



RISE UP

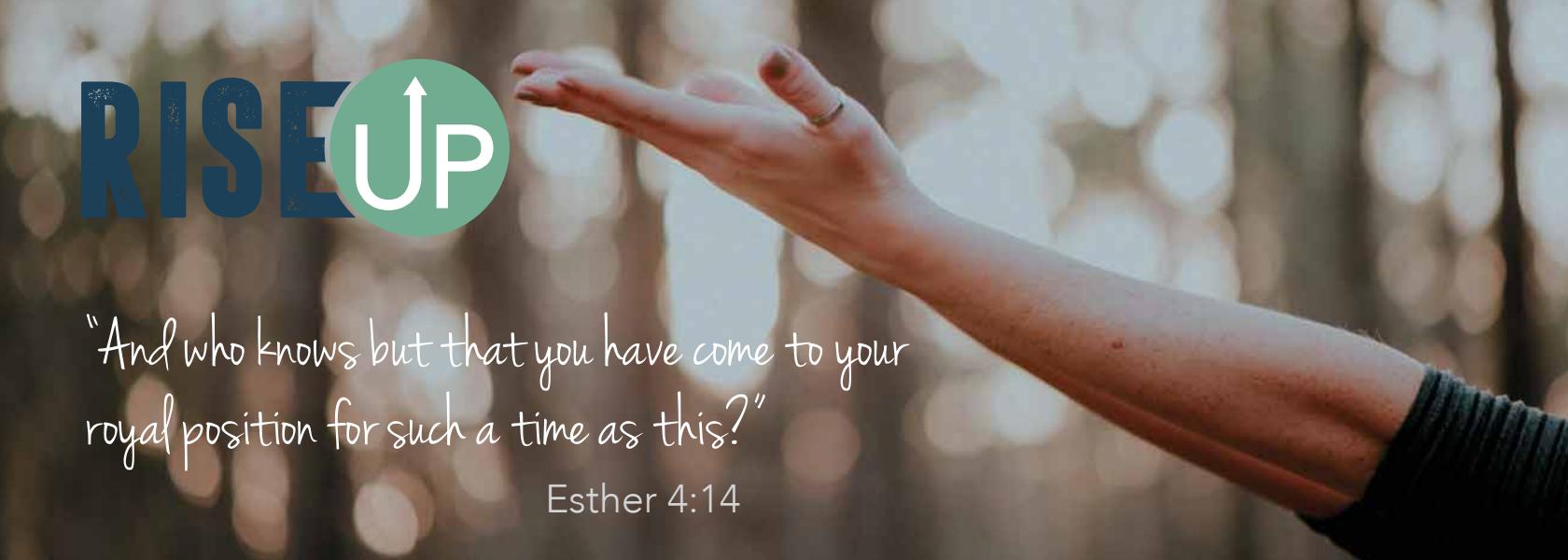
SPRING / SUMMER 2020

SPECIAL EDITION

MAKING HOPE TANGIBLE FOR
OUR CITY IN A TIME OF NEED



CITY *Alive*

A close-up photograph of a person's hand reaching out, palm up, against a background of soft, out-of-focus light spots (bokeh). The hand is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the frame. The person is wearing a dark-colored sleeve.

RISE UP

"And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

Esther 4:14

If we spend very long watching the news, it's easy to begin to feel overwhelmed. And yet, while the storms continue to rage around us for the foreseeable future, we know He remains in control, so how do we respond?

The following stories of hope provide reminders of connection with God's people and confidence from Scripture as you persevere through these trying days. Building Hope in the City (BHITC) believes God is calling His Church to "Rise Up" with boldness and courage to demonstrate

possibly the most tangible witness of His love and power in our day. Would you join us to put those spiritual muscles - worship, prayer, repentance, sacrifice - to work! After all, we practice these exercises "for such a time as this!"

