

## BAXTER STAFF

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Rachel McClelland  
Jessica Melton

Wanda Nelson  
Joanie Rosema  
Sue Wright-Caruthers

### Marketplace

Dee Lucas

### Mizizi-Maji Mentoring

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*Youth Mentoring Director*  
Erica Millbrooks,  
*Thread Project*

### Medical Clinic

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*Counselor*  
Mary Holt  
Alice Lewis  
Noele Stith

Lisa Van Dyke

### Dental Clinic

Katie Hudson  
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### WIC

Chawntele Flowers  
Jan Flowers

### Medical Clinic Volunteers

Tammy Bekkering  
Maryann Bishop  
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Lynne DenBesten  
Mary Koenen  
Deborah Pelletier  
Kay Postma  
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### Prayer Clinic

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Rachel Dykstra,  
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Ashley King, *Calvin College*  
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### AARP Staff

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### Recreation Reaps Rewards

Nicole Thompkins

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Melanie Beelen,  
*Executive Director*

## BAXTER 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

### Contributors:

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## MISSION

A Christian Response to Human Needs

## BAXTER COMMUNITY CENTER

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*Baxter Community Center is a 501(c)(3) organization.  
Your donation is tax deductible.*



reflecting on the past  
*anticipating the future*



2009  
ANNUAL REPORT

# LOOKING IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR

## REFLECTION ON 40 YEARS... 1969-2009

**Reflection... a word with a variety of meanings.** The theme for our 2009 annual report is "Reflection." As I write this article, my first grandchild, Javion, is one week old. Shakespeare, our family dog of thirteen years, died a day after the birth of Javion. These events have caused me to pause often over the past week.

I remember 14 years ago, when I began at Baxter, I went on my first annual silent retreat to a Catholic retreat center in Door County, Wisconsin. Sister Maryanne, my spiritual director, asked me why I had come. I began to explain the anticipation and fear I had in taking the "helm" of Baxter. I also told her that my father had recently died. I will never forget her response, *"The freshness of your grief, will bring significance to the birth."*

There is something about new life and death that causes a person to pause. The passing of time, the end of an era, the birth of a new generation, or even the death of a dog provides a venue to look into the reflection of the rear view mirror in order to reflect and re-focus.

**When I look in Baxter's rear view mirror, the landscape I see is an urban corridor filled with people of heartfelt conviction and unprecedented commitment.** Our early roadway was sometimes filled with potholes as we faced the turmoil of the late sixties and early seventies. However our vision was never blurred. Baxter's mission statement, *"A Christian Response to Human Needs,"* came out of those difficult days and paved the way for us to stay committed to our calling to walk alongside our community no matter what the terrain. As a result of faithful trailblazing, Baxter has been able to significantly impact lives.

**Upon reflection over the past decade, we have had these strategic results:**

- We have given birth to our **Mizizi Maji Youth Mentoring Program** (1998).
- We have become a **WIC** (Women Infant Children) site within our **Wholistic Health Clinic**. (1999)
- We have added an infant classroom (1999) and gained National Accreditation in our **Child Development Center** (2007).
- We have completed a successful three million dollar capital campaign (2006).
- We have launched a financial literacy component (2006) and introduced senior center programming (2009) within our **Marketplace**.
- Recently we have started a technology class twice a week for seniors (March 2010).

People of every age have a place to call "home" at Baxter. **Every program began because someone within our community asked Baxter to respond to a need the community identified. We paused long enough to reflect and respond.**

Baxter has listened to the spoken and unspoken needs around us.

**The view in our rear view mirror is a reflection of the hearts of many people. Program participants** who trust us to give our best...**competent staff members** who are loyal... **faithful board members** who are engaged in the mission...**committed volunteers** who believe in our mission and are willing to give of their time and expertise... **generous shareholders**, like you, who understand the impact of an investment made to Baxter.

When we look back over our past forty years, we are so very grateful to begin a new decade without past debt. It is critical for us to continue to be able to meet the challenges and changing needs within our community. I keep thinking of the 15,000 people who entered our Marketplace doorways in 2009 with a basic need for food

and clothing. We are committed to be a response to the question, *"When were you hungry and I fed you, naked and I clothed you?"*



**Will you consider making an investment to Baxter this year? Your gift of time to listen to a child, to become a mentor, or write a check allows us to continue to be the embrace of Christ to a hungry and broken world.** We live in difficult times... but there is an **ultimate reflection** we strive for at Baxter. **We are called to be the Light of the World... Through a glass darkly, but someday face to face we will see all things made new. Will you join us in making the Light more brilliant on this side of heaven?**

Walking in the Light with you,

*Melanie*

Melanie Beelen, Executive Director

## WHAT'S NEW AT BAXTER COMMUNITY CENTER?

- We now have available an option for you to **donate online**. Just click the **"Donate Now"** button from our website ([www.baxtercommunitycenter.org](http://www.baxtercommunitycenter.org)), and it will lead you to a secure site to make your donation.
- In the beginning of March 2010 we started our **Senior Technology Classes**. New classes are starting soon. Call Baxter for more information. (616-456-8593)
- **Sportspower** is a new partner with Baxter. The activity takes place on Saturdays for 5<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> graders and includes a meal, a Bible study and basketball camp. You can learn more by visiting our website and going to our "Partners" page.
- **Baxter Wholistic Health Clinic** is in the final stages of creating a partnership with the **Helen DeVos Children's Hospital**. The opportunity is a result of Baxter's strategic planning process to increase access for more children to find a medical home at Baxter.
- **Community NEWZ** is a new newsletter project for our **Mizizi Maji Mentoring** students. Students will staff the various journalism responsibilities in order to create a community based newsletter from the perspective of our youth.
- Our **Garden Club** will be up and running again soon. Be sure to check out the garden on the west end of Baxter to see what is growing!
- In 2009, we kicked off the **40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Initiative**. Our plans include the creation of a rooftop greenhouse, growing the Proctor Endowment, and establishing an Emergent Needs Fund to be able to respond to the various program needs that arise in our community.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT  
[WWW.BAXTERCOMMUNITYCENTER.ORG](http://WWW.BAXTERCOMMUNITYCENTER.ORG)

## GIVING NEW MEANING TO A SAFE PLACE TO GROW... ROOTED IN THE BAXTER SOIL

### A NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR THE GARDEN AT BAXTER

If you happened to walk by Baxter Community Center last summer, you might have noticed the garden at the west end of the building. Perhaps you saw a few children working hard to cultivate their own small plot of earth. This is Baxter's Garden Club. The effort is not a "club" in the typical sense of the word. There is no scheduled meeting times or a structured leadership team. Rather, the Garden Club is guided by Marjorie Boerema with the help of Baxter's Facilities Manager Randy Posthuma. Marjorie is in charge of the flower section of the garden and Randy oversees the vegetable area. Children in the community are encouraged to help when and where they desire and a few even have their own small plots in the garden.

A Garden Club offers many valuable lessons for our community and our children. Randy points out that one important lesson gardening teaches is patience. He also notes the importance of teaching youth and families where their food comes from. "Gardening can teach us to become somewhat self-sufficient because the food grown means money that we do not need to spend at the grocery store. It is healthy and economical. And if we can start with the kids, then hopefully the parents will become interested," explains Randy. Marjorie hopes to further this goal by encouraging our neighbors to follow the example of Baxter and begin a garden of their own in their back yard.

In addition to teaching lessons like patience and providing healthy food for the community, the garden also creates a beautiful space for the community to enjoy. Marjorie envisions that "the garden will become a beautiful place for the community, a space where people can go and sit and relax."

