

*News of hope for a people of mission*

# CITY *Alive*

SPRING 2013



## *What's Inside...*

BHITC recognizes outstanding volunteers

Church Planter: Pastor Juri Ammari

Teens transforming the city

Urban ministry Bible study course starts in April

Sisters of the Heart women's ministry of discipleship and outreach



# Our Mission

RESTORING THE CITY TO GOD BY DEVELOPING AND LINKING PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND CHURCHES.

## CELEBRATE!

BHITC Recognizes Outstanding Partners and Volunteers

In February, BHITC celebrated the amazing work God did in 2012 through the organization when it gathered more than 150 of its volunteers and partners. The newly renovated Crawford Auto-Aviation Museum provided a lively backdrop for the event, which recognized the contributions of the following individuals and organizations:

### VOLUNTEERS AND PARTNERS OF THE YEAR

#### Loren Dill Volunteer of the Year



A member of Bay Presbyterian Church, Loren serves as a volunteer refugee mentor for BHITC. Since 2010, Loren has mentored families from Bhutan and the Congo. As a volunteer, he has spent hours in hospital waiting rooms and family homes, making sure that refugees receive needed medical care. Loren has also attended refugee weddings, birthdays and cultural celebrations, and has included them in his own family's celebrations. "Because of Loren's presence, his mentor families have learned new skills, obtained jobs and thrived under difficult situations," says BHITC's Director of Refugee Ministries **Eileen Wilson**. "Most importantly, they have learned that they can trust God to care for them as if he was their family."

#### Sandy Schurdell Volunteer of the Year



Sandy serves in BHITC's Sisters of the Heart ministry, which is an outreach effort led by BHITC's **Nadia Abuamsha** to Arabic women. "Sandy has the most patient and loving heart toward people who are different than her," says Nadia. "She's truly a cross-cultural missionary." (see article about Sisters of the Heart on page 8 of this publication.) Sandy volunteers to assist women with learning English, help them to understand American culture and the Christian faith. But most importantly she wants to be a friend. As a retired nurse, she's also an invaluable resource to women dealing with health issues, maneuvering the healthcare system, and assisting at BHITC's Women's Health Cafes.

#### Darleen Koskinen Volunteer of the Year



A member at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Lakewood, Darleen has been a key leader in the weekly tutoring program at Gethsemane for more than eight years. As Coordinator of that ministry, Darleen and her team help students advance in reading levels, improve grades and so much more. "Darleen takes a real interest in her students' lives, builds confidence in them, and reminds them of God's love for them," says BHITC's Director of Volunteers **Amy Mitchell**.

#### Grace CMA Church – Middleburg Heights Partner Church of the Year



The ministry partnership between BHITC and Grace Church has been building steadily for years. The church has hosted multiple ministry events for BHITC, including outreach programs to the immigrant community. In 2011, the church launched *Grace in the City* as a mean of increasing opportunities for its members to connect to local urban ministry opportunities. BHITC partners with Grace in this effort, helping the church organize "service weekends" for groups of Grace members.

In addition, members of Grace are woven into BHITC at every level. BHITC staffer **Eileen Wilson** and BHITC Board member **Tim Foust** both belong to Grace Church. The church also regularly organizes teams to assist with refugee apartment set-ups, prepare and pack lunches for summer reading program students, and supported outreach efforts for Trinity's Westtown church plant. To learn more about this dynamic congregation, visit [www.gracecma.org](http://www.gracecma.org)



Thank You!

This newsletter was produced at a very low cost to BHITC, thanks to the generosity of **Akhia Public Relations**, which donates all the graphic design services, and **RE May**, which donates printing expenses.

The result is a newsletter publication that looks far nicer than BHITC could afford otherwise. To learn more about either of these organizations, visit [www.akhia.com](http://www.akhia.com) or [www.remay.com](http://www.remay.com).

## OH, WHAT A NIGHT!

To celebrate volunteers!