Enclosed you'll find updates on BHITC's efforts in response to the COVID-19 crisis and stories of God's people on mission to advance the good of the city, magnify the mission of Jesus and unleash the capability of underestimated people.

WRAPPING PEOPLE AND RESOURCES AROUND THE HOPE CENTER AND THE CLARK-FULTON AND STOCKYARDS NEIGHBORHOODS

COLLABORATIVE SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES AMIDST COVID-19

One of the major fallouts of COVID-19 has been the closure of schools and the complex situation in which parents now find themselves – particularly families in our most vulnerable neighborhoods and newcomers navigating unfamiliar terrain. This new reality adds a challenging dynamic to so many parents who once depended on school meals, academic support, and the availability school created for day jobs. That’s why now, perhaps more than ever, the 100+ students and their parents at Halle School of Inquiry and The Hope Center served through BHITC’s education enrichment programming are in need of support.

Starting in mid-April, BHITC began facilitating an effort between several area churches, with leadership support from **King’s Church**, as well as gifts from **Cuyahoga Valley Church, Korean Central Presbyterian Church, Messiah Lutheran Church, Parkside**



Westside and **Renew Communities** to provide “Blessing Bags” to students and families at Halle School of Inquiry and The Hope Center. Bags will be delivered weekly for one month beginning April 19th that include healthy food items, toiletries, and academic materials. In a time of crisis, these bags will make tangible the presence and love of God in the city.

BHITC'S COMMUNITIES HIT HARD BY PANDEMIC

CRISIS RESPONSE IN CLARK-FULTON AND STOCKYARDS AMIDST COVID-19



Imagine the daily challenges many low-income families already face. Then, add the reality of COVID-19 and the economic turmoil it is causing for those facing jobs loss and ineligibility for unemployment benefits. This pandemic is exacerbating the challenges and instability that many families in BHITC's targeted neighborhoods were already facing. In light of this crisis, BHITC now partners with a number of neighborhood organizations to provide relief in the form of **50% forgivable loans up to \$1500 for those with a qualifying emergency expense. The COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund and The Cleveland Foundation made this possible by approving a grant to fuel this work.** This spring and summer, BHITC's

community development staff will work alongside **Metro West Community Development Organization (CDO), Hebrew Free Loan Association and Community Financial Centers** to identify households in the neighborhood in need of emergency cash relief due to COVID-19. BHITC will help these families access emergency cash assistance from the grant funds, and once residents complete their 50% repayment, more loans will be made available to these neighbors.

THE HOPE CENTER HELPS REFUGEES NAVIGATE COVID-19

Newcomers to the U.S. face culture, language and resource challenges among other things, let alone added fears and reminders of past trauma caused by COVID-19. That's why in April, Cleveland's **COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund** awarded the **Refugee Services Collaborative of Greater Cleveland (RSC)** a \$50,000 grant to support refugees experiencing extreme hardship due to the pandemic. BHITC is one of 14 members in the RSC. Learn more at www.rscleveland.org.

This spring and summer, The Hope Center's staff will work alongside other agencies to identify refugee households experiencing continued unemployment or other financial challenges due to the COVID-19. BHITC will help these families access emergency cash assistance from the grant funds, as well as short-term employment opportunities with member agencies and willing employers.



SUMMER ENRICHMENT SESSION AND AMBASSADORS SOCCER CAMP

When the COVID-19 crisis begins to subside, BHITC expects its summer programming to be **even more necessary** for kids who will need extra help catching up before the next school year and those looking for an opportunity to socialize and have fun! It's for this reason, that as of now, plans are underway for summer programming at The Hope Center and Halle School of Inquiry.

This summer, BHITC plans to offer two months of tutoring at The Hope Center and in Clark-Fulton and Stockyards to aid families.

Volunteers and church partners willing to tutor and bring snacks are needed. Email BHITC's Manager of Ministry Engagement, **Eloy Gonzalez** at eloy@buildinghopeinthecity.org to get started. More details coming in May.