The garden at Baxter has been a community project all along. Years ago, a neglected house was donated, many *United Way Day of Caring* volunteers helped to

clean up the area, Fix Up Day volunteers for many years have given their time and muscle to spread dirt, build a gazebo and pathways. For several years the seniors at *Fulton Manor* joined us in creating an atmosphere for an intergenerational garden. We have also had a 4H Club involved within our garden. It has been hard work for many years. We would like to thank the many people that are making an investment of time and money in our gardening efforts. The space has become a gazebo and has various beds and new plots with pathways to walk through and enjoy. Marjorie is now adding to the beauty.

A garden is always a work in progress. In the same way, the Garden Club itself is a work in progress. As more children become interested, the club has the opportunity to become more structured. Marjorie is also interested offering "garden coaching" to expand the garden from Baxter to individual households. Randy also would like to see gardening take off in the community. The hope is that the Garden Club will continue to grow and increase its impact on the larger community. **If anyone is interested in volunteering in the garden please contact Georgia Taylor, Baxter's volunteer coordinator.**

Ashley King

Calvin College Comenius Intern

God has blessed Baxter because just by doing good, Baxter has done well.

Dr. Dennis Hoekstra



## LEAD ME TO THE ROCK...

During Baxter's early years, a lack of understanding of the organizational mission often impeded its work in the community. Desiring to communicate his own heart and the heart of the organization, **Herschell Turner**, the first director, painted a picture of two young men, one of them black and the other white, who ran Baxter's recreation program. In the painting, they pull a large rock together. Herschell made 2,000 prints in two weeks and distributed them in the community. "And then" he remembers, "people started understanding what Baxter was doing." **Eli Lumpkins**, a board member at the time recalls the significance of this painting as well, explaining, "The symbolism in that image is what has really propelled this place forward and allowed it to grow."



Herschell's original painting now hangs on the wall in the Grace Room at Baxter, providing a continual reminder of the struggles posed by the rock of racism but also the strength that comes through the brother and sisterhood that crosses racial lines and supersedes division.

Forty years later (2009), Baxter received a gift from an anonymous donor. The donor selected Baxter as one of the sights around the world to place a Rock of Remembrance in recognition of God's faithfulness to all generations. The following words are on a commemorative plaque placed on the rock:

#### A DONOR'S STATEMENT

Our family has experienced God's love and guidance as expressed in the Torah and the Bible:

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11*

We hope all served here will know that God has a plan for their lives too.

In our desire to reflect God's love to others and to be good stewards of the gifts God has given us, we are providing funds for construction at Baxter Community Center. We make this gift anonymously so that the focus will be on God, who gives each of us "hope and a future" through His Son, Jesus Christ.

September 3, 2008

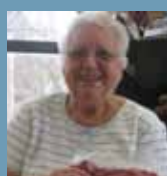


Shortly after the rock was in place at Baxter, I took a second glance and noticed the shape of the rock was almost identical to the one that Herschell had painted forty years ago. The symbolism and "coincidence" was incredible. I remembered a quote I heard awhile back... "There's no such thing as coincidences. It's just God's way of staying anonymous." He continues to provide a visual reminder to us of our mission and His plans to give us all hope and a future.

Melanie Beelen  
Executive Director

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

### WHAT IMPACT HAS BAXTER HAD ON YOUR LIFE?



Anna Mae Stegeman

#### MARKETPLACE

“Baxter is an organization that really cares about people. Baxter wants to know where people come from and tries to mitigate their pain, whatever that pain is. It’s an environment I like: especially the cross-cultural part of it. It’s a healthy organization.”

—**Phil Quist:** Volunteer Income Tax Program



Norma Peterson

Baxter is a caring environment. I think we all try to help each other in some kind of way if possible... There is a sense of team here... I’ve learned of resources at Baxter that I didn’t even know existed.” —**Genika Horton:** Jubilee Jobs Intern Emergency Food and Clothing



Grandma Mary

#### THREADS

“How has Baxter influenced my life? The friendship and the diversity of cultures... the Baxter community is friendly. I’ve been really impressed with it. Being at Baxter has allowed me to build friendships. We come from different places but at Baxter we all have the same home.”

—**Anna Mae Stegeman:** Volunteer Threads Instructor.



Dr. Addy

“Threads has allowed me to use the talents and experience of my sewing class here and I’m still learning. Baxter is a very positive and upbeat place and I can tell the importance it has in the community.”

—**Norma Peterson:** Volunteer Threads Instructor.



Alice Lewis

#### CHILD CARE

“It helps me to get through the day to not be sitting at home but to get out and do something that is meaningful. I benefit the kids and get benefit from them. Being with the children every day and helping them to get along with one another you find it related to you too... You can learn a lot from kids if you just listen to them and have patience with them.”

—**Grandma Mary Bruce:** Foster Grandmother



Deb Pelletier

#### CLINIC

“It’s a Wholistic clinic. We don’t just address the physical needs, we provide for the spiritual and emotional needs, and when you combine all three, it is powerful... Parent’s know it’s not just physical care and to me, it’s the best combination. We need to meet people where they are hurt. And that’s what God asks us to do, to reach out to the oppressed and be the hands of Christ to them. It humbles you.” —**Dr. Addy:** Volunteer Pediatric Clinic

“...Baxter has made me much more aware of the needs in our community.”

“I feel lucky that we have a job that we can be the directors of the dental clinic at Baxter and we are in a position to help those in need.”

—**Dr. Jennifer Van Timmeren:** Volunteer Dentist and Co-Director of the Dental Clinic

“The biggest thing is the patients that we see—the dental needs they have are greater and the people that come in are so very grateful for what we are doing and what all the other volunteer dentists are doing. It really is a team effort.”

—**Dr. Scott Van Timmeren:** Volunteer Dentist and Co-Director of the Dental Clinic.

“I have been at Baxter for six or seven years now and I feel it is important work. Someone has to take care of the people in the Baxter community.” —**Dr. Yavich:** Volunteer Adult Medical Clinic

“Being at Baxter has made me much more aware of the needs in our community. I feel like I can use the skills that I have to serve God in this way. When I retired, that is what I wanted to do: to use my nursing skills to help others.”

—**Lynne Den Besten:** Volunteer Adult Clinic Nurse

“I remember being in high school and seeing Baxter and thinking ‘this is what I want to do when I retire.’ Baxter has impacted me by making me more aware of the difficulties that people with a lower income face.”

—**Alice Lewis:** Volunteer Adult Clinic Nurse

“The kids, I may have just given them five shots, and they shout “Miss Debby!” and come running up if I’m not busy and give me hugs. What greater reward is there? It’s the clients.”

—**Deb Pelletier:** Volunteer Pediatric Medical Assistant

## TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

[WWW.BAXTERCOMMUNITYCENTER.ORG!](http://WWW.BAXTERCOMMUNITYCENTER.ORG!)

In 2009 Baxter Community Center applied for and was awarded the **Non Profit Technical Assistance (NPTA) grant** from the Non Profit Technical Assistance Fund of Kent County ([www.nptafund.org](http://www.nptafund.org)). The grant allowed for a redesign of our website, a new software program to assist with fundraising, the development of a newsletter template, and the creation of case statements for each of Baxter’s pillar programs (Child Development Center, Mentoring Program, Marketplace, and Wholistic Health Clinic).

Because of this grant, Baxter has been able to improve its technology to prepare for future clients and fundraising. We invite you to visit our website:

[www.baxtercommunitycenter.org](http://www.baxtercommunitycenter.org).



