News of hope for a people of mission

What’s Inside...

- Churches in the city tackle illiteracy and win!
- BHITC welcomes new staff members
- Nadia Abuamsha on ministering to Arabic women
- CitySERVE 2013: A recap
- BHITC refugee ministry creates new homeowners!
- October 3: Church Leadership Summit
Since its founding in 2003, BHITC’s partnership with local urban churches to offer a network of neighborhood-based tutoring ministries has been among its mainstays, drawing hundreds of families into urban churches in Cleveland and Akron.

“Our tutoring program has helped introduce my church to so many people,” says Darleen Koskinen, who coordinates the tutoring program at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Lakewood. “We’ve received new members through the tutoring program, experienced an increase in junior high students in our youth group and witnessed the power of God’s Spirit working through Gethsemane members serving Christ.”

Connecting families to urban churches is one of BHITC’s two main goals for its tutoring programs. The other is to see gains in academic performance. Here, too, God continues to show His favor. During the 2012-2013 school year, the 100+ students enrolled in one of BHITC’s five tutoring ministries across Cleveland achieved an average 20 percent improvement in reading and math assessment scores, representing one of the greatest leaps in literacy levels for a single year that BHITC and its partners have ever achieved!

Success is measured in more than just test scores, however. These ministries are also about building relationships between students and volunteer tutors. It’s these dynamic partnerships between volunteer adult tutors and school-aged youth that are also causing parents to take notice.
“I’m really impressed with how close my kids are with their tutors,” says **Trudy Smith**, whose son and daughter are tutored at Trinity Lutheran Church. “They’ve had the same tutors for at least the last three years, and they’ve really formed relationships with them. The tutors even do things with my children outside of the program – like taking them to an Indians’ game recently. That part is excellent.”

“Through these and other BHITC efforts, local churches and the people of God are being used by Him to help others solve many of life’s difficulties,” says BHITC’s **Brian Upton**. “Excellent literacy and tutoring ministries like these give witness that Jesus is the answer to what it takes to transform a city.”

**Summertime is the right time for reading!**

Over the summer of 2013, BHITC partnered with two Cleveland-area churches to extend their tutoring ministries. Each weeklong program focused this year on building into students the ability to evaluate information and make informed decisions – a critical skill for high school and adulthood.

The first session, led by **The Meeting Place Church**, took place in June in the Buckeye-Shaker neighborhood. For the Willard family, who started the church out of their home two years ago, reading, tutoring and homework are just the beginning. **Judy Willard**, wife of Pastor Bob Willard, explained how God led the family to purchase the home, only to then discover that it’s located in an area with the highest number of children removed from their homes for neglect and abuse in Cuyahoga County. The Willards are clear about their purpose – “Our family’s mission focus is on meeting needs through homework help, food or clothing, and thereby earning the privilege of speaking into people’s lives and introducing them to Jesus,” says Judy.

The second Summer Reading Program took place in July at Gethsemane Lutheran Church, serving children from the neighborhood, as well as several Arabic families linked to **Nadia Abuamsha’s** ministry.

**Fall brings expansion and the need for more tutors!**

As the summer draws to a close, BHITC already has determined the need for at least 50 new tutors by September. New after-school and evening programs on the east and west sides of town could be a new weekly mission and service opportunity for you! Come make a difference in the life of one child. To learn more, contact BHITC Director of Ministry Engagement, Amy Mitchell at 216.281.4673 or amy@buildinghopeinthecity.org.
Welcome, Anita! (and, thank you, Stephanie)

BHITC’s newest staff member will help expand literacy and tutoring programs even further!

BHITC is proud to introduce Anita Morrison, Director of Literacy and Youth Ministries, who joined the staff in July.

Anita is a veteran teacher in urban Cleveland with more than thirteen years of experience. For the past three years, she has served as Literacy and School Improvement Coach for the Urban League of Greater Cleveland. Previously, she has held positions with Braxton Education & Technology Consulting, Hope Academy, John Carroll University’s Institute for Educational Renewal, and Warrensville Heights City Schools.