Assuming government orders for public safety allow it, BHITC also looks forward to hosting Ambassadors Soccer camp. Ambassadors is a global ministry that focuses on building relationships and sharing the Gospel through sports camps. This year, kids from The Hope Center and Halle are invited for a fun and meaningful camp experience. Pray for these summer opportunities to provide an added level of support to families and students reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic.



Our Mission

ADVANCE THE GOOD OF THE CITY.
MAGNIFY THE MISSION OF JESUS.
UNLEASH THE CAPABILITY OF UNDERESTIMATED PEOPLE.

Exciting Progress and Additions Move Forward for Immigrant and Refugee Community



In January, The Hope Center began phase one of its long-awaited renovation plans to improve the appearance and functionality of the building. New flooring was installed in the Gathering Room (the sanctuary of the former church), where the stage area was also reconstructed and redesigned.

Eileen Wilson, Director of The Hope Center, says this first upgrade is but one of many that will take place over the coming year. "That every visitor – whether be they a volunteer, a refugee, migrant or neighbor – have an excellent experience of welcome when they enter The Hope Center is our main goal. Through its physical presence, we want The Hope Center to communicate to everyone

who enters that they matter, that they are worth our very best and that they belong here," Wilson said.

A very special thanks to the **Albert M. Higley Company** for donating general contracting services on this project, as well as many of Higley's contracting partners that are donating labor and materials. Higley's **Cory Schiebel**, a long-time supporter of BHITC, deserves a standing ovation for donating his time as project manager, as does **Mary McHugh**, volunteer at The Hope Center and BHITC supporter, and the family of **Matt and Deb Crawford**, for helping to secure needed funds.

In This Together!

C.S. Lewis once said, "Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another: What! You too? I thought I was the only one." Finding commonality and encouragement with others who've shared similar experiences of difficulty are key to overcoming challenging seasons in life.

That's one of the many truths being imparted through a new initiative this year at The Hope Center. Thanks to the generous support of **CareSource Foundation** and **Three Arches Foundation**, The Hope Center launched several groups of 6-10 refugees who,

prior to COVID-19, met regularly to discuss in their first language the difficulty of adjusting to life in Cleveland after experiencing so much personal loss and adversity. The groups help these resilient survivors make plans for the future and their wellbeing. The new initiative includes access to professional counselors at **Catholic Charities Migration and Refugee Services** for those who need it.

Former Bhutanese/Nepali refugee who is now a US Citizen, **Ganesh**



Pradhan (left), serves as one of the group facilitators. “These groups have been a real blessing to my community,” says Pradhan. He’s already receiving feedback from his all-male group of participants who started meeting early in 2020. “I feel supported to make changes and share my experiences with others,” said one man. Another said that the

group reminded him of an important adage about the power of community: “One hand cannot produce sound. You need two hands to clap!”

BHITC couldn’t agree more!

New Computer Lab Eliminates ‘Digital Divides’

Whether it’s seeking employment, completing school assignments or staying in touch with loved ones who live far away, access to technology (computers, the internet) is essential. Yet, for many low-income households, including many refugee families, such reliable and consistent access is a “digital divide” that

hinders their resettlement. Thanks to a recent grant from **Legacy Collective**, a nationwide giving circle started by author Jen Hatmaker, BHITC is doing something about that for the international newcomers it serves. Later this year, a **Digital Learning Lab** will be installed at The Hope Center to bless and empower these communities BHITC serves.

The new and secure space will be constructed on The Hope Center’s first floor and include equipment such as computers, printers, presentation and video-conferencing equipment, and access to some of the fastest internet speeds in the neighborhood!

Thank you, Legacy Collective, for making equitable access to technology a priority with BHITC!



Meet Geeta!

