



Highlighting Hope

A PUBLICATION OF HOPE VILLAGE FOR CHILDREN

SPRING/SUMMER 2023



Happy Summer!!

We are entering this new season with a tremendous amount of excitement. We are incredibly proud of our three high school seniors who graduated this year and are moving into the next chapters of their lives: work, college, and technical school. Please check out more Hope Village accomplishments and noteworthy events highlighted in our "Village Victories" section!

The amount of support Hope Village has recently received from various organizations is beyond thrilling. We couldn't be more grateful and appreciative of the very **generous donations from The Manitou Foundation and Meridian's own Trustmark Bank**. Also, updates for the recreation center project that the Mississippi Association of Builders and Contractors (ABC) - Young Professionals are organizing and funding is included inside.

I also wanted to give a huge shout out to **Robert Smith (Glass Inc, ABC's President)** who has truly become Hope Village's guardian angel; making possible a number of campus improvements that increase the beauty, safety, and functioning of our facilities.

As always we are proud to brag on the incredible team at Hope Village with our employee of the month spotlights. Our Hope Village family provides so much love, care and support to our kids, and we can't thank them enough for their amazing dedication.

Warmly,

Sela Ward

April's STORY

Like so many of the kids at Hope Village, April Shears began to experience the upheaval and uncertainty of being in the foster system at a young age. Between the ages of six to eleven, she was removed from her family home, placed in a temporary residence, returned to her home, and then permanently placed in foster care. April's anger would get her in trouble in the various placements, so she was moved around a lot before arriving at Hope Village at the age of twelve. April lived in the cottages until she was sixteen and was lucky enough to have one sister with her while she was a resident. Eight of the twelve kids in her family were in the foster care system, so keeping in touch with her siblings was very difficult.



April Shears graduated from Meridian Community College's Licensed Practical Nursing Program in May 2023



Featured: April Shears with Hope Village employee, Amy Brassfield

April remembers that beyond meeting the basic needs of the kids, the staff at Hope Village helped *"make us feel like we were at home."* They made sure that birthdays were celebrated, that the kids were getting a good education and, maybe most importantly, in all the trauma and emotional disruption of being removed from their homes and families, April said the staff *"let us be normal."* So many staff members stood out in her life. She has kept in contact with Ms. Latasha, and Ms. Amy attended her recent graduation. She really enjoyed visiting past residents and staff at a reunion years ago, and hopes to attend the next one.

At Hope Village, April learned essential skills to make it on her own through the consistency the staff provided. Not only were residents required to do their chores and homework and had other cottage responsibilities to fulfill, they were also taught and expected to *"do the right thing."* These skills stayed with April as she aged out of the foster care system and are skills that she wants to pass down to her own children: Emory, Ian, and Katelyn.

April says she understands that current residents may feel like their situation is bad but wants them to know that there really is light at the end of the tunnel. She suggests that residents take advantage of the many resources that Hope Village and the foster care system have to offer. She received financial aid when she went to college and, with that help, recently completed the Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) program at Meridian Community College. She hopes to be accepted to the University of West Alabama's Registered Nurse (RN) program soon. April remembers that staff like Mrs. Janet and Ms. Catena always wanted what was best for her. Although she was stubborn when she was young, she knows now that them pushing her *"made me the person I am today."*

FOR MORE HOPE VILLAGE FOR CHILDREN SUCCESS STORIES, VISIT: [HTTPS://WWW.HOPEVILLAGEMS.ORG/ABOUT-HOPE-VILLAGE/](https://www.hopevillagesms.org/about-hope-village/)

2023 CHILDREN'S PROMISE ACT TAX CREDIT DONORS TOP CONTRIBUTORS



Trustmark Bank donated \$100,000 to Hope Village for Children



Thomas HVAC Services donated \$50,000 to Hope Village for Children

(Above): Graham Behringer, Owner of Thomas HVAC Services and Perry Gower present a check to Hope Village for Children

(Right): A ribbon cutting was held for the naming of Hope Village for Children's Trustmark Bank Program Building in honor of this generous donation





Glass, Inc. donated \$25,000 to Hope Village for Children

(Above): Robert Smith, Owner of Glass, Inc., pictured with Hope Village employees Terri Province, Kathy Parrish, and Casey Culpepper

YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS AND SUPPORT TRULY HELP CHANGE THE LIVES OF CHILDREN!



