



Summer 2020

Contagion

Few challenges have been as world-changing and life-altering as the coronavirus pandemic has. It has affected everyone and everything, contributing greatly to the number of those in need and requiring help as we all try to survive.

Despite the world's current challenges dealing with a deadly pandemic and worldwide anger over the deaths of African Americans in police custody, we at MLGW are looking to heal as well as continue the efforts of our dedicated volunteers serving the community.

During the crisis, our volunteers have helped box-up food supplies, make deliveries and hold Mobile Pantries in an effort to feed the need. As volunteers, we have the support and encouragement of our leadership who see the high value in helping our community be a better place by giving of ourselves to others.

If you have any thoughts or comments, please send them to VIP editor **Dan Hope**, Corporate Communications, at dhope@mlgw.org or call 692-8064. And as always, **log your volunteer hours in Oracle!**

Mobile Food in Fowl Weather

It was a dark and stormy day.... as the line of cars snaking down Raleigh-LaGrange belied the need. Hungry families showed up by the hundreds to receive food assistance from MLGW volunteers. It was MLGW's first Mobile Food Pantry during the COVID-19 pandemic held Thursday, June 4 at the Division's Joyce Blackmon Training Center. There are more coming.

In partnership with the Mid-South Food Bank, the mobile pantry was organized by MLGW's Corporate Social Responsibility department. Boxes of food along with produce and fruit were distributed to families who drove through with their trunks and hatches open for contactless loading. MLGW volunteers placed supplies in families' cars while masked and gloved, wearing raingear for the downpours.



President and CEO J.T. Young joined in with MLGW volunteers to help load food supplies into cars as rain showers came and went.

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A line of cars snaked down Raleigh-LaGrange Road waiting to get in the Mobile Food Pantry entrance marked with colorful signage.

Mobile Food (continued from front page)

Fifty MLGW volunteers involved in the effort did an excellent job managing a massive food distribution effort for 300 families with a long line of cars stretching several blocks. Each family received about 50-60 pounds of food including potatoes, oranges, grapefruit, apples, yogurt, veggie burger patties, pre-cooked grilled chicken and buffalo chicken pot pies. In these troubled times with so many hurting, that food can be a lifesaver. Event coordinators **Beverly Perkins** and **Ken Mack**,

Corporate Social Responsibility, and **Chantal Lairy**, Customer Experience/Market Analysis, gathered volunteers and arranged for food supply boxes with the Food Bank, set-up signage and designated a route around the Training Center for a smooth flow. Families receiving food were so grateful, expressing their thanks and relief knowing where their next meals were coming from. Another MLGW Mobile Food Pantry was organized for July 2.



***Terica Lamb**, Economic/Community Development, points the way for family cars picking up needed food supplies as **Edward Boone**, Electric Meter, gets ready to load the next vehicle.*



***Latonya Alexander**, Enterprise Resource Planning, and **Gale Carson**, VP of Community and External Affairs, wait for the next family car to fill with food supplies.*

Southern Women

Southern Women gathered for the annual Southern Women's Show in early March shortly before gathering became taboo. It was one of the last gatherings before Stay at Home orders hit Shelby County, and it was a good one. MLGW volunteers staffed an info booth as usual at the show and held EnergySmart seminars to inform attendees about energy savings, conservation and insulation.



*MLGW volunteers staffing the info booth at the Women's Show include (L-R) **Felecia Tuggle**, Substation Transmission Engineering; **Marion Harris-Cooper** and **Carla Norwood-Jeter**, Reliability/Power Quality; **Darren Sharp**, **Heidi Slakans** and **Michael Faulk**, Customer Information Systems; and **Brandon Taylor**, IS.*



*Members of MLGW's Residential Services area present an EnergySmart seminar at the Women's Show to inform attendees about ways to save energy and weatherize their homes. **Vidale Cothran** and **Stephanie Darnell** demonstrate ways to save on utility bills.*

MLK Day in the Community

Martin Luther King Jr. Day in Memphis holds special significance in the city where he died. That's why devoted MLGW volunteers dedicated their holiday to serve neighborhoods in North Memphis on January 17 BC ("Before COVID"). It was a harbinger of needs to come.