Anita shares why she is excited about her new position at BHITC. She says, “I love the idea of working collaboratively with a team of believers who assist, support, and strengthen churches across the city of Cleveland to reach their communities for the sake of the gospel of the Lord Jesus. Galatians 6:10 says, ‘...to do good to all men, especially those of the household of faith.’ The vision of BHITC is to obey that instruction completely. That is compelling to me.”

As Anita transitions in, BHITC also says goodbye to Stephanie Labovitz, who completes her two-year position with BHITC as an AmeriCorps representative, and has accepted a full-time position with Scranton Road Ministries Community Capital Development Corporation.

Anita can be reached at BHITC at 216.281.4673 or anita@buildinghopeinthecity.org.
Go back to school with Building Hope!

WINE SCHOOL, THAT IS!

A planned giving education event that will uncork all sorts of possibilities!

Sunday, September 22, 2013
1:00 to 4:00 pm
Players Restaurant
14523 Madison Ave, Lakewood

Join us for an afternoon that includes:

- Discussion and wine tasting lessons with a professional sommelier from The Cleveland Wine School.
- Great food (paired with great wines!)
- A session by attorney Staci Lowell on the basics of estate planning, including wills and power of attorney.
- A presentation from Thrivent on planning giving tools
- Updates on urban mission and ministry from Building Hope in the City.
Q. What are the most common misconceptions Americans have of Arabic and Muslim people?

**Faith.** Many Americans believe all Arabic people are Muslim, and that is not true. I work with many Arabs who are Christians. However, I’ve found that many Arab Christians are not knowledgeable about the Bible and how to apply it to their lives. For my ministry among Muslims, I find the person of Jesus is a great discussion starter. Muslims recognize Jesus as a great prophet, and that’s a great place to begin the conversation.

**Poverty.** Many Americans believe Arabic people are poor and receive government assistance. This is not always the case. A lot of Muslims own small business and retail stores in our area and make a good wage.

**Loneliness.** Most Americans don’t realize Arabic women live very isolated lives and long for relationships with other women. There are many things Arabic women are not supposed to do in their culture, such as have close relationships with other women. For this reason, many Arabic women are shy and don’t want to be a burden on others, but really long to make relationships with others. Because of the isolation felt by so many Arabic women, it is quite common for them to struggle with depression.

**Crime.** The media causes many people to dislike the Arabic community due to terrorist attacks. The perception by some becomes that all Arabic people are violent extremists. This is not true.
Q. What is it you would like Americans to know about Arabic and Muslim people?

The best advice I’d give Americans and those in the Arabic community is to spend time with each other and begin to learn each other’s cultures. Arabic women especially want Americans to become educated about their values and way of life. Arabic women also want to be shown the love of Christ. I have seen many Arabic women who highly trust Christian American women. That’s important for outreach.

Q. What is the biggest need among Arabic and Muslim people in the US?

The biggest need among Arab women is for relationships. Many Arabic women have very little interaction with people outside of their immediate family. You’d be surprised, but Arabic women typically have very little interaction even with each other. This is because their primary responsibility is seen as serving their husband and children, so when they are around each other, it’s counter-cultural to be vulnerable with each other and open about what is going on in their lives.

Q. What are the similarities between Americans and Arabic and Muslim people?

Enjoying good food and the need for relationships between women. Both Arabic and American women draw a lot of strength, inspiration and support from their relationships.
CitySERVE 2013
ONE DAY.
HUNDREDS OF VOLUNTEERS.
CITY-WIDE IMPACT.

Serving God and Serving a City.

With 500 people gathered together for the purpose of serving God at 40 locations across the city, one day goes a long, long way! On May 4, 2013, BHITC conducted its sixth-annual CitySERVE event in partnership with Lutheran High School West, sending the people of God in teams into churches, ministries, schools, shelters and communities across Cleveland to lend a hand of service...or we should say a thousand hands!

