now, like me, have grown up and become successful adults.

I've seen first-hand how Stewpot's mission, to provide for and be a hand up to others, helps so many get back on their feet and restore lives. They did just that for my family.

Growing up not having older siblings, Stewpot's counselors fulfilled that role. They were the big brother to play football with, they were the big sister who always steered you in the right direction, and it was also the place I could just be a kid. I learned so many lessons from people who devoted their time and energy to make sure I had the best school year after school and the best summer experience during the summertime. These same people came back year after year summer after summer, not because of what they gained financially but because they truly cared about us. These attributes the directors and counselors had, were direct take-a-ways for myself and my fellow campers - which we now use with children we mentor today.

Working in higher education and at other summer camps all over the world, affords me the opportunity to use my skills of compassion, understanding, tolerance, and adapting. All of these are skills that I learned while being a camper and counselor in the children's and teens' programs. I am a great leader because that's what was extended to me.

While working at Stewpot, I found my passion! Working with children and directly influencing their lives so that they see their future potential is very rewarding to me. Stewpot taught me that being an example means more to the ones who look up to you.

Thank you Stewpot, for the life-lessons!

Stewpot
Community Services

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Faith meeting needs in our community



Consider Participating in Stewpot's Annual Christmas in July Food Drive.

Beginning July 1st

Make it an inner office, church, or social group competition.

Get started collecting TODAY!

Call Stephanie Echols for more information at 601-353-2759.



Raise Money for Stewpot just by shopping at Kroger

Did you know you can support Stewpot just by shopping at Kroger? It's easy when you enroll in Kroger Community Rewards! To get started, go to www.kroger.com and click on the Community link. That will bring you to the Kroger Community Rewards page. Sign up with your Plus Card and select a local organization you wish to support (Stewpot). Once you're enrolled, you'll earn rewards for your chosen organization every time you shop and use your Kroger Plus Card!



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A Newsletter of Stewpot Community Services

Summer 2019

Changing Lives

"Caring. Helpful. Fun. Love. Family. Compassion. Active." Those are the first words which came to mind for seven of Stewpot's "graduates" when they were asked to describe this place where they have spent so much of their youth. They have grown up coming to Stewpot for the After School Program and the Summer Camp, and now they have graduated from high school and will be going on in the fall to various colleges. They have plans for careers such as audio engineering, nursing, accounting, and graphic design.

They are working this summer as senior counselors in the Stewpot Summer Camp they attended when they were in elementary and middle school. This is how some of them described the lessons they have learned in their years at Stewpot: "To be respectful. To be better overall at life. Seeing older counselors come back to help me was a reminder to love and do the same and keep the cycle going. To love everyone no matter where they come from."

These are the lessons which each person who participates in or supports the Stewpot community in any way has had the opportunity to learn during all these years. Every minute of volunteer time spent and every dollar donated touches lives in ways that will echo down through the generations. When asked what she would like to say to all the supporters of Stewpot, one of the graduates replied, "What you are doing here changes lives!"

Amen to that!



Dorian Cox, Ricky Dobson, Caleb James, Maleah Briggs, Ava Davis, Ariel Love, and Jasmine Cleaver



**Director's
Corner**

In these pages, you will find uplifting stories about the impact that Stewpot's Children's Program and Teen Program are having on the lives of youth in our corner of the world. These are stories we get to hear every day, and we want you to share them with you.

We're also glad to share how we couldn't possibly make it happen without the larger community; Stewpot volunteers and donors are an essential element in the children's success. Just think of the "village" that raised you or is raising your children. At Stewpot, we have a wonderful "village" of committed staff, volunteers, and donors who are committed to helping our kids and teens through what is often a difficult time in a difficult place.

At this very moment, over 140 kids and teens are filling our campus with laughter and learning while they attend our Summer Camp. In addition to reading and art classes, they'll attend Vacation Bible Schools, go on field trips, and enjoy summer favorites like snow cones and popsicles. The teens will visit college campuses and talk about the future and their dreams.