Bivouacking at Dave Wells Community Center in North Memphis off Chelsea, our volunteers fanned out on foot with energy-saving kits and supplies to distribute to households in the area. MLGW believes in giving back to the community, and an example of that commitment was illustrated by the small army of MLGW volunteers. Our volunteer force also criss-crossed the neighborhood gathering up and bagging trash from streets, parks, sidewalks and more. Truckloads of filled garbage bags left the area in triumph leaving a cleaner, more welcoming neighborhood.

Our MLGW volunteers' MLK Day efforts earned the Division the Corporate Impact Memphis Volunteer Project Award from Volunteer Memphis recognizing our volunteers for both the 2019 and the 2020 MLK Day of Service in the Community, presented in a virtual award ceremony on June 25.



Ryan Groves, Ethics & Compliance, and **Terry Toler**, Gas Dist. - SSC, clean up curbside in a North Memphis neighborhood for MLK Day. MLGW volunteers' MLK Day efforts were recognized by Volunteer Memphis.



Tracy Tate, Reliability/Power Quality, Claims, and **Joel Wakeley**, fill a garbage bag as they clean up a park and areas behind the community center.



An army of MLGW volunteers fanned out across a North Memphis community to deliver energy-saving kits and supplies to area residents.

Whitehaven STEM

Whitehaven Elementary held a STEM Expo on Thursday, March 12 focusing on science, technology, engineering and math. There certainly was a lot going on! MLGW's Conservation Girl and the Terminator provided excitement and important safety lessons, and MLGW volunteers educated schoolchildren on energy sources and conservation. The kids loved the MLGW superheroes, and learned a lot from them. Teachers organized a talented drum line that drummed in a parade of students and the various STEM clubs they belong to, followed by an "Innovation" program on a large stage. Kids who dropped by our energy booth learned from our volunteers about ways to save energy. After all, the future is in their hands.



MLGW's superhero, The Terminator (**Anthony Harrison**, Electric Distribution - HHSC), offered the students a dramatic lesson in safety with his bucket truck.



Conservation Girl (**Chantal Lairy**, Customer Experience/Market Analysis), and the Terminator posed in front of the Terminator's dramatically designed bucket truck at the Whitehaven STEM Expo.



MLGW's STEM booth had several interactive and educational elements that booth volunteers **Chantal Lairy**, **Anthony Harrison** and **Cynthia Hailey**, Economic and Community Development, used to engage students at Whitehaven Elementary.

Power of Warmth

MLGW partnered with Neighborhood Christian Centers on January 15 to host the Power of Warmth Senior Expo and giveaway. More than 232 qualifying seniors received either a space heater or electric blanket. There were 23 organizations at the expo who provided information on mortgage and rent assistance, prescription assistance, utility assistance and many more programs. **Vickie Fox-Price** (in red), Systems Security Control, helped staff the MLGW booth during the expo and distributed information on programs the Division offers to seniors.



Volunteers Needed for Food Pantries

Corporate Social Responsibility needs your help distributing MLGW special assistance packets at Shelby County mobile pantry sites Monday through Saturday from 9-11 a.m. Volunteers can select a day and location to hand out packets to people in cars waiting in line to receive food. For more information, contact **Tanya Becton** at (901) 497-0571 or tbecton@mlgw.org.

Key Persons Luncheon

United Way Campaign Committee members and all department Key Persons were honored at the Key Persons Luncheon on January 24 at the Teaching and Learning Center on Union Ave. Steering Committee members received a special certificate of appreciation thanking them for their stellar efforts. Several Key Persons and campaign standouts were also recognized with a certificate for their fundraising ideas and campaign fundraising components including **Sharika Hollingsworth** (Fashion Show); **Ryan Grove** and **Robbie Gaia** (Golf Tournament); **Jennifer Reed** (concession stand); **Janet Merriweather-Price** (campaign speaker award); Energy Services and Community and External Affairs (department participation awards); **Roshanda Coleman**, **Carmen Peronto**, **Angela Ward** and **Casey Cook** (bake sales); and **Albert Edwards** (United Way liaison).