"CitySERVE participants donated more than 4,500 hours of time in one day," says BHITC’s Director of Ministry Engagement, Amy Mitchell. "That’s a labor value of more than $80,000 that, in turn, brought blessings beyond price to many people in Jesus’ name."

The CitySERVE participants began the day with a time of worship, prayer and a message from BHITC’s Rev. Jeff Johnson. Equipped with plenty of energy, love and sunshine, the teams then spent the day cleaning, painting, planting, sewing and ministering to a city in need. CitySERVE event concluded with a “Walk for Hunger” back at Lutheran West in the afternoon, which raised needed funds for the Greater Cleveland Hunger Network and church-based food pantries in the city.

The photos and captions from CitySERVE below represent a portion of the work done on May 4 across the city of Cleveland.

David Fuhr, property manager at Bethlehem Community Church in Euclid, knows how much work it takes to maintain the building and its grounds. "The impact that CitySERVE has had on Bethlehem over the past years is immeasurable...I cannot find the words to express my deep, deep appreciation for CitySERVE," says David. This year, the CitySERVE volunteers completed spring cleaning in the church’s yard by raking, trimming and cutting the grass and also repainted the church entrance doors and front windows. The feedback David received from members of the church was simply, “What a blessing!”
At Emmanuel Baptist Church on Quincy Avenue in Cleveland, a team of volunteers repaired plaster and painted in the sanctuary, cleaned up the parking lot and painted an outdoor fence. **Dyeatra Williams**, a member of Emmanuel said, “To see a team of Christian men and women come forth to volunteer to help us spruce up our church was awesome.” She said it also served as a great fellowship event, allowing church members and CitySERVE volunteers to work side-by-side for positive change.

**A very special thank you to these supporters of CitySERVE 2013:**
Church Extension Fund – Ohio District • Cleveland Lutheran High School Association • Damon Industries • David Beckman, DDS • Lowe’s (Rocky River) • Lutheran Hospital – Cleveland Clinic • PPG Store (Oakwood Village) • Printing Partners (Lakewood) • RE May • Sovereign Industries • State Chemical Solutions • St. Ignatius High School • Thrivent – East Cuyahoga Chapter • Thrivent – Northwest Cuyahoga Chapter • Thrivent – South Cuyahoga Chapter • Wegman, Hessler & Vanderburg • Woolf Farms
For brothers Tom and Tanka Acharya, their families and their aging parents, all refugees from Nepal in South Asia, Cleveland has become home in many ways.

The Acharyas, who are part of the nearly 1,000 refugees who resettle in Northern Ohio each year, arrived in Cleveland three years ago after waiting for 17+ years in a refugee camp. No strangers to overcoming trials through perseverance, the Acharyas recently once again persevered to achieve a major goal – home ownership.

Just three years ago when Jim and Sharon Ditata, volunteer refugee mentors from BHITC, first met Tanka – one of the Acharya brothers – and his wife Indra, they were just beginning to build a new life and future for their children. At the time, the family lived in a small apartment, and Indra spent many hours alone with the children in a new city while Tanka worked part-time to earn the only income for the family.

For a year, Sharon visited Indra once a week, answered any questions she had and helped her with things we take for granted — reading and going through mail, learning how to prepare and properly store American food and the importance of locking their apartment door. Over time, the Acharyas became more independent and began to prosper, and so
their need for mentors lessened. They moved into a larger apartment, Tanka began working full-time and Indra received training and began working as a home aid worker.

Then, last August, Sharon received an unexpected call from the Acharyas saying they had bought a house and wanted she and Jim to come see it. It was a duplex the two families were going to share.

“I was more than a little worried for them,” said Sharon. “Buying your first home isn’t easy for someone who has lived here their whole life, let alone for people who are new to our country.”