El Bethel Missionary Baptist Church donates to the Hope Village Campus Revitalization Fund



Carousel Horse unveiling at Northeast Middle School



Mississippi Power donates to the Hope Village Campus Revitalization Fund



Thanks to community votes, Hope Village received a Caring4Community Award from Happy Smiles - Meridian



PHI-Air designs new uniform patch to bring awareness to Hope Village for Children



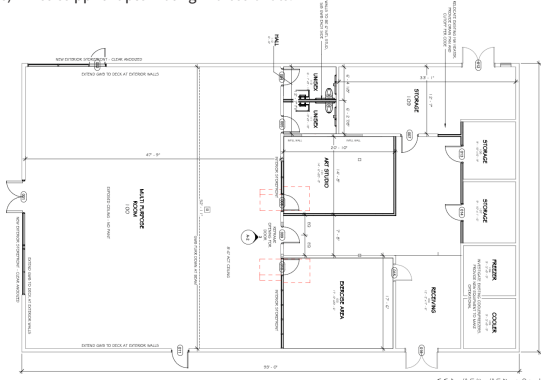
Youth Leadership Lauderdale group hosted a kickball tournament to raise funds for Hope Village for Children

WE COULDN'T DO WHAT WE DO WITHOUT YOU!

Thank you so much for the memorial donations in honor of the lives of Betsy Storms 2/6/1947 - 3/7/2023 and Janice Deweese Jones 9/21/1933 - 5/13/2023

PROGRESS AT THE NEW RECREATION CENTER AT HOPE VILLAGE

(Below): Plans for the future Hope Village for Children Recreation Center. This project has been adopted by the Association of Builders and Contractors (ABC) - Mississippi Chapter Young Professionals.



(Above): Recent pictures of roof and windows being replaced at the Hope Village Recreation Center

Special thanks to:

Independent Roofing Systems (Jackson, MS), Graham Roofing (West Point, MS), and Glass, Inc. (Meridian, MS)



WE HAVE LOVED SEEING HOPE VILLAGE YARD SIGNS ALL AROUND TOWN!

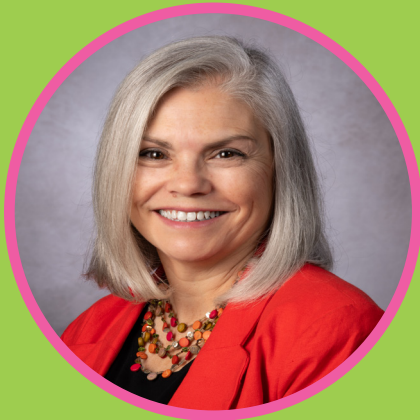


2023 SPRING FUNDRAISER

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, AND BUSINESSES WHO GENEROUSLY DONATED \$100+ TO OUR SPRING FUNDRAISER:

Angela Jolly
Ann Compton
Dr. Margaret Morrison
Laurie Cobb
(in honor of Nell Taylor)
Andrea Germany
JJ Haarala
Terri & J.P. Province
Kathryn McNair
Clair Huff
Jamie Castle
Shelby & Charlotte Chaney
Michael and Jessica Smith
Mr. and Mrs. Mitch Mosley
Dees Automotive
Mary Clare Evans
Helen Sims
Alexa Marcello
Pigford & Corey Realtors
Honeysuckles
Citizens Bank of Philadelphia
Over the Moon Children's Boutique
SuperTalk - Meridian
Kristen McKenney
Home Instead - Meridian
Simply Irresistible
Harper's Hospice Care
Ed & Rhonda Poole
Julie McKay
Jeremy and Bethany Stringer (in honor of the McDonald Family and Thompson Family)
Priscilla & Robert Cardwell
Maureen Files

TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE REMAINING RENOVATION NEEDS AT HOPE VILLAGE, VISIT WWW.HOPEVILLAGEMS.ORG/HOW-CAN-YOU-HELP/REVITALIZATION-PROJECT/



