

The Messenger

February 2012

Christmas Sharing...

More than just gifts to children

EMI started its Christmas Sharing program in 1985, according to Jaline Bradley, long-time volunteer and EMI board member. Jaline was there from the beginning when the idea took shape and EMI began to coordinate resources in the community to provide Christmas gifts for families that may not otherwise have anything under their tree.

Twenty six years later as the gifts once again line the floor at Foley United Methodist Church and the Dwelling Place in Fairhope, the program has grown in scope and size due to our population growth and the economic climate in the county. This year the community stepped up to provide Christmas gifts to more than 900 children and 100 homebound elderly.

Even though it is a lot of hard work that begins in the hot summer month of August, that hard work is forgotten on distribution day as we hand out gifts to all the parents. We are unable to see the reaction of the children on Christmas morning, but are blessed by the reaction we see on the faces of parents when they realize that their children will have a wonderful Christmas due to the generosity of the community in which they live. Nor are we there when gifts are distributed to the elderly in our program, but we know that these individuals find the Christmas season just a little less lonely, knowing that someone does care.

Christmas Sharing is definitely a community-driven program. We could not do it without the financial support, volunteers and all those who sponsor our angels each year. The list is far too long to print, but we are grateful for each and everyone.

May the joy that is felt during the Christmas season be with all of those who are dear to this ministry throughout the new year.



Jaline Bradley checks identification as parents pick up Christmas toys

See Page 5 for article on long-time Foley volunteer who has coordinated Christmas Sharing for the past four years.



Above: Dale Sommerfield checks bags of gifts ready to be distributed at Foley United Methodist Church. Below: Robin Huchison, Michelle Kurtz, Joye Vath and Jerry Barnett (in the distance looking on), check the contents of gift bags at the Dwelling Place in Fairhope.



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Staff Appreciation Supper at St. James Episcopal Church

EMI Board of Directors honors the staff for a job well done

In September of 2011 the Board of Directors honored the staff of EMI with a banquet held at Saint James Episcopal Church in Fairhope.



EMI Board Member Rev. William Brown gives Dan Hanson a sculpture as a tribute to his years of service.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of an award to Dan Hanson for his twenty years of dedicated service to EMI. Dan pioneered the Community Development program for the ministry and has been its one and only Director.

Community Development under Dan's leadership initiated ACT-II (All Churches Together), a grass roots organization tackling difficult problems throughout the community such as road paving, clean drinking water, high insurance rates and safety issues in under-privileged communities in the form of stop lights and sidewalks.

EMI is proud to have such a dedicated and effective leader in Dan. We hope he continues to serve the ministry for many more years to come.



*Dan Hanson
Photo by Carol Rupp*



2011 record crowd enjoys beautiful weather at the 11th Annual Chili for Charity

12th Annual Chili for Charity

What do Elvis, motorcycles and a hay wagon have in common? They're all "on a roll" at the Chili for Charity event at Oak Hollow Farm in Fairhope, Saturday, **February 25 from 11:30 am until 2:00 pm**. The trio will be part of our fun-filled family event to raise funds for the ministry and its broad range of programs that help families in our community.

The newest feature of the 12th cook-off will be a motorcycle ride around the county. It will begin and end at Oak Hollow just in time to start sampling the event's star attraction. . . some of the best chili Baldwin County has to offer. More than 40 booths will offer mouth-watering samples of chili cooked by local groups vying for top honors and the coveted awards provided by Tom Jones Pottery. It's a popular event that welcomes all ages.

A large bake sale with delicious homemade baked goods will tempt your sweet tooth and help fuel your energy for other features of the afternoon, such as the mechanical bull, inflatables for the kids, a hay ride around the farm, the foot-tapping music of Blind Dog Mike and the Howlers and, of course, Elvis! Baldwin County's own Shane Tucker will bring his velvety voice and sequined suit to entertain the chili crowd with his unique tribute to "the King". Laurie DuBose and Mark from WABF 1220 radio will again emcee the event.



Above: Children line up to receive a balloon sculpture from Dr. Gee.