## MEET THE NEW STAFF AT BAXTER!



**Cathy Smedes**

Cathy Smedes began working with **Baxter's Senior Center** in February 2010 teaching a basic computer skills class for seniors. A native of Grand Rapids, Cathy has spent the last 40 years living in California where she taught computer classes at *Los Angeles Community College* and *Long Beach Community College*. Aside from teaching, Cathy enjoys working in her garden, running with her dog, visiting the beach and riding her motorcycle. After a battle with cancer, Cathy returned to Grand Rapids, eager to begin teaching again and, having grown up in the Baxter neighborhood, was drawn to Baxter Community Center. She brings a willingness to help wherever she is needed and with whomever is in need. For Cathy, the reward is seeing her students get over their fear of computers and even come to enjoy technology as they continue to learn new skills.



**Chawntele Flowers**

Chawntele joined Baxter in November 2009 as a **WIC clerk**. Originally from Detroit, she moved to Grand Rapids five years ago with her husband, a native of Grand Rapids, and her four children. She has a bachelor's degree in Social Work and heard about Baxter through her mother-in-law, Jan Flowers, Baxter's **WIC** Coordinator. Chawntele is drawn by Baxter's mission, to be a light in the neighborhood, which she feels is very unique and powerful. She is excited to be a part of Baxter's work in connecting people to opportunities. As the number of **WIC** patients continues to grow, Chawntele hopes to bring more support and stability to the **WIC** office so that the program's services can meet the increasing demand.

### THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN BAXTER AND JUBILEE JOBS

Baxter and Jubilee Jobs have formed a strong relationship over many years that has impacted both organizations. The clients who come to Jubilee Jobs in search

of work may find the experience they need met by an internship at Baxter.



**Genika Horton**

Genika found her Marketplace internship through Jubilee Jobs. She does a wide variety of tasks within the **Marketplace Emergency Food and Clothing Services**. When not at Baxter, Genika is kept busy by her daughter and attending classes full time at *Grand Rapids Community College* where she is majoring in pre-med. Her favorite part of working at Baxter is interacting with the community and being able to assist people with their needs.

*"It's been such a joy for me to have Genika as an intern. She is such a fast learner. I've had interns prior to her but few that have shown the enthusiasm and the willingness to do the job so well that she does. She also has the rapport with the people who come in. Customers will even call in and ask for her. People really enjoy her. Her attitude is great. She is always friendly and bubbly, never has a sad face, she really brings a lot of compassion and is very passionate about what she is doing. And I think what Baxter has done to impact her life is to help Genika realize her full potential. She says she really gets encouragement being here. And we can hold her accountable in other areas of her life. She is in GRCC, so we can say 'yes, you have to get to class now!' When she first came here, she wasn't sure of herself, but now she is a joy to be around and I think both the people using the Marketplace and the staff here have been lifted up by her presence here. She is a really great young woman and a joy to have around."*

—**Dee Lucas**: Marketplace Coordinator



**Rona Ghee**

Rona is interning in the **Baxter's tax program** and is assisting us with setting appointments and managing client intake. She also comes to Baxter through Jubilee Jobs. She is simply amazed at God's goodness in leading her here. She says "I feel like the door was open

and I walked through it." Because Rona has been in the position of need and has used many of Baxter's services, she is able to understand the significance of Baxter's work and can relate to clients with a profound compassion. Rona hopes to use this compassion and understanding to bring encouragement to the clients she meets in the tax program and in volunteering in the Marketplace. She wants to encourage others not to give up because if she can make it, so can they.

*"Rona is a great example of someone who comes to Baxter with a legitimate need for our services and is able to use our resources to turn around and build herself up. She has used many of our programs such as the pantry and the medical clinic but did not just take the service but also the advice and used it to build her life. Rona is a personification of the mission of Baxter: to provide for the immediate needs of people while also helping them to become self-sufficient. I have also seen Rona's self-confidence increase. Her knowledge of herself is becoming deeper as she is realizing that she can change, through the help of God and the help around her. The light bulbs that point out 'Yes, I can do this. It is possible. I do not have to live that way but can take steps and change my life.' are coming on."*

—**Georgia Taylor**: Volunteer Coordinator

### Ayen Kyanyin-Agoth



Ayen is a teacher assistant in the **Child Development Center** at Baxter.

*"Ayen is a very good worker. She is very willing to do whatever needs done and even asks for things to do when she is not busy. She works very well with the children. She will just get down on the floor and play with them at their level. Ayen never just came in to do what needed done; rather she always has a smile on her face and shared her optimistic personality with all of us. When she first came to us we could tell that she didn't think very highly of herself. We just stayed with her and kept encouraging her. We worked with Jubilee Jobs and they helped her find a job as a greeter. It is obvious she has learned more about her social skills! We have helped her set goals and she is achieving them, which is also increasing her self-confidence. The first two goals she set for herself were a job and an apartment. Ayen has met those goals and we*

*are now encouraging her to go to school. I have seen her grow a lot since she first came here."*

—**Ms. Lacy**: Child Development Center Program Director



**Bethany Levi-Sims**

Bethany is a teacher assistant in the **Child Development Center** at Baxter.

*"Bethany worked in our infant room while interning here. She was a very eager worker. She interacted with the children very well and was willing to help out with activities for the older children as well if needed. She fit right in with the staff and we are encouraging her to go to school and get licensed so that she can continue to work in childcare. She is expecting her own child soon but she still comes in as a substitute when we need someone and helps with childcare for the Freedom in Your Finance class. She is just very willing to work hard and we continue to encourage her to further her education and career."*

—**Ms. Lacy**: Child Development Center Program Director

**Baxter became the common ground for the meeting of white people and black people. 'This is mine.' 'This is mine, too.' And so it was both of theirs.**

**James White**



## MEET BAXTER'S NEW BOARD MEMBERS!



### Mark Carryl

Mark Carryl is a transplant to the Grand Rapids area. Growing up on Long Island, New York, he moved to Grand Rapids to practice corporate law at *Clark Hill PLC*. As someone new to the area, he had not known of Baxter until his work at *Clark Hill* and our long-term board member Jeff DeVree. His first experience of Baxter, at our Opening Doors Celebration in 2008, showed him the commitment Baxter has in serving the community. At the event Mark was also able to learn about the Mizizi Maji Mentoring Program where he has been matched as a mentor. As Baxter Community Center moves into 2010 and beyond, Mark's hope is that the community, both volunteers and clients, becomes aware of tremendous range of opportunities and services provided at Baxter.



### Jorge Gonzales

Jorge Gonzales is the Vice President for Community Development at *Macatawa Bank*. He is married with five children. When he is not watching his kids in their sporting events, he enjoys running and hopes to run a 10k this spring. Jorge has been involved in the Grand Rapids community in many ways including other boards, neighborhood ventures and business associations. But Jorge was particularly drawn to join the board at Baxter because he grew up in southeast Grand Rapids and feels connected to this community. He hopes to ensure financial support by showing supporters just how valuable Baxter has been for the community and all the important things Baxter has done through its long history. Jorge also believes that his Hispanic ethnicity will make him a beneficial member of the board

of directors as Baxter looks to address the new needs of the growing Hispanic population in the community. He is very excited to be a part of the work and eager to see what the future holds for Baxter.