Immigration Services at The Hope Center Expands



Geeta Sharma, new Immigration Services Legal Assistant at The Hope Center, working in the office alongside BHITC's Nick Tribuzzo, Manager of Legal Services

When **Geeta Sharma** walked into The Hope Center in 2016 to begin the process for U.S. citizenship, little did she know that two of her biggest dreams: to become an American citizen and to pursue her goal to be part of the legal field, were about to come true.

A strong family, an even stronger sense of personal motivation and a love of learning has shaped Geeta her whole life. They helped her survive becoming a child refugee in 1998 in Nepal and being sent by her family from Nepal to India for school, where she lived with her aunt.

In India, Geeta wanted to pursue

her dream of going to law school, but education is prohibitively expensive, so she instead obtained an undergraduate degree in political science and was making progress toward her master's. That's when her family got word they would finally be resettled from Nepal to the United States, so she abandoned her educational pursuits and, in 2012, landed in Houston, Texas, with her mother, brother, sister-in-law and their two children.

Now a "refugee," Geeta, like so many other displaced migrants before her, had to rely heavily upon her family bonds and personal resiliency to start life over again. Her job experience grew and revealed a continual capacity for learning and adaptability. She cleaned homes, worked in a manufacturing plant that assembled phones, then at a lab that tested fuel density, then for a leasing office, then as a cashier at Walmart.

"They were all good jobs where I learned a lot," she says, "But I never gave up on my dream to one day be a lawyer."

Life in America was a challenge, but was also proving to be good to Geeta and her family. However, Houston's heat, high cost of living and flooding caused them to look elsewhere. They heard Nepali refugees were doing well in Cleveland,



You can find this pair – Geeta and Nick – hard at work at The Hope Center’s legal office

and in 2016, Geeta, her husband and family relocated to Northeast Ohio.

“Cleveland has been a better place for us to live,” Geeta says, “It’s smaller, which I like. And there was nothing in Houston like The Hope Center – a place where refugees can walk in and get the help they need that day.”

Geeta completed her U.S. citizenship process in 2017, making many new friends within BHITC as a result. In 2018, The Hope Center staff hosted a baby shower for Geeta at the birth of her first child.

Knowing more about Geeta’s story and her commitment to her goals, it makes total sense that in February 2020, **BHITC hired Geeta as a new staff member in the role of Immigration Services Legal Assistant!** Partial funding for this position was generously provided by the **Give Back Gang**, a giving circle at **The Cleveland Foundation**. Geeta now works closely with BHITC attorney, **Nick Tribuzzo**, to help manage The Hope Center’s growing case load of immigration and legal services. She brings to BHITC a first-hand experience that will bless all who the Lord sends to The Hope Center in the days ahead! Welcome, Geeta!

Thank You!

This newsletter was produced at a very low cost to BHITC, thanks to the generosity of **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 this organization, go to www.remay.com.

When Generosity is a Lifestyle, Big Things Happen – Entire Houses Get Donated!

How God is using a local family's vision and faithfulness to impact the city



The donated Storer Avenue property – a five-bedroom, move-in ready home with third floor bonus space!

God's plans can sometimes be a mystery, yet He asks us to trust him and not doubt. Just when it seems clear what He is asking you to do, circumstances can seemingly fall apart or fail to materialize in the way that you thought, at times leaving believers scratching their heads.

For one local family, the decision to faithfully practice generosity as a lifestyle, season after season, was clear, but what God was doing through it took years to fully materialize.



From left to right, Jean and Jim Jacobs with daughter, Chrissy (Jacobs) Scarcella.

For **Jim and Jean Jacobs** of Brunswick, who came to know Jesus together as newlyweds, their faith shaped a lifestyle of generosity for themselves and their children. Their daughter **Chrissy (Jacobs) Scarcella** recalls memories of giving from her childhood, and says, "I saw genuine joy and excitement when my parents gave gifts of all sizes, opened their home to friends in need and modeled what it looks like to trust Jesus with the results."