Below: Shane Tucker delights the crowd with his Elvis impersonation



Mark Your Calendar
for this Year's Chili Event
February 25
Motorcycle Fun Ride
Cost is Included in Admission
Registration at 9:30
Ride begins at 10:30

Affordable admission prices remain the same: \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 3 to 12. Children under 3 are free. For motorcycle enthusiasts, there will be a fun run that will be-

gin and end at Oak Hollow Farm. . . still one of the best eating and entertainment deals available. Tickets are available at the Ecumenical Ministries offices in Fairhope and Foley. For more information visit our website www.baldwinemi.org or call (251)928-3430 (Fairhope) or 943-3415 (Foley). Mark your calendar – Saturday, February 25 - for this great afternoon of food, fun and entertainment for all ages at Oak Hollow Farm in Fairhope. A healthy appetite for great chili and lively family fun is required but cowboy boots are optional!

See you there -- rain or shine!

Emmy's Thrift Shop: A fun place to shop but also a place to give

Ecumenical Ministries opened its thrift shop more than 10 years ago to help support the ministry financially as well as give the community the ability to help families in need with household items, clothes, furniture, etc. In the first few years the donations were few, but the store steadily grew as the community supported the mission of EMI.

A few years ago we had such an abundance of donations that it made it hard for our volunteers to sort and display donated

items. However this last year has seen a dip in donations as a result of our slowing economy. Emmy's is a vital part of EMI in generating much needed revenue, and the sale of these items is used directly in the community that we serve. All donations are appreciated.

If you have larger items please call our pick-up line at 367-Emmy (3669).

If you don't have anything to donate, stop by and shop. We always have many interesting items for sale.



Jerry Barnett, Richard Bowen and long-time volunteer Alyce Geyer

Young girl express her thanks in a handmade card

The Fairhope office was blessed by a young girl who created a handmade thank you card to express her gratitude to EMI for helping her family through a tough time.

Her mother had been in to see us seeking help with her rent.

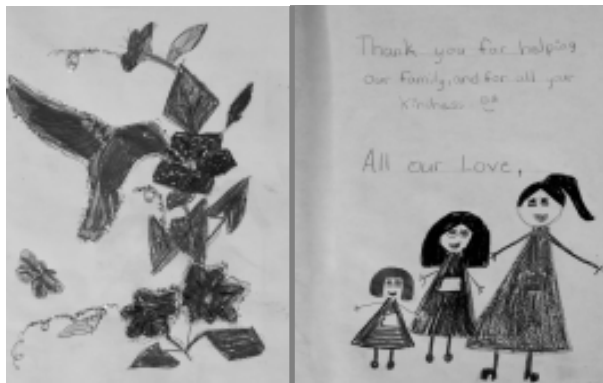
The mother of two was brought in by a neighbor, since she had no transportation. Her rent was behind and she was very afraid that she was going to be evicted. Our Emergency Aid volunteer was able to help with some financial assistance and with

some suggestions of other resources that could probably help the family.

The oldest daughter was then brought in by this same neighbor in order for her to give us the card that she created to show her appreciation for what we had done.

Needless to say there was not a dry eye in the house as this young girl explained to the staff what our help had meant to the family.

We truly appreciated this wonderful gesture of gratitude from one so young!



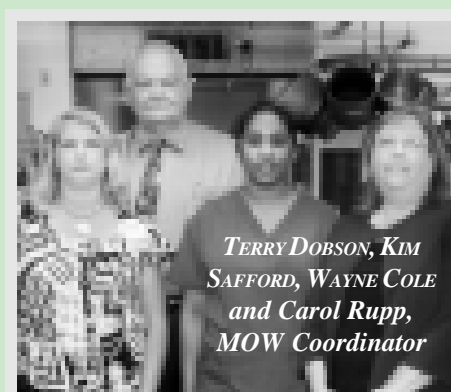
Meals on Wheels program gets new vendor for Fairhope area

In November Montrose Bay Health and Rehabilitation Center accepted the responsibility of preparing our meals for the Fairhope area.

A change in the kitchen service at Homestead Village necessitated finding another vendor.

We are very grateful for the staff and leadership of Wayne Cole at Montrose Bay who understood our need and stepped up immediately to take on the task. They are now preparing 30-40 hot meals a day for our clients.