### Mark McAleenan

Mark McAleenan has been practicing law for 32 years and is currently a commercial real-estate lawyer with *Varnum, Riddering, Schmidt & Howlett, LLP*. Originally from Grand Rapids, he returned in 1992 after beginning his career in Houston, Texas. He is the proud father of six children and three grandchildren. When he is not coaching his children or his grandchildren and others in youth sports, he enjoys gardening, fix-up projects around the house and taking care of his 200 pound Irish Wolf Hound. Mark's mother and brother were involved with Baxter when Mark was young, so the Center holds a special place in Mark's heart. When he was asked to join the board he describes it as *"one of those proverbial offers you just can't refuse."* Mark hopes to use his talents to help Baxter establish a firmer foundation for moving forward so it can continue to expand its services to the neighborhood. He believes it is an honor and privilege to be able to work with the people at Baxter.

**This place provides an anchor in the community, a place where people know they can go.**

**Eli Lumpkins**



**Volunteers**

**Administration**

Yekaterina Atonina  
Lilly Booker

Rita Broyles  
Sue Carl  
Hazel Lewis

Tracy Lucas  
Vanessa Purcell  
Phil Quist

Dawn Schaffer  
Noele Stith  
Michelle Williams



## MIZIZI MAJI YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAM

### ROOTED IN LEARNING AND GROWING IN KNOWLEDGE

**At the beginning of the school year 2008-2009 the young people in the Mizizi Maji mentoring program were challenged to end the school year with a 3.0 or better.** The reward for reaching the goal was a special overnight trip. We did not know where the funding would come from nor where we were going... but God prepared the way, gave us a destination and provided the resources for us to go!

Ultimately ten young people were able to go on a two-day, all expense paid trip to **North Buxton, Ontario**, a well preserved historic African Canadian town that thrived with industry and education from pre-Civil war until 1968. After spending the night in a hotel we headed home, visiting the *African American museum* in Detroit on the way. In addition to the experience of crossing the border, going over the bridge, seeing the Canadian flag waving in the air, exchanging American for Canadian money, seeing miles represented in kilometers, differences in accents, and signs in French and English, they were learning African Canadian History that connected with our/their history!

**Mizizi Maji**

**Mentoring Program**

Kelli Acord  
David Apsey  
Theresa Bacon-Bradley  
Carolyn Gallery  
Mark Caryll  
Anne Cassard  
Rhonda Coleman  
Erica Ekland  
Felicia Enuha  
Travis Foster  
Beatrice Gakuru  
Maceo Gant  
Kat Godinez  
April Harvey  
Audrey Heckwith  
Ginny Hodgson  
Cleopatra Jeffries  
Earnest Johnson  
Patrick Johnson  
Debra Jones  
N. Levi LaChappelle  
Stacy Ladenburger  
Mary Kennedy

Amy Kulan

Guiseppe Lore  
Charlotte Macon  
Darrin McCall  
Erica Millbrooks  
Jase Mondy  
Prentice Naves  
Cantaneeca Ortega-Key  
Nicole Parker  
Jordan Roberts  
Leslie Smith  
Shayon Smith  
Will Smith

Jason Stewart

Darlene Sueing  
Jill Tallman  
Georgia Taylor  
Stephanie Thompson  
Brian Tram  
James Williamson

**Threads Project**

Nancy Barnhard  
Barb Leegwater  
Norma Peterson  
Anna Mae Stegeman

**Volunteers**

### IMPACT ON LEARNING

Now when this group of young people study about Canada, border crossing, or money and flags of other countries they will listen with a different kind of interest. When they see a movie or documentary about North Buxton, slavery, Civil Rights or see a one room school house they will take interest in a new way, because they have been there!

### YOUTH TEACHING YOUTH

We saw the impact the trip made upon the students when they made a presentation to the rest of the young people in the program. They talked with excitement about all that they have learned, and expressed their desire to do well in school and learn more so that they can go on the next trip. You could see the wheels turning in the minds of the young people who were listening to their peers talk about the trip. Now they know it is for real and they could go too!



### THAT MUST HAVE COST A LOT!

The total trip cost including three adult chaperones with ten young people, hotel, museums and food came to just under \$1,300!

### WHAT ABOUT THIS SUMMER?

The offer still stands! A 3.O and you get to go! The destination is North Buxton for kids that did not go there last summer. The ten that went last summer now have the opportunity to go to Toronto where they will experience variety of ethnicities and languages and visit historic sights connected to North Buxton! If you would like to support our effort, please contact Melanie Beelen-melanieb@baxtercommunitycenter.org.

## WEST MICHIGAN FLIGHT ACADEMY

### PATRICK JOHNSON

Last fall the **West Michigan Flight Academy** (WMFA), founded by Patrick Johnson in 2007, invited young people from the Mizizi Maji mentoring program to engage in an experiential learning opportunity designed to introduce them to the world of aviation. Ultimately 13 young people received certificates and log books that



documented their experience learning and flying with licensed pilots in a Cessna 172 (C-172) 4 passenger aircraft at the *Riverview Airport* in Jenison. Patrick's mantra is, **"show them (young people) the light at the end of the tunnel"** to help them see the connection to math and science they learn in school and it's usefulness in careers such as engineering, air traffic control, flying and other areas of aviation. It was a great opportunity for our kids, since many had never flown before and several of our young people now have an interest in aviation and continuing with the programs of the WMFA as a result of the trip! For more info on the WMFA please visit:

[http://westmiflightacademy.org/about\\_us.html](http://westmiflightacademy.org/about_us.html)

**Sharon LaChappelle**

*Mizizi Maji Youth Mentoring Program Director*

## COMMUNITY NEWZ PROJECT

### A NEWSLETTER CREATED BY BAXTER'S YOUTH

Photographers, editor, and writers are positions that seven young people from the **Mizizi Maji mentoring program** applied for and filled! This group of young people is working together to produce a newsletter, *Community NEWZ*, that highlights their own accomplishments, mentoring program activities, volunteers, employees and neighbors of Baxter Community Center. The newsletter production allows our students the opportunity to sharpen writing, technology and team building skills and develop creativity in a variety of areas. The students will also be practicing professional etiquette in setting appointments, making telephone calls, developing email communications, and meeting project deadlines. The newsletter will provide a valuable communication tool to the immediate community by spotlighting positive youth stories and highlighting unsung heroes. And perhaps one day the paper will sustain itself and even provide a stipend for the youth staff through marketing to local business and encouraging them to purchase advertising space in the Mizizi Maji Newsletter *Community NEWZ*. Our first newsletter will be scheduled for publication in May and second in December!



#### Child Development Center

Dr. Akuorkor Addy  
Katie Artz  
Hannah B  
Gayson Baker  
Betsy Boomsma  
Hannah Brenton  
Curt Brink  
Kristin Broekhuis  
Melissa Chrisman  
Cassie Christian  
Kelsey Christian  
Sarah Chung  
Hannah Corner  
Andrea Cox  
Reanna Cunningham  
John De Vries  
Nate De Vries  
Ryan DeVries  
Tara DeVries  
Liz Eckman  
Katie Eiten  
Kaitlyn Emelander

Rachel Flim  
Nathan Gelderloos  
Bryant L. Greenfield  
Amanda Hayes  
Melissa Hays  
Eric Helder  
Austin Helms  
Diane Helms  
Amarra Heynen  
Katie Hisks  
Ms. Judi  
Charlotte Kamphuis  
Lyndsie Kamps  
Theresa Keppler  
Taka Kramer  
Rebekah Kreischer  
Karlie Krieger  
Aleea Laird  
Andrea Lamfers  
Mike Lamfers  
Joshua Lee  
Soo-Jin Lee  
Tom Leegwater