### Photo Gallery

BHITC's Volunteer Appreciation Event



## MEET PASTOR JURI



*In 2013, Building Hope in the City is supporting Pastor Juri Ammari and the congregation he founded, MetroAlliance Church in Ohio City, as they begin a new work to the south in Cleveland's Clark-Fulton neighborhood. Pastor Juri is an ordained minister with the Christian Missionary Alliance. The church plant will be a satellite of MetroAlliance and be located at Family Ministry Center on Fulton Road.*

**Age:** 44

**Where do you live?** On West 65th Street, in Cleveland's Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood.

**How long have you been in Cleveland? Share a little about your background.** I arrived in Cleveland in 2000 as a church planter / evangelist. Ethnically, I'm Russian, Lithuanian, Polish and Arab-American. I was born in Chicago, lived seven years in Texas followed by ten years in the Middle East in Jordan. Academically, I'm educated beyond my usefulness, with degrees in journalism, education, Bible and urban ministry.

**What brought you to Northeast Ohio?** The Central District of the Christian & Missionary Alliance asked me to lead the planting of an urban church on Cleveland's near west side. Those efforts formed MetroAlliance Church, where I serve as pastor today.

**What do you love about working as an urban pastor?** I love the people of the city who are often transparent with their circumstances. I love the commonality of the human experience that is revealed as diverse people live in close proximity to one another.

**For others who are thinking about planting an urban church, what's the most important lesson you'd want to pass on to them?** Love is partly defined as persevering...planning for the long haul. It'll take a planter ten years to get started in the city among the poor due to the huge trust violations in urban contexts. "Staying put" in a community goes against the culture. It reveals and develops character and integrity for the planter.

**What's your vision for the church plant at Family Ministry Center?** I pray this congregation would become a vibrant catalyst of uniting diverse people with God and one another, not only in this neighborhood, but also across the region.

**What can BHITC and its supporters be praying for to support this effort?**

- Pray for multiple pastoral staff to be raised up so that the church plant reflects the diversity of the near west side.
- Pray the next associate pastor of MetroAlliance Church finds appropriate housing in the days ahead and transitions well into the city.
- Pray for the Lord to draw many people to Himself as the faith community is formed.
- Pray His Spirit gives us both boldness and gentleness in sharing our faith.

# The City

## A BIBLICAL STUDY OF URBAN AND CROSS-CULTURAL MISSION

This free, seven-week course led by Rev. Jeff Johnson will provide the biblical foundations for mission efforts aimed at cities, including approaches to outreach and bridging cultural barriers. Come learn, meet others and be challenged in your service to the Lord!

Study topics to include:

- God's heart for the poor, forgotten and foreigner in our midst.
- Incarnational mission – living like Jesus, among those He loves.
- City-centric church growth and expansion in the New Testament.

**April 11 to May 23**  
Thursday nights at 7 pm

**BHITC / Trinity**  
2031 West 30 Street  
at Lorain Avenue



To learn more or save your seat for this course, call BHITC at 216.281.4673.

## WHAT SMELLS?!? CHANCES ARE IT'S YOU.

*Book and new ministry course offer insight on urban mission*



In October, Rev. Jeff Johnson published his first book, *How to Hug A Smelly Guy*, as a collection of stories and insights gained over his 20+ years as an urban pastor.

You don't have to wade too far into the book to get the point: "Smelly guys" (and gals!) are not just those individuals we see at the highway exit ramp's end, holding signs that plea for charity. **They are us**, that is, broken people who smell in all sorts of ways – relationally, socially, emotionally and spiritually.



"Understanding the brokenness that so many people lament over when they think of 'urban ministry' begins by confronting your own personal and spiritual brokenness," says Johnson. "Truth be told, there's not much difference between me and the guy sleeping under the bridge tonight, especially in terms of our need for a relationship with God."

Johnson says he wanted the book to serve as an antidote of sorts for Christians. "God-honoring, Christ-centered ministry begins in and through us as we come to the end of pretense, judgment and an addiction to success," says Johnson, noting that the book retells many experiences of failure and pain, through which God graciously worked.