Having been raised with a heart of generosity, it comes as no surprise that Chrissy would find herself drawn to the city as a



Chrissy Scarcella with BHITC's Jeff Stredney, Director of Social Enterprise and Nick Tribuzzo, Manager of Legal Services at The Hope Center, who was able to do the notary at signing for the property late February.

In 2008, she and her parents purchased several investment properties with the hope of generating additional income. The homes presented many unanticipated challenges, and in 2011, after a particularly destructive family had moved out of the Storer Avenue house, Chrissy began asking God for a better plan and purpose for the property. Shortly after, Jim, Jean and Chrissy converged on the idea of starting **The Lioness Foundation** to provide housing for victims of human trafficking. While the original vision for the house has transformed several times over the years, God was always faithful to bring the right residents for Lioness in the right season.

young adult, wanting to do what she could to demonstrate the love of Christ to those struggling. She taught in Cleveland Public Schools, where she saw first-hand the needs of her students and their families. She also volunteered with her mom at a center for victims of human trafficking, where Chrissy quickly realized their largest need was for housing.

As Chrissy married and started a family of her own, keeping up with the property and fundraising efforts became more and more of a challenge. "There were times when we felt like giving up, but God would bring us someone new in need of help, and we knew we needed to keep going," Jean said. As the final residents let the family know they were ready to be on their own, they once again began to ask God for his plans for the house.

In the fall of 2019, while doing some insurance work for her dad's business, she was issuing a policy for a vacant property on Storer Avenue – just down the street from the property her family owned. She stumbled upon a home nearby owned by BHITC. Unfamiliar with the organization, she turned to Google and BHITC's website to learn more. Shortly thereafter, she called the organization to discuss its housing efforts and vision for the Clark-Fulton and Stockyards neighborhoods.

Before long, she and her family met with BHITC's **Jeff Stredney**, Director of Social Enterprise, and they decided to GIFT the Storer Avenue property owned by The Lioness Foundation – in move-in ready condition! – as a donation to BHITC as part of its growing ministry in the neighborhood!

Chrissy says, "I'm very grateful to be passing the torch onto BHITC instead of laying the torch down and extinguishing it. It's going to an organization that has the energy and resources to keep it going and

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Work team from Royal Redeemer Lutheran Church earlier this winter. Some of the members also helped tear out carpeting and patch and paint walls.

do so much good with it. We are confident the house will continue to fulfill the vision God had given us for it in the hands of BHITC.”

Her mom, Jean, says, “It’s exciting to know it’s doing what it’s supposed to do...what it was always supposed to do! At some point, it was someone’s dream home, and now it will be again.”



Rev. Will Henderson working with the Royal Redeemer Lutheran Church team prior to moving in.

When asked if their decision to parent through the lens of generosity was intentional, Jim says, “When we came to know the Lord early in our marriage, that made all the difference. Then, as needs arose over the years, if we could physically, financially or spiritually help, we did. The answer was always simple – YES!” When you give to God, He multiplies it!

Meet Rev. Will Henderson, the house’s anchor tenant!

A friend of BHITC and Christian Missionary Alliance ordained minister, **Rev. Will Henderson** became the anchor tenant on April 1 for this five-bedroom house with bonus third floor space!

He brings very broad east and west side urban experience along with organic house church plant experience. Will is excited to live out incarnational ministry for the King in Clark-Fulton. As a grill master and chef in addition to his pastoral role, Will is already looking to use the side yard for a HUGE block party cookout once it is safe to do so again!

“He will be a blessing to BHITC in our targeted Clark-Fulton and

Stockyards neighborhoods, and we know this will soon be a missional community house for others in need of housing,” says **Brian Upton**, BHITC’s Executive Director.

The organization plans to bring in other tenants soon as circumstances in their lives align with the vision for this house. Although others will come and go, Will serves as a constant presence in the neighborhood and reminder to God’s never ending love and faithfulness!