We would also like to thank



We have an urgent need for drivers in Daphne and Spanish Fort.

Westminster Village. Their staff has continued to provide quality meals to our clients in the Spanish Fort, Daphne area. MOW is a volunteer driven program that delivers hot lunches to homebound elderly and disabled five days a week at a nominal cost.

We are always looking for volunteers who would like to give their time of at least one hour a week to deliver these meals.

If you are interested in a rewarding volunteer experience please call Carol Rupp, Meals on Wheels Director, at 928-3430.

Foley Christmas Sharing Coordinator retires



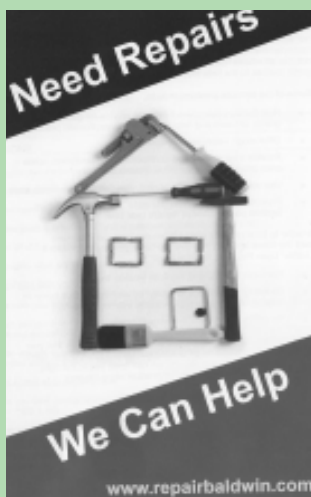
Darlene Sommerfeld

Darlene Sommerfeld has coordinated the Christmas Sharing program for the South Baldwin area for the last four years.

With the distribution of all the gifts in 2011 she turned in her angel template and retired from being our Santa elf! While it is a fun program to manage, there are many details...from cutting out angel ornaments... to providing the sponsors with what the children want for Christmas ...to getting all the gifts distributed.

Her organizational skills and attention to detail has been a wonderful asset to our program. She also has a way of soliciting other elves. Her husband Dale has assisted with registering families and setting up for receiving and distributing the gifts.

We are grateful for all the ways they both have made the Christmas Sharing program a blessing in our community.

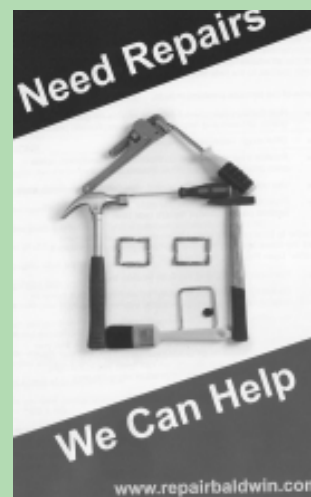


Unique, new home repair initiative

EMI continues to work with Habitat for Humanity and Eastern Shore Affordable Houses to put together a comprehensive plan to repair homes of low-income families in our community.

This effort is called Repair Baldwin, and together with churches and volunteers we hope to address many home repair problems throughout the entire county.

Anyone interested in learning how you or your church can become involved please call Sally at 928-3430.



Dashing Divas for EMI

Once again South Baldwin Regional Medical Center's Healthy Woman annual fun run/walk will benefit EMI.

The event will be held on Saturday, March 31st and this year will have a Foley location.

The run will start and end at the hospital. The funds raised will once again benefit the

under or uninsured individuals in our area that require emergency medical tests. Last year over \$2,900 was raised for this much needed fund.

With your help the Diva Dashing and Family Walk will surpass that amount.

Applications will soon be available through SBRMC. Watch for details.

Save the Date!
Diva Dash
5K and Family Walk
Saturday, March 31 in Foley
Information available from our website
www.baldwinemi.org



Pictured left and right are before and after views of the interior. In the center picture are Harry Bennett, the original builder of the house, Sally Deane, Executive Director EMI, and Mike Brokowsky, Executive Director of Family Promise.

EMI helps with the promise of a place to live

Ecumenical Ministries, Family Promise and Fairhope United Methodist work together to help homeless families in Baldwin County.

More than 20 years ago EMI built a house for a client with the stipulation that the house be returned to the ministry at the time of her death.

The house was transferred to Ecumenical this summer but was in need of many repairs. The EMI board decided that the best use of this property was to lease it to Family Promise of Baldwin County so it could serve as a transitional

home for homeless families with children.

Fairhope United Methodist Church, which is part of the Family Promise hospitality network, became aware of EMI's desire to use the home in the program.