Concerned the families were in over their heads, Sharon quickly met with the realtor. The home they selected needed too many major repairs, so the Ditatas advised the Acharya brothers to cancel the contract. “Of course, that meant the hunt for the right home was on!” says Sharon.

To the Ditatas happy surprise, the Acharyas were already pre-approved and fully prepared to make a down payment on not one but two houses, as they wanted to live separately but within walking distance of each other. “I was just so proud of them when I learned that despite meager incomes, they had saved a substantial amount of money toward their purchase,” said Sharon. “The Acharya family could definitely teach many of us about financial management and perseverance.”

For the next several months, Jim and Sharon volunteered their time and met the families every Sunday morning to go look at houses. Forty house visits later they found two homes in Cleveland’s West Park neighborhood. The Ditatas stayed involved throughout the home-buying process, attending showings, explaining home inspections and appraisals, helping secure home insurance and even attended one of the closings.

In November of 2012, the Acharya families moved into their new homes – just nine houses apart.

Both brothers are proud to be homeowners. “We now have the space and freedom to host large events for our family,” said Tom. His brother, Tanka, reminds us how much these homes mean to the families, and says, “We’re free! So many people cannot do this [own a home] in their lifetime.”

“Volunteering as refugee mentors has been a great experience for Jim and I,” says Sharon. The most rewarding part is that you quickly see how easily you can make a difference. The refugees we’ve met have already come so far and they just need new friends in America. You can see how your little bit of help can really make them successful.”

To learn more about serving as a volunteer refugee mentor, contact BHITC at 216.281.4673.
Sending mission teams out to unfamiliar locations to provide relief or share God’s Word can be an inspiring experience for churches. Those who participate often return with a renewed sense of purpose for their lives that’s contagious.

Grace CMA Church, located in Middleburg Heights, knows this to be true. The congregation has long been known for sending many short-term teams and missionaries overseas. However, a blossoming new partnership with BHITC has opened for Grace a new mission field opportunity for its members: the city.

The relationship between Grace and BHITC began more than four years ago when the church’s Missions Pastor, Jim Hicks, sensed he was being led to pursue new local opportunities for mission and service. “It says in the book of Acts, ‘you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth,’ and I felt this nudge from God that we needed to be more involved in our ‘Jerusalem’ – Cleveland,” says Hicks.

That “nudge” from God has led to Grace in the City, weekend mission trips into urban Cleveland for Grace Church members with BHITC as their guide. To date, nearly 100 of the church’s members have since taken part!

While serving on a Grace in the City weekend, church members are introduced to all the needs – physical, spiritual and emotional – of those in the city. Grace Senior Pastor, Jonathan Schaeffer says, “We want as many people as possible to experience the needs of our city, and to gain a vision for what the Body of Christ is doing – and what more they can do – to be salt and light.”
Chuck Anderson, a member of Grace who has participated in a weekend, says he saw needs and plenty of opportunities for ministry. “All of our society’s problems are magnified in the city, which means it’s a great place to be used by God as His messengers of hope,” says Chuck, who now organizes a monthly service opportunity for Grace in the City “alumni” to continue serving in the city.

Loretta Stiles knew she wanted to join in on a weekend as soon as the opportunity became available. She says, “Most missions are about going overseas, but there’s so much we can do right here in our own backyard.”

Pastor Schaeffer agrees. “It would be a travesty to leapfrog our local communities to serve in faraway places. We believe the heart of Jesus encompasses places and people both near and far,” he adds.

A great benefit for participants in Grace in the City is a deepening of their understanding of God’s love and mission, especially among people who are different culturally and socio-economically. “I do not know exactly what my presence did for anyone I encountered each time I participated, but I know that each weekend changed me,” says Pat Massey, a member of Grace Church, who has also served on BHITC’s church planting team in Cleveland’s Westown neighborhood and in other BHITC service projects in Cleveland.