“The luncheon was a great way to show appreciation to the Steering Committee, department key people, those who put on special fundraisers and departments that were key assets to us having a successful campaign,” said Campaign Chair **Kevin Watkins**, Performance Engineering. “This campaign year, we raised the most money in MLGW history!”



Delivering the Basics

As the pandemic ravages the world, so many are greatly in need of just the basics. Survival is paramount, the economy is in confusion and people are hungry. It's a time when our volunteers show their true mettle and dedication to service.

Many times, the basics involve food – a necessity. Those suffering from pandemic effects include some who have never before needed assistance, never been out of a job and never needed to ask for food before. It's humbling. MLGW volunteers have been working with local non-profit organizations to box-up and deliver food to our community.

Early in May, our volunteers donned masks and gloves and headed to the Neighborhood Christian Center on Jackson to assist in their pandemic food distribution efforts. On May 4, **Crystal Love**, Customer Experience/Market Analysis, and her two sons Marcus and Miles helped box up food for a wide range of families in need. Wearing their ever-present masks and gloves for safety, Crystal and her sons placed canned goods, peanut butter, yogurt and more in boxes and sealed them for pickup and delivery.

On May 6, **Rose Herron**, N. Community Ofc., pulled her own car up to NCC and began loading boxes and bags for delivery to area families in the Faxon, Barron and Prescott neighborhoods as she drove between home deliveries dropping off her “care” packages. “As it says in Matthew 25:35, ‘I was hungry and you gave me food.’ “Customers



***Rose Herron**, N. Community Ofc., hefts a heavy produce bag as she loads food to deliver to those in need in our community.*

who received food were ever so grateful, and some were surprised to know that MLGW really cares”, Rose said. “The service was very rewarding, and I look forward to helping more.”

There have been many other efforts by MLGW volunteers assisting the community during this health crisis seemingly with no end. We'll tell you about their assistance to the community, too. Let us know about your community pandemic efforts by emailing dhope@mlgw.org.



*Delivering food for the Neighborhood Christian Center, **Kerry Williams**, Revenue Protection, encounters a grateful, hungry neighbor.*



***Crystal Love**, Customer Experience/Market Analysis, and her two sons, Marcus and Miles, load boxes for the Neighborhood Christian Center for delivery to those in need of food during the pandemic*

Volunteer Spotlight

James DeBose: Volunteer Coach and Mentor

Sometimes it's the smallest kid who needs help and encouragement to overcome challenges. Perhaps they need a lift, some help, a little inspiration to help them reach their goals. That's when **James DeBose Jr.** steps up as coach and mentor.

James started at MLGW 32 years ago, in February 1988 in the Computer Room for Data Processing where he soon became a Lead Operator. He has served time at the Service Desk and worked for other Information Technology departments. Often taking night courses while working for MLGW, James earned his MBA degree with a concentration in Information Services from Webster University in St Louis in 2008. He got involved with Data Security in 2015, and is now an Information Compliance Analyst level 4 in Data Security/IT, part of Information Systems (IS).

"My time here at MLGW has been a humbling experience, because it has been a joy to work for such a great company," James says. "MLGW cares about individuality, growth and family, too. I've become great friends with a lot of great people during my tenure here and still can't imagine my career being anywhere else."

About 15 years ago, James got into volunteering through MLGW. "I got started in volunteering through MLGW University by going to local inner-city high schools," says James. "I'd go and speak to students to encourage them on how they can be successful in life by being positive and kind to their fellow man. I also offered examples of life success stories to them."

Working as an IS fundraiser, James has also volunteered for MLGW's United Way Campaign, even wearing a Batman costume to encourage donations. Over the years, he has also helped his wife, MLGW employee **Angela DeBose**, Customer Care Residential Center, with her annual 'Hoodies for Homeless' campaign during the Holidays. His Christmas gift to her one year was \$500 to buy hoodies to give to the homeless.



James DeBose Jr.

James is dedicated to and really enjoys coaching kids in sports, which he's been doing for years thanks, recently, to the inspiration of his son, James DeBose III, who is about to turn eight years old. Young James was fascinated by sports as young as four years old, and started playing basketball and soccer, sports James Jr. coaches. He loves coaching his son.