The Youth enthusiastically took on the job of renovating the house under the leadership of Jennifer Myrick. In October the house was completely renovated and was turned over to Mike Brokowsky, the director of Family Promise. EMI is very grateful to the youth and all volunteers and supporters that helped make the house a home.

Emergency Aid is . . .

Crisis assistance to families in need

Rent • Utilities • Food • Clothing • Medication

• A listening Ear and caring Heart



Going to the Dogs

For the past two years EMI's pantries have worked in conjunction with the Baldwin County Humane Society (BARC) to stock pet food to give out to families in need with pets to feed.

Gracie stopped by the pantry in Fairhope one day to take advantage of the pet food distribution.

EMI's Community Development program tackles

Natural gas, Housing, Drainage and Exorbitant Homeowners Insurance Prices

Latham/ Little River Churches Community Improvement Organization helped acquire **natural gas for northwest Baldwin**. New lines will run from Stockton to Little River. They will be laid in phases, starting in Latham.

In addition to the significant savings natural gas offers over propane, North Baldwin Utilities offers new customers free water heaters and valuable rebates on other gas appliances. All are a considerable help for rural, low-income families in the area.

The **Mills/ Foley Churches** Community Improvement Organization piloted a strong clergy and church lay-leader base for Repair Baldwin.

This led to a **\$22,000 grant** from Holy Spirit Thrift Shop in Gulf Shores. Rev. Keith Talbert of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Foley, played a key role in obtaining the grant. (See Page 5 for more about Repair Baldwin.)

The **Eastern Shore chapter** of the EMI Community Improvement program wrestled with drainage and awaits a new comprehensive, countywide drainage study before taking additional steps.

The **Homeowners Hurricane Insurance Initiative** succeeded in getting officials from nationally recognized Risk Management Solutions (RMS) and also Karen Clark of Karen Clark Company to



Top: Deacon Shedrick Thomas summarized natural gas progress in northwest Baldwin. Below: EMI community group studies how a proposed medical overlay district will impact their families.



testify at Governor Robert Bentley's Affordable Homeowners Insurance Commission in December.

The RMS representative explained how its own hurricane catastrophe models significantly *over-estimated* hurricane damage to Alabama's coastal counties and significantly *under-estimated* risk in inland Alabama.

Clark, the inventor of the new hurricane risk models, disavowed them for a revised method of calculating the effects of hur-

ricane risk.

The disavowed, *experimental* models are the driver of the change in coastal Alabama's homeowners insurance crisis.

Bob Hartwig, president of the Insurance Information Institute -- a nationally-known industry figure -- showed that more than 500 tornadoes have hit Alabama since Hurricane Ivan. He also cited four "catastrophic" wind events that hit upstate Alabama in 2011 *in addition to the April 27 tragedy*.

The combined testimony is significant because it suggests upstate Alabama is equally expensive to repair due to wind and hail. Until 2006, coastal Alabama paid the state average for insurance. If coastal Alabama is no more expensive than inland, then coastal counties should continue to pay the state average -- \$954 a year -- not the thousands that the Department of Insurance (DOI) permits.

The DOI relied on the experimental "models" when it allowed companies to increase coastal prices *hundreds of a percent* starting in 2006. It did not rely on, nor even collect, county-by-county claims and premiums data when it permitted these historical increases.

The Community Development program encourages the regulatory body to start collecting this historical data and using it as a guide for fair pricing statewide.



Governor Bentley's Affordable Homeowners Insurance Commission Chairman, Baldwin County Probate Judge Tim Russell speaks at the December 12 meeting in Montgomery. Bentley appointed EMI's Michelle Kurtz to the Commission. She's at the table, first on the left with her back to the camera. The photographer is HHII volunteer Leon Leggett, the only "media" covering these very important meetings. EMI has video-taped every meeting.



Ecumenical Ministries, Inc of Baldwin County

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 **Find us on Facebook**, become a fan of Ecumenical Ministries of Baldwin County and Emmy's Thrift Shop. You will get updates about the ministry and all the happenings at Emmy's, including new items for sale and announcements of those spur-of-the-moment sales.

EMI is proud to be a member of both The Eastern Shore and South Baldwin Chambers of Commerce.



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**See Page 3
for more about
this years'
Chili event.**