



# BETHLEHEM CENTER

United Methodist Neighborhood Centers Inc.

200 West 38th Street • P.O. Box 2156 • Chattanooga, TN 37409-0156



January 2, 2013

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Development Director*

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City Council Office  
1000 Lindsey Street  
Chattanooga, Tennessee 37402

Dear Chattanooga City Council:

The Bethlehem center has served the city of Chattanooga for 93 years and made a major impact on tens of thousands of lives during these years. Our areas of focus remain four-fold for the greatest impact in helping youth become better decision makers who lead stable and productive lives.

1. **Character Development**-- As a faith-based organization we believe God has given us the inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness according to both the Constitution of the United States of America and the Bible. We help shape character through prayer, Bible study and service to mankind. Loving our neighbor as ourselves helps our youth learn respect for others and the community. Good character reduces teen pregnancy, crime, violence, drug-use and gang involvement.

2. **Education/Literacy**— Our initiative for quality education requires each Bethlehem Center student to be at or above grade level in both reading and mathematics skills. We teach students to value themselves and take their education seriously. Our After School and Summer Literacy Academy gives students a greater chance at improving their academic deficiencies that are no fault of their own. According to national research, students with quality education and high levels of literacy have much better odds at surviving and excelling in inner-city communities. Education and literacy reduce crime, incarceration, and gang involvement.

All of our students access their personalized reading program on our laptop computers each day of the academy. We track each student's individual literacy levels weekly throughout the school year and the summer. Our Lexia reading program is scientifically-based and peer-reviewed as a proven tool that increases literacy proficiency in elementary and middle school students. Lexia is an internet-based reading program that assesses skills, helps teach students with engaging and interactive games, determines lesson plans for teachers according to student weakness, provides daily practice for indicated areas of need, and measures each student's time on task.

3. **Economic development**- For Chattanoogaans growing up in low-income families finding jobs and financial opportunities is very difficult. The Bethlehem Center is helping citizens in South Chattanooga communities make ends meet by providing positive opportunities that discourage individuals from being tempted by criminal enterprises that bring false hope and destruction to our communities. The Bethlehem Center, in



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partnership with LAUNCH of Chattanooga; The Partnership for Families, Children and Adults; the Chalmers Center; and Junior Achievement, has 1) job training and placement programs; 2) small business training & start-up programs; and 3) personal financial literacy classes for children and adults. When a person learns to earn money legally, it reduces their chances of being involved with drug dealing, gangs and other criminal financial enterprises.

**4. Leadership Development:** The Bethlehem center has been in the business of training leaders for the last 93 years. To name a few of the lives the center has influenced: John P. Franklin, Sr, Moses Freeman, James Baldwin, Judge John McClarity, Coach Robert High, Reggie White, Terdell Sands, Ashley Wilbur, Lurone "Coach" Jennings, Sr. and many more. Leaders are important to our future; therefore The Bethlehem Center specializes in training leaders with the V-Team Leadership Curriculum, an international curriculum developed by the International Leadership Institute. The 8 core values of effective leadership include: 1) Intimacy with God, 2) Passion for People, 3) Visionary Leadership, 4) Culturally Relevant Communication, 5) Multiplication of Leaders, 6) Family as Priority, 7) Good Stewardship and 8) Integrity. Teaching these values reduces the chances of our youth being involved with gangs, drugs and other criminal activities.

The funds allocated by the City will be used to provide the specific programming listed above. I assure the City Council that the funds will be used for their stated purpose and that an accounting of the use of the funds will be provided prior to the close of the City of Chattanooga's fiscal year until all funds are exhausted. Annual audits of the Bethlehem Center will also be provided to the City of Chattanooga for review. I will be happy to assist the City of Chattanooga in attaining any other information about the Bethlehem Center needed for review of this funding request.

The Bethlehem Center has a strategic and intentional program model that helps youth become mature and effective decision makers. Our approach for youth development is founded on research and our strategies are measurable and outcome based. I hope that you will look closely at what is happening at the Bethlehem Center and partner with us to change or influence more lives for the good of our city. Thank you for your time, consideration and service to Chattanooga.

Sincerely,

Lurone "Coach" Jennings Sr.  
Executive Director/ Life Coach