"I got involved with kids' sports because a group of kids in my old neighborhood asked me to coach them in a recreational basketball league over 10 years ago," James

recalls. "I couldn't say no, because of my passion for kids and my love for sports. I had to study basketball and coaching, so I could guide them on how to be successful in what they wanted to do. At times, I had to explain my life experiences to them for different situations. I had to pick several of them up because they lacked transportation, find gyms for practices and take them to games. Most of the mothers were single parents."

"One year, my teenage team went to the basketball championship game and lost by just two points," James says. "I explained that they were great kids and for them to hold their heads up high and to be proud of

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James coaches some inspiring kids in youth sports for St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School.

themselves. Later after having my family, I wanted to spend my spare time with my son. I work with him in kids' sports, grooming him to be a Godly young man and a great person."

James coaches mostly younger kids in basketball, baseball, soccer and T-ball. "The younger ones – you have to be more patient with them. Once you get their parents support, things get better." He also coaches teens who are a different challenge as they prepare for adulthood and their future.

James fondly remembers the challenges of a Pre-K/1st grade basketball team last year and one team member, the smallest kid, who couldn't make a shot. "I went and picked him up and let him take a closer shot and make it." It must have inspired him and given him confidence. "Then, in the middle of the game, he took a shot and scored! It made me proud. The smallest guy, and he made his shot. I was so happy, ecstatic – and so was he. I'll never forget it!" James excitedly recalls.

"The kids inspire you," James says. "They're looking for positive answers. They're thirsty for positive influences. We're teaching life lessons that relate to them so they'll open up and feel comfortable asking questions. That yields positive results, but you also have to explain bad choices. All choices don't come up positive. Learning is part of growing up."

James also coaches baseball, basketball and soccer teams for St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School and T-ball teams for little ones through Bartlett Recreation. The kids he coaches range from the very young to teenagers. James even shows up at St. Francis to help serve lunch to the kids. This is a guy who cares.

During May, MLGW's IS Division Secret Safety Inspector selected James as its 2019 Volunteer of the Year. It was richly deserved. Working with youth in the community, he reported the most volunteer hours

in 2019 with 96, yet even that high number is not a full representation. Many of James' volunteer hours went unreported, and he'd already logged 86 volunteer hours in 2020 before COVID-19 hit. He's served after hours, on weekends – indeed whenever he's able – to provide children with a safe alternative for play and learning.



"This pandemic has been tough," James laments. "I'm really missing the kids I coach." Like most of us, he doesn't know what to expect, and it is tough on younger kids who don't quite understand what's going on.

James' favorite volunteer effort is obviously coaching kids in sports, and it's not hard to understand why. "You get a chance to see their efforts, smile, learn their personality and see how their parents get excited about their kids' success," James explains. "When they get discouraged, you have to figure out ways to motivate them. My rewards truly come from them."

For those considering volunteering, especially in these challenging times, James offers advice: "Our community

needs inspirations, hope, people to encourage one another, respect for each other and for us to love our neighbors," he says. "Volunteering gives us all those rewards and more. It uplifts me, and for me to see the gleam in the kid's eyes brings satisfaction to my heart. I encourage volunteerism for self-fulfillment, knowing that you are helping others and making a positive difference in their lives."

"My faith allows me to have a heart to help my fellow man," James believes. "I wish I could do more, but there is not enough time in the day. The kids satisfy my heart, and that's my inspiration. If I have touched one heart, then I've said what needed to be said because our kids do need us."

Indeed they do, and James DeBose will work tirelessly to make sure those kids have the support and inspiration they need.

Volunteer your time and give back to our community.

Senior Utility Bingo

Inside a room at the Frayser-Raleigh Senior Citizen Center in January, a group of mostly women and a few men spent about an hour playing utility bingo. Instead of B-1 or I-30, **Beverly Perkins**, Corporate Social Responsibility, called out “change filter, Prepay and 68 degrees” for the B-I-N-G-O squares while sharing information about the word or phrase. For the uninitiated, those are energy-saving tips...

