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of

Jackson

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JACKSON *interfaith* SHELTER

**CELEBRATING THE PAST.
CULTIVATING THE FUTURE.**

*Honoring 50 Years of Hope with the
Jackson Interfaith Shelter*



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Shelter exterior after 2022 renovations

CELEBRATING THE PAST. CULTIVATING THE FUTURE.

BY BRIANNA HAMPTON / PHOTOS BY MIAME JARRETT PHOTOGRAPHY

— *Honoring 50 Years of Hope with the Jackson Interfaith Shelter* —



Shelter exterior before 2022 renovation

The work the Jackson Interfaith Shelter is doing in our community is impactful, essential, and transformative. The clients who walk through their doors are treated with dignity, given hope, and offered love during some of their most difficult life circumstances. This month, we want to gratefully reflect on their mission's efforts as they celebrate the past 50 years of work, and look forward to cultivating another 50+ years of hope in Jackson.



If you're unfamiliar with their mission, the Shelter is a low barrier homeless shelter whose purpose is to work with people experiencing homelessness by providing emergency shelter, prepared meals, as well as assisting with other physical, emotional, and spiritual needs whenever possible. In 2023, they collectively served 73,273 meals and hosted 23,477 nights of shelter. While their doors will have been opened to the community for 50 years this November, they have been evolving to meet various needs in the community. What has remained consistent is the vision of making Jackson a community where everyone has access to decent, affordable housing, and where resources needed to prevent or resolve homelessness will be available to all.

choose HOPE





Pictured here several staff together in the shelter auditorium

"WE ARE SO GRATEFUL FOR THIS AMAZING COMMUNITY WHO HAS BEEN THERE SINCE THE BEGINNING. THANKS TO THE AMAZING PEOPLE OF JACKSON, WE KNOW THE NEXT 50 YEARS WILL ENABLE CONTINUED AND DEEPENED SUPPORT FOR OUR COMMUNITY'S MOST VULNERABLE."

In 1974, Beverly Garges, a devout Catholic, was compelled to take action after witnessing men struggling with alcoholism and living on the streets of Jackson. She spent her time and resources providing food and clothing, as well as building relationships with her new friends, many of whom were living under a downtown bridge. One cold winter evening, she was grieved to learn of a homeless man freezing to death on the streets. Broken hearted, angered, and extremely motivated, Bev knew more had to be done.

Working tirelessly, Bev, along with the support of a variety of other faithful individuals, churches, organizations, and businesses, opened the first Jackson Interfaith Shelter at 436 E. Michigan Ave. in November of 1974. The connections Bev made kept the shelter running 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, eventually leading to an expansion to the location of their current facility at 414 S. Blackstone St. With only 77 cents in the bank at the time, Bev relied on the generosity of this community to raise the \$3,000 down payment needed in 1978. Today the faith foundation remains the same, as the Jackson Interfaith Shelter continues to broaden their services to meet needs in this community.

Sheryl Sabo-Grieve, current Director of Operations at the shelter, has been involved with the shelter for 25 years, witnessing first hand the impact of their mission. First entering their doors as a homeless single mother, Sheryl understands so much of what people feel when they walk into the shelter. With such a close connection to the services, Sheryl's biggest inspiration in her role is continuing to serve the people who walk through the doors every day. "When a client has success, we celebrate that person, when they have a failure, we commiserate with them and try to help them get back on track", she shared. The shelter has changed Sheryl's life in more ways than one. 22 years ago she met her husband, Mike, as a co-

worker of the shelter. Mike and Sheryl are proud to be a "Interfaith Shelter family." In 2021, Mike retired after working there for 31 years. Sheryl's 36-year old son currently helps upper management doing freelance work from his home in Phoenix, and their 20-year old daughter started an internship at the shelter in her junior year of high school, now working as a full time staff member. The ever-evolving job of helping others transform their lives has given Sheryl, her family, the rest of the amazing, dedicated staff, as well as the generous volunteers a reason to continue showing up every day for the mission.

In 2019, the shelter's board of directors chose Steve Castle to be their Chief Executive Officer to continue building on the strong foundation and beautiful heritage the past five decades have provided. "We understand most coming to us for help are in the midst of a major life storm", Steve shared, "There is often fear, shame, struggles with mental health, addictions, or various traumas experienced. We strive to welcome people as they are while providing dignity, hope, love and resources for them to become all they are meant to be." Steve considers it a great honor to speak value and worth into those struggling, and putting processes and systems in place to see those individuals thrive. His Christian faith, family, and community are his biggest inspirations, and continue to push him to use his blessings to be a conduit of grace and blessing to others.



Kevin, kitchen manager, and Monifa, kitchen volunteer



Steve Castle, CEO, and Bekah Zraik, Office Director



Amy, Front Desk Volunteer

50 years ago, Bev Garges likely never dreamed of the countless lives touched, and literally saved, because of her bold and selfless action. Her initial vision has been far expanded, growing the shelter from a small storefront shelter and soup kitchen for 10 men to a 76-bed shelter and resource center for men, women, and families, in addition to providing housing in more than a dozen rental units in the shelter neighborhood. The past few years, shelter staff has turned attention to facility renovations, upgrading almost every space inside and outside of the shelter. With each update the goal has always been to go beyond "good enough for the homeless"

to a true place of holistic transformation. Today, they're ready to take on the next steps to enhance their level of care, specifically to families. Accommodating unique family situations has proven to be a challenge with the current shelter. Jackson Interfaith Shelter staff, along with local partner organizations, is working diligently to build a second shelter dedicated to supporting the unique needs of families.

If you'd like to learn more about all the Jackson Interfaith Shelter has accomplished and is working to accomplish, their website offers valuable information on their impact, as well as opportunities to personally involve yourself in their mission. In addition, they invite anyone in the community to celebrate their golden milestone with a ticketed celebration dinner at Commonwealth Commerce Center on November 23rd. You can find more information here: interfaithshelter.com/dinner. They want to take this time to reflect on the five decades of service, while also preparing a way to purposefully meet the need by enhancing care for the next 50 years for the homeless community

"We are so grateful for this amazing community who has been there since the beginning. Thanks to the amazing people of Jackson, we know the next 50 years will enable continued and deepened support for our community's most vulnerable. We truly hope all who are able will get tickets for our November celebration dinner so they can see the impact made and be a part of our exciting next steps to expand our care for families."