



STREETS MINISTRIES
P.O. Box 42181
Memphis, TN 38174-2181

Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Psalms 82:3-4

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STREETS - BETWEEN THE LINES

APRIL 2010

U.S. Census 2010: Numbers Have Faces

Poverty: In the 38126 zip code, 66.8% of the area's 7,864 residents have an income below the poverty level (2008 U.S. Census).

The phone rings and it is Shirley. She needs help again. I've received this call numerous times over the past few years. Shirley struggled as a young person, and that struggle has lasted well into her fifties. She was a teen mom whose kids could not escape the jaws of poverty and neither could she. Today she has two big issues. There is no food in the cupboard and there are rats in her bed. She is in her third living situation in the past six months. Typically she ends up staying wherever she can afford. That place is usually a dilapidated house or apartment that is rented by someone on the block with the entrepreneurial savvy to subdivide it in such a way that it houses more people than code would allow. I drive by with food in hand. As I pull up to Shirley, she is positioned in the driveway sitting in her motorized wheelchair with oxygen tubes coming out of her nose. She goes into congestive heart failure periodically and does stints in the hospital. Each time, she comes back to the squalor that is home. Oh, did I mention that she has diabetes? Sometimes, I run needle money by for her daily injections. Today, she forces a smile to distract me from her tears, and says "thank you." She tells me how she sleeps in a chair at night since the rats like to play in her bed when the lights go out. We share a hug and I hold her hands and pray. As I drive off, I see her in my rearview mirror and wonder if our next encounter will be in Heaven.



Education: Income is directly related to educational levels. In 2007, the national median earnings of individuals graduating from high school is \$31,337. The Average Adjusted Gross Income of a resident living in the 38126 zip code is \$15,089 (2008 U.S. Census).

Walking down the center hallway, I hear my name and turn around to see Rodney. I did not realize that he is still in the neighborhood. After a couple of passes through juvenile court and a couple of different schools, he seems as though he is doing okay. We talk about the past and try to breathe hope into the present during our conversation. After a brief exchange, I quickly surmise that Rodney could very well be another academic casualty. He has been set up to fail by a less than desirable home life in public housing and bumps into distractions at every turn. Later that day I see him in front of a store whose front sidewalk is littered with drug dealers. I make sure that our eyes do not make contact. I lift up a prayer on his behalf and tremble as I think about where his story probably ends.

Teen Pregnancy: Of the 3,822 births in Shelby County last year, 57% were to single moms and 14% were to teenage moms (2009 Urban Child Institute). Less than one-third of teenage moms obtain a high school diploma or equivalent (2006 March of Dimes).

I get a call from Shonda. As I hear her voice, I am quickly reminded of a high school majorette that was in the top ten of her class. College was clearly in her path and she seemed to set herself apart from her peers not only academically, but from a maturity standpoint as well. Shonda was going to make it! That was a couple of years ago now. Since then, life has become more difficult. Shonda got pregnant right out of high school, and college gave way to a series of part time jobs and a government subsidy check. While she is living with the child's father, he spends most of his days making feeble attempts at employment and smoking dope. Despite all of that, it is great to hear from her and I ask how she is doing. **continued inside >>**

What Lives Behind the Data: Continued

I have no doubt that those thirty minutes with her tutor are her favorite of the week. Because of this relationship, Danesha has also started to participate in our after school programs. Just another way to expose her to the love of Jesus Christ! These are exciting stories, but there are many more students in the community who we are not able to reach. Students who are coming to school each morning without many of the advantages you and I were granted. So is it any wonder that they often do not perform at the same level as their peers on standardized tests? No. Let me encourage you to not only pray for these students, teachers, and schools, but to also find a way in your heart to make these statistics be more than just numbers. See that they are all connected to children who need love and support from someone like you.

Sarah Coleman is the Elementary Coordinator at Streets Ministries.
sarah@streetsministries.org



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This seal is our pledge that your gifts are used as you planned.
Thank you for your support of Streets Ministries.