*How to Hug a Smelly Guy* is available at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) for \$12.00.

You can also order a copy, as well as listen to many of Johnson's audio blogs, at [www.hugasmellyguy.com](http://www.hugasmellyguy.com).

## CitySERVE2013

See what a difference one day can make!

Saturday, May 4th

Join with BHITC, Lutheran High School West, Thrivent Financial and hundreds of local volunteers as together we impact the city.

You'll give one day of service at a local urban church, agency or neighborhood, serving as the hands and feet of Christ.

Once your project is completed, you're invited to return to Lutheran West for a picnic dinner and walk-a-thon as we raise funds for the Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland.

Learn more at:  
[www.buildinghopeinthecity.org](http://www.buildinghopeinthecity.org)  
[www.lutheranwest.com](http://www.lutheranwest.com)



# CURING LONELINESS

*Sisters of the Heart outreach ministry binds women together in friendship and so much more*



**By BHITC's Nadia Abuamsha**

"I can't wait to get together with all of you again." That's what a new Muslim friend of mine told me after her first experience with *Sisters of the Heart*. Her openness was a sign to me that God is already at work in our lives.

I've long sensed that many Arabic women struggle with a profound sense of loneliness. Many of the women in our ministry don't have their families nearby. Some are kept from developing too many relationships. They long for a real connection with other women.

*Sisters of the Heart* is a monthly BHITC fellowship ministry that brings women of differing cultures and backgrounds together. It's intentional, relational outreach to Cleveland's community of Arabic women, and it's a ministry that's strengthening Christian women in their ability to bridge cultural and relational differences.

## FOR YOUR CALENDAR

*Make a date with urban ministry!*

To RSVP for any of these or get more information, call BHITC at 216.281.4673.

### March 11

New Volunteer Orientation Session  
5:30 to 6:30 pm

### March 16

Understanding Urban Poverty Workshop  
BHITC / Trinity  
9 am to 2:30 pm  
\$10 registration fee

### March 16

Arabic Women's Henna party  
Family Ministry Center  
3389 Fulton Road at Trowbridge Avenue  
11 am

### March 23

Refugee Mentor Training  
International Institute of Akron  
207 Tallmadge Road  
9 to 11 am

### April 11

"The City" urban Bible study course with Rev. Johnson  
BHITC / Trinity  
Thursdays at 7 pm until May 23

### April 13

Understanding Urban Poverty Workshop  
Grace-CMA Church  
7393 Pearl Road, Middleburg Hts.  
9 am to 2:30 pm  
\$10 registration fee

### May 4

CityServe 2013!  
Starts at Lutheran High School West  
8 am to 4:30 pm  
Registration fee: \$15  
Advance registration required!

### June 15

Arabic Women's Ministry Health Fair  
Family Ministry Center  
3389 Fulton Road  
10 am to 1 pm

### July 26

Tee Up for Hope Benefit Golf Outing and Steak Roast  
Bob O'Link Golf Course, Avon  
12 noon shot gun start  
\$75 per person

I'm never quite sure where the conversation will go each month. These "sisters" know that no topic is "off the table," which means topics of conversation can range from differences in faith, culture, raising children and personal care – all often in one session!

**Sandy Schurdell** recently told me that her involvement as a volunteer in *Sisters of the Heart* has stretched her faith and her ability to share it. An Arabic woman started asking Sandy questions about faith. Learning to succinctly express your belief in Jesus' Birth, His Resurrection or why God allows evil in the world is an outreach skill worthy of every Christian. Now, add to that a barrier of limited English or a hearer who has been taught to fear Christians, and you start to grasp Sandy's experience. But I thank God for her and our other volunteers. Their commitment to building relationships is changing hearts.

Of course, not every moment at a *Sisters of the Heart* session is so serious. We also enjoy many fun activities, including crafting, exercise, jewelry making or learning how to care for ourselves personally. During these activities, lots of personal stories, laughter and mutual support are shared.