You still have the opportunity to support this amazing effort. We can give a kid seven weeks of learning and fun for about \$375 per student. Would you consider sponsoring a camper? Please give what you can by going to our website at www.stewpot.org and clicking the "Donate" button. Or mail a contribution to Post Office Box 3610, Jackson MS 39207.

COMCAST CARES PROJECT DAY

This past May, Comcast held their 2nd annual Comcast Cares Project Day for the Children's and Teen Programs at Stewpot. Although the weather put a damper on many of our outside projects, we had a great group of volunteers who were committed to helping Stewpot!

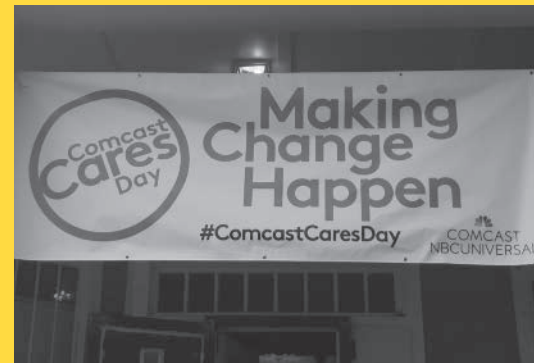
Volunteers, some as young as five years old, cleared out the Teen Building's backyard, planted flowers, picked up garbage, and pressure washed the back porch. The rocks on the stone walkway, put in during last year's project, were replenished. The flower beds in front of the building were weeded and planted. Comcast also purchased two picnic tables with benches. Now the teens have a safe, wonderful area to hang out during the summer!

When the rain became too much, volunteers moved to The Children's Hut. Everyone helped to organize and

clean the bookshelves. Some of the younger children went through the toys, discarding broken ones and cleaning the others. A family of volunteers scrubbed down the kitchen and organized every shelf and cabinet! The paint may be old, but thanks to their efforts the kitchen looks brand new!

Jessica Gunter and Emily Colvin, employees from Comcast, helped to organize the event. They always put in lots of hours planning and promoting, making sure we have all the supplies we need, including snacks, water, and any other items needed to complete our projects. For the past two years, Emily has included her family. Her father and husband worked in the rain clearing out the brush behind both buildings & yards, removing fallen limbs, and weed-eating.

Councilman Charles Tillman came out and volunteered. We are so blessed and thankful for all the volunteers, Comcast employees & volunteers, and continued community support! The work completed on Comcast Cares Day has made such big difference in our programs, making our spaces bright and inviting for the children and youth!



New Playground Equipment, **YAY!**



The Stewpot Children's Program's playground equipment has long been in need of a facelift. I had been researching ways to fund our needed improvements, when Mr. Luke Dove contacted Jill, Stewpot's Executive Director. Mr. Dove was looking for a way to honor the memory of his late wife, Marlane, who loved children. He chose our children to be the recipients of this great gift in her name.

In making plans for the playground, Jill connected with Cindy Jefcoat at Jefcoat Recreation. Jefcoat gave us three stand alone structures (which the children now love). But Mr. Dove wanted to ensure we had enough for

all the children to enjoy, so with his support we purchased an additional playground set; and with the help of our Teen Service's staff member, Mike Turner, we installed it this spring. The children were so excited! One of them commented, "We don't have to go to the park anymore! We have a park in our backyard!"

The new equipment has been just the beginning: Mrs. Tiffany Sims donated a trampoline; Mrs. Jacqueline Rudder got us a volleyball net; and Mrs. Stacy Underwood gave us a new basketball goal. Ian Underwood (Stacy's son) and his fellow Eagle Scouts built two kid-sized picnic tables with benches. They

planted shrubs in our flower box & put in a stone walkway. We are now in the process of leveling out the open part of our backyard for more equipment, since Mr. Dove also wants to donate a swing set.

We are so very thankful to all of the volunteers and donors who have made this possible, especially Mr. Dove! Mr. Dove helped provide our children with a safe & fun place to play. He not only provided the means but also put into motion so many wonderful things that have given us so much more than a playground. Thank you!