(901) 525-7380 x201

Ken Bennett
Executive Director

Delvin Lane
Assistant Director

Carmen Coleman
Education Director

Sarah Coleman
Elementary Coordinator

John Cowherd
Middle School Coordinator

LaToya Dansby
Mission Graduation Advisor

Whitney Hale
Development Coordinator

Katie Hobson
Mission Graduation Advisor

Ross Hurst
Business Office Coordinator

Erica Jones
Pathways Coordinator

Vic Lightning
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Site Coordinator

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Mission Graduation Advisor

Richard Vining
Business Director

Emmabeth Weaver
Education Coordinator

Joyce Wilfong
Administrative Assistant

Terrence Young
Mission Graduation Advisor



STREETS MINISTRIES
(901) 525-7380
www.streetsministries.org



Numbers Have Faces: Continued

She tells me that she is pregnant again and low on food. I arrange a time to meet at Kroger and we talk about the good old days as we fill a shopping cart with the bare essentials. As she drives off in a vehicle that has not had a legitimate tag in years, I think of what could have been, and a lump wells up in my throat.

It is amazing what you can do with numbers. In fact, one of my favorite television shows is *Numb3rs*. In it, mathematicians work in concert with the FBI to solve crimes through the use of complicated mathematical approaches. Of course, I don't understand all the math, but am enthralled just the same.

Over the past few months, there has been much made of the 2010 Census - and rightfully so. It is incredibly important on a lot of fronts. Obviously there are a lot of fiscal implications that will result from the data collected that will affect us as a community in a significant way for years to come. In fact, we have even hosted events at our site at 430 Vance over the past couple of weeks that have dealt with hiring community residents to not only get the word out, but also help collect data from those who might struggle to fill out the form appropriately. And while we

are all anxiously awaiting the final numbers, I think at times we become so focused on the data that we lose sight of the human lives attached to these numerical digits. We even do that with some of the numbers in our newsletters.

I hear people rattle off numbers all the time. The fact is that we are so bombarded by the media and each other with these often depressing statistics that we become numb to them. That is easy to do when we forget about the faces behind these numbers. When we read about poverty, dropout rates, and teen pregnancy, very few us reading this article are directly affected by them. I am as guilty as the next person when it comes to this point.

Let us make a commitment, as the body of Christ, that every time we hear about the 2010 Census that we not only pause and pray for the faces behind the numbers, but that we also pray about how to intentionally engage those faces with the Gospel that we proclaim!

Please join the Streets staff as we renew our commitment daily to see the faces in the numbers!

Ken Bennett is the Executive Director at Streets Ministries.
ken@streetsministries.org

New Giving Opportunity: Schnucks eScrip Customer Card

For the past few months, the staff at Streets has been participating in a new fund-raising program - The Schnucks eScrip Customer Card. After seeing how successful it has been with staff, we would like to now offer it to you.

The eScrip program is an easy way to help Streets raise funds at no additional cost to you, our supporters. Once enrolled into the Streets group, all you have to do is show the cashier your registered Schnucks card at check out. In return, Schnucks will donate back a percentage to Streets. Up to 3% depending on how much you purchase each month. So the more you spend, the more Streets receives! As a father of three young daughters who drink a lot of \$4.00 a gallon milk, I can tell you that this adds up in a hurry.

To enroll in the program and obtain a card, please contact either Whitney Hale or myself at any time. Thank you.

Richard Vining is the Business Director at Streets Ministries.
richard@streetsministries.org



Please Participate! Students and Staff displaying eScrip cards.

What Lives Behind the Data: by Sarah Coleman

Whether you have school aged children or just recall being a school aged child yourself, you are probably no stranger to standardized testing. Although teachers have been preparing for the TCAP (Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program) the whole year, the last few weeks have been frantic as testing time grows near. Just the other day, I headed to Georgia Avenue Elementary to visit students during lunch - their only break of the day. While they ate, an assistant principal was calling out practice questions to the students. Why all this anxious behavior? Because the data gathered from these tests is important! Not just because it tracks student achievement, but because it also helps determine how much funding the school will receive the following year. That funding not only goes towards books and supplies for the school, but also jobs. So quite literally, much of what the school needs is dependent on the scores of these students.

It is not that the testing system is wrong or corrupt, it is just that our students go into this process without a basis to succeed. For example, 61% of low income households have no books in the home. None. The average low income child receives less than twenty-five hours of being read to by the time they reach first grade. These statistics are gloomy, but here at Streets we attempt to see these numbers as real children with real situations and implement programs to help change their future.



Lets Read! Manava is excited to meet with her Ready Reader, Dominique, who has spent two years volunteering in the program.