Rachael Machiele  
Courtney Martin  
Meghan McCarthy  
Ivory Melton  
Mackenzie Meyering  
Raquelle Millbrooks  
Shelby Mitchell  
Timothy Monteiro  
Traci Montgomery  
Dennis Morrison  
Sam Olsen  
Megan Oswald  
Julia Overs  
Kelli Ponstein  
Danae Postma  
Connor Schaaphok  
Kathi Schaaphok  
Manda Scholten  
Aimee Schuitema  
Jon Shervac  
Tom Sherwood  
Shane Sparkman  
TaShea Spearman-Bennett

Volunteers

Nicole Spoolstra  
Allison Sterling  
Angela Svaan  
Ashley Timmerman  
Landon Townsend  
Mary Van Harn  
Michelle Van Houten  
Eric Van Oeveren  
Caleb Van Wienen  
Jacob VandeHaar  
Hendrik Vanderloo  
Leah VanSchouwen  
Daniel Vanstroek  
Amy Veenstra  
Thomas Walt  
Robert Walt  
Sam Warner  
Rachel Waverkamp  
Leah Wychers  
David Yuipers  
Emilio Zamarripa  
Kara Zondervan





## DENTAL CLINIC

### MEET DOCTORS SCOTT AND JENNIFER VAN TIMMEREN

The state of Michigan ended adult Medicaid coverage for dental care in the fall of 2009, leaving many unable to afford a visit to the dentist. Baxter's Dental Clinic immediately felt the impact as the demand for its low-cost services quickly increased. As Baxter strives to do with all its programs, the dental clinic is filling "a big hole for those who have nowhere else to go," notes **Dr. Scott Van Timmeren**.

To address the important community need, the Dental Clinic has taken many steps in recent years to enhance the quality of the services it provides. The clinic, through recent expansion and remodeling, has created a professional atmosphere that reassures patients of the quality of care provided.

**The clinic is also under new volunteer leadership. In the fall of 2009, Drs. Scott and Jennifer Van Timmeren took over the duties of volunteer director for Baxter's Dental Clinic.** The energy and vision of this husband and wife team is certain to have a positive effect on the clinic.

The Van Timmerens had been volunteering for about a year when they were offered the position as volunteer directors. Both are employed at other dental offices

and feel that working outside of Baxter enables them to better understand the importance of Baxter's clinic in the community. *"The dental needs we have here are great and the people that come in are so grateful...It is not that our other patients are not grateful. Rather, the patients at Baxter seem to have a strong understanding of the significance of the services Baxter is providing,"* explains **Dr. Scott Van Timmeren**.

**Providing dental care for the community requires a team effort.** The Van Timmerens are at Baxter a few times a month and the amount of time that the clinic is open is the result of an entire **team of dedicated volunteer dentists and hygienists** who give their time. **It was due to these faithful volunteers that Baxter was able to provide 177 services to our dental patients in 2009.**

In looking ahead to the future, Dr. Scott Van Timmeren sees the goal of the clinic to be very simple: *"To see, help and care for more people in our target population that are not getting help right now."* And as demand for their service increases, the Van Timmerens would like to increase availability of Baxter's dental clinic



which is currently open two days a week. This will require more volunteer dentists and hygienists as well as financial support for the dental program. **If you would like more information about volunteering or making a donation, please visit our website. If you would like to take a tour, contact Melanie Beelen at [melanieb@baxtercommunitycenter.org](mailto:melanieb@baxtercommunitycenter.org).**

**Ashley King**  
Calvin College Comenius Intern

## BAXTER COMMUNITY CENTER PARTNERSHIP WITH CARING COMMUNITIES

"MOVIN' on UP" is a series of expressive art therapy classes held weekly in the art room at Baxter. The classes are facilitated by Carol Johnson, LMSW, MCHH, BFA, who through art projects, journaling, encouragement, and group discussion, guides participants towards increased self-awareness and positive change. Participants are challenged to learn about themselves and in relationship with others, in a caring, supportive, and safe environment.

Through expressive art experiences, lives are being empowered and restored. One participant recently shared, "I have learned to love myself. I have high self-esteem and I don't feel alone anymore." Another group member wrote, "I feel stronger as a person. I've been making changes in my life that insight and support through this program helped me have the courage to do." MOVIN' on UP has allowed participants the opportunity to be molded and shaped into the person Christ intended them to be.



**Sara Mast**

Manager-Pine Rest's Caring Communities Outreach Ministry

### Volunteers

#### Wholistic Health Clinic

##### Medical Clinic

Dr. A Addy  
Carolyn Anderson-Britt  
Renee Arndt  
Tammy Bekkering  
Hillary Berg  
Maryann Bishop  
Dr. G Bruins  
Dr. R Bulten  
Michelle Busscher  
Rosemary Byle  
Sue Carl  
Bethany Cousineau  
Dr. D Daining  
Laura Datema  
Lynne DenBesten  
Carole Gaiser  
Benjamin Geldersma

Lateena Hill  
Dr. R Hofman  
Stephanie Jongasma  
Mary Koenen  
Katelyn Laarman  
Lisa Lauterbaln  
Melissa Murtha  
Michele Niles  
Deborah K. Pelletier  
Dr. J Rauwerda  
Dr. Scholten  
Marguerite Sellers  
Mari Smith  
Dr. VanDyken  
Dr. Anthony VanGrouw  
Dr. James Visser  
Dr. Visser  
Mary Warpinski  
Dr. Y. Yavich

#### Dental Clinic

Dr. Len Bartosciewicz  
Dr. Sharon Brueker  
Sharon Brueker  
Sandy Burns  
Dr. Allan Caldemeyer  
Dr. Charles Caldwell  
Dr. Elizabeth Christopherson  
Dr. Keith Combs  
Dr. Laura Fogel  
Dr. Laura Fogle  
Dr. Tom Harman  
Dr. Andrew Hoekwater  
Dr. James C. Hoekwater  
Dr. Tom Lambert  
Heidi Larr  
Dr. Jacob Lueder  
Dr. Douglas Martin  
Dr. Henry Milanowski

Dr. Nicole Miller  
Dr. John Monticello  
Dr. Dennis Nagel  
Lisa Nelson  
Dr. Chris Norman  
Dr. Devin Norman  
Dr. Stephen Novak  
Tyler Oatman  
Dan O'Brien  
Chasity Shorter  
Dr. John Stepanovich  
Dr. Andy VanHaren  
Dr. Katie VanHaren  
Dr. Jennifer VanTimmeren  
Dr. Scott VanTimmeren  
Kay Ver Brugge  
Dr. Peter Zwier

# MARKETPLACE AT BAXTER...

Through its range of programs, the Marketplace continued to address the various needs of the Baxter community in 2009.