*Sisters of the Heart* has changed me. It's deepened my faith in a God who loves all people and is gathering diverse people to Himself. If you want to know more, you're welcome to join us. I guarantee the ministry will stretch you, change you and fill you with a sense of God's love, grace and mission.

## Upcoming Sisters of Heart Events



**March 16** – Women's Henna Party.

**April 13** – Regular Sisters of the Heart session.

**May 9** – Regular Sisters of the Heart session.

**June 15** – Women's Health Fair and Luncheon at Family Ministry Center.

Nadia Abuamsha can be reached at 216.281.4673 or [nadia@buildinghopeinthecity.org](mailto:nadia@buildinghopeinthecity.org)

## ONE GIFT TODAY. MANY BLESSINGS FOR YEARS TO COME.



Giving to the BHITC's Endowment Fund is a gift that keeps on giving. When placed in Endowment, your gift earns annual interest, which is fruit and fuel for mission. In other words, your one-time gift will give to the Lord's work for years and years to come!

If your annual gift totals:	You can perpetuate that gift with an Endowment gift of:
\$100	\$2,000
\$200	\$4,000
\$300	\$6,000
\$500	\$10,000
\$1,000	\$20,000
\$2,000	\$40,000
\$5,000	\$100,000

To learn more about giving to BHITC's Endowment, directly or as part of your estate plan, contact Brian Upton at 216.281.4673.

## IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME!



Namat and baby Bisan, pictured with BHITC volunteer **Sarah Stula**

Volunteering can usher you into new and exciting places....like the hospital labor and delivery room!

That was the experience of BHITC volunteer **Angie Vespoli**, who has been serving as a volunteer mentor to the Eisa family from Sudan.

When Angie first met her refugee family in October of 2012, Namat was already pregnant with her third child. On November 5th, Angie arrived for a regular visit with the family, during which Namat's water broke and labor began. Both excited and nervous for Namat's experience of delivering a baby in a new and unfamiliar country, Angie immediately called Eileen Wilson at BHITC.

"The phone call took me by surprise," says Wilson. "Our refugee mentors go through many new experiences with their families, but this one was a first. I told Angie to get Namat to the hospital."

Just two hours later, baby Bisan was born! Angie courageously took on the challenge of staying with Namat's two small children while watching two of her own until father Salih could arrive home from the hospital.

We're happy to report that mom, dad, baby – and volunteer – are all doing just fine!

## GENERATION >>>> NEXT

*BHITC, Lutheran West and Cleveland's Liberian Community Team Up to Support At-Risk Youth*



God is great and He is faithful in answering prayers at Building Hope in the City!

An ongoing prayer among BHITC staff for youth in Cleveland's Liberian community was answered recently in two ways. First, young adult volunteer leaders from within the Liberian community came forward, asking BHITC to support efforts to meet the needs of their younger kin. The leaders, **Yonsowable Yonly** and **Cecilia Yonly**, were responding to the behavioral difficulties some Liberian students were having in and out of school.

The Yonlys and BHITC recognized that these Liberian students needed positive role models in their lives, mentors who could teach skills like conflict resolution, positive self-expression, and who could exhibit a love for the Lord Jesus and a desire to complete a high school education.

That's when God provided His second answer to prayer by raising up the **girls basketball team at Lutheran High School West** as volunteers. Working in partnership with **Josh Campbell**, sports coach and teacher at the high school, BHITC helped launch an after-school mentoring ministry late last year at its St. Colman literacy center for the Liberian teens, most of whom live within walking distance of St. Colman.

Every Friday, Lutheran West students invest themselves in the Liberians, building relationships, exploring Scripture together, and enjoying game time or sports at a nearby recreational center. Mia, a 7th grade Liberian student in the program, recently expressed her gratitude, "This is a safe, fun place to be on Fridays."

Thanks to this new ministry, the Liberian community is already reporting a decrease in behavioral issues among some of its teens – proof that the Word of God and His people are having a transformational impact.



**Building Hope in the City**

2031 West 30th Street  
Cleveland, OH 44113

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Cleveland, Ohio  
Permit No. 1680