“Unlike a standard presentation, utility bingo gives our customers a chance to have a little fun, win some prizes and also learn about our programs as well as ways to save on their utilities,” Perkins said.



***Beverly Perkins**, Corporate Social Responsibility, calls out “bingo words” at Senior Utility Bingo.*

Many of the players are avid bingo fans. “When you say, bingo, they’ll show up,” said bingo winner Sandra Stiger. “Bingo. That’s the word.” Stiger hopes she can convince the senior living facility where she lives to host a utility bingo event soon. “This is very helpful. I love the information we got. We need to do this more often,” added Martha Roye.



***Cynthia Hailey**, Economic and Community Development, helps a senior with her utility bingo board, a unique way to teach energy-saving.*

2020 Summer Volunteer and Fundraising Calendar

Many MLGW spring and summer volunteer and charitable events were canceled or postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of MLGW’s volunteer and charitable events will resume when it is safe to do so, possibly in the fall. Current volunteer opportunities to help in the community during the pandemic will be listed in the Weekly Bulletin. This Volunteer Calendar will be in hiatus until at least the Fall 2020 edition. If you have any volunteer questions, please contact volunteer coordinator **Ken Mack**, Corporate Social Responsibility, at 528-4820 or kmack@mlgw.org

Always remember: Mask Up before you volunteer. Let’s stay safe!

Don’t forget to log your volunteer hours in Oracle including any hours spent volunteering to assist the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Volunteer your time and give back to our community.

Volunteer Views

Photos of MLGW volunteers are viewable on your home computer or mobile device in our volunteer photo albums at www.flickr.com/photos/mlgwpix/albums.



Two Sistahs: Using their own time and money, **Camela Mitchell** and **Demetria Bowers-Adair**, Purchasing, set out on foot at lunchtime each Friday to deliver much-needed food to the homeless population downtown and along Main St. Camela and Demetria refer to themselves as “The Two Sistahs.” Their help is deeply appreciated by the homeless downtown, and their efforts landed them on WMC-TV5 News and in the Commercial Appeal.



MLGW/REA Walk: The MLGW Retiree Employee Association raised \$5,200 for their Inaugural REA Walk to benefit Plus-1 at Shelby Farms on Saturday, October 12. Walking with the group of retirees were former MLGW presidents **Jerry Collins** and **Larry Papasan**, both retired, who helped organize the fundraiser. The REA presented a check to Plus-1 at the November 19 Board meeting.

Volunteer Views



Midsouth Makers: Reuben Hull, Transformer Electric Motor Shop, and Gerald Jameson, Gas Measurement, are among a small army of local volunteers who are making much-needed medical face mask shields for the Memphis Medical Society through the local nonprofit group, Midsouth Makers.



Southern Women: David Wright, Residential Services, stands with two Women's Show attendees who love to participate in our EnergySmart seminars each year. To the right, Vidale Cothran, Residential Services, explains some energy-saving ideas to seminar attendees.

Volunteer Views



STEM Weekend Academy: MLGW University held a STEM program for students attending its Weekend Academy sponsored by the local chapter of the American Association of Blacks in Energy. MLGW/AABE volunteers included **Derrick Dones** (pictured), Residential Energy Services; **Barbara Martin**, Credit Operations; **Bobbie Felton**, Systems Control/Gas & Water; and **Angel Harper**, Human Performance.



Mid-South Home Show: Volunteering in the MLGW booth at the Mid-South Home Show on Valentine's Day, **Phillip Miller**, Transformers/Central Shops, gave visitors energy-saving brochures and talked to them about programming thermostats to save money on energy. Booth visitors spun the wheel for LED light bulbs. When they landed on 68 or 78 degrees – where you should set your thermostat in summer or winter, they won an LED.

Volunteer Views



MLK Day of Service: The park across from the Dave Wells Community Center really needed the loving care and clean-up efforts of our MLGW volunteers on MLK Day.



Mobile Food Pantry: The weather was for the birds - fowl! But MLGW volunteers endeavored to persevere in their foul-weather gear, ponchos, masks and gloves while loading food supplies into cars full of hungry families at MLGW's June 4 Mobile Food Pantry in partnership with the Mid-South Food Bank.