As part of my job as Elementary Coordinator at Streets, I run a program on the campus of Georgia Avenue Elementary called Ready Readers. Ready Readers is a volunteer driven program where an adult is placed with two students that are below reading proficiency. Each week, that volunteer reads to the students for one hour. This past year, the Ready Reader volunteers have been a joy to watch as they have interacted with their students and taken the initiative to go above and beyond their program responsibilities. I was visiting with one not too long ago and asked her how things were going with her two students. She got a big smile on her face and exclaimed "Actually, one of mine has graduated from me and I am now working with a new student." How encouraging is that! This is the exact mission of the program: to take students who are below proficient and push them to that proficient line.

Another mission of the Ready Readers program is to build positive relationships with students so they might experience the love of Christ through our volunteers. One of my volunteers works with this sweet little girl named Danesha. Without fail, almost every Wednesday before her tutoring time with Mary-Marsha, she asks me with expectant eyes - "Is Mary-Marsha coming today?"



Phonic Fun: Ready Readers at Georgia Avenue Elementary make Phonics fun during class time for their students.

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What We've Been Up To

- On February 16th, a woman's group from **Independent Presbyterian Church** donated and assembled over forty shoeboxes of toiletries for students participating in College Tours 2010. Each box contained personal hygiene projects, motivational notes, snacks, and some change for the vending machines. Thank you IPC!
- On March 2nd, a group of students representing the **St. Mary's Community Fund** came to Streets to learn more about Streets' education programs and take a tour.
- From March 4th-7th, adult members from **Hope Presbyterian Church** hosted their annual "Urban Plunge" at the Streets Center. During their time here, the group ate and slept at Streets, toured other ministries in the neighborhood, and participated in service projects.
- During the month of March, the Streets Center served as a **U.S. Census** employment recruiting base for residents of the Foote and Cleaborn Homes community.
- Special congratulations are in order for Jaquisha, a senior at Booker T. Washington High School, on her recent interview with **Harvard University**.
- On Friday, March 5th, Carmen and Whitney attended **First Evangelical Church's** annual "Family Reunion Dinner."
- March 22nd, a group of students from **Briarcrest Christian School** gave the Streets Center a deep cleaning from top to bottom as part of a group service project.
- On March 26th, the Streets Center Gym hosted a practice session for the **San Diego State University Lady Aztecs** as they prepared for the NCAA Regional Final. Additionally, six students from Vance Middle School worked as ball-girls for the Regional hosted at the FedEx Forum.



Cookout Conversations: Delvin visits with students and neighborhood friends during a recent community cookout.



Bumper Bowling: The lane bumpers at *Billy Hardwick's* were put to good use recently as John took a group of twenty students bowling.



Class Outside: Taking advantage of the good weather, Carmen took High School Girls Bible Study group outside for their weekly lesson.



What's Coming Up

- Beginning April 7th, Carmen will be hosting a weekly computer class for women in the neighborhood. The class, which will be held in the Homework Lab, will teach basic computer skills and help with resume development.
- On April 12th, **Metropolitan Bank** will be bringing food for students attending High School "Club." If you or your group are interested in a similar upcoming opportunity, please contact Whitney at whitney@streetsministries.org.
- April 17th, volunteers from **First Evangelical Church** will be hosting a photo scavenger hunt for elementary students at Streets.
- Thanks to artist Anne Sayle, Peg Stringer, and **Second Presbyterian Church**, Streets' Elementary Room now has a beautiful, wall sized mural depicting God's Creation of animals. Thank you!
- April 27th, Streets will be hosting a party for Pathways students and their mentors as a way to close out the semester and say "thank you" for all their hard work.
- Beginning May 30th, Carmen, Emma, Delvin, and Kenny will be taking students to **Sharptop Cove** in Jasper, Georgia, for Summer Camp. Please pray for their safety as well as for the time they will be spending with the students.
- June 7th, Sarah and Nick will be taking Georgia Avenue and Downtown Elementary students to **Kids Across America** in Branson, Missouri, for Summer Camp. Please pray for these young students while they are away.
- To keep up with the latest happenings at Streets Ministries, please visit us on the web at www.streetsministries.org. If you would like to be a part of our **Periodic Needs List** and receive monthly updates on specific needs for our students and programming, please email us at info@streetsministries.org.



The Creation of Animals: Georgia Avenue and Downtown Elementary students saying thank you for the new mural in their room.



Ride the Bluff: Demetria, a first grader at Downtown Elementary, gets ready for another slide down the bluff downtown.



Spring Break: Tyrenisha, Jasmine, and Brittany take a break in the sun downtown as they enjoy the spring weather.