## EMERGENCY FOOD AND CLOTHING:

*"I feel a sense of a team here. I've never had a job where I felt like I wanted to go to work. Helping people must be my passion because I enjoy doing it. I've learned of resources at Baxter that I didn't even know existed."* — **Genika Horton, Marketplace Intern**

In January 2010, a report by the *Brookings Institute* found that Grand Rapids had the fastest growing poverty rate of the 95 cities in the study, jumping from 15.8% in 2000 to 24.7% in 2008. **Baxter's emergency food and clothing program addresses the growing need for basic necessities as the community continues to feel the impact of the recent economic recession. In 2009, Baxter's Marketplace emergency food and clothing assistance provided over 15,000 services as it continued to address the immediate needs of people.**

In 2009, a grant from the **Emergency Needs Task Force** enabled the Marketplace to address the immediate needs of the community. **The Marketplace used**



**the grant to buy a new refrigerator as well as provide more food supplies for customers. The Senior Center, another avenue for Baxter to better address community needs, is also growing in popularity. The Senior Center, funded by senior mileage dollars through a partnership with Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan (AAA of WM), had over 150 participants in 2009 and added a new technology class to educate senior citizens in basic computer skills.**

## FREEDOM IN YOUR FINANCES:

*"One of the things that the society hasn't done well on is teaching people how to manage their finances. This class addresses this need, while specifically teaching us how God wants us to use our finances. The goal is to get participants to look at how they are spending their money and make sure what they plan to do and*

*what they think they are doing are one in the same."* — **Catherine Botts, FIYF II class leader**

**Financial literacy continues to be a focus of the Marketplace and our "Freedom in Your Finance" (FIYF) classes had 14 participants in 2009. Scott Crowley and Noele Stith** have stepped up as the class leaders for FIYF1 and the class has benefited from this partnership which combines Noele's organizational skills with Scott's ability to facilitate a lively discussion. Scott's goal is to get the participants to *the "mental state where they understand full financial picture and each facet of that scene."* Noele adds, *"I want everybody who comes to that class to take away one new discipline in finance and one new discipline in their relationship to God."*

**As the program continues to meet an important community need, interest is growing. As a result, there is a need for additional coaches and class leaders so that the class can be offered to more participants.** In addition, program support allows Baxter to develop resources and materials as well as ensuring that childcare is provided for participants during class times and is welcomed.

## TAX PROGRAM:

*"I see the affect on the lives of these folks. Even just the gross numbers—we expect in returns and fees almost \$2 million this season—have an immense impact on the community. You can't see it on the street but all that money going back into the community has an impact in the community."* ~ **Phil Quist, Income Tax Volunteer/Coordinator**

Our tax preparation support gave 3,195 hours of their time and served over 1,600 individuals in 2009, saving people **\$1,947,000 in tax refunds and credits!** Phil Quist expects these numbers to be even higher in 2010 and gives credit to the dedicated and experienced volunteers whose experience in the program led to higher efficiency and an increase in tax services provided.

The huge success of the tax program is evidence the service provides such an important community need. Many who utilize the tax program at Baxter would not get their taxes done elsewhere and would lose the money they could gain in refunds. Some of the tax returns done by Baxter would have cost between \$300 and \$400 in fees at a for-profit tax service center.

**The service of Baxter's tax program is of the highest quality and continues to put money back into the community. The program is always looking for volunteers willing to donate their time.**

## A CUT ABOVE

Even though times are difficult, we are still involved in the things we do  
 It may be easy to find excuses for losing our way or giving up  
 What good are they as we take a closer look  
 Who would fault us if we drift or stray  
 Would anyone notice if we show discontent  
 Should we vacate to avoid the rent  
 What would the consequence be or the unintended consequences as if in a dream  
 Oh they would understand and they know it is tough  
 Compassion for you in spite of your fluff  
 No my friend, this is not the way. There are enough games that have to be played  
 When you know, when you have a clue you don't get away with those things you do  
 Even though the burdens are difficult to endure  
 We are still involved in the things we do  
 The outcomes we seek are still intact and pathways are longer and hills are steep  
 We start earlier, work longer and later prepare for the next event  
 We are the light as we remain a cut above for all to see  
 And for them to follow suit and incorporate into their philosophy  
 This guidance may seem simple, but so is a sign to mark a trail  
 The success is in the showing up. The reward is in the doing  
 And the knowing that within us is the hero  
 Often masked as enlightenment

Steve Haarman March 3, 2010

### Volunteers

<b>Marketplace</b>	<b>Freedom in Your Finances</b>	Esther Bos	Kathy Hoskins
Charlotte Booker	Catherine Botts	Don Bultman	Scott Huebl
Lillie Booker	Scott Crowley	Sue Carl	Jazz Hutchinson
Judie Dowell	Dave Davlin	Leah Carpenter	Dusty Jekema
Amber Hora	Janis DeVree	Irene Carter	Nancy Kelly
Hazel Lewis	Taffy Dickerson	Sara Cinadr	Gordon Koetje
Amante Lucas	Francine Gaston	Ed Cortlett	Pam Martin
George Lucas	Belinda Lazo	Rick De Vries	Linda McGuire
Greg Lucas	Hazel Lewis	Helen DeGraff	Monica Normandy
Tisha Lucas	Susan Meyer	Letheia DelaPaz	Amy Okoroafo
Tracy Lucas	Amanda Pfeiffer	Carol Dille	Amanda Pfiefer
Pam Lyons	Bradley Pionton	Sheri Dille/Converse	Pam Quist
Ed Nowicki	Phil Quist	Deb Dittmer	Phil Quist
Linda Sanders-Smith	Marvin Ritsema	Katie Dunlap	Rich Quist
David Sewell	Sherita Ruffin	Kim Duong	Ed Riekema
Daryll Smith		Jim Emmert	Rachel Spoelman
Melanie Vance	<b>Income Tax Program</b>	Brittany Fontanez	John Vander Muelen
	Mike Aslum	Nadeia Fudge	Seprenice Villalona
	Sandy Bergstrom	Marilyn Gavigan	

## BAXTER FIX-UP DAY HISTORY



The first Baxter Community Center Fix-up Day was the brainchild of two dedicated men who not only had a heart for the community but also lived in the community. **John Hamstra** and **Mearl Hoekwater** knew the budget was tight and there was almost no funding for building maintenance and improvement. The third floor was uninhabitable with windows missing and a leaky roof. The local pigeon population used it as a penthouse coterie.

John and Mearl understood the relationship between one's environment and sense of dignity. John often said, "We get a lot out of this building so we have to put a little back in." In the spring of 1978, John and Mearl assembled a small army of carpenters, electricians, plumbers, plasterers and painters and convinced them to spend one day at Baxter to put as much TLC as possible into the tired old building.



The first Fix-up day was so successful it was decided that Fix-up Day would become an annual event. Through the early years **John and Mearl** continued to plan and lead Fix-up Day with the assistance of assistant director, **Jim Talen**. As the word got out about Fix-up Day, more and more people started coming each year. Realizing that working together was only part of the beauty of community, a crew was recruited to serve noontime hotdogs, beans and drinks. Eating together builds community.



John and Mearl also realized that Fix-up Day was evolving into something more than just a day to do maintenance on an aging physical building. They saw the event as a way for people to connect to Baxter. A Fix-up Day Committee was formed and included John and Mearl's sons who were recruited for the committee or as Fix-up Day workers to perpetuate the efforts. Eventually **Dave Hoekwater**, **Steve Huissen** and **Dale Rosema** were recruited as "Committee Members" and were placed in charge of planning and operating Fix-up Day. Today the committee

consists of board member **Paul Bulthuis**, Building Manager **Randy Posthuma**, **Dave** and son **Abram Hoekwater**, **Dale** and son **Drew Rosema**, **Don Hamilton** and Volunteer Coordinator **Georgia Taylor**.

Year after year, Fix-up Day continues to draw an average of 125 people. Attendees come from the whole metropolitan area and many denominational backgrounds. A recent Fix-up Day included a youth group from the Detroit area. Yet, there is a core cadre of volunteers that have shown up every year.

**Dale Rosema**  
Volunteer



## JOHN HAMSTRA, CHAMPION OF BAXTER!

We fondly remember **John Hamstra** who passed away in July of 2009. On this 40<sup>th</sup> year of Baxter we acknowledge the lasting impact he and his wife Evelyn had during those formative years of Baxter and continuing until they were no longer able.

John and Ev were members of Eastern CRC and had always lived on Thomas Street in the heart of the Baxter neighborhood. They with their dear friends, Mearl and Barb Hoekwater, had a heart for the people in the community. Their porches and homes were open to anyone who might need help, food or just come to chat! They arranged extensive block parties throughout the summer and took groups of kids to the beach to experience the Michigan summer in a way that was likely not available to them.

So, when Baxter Community Center was born, it was not a surprise that John and Ev were at the center of the action! They did all they could to make sure that Baxter would remain viable. When Hershell Turner was the first Director, there were few paid employees and everything depended on volunteer commitment. The Hamstras pitched in however they could. Their daughter Carol told me that her mom used to drag the heavy typewriter to Baxter to take care of business! They both served on the board for many years, and were instrumental in starting the Baxter Fix Up Day in the spring. They believed in hard work and good food, so those lunches on Fix Up Day were amazing!



Lots of people from the community joined in to provide a tasty, "thank you" lunch.

The fact that Baxter is still growing strong is a testimony to the faithfulness of volunteers like the Hamstras who lived out their faith by bringing forth the kingdom of God in the neighborhood in which they lived! **We praise God for their lives and the way they mentored so many in a kingdom vision that proclaimed, "Our World Belongs to God"!**

**Annette Byl**  
Long time friend and Baxter Board Member

# A TRIBUTE TO MARGARET “PEG” RINCK

OCTOBER 1912 - APRIL 2009

Margaret “Peg” Rinck’s life included tragedy, challenge, honor, and philanthropy. She understood the difficulty life can throw at a person and because of her understanding she wanted to give back to others facing their own difficulties. She lived alone, but not lonely, because of her compassion and empathy.

Peg was born to loving parents, Professor William and Maime Rinck, in the early 1900s. She was the youngest of four children, two boys and two girls. Her father, Professor Rinck, was a Mathematics Professor at *Calvin College* and also served as a board member of *Baxter Christian School*. The family attended *Sherman Street Christian Reformed Church* and Peg remained a member there until her death.

**Life did not continue to be picturesque for the family.** Tragedy struck the family in 1919 when the older of the two sons drowned at a family picnic. A year later, on *Armistice Day*, the family went to visit friends in Fremont. It began to snow and continued snowing all day. The Rinck family decided to leave early for the return trip. They travelled slowly and carefully, however, just outside of Sparta a hay wagon appeared on the road. Professor Rinck braked and swerved to miss the wagon. He lost control, the car spun around, turned over, and landed in a ditch. Mrs. Rinck and her two daughters crawled out of the vehicle. Professor Rinck and his only living son were killed in the accident. **Peg lost half of her family within one year.**

Peg and her sister were raised by her mother from that point on. Peg graduated 9<sup>th</sup> grade from *Baxter School*. Her mother insisted that she obtain a college education. Even though money was scarce, she attended *Calvin College* and earned a teaching degree. She was hired by *Muskegon Public Schools* and taught 2<sup>nd</sup> grade until she retired. Her income became the mainstay for her mother and sister. Peg faced the challenge of caring for family and working full time in a city far



from home. She persevered this challenge by taking the Greyhound bus to Muskegon on Sunday afternoon and, after working all week, would get back on the bus on Friday evening to return to her mother’s home. Weekends were spent cleaning, cooking and caring for her sister and mother. It wasn’t until years later that she obtained a driver’s license and purchased a car for her travel to Muskegon.

**Peg never married and lived her life frugally. When she passed away, she had a considerable nest egg saved. In her will, she left a generous amount to Baxter Community Center.** Her cousin, **Gerald Huizen, and his wife, June,** were on the Baxter board and spoke to Peg on numerous occasions about the needed programs the Center was providing the community. June believes *“Peg left money to Baxter because of the support her church, Sherman St. CRC, gave to the inner city and because Gerald and I talked about the center so much.”*

**Peg came from humble beginnings, lived through great tragedy, and worked hard to provide for her family. She is a great example of how faith provides hope, and how God’s grace provides an assurance that one can overcome life’s difficulties. We honor you, Peg, for sharing your faith and hope in Baxter Community Center.**

**Cathy Smedes**  
*For all of us at Baxter*

# BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS, IMPACTING LIVES, BUILDING COMMUNITY

## BAXTER COMMUNITY CENTER AND CALVIN COLLEGE

For years, Baxter Community Center and Calvin College have been working together to address the needs of the Baxter community.

Calvin College encourages students to get involved at Baxter in a variety of ways whether through helping on Fix Up Day at Baxter, the dorm-community partnership between the Rooks VanDellen Dorm and the Baxter Child Development Center, nursing students’ community health surveys, or various internships. The relationship is one of mutual reciprocity: the Baxter community benefits from the time and energy of the students and the students gain valuable life and work experience from Baxter.

### CALVIN VOLUNTEERING AT BAXTER

Every Tuesday and Thursday between 3:00 and 4:30, a group of Calvin students from the Rooks VanDellen dorm come to Baxter Community Center to spend time with the children in the Child Development Center. This is part of Calvin’s Student Learning Center’s program which connects each dorm with a community partner and encourages students at Calvin to get involved in their community in Grand Rapids. Baxter and Rooks VanDellen have formed a strong partnership over many years which has benefited both Calvin and Baxter Community Center.

*“The students of the Rooks VanDellen dorm come in to tutor and to interact with the children. They do different things like arts and music and also come help out at events. Having them come help in the evenings helps the children get ahead in school. They help with literacy by coming in and reading with the children. And sometimes having that extra person to interact in a group leaves the teacher free to do the other things that need done. It’s a great relationship.”* —Ms. Lacy: Baxter Child Development Center Program Director



### Comenius Program Impacts Baxter and Calvin Interns:

When Calvin College received a grant from the McGregor Foundation to start a paid internship program for students interested in non-profit leadership, Baxter Community Center was one of the first organizations to jump on board as an internship site. Our initial group of Comenius Scholars, as the non-profit internship program would be called, started in spring 2007, and two of the students were thrilled to find internships at Baxter.

Since spring 2007, eight Calvin students have interned at Baxter. They have had a wide range of responsibilities, from writing newsletters, to supporting fund raising efforts, to organizing events, to coordinating employee training. Each intern has contributed their skills while benefitting from an outstanding environment, working alongside passionate and competent leaders.

In addition, the entire Comenius class takes a field trip to Baxter each semester during which Melanie Beelen shares her wisdom about how to effectively communicate an organization’s story. This field trip is the only class activity that has remained a constant over the years because of its enthusiastic reception by students.

Calvin has appreciated the symbiotic relationship with Baxter, partnering together to expose students to careers in non-profit leadership.

**Laurie Lemmen** Internship Coordinator,  
*Calvin College Career Development Office*

# OPENING DOORS CELEBRATION CELEBRATING 40 YEARS 1969-2009

## PLANTING SEEDS AND SINGING SONGS

On November 12, 2009, Baxter hosted its sixth annual **Opening Doors Celebration**, which took place for the first time at the *JW Marriot* in downtown Grand Rapids. The event commemorated **Baxter's 40th Anniversary** with the theme of *Planting Seeds and Singing Songs*, celebrating four decades of faithful service and looking forward to an exciting future of continued growth and rejoicing. The 40th Anniversary documentary video offered a glimpse into the past, and Baxter's hopeful future was anticipated by the official announcement of the **40th Anniversary Initiative** and its Proctor Endowment, Rooftop Green House Project and Emergent Needs Fund.