Building Hope Named Community Partner of the Year

BHITC was honored to be recognized for its housing & community development work in the Stockyards & Clark-Fulton communities this year by **Cleveland City Council, Metro West CDO** and residents of the community. Metro West described the Community Partner award as such:

The Community Partner Award is given annually to an organization or institution that has made significant impact within the community to improve vitality, quality of life, and infrastructure improvement through collaborations in the neighborhoods we serve. People are and will always be the greatest assets for a community. Your team and organizations ability and contributions are an important key to achieving an equitable and healthy neighborhood.

Through housing redevelopment work, community engagement efforts like Rally CLE, and education enrichment at Halle School of Inquiry, BHITC is proud its contributions over the past year and the vital relationships made along the way. This is just the beginning, as author and pastor Eugene Peterson says, "of a long obedience in the same direction" in the Clark-Fulton and Stockyards communities.

Hope to Local Economy Coming Through Common Threads – Brook Park

Adjusted timeline, same level of excitement for second store

GUESS WHO'S EXPECTING?!?

We are!



As the Proverb goes: In a person's heart, he plans his own way, but the Lord directs his steps.* When BHITC announced the opening of a Common Threads – Brook Park location in February 2020, the organization intended to open sometime this summer. At that moment, only God knew the timeline would change in the wake of global developments, but, by His grace, plans to open still move forward!

The second Common Threads location is targeted to open in Brook Park by the end of 2020, instead of its original timeline of the summer of 2020. Thanks to very low financing and partnerships with **Royal Redeemer Lutheran Church** and **Lutheran Church Extension Fund**, the plan to move forward is the best possible business decision for Common Threads, BHITC and the local economy.

"In a time where, unfortunately, many people are still unemployed and some businesses need to close, we're deeply grateful to have the opportunity to not only retain the existing jobs of Common Threads - Fairview Park, but also to create additional jobs with our Brook Park location. More so, we're grateful to continue to provide competitive wages and benefit options to our workers and a 'grace wins' workplace environment that seeks the good of each employee alongside the good of the company. Finally, we are thrilled to be able to offer low-cost options on thousands of



Preview of the inside of the new Common Threads – Brook Park store!

everyday items to the public as many recover financially,” says **Jeff Stredney**, BHITC’s Director of Social Enterprise.

Brook Park was chosen as the second store location to serve shoppers and donors located south of the city. “The city of Brook Park is a great second location for Common Threads. We look forward to welcoming them to their new home in our community of Brook Park,” says **Michael D. Gammella**, Mayor, Brook Park.

As the economy recovers locally, Common Threads – Brook Park will certainly be a part of that for this community. “The economic impact of a great business coming to Brook Park right now, offers

us short-term benefits and a tremendous amount of long-term gains for our residents and city,” says **Scott Adams**, Commissioner, Brook Park Economic Development Department.

The new store will be roughly the same size as Common Threads’ Fairview Park location and offer all the same “Daily Deal” discounts and promotions shoppers in Fairview Park have come to love. “Now, our customers and friends will have two great locations and twice as much merchandise from which to choose,” says Stredney.

Stay tuned through BHITC’s emails, Facebook and Instagram pages for announcements about the grand opening later this year of Common Threads – Brook Park!

*Proverbs 16:9, paraphrased by BHITC.



And out an outside view! This shopping center is about to get thrifty!

TEE UP FOR HOPE

CHARITY GOLF OUTING

FRIDAY, AUGUST 14, 2020
8:15 AM TEE TIME

STONEWATER GOLF CLUB
1 CLUB DRIVE,
HIGHLAND HEIGHTS, OHIO 44143

\$250 PER GOLFER, \$900 PER FOURSOME
(Before June 30)

\$275 PER GOLFER, \$1,000 PER FOURSOME
(After June 30)

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To register or make a sponsorship gift,
visit www.buildinghopeinthecity.org or
call 216.281.4673.

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SUPPORT THE MINISTRIES OF
BUILDING HOPE IN THE CITY!