That’s the ultimate vision for the partnership between Grace and BHITC. Pastor Jim Hicks sums it up this way, “Through our church’s involvement, we pray that real transformation would take place – for those who serve and those who are served. That’s what it’s all about.”

Interested in developing a weekend mission trip for your congregation? Contact BHITC’s Amy Mitchell to learn more at 216.281.4673.
DANA CARLISLE JOINS BHITC

In June, BHITC welcomed Dana Carlisle in the newly created position of Fundraising and Communications Manager.

She joins BHITC from FirstEnergy Corp. in Akron, where she held various positions as a business analyst over the last five years in roles including process improvement, change management and investor relations. Prior to FirstEnergy, Dana worked in public relations at Liggett Stashower in Cleveland, an advertising and public relations agency. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mass Media Studies from the University of Mount Union.

“This is such an exciting opportunity and a true answer to prayer for me,” she says. “I am passionate about seeing Christians engaged and active in doing God’s work. He has chosen to use people to spread the gospel because he wants us to connect with others. The staff and volunteers at BHITC are connecting with people, doing God’s work, and He is doing exciting things through this organization as a result. It’s a privilege to be part of it,” says Dana.

Dana is a member of Grace CMA Church in Middleburg Heights, where she and her husband Cody are involved in the marriage ministry. They reside in Lakewood.

Dana can be reached at BHITC at 216.281.4673 or dana@buildinghopeinthecity.org

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.

Sept 11
Building Hope: 101 Class
Come learn about current volunteer opportunities
5:30 to 6:30 pm
At BHITC’s offices

Sept 13-14
Engage Weekend Training
A two-day training seminar to equip churches and church planters with tools to better understand urban ministry. Training developed by Dr. John Fuder, Professor of Urban Studies at Moody Bible Institute, who will be conducting the seminar.

Sept 21-22
Engage Weekend in the City
A follow-up to the training. Participants will put what they’ve learned into practice as they spend two days in the city with Pastor Juri Ammari, MetroAlliance Church.

Sept 21
Understanding Poverty Seminar
Grace CMA Church
9:00 am to 2:30 pm
$10 registration fee

Sept 22
Go Back to School with BHITC. Wine School, That Is!
A free planned giving education event
1:30 to 4:00 pm
Players Restaurant, 14523 Madison Avenue, Lakewood
RSVPs required
Christmas comes early this year!

Christmas Gospel Gala
A merry gathering to share hope and faith in the city

BHITC’s annual holiday-themed party moves to a new and larger location: the newly restored Tudor Arms Hotel.

Join us for great food, entertainment and auctions.

All new this year: Bid to win Nativity Sets from around the world, in addition to our simply amazing display of professionally decorated Christmas trees, wreaths and table centerpieces.

Oct 3
Church Leadership Summit
Grace CMA Church
8:00 am to 5:00 pm
$20 per person
See back cover for details

Oct 7
Building Hope: 101 Class
5:30 to 6:30 pm
At BHITC’s offices

Oct 19
Volunteer Bootcamp
Trinity/BHITC
9:00 am to 2:30 pm

Nov 2
Understanding Poverty Seminar
Trinity/BHITC
9:00 am to 2:30 pm

Nov 6
Building Hope: 101 Class
5:30 to 6:30 pm
At BHITC’s offices

Save the date
November 10, 2013

Christmas comes early this year!
CHURCH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

A DAY OF LEARNING AND NETWORKING TO EQUIP THE BODY OF CHRIST FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

DELVING DEEPER INTO THE MISSIONAL COMMUNITY MOVEMENT AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE CHURCH

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

MIKE BREEN AND HUGH HALTER

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2013
8:00 am to 5:00 pm
Grace Church, Middleburg Heights
$20 per person, advance registration only

Save your spot for this important event by registering online at www.buildinghopeinthecity.org or calling Lesa at 216.281.4673.