Masterpiece Through Art

By: **Karen Cotton**

Being Karen Cotton hasn't always been easy. But creating art seems to come easy to me. My love for art started when I became a mother. I'm a mother of four wonderful boys: Stephon, Travon, Adrienne, and Jay. I have always enjoyed creating projects for my kids and me during the summer time, just for fun.

This year, I am leading art classes for Stewpot's Summer Camp. Our theme is "Charlotte's Web." Because of BankPlus's generosity, we will have all of the art supplies we need to help us emphasize the themes of friendship and sacrifice in the book.

Leading this art class is a real gift to me, because I love to watch children express themselves through art. Art allows children to be free and express how they feel. When you look at a child's art, you can visualize how a child sees the world. If a child can't talk, they can express themselves in painting. Art allows kids to be creative, to build up

confidence and become patient to see how their masterpiece is going to turn out.

My passion for art has grown over the years. Art has taught me many things about life. It has taught me to go with the flow. I've learned to take risks and just see what happens. Sometimes in life, you have to take a risk. Being a mother, I have always made something out of nothing and I have used the same analogy when it came to art; creating something out of nothing. I've learned that you can't please everyone. Some people will like your art and some will not. But most of all, I've learned that I have to have determination and never give up.

Our 2nd annual art show is coming up again this year on July 17, at 10:00. We would love to see you here.

SUMMER CAMP STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Roderick (Rod) Thompson, Jr. Summer Camp Assistant



Education: Junior Accounting Major Jackson State University

Hobbies: Loves Basketball, Traveling, and Spending Time with Family

Roderick has been coming to Stewpot since he was a kindergarten student. He has worked his way up through the ranks from serving as a volunteer counselor, then as a junior counselor, and now as the assistant to Brooke Floyd, the Director of Children's Services. In his new position as assistant to the director, Rod was chosen because of his genuine work ethic and educational background. With his compassion, dedication, and understanding of the needs of our children in the Summer Camp program, he was the best candidate to serve in this position. Rod's loving spirit and contagious ability to bring out the best in himself can't help but spill over to our children this summer. And, he is a familiar face, which is a big plus when leading our kids.

Being able to juggle this full-time assistant position, being a student, and his love for the sport of basketball is

no problem for Roderick. He likes to think of himself as an excellent multi-tasker who will give his all to make sure the job is done and time is left to play ball!

Roderick attends New Gethsemane Missionary Baptist in Jackson where he serves as an usher and sings in the choir

"Being a part of Stewpot has given me the greatest experience of my life. Growing up here has taught me some of the greatest life lessons. Now I am ready to share what I have learned and give back to children who are just like I once was; very impressionable. I am more than grateful to be giving back this summer."
— Roderick Thompson



One Step Closer to Eagle

Last month members of the First Baptist Church Troop #8 Boy Scouts rejuvenated the front of the building where the After-School Program is housed at Stewpot. Led by Ian Underwood, an Eagle Scout candidate, this small group of volunteers made a big difference in a short amount of time.

Earning the rank of Eagle Scout within the Boys Scouts of America is not an easy task. Since its inception in 1911, only 4% of Scouts have earned this rank. An Eagle Scout candidate gets wonderful experience as he is called to plan, develop, and give leadership to others in a service project of his choosing. The project chosen must benefit an organization other than the Boy Scouts of America.

Ian chose to do his project at Stewpot because he has been volunteering at Stewpot most of his young life. In the summer, he goes to HeARTWorks (an art ministry on Tuesdays) with his mother. Ian and his mother noticed that the students in the After-School Program did not have a place to sit outside to have snacks or to do their homework. They also noticed a planter that ran alongside the building was in need of new shrubs. These observations led Ian to choose Stewpot as the recipient of his Eagle project.

Three fellow Scouts (Tim, Winn, and Harrison) helped Ian assemble two picnic tables for the students. They also revitalized the planter with 6 healthy azalea shrubs. The immediate improvement is exciting! Ian says, "I am very glad I did this and I hope the kids there can enjoy what we worked on."

If you know any Scouts contemplating their Eagle Scout project please encourage them to consider Stewpot. Our Department Directors are easy to work with and can help come up with life-changing experiences for any group, big or small.



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