Dear Friends of Hope Village for Children,

It's hard to believe school is over for the year and summer is finally upon us. Our Activities Coordinator, our Education Director, and our Supervisors are all working diligently to design a schedule of summer activities that will create memories for our children they can cherish for a lifetime. We'll probably have a campout, complete with s'mores and ghost stories, many will volunteer at a local horse farm or day camp, a Fourth of July pool party will be a blast, and a day trip to the beach is a definite must. It really is amazing to see the awe in a child's face when they look out over the ocean for the first time. These kinds of experiences help our children broaden their minds and think beyond what had been, and start to think, what might be. Here at Hope Village we view summer as a wonderful opportunity for our children to expand their minds, have new adventures and realize the infinite possibilities life has to offer them. Because, regardless of what anyone has told them in the past, they are worth it!

Here's wishing everyone has a safe and happy summer season.

Terri Province
Executive Director

HOPE HEROES

Junior Auxiliary of Meridian

Junior Auxiliary of Meridian provides mentorship to teens living at Hope Village. This wonderful organization manifests its commitment to serving all children in the community through its continuous, ongoing relationship with Hope Village teens. Operating year-round, Junior Auxiliary supports the mission of Hope Village by providing stability, consistency, and encouragement through fun activities that also teach life skills such as financial literacy, gardening, etiquette, and healthful living. At Hope Village, we appreciate the time and effort of the Junior Auxiliary members who spend time with our residents. You add so much value to their lives!



HOPE VILLAGE VALENTINES DANCE 2023

ORGANIZED BY THE HOPE VILLAGE GUILD

We want to give a huge shout out to Rene Oubre from Drury Inn and Suites for offering a banquet room space for our event!

We also want to recognize the following businesses and individuals who contributed in-kind or discounts for everything else that made this year's dance so special:

- Olive Garden
- Jack's Restaurant
- Harvest Grill
- LJ Candy Company
- Over the Pop Balloon Decor
- Winn-Dixie
- Jigga JT (DJ)
- Traveling Light Photobooth
- West Lauderdale Elementary



Also, special thanks to Alison Gardner, Ashley Gayden, Erin Scharmen, and Jennifer Shehi from Junior Auxiliary of Meridian for helping our girls get ready for the dance by helping them with their hair and makeup.

Thank you to our amazing sponsors and Guild!

VILLAGE VICTORIES

Our residents are doing fantastic!



ACT Success: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•I.G. Score: 36 (Category - Reading)•A.G. Score: 24 (Category - Reading)		Residents enjoyed learning how to cook a healthy meal from Meridian Community College’s Culinary Arts Instructor, An Howard Hill.	M.H. progressed to the next level on his G.E.D. Practice test! So proud!
Three of our residents were recently employed by a fast-food franchise. They are so excited about working! Congrats!	MHS Junior awards: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• T.A. - A/B Honor Roll (3.2 GPA and above)• F.G. - A/B Honor Roll (3.2 GPA and above)• F.G. - Honors Geometry		M.H. and A.G. are participating in “Opportunity Passport,” which is a financial literacy program for residents.
Hope Village held its second annual cook -out for staff and family. Great food and fellowship!	F.G. received CTE February Student of the Month (Carpentry) at Ross Collins.		Sherry Acton of Pampered Bodies hosted a skin care clinic for our kids and taught them the importance of cleansing, using sunscreen, etc.
A.G. MHS Honors Graduate, 2023	98% of our residents were promoted to the next grade level for the 2023-2024 school year!		A.M. made the MHS basketball team.
Education Center: Summer School has started. Lots of fun learning activities will be implemented daily for residents to enjoy.		A.B. won a t-shirt design contest at MCC.	Residents recently participated in a financial literacy class with Michael Gibson from Great Southern Bank where they learned about money management, budgeting, and saving.
One of our residents was recognized for his academic accomplishments at a graduation celebration for Seniors. This ceremony and celebration is sponsored by the state of Mississippi Child Protective Services committee and was held in Brandon, MS.			
I.G. will receive a “Help” grant to help pay for his college tuition (because he scored 20+ on his ACT).	T.A. enjoyed being a teacher assistant for College for Kids at Meridian Community College. She helped her students participate in a lot of fun, innovative, and creative activities.		A resident received his state of Mississippi Driver’s License.

OUR GUILD GO GETTER

Rhonda Poole

Some people allow their light to shine for all the world to see through their words and actions, and Rhonda Poole is one of those people. She began volunteering at Hope Village in 2012, and has worked diligently behind the scenes coordinating, fundraising, leading, and mentoring many of our Guild members, and is always ready to step in with our children. Rhonda has the heart of a giver, and when one of our kids needs something, she can always be counted on to respond. Whether it was shopping for last minute gifts for children who came to Hope on Christmas Eve, helping a child move all their belongings to a new bedroom in order to make it their own, or being someone the kids could confide in and share their story, Rhonda was and continues to be wherever she is needed. The effect Rhonda has had over the past ten years is immeasurable, and Hope Village is a better place because of the love she has freely shared with our residents. Thank you, Rhonda, for all you have done and continue to do to help us reach our mission of giving children Hope for a brighter future. You are amazing and we cannot thank you enough for being part of our Hope Village family!



HOPE VILLAGE STAFF >> EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH NOMINEES AND WINNERS

JANUARY LOU ANN HENSON

Activities Coordinator



Lou Ann began her employment at Hope Village for Children 16 years ago as a part-time Developmental Coach, and she now serves as our Activities Coordinator. Her joyful attitude, creativity, and enthusiasm are evident in everything she does. She not only plans the activities for our kids, she participates in them, and has a ball doing it. Do you want to know how to build relationships with our kids? Watch her, she does it beautifully! We are truly blessed to have Lou Ann as part of our Hope Village family.

Other January nominees – Angela Brown, Tamika Scarborough, Paris Hopson

CATENA MCBRIDE FEBRUARY

Director of Education and Transitional Case Manager

We love Ms. Catena as our new Director of Education and Transitional Case Manager. She is always willing to help out and is always the first to complete her tasks. She encourages our residents to participate in activities and to do their best both at school and here on campus. She has already made an impact with our children and our programs, and we cannot wait to see how she blossoms in this new position. Keep up the good work!

Other February nominees – Latonya Drish, Dianna Hughes



MARCH DAY RUTHERFORD

Program Assistant



Day Rutherford is a gem and a blessing for the Hope Village culture. She truly is one element in the glue that sticks us all together, and we believe she can never be replaced. We really appreciate Ms. Day because she truly goes above and beyond, and always with a willing heart and a smile.

Other March nominees – Angela Brown, Kelly Carter, Marcus Gladney

MARKUS GIBSON APRIL

Developmental Coach

Markus Gibson is nominated as employee of the month because regardless of the situation, Mr. Markus always puts his best foot forward. You can tell by his words and his actions that he loves helping our staff and residents. Markus' care and concern he has for residents is evident in every aspect of his job. He communicates well with others, and it is always with a smile. He always wants to make sure you know what's going on with the residents and is constantly advocating for them.

Other April nominees – Latasha Sims, Angela Brown, Taurus Parker, Dr. Lashanda Baylor



MAY SHELLY STILTNER

Developmental Coach



Shelly began working at Hope Village as a part-time employee back in 2018 and now is one of our amazing full-time staff members in the girls' cottage. Shelly has such a loving, gentle spirit and can always be counted on to bring a calming presence to any situation. It doesn't matter what she's dealing with, who she's dealing with or why she's dealing with it...she handles the situation with patience, empathy and understanding. It is obvious through her words and actions that she is dedicated to our mission and we could not be more blessed to have her as part of our Hope Village family.

Other May nominees – Natichia Ellis, Josh Laden

RACE FOR HOPE 2024



www.raamrace.org/

START: OCEANSIDE, CA
FINISH: ANNAPOLIS, MD

DISTANCE: 3,000 + MILES

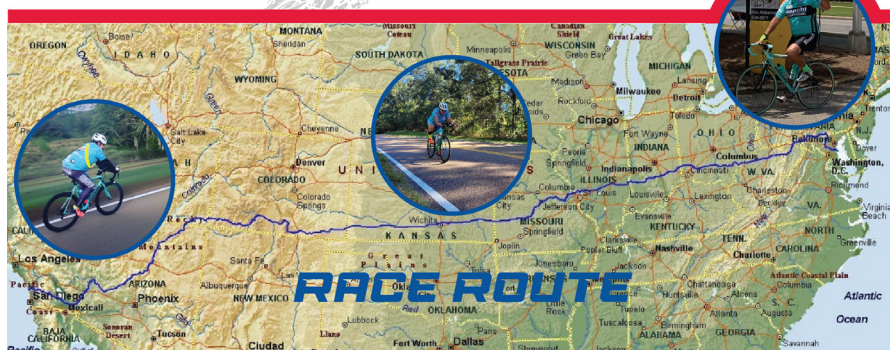
TIME: 12 DAYS

CLIMB: OVER 170,000 VERTICAL FEET

12 STATES • 3 DESERTS • 4 OF AMERICA'S LONGEST RIVERS (COLORADO, MISSISSIPPI, MISSOURI, AND OHIO) • 3 MOUNTAIN RANGES (SIERRA, ROCKY, AND APPALACHIAN)

2024 SUPPORT ED ABDELLA "THE FLYING FREIGHT TRAIN" RACE FOR HOPE

Support Ed Abdella's mission to complete Race Across America in 2024 while raising funds for Hope Village for Children on a national level. Ed is known as the "Flying Freight Train" in the competitive sport of bike racing. He is embarking on one of the most challenging races in the world. Starting in Oceanside, CA and finishing in Annapolis, MD, Ed will cover 3,000 + miles in 12 (or less) days. He will cross 12 states, 3 deserts, 4 of America's longest rivers, and 3 mountain ranges.



HOW CAN YOU HELP GET ED TO THE FINISH LINE? BECOME A SPONSOR!
FOR \$1,000 + YOUR LOGO CAN BE PLACED ON ED'S RACE UNIFORM.

Scan QR code to support this cause:



Race proceeds benefit
Ed Abdella's charity of choice:



(Featured Left: Ed Abdella)
• U.S. Army Veteran (26 years)
• 1st Sergeant, U.S. Army, Retired
• Iraq War, 2003-2004
• Desert Storm, 1990-1991
• Grenada, 1983

Race Across America is an outstanding national platform for raising money for charitable causes. Ed's fundraising goal is \$1 million+. Proceeds will benefit Hope Village for Children. Upfront sponsors are needed in order to cover Ed's race expenditures such as entry fee, travel for his crew, and food during the race. For \$1,000 +, your name or business logo will be placed on Ed's race uniform. We are looking forward to your support!

For more information regarding Race Across America, visit:
www.raamrace.org

Race for Hope Sponsorship levels:

- Title Sponsorship: \$10,000+
- Gold Sponsorship: \$5,000+
- Silver Sponsorship: \$2,500+
- Bronze Sponsorship: \$1,000+

HELP ED GET TO THE FINISH LINE!

Checks can be mailed to PO Box 26 | Meridian, MS 39302

HOPE VILLAGE THRIFT STORE



The Hope Village Thrift Store needs a face lift! It is time to paint the brick on our building. We are asking for donations of exterior paint (any colors) as well as paint brushes. We can't wait to get started on this project!

Also, the Hope Village Thrift Store is now open on **SUNDAYS!** (1-4pm)

For donation pick-up, please call 601-553-8660 ext. 2266 or email cculpepper@hopevillagers.org.



Hope Village for Children
P.O. Box 26
Meridian, MS 39302

FOLLOW HOPE VILLAGE FOR CHILDREN ON FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM

NEW TAX CREDIT FOR 2023

CREDIT FOR CASH CONTRIBUTIONS TO ELIGIBLE TRANSITIONAL HOME ORGANIZATIONS

COMING SOON!



DONATE ONLINE!

For more information regarding the Children's Promise Tax Credit for individuals and businesses,
call 601-553-8660 ext. 2266

*Scan QR code to support
Hope Village for Children*