The event honored the **2009 St. Francis Award Honorees, Denny Hoekstra and Rosie Saverson-Hair**, two individuals who have faithfully, passionately and humbly planted seeds and sung songs in the Baxter neighborhood for decades. The celebration also featured a silent auction, dinner and short program. *The Royal Kingdom Chorale* offered joyful music to open and close the evening, the *Mizizi Maji Mentoring Program* highlighted the story and poetry of recent program graduate **Anthony Taylor** and **Mistress of Ceremonies Reverend Angela Taylor-Perry** sprinkled the evening with Spirit-filled words of hope.

Once again, we reflect joyfully on an evening of community, celebration and the casting of vision for the future. We are thankful for the presence of all of you who joined us and the many who gave generously so that we can keep our doors open as we move into a new year—and the beginning of another four decades of service to God and to our neighbors!

Stacy Ladenburger



**Volunteers**

**40th Anniversary Committee**

John Apol  
Melanie Beelen  
Annette Byl  
Cathy Calvaneau  
Scott Crowley  
Patrick Dessart  
Marilyn Gilbreath

Kristine Jaros  
Sharon LaChappelle  
Ollie Lacy  
Jeremy & Michelle Louters  
Rhonda Molendyk  
Andrea Robinson  
Melissa Selmon  
Michelle & Blair Sharpe

Shayon Smith  
Noele Stith  
Georgia Taylor  
Barb Van Noord  
Sally Vander Ploeg  
Pat Vredevoogd Combs

**Opening Doors Celebration Volunteers**  
Maggie Holmgren  
Sarah Jasman  
Barb Molendyk  
Charles & Leslie Montgomery  
Rachel Rynbrandt  
Calvin Stith



## 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY INITIATIVE PROGRESS REPORT

APRIL 2010

**Our goal is to raise \$400,000 in celebration of our 40 years—\$100,000 toward growing the Gene & Virginia Proctor Fund, \$200,000 to create a Rooftop Greenhouse including nutritional program planning at Baxter, and \$100,000 toward the Emergent Needs Fund which will allow Baxter the flexibility to respond to urgent community needs and expanded programming for healthy living.**

Currently we have raised in **cash gifts** of \$97,965 with an additional **\$5,000 in pledges** and a **Cap Gift of \$50,000 from the Wege Foundation**.

**We currently have a challenge gift of \$15,000 from the Seabury Foundation, once we receive \$30,000 in new gifts designated for the Rooftop Greenhouse Project. To date we have \$5,265 toward the \$30,000 in new gifts.**

*Amount needed to meet our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary goal: \$222,035.*

If you are interested in making an investment toward the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary initiative, please indicate your intentions when giving your gift to Baxter.

**BAXTER COMMUNITY CENTER**  
**40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Initiative**  
*Planting Seeds & Singing Songs*

**40TH ANNIVERSARY INITIATIVE**  
*Planting Seeds & Singing Songs*

**1969 - 1979: Proctor Endowment**  
Gene Proctor was executive director of Baxter Community Center for 18 years. A staunch advocate for the Center and neighborhood residents, a gifted and sought-after speaker, and a true "bridge" between cultures, Gene was responsible for putting Baxter's programs first in the minds of local, state and national funders. We miss him and want to acknowledge forever his contributions to Baxter Community Center. We will be growing the Proctor Endowment from a mere \$10,000 to \$110,000, and enable the Center to draw down proceeds from the endowment to fund critical repairs and maintenance to perpetuity.

**1980 - 2000: Rooftop Green House Program**  
The Rooftop Green House Program is an exciting new effort that includes not only construction of a rooftop greenhouse, but myriad links to existing Baxter programs, including Mizizi Maji mentoring, Marketplace, the health clinic, cultural classrooms, and the child care center. The benefits from having the greenhouse are nearly limitless.

**2001-2009: Emergent Needs Fund**  
Over its 40 years, some of Baxter's programs have been phased out because they were no longer needed. Others have grown to meet increased or changed needs. Emergent Needs Fund will ensure that the Center can continue to move swiftly to meet the community's needs for education, prenatal care, preschool and early childhood development, health and nutrition education, and that administrators have flexibility to respond to other urgent, critical needs such as utility assistance, warm winter clothing, and fresh, healthy foods.

If you would like to find out more about the initiative, please contact Melanie Beelen 616-456-8593 or email [melanieb@baxtercommunitycenter.org](mailto:melanieb@baxtercommunitycenter.org).

**"Baxter exists because a group of people sat down someplace and recognized a need and did more than just talking."**

Sandra Fleming





## BAXTER SENIOR CENTER INTRODUCES TECHNOLOGY CLASSES!



The seniors at Baxter Community Center are now being introduced to computer basics!

An eight week class started on March 2, 2010. The students are learning computer basics which include:

- using the mouse
- keyboarding skills
- understanding Windows and file storage
- Internet basics
- Email – using Google and/or Yahoo

The feedback is very positive. The enrollment has been excellent. A waiting list is in effect for the next session. Also, we are anticipating the need to create classes at different levels and are in the process of developing a curriculum.

This is a great program that we are excited about offering to the seniors in our community. We want to thank Area Agency on Aging of West Michigan and Kent County Senior Mileage dollars who support our senior programming. Also, a special thank you for the financial contribution from an anonymous 2009 year-end donor whose investment has allowed us to purchase six laptop computers to make this class a reality!



**Cathy Smedes**  
Senior Technology Instructor

## “YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD”

### INSIGHT FROM BAXTER’S BOARD PRESIDENT

As I began to think about writing a short piece for Baxter Community Center’s 2009 Annual Report, I went back to previous annual reports, and was struck by the frequent use of the word “reflection”, which is the theme of this edition of our annual report to you, Baxter’s faithful supporters.

In 2007, Melanie’s Executive Director’s report was entitled “*Well Done! 2007 Reflections...A Challenge for 2008*”, and Ken Hofman, past board president wrote on “*Passing the Baton, Reflections of a retiring Board President*”. In 2008, when the theme of the annual report was “*Coming Together*”, Melanie entitled the report “*Looking Back...Reflections from the Executive Director*”.

So, it is surely right and good on the occasion of our annual report to take the opportunity to reflect on the year at Baxter Community Center. To think about and mull over and praise God for the impact Baxter has had in the lives and the people and families we have been privileged to serve through our dedicated staff and excellent programs. **To recollect the stories of lives changed through the Four Pillars of Baxter Community Center: The Child Development Center, The Wholistic Health Clinic, The Mizizi Maji Mentoring Program, and The Marketplace Ministries.**

But when I think of reflections, I also think of something else. As an eye doctor, I think of light. In John 8:12, Jesus said, “*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the Light of Life*”. And in Matthew 5:14-16, Jesus said, “*You are the light of the world...In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven*”. If we believe that God is the author of every good and perfect thing, and Jesus calls himself the Light of the World, then



we must be called **reflections of God’s Light**. Isn’t it amazing that God has chosen us, His flawed people to be reflections of His marvelous Light? **And we, as board and staff and volunteers and supporters, are called to be reflectors of God’s Light and Grace right here at Baxter Community Center.**

**So, let’s reflect back on God’s goodness to and provision for Baxter in the past year, and pray to be faithful and focused reflectors of God’s Light and Love for the people and families we have been called to serve at Baxter in the coming year.**

**Larry Gerbens**  
Board President

**This is more than charity; this is transformational.**

**Jim